

Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

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QUIET AS CHURCH MICE:
OFFERING WELCOME THROUGH CONTEMPLATIVE WORSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Quiet as Church Mice: Offering Welcome Through Contemplative Worship

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In a busy suburban church, those with introverted personalities may easily be marginalized or overlooked. This project set out to create a new kind of welcome for both introverts and extroverts through a weekly contemplative worship service. Celebrating the Lord's Supper amid stillness and quiet presented a stark contrast to the prevailing culture of the congregation, which is usually sociable and boisterous. It recognized the increasing diversity of the community and invited leaders and participants to practice hospitality more deeply. It also taught a new kind of Christian practice that is essential for a congregation engaged in local mission.

This doctoral project includes the short history of the congregation with its increasingly diverse context and explores the general definition, needs and character of introverts and extroverts. A theological and biblical argument is made for greater inclusion and for the use of contemplative spirituality as a way to welcome introverts more fully. A full liturgy for the Eucharist in a contemplative style is also included.

This project not only widened the welcome at Trafalgar Presbyterian Church; it also created a new rhythm of action and contemplation. Once introverts were heard and accommodated, their needs and preferences turned out to be a gift to extroverts as well. Contemplative spirituality, previously unexplored, has begun to nourish a tired and missional congregation.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
PART ONE: MINISTRY CONTEXT	
INTRODUCTION	2
CHAPTER 1. COMMUNITY AND MINISTRY CONTEXT OF TRAFALGAR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH	6
PART TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION	
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW	27
CHAPTER 3. A THEOLOGY OF INCLUSION AND TRANSFORMATION	47
PART THREE: MINISTRY STRATEGY	
CHAPTER 4. MINISTRY PLAN	71
CHAPTER 5. IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS	92
CONCLUSION	104
APPENDICES	107
BIBLIOGRAPHY	111

PART ONE
MINISTRY CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

As a way of life, an act of love, an expression of faith,
our hospitality reflects and anticipates God's welcome.

—Christine Pohl, *Making Room*

This project is an initiative about hospitality. It invites those in and beyond the congregation of Trafalgar Presbyterian Church to gather in God's silent presence and to be renewed at the Lord's Table together. Focused on introverts and extroverts, it will offer an opportunity for reflection about personality types and how they may impact individual worshiping experiences and community life together. It also will introduce and teach the practice of contemplative prayer with the hope that this will be nourishing for a congregation engaged in local mission and for those worn down by busy suburban living.

I am not sure who first suggested that I read a book about introverts. I do know, however, that once I began reading, I found myself in its pages. Years earlier I was identified as an introvert on the Myers Briggs Type Indicator and I already knew that quiet environments suited me well. Now, however, I realize why I had instinctively sought out silent retreats and adjusted my schedule to accommodate the exhaustion that followed busy or noisy events, including Sunday morning worship services. As an experienced pastor, I wonder about the people in the pews and how many of them, like me, have struggled with conversations at coffee hour and longed for more opportunities for contemplative worship and prayer.

As I visited a new family in 2015, a woman indicated to me that she found Sunday mornings joyful but overwhelming. Identifying herself as an introvert, she said that she appreciated my one-on-one visit, and we went on to discuss various spiritual practices that she might find helpful for her personality type. After this visit I read *Quiet: The Power of*

Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking by Susan Cain. I noticed those who avoided coffee hour after worship and remembered the woman who attended only the small, quiet services held at Easter and Christmas. I looked around at my elders and noted how many of them exhibited introverted characteristics. I also reflected on my own need for quiet spaces and silent prayer.

Discovering Adam HcHugh's book *Introverts in the Church* was exciting because it connected introverts with the life and mission of the Church. Unfortunately, like so many books about introverts, it placed the onus on introverts to find ways to cope with an extroverted culture. Surely church communities have a responsibility to see those in their midst who struggle and find ways to welcome them. Since statistics from 2001 suggest that introverts make up fifty percent or more of the general population,¹ this is no small issue. It is possible that the congregation, for all of its efforts to be friendly, is not as welcoming as it could be.

The first part of this paper will examine the origins of the suburb immediately surrounding the church and the initial strategies used to build a new congregation. The founding minister and elders placed a large emphasis on building friendship and hosting social events as a way to attract people to the church. This is clear in everything from the church's mission statement to the sign at the front of the building, and it was very effective. As time went on, however, a variety of changes in and outside the congregation meant that this was less helpful now than it was in the 1980s. The congregation gradually adjusted to growing ethnic and economic diversity, but several wearying years are

¹ Laurie Helgoe, *Introvert Power: Why Your Inner Life Is Your Hidden Strength* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks Inc., 2013), 12.

prompting leaders to ask new questions about spiritual growth and nourishment. The idea of a quiet second worship service, radically different than Sunday mornings, found support. Introverts and extroverts, and the value of contemplative worship, will be presented here as they relate to community and worship practices.

Part Two of this paper will consider the practices of Christian hospitality and the Eucharist. A review of relevant literature will show that the Body of Christ is called to see and welcome all of those who are hungry; but this is a challenge for a Church that lives in an age of extroversion and where gregariousness and activity are valued so much more than silence and stillness. Introverts like me often struggle to participate in the life of the Church. This is a project for extroverts, too, however, because their spiritual lives may be stunted unless they learn to be quiet before God. Silence is an essential way to listen to and connect with God.

Also in this section will be a consideration of practice and theology of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Historically, it has placed an emphasis on gathering for The Lord's Supper but in recent years has struggled with the question of who participates and why that is important. After six years of discussion and various reports, the General Assembly adopted a series of recommendations that encouraged churches to invite baptised children to participate in the Lord's Supper, a new practice in most congregations. This helps frame the discussion about welcoming different personality types, because it is not just a question of who is allowed to participate, but why all of those who follow Jesus Christ need to be invited and made welcome. To be nourished in the mystery of love and grace is to be inspired and transformed. The Church is wise to open the door to God's transforming work that is begun in silence and contemplation.

Finally, Part Three will build on the knowledge of introverts and a theology of inclusion in order to create a new worship model for Trafalgar Presbyterian Church. With a contemplative liturgy and an alternative space, the congregation and surrounding community will be encouraged to gather at a second, different worship service each week for nine months. A brief questionnaire will help to gather responses and perspectives from both introverts and extroverts, and the results will later be shared with the elders. This project and the resulting conversation will be helpful for the church as it moves ahead after a season of uncertainty and weariness.

As the only full-time staff person and the only pastor in a church community of about two hundred people, the strategy will be simple. I will provide key leadership while the church elders offer permission, encouragement and support for a short, quiet service of communion each Wednesday evening. It is a project that is rooted in a theology of deep and meaningful hospitality and the importance of welcoming everyone who is hungry for the bread of life and the cup of joy. It is about striving to make everyone welcome at the Lord's Table so that they might be transformed and inspired to lives of love and service. This is a quiet project for a busy world that hungers and thirsts for food and drink that nourish the soul.

CHAPTER 1

COMMUNITY AND MINISTRY CONTEXT

Trafalgar Presbyterian Church has just celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. Since its beginning there have been significant changes both within the congregation and in the town of Oakville that surrounds it. These changes have led to important questions about hospitality and spiritual nurture.

An Emerging Canadian Suburb Where Fun is an Effective Tool for Evangelism

In February 1995, The Presbytery of Brampton requested that the Presbyterian Church in Canada's Board of World Mission plant a new congregation in North Oakville, near Toronto. While the town of Oakville had existed for over a hundred years, the land to the north of it was quickly being transformed from rural farmland to large subdivisions. This request was approved, and on June 8, 1986, over one hundred Presbytery volunteers helped to canvass four thousand homes in the area. One hundred and ten people indicated that they were interested in a local church.

Ferne Reeve was appointed to the mission charge immediately after graduating from Knox College in May of that year, and the first worship service was held on

September 14, 1986. On April 26, 1987, eighty-six individuals became charter members of Trafalgar Presbyterian Church. The congregation continued worshipping in a local public school gymnasium until the dedication of its new building on February 3, 1991.²

The Halton Region Profile (1986 to 1996) paints a picture of the White, upper middle-class, young families who were moving into the neighbourhood around the church at that time. In 1986, the majority of dwellings were single detached houses. More than 90 percent of the population was married and more than 60 percent of married couples had children; of those families, two-thirds had more than one child.³ The average family income was much higher than for Ontario at \$55,640 in 1985. Most immigrants who came to Oakville from outside of Canada were from the United Kingdom, followed by the United States. In 1986, over 87 percent of residents indicated that English was their first language.⁴ Rapid growth marked this era: the town grew 10 percent in just one year, from 1986 to 1987, and this steady growth continued in the coming years.⁵ A quick glance through the 1996 Trafalgar Presbyterian Church photo directory confirms that the congregation mirrored these local trends. Of eighty-six photos, fifty were married couples that included one or more children. All but two families were white,⁶ meaning that only

² Donna Drapkin, ed., *Stewardship Report: Growing Together in Christ* (Oakville, ON: Trafalgar Presbyterian Church, 1994), 5.

³ Community Development Halton, *Halton Social Profile* (Oakville, ON, 1999), 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵ Planning and New Developments, *Population History of Oakville 1921-2011* (Oakville, ON: Town of Oakville, 2016), 1.

⁶ Trafalgar Presbyterian Church, comp., *Photo Directory* (Chattanooga, TN: Olan Mills Church Directories, 1996), Vol. 2.

2.3 percent were non-white, and among them were many successful professional and business people.

From its beginning, the Trafalgar community dreamt of having its own building and envisioned it as a place for large community gatherings that included both worship and fellowship. A 1988 newsletter shared the results of a congregational survey, noting that the goal was to “make visitors and members alike feel welcome.”⁷ Although many of the initial dreams would later be cost prohibitive, there was a desire for a large entrance, a stage, sports facilities, and a large kitchen. The sanctuary, it was hoped, would be filled with light and music. All of these were well suited to the happy and boisterous character of the emerging community and its attractational style of evangelism.

Trafalgar’s initial mission statement was, “To establish a church in North East Oakville,” and this was still in use in 1994. By the year 2000, however, the statement had grown:

At Trafalgar Presbyterian Church we will:

- Create and foster an enduring Christian community
- Rejuvenate, nurture and strengthen our personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- Enable children to experience Jesus and Christian friendship through worship, outreach, and Christian education.

Welcoming, helping, healing

Sharing, supporting, loving,

Providing fellowship through faith.⁸

The final line, “Providing fellowship through faith,” was particularly cherished and was even printed on the Church’s two permanent roadside signs underneath the name of the

⁷ Drapkin, *Stewardship Report*, 7.

⁸ Trafalgar Presbyterian Church, *Photo Directory*, Vol 3.

congregation. This phrase was also printed, along with the preceding list of verbs, on the back of the minister's business cards and on the pew cards for Pre Authorized Giving. It speaks clearly of the congregation's understanding that fellowship was the church's goal. Having faith in common would make it possible for members and visitors to experience warm, loving relationships.

Growing the congregation numerically was a major focus from its beginning, and social events were at the heart of these efforts. As the congregation grew, a number of ministries were created alongside weekly worship services, including committees for Christian Education, Finance and Maintenance, and Outreach. However, it was the Social Committee that appears to have been the busiest, reporting at least ten events in 1991, plus six additional community fundraisers. Sports were popular and included golf, bowling, darts, curling, cards and family skating nights. Food was another gathering point with a potluck, a couple's dinner, a Christmas turkey dinner and a springtime lobster supper, as well as a summer picnic. Club Sixty provided "senior female members of the congregation an opportunity to get together and socialize,"⁹ and youth group activities offered "fellowship and fun"¹⁰ when they met every six weeks. A garage sale, fashion show, holiday bazaar and plant sale also invited people to socialize while they worked to raise money. This emphasis on having fun continued, and in 2000 the social committee had not only kept up these activities but added new events: Ladies' Nights, Men's

⁹ Drapkin, *Stewardship Report*, 9.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

Breakfasts, a congregational progressive dinner and trips to see tapings of The Royal Canadian Air Farce television show in Toronto.¹¹

Trafalgar began with eighty-six members making a public profession of faith in 1987. By 2001, that number had grown to just over three hundred members, along with a robust list of adherents. Reeve indicated that every week there were between one and three new families coming to the church for worship.¹² Along with this rapid growth came the need to quickly assimilate people into the life and work of the congregation, and social activities proved to be effective. In fact, there was little emphasis on spiritual maturity at this time and it was noted that those in leadership in 2001 “did not have a strong faith background.”¹³

When the congregation published a church photo directory in 1996, the pastor began the book with a letter that characterized the emphasis on church fellowship. She wrote that “in the past ten years all of us have enjoyed deep and lasting friendships with other members . . . and we look forward to getting to know more and more people as our circle of friends expands.”¹⁴ The purpose of the directory, she goes on to explain, is to deepen the ties of friendship that marked the congregation’s life together since its beginning.

¹¹ Trafalgar Presbyterian Church, comp., *Annual Report 2000* (Oakville, ON), 3.

¹² Ferne Reeve, interview by Kristine O’Brien, Oakville, ON: April, 2002.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Trafalgar Presbyterian Church, *Photo Directory*, Vol 2.

The Shift from Saturday Night Fun to Sunday Morning Worship

In September 2001, Ferne Reeve followed a call to a new congregation in Toronto. A search process ensued, and one year later I was inducted at a service on a Sunday evening in September 2002. The congregation had never been through a change in pastoral leadership before and found this transition challenging. Several families were not able to adjust and left for other churches, even as new families happily arrived.

Until 2002, the church included only a sanctuary and a large multi-purpose gathering space. All but the sanctuary was shared with a full-time daycare, which provided much-needed income. Space was very limited. Mobile carts for program materials and portable walls resulted in a noisy and chaotic Sunday school for the fifty-to-sixty children who attended each week. Walls were covered in large displays of pre-school art, while government daycare regulations prohibited the display of any religious materials. Many church members were anxious for more space. After a significant fundraising effort, a new wing of the church building was dedicated within a month of my arrival, having been planned and constructed during the pulpit vacancy. It added an additional office, a baby nursery, a choir room, and four classrooms. Second-hand office furniture was donated to provide adult-sized tables, chairs and filing cabinets, but with no budget for additional furnishings, no recreational or social spaces were created. Vague, pre-building plans for youth and senior events did not result in any programming.

Understanding the well-established social life of the congregation, one of my early goals was to make worship a more central element in the life and work of Trafalgar. I introduced additional services for Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday in my first year, as well as several intergenerational Sunday services in which all ages participated in

worship together. A large, permanent wooden cross was created and hung on the sanctuary wall, replacing a fabric banner with a picture of a cross that had been used since the early days worshipping in the local high school; new banners were sewn and hung for the season of Pentecost. The Revised Common Lectionary, liturgical colours and a new seasonal rhythm of worship were adopted and well received. I took great care in preparing for Sunday services and preaching was a much higher priority than it was for the previous minister. For the first time, in 2004 pulpit supply became a budget item so that trained preachers could be invited to lead worship while I was on vacation, rather than volunteer elders.

Each Sunday morning, the order of service included an opportunity for those in the pews to greet one another with a hug, handshake, or words of greeting. It was a noisy and energetic few moments, full of laughter and cries of, “It’s great to see you. Good morning.” I did not wish to change such a happy tradition but did invite the congregation to understand it as a moment not just to say hello, but to pass the peace of Christ. Very early in my time at Trafalgar, I began to teach about this tradition and have continued to do so each week. The bulletin began to reflect this change, so that the printed order of service now says, “May the peace of Christ be with you/And also with you,” immediately following the prayer of confession. Smiles, handshakes and warm greetings continue to be an important part of worship.

Late in 2002, the church’s faithful volunteer pianist and choir director indicated that she was ready to step down from active service. A search committee was formed and for the first time in its history, the congregation hired a church musician. With the title of “Pastoral Musician and Worship Enlivener,” Andrew Donaldson’s arrival in 2003 was

another sign of the shifting priorities in the congregation; this half-time position brought with it a significant cost in order to properly compensate a professional musician. Sunday morning worship gained a larger number of leaders as new choir members and instrumentalists were engaged. Rehearsal shifted dramatically; it was not simply a pleasant social time with some enjoyable singing but an intense and joyful opportunity for learning new musical skills. This discipline was immediately apparent in worship services.

One of the passions of the new music leader was global song. He worked to not only acknowledge and respond to diversity within the congregation, but found fresh ways to connect worshipers with the worldwide Body of believers. This would deepen worship and prayer life of the congregation, he argued, but also lay a foundation for genuine hospitality. Someday, when people from other countries arrived to worship, the church would be equipped to offer them welcome. The music incorporated in Sunday morning services expanded dramatically to include jazz, gospel, classical, contemporary and traditional styles. Languages grew beyond English to include French, Spanish, Xhosa, Chichewa, and Zulu. The denomination's most recent hymn book was produced in 1997 and was already in use, but now far more of it became familiar. Not surprisingly, these changes caused inevitable tension for a time, and several families actually left the congregation. However, the rest soon adapted and found joy in the new music. The choir even attended learning events with global song leaders John Bell and Pablo Sosa, deepening their skill and ability to sing with those from many parts of the world.

A stewardship campaign called Dessert First was launched in the fall of 2004 and indicated the congregation's increasing focus on Sunday morning worship rather than

Saturday night socials. The results from small study groups revealed that worship was a strong priority for the congregation.¹⁵ Many appreciated the busy atmosphere of worship services with its boisterous global songs and the presence of many children; however, there was also a longing for quiet prayer. More frequent opportunities for the Lord's Supper were desired by a large number of participants, with some indicating that this grew out of their Anglican or Roman Catholic heritage. As a result, the elders soon decided to introduce monthly, rather than quarterly, Communion services. Music for silent meditation was also added to the weekly order of service, so that several minutes of quiet instrumental or choral music invited the congregation to prayer and reflection immediately following the sermon.

Fellowship Emphasis Wanes Amid Economic and Ethnic Changes

A Year of Sabbath was declared by the Presbyterian Church in Canada in 2007, and Trafalgar embraced this focus wholeheartedly. In a letter to the congregation, the elders wrote that they “discussed at length the ‘busy-ness’ of our community. Many people are searching for peace and yet few have time for more church programs.”¹⁶ It was decided that the life and ministry of the church that year would place an emphasis on rest, redemption and renewal. The church library was stocked with new and relevant Sabbath resources and a special Bible study on the stewardship of creation was held during Lent. The clock inside the sanctuary was removed and sermons offered teaching about biblical Sabbath. A small group also began to meet for prayer and knitting prayer shawls. The

¹⁵ Trafalgar Presbyterian Church, *Annual Report* 2005, 5.

¹⁶ Trafalgar Presbyterian Church, *Annual Report* 2007, 11.

largest undertaking was the addition of an extra worship service held once a month on a Sunday evening, offering opportunities for those in and beyond the congregation to come and rest. This included a Taize prayer service, Jazz Vespers with local professional musicians, a healing service and anointing with oil, and Festival of Friends, a service for those whose lives had been touched by cancer. These services were advertised widely in the community, and, for several, press releases were sent to the local newspaper. This theme found a deep resonance in the congregation and the community.

Reviewing the annual congregational reports, it is clear that by 2007 there was far less emphasis on social events at Trafalgar. The Social Committee that was so active in the congregation's early years disbanded in 2002, although some of the activities carried on.¹⁷ By 2007, however, there was no longer even a "Social" heading in the reports. Saturday night dinners and social activities became sporadic, although the Christmas Dinner and Lobster Supper both carried on with very strong leadership and support. Coffee hour after the service remained strong despite regularly changing leadership.

While the congregation-wide activities waned, small group gatherings continued. Several times a year, seniors continued to be invited for tea and fellowship at the home of an elder at the Strawberry Social and Epiphany Party where approximately a dozen people would gather. Two small Bible study groups met in the homes of members. The junior youth leaders continued with an emphasis on fun activities: pool parties, game nights, tobogganing and attending Toronto Blue Jays games. This, however, was unusual even by comparison to the senior youth. High school students had begun to attend monthly

¹⁷ Trafalgar Presbyterian Church, *Annual Report 2002*, 11.

worship services hosted by the presbytery and offered strong leadership in Sunday morning worship through music and collecting the offering. They also helped regularly with Sunday school and fundraising efforts. They did not plan social occasions for their own sake.¹⁸

The economic downturn of 2008 affected the Trafalgar congregation and eroded its normally exuberant character. There was a very large budget deficit. After disastrous flooding, the church's flat roof needed to be repaired immediately and more extensive work needed to be planned for the near future. Local youth broke into the church, vandalizing the offices and destroying equipment and furnishings. The minister's letter to the congregation read, "2009 . . . was a wearying and difficult time."¹⁹ The church did not rebound easily; the roof would continue to present extreme challenges to both leadership and finances for the next eight years.

At the same time as these changes were occurring inside the church, changes outside the church were happening as well. Canada is an increasingly diverse country and in the 1990s it began to shift "from a mainly white culture to a multicultural society,"²⁰ due in large part to immigration patterns. While in the 1970s and 1980s people arriving in Canada were mainly from Europe and the United States, now "rising numbers of immigrants—nearly half of Canada's immigrant population—have come from Asia,

¹⁸ Trafalgar Presbyterian Church, *Annual Report 2008*, 6.

¹⁹ Trafalgar Presbyterian Church, *Annual Report 2009*, 1.

²⁰ Don Posterski and Erwin Barker, *Where's a Good Church? Canadians Respond from the Pulpit, Podium and Pew* (Kelowna, BC: Wood Lake Books, 1993), 91.

Africa and the Middle East.”²¹ This began to impact the Christian Church, since new arrivals at one time were almost assuredly Christian; this was no longer the case. This was particularly true in Ontario, where “the share of Ontario residents who identify with faiths other than Protestantism or Catholicism has risen from about 5 percent in 1981 to 15 percent in 2011.”²²

The most recent Halton Region Profile, published in 2014, indicates that the community of Oakville was becoming much more diverse ethnically and economically, too. The number of immigrants arriving in Halton increased by over 160 percent between 2000 and 2012.²³ While at one time most people new to the community were from European countries, by 2011 immigrants were now most commonly from India, Pakistan, the Philippines and China.²⁴ Not surprisingly, one in four residents now speaks an immigrant language and Oakville is one of the most linguistically diverse municipalities in the area.²⁵ Although the most recent photo directory is from 2006, even then the congregation had begun to show signs of change: 14 of 115 (11.3 percent) families pictured were non-white, an increase of 9 percent in ten years. This trend has continued, and now, in 2016, on many Sundays a third or more of the congregation is non-white.

The socioeconomic situation of nearby families also began to change at this time.

The median family income has remained higher than the provincial average, but in

²¹ Pew Research Center, “Canada’s Changing Religious Landscape,” last revised June, 2013, <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/06/27/canadas-changing-religious-landscape>, (accessed August 7, 2016).

²² Ibid.

²³ Community Development Halton, *Halton Social Profile*, 43.

²⁴ Ibid., 45.

²⁵ Ibid., 50.

Oakville the number of low income families (those who will spend 20 percent or more than average on food, shelter and clothing) grew by 18.2 percent.²⁶ Since the congregation began its friendship with two government subsidized housing neighbourhoods near the church six years ago, it has become acutely aware of this reality. Community initiatives have, much to the church's surprise, resulted in the opportunity to welcome some of these families into worship, with some receiving the Sacrament of Baptism and making public professions of faith. In 2016, church leaders were called upon to assist three member families who became, or were at risk of becoming, homeless; this had never happened before in the church's history.

A Weekly Service in the Contemplative Style is Considered

The leaking church roof reached a critical point in 2013 and put a strain on finances, leadership, worship attendance and personal relationships. The congregation and staff had endured multiple floods while seeking remedies, including legal action against previous roof work. With an outstanding mortgage, the inability to refinance and no possible way to raise the funds required for a new roof, the elders and two presbytery representatives met in January 2014. As they described it later, "One by one we went around the room. Every elder agreed that they could see no other way forward but to put our property up for sale."²⁷ A series of congregational meetings followed amid a sense of despair and frustration. Then, just four days before a vote to sell the building, the Presbyterian Church in Canada Building Corporation reversed their previous decision and

²⁶ Ibid., 68.

²⁷ Trafalgar Presbyterian Church, *Annual Report 2015*, 24.

agreed to offer financial help, saying, “It is clear that the congregation is vital and a solution to this problem will be found.”²⁸ Amid the exhausted congregation, there was much rejoicing and praising God.

Soon the elders were discussing the need and desire for spiritual and numerical growth. It was time to move past a preoccupation with the building, and in March 2015, with a new roof completed, fresh initiatives were considered. Ideas included an increased web presence (including online giving), a weekly meal for local college students or an additional mid-week worship service. At the final congregational meeting regarding the roof in May 2015, I preached on John 4:7-13, saying, “My prayer at this moment is that we can begin to imagine how God might not just fix a roof but build bridges, mend the broken hearted and welcome the outcast.”²⁹ The gratitude for God’s mercy and help was profound; it was a moment to begin lifting our eyes to what God might call us to now that the crisis had passed. It was also a moment in which leaders and members felt tired and weary. Establishing any new large-scale ministries seemed unwise, and few were ready for boisterous events.

While social activities at Trafalgar had declined in recent years, local mission efforts had seen a significant increase. By 2014, the long-standing food bank and Christmas hamper programs had been joined by a weekly summer meal program, weekly winter fresh food distribution, annual clothing drive, holiday toy distribution and community garden. Many church members now went out into the surrounding

²⁸ William Collier, “RE: Trafalgar Presbyterian Church,” email to author, February 25, 2015.

²⁹ Kristine O’Brien, “Church Matters,” sermon for Sunday, May 3, 2015.

neighbourhoods through these new programs, making friends, learning about issues of economic justice and sharing the love of Jesus. The congregation was no longer leaning on an attractional style of evangelism but finding ways to carry the Good News into the neighbourhood. This was exciting and a sign of genuine faithfulness, but it also demanded a great deal of time and energy. The work proved to be confusing and difficult at times. In order to continue, this important work needed to be nourished.

The worshiping life of Trafalgar today is vibrant. Not only is there a broad range of musical styles, but a large group of musicians and singers. This special ministry has grown to include both accomplished musicians and younger students, creating learning and relationship opportunities. A grand piano now supports the music and several pews have been removed at the front of the sanctuary, which allows more room for those who play instruments during worship. The congregation continues to consider how the worship space and its furniture can evolve to serve the worshiping community well.

A variety of spiritual practices have for years been an increasing part of the fabric of Trafalgar Presbyterian Church. Sunday morning worship and Bible study are mainstays, and a week-long *lectio-divina* inspired program is usually held once a year as well, offering people the opportunity to explore Scripture and prayer with great intensity. Local stewardship and mission initiatives invite people of all ages to serve God through sharing food, raising money and cleaning up the neighbourhood. Most of them, however, involve noise, activity and interaction with groups of people. For those who thrive in the midst of intense social interaction, this is wonderful. For those who are quieter or more introverted, this presents a number of challenges.

In casual conversation, introverts are sometimes defined as those who do not like being with people, while extroverts are those who do. In reality, however, the terms are far more complex. Rooted in the work of Carl Jung, personality types began as a classification method in “an effort to deal with the relationship of the individual to the world, to people and things.”³⁰ Building on ideas of conscious and unconscious psychology, Jung explored the unique characteristics that mark introverts and extroverts. The two are oriented differently, he argued, describing the character of the extrovert, “which constantly urges him to spend and propagate himself in every way.” This was a marked contrast to the character of the introvert, who tends to “defend himself against external claims to conserve himself from any expenditure of energy”³¹ when encountering people or things around him. One was outward-oriented; the other, inward-oriented. Jung further divided the two categories by how each differs in thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition.

All of those Jungian categories were used as a foundation for the now popular Myers Briggs Personality Inventory, created by Isabel Myers and her mother, Katharine Cook Briggs. In the mid-twentieth century, the two women sought to “enable individuals to grow through an understanding and appreciation of individual differences in healthy personalities and to enhance harmony and productivity in diverse groups.”³² By making Jung’s ideas accessible and applicable to ordinary people, they also popularized the terms

³⁰ Carl G. Jung, *Psychological Types*, Vol 6 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), v.

³¹ Carl Jung and Beatrice M. Hinkle, *Introvert and Extrovert Personality Traits: Two Classic Studies in Psychology* (Libros Caribe, 2013), 1.

³² Myers and Briggs Foundation, “Isabel Briggs Myers,” <http://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/isabel-briggs-myers.htm>, (accessed August 7, 2016).

introvert and extrovert. Like Jung, the Myers Briggs Type Indicator profile defines an extrovert as an individual who prefers to focus on the outer world while an introvert is one who would rather focus on her own inner world.³³

While the categories of introvert and extrovert seem to be quite decisive, they are best understood not as two distinct categories but as a sliding scale. Each person has needs and preferences that make him more or less introverted or extroverted, varying in intensity from person to person. For the purpose of this study, however, I will use the terms in general ways. Introverts are marked often by a partiality for quiet spaces and smaller groups and enjoy a rich inner life. They are renewed by spending time looking inward, perhaps alone. Extroverts are drawn to busier environments and the company of others and often recharge by interacting with the world around them. Each has their own gifts and challenges.

Contemplative prayer is a spiritual practice particularly suited to introverts. Thomas Merton describes it as “a prayer of silence, simplicity, contemplative and meditative unity, a deep personal integration in an attentive, watchful ‘listening of the heart.’”³⁴ Rooted in silence and solitude, its focus is on a personal encounter with God, usually through Scripture. For those who are naturally inward-looking, this is often a comfortable and easily accessible way of praying. It echoes the practice of Jesus, who frequently slipped away from the crowds. Preparing to choose disciples, for example, Jesus “went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God” (Lk

³³ Myers and Briggs Foundation, “MBTI® Basics,” accessed August 7, 2016, <http://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics>.

³⁴ Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 1969), 5.

6:12), and later, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray” (Mt 26:36). For Jesus it seemed a necessary part of his relationship with his father. For his followers, it offers an important pathway to “experience the divine rest,”³⁵ which both introverts and extroverts long for in busy modern life.

Prayer in the contemplative style is not a replacement for communal worship but one way to nourish a life of faith for both introverts and extroverts. It offers a number of inner gifts, including peace and delight, but also brings with it more outward-focused gifts in the transformation of daily habits and love for God and others.³⁶ It does not simply nourish the inner life, because when it is practiced well it “leads us forth in partnership with God into creative and redeeming work.”³⁷ Although it may come more naturally to those who are introverted, it is an essential practice for all kinds of Christians because it nurtures both the inner and outward life of faith. To teach and enable contemplative prayer in a church community expands the potential for corporate mission and ministry. This seemed to be particularly important for the Trafalgar congregation as it began to consider a new season of growth.

The suggestion of a second worship service was one that had the potential to evoke a certain level of anxiety among church leaders. Trafalgar had already tried this strategy some years earlier. In 1998, further growth was sought by establishing two Sunday morning services. Unfortunately, worship and Sunday school attendance did not grow but

³⁵ Richard Foster, *Streams of Living Water* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 58.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 49–51.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

fell, “and there was a decrease in the general activity and quality of congregational life.”³⁸ The second service was abruptly discontinued in March 2000, because it was “too much for our minister and our volunteers.”³⁹ Adding to this unpleasant memory was the concern that I was already overworked. A presbytery visitation in 2007 noted that while God’s ministry was thriving at Trafalgar, the elders should be concerned for my health and aware of the potential for burnout.⁴⁰ Despite many and varied efforts to seek greater rest, this problem had not been solved seven years later.

Even with these concerns, however, at a meeting in September 2015, the elders agreed to experiment with a mid-week contemplative Eucharist. It was reasoned that such a service would not compete with Sunday morning worship and would not overwork our staff, since it did not require music or even a sermon. Through it, the congregation’s earlier yearning for more Communion opportunities and desire for quiet reflection may be met. It might also accommodate those in the congregation who struggled to get to church on the weekend. Most of all, the elders recognized that it could nourish those hungry for more spiritual food and nourish the Spirit’s growing work of drawing the congregation out into the community.

This project has the potential to welcome different people and to welcome people differently. It is possible that new church members may be attracted to these new services, but this is not the primary goal. Church growth, which is too often considered solely

³⁸ Trafalgar Presbyterian Church, *Annual Report 2000*, 21.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁰ Ron Sypher, *Pastoral Guidance Report for Trafalgar Presbyterian Church* (Brampton, ON: Presbytery of Brampton, 2007), 2.

numerical, will most certainly occur, but it is the kind of growth that is transformative and not easily measured. This project strives to listen closely to voices on the margins and to be quietly attentive to the Spirit at work in the midst of the congregation. Jesus promises that “where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Mt 18:20).

PART TWO
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This project is influenced by literature in the areas of personality type, hospitality and Communion. The following chapter surveys nine books that speak to these areas. The first three draw attention to introverts and the extroverted culture of North America, and the North American Church. The next three argue that local churches need to recover a genuine Christian understanding and practice of hospitality. Finally, there are three books that explore the Eucharist and the importance of diversity at the Table. All of these books speak to the hopes of this project, which are to welcome and nourish many different kinds of people, including introverts.

Introverts on the Margins

There is a loud chorus of those who believe that North American culture favours the extroverted personality over the introvert. This is hardly a new phenomenon; as Susan Cain points out, “We can trace our admiration of extroverts to the Greeks, for whom oratory was an exalted skill, and to the Romans, for whom the worst possible punishment

was banishment from the city, with its teeming social life.”¹ Since then, North Americans have not only grown accustomed to a culture that is loud, busy and full of social interaction, but have come to see it as normal and comfortable for everyone. Those who prefer to withdraw, spend time alone and express themselves quietly are considered unusual and sometimes even defective. Until recently, the International Classification of Diseases, a World Health Organization publication, even identified the “introverted personality” as a variant of the schizoid personality disorder.² Introversion, according to Laurie Helgoe, is “a second-class personality trait, somewhere between a disappointment and a pathology.”³

Adam McHugh, Helgoe and Cain all self-identify as introverts. Their voices are important because they offer a glimpse into the difficult experience of introverts living in an extroverted world. They attest to the fact that introverts are often misunderstood as antisocial, unfriendly snobs. All three also testify to how hard it is to fit into a world with extroverted expectations. This has been especially true for McHugh, who explains that he “had a difficult time squaring my own temperament with common roles and expressions of the pastoral ministry.”⁴

¹ Susan Cain, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* (New York: Broadway Books, 2013), 29.

² Laurie Helgoe, *Introvert Power: Why Your Inner Life Is Your Hidden Strength* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks Inc., 2013), 12.

³ Cain, *Quiet*, 4.

⁴ Adam S. McHugh, *Introverts in the Church: Finding Our Place in an Extroverted Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 13.

Even American Church culture is highly extroverted, argues McHugh. Within the Evangelical tradition in particular, faithfulness is often judged by attendance at large worship services and sharing personal testimony in public settings. Church services tend to be loud and energetic. Face-to-face evangelism is highly regarded and sometimes even required. Before, during, and after worship there is also an expectation of social interaction and greeting strangers in what McHugh calls “a non-alcoholic cocktail party.”⁵ A congregational culture of constant motion, growth, excitement and boldness is regarded as normal and even essential for the church.

Although neither Cain nor Helgoe treats introversion in the Church with any significant depth, Cain does raise the example of the First Great Awakening. This eighteenth century religious movement “depended on the showmanship of ministers who were considered successful if they caused crowds of normally reserved people to weep and shout and generally lose their decorum.”⁶ McHugh points out that, centuries later, the Church continues to ascribe success to emotional displays of faith and fast-paced worship services. Megachurches, for example, are held in high regard, where “fast-moving, high production events may entertain us and their avid employment of modern technology may dazzle us.”⁷ Successful churches are those that draw hundreds and even thousands on Sunday mornings and who have congregants that are happy, excited and ready to publically express their faith in Jesus.

⁵ Ibid., 21.

⁶ Cain, *Quiet*, 30.

⁷ McHugh, *Introverts in the Church*, 27.

Charm, charisma, social confidence and outgoing personalities are generally admired in modern culture, which Cain makes clear through examples such as Dale Carnegie, Tony Robbins, and the Harvard Business School. Church leadership also favours extroverts. Citing research which identifies the ideal attributes of American business leaders, McHugh acknowledges that church pastors and staff are expected to exhibit the same charisma, gregariousness, dominance and superstardom. At an interview for a new pastoral position, he recalls being told, “This is a really high-octane environment. We’re looking for someone who is excitable and high energy. . . . We work full throttle.”⁸

All three authors use current research to explore extroverts and introverts. Helgoe, however, goes into the greatest depth. She includes the work of Jung, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, and the NEO (Neuroticism-Extraversion-Openness) Personality Inventory which contains The Big Five dimensions, one of which is introversion/extroversion. She concludes that, “The biggest lie is that introverts are in the minority,” using results from an American 1998 MBTI study. According to that research, introverts make up 50.7 percent of the general population. This provides a surprising but essential contribution to this project, because it asserts that introverts are not simply a few people in each congregation but a large and important part of the Church.

For introverts living in what Helgoe calls “America the Extroverted,” life in community presents significant challenges. This is especially concerning to the Church, according to McHugh, where “a subtle but insidious message can permeate these

⁸ Ibid., 26.

communities, a message that says that God is most pleased with extroversion.”⁹ Even though he suggests that a survey of the Gospels indicates that Jesus was a balance of introversion and extroversion, a 2004 psychological study revealed that 97 percent of students at a Christian college believed that Jesus himself was an extrovert.¹⁰ With this perception it is easy to see how an extroverted church can lead to a sense of failure or disobedience for church members. It also begins to explain why so many pastors are exhausted by masquerading as extroverts.¹¹

Even though extroverts are often seen as the social ideal, many introverts find ways to thrive. Cain introduces people such as Eleanor Roosevelt, Steve Wozniac and Al Gore to make the point that many famous and successful people are, in fact, introverts. Defining them as people who prefer solitude, who listen more than they talk and who tend to be more sensitive, she asserts that introverts have important contributions to make to the world. In her discussion of “soft power,” she holds up Ghandi as an example of how effective a quiet and persistent leader can be. Helgoe offers a unique perspective as she carefully listens to the voices of introverts: the thoughts and ideas she hears from poets, songwriters, authors and even famous people such as Stephen Hawking and Bill Gates. Each provides a window into the experiences of introverts, but also offers hopeful coping strategies. As for the Church, McHugh offers his own story as testimony to how leaders can find their place. There is a wealth of possibilities, all three authors assert, to be happy,

⁹ Ibid., 29.

¹⁰ Ibid., 16.

¹¹ Ibid., 137.

productive and faithful when thoughtful changes are made to our physical space, relationships, employment, theology or spiritual practices.

Cain, whose book is subtitled *The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*, clearly believes that introverts are underappreciated but highly valuable. Helgoe, too, declares that introverts can “advance every field of human endeavor, from science to business, education to politics.”¹² McHugh takes this recognition and applies it to the Church, emphasizing that introverts, whether they are pastors, leaders or congregation members, are a valuable part of the Body of Christ.¹³ As thoughtful and inward-looking people, for example, they live a reflection/action/reflection model and take ample time to process events and ideas. He argues that they seek depth in conversations, relationships and spiritual practice and that they pray in different ways, finding contemplative prayer practices nourishing. They are often skilled at listening for the still, small voice of God. He is convinced that introverts are “calling us to a renewed understanding of God and a fresh reading on the abundant life Jesus came to give us.”¹⁴

Using the examples of Norway and Japan, cultures which Helgoe asserts are identified with introversion, she imagines a way of living that leaves greater room for solitude and quiet. Norway, for instance, honours consensus, inclusion and lengthy annual vacations. Japanese culture values harmony, personal space and gentle spirituality. These are a stark contrast to the loud, aggressive, extroverted culture that is so common in North

¹² Helgoe, *Introvert Power*, 195.

¹³ McHugh, *Introverts in the Church*, 202.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

America. This is consistent with Cain's observations of Asian-American students, in which she discovers that introverted traits are highly respected by those from China, Japan and Korea. For individuals, and also for the Church, this is an important consideration and a moment of holy imagination. Observing cultures with different values opens the door to envision a different way of living and praying in community.

Cain, Helgoe and McHugh all put forward possibilities for introverted leaders. For McHugh, this centres around a servant leadership style that is firmly rooted in the biblical tradition, found in places such as Titus 1:7-8, which says, "For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled." This servant model is often comfortable for introverts because it emphasizes humility, character and "sensemaking," a process identified by McHugh as one in which leaders help others respond to the world with sensitive insight. Effective introvert leaders that he lifts up as examples include the classic figures of Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King, Jr., but also Brian McLaren, Barbara Brown Taylor and Eugene Peterson, who all publically identify their own struggles as introverts in the Church.

Perhaps the greatest contribution that these books on introversion make to this project is their quiet inspiration to ask further questions about the Church and personality type. In the chapter called "The Anti-Party Guide," Helgoe includes rationale for politely saying no to unwanted party invitations and strategies for planning an escape when a party is unavoidable. This is an important perspective for church leaders, because if there are people avoiding parties, there are probably introverts who are avoiding worship. When

both Helgoe and Cain insist that introverts make up as much as half the general population, as a pastor I am led to ask: who are the introverts that fill up half of the pews on Sunday morning and why have I not noticed them before? And when McHugh paints a stark picture of an extroverted Church with its extroverted leaders, I wonder: does my own congregation reflect this bias, and are the needs and gifts of introverts being overlooked?

Making Room for Different Personality Types

Hospitality has not always meant fine china and gourmet meals. Michele Herschberger, Christine Pohl and Henri Nouwen explore this truth, revealing the Church's need to recover genuine Christian understanding and practice. Services of worship, including the celebration of the Lord's Supper, are moments of hospitality. So, too, are weekday suppers at home, sharing groceries with hungry neighbours, protecting illegal aliens and finding time to mentor troubled youth. Even learning to be at home within oneself is a hospitable act.

Genuine hospitality is deeply rooted in the biblical tradition. In this, all three authors not only agree, but turn to many of the same stories. In the Hebrew Scriptures, this includes the story of the Exodus as well as Elijah and the widow, highlighting food and the need to care for strangers. In the Gospels, Jesus shares fishes and loaves and visits the home of Mary and Martha, further underlying the central role of nourishment in the practice of hospitality. Philemon and Onesimus set a strong example of welcoming the stranger, and Paul reminds the early Christians that all are equal at the Lord's Table.

Pohl carefully explains that the early Church was characterized by its practice of hospitality to needy strangers.¹⁵ Herschberger agrees, noting that it was dependant on house churches and itinerant preachers, both of which meant homes being opened to strangers. It was about more than simply offering food to those who were hungry. It defined the Church “as a universal community, in denying the significance of the status boundaries and distinctions of the larger society, in recognizing the value of every person.”¹⁶ In a culture with very particular expectations governing relationships and social actions, followers of Christ demonstrated counter-cultural values, welcoming outsiders and freely sharing food and resources. This project is built on the notion that the Church does indeed have a calling to recognize the value of each person and offer them grace-filled welcome.

The understanding of hospitality has changed remarkably since those ancient times, and *Making Room* chronicles just how the practice evolved.¹⁷ As the Church grew and developed beyond those ancient house churches, it was monasteries, hospitals and hostels that became more common settings for the practice of hospitality. By Medieval times, hospitality had become associated with lavish banquets, and luxury was offered to the elite in order to obtain power and status. It became completely divorced from the notion of relief for the poor or needy. By the middle of the eighteenth century, with the onset of industrialization and mass migration to large cities, Christian hospitality had all

¹⁵ Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 33.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

but disappeared. Since then, social changes “have made modern expressions of hospitality both important and difficult.”¹⁸

Individuals and Churches need to relearn this Christian practice because “people are hungry for welcome but most Christians have lost track of the heritage of hospitality.”¹⁹ Industrialization and urbanization have alienated people from one another, and this is particularly true in suburban culture. Nouwen highlights the deep loneliness experienced by so many people in contemporary Western Society. He notes that, “Psychiatrists and clinical psychologists speak about it as the most frequently expressed complaint,”²⁰ and he makes it clear that this includes the elderly, children and youth as well as adults. For Hershberger, this was the starting place for her book. Her Forty Day Experiment, in which forty people prayed for, lived and reflected on hospitality opportunities for forty days, created a structure for learning to practice hospitality. She believes that this learning is necessary because “busyness is the curse of the hour, materialism threatens to destroy our families, and the homes are sanctuaries instead of centers of community.”²¹ Too rarely, it is an unpracticed spiritual discipline.

Everyone can learn to practice hospitality, but the starting place is not food or social events. Here is where Nouwen presents a unique and essential insight to this project: hospitality begins with looking inward. Solitude of the heart, which he defines as

¹⁸ Ibid., 56.

¹⁹ Ibid., 33.

²⁰ J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1975), 25.

²¹ Michele Hershberger, *A Christian View of Hospitality: Expecting Surprises* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999), 17.

a cultivated inner sensitivity, is what “creates the inner space where a compassionate solidarity with our fellow human beings becomes possible.”²² Hershberger also names contemplation as a necessary element of hospitality, using the story of Peter and Cornelius in Luke 10. Peter, who was Jewish, was called upon to welcome Cornelius, who was a Gentile. First, however, Peter went to the roof to be alone in prayer, where God offered him a vision of radical inclusion. Even when Cornelius’ men arrived, Peter was still deep in thought. This time of thinking, praying and contemplation was essential, Hershberger argues, because Peter “needed something to happen inside him before he could be hospitable to the strangers headed for his door.”²³ Silence and contemplative prayer are so deeply connected with the practice of hospitality that one is not possible without the other.

Hospitality often centres on sharing food, but it may also be taken beyond its literal meaning. In fact, Nouwen stresses that the term “should not be limited to its literal sense of receiving a stranger in our house . . . but as a fundamental attitude toward our fellow human beings.”²⁴ This attitude allows for the host to create a friendly but empty metaphorical space where another is “free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances.”²⁵ Being at home within oneself is crucial, argues Hershberger because, “it is impossible to love the stranger outside unless we truly love the stranger inside.”²⁶

²² Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 61.

²³ Hershberger, *A Christian View of Hospitality*, 54.

²⁴ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 67.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 72.

²⁶ Hershberger, *A Christian View of Hospitality*, 55.

Boundaries and identity define every community, and these are challenged when seeking to welcome someone new or different. Established traditions and relationships may feel threatened when the needs of an outsider are considered. This is true even for Christian communities, and generations before us have struggled to find an acceptable balance. Pohl wisely suggests that it is the ancient practice of covenant making that helps us to live in the tension “between living a holy life and providing hospitality to strangers.”²⁷ Defined guidelines, for instance, create an orderly environment that is physically and emotionally safe, but these must be fluid enough to provide ample room for diversity. This project, because it involves worship traditions, must be mindful of Pohl’s point. Asking a congregation to host a new style of worship has the power to change its identity, and it must be done carefully and respectfully.

Although none of these books deals directly with personality types, Hershberger recognizes that “hospitality looks different to introverts.”²⁸ She defends those who struggle with personal space, arguing that it is not a sign of a cold heart but of personality.²⁹ No matter who engages in this practice or where it takes place, the ability to give and receive hospitality is complicated, and Pohl rightly addresses at length the issues of limits, boundaries and temptations. She acknowledges that “we are unlikely to notice how even our own occupations, neighbourhoods, and churches can, in themselves, create boundaries that shut out most strangers, especially needy ones.”³⁰ While statistics tell us

²⁷ Pohl, *Making Room*, 136.

²⁸ Hershberger, *A Christian View of Hospitality*, 59.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

³⁰ Pohl, *Making Room*, 129.

that a large portion of our congregation is introverted and may have different spiritual needs, the church may have difficulty seeing them or understanding what barriers they may have unknowingly erected.

Acknowledging that “sharing is almost a lost art in North America,” Herschberger urges prayer and reflection but also activity. Her book is grounded in everyday life and includes down-to-earth stories about hospitality that are both simple and extravagant. While this mainly centres on her own life and the lives of forty other individuals, she does address community life in an Appendix called “Hospitality Enhancers.” There, she asks important questions for every congregation: How difficult is it to find the bathrooms? Is the worship service confusing? Are there greeters at every entrance?³¹ Trafalgar can easily inquire further: Is social interaction a requirement for membership? Does worship allow room for silence and silent prayer? Are the needs of introverts being considered?

At the heart of this project is the need for hospitality, and there is no greater symbol of this in the Christian tradition than the Lord’s Table. “Churches, like families, need to eat together,”³² argues Pohl. But, says Hershberger, Paul makes it very clear in 1 Corinthians that “if hospitality was not practiced and community was not nurtured, their gathering with the bread and wine was not the Lord’s Supper at all.”³³ A welcome that breaks down barriers, welcoming strangers and feeding those who are hungry, however, is a sign of God’s Kingdom and an opportunity to meet Jesus Christ himself. It is an

³¹ Hershberger, *A Christian View of Hospitality*, 268.

³² *Ibid.*, 158.

³³ Hershberger, *A Christian View of Hospitality*, 223.

ongoing task of the Church to strive for a Table where all faithfully commemorate his life, death and resurrection.

Celebrating at the Table: Worship for Introverts and Extroverts

Sarah Miles, Michael Hawn and Henri Nouwen have each encountered the Church in unique ways, and have come to have very different roles in their own worshiping communities. Miles was an atheist whose accidental participation in the Eucharist began a journey into radical faith in which her passion for food, justice and worship moved her from tentative guest to server at the Table. Hawn is a professor of music and worship who has travelled the world listening to global voices, and who is now “a troubadour for global music.”³⁴ Nouwen is a Roman Catholic priest who moved to the L’Arche community in Toronto, where for ten years he celebrated the Eucharist every day with a small group of disabled adults and their assistants. These diverse voices offer a wide lens with which to view the worshiping life of Trafalgar Presbyterian Church and this project, which is centred on the Lord’s Table.

While the Church too often forgets, faithful church attenders are not the only ones who hunger for the bread of life and the cup of joy. The child of atheist parents, Miles spent her whole life as an outsider to the Church. When she finally found herself in a church pew, she did not know any of the words or what to do. She simply followed along, noticing that it was, “peaceful and sort of interesting.”³⁵ Even though she had no history

³⁴ C. Michael Hawn, *One Bread, One Body: Exploring Cultural Diversity in Worship* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2003), xxiii.

³⁵ Sara Miles, *Take This Bread: A Radical Conversion*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 2008), 58.

in the congregation, had not been baptised and had never been to a service of worship before, the presider at the Table did not hesitate to share the bread and the cup of wine with her. As a lifelong atheist she could not make sense of it, but she knew that “for some inexplicable reason I wanted that bread again.”³⁶ Henri Nouwen also knew the hunger and thirst of those who were not sitting in church pews; when he celebrated communion it was in a small urban house, “behind a low table in a circle of handicapped men and women.”³⁷ Those who were not able to attend a regular Sunday service still hungered for the body and blood of Christ.

Knowing that many hunger and thirst prompts Michael Hawn to ask a key question: “Is there room for my neighbor at the table?”³⁸ Because the North American Church so often prefers homogeneity and stasis,³⁹ a simple sign on the door that says, “All are welcome,” is not a reliable indicator. Some congregations create and sustain worship practices that are culturally uniform; in other communities, newcomers are expected to assimilate, adjusting their own preferences or habits to match those of the established community.⁴⁰ Sometimes the music, language and furnishings reflect only those who initially founded or who currently lead the congregation. This was what Miles discovered in her experience of St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco, where the

³⁶ Ibid., 60.

³⁷ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Can you drink this cup?* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press Inc., 1996), 121.

³⁸ Hawn, *One Bread, One Body*, 1.

³⁹ Ibid., xxiv.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 4.

founding priests' personalities "dominated the church, which had grown up around their particular gifts, tics and weaknesses."⁴¹

Because many congregations have not, in fact, made room for neighbours more diverse than the present congregation, Hawn urges us to create welcome through global worship practices. Ironically, he does so with a series of case studies from the same denomination, and all in the United States. However, with the day of Pentecost at the heart of his inspiring vision, it is easy to see how congregations can and should make room for a wide range of personality types, sexual identities and generations. He is confident that "the same Spirit that brought comprehension and community out of chaos at the birth of the Church is able to unite us in our cultural differences and we worship as 'one body' sharing 'one bread.'"⁴²

Henri Nouwen testifies to the truth that a worshipping community is most beautiful when it is diverse. For years, he lived with those who many would consider a burden because they were limited in their abilities or required assistance in daily life. As he explains, "Community is like a large mosaic. Each little piece seems so insignificant."⁴³ Each has its own colour and texture, he explains. Some are broken, others are delicate, ordinary or gaudy. When they are brought together, however, they create an image of Christ, so that "if even one of them is missing, the face is incomplete."⁴⁴ Hawn also draws on the mosaic as inspiration for worshipping communities. For Miles, beautiful diversity

⁴¹ Miles, *Take This Bread*, 80.

⁴² Hawn, *One Bread, One Body*, 176.

⁴³ Nouwen, *Can you drink this cup?*, 63.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

includes her atheist mother, Jimmy the mob guy, Earnesto, a tattooed Chicano man with prison muscles, a Chinese woman who spoke no English, two Cuban sisters and little kids pestering her for candy. Together they ate and “it was real communion, with all the incomplete, stupid, aching parts still there... a foretaste of the heavenly banquet, where none are left behind.”⁴⁵

The Nairobi Statement on Church and Culture offers new ways to consider inclusion in worship practices. Created in 1996 and included as an appendix in Hawn’s book, it is an ecumenical, globally-conscious document that addresses the relationship between worship and culture. Worship, it explains, can be transcultural, contextual, counter-cultural and cross cultural.⁴⁶ The centrality of the resurrected Christ transcends locality or ethnicity; communities worship in their own unique time and place. A gathered community seeks to be set apart from the world and open to transformation; music, art, language of all cultures acknowledge that Jesus is the Saviour of all people. Becoming aware of these patterns, working toward cross-cultural communication and creating culturally conscious worship “will lead us to receive the gifts of people from all cultures and to work diligently to welcome those who are different from the majority group in socioeconomic status, cultural background and political perspectives.”⁴⁷ The self-conscious approach to worship is helpful to this project because it asks for an evaluation

⁴⁵ Miles, *Take This Bread*, 278.

⁴⁶ Hawn, *One Bread, One Body*, 177.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

of current practices and patterns not just culturally but also as it relates to music and liturgy.

These books all underline the fact that “you can’t be the Church by yourself.”⁴⁸ The very first time Miles served as a deacon, she came to the stunning conclusion that “the bread on that Table had to be shared with everyone in order for me to really taste it.”⁴⁹ Nouwen reminds us that the cup must be shared because “we need to remind each other that the cup of sorrow is also the cup of joy.”⁵⁰ It would be easy to suggest that this project is unnecessary, that introverts would be best left alone or encouraged to solitary spiritual practices. For those who hunger and thirst, however, this closes off the possibility of being fed by the body and blood of Christ; it also reduces the potential for the community to fully reflect the Kingdom of God. “The Spirit calls Christians to build a new community around Christ that follows the model presented in Galatians 3:27-28,”⁵¹ Hawn argues, where there is no preference or favour given to any one group, and no one is left out.

Silence and contemplative prayer are essential to this project, and Nouwen is careful to explain their necessity. He acknowledges that silence may be strange or uncomfortable at first, and that sometimes “being silent seems like doing nothing.”⁵² For those who wish to drink deeply of the cup of the Eucharist and the cup of life, however,

⁴⁸ Miles, *Take This Bread*, 256.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁵⁰ Nouwen, *Can you drink this cup?*, 56.

⁵¹ Hawn, *One Bread, One Body*, 142.

⁵² Nouwen, *Can you drink this cup?*, 103.

he explains that silence helps us to confront our true selves and listen closely for the voice of God. Silence, he says, “is the discipline that helps us go beyond the entertainment quality of our lives.”⁵³ Miles’ first transformative worship service echoes with this same practice. She describes the strange and mysterious liturgy with its “unadorned voices of the people, and long silences framed by the ringing of deep Tibetan bowls.”⁵⁴ Although not a familiar part of corporate worship at Trafalgar Presbyterian Church, it would clearly be a practice worth learning. Perhaps introverts will lead the way.

The celebration of Communion draws people together, but those who are gathered are soon sent out into the world again. Nouwen spent nine years living at L’Arche in Toronto, where friends would come, stay for a time and then go. When Jean Vanier visited he said, “Those who came to live with you, from whom you received much and to whom you gave much, aren’t just leaving you. You are sending them back...to bring some of the love they have lived with you.”⁵⁵ This is an essential part of worship and a reality of the Eucharist. After Miles encountered the body and blood of Christ, her inner life was radically transformed but so, too, was her outer life when she founded a food bank in the church’s sanctuary.

This project leans into the hope that those who gather to break bread together and share the cup will be nourished for a life of faithful servanthood. It takes seriously the responsibility of the Church to welcome those who may be invisible or misunderstood,

⁵³ Ibid., 104.

⁵⁴ Miles, *Take This Bread*, 58.

⁵⁵ Nouwen, *Can you drink this cup?*, 94.

and the power of the Eucharist. Even though it is focused on introverts, extroverts play a key role, too. Silence and contemplative prayer can open the door to the work of the Spirit for all personality types. In this way, the mission and ministry of Trafalgar Presbyterian Church can be sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit as people of all kinds are nourished and strengthened.

CHAPTER 3

A THEOLOGY OF INCLUSION AND TRANSFORMATION

Every Christian needs to participate in the Sacrament of Communion. This chapter explores the how both Scripture and the Church understand it to be necessary for a full life of faith. The Church is therefore obligated to compel all followers of Jesus to come to the Table, allowing spiritual needs to be met and divisions erased. Taking up this practice is not simply an act of obedience, however; it is also an opportunity for God's transforming power to be at work. Communion in a contemplative style creates a special opportunity to welcome and nourish introverts who are often on the margins of community. Extroverts, too, are invited and given an opportunity to learn, grow and participate in the beautifully diverse body of Christ.

Count Me In: The Deep Need for Communion

In every age, Christians have gathered not only to pray and study the Word, but to remember and celebrate in faith with the help of sacraments. According to John Calvin, a sacrament "is an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of

his good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith.”¹ Understood as visible signs of God’s invisible grace, sacraments connect the mystery of faith with our world of sight, sound, touch and taste. They offer visual and sensual expressions of faith that are rooted in ancient practice and central to the worshiping community. They draw us further into faith because they “are mirrors, by which we contemplate the riches of God’s grace, which he lavishes upon us.”²

Sacraments are an essential source of nourishment for God’s people. They are necessary because, according to John Calvin, “our faith is slight and feeble unless it be propped up on all sides and sustained by every means, it trembles, wavers totters and gives way.”³ Or, as Gerrish argues, “the need for them...lies in the fluctuation of the life of faith.”⁴ Participation in the sacraments is not necessary for salvation, but they serve a number of other purposes, including “to confirm faith, to awaken thankfulness, and to encourage mutual love.”⁵ One of the subordinate standards of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, *Living Faith*, clearly states this:

In obedience to our Lord's command and example
we observe two sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion.
These are visible expressions of the Gospel
given as means of entering and sustaining the Christian Life.⁶

¹ John T. McNeill, ed. *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion in Two Volumes*. (Louisville: The Westminster Press, 1960), 4.15.1.

² *Ibid.*, 4.15.5.

³ *Ibid.*, 4.15.3.

⁴ B.A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 162.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁶ The Presbyterian Church in Canada, *Living Faith: A Statement of Christian Belief* (Winfield, BC: 1984), 7.5.1.

The Sacrament of Communion is not simply helpful; it is necessary for a life of Christian faith. As Calvin explains, “we must at once grasp this comparison: as bread nourishes, sustains and keeps the life of our body, so Christ’s body is the only food to invigorate and enliven our soul.”⁷ However, for Calvin this is an essential act, rather than a discretionary one, because “authentic humanity is constituted by the act of thanksgiving to the Maker of heaven and earth, whose goodness has prepared a table before us: that is the truth of our being, grounded in the creation.”⁸ Humans are created by God with spiritual hunger, and “our souls must feed on his body and blood as their proper food.”⁹

Chapter six in the Gospel according to John offers complex insights into the necessity of the Eucharist for God’s people. The chapter is set within the context of the Passover celebration, the annual Jewish commemoration of their escape from Egypt (6:4).¹⁰ In the miracle of the fish and loaves there is an echo of manna in the wilderness, where an entire community is fed (v.1-15). As Jesus walks on water there is an allusion to Moses and the crossing of the Red Sea (v.16-21). The Jewish crowd would have easily understood such parallels, but it is the teaching of Jesus that begins in verse twenty-six that makes a clear and important connection. Jesus reminds his hearers that manna in the wilderness came not from Moses, but from God. It is the same God of Moses who sent Jesus into the world. Jesus, then, is offering fresh manna and a new kind of bread for God’s people (v.32). This food will not perish in a day, as manna did during the Exodus.

⁷ McNeill, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.17.3.

⁸ Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*, 50.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁰ All Scripture quoted is from the New Revised Standard American Version.

It will not only come from God, but it will be the eternal God himself in this bread. The crowds respond with desire, “Sir, give us this bread always” (v.34).

This divine gift of flesh and blood is more than simply a metaphor. Jesus is clear that there is a very real physical need to ingest his body and blood “in order that the life of God, which is fully present in the Son, becomes their life as well.”¹¹ Life-giving power belongs to God alone. Through the self-giving of Jesus, however, his followers receive this gift of eternal life through the very physical elements of food and drink. It is a benefit that comes not simply through a cerebral agreement with a set of principles but through a bodily experience that is initiated by Jesus. It is not enough to agree with or admire Jesus. His followers must be joined with him in a way that is both spiritual and physical, one that offers “real grace coming through our participation in the Eucharist.”¹²

The grumbling that erupts while Jesus is teaching is also reminiscent of the Hebrew wilderness experience, but this, too, allows Jesus to expand on his identity as the bread of life (v.41-42,52). While never using explicit Eucharistic language, he clearly alludes to the sacrificial gift of his own flesh and blood (v.53-36). Jesus will not simply give his followers a gift; he gives his very self to be consumed. Those who are hungry and thirsty will only find their need satisfied when they fully abide in the Son of Man, who has been sent from heaven for their salvation.

¹¹ David E. Fredrickson, “Eucharistic Symbolism in the Gospel of John,” *Word & World* XVII, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 43.

¹² Len A. Hjalmanson, “Trinitarian Spirituality of Mission,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 6, no.1 (Spring 2013): 103.

With such deep and lasting significance, the sacrament of Communion is meant to be celebrated often. Calvin felt strongly that Christians should be invited to participate in the Lord's Supper every time the Word was preached. This was a change from medieval practice and an innovation of the Protestant Reformation; although previously the Church regarded the Lord's Supper "as an occasional add-on to the regular service, Calvin's liturgy was a service of word and sacrament."¹³ The sacrament, he argued, "was ordained to be frequently used among all Christians."¹⁴ The Eucharist is not only to be celebrated often but would be "administered most becomingly if it were set before the church very often and at least once a week."¹⁵ In Calvin's eyes, celebrating the sacrament was an integral part of the ordinary life and ministry of the Church.¹⁶ He faced great opposition, however, and did not succeed in establishing such a practice. In both Geneva and Strasbourg, city councils refused to grant permission for weekly communion, despite Calvin's strenuous arguments.¹⁷ The failure to establish this pattern was not only disappointing to Calvin; it also had a lasting effect on the future Church. A weekly celebration continues to be unusual among Canadian Presbyterian congregations. Some, in fact, host such services only four times each year.

Eating spiritual food is essential for every Christian, but it is not a meal that can be taken in solitude. Although worshipers may arrive alone, sit alone in an empty pew and

¹³ Michael S. Horton, "At Least Weekly: The Reformed Doctrine of the Lord's Supper and of its Frequent Celebration," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 11 (2000): 147.

¹⁴ McNeill, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.17.44.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.17.43.

¹⁶ Horton, "At Least Weekly," 147.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 149.

leave alone, their attention must be drawn to the others who gather with them. According to Calvin, “the Supper is a matter of nourishing, sustaining and increasing a communion with Christ,”¹⁸ and each one who shares the elements is connected to Jesus Christ. This communion with him results in relationship with each other and with the world for which Christ died and rose again. As the bread is broken and the cup is passed, whether to a few or among many, it is not possible to be joined with Christ without being joined to each other. Living Faith makes this clear:

The Lord's Supper is a joyful mystery
whereby Jesus takes the bread and wine
to represent his atoning sacrifice,
deepening our union with himself
and with each other.¹⁹

Communion is a call to unity. Nowhere is this more clear than in the early Church at Corinth. The ancient city’s tumultuous history resulted in a population that included people from different nations. There was a wide spectrum of wealth, vocation and social importance among its population. Most groups in the city formed among those who were alike, with each class preferring to be separate from the others. The early Church, however, drew in people from a vast array of backgrounds and situations. They were faced with the challenge of how to worship, share meals and form relationships as equals.

Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians illuminates just how difficult unity is to achieve in a diverse church. It is filled with instruction on issues such as lawsuits and marriage and acknowledges clearly the divisions in the church (6:1-10; 7:1-16; 3:21-22).

¹⁸ Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*, 134.

¹⁹ Presbyterian Church in Canada, *Living Faith*, 7.7.3.

In chapter eleven, he addresses the Lord's Supper directly, decrying abuses among those who share the meal. Because some were invited to eat more substantial meals before the common meal began, it was not simply a problem of bad manners but a practice of leaving out the socially or economically disadvantaged.²⁰ Paul not only cites these various factions, but points to an individualism that was hampering the common meal (1 Cor.11:21).

The solution for the church in Corinth, which also speaks to churches today, is rooted in the words of institution in which Christians are to not only remember but enact Jesus' last supper (v.23-26). Paul makes clear that "this remembrance reflects a concern not for historical reminiscence but for the contemporary significance of the meal."²¹ The life, death and resurrection of Jesus are embodied and proclaimed in the breaking of bread and sharing of the cup. To participate in a way that excludes or forgets other followers does not do justice to the life and mission of Jesus or bring it to life in the Church. Not only this, Paul reminds them, but they are not to be so arrogant as to forget that they all still wait together for their ultimate redemption when the Lord comes again (v.26). Each one, regardless of wealth or status, remains dependent on the saving power of Jesus.

Eating Justice: Who Is Invited to the Table?

From its beginnings, The Presbyterian Church in Canada had a very simple rule to decide on who was invited to the Lord's Table: those who were baptised and who had also

²⁰ Sharon H. Ringe, "Hospitality, Justice and Community: Paul's Teaching on the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34," *Prism* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 62.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

made a public profession of faith were permitted to participate. To this, however, was added the practice of examining participants to ensure that they were not immoral or lacking in faith. Usually, “the minister was to lead the process of examination through preaching and teaching, and it was the elders who were assigned the task of interrogating and examining communicants where necessary.”²² Communion tokens or cards were then given to the family, as proof that they “were in a proper spiritual condition to receive the sacrament.” This token would then be presented at the service of worship. This process, or “fencing the table,” as it was often called, was an attempt to preserve the integrity of Communion and “to encourage those who took part to do so in sincerity and truth.” Over time, these practices gradually eroded. Communion tokens remained in use for decades and were delivered by elders in the course of home visitation, although without an examination of suitability for the sacrament. In some Canadian churches, the cards are still collected as a way of keeping track of communion attendance.

By the early 1960s, questions about who was welcome at the Lord’s Table had begun to surface. In 1967, in a joint effort between the Board of Christian Education and the Committee on Articles of Faith, a study was prepared that raised the issue of whether a public profession of faith was required in order to receive Communion. This began a very long discussion marked by a number of study guides and requests for input from congregations and ministers. Four official statements were made by the General Assembly that examined church membership, the meaning of both sacraments and the role of baptised children. Each of these areas was studied “from the perspective of biblical and

²² John Congram, *This Presbyterian Church of Ours* (Winfield, BC: Wood Lake Books, 1995), 116.

doctrinal standards as well as the historical tradition and polity of the Church.”²³ This brought no resolution or clarity. Study continued, with a focus on whether or not children were to be included.

In 1981, the denomination’s highest court “recognized that several sessions had acted to include children at the Lord’s Table.”²⁴ A document entitled *Children of the Covenant: Towards a Re-Thinking of the Place of Children at the Lord’s Table* was created in 1984 by a subcommittee of the Committee on Church Doctrine. It examined the Lord’s Supper as well as Baptism, what it means to make a profession of faith and the kind of relationship that Jesus shared with children. It concluded that “it is difficult to believe that Jesus, who claimed young children for the kingdom of God, would fail to invite them to the special Table he provided for his people.”²⁵

Finally, in 1987, the General Assembly received a lengthy report from the Committee on Church Doctrine that affirmed a new and much broader welcome to the Lord’s Table. The first half of their argument asserted that children are capable participants in the Sacrament. The second half, however, strongly stated that sharing the bread and the cup offers essential spiritual nurture. By taking part in it, participants “learn about and gain a deeper appreciation of what God has done for them.”²⁶ Not only this, but

²³ Committee on Church Doctrine, *Children of the Covenant: Towards a Re-thinking of the place of Children at the Lord’s Table* (Toronto: The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1984), 3.

²⁴ Presbyterian Church in Canada, *Acts and Proceedings of the One Hundredth and Seventh General Assembly* (Toronto: 1981).

²⁵ Committee on Church Doctrine, *Children of the Covenant*, 21.

²⁶ Presbyterian Church in Canada, *Acts and Proceedings of the One Hundredth and thirteenth General Assembly* (Toronto: 1987).

celebrating together draws Christians close to Christ and one another and “there at one Table, we are reminded that we are all part of a spiritual family, with all the privileges and responsibilities to one another which that entails.”²⁷ The report concludes that young people should be included in the Church’s Table fellowship and urges every congregation to actively invite them to participate.

Following the 1987 decision, the denomination began to teach with a renewed emphasis on why and how Christians are called to participate in Communion. Using a variety of teaching materials, elders and ministers not only discussed worship practices but began to change them. Children became more frequent participants in Sunday morning services. They were no longer barred from eating and drinking with the adults and members of the body of Christ but had the plate and cup passed to them. Families including multiple generations began worshipping together. At last, there was a fresh understanding that “one of the most visible ways by which we are evidently part of the family of God, by the activity of God, is when we gather around the Table of our Lord.”²⁸

The Presbyterian Church of the United States (PCUSA) underwent its own examination of who belonged at the Table in 1999, reviewing the participation of those who were isolated from regular services of worship. At that year’s General Assembly, the denomination made a decision to provide for the Extended Serving of the Church’s Communion for two reasons. First, because they believe that “it strengthens the pastoral care of the church to its elderly, disabled, and homebound members” and second, because it “makes our celebration of the Lord’s Supper a strong sign of the unity of the Church by

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Committee on Church Doctrine, *Children of the Covenant*, 38.

regularly including in the church's communion those who are unable to gather with the worshiping congregation."²⁹ In setting out the parameters for such a celebration, it notes that in such a practice "the church has embraced opportunities for pastoral ministry to persons in a variety of isolating circumstances."³⁰

This significant effort toward inclusion is rooted in the denomination's declaration in the Book of Order which states that "All baptized persons, whether children or adults, even though they have made no profession of their faith in Christ, are entitled to participation in the Lord's Supper, to pastoral care and instruction of the Church."³¹ The use of the word "entitled" makes it clear that the church has a "pastoral and spiritual obligation to all the members of the church's fellowship,"³² which must be carefully tended. It places an emphasis on the duty of the church to provide the meal, rather than on the effort of the participants who are to receive it. This is important because when the initiative of seeking communion is left to the church member, they recognize that many will not ask out of guilt, embarrassment or shyness. The burden for including isolated church members in the Lord's Supper, therefore, "must not be placed on the member making a request, but on the church extending an invitation."³³

²⁹ Presbyterian Mission Agency, *Extended Serving of Communion* (Office of Theology and Worship, Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.], 1999), 1.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 3.

The PCUSA places a further emphasis on the importance of the meal for the entire body of Christ rather than simply on an individual participant. They argue that this arises from the early church tradition:

For the early Christians who lived in the wake of the resurrection, it was unthinkable that any member of the body of Christ be excluded or omitted from participation at the Lord's Table. For them, the Lord's Supper was the vital living sign of the church's unity in Christ. The bread and wine were distributed to each and every member of the congregation, even to those who were missing from worship on any given Lord's Day. This ancient understanding offers the contemporary church a corrective for the inclination to limit the importance of the Lord's Supper to the personal meaning it has for individual believers.³⁴

This American denomination is ready to make an effort to provide the sacrament not simply to meet the private needs of individuals but for the good of the entire body of Christ and its witness to the world.

When the United Church in Canada was formed in 1925 with the union of Congregationalist, Methodist and some Presbyterian Churches, it began by welcoming all professing Christians to the Lord's Table. In the Twenty Articles, the first statement of its common faith, it explained that "all may be admitted to the Lord's Supper who make a credible profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus and of obedience to His law."³⁵ The founding statement goes on to assert that all should participate in Communion "as a means of grace, by which, working in us, He doth not only quicken but also strengthen and comfort our faith in Him."³⁶

³⁴ Ibid., 2.

³⁵ The United Church of Canada. *The Manual: The Twenty Articles of Doctrine (1925)* (Toronto, ON: United Church Publishing House, 2016), 14.

³⁶ Ibid.

Already a blend of three denominations, an attitude of openness surrounded the Lord's Table. This gradually expanded further to welcome not only professing Christians from those three denominations but anyone who wished to participate. In a guide to congregational life published in 2000, United Church lay leader Ralph Milton clearly stated this, saying, "You are invited. No exceptions. That doesn't mean you are required to participate. It just means you are welcome if you'd like to."³⁷ Although special rights and privileges still belonged to those who publically professed their faith, such as voting on large purchases or calling a new minister, the opportunity to receive the sacrament was not among them.

A new creed called "A Song of Faith" was adopted by the denomination in 2006, and it reaffirmed its belief in inclusion at the Lord's Table. Again, a broad welcome was affirmed not only in the life and ministry of the Church but specifically in the sacraments. As for Communion, it names the open table:

We welcome all in the name of Christ.
Invited to the table where none shall go hungry,
we gather as Christ's guests and friends.
In holy communion we are commissioned to feed as we have been fed,
forgive as we have been forgiven,
love as we have been loved.
The open table speaks of the shining promise
of barriers broken and creation healed.³⁸

Having already removed barriers to those wishing to participate in communion, United Church of Canada now also affirms the use of a variety of languages appropriate to each context and makes room for dancing, clapping, emotional expression and silence.

³⁷ Ralph Milton, *This United Church of Ours*, 17.

³⁸ The United Church of Canada, *The Manual*, 20.

Stressing that worship and liturgy are the work of the people, they remind congregations that practices “will emerge out of the cultural community itself and be developed out of a process of consultation.”³⁹

No matter the denomination, all Christian churches find a lesson of inclusion and grace in Luke’s parable of the great banquet (Luke 14:15-24). Although Matthew offers a similar account this much simpler version underscores the theme of inclusivity, especially in relation to the outcast (Matthew 22:1-14). Located after three other portions of teaching on hospitality, which includes the man with dropsy, selective seats and selective guests (v.1-6,7-11,12-14),⁴⁰ this final story emphasizes the surprising actions of the master who goes to extraordinary lengths to hold a banquet.

The audience of Jesus would have had very little trouble with most of this story until “Luke’s familiar reversal to announce the gospel,”⁴¹ when those who were thought to be outsiders are suddenly found to be insiders. Not only does the banquet include the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame, but anyone at all that the servant can find from the street and compel to attend (v.21). This surprise is a challenge to the arrogance of Jesus’ hearers and to the Church. It is a prophetic word to the early Church that had become “confident in its own salvation, and no longer inviting to God’s table the poor, the

³⁹ The United Church of Canada, “Intercultural Ministries: Living into Transformation,” *41st General Council* (The Executive of the General Council Permanent Committee on Programs for Ministry and Mission Task Group on Intercultural Ministries, 2012), 1.

⁴⁰ J. Lyle Story, “One Banquet with Many Courses (Luke 14:1-24),” *Journal of Biblical and Pneumatological Research* 4 (Fall 2012): 71.

⁴¹ Fred B. Craddock, *Luke. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 180.

mained, the lame and the blind.”⁴² Perhaps the contemporary Church also needs this lesson, which draws a sharp distinction between the world’s way of evaluating people based on wealth, class, ethnicity and personality and God’s Kingdom which has no such stratification. All who are invited are welcome without exception, and no one is excluded from the great banquet except by a personal and accountable rejection of a warm invitation.”⁴³

This banquet story speaks not only about the guests; it also reveals the character of a good host. Although he remains a nameless “someone,” his generosity is astounding (v.16). Faced with the rejection of his friends, who are busy with various real estate dealings and weddings, it would have been understandable if he had thrown up his hands and cancelled the dinner (v.18-20). Instead he chooses to widen his circle of hospitality to include those of very different social standing. The host seems “driven by an inner compulsion to completely fill the banquet hall with anybody and everybody who would respond to the invitation,”⁴⁴ rather than let chairs sit empty or have food go to waste. This compulsion reveals the character of God so often revisited in Luke namely that love which is so merciful will not let any barrier stand in his way.⁴⁵

For the Church that so often sets the Table and bids its members come and eat, the banquet teaches fresh urgency. Following the example of the host in this parable, it is the Church’s responsibility not simply to invite the usual participant and accepted member

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Story, “One Banquet with Many Courses,” 90.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 91.

but all those who may feel excluded. This surely includes the poor, mentally ill and disabled but also the absent, unusual or uncommitted. The role of the host is not simply to issue a vague invitation; for Jesus it is imperative that the Church would “go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in” (v.23). When there are some who cannot participate easily in worship for whatever reason, the responsibility clearly lies with the Church to make their inclusion possible, no matter how strange or surprising its invitation might seem.

Continued absences at services of Holy Communion have too often been understood as reason for judgement and even grounds for removal from the church’s membership roll. When an annual review is conducted of who may or may not continue to be a church member, elders have been instructed to “use criteria such as attendance at services of worship, especially the Sacrament of Holy Communion.”⁴⁶ This criterion places the burden on the participant while removing responsibility from the host for eliminating any existing barriers to the Lord’s Supper. While it may be true that some Christians are absent due to disobedience, others may in truth be unable to participate due to mental or physical limits. Large crowds or excessive noise may create such anxiety or discomfort that certain personality types are unable to participate. Some introverts can even “become mired in our inner worlds, to the exclusion of relationship and actions that would bring the healing and joy we seek.”⁴⁷ Fresh grace is clearly in order in light of this parable.

⁴⁶ The Presbyterian Church in Canada, *The Book of Forms* (Toronto, ON: 2013), 125.5.

⁴⁷ McHugh, *Introverts in the Church*, 58.

Drawn More Deeply: Communion Inspires Change

Contemplative spirituality is faithful living that is deeply rooted in listening that watches and waits for God to communicate. Sometimes described as “a steady gaze of the soul upon the God who loves us,” its hallmarks include love, peace, delight and transformation.⁴⁸ It employs approaches such as thoughtfulness, silence and contemplating God, which often appeal to introverts and all those “who find that their hearts cry out for a focus and depth that modern life does not offer.”⁴⁹ Although often associated with the monastic lifestyle, it is a practice for Christians in all walks of life. It easily engages for introverts, since “introverts are often drawn to such spirituality as it involves a quieter, more reflective lifestyle.”⁵⁰ Its practice may be quiet, but it is also exciting because it brings with it the expectation of transformation and change for those who engage in it.

The story of Mary and Martha, which is unique to Luke’s account of the gospel, can be seen to illustrate the contrast between active and contemplative faith (Luke 10:38-42). While both women encounter Jesus and are given an opportunity to interact with him, each chooses a different method. Martha offers practical hospitality, welcoming her guests and tending to their physical needs. Mary does little more than sit and listen to the words of Jesus. It is all too tempting in this frantic world to take the side of Martha, who complains to Jesus, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by

⁴⁸ Foster, *Streams of Living Water*, 49.

⁴⁹ McHugh, *Introverts in the Church*, 70.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

myself? Tell her then to help me” (v.40). Mary, however, is also deeply engaged and accomplishing important work, and Jesus seems to take her side as he commends her for taking “the better part” (v.42).

This traditional interpretation is only a beginning. Considered in the light of personality types, it yields still more wisdom. Could it be that Martha is a gregarious people-person, an extrovert who finds energy in closer personal contact and intense interaction with others? Could Mary be an introvert, drawn to quieter spaces and careful listening? Although personality types like the Myer-Briggs Personality Inventory are a modern measure, such an interpretation is reasonable. It therefore offers redemption to introverts and all those who “feel they need to become more extroverted to live for Jesus.”⁵¹ Jesus validates the sister who is drawn to stillness.

Despite the simple contrast between these two women, Jesus hardly disparages the practice of hospitality. Certainly there is a time for tending to physical needs of others as he has shown repeatedly, such as when he sent followers out to proclaim the Kingdom and told the story of the Good Samaritan (10:1-12; 10:25-37). Rather, contemplation and faithful action “are two sides of a coin.”⁵² There are times in which the most appropriate response is stillness, as when Jesus came into the home of the two sisters. The arrival of Jesus signalled a time to be still and Mary was right to sit at his feet. In fact, it can be argued that “only the contemplative will be a healthy missionary, a rich channel for the Spirit, securely rooted in the love of God; only the missionary, rooted in place, feet on the

⁵¹ Judson Edwards, *Quiet Faith: An Introvert's Guide to Spiritual Survival* (Macon: Smyth and Helwys Publishing, 2013), 6.

⁵² Hjalmsen, “Trinitarian Spirituality of Mission,” 100.

dusty road, mired in the brokenness of humankind, understands the need for contemplation.”⁵³ Both action and contemplation are faithful, essential and interwoven responses to God.

There is a rhythm to faithfulness. According to this passage, it is a rhythm that asks for both action and contemplation. In this project, when the Martha-like church hears the admonition of Jesus, it is not condemned but invited to take up contemplation. Introverts like Mary lead the way in a practice “that emphasizes the heart far more than the head”⁵⁴ and serves to open doors to new experiences for all who follow Jesus. This stillness, particularly the stillness of prayer, is essential.

Prayer is central to contemplative spirituality. “Contemplatives do not think of prayer as a good thing, or an important thing, but as the *essential* thing, the *primary* thing”⁵⁵ for a life of faith. This may take many forms and can include solitude and a desire for greater intimacy with God, and places a “stress on silence and a call to unceasing prayer.”⁵⁶ It is not passive, however; it is an active integration in which God’s people “seek to draw together the divided fragments of our existence and present them to God who, in turn, finds us, restores us and draws the pieces together.”⁵⁷ It places God in a central position in life and emphasizes deep and meaningful conversation.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Tom Schwanda, “‘To Gaze on the Beauty of the Lord’: The Evangelical Resistance and Retrieval of Contemplation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 7, no.1 (2014): 68.

⁵⁵ Foster, *Streams of Living Water*, 52.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ McHugh, *Introverts in the Church*, 72.

The Psalms of David demonstrate this practice of turning to God with deep intensity. Psalm sixty-three, one of eleven Psalms that are attributed to him, is set in a particular moment in his life.⁵⁸ It provides an honest, if visceral, glimpse into the reality of one man's struggles and his contemplative response. At both the beginning and the end of the psalm his tone is desperate; he even has enemies who seek to kill him (v.1,9). Still, he very deliberately turns his attention not to outward concerns but inward ones, testifying, "I think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night" (v.6). He worships in the sanctuary in order to behold God's glory (v.2). His very soul clings to God's presence (v.8). He demonstrates the "steady gaze of the soul upon the God who loves us."⁵⁹

Even as David focuses so intently on his God, he also bears witness to the changes that come from such careful attention to the Divine. The imagery he uses is stark as he thirsts after God's presence, as if he was in a dry and weary land where there is no water (v.1). This desperation does not go unchanged; soon his intense longing becomes fulfilled delight.⁶⁰ The act of waiting for the life-changing power of God gives way to a transformation. Soon his hunger and thirst are "satisfied as with a rich feast" and his countenance is so joyful that he is ready to praise God (v.5). His words put an end to any argument the Church might construct that contemplation is a waste of time or of little

⁵⁸ James Luther Mays, *The David of the Psalms*, Interpretation 40, vol. 2 (1986): 151

⁵⁹ Foster, *Streams of Living Water*, 49.

⁶⁰ Schwanda, "'To Gaze on the Beauty of the Lord,'" 70.

value in a busy world. Clearly it is a discipline that invites God to be at work, and this work begins in solitude.

Contemplative prayer is often marked by times of solitude and silence. In a noisy world, our senses are filled with lights, screens, sounds and voices that make it difficult to hear the still, small voice of God. Even Jesus himself fled the crowds from time to time, seeking opportunity for quiet prayer (such as in Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 22:41). Those who engage in this practice seek out places where distractions have been eliminated. Away from the chaos of the world, it becomes more possible to “discover that the silent time makes us quiet and deepens our awareness of ourselves and God.”⁶¹ This solitariness, however, “does not mean individualism.”⁶² Instead, deepening our gaze on God draws us into a deeper connection not only with the divine but also with the world.

The farewell discourse in John 17 suggests a new understanding of how contemplation and mission are deeply entwined. As Jesus prepares for his death, he prays passionately for both the disciples and all those who will believe because of them with the hope that “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us” (v.20,21). This suggests more than friendship or intimacy; it is an earthy, organic connection. Jesus expands on his earlier metaphor of the vine and branches and describes a mutual, mysterious, perichoretic participation made possible by the Holy Spirit (John 15:1-11).⁶³ It is this relationship that leads us to be transformed so that his followers gradually come

⁶¹ Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, 136.

⁶² Foster, *Streams of Living Water*, 52.

⁶³ Hjalmarson, “Trinitarian Spirituality of Mission,” 102.

to resemble Christ and “more and more and more we take on his habits, feelings, hopes, faith and love.”⁶⁴ While we may view prayer and action as two separate paths, here we see that “mission must grow out of intimacy with God: anchored in the place where we experientially know that Christ is our all in all.”⁶⁵

Throughout the book of John, God the Father is active and is described in terms of doing rather than being.⁶⁶ This action is largely that of giving and sending, which is quite visible in John 17 (v.6-8,24-26). Joined with the Father, Christ is also active in giving and sending (v.14, 18). The two share purpose and activity. As Jesus prays that those united with him might become united with the Father (v.21), therefore it is reasonable to expect that a fulfillment of this prayer will result in participation in more shared purpose and activity. The action of the sending God becomes action in the sending Son, leading to action in those for whom Jesus sends. The divine union sought by contemplation cannot leave a worshiper unmoved. As they are joined with the Father and the Son, they are swept up into a life of doing, giving, sending.

The activity of God the Father is rooted in love (v.23), and this love is necessary to be made ready for a life of activity in Christ. At the end of a life in which he makes known his great love for the world, Jesus lays his hopes before his Father, “that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them” (v.26). Preparing to leave the world, Jesus loves his disciples as he prays for their joy (v.13) and for protection from

⁶⁴ Foster, *Streams of Living Water*, 51.

⁶⁵ Hjalmarson, “Trinitarian Spirituality of Mission,” 102.

⁶⁶ Paul N. Anderson, “The Having-Sent-Me Father: Aspects of Agency, Encounter, and Irony in the Johannine Father-Son Relationship,” *Semeia*, 1999: 33.

the evil one (v.15), but he also acknowledges that he has sent them out into the world (v.18). This mission grows directly from the love that his followers discover in him, because then, as now, when “we are rooted in the loving nature of God we grow in...true life for others.”⁶⁷ Love that begins in the Father and is displayed in the Son becomes love among those who follow him.

Christ’s self-giving love is never more clear than at the Eucharist. As bread is broken, the presider reminds participants that it is a symbol of Christ’s body broken for us; as the cup is raised it is declared to be a reminder of Christ’s blood poured out for us. Gathering at the Table with Christ unites each worshiper with him and with all those who hunger and thirst.⁶⁸ Since it is impossible to be united with others in one moment and then divorced from them the next, the experience of unity in worship informs and inspires relationships long after the meal has ended. Sarah Miles, for example, discovered that the church’s food pantry, which was a food bank that offered access to anyone regardless of faith or documentation, “was another way of doing church...modeled on the liturgy of the Eucharist.”⁶⁹ Ensuring that all are loved and nurtured in one moment naturally leads us to actively work so that all will be loved and nurtured in other places, too.

⁶⁷ Hjalmarson, “Trinitarian Spirituality of Mission,” 105.

⁶⁸ The Presbyterian Church in Canada, *Living Faith*, 7.7.2.

⁶⁹ Miles, *Take This Bread*, 113.

PART THREE
MINISTRY STRATEGY

CHAPTER 4

GOALS AND PLAN

This chapter will explore how the Trafalgar community can offer greater hospitality, especially to those who identify themselves as introverts. Rather than excluding those who are different or insisting that they conform to the traditional worship style, a new time and space will be created for a contemplative Communion service. This will necessitate not only a new liturgy but new leadership skills for the minister. It will also inspire and transform participants as they experience a silence and share the body and blood of Christ.

The Need for a Wider Welcome and an Open Table

Warm hospitality has been a hallmark of Trafalgar Presbyterian Church's culture since its beginning. Before it had its own church building, local hosts opened their homes for Bible study, committee meetings and even large events like the annual Robbie Burns Night. For all of its thirty years, almost every event held by the congregation gladly welcomed children of all ages. It has embraced the privilege of welcoming child and adult church members with mental disabilities, helping them to find ways to not only participate

but serve the community. The building was created to be barrier free so that those with physical limits could easily enter almost every part of the church building.

In worship, hospitality has also been practiced well. A casual dress code means that those wearing shorts and sandals, princess dresses and even messy bedhead are happily welcomed without protest. The web site offers visitors a description of what they can expect on a Sunday morning, and the printed weekly bulletin gives instructions to worshipers so that they know when to sit, stand, sing and move. After an adult member asked an elder for help because she could neither read nor write, the congregation responded with music and prayers that allowed for learning by rote instead of depending solely on printed text. Children have always been invited to celebrate Communion, and in 2015 the congregation moved to all-ages worship for every service that includes the Sacrament.

The congregation made an effort to balance the needs of a diverse worshipping community and in some ways succeeded; however, the need for silence and a quieter worship environment was not easily accommodated. Unlike large, ornate sanctuaries, Trafalgar's bright and airy atmosphere does not immediately inspire hushed tones and slow movements. The historically social culture of the congregation resulted in the time before and after worship being used not for silent prayer but for conversation and social greetings. Even the musical prelude, which is printed in the order of service, does not discourage friendly chatting; most people regard it as little more than background music before the real worship begins. In addition, as an increasingly culturally diverse community, the value of arriving early is not shared by everyone. While this movement

and joy is appropriate for worshipping the Lord it can lead to frustration among those in search of silence (Psalm 100).

Children's voices have always been welcome in worship, but the noise level at Trafalgar has begun to increase in the last three years. Almost without exception, parents of infants and toddlers have begun to insist on coming to worship as a family. The supervised baby nursery, which was hosted in a specially equipped room with toys, rocking chairs, a change table and bathroom, is ignored in favour of being together in the sanctuary. This is a joyful development, giving the whole church an opportunity to welcome little children as Jesus did (Luke 18:15-17). It also means, however, that the opportunities for silence at the beginning of worship and after the sermon are often punctuated by squirming children or the babbling of infants.

The practice of passing the peace is an important one. Since the early church, Christians have engaged in this practice, remembering how Jesus greeted his disciples after the resurrection (John 20:19-26). It gives physical expression to our unity in Christ and calls everyone to humility and grace (Eph 2:14-21). A change was made to include a more formal practice of saying to each other, "May the peace of Christ be with you," rather than a sociable, "Good morning," in the hope that it would put at ease those who find such close contact intimidating or uncomfortable, especially introverts. Unfortunately, it is still a ritual that can be very difficult for introverts, particularly when it goes on for more than a brief moment.¹

¹ Lynne. M Baab. *Personality Type in Congregations: How to Work with Others More Effectively* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 4.

To ask families to keep their children quiet, eliminate the passing of the peace or chastise those who enjoy greeting one another in friendship is clearly not the answer. Those practices are biblically sound and vital to the Christian community. They are also appealing and comfortable for those with more extroverted personalities. Pretending that the needs and preferences of introverts are unimportant is equally untenable, however, as is failing to make room in the congregation for alternative modes of worship that may be more accessible to those with more introverted personalities and desired by those who are more extroverted.

In the Bible, the burden to offer hospitality falls squarely on those who are comfortable and well fed. Jesus is clear that they have a special responsibility to recognize and respond to those with unmet needs (Matthew 25:31-46). The worshipers at Trafalgar who are at ease and being nourished by the normal patterns of church life are obligated to take up the concerns of those who are not. This presents a challenge when it comes to needs that are less obvious or seem less pressing than hunger or thirst such as personality types, and “too often churches ask introverts to change, rather than stretching their own understandings of participation.”² The minister, elders and worship leaders who create and sustain the community patterns therefore need to find ways to tend to those on the margins. Rather than excluding those who are different or insisting that they conform to the traditional worship style, a new time and space will offer fresh opportunity for those who find Sunday mornings difficult and for those who simply long for a quieter and more contemplative experience.

² McHugh, *Introverts in the Church*, 94.

This hospitality project holds great potential for the entire congregation. The Emmaus story in Luke chapter twenty nine illustrates that surprising experiences can happen when welcome is offered. In that story, travelers met a stranger with whom they had little in common, but when evening came they urged him to stay the night (Lk 24:29). It was only later in the breaking of bread that they recognized their guest was the resurrected Jesus (v.32). As extroverts learn to offer gracious welcome to introverts, it is hoped that Jesus will be manifest in vibrant and even unexpected ways.

Preparing an Open Table

The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Book of Common Worship provides several texts for inviting worshipers to the Lord's Table. Most include language of welcome such as, "Our Saviour invites all those who trust him to share the feast which he has prepared."³ While I use a variety of those prepared texts, there is one exception. The congregation has never heard me use this one:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ
I invite to this Table
all who are members in full communion
with any branch of the holy catholic church.
This is the Lord's Table
and belongs by right to all his people.

All who have been baptized into the membership of the church
are lovingly urged to come to the Table he has prepared.⁴

This has been a conscious omission on my part. Knowing that ours is a transient and diverse congregation, talk of membership can quickly become confusing. Some infants have been dedicated but not baptised; some young people have been baptised but not

³ Presbyterian Church in Canada, *Book of Common Worship*, 74.

⁴ Ibid.

confirmed. A significant number come from Roman Catholic, Salvation Army, Anglican and other denominations where membership is a term used in a multitude of ways. Add to this the reality that many visitors and new worshipers may have little church background and such emphasis on membership requirements could easily keep faithful people from participating in the Sacraments.

Particularly in the months leading up to this project, I placed an emphasis on inclusion as I led worship. As a participant in Fuller's Micah Group program, my preaching was inspired by the diverse group of preachers that I met with regularly for two years. For example, I explored Paul's vision for the Church, which is rooted in the radically inclusive life and work of Jesus and is a sharp contrast to the homogeneity of Oakville and its safe, predictable patterns of suburban life (Acts 16:9-15). I used a variety of images for God in prayer, including titles such as Creator of the Universe, Loving Parent and Mighty Spirit. I also led a robust service to celebrate Worldwide Communion Sunday, which included music and language from many different countries.

The elders and I began laying the foundation of deeper hospitality beyond worship as well. At the 2014 General Assembly, the issue of same-sex relationships reappeared after almost twenty years of silence. It was clear from my colleagues and some members of my congregation that it was a topic of concern and I began to place themes of inclusion and language of sexuality in sermons. At the 2015 General Assembly, twenty-four overtures were received that had to do with issues of sexual orientation and the Church. No decisions were made at that time. While many Presbyterians across the country were anxious or even angry about this, the leaders in this congregation agreed to be calm and welcome discussion. The Church Doctrine and Justice Ministries were instructed to

prepare a joint study guide on sexual orientation, and when it was ready it was immediately circulated widely among the people of Trafalgar Presbyterian Church. A group study was held with a gentle atmosphere that included a covenant of conduct so that all could express their opinions without fear of judgement or reprisal. This safe space resulted in fair questions, good debate and a clear sense that every voice was important. There was confidence that this tone would spill over into the wider life and work of the church.

In order to prepare the congregation for a new style of worship, I began experimenting with elements of the liturgy and even location on Sunday mornings. I spoke with the music director about adding more silence to worship during the distribution of the elements, rather than filling all of that time with music; he agreed and this practice was easily adopted. Worship was held one Sunday morning in the church's large fellowship hall allowing us to worship in a different space than usual, and while some found it slightly strange it was not met with major complaints. In the Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession, I offered silent prayers of varying duration. I tried placing finger labyrinths in the children's worship bags and taught them to be used during the pastoral prayer so that they, too, could learn a new contemplative practice along with the adults.

Creating Worship for Introverts

Finding a space for an additional worship service was a challenge. The Trafalgar Presbyterian Church building includes a sanctuary, bathrooms, a large fellowship hall and a number of small classrooms. Even before the building was completed in 1991, the congregation had committed most of its space to Time for Tykes, a day care company, for use from Monday to Friday. Over time additional renters were added and now include a music school, a Korean congregation, a Japanese school and a local Pentecostal church. Every day there are activities in the church building, many of them including children who inevitably make noise as they learn or wait in the hallways. Any new service must be arranged to accommodate these arrangements.

Finding a suitable day and time were made even more challenging by the regular patterns of church and family life. On Sundays the church hosts not only the congregation's weekly worship service but two services for a Korean-speaking congregation. Monday is my Sabbath day and the evening includes a lay-led Bible study. Presbytery and Session meetings are regularly held on Tuesdays. Choir practice takes up Thursday evening. Many families travel on weekends or are engaged in lessons and parties. Wednesday clearly emerged as the only day of the week that would not conflict with other schedules.

Choosing to create this new worship service in the evening was more than simply convenience for those who work during the day. Children, youth and adults in this suburban neighbourhood tend to have days that are busy and filled with noise, relationships, travel and technology. Much of this is necessary and helpful for people of all personality types. By the end of the day, however, many introverts are drained from

stimulation and interacting with others. Following the pattern of creation in Genesis chapters one and two, activity is best followed by a period of rest. Introverts are perhaps most in need of such a rhythm,⁵ not only in a weekly but even in a daily pattern. Silence and contemplation at the end of the day make room for the recovery of energy, preparation for sleep and the activities of the following day. Holding this service at night also opened up the possibility of taking up the practice of keeping The Grand Silence. A custom in many monastic communities even now, this nightly routine begins in worship and is followed by “the cessation of speech, to be observed in all circumstances except dire emergency.”⁶ Silence is kept until the following morning.

The elders chose Wednesday evenings for the new worship service. Unfortunately, the very next morning after the decision was made it was discovered that the building administrator had already agreed to allow the music school to expand their classes to include Wednesday evenings, in the sanctuary. The administrator and I immediately sat down to discuss a resolution. It was agreed that although rental income was essential, it should not prevent the congregation from worshipping. A consultation with the music school, whose director is a Christian and sympathetic to the problem, resulted in a solution. Music classes would be held before and after, but the sanctuary would be empty and quiet from 6:55 p.m. to 7:45 p.m. Because the services would be small and only about thirty minutes long, all music stands and instruments would remain in place. With a large group of children, parents and music teachers present in the church building making room

⁵ McHugh, *Introverts in the Church*, 77.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

for silence presented a challenge. Church leaders clearly articulated to the renters our hopes for a quiet and undisturbed space. The administrator also made signs for each entrance that read, “Quiet, please. Worship in progress.” Finally, the music school director, church administrator and I committed to communicating regularly so that any problems that arose would be dealt with quickly.

Sunday morning worship takes place in the sanctuary, which seats about one hundred and fifty people with a centre aisle and pews all facing the front. Some pews had been removed from the front, however, in order to create more room for musicians. With nowhere to store them, they had been placed along one wall to the left of the pulpit, in a small open space. It took little imagination to re-arrange those pews to create a worship space, almost a side chapel, with three pews facing each other and enough seating for about a dozen people. Located under one bank of lighting, it was possible to turn off all but a few lights in the sanctuary, allowing the worshipers in those pews to see and read well. A small but lovely wooden pedestal, usually used on the dais to hold flower displays, was moved to become a communion table in the chapel space. It was large enough to hold a candle, plate and chalice and matched the other sanctuary furniture. The space had a feeling of calm and order.

The new worship service would begin with centering prayer, a time of stillness and silence. Also called apophatic prayer, it may appeal more to the introvert than the extrovert,⁷ but is a deeply rooted spiritual practice for all of God’s people (Psalm 62:1, 5). Unfortunately, silent prayer is not a familiar activity to many in such a social suburban

⁷ Roy M. Oswald and Otto Kroeger, *Personality Type and Religious Leadership* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 108.

church, and it would need to be taught and practiced. Those who had participated in the congregation's annual lectio divina retreat in the past would already have "learned some measure of stillness, an appreciation for contemplative prayer, and a stance of quietly receiving from God."⁸ They would, along with the presider, teach by example, sitting quietly without talking or moving, perhaps even with eyes closed to limit conversation. Although centering prayer may include an extended period of stillness,⁹ in this contemplative service it would be limited to approximately five minutes in order to accommodate further worship.

Silence would not simply begin the time of worship. Two more opportunities would be offered, ensuring that the service maintains a slow and unhurried pace. After the opening words of Scripture, a brief silence will accompany the lighting of the Christ candle. This wordless pause will invite the worshiper to orient themselves to the presence of Jesus Christ and one another. The longest silence will take place after the Scripture, when a short contemplative reading or poem will usher in a longer period of quiet. Each silence will be clearly noted in the printed bulletin so that worshipers understand that these are not simply pauses but an integral part of worship.¹⁰

Worship will use the same words and actions each week. This offers two important gifts. First, a structured and more formal liturgy is often helpful for introverts because they know exactly what to expect before they arrive and are released from the

⁸ James C. Wilhoit, "Contemplative and Centering Prayer," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 7, no. 1 (2014): 109.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ McHugh, *Introverts in the Church*, 199.

anxiety over hidden or unknown expectations. Second, the repetition of the words requires less energy and offers more freedom than informal or unstructured worship.¹¹ Since the minds of introverts already “have a constant internal rushing through our heads,”¹² familiar responses eliminate one strand of stimulation and deepen the experience of quiet.

What will be absent from this worship service is just as important as what will be present, since introverts so often seek release from “superficial relationships, trivial communications, and the constant noise that pervades our world.”¹³ There will be no expectation of greeting others when worshipers enter the sanctuary, which will be signaled by dimmed lighting and a silent worship leader. Also, because there is a limited time in which worship will take place, there simply will be little opportunity to gather in the sanctuary ahead of time. There will be no time set aside for greeting one another with smiles or handshakes as a part of worship either, although there will be words of peace given by the presider. There will be no screens with images or words, no lengthy or wordy hymns and no clapping or loud music. No bodily responses or emotional displays will be expected.¹⁴ Instructions to turn off all cell phones will be printed at the top of the order of service in order to eliminate distractions and unnecessary noise.

¹¹ Ibid., 190.

¹² Ibid., 74.

¹³ Ibid., 191.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Beautiful and Practical: A New Liturgy

The fourfold pattern of worship that is used on Sunday morning will also be used on Wednesday evening. Typical in Presbyterian churches, four basic components will be included: The Call to Worship, The Word Proclaimed, The Great Thanksgiving and The Dismissal. This is important, since it links the two services together and helps the congregation to live out a unity even among those who may have different needs or personalities. In particular, the responsive Communion liturgy's Great Prayer of Thanksgiving will be exactly the same as that used on the first Sunday of each month, offering immediate familiarity to the congregation.

Also common to Sunday morning will be the role and attire of the minister. Robes with a white Communion stole will be worn in order maintain unity with other services, and will also free the presider from dressing up on a weekday evening. As much as the minister will look the same and perform the same function, however, leading a contemplative service will require greater self-awareness and preparation. Care must be taken to transition from a busy day of pastoral work to the stillness of worship. A period of quiet reflection must take place before worship, preferably in solitude before worshipers arrive. Upon entering the sanctuary, physical movements will need to be slower, especially when serving Communion. As suggested in the Book of Common Worship, when it comes to sharing the elements, "the action should be executed with dignity, reverence and quiet joy in an unhurried manner."¹⁵ The leader's spoken volume will need to be loud enough for everyone to hear, but since all will be seated in close

¹⁵ Presbyterian Church in Canada, *Book of Common Worship*, 21.

proximity to one another, a softer voice than usual will be appropriate. While I am an introvert and such posture comes naturally, each Wednesday will still require attention to the work at hand.

Words for this service will be carefully chosen in order to draw those in attendance into a spirit of quiet and rest. Compline, a form of evening prayer dating back to the sixth century, is still used by some monastic orders at the end of the day. This Compline prayer, taken from the Anglican Church in New Zealand will be used:

Lord, it is night.
The night is for stillness. Let us be still in the presence of God.
(silence is kept)
It is night after a long day.
What has been done has been done;
what has not been done has not been done. Let it be.
The night is dark. Let our fears of the darkness of the world
and of our own lives rest in you.
The night is quiet. Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,
all dear to us, and all who have no peace.
The night heralds the dawn. Let us look expectantly to a new day,
new joys, new possibilities. Amen.

These words, with the embedded silence, are important ones for busy people. They invite worshipers to be both physically and spiritually still, letting go of worries, concerns and unfinished work. They also offer peaceful acceptance of our human limits, placing trust in God's mercy. Repeated each Wednesday evening, those who come often may find that the simple words are quickly memorized so that they can be enjoyed on other days, too, out loud or in silence. Even one line, repeated often, may prove to be a gift for those learning how to pray in a contemplative way.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Book of Common Worship makes it clear that for public worship, "readings from both the Old Testament, and the New Testament,

ensure that the completeness of God's work of creation and redemption in history is proclaimed.”¹⁶ For this reason, an effort will be made to include a wide variety of Scripture passages over the course of the project. Unlike Sunday morning worship, the evening service will include only two selections instead of four. This simpler approach will make it easier to focus and will avoid being overwhelmed by too many ideas or images. Rather than choosing passages to educate or enlighten those who gather, Scripture selections will be chosen in order to be “experiential and savouring rather than discursive or mental dissection.”¹⁷

Each week a psalm will be included as one of the two Scriptures. With their rich history in the Jewish tradition and in the early Church, and their later use in Calvin’s Geneva Psalter,¹⁸ they are a common part of Canadian Presbyterian worship services. It is their usefulness for contemplation that makes them an important choice for this project. Rich with natural imagery and language that invites devotion, many of the Psalms offer a feast for contemplation. In this context they will not be sung or read responsively, as they so often are. Instead, one voice will simply read a selection from a psalm such as forty-six, with its familiar words, “Be still, and know that I am God.”

Because contemplation can be defined as “the active use of the mind to engage God through reading and praying of Scripture or some other devotional practices,”¹⁹ one other reading will be chosen each week. It will be brief so as not to overwhelm the

¹⁶ Ibid., 17.

¹⁷ Schwanda, ““To Gaze on the Beauty of the Lord,”” 70.

¹⁸ Cheslyn Jones et al., eds. *The Study of Liturgy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 227.

¹⁹ Schwanda, ““To Gaze on the Beauty of the Lord,”” 68.

listeners, and it may be connected with an additional poem or other written material. During the season of Advent, for instance, words from Anne Weems on the theme of waiting for God may be read; in any season, brief words from one of Henri Nouwen's books may direct a participant's heart to adoration and rest.

Because this service will include only a small number of worshipers, there will need to be a fresh way of serving the Eucharist. It will be essential, as always, to prepare one loaf of bread and a chalice of wine. These will be placed on the small Communion table before worship begins, and will remain visible throughout the service as wordless symbols, something that is so often appreciated by introverts.²⁰ After the presider breaks the bread and lifts the cup during the words of institution, they will be shared by intinction. While this method is used annually at the congregation's World Communion Service, it may not be familiar to some and this may necessitate instruction. Before worship begins, the minister will indicate that a sizeable piece of bread is to be torn from the loaf and dipped in the cup. The minister will hold the elements, one in each hand, moving from person to person while they remain seated. Rather than along the pews, this method offers two gifts to introverts. They are not forced to interact with someone they may not know as they pass the elements from one person to another. There is also a measure of privacy, because the minister's body provides a physical barrier while bread and wine are handled and eaten. This avoids over-familiarity and public actions that many introverts do not enjoy.²¹

²⁰ McHugh, *Introverts in the Church*, 192.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 188.

The elements themselves will be carefully prepared. On Sunday mornings, grape juice is used because the elders reason that it offers hospitality to children and remembers alcoholics. For Wednesday evening services, however, the elders decided that wine will be used instead as an alternative and enriching experiencing for those who wish to receive it. A printed notice indicating this difference is essential in order to avoid surprise or disappointment. The bread will also be different than the customary loaf purchased at the local grocery store. Each Wednesday afternoon, the congregation hosts a fresh food program that feeds local families living in government-subsidized neighbourhoods. Thanks to a generous local bakery, this always includes the distribution of bread. The minister will bring a small loaf or bun from that community gathering so that it can be shared with the wider community. This is an important and symbolic distribution among the body of Christ. It ensures that the small evening Eucharist is not an isolated event for introverts alone, but a community feast in which all are welcome to be fed.

Whether introvert or extrovert, the people within the Trafalgar congregation understand what it is to be tired. Particularly after a long season of anxiety and hard work tending to the roof and an increasing local mission, many church members long for rest. For this reason, guest and host language will be woven into words of invitation to the Table:

L: In the homes of Peter and Jairus, Martha and Mary, Jesus was always the guest.

P: At the meal tables of the wealthy where he pled the case of the poor, he was always the guest.

L: Upsetting polite company, befriending isolated people, welcoming the stranger, he was always the guest.

P: But here, at this table, he is the host.

L: Those who wish to serve him must first be served by him, those who want to follow him must first be fed by him, those who would wash his feet must first let him make them clean.

P: For this is the table where God intends us to be nourished; this is the time when Christ can make us new.

L: So come, you who hunger and thirst for a deeper faith and a better life and a fairer world. Jesus Christ, who has sat at our tables now invites us to be guests at his.²²

Here are words and actions underlining a complex reality of faith, namely that “Jesus welcomes and needs welcome; Jesus requires that followers depend on and provide hospitality.”²³ Adapted from Iona Community with its monastic roots, this set of responses is a reminder that worshipers come as recipients of bread and wine, mercy and grace. Participants are released from the obligations and expectations of a host, if only for a few moments. Just as there was a time for Martha’s practical hospitality and busyness, so this is a time to come as Mary and sit at the feet of Jesus ready to receive what he offers (Luke 10:38-42).

This release from the role of host, however, will also draw attention to unity among the guests. While introverts may prefer to remain at the edge of a gathering,²⁴ the arrangement of the pews will be such that there is no back row. Those who may be more comfortable sitting at the end of a pew, rather than immediately next to the Communion table may do so. Still, each worshiper will be on equal footing. The hope is that as everyone is fed, the eyes of each are opened to recognize a shared humanity. Experiencing vulnerability, along with God’s grace, not only deepens the bond among the gathered

²² Wild Goose Worship Group, *A Wee Worship Book: Fourth Incarnation* (Glasgow, Scotland: Wild Goose Publications, 1999), 84.

²³ Pohl, *Making Room*, 17.

²⁴ Helgoe, *Introvert Power*, 7.

community but deepens sensitivity to all those beyond the church who are also, for whatever reason, vulnerable, too.²⁵

For a congregation that is tired after a season of stress and the hard work of mission, and for introverts who are tired after a day of stimulation, this invitation to the Table offers much-needed balm, but it does not deny the reality and importance of faithful action. In fact, as it recalls those times when Jesus found welcome among his followers, it underscores the importance of offering hospitality. The roles of guest and host are not once-and-for-all identities but fluid, interchangeable roles for Jesus and for God's people. In a consumer world, where too often church worship and programs are regarded as products to be consumed, this mysterious language of giving and receiving offers an important lesson. To engage in this Eucharist is to be fed, so that in other times and places participants might feed others.

After everyone has become still in God's presence, taken up the opportunity to contemplate God's goodness and received God's gifts of bread and wine, they must be made ready to go back out into the world. Words drawn from the Book of Common Worship will end the sharing of the Eucharist:

O Lord, support us all the day long,
until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes,
the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over,
and our work done; then Lord, in your mercy,
grant us safe lodging,
a holy rest and peace at the last. Amen.²⁶

²⁵ Pohl, *Making Room*, 65.

²⁶ Presbyterian Church in Canada, *Book of Common Worship*, 245.

In these words, rest becomes more than just a few quiet moments at the end of the day. This prayer, which has been used for generations, perhaps as far back as the sixteenth century, speaks of the ultimate rest promised by the resurrection.²⁷

Finally, responsive words of blessing will end the service. Having been joined together in the silence and the sharing of the meal, even introverts will be ready to quietly acknowledge one another and speak together:

L: On our heads and houses

P: The blessing of God.

L: In our coming and going,

P: The peace of God.

L: In our life and believing,

P: The love of God.

L: At our end and our beginning,

P: The arms of God to welcome us and bring us home. Amen.²⁸

This, too, gently draws everyone, but especially introverts, out of their introspective thoughts. It remembers and celebrates all of the people and activities in their lives as places and situations where God is present. The expansive framework of eternal life is once again offered so that it can be carried back out into the world as a comfort and hope.

Each element of worship is carefully crafted in order to offer a broad welcome, but with a special hope of helping introverts access the Eucharist. Although introverts need to be challenged to experience God in ways that stretch us,²⁹ for Trafalgar Presbyterian, with its boisterous community life, such a service will be a gift to quiet and introspective people. It is also expected that people who are less introverted will learn a new spiritual

²⁷ Congram, *This Presbyterian Church of Ours*, 103.

²⁸ Wild Goose Worship Group, *A Wee Worship Book*, 66.

²⁹ McHugh, *Introverts in the Church*, 193.

discipline. Contemplative prayer, while it may come more naturally to some personality types, is useful for everyone who wishes to draw closer to God. A spirit of gentleness will create a space of safety where everyone can listen for God's voice, be fed with the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, and made ready to go out into a busy and hungry world.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter contains all that was required to host a new weekly contemplative Eucharist. The service was undertaken on a trial basis only, for not less than twelve weeks, and leadership was left primarily with the minister. With some surprises along the way, this initiative gathered members for worship that nourished both introverts and extroverts, inspiring and equipping them for further life in Christ. A questionnaire asked participants to assess themselves as introverts or extroverts and evaluate their experience with the service. The results will inform the future ministry of the Trafalgar congregation.

Introducing a New Weekly Communion Service

A new weekly Eucharist addressed a number of realities in the congregation: an awareness of an extroverted culture, an increasingly diverse congregation, and a long season of struggle and frustration with the building. Elders were eager to shift the congregation's focus from bricks and mortar issues to spiritual pursuits, and a worship service would offer much needed food for the soul for leaders and parishioners alike. It also required very little investment of money or leadership. Even as a small and simple initiative, it promised growth; sharing food and drink at the Lord's Table held the promise

of deepened relationships among those who shared the cup, as well as greater strength for the ongoing mission of the church. This new service came with a sense of relief and hope for fresh life within and beyond Trafalgar.

Timeline

In June 2015, I brought the idea of a new contemplative service to the Session of Trafalgar. I proposed a brief and simple Communion service once a week, lasting approximately thirty minutes. General introverted and extroverted personality traits were discussed and most elders were already familiar with the MBTI assessment. Because some elders appreciate the time to think through large decisions, there was no formal motion or vote at that time. At the September meeting, however, I formally presented the request and asked for support. The service would be small in scale and require no new funding, and there was no opposition. There was not a great deal of confidence that many would attend, either, although a few of our twelve elders expressed personal interest. There was agreement that those unable to attend on Sunday mornings might be appreciative of this additional opportunity, as well as those who may prefer a quieter and more contemplative style of worship. Because the session doubted that the congregation was familiar with the term Eucharist rather than Communion, it was suggested that both words should be used until the church had learned the new term. A motion passed, declaring that this new service would begin on October 7 and continue until the end of December, at which point its usefulness would be evaluated.

It was important to share the news that this new service would be offered. It was easily advertised in the weekly printed bulletin and email newsletter. The details were also

added to the church website. Because I noticed among my colleagues a general sense of stress, overwork and a need for renewal, I began to share the news with them as well, offering a service in which they could be a guest and soak in a time of silence. I invited my Micah Group friends, most of whom were full time pastors or preachers. I also contacted our local mission partner, Frontline Outreach, and invited the Executive Director, a community pastor who I knew to have a gruelling schedule. Although in the end only a few of them ever attended, I still believe the invitation was important to offer. I spoke to a number of local friends and members of the congregation who demonstrated introverted personality traits, explaining how the service might be helpful for them. I shared the invitation on Facebook as well.

Having already begun to consider the content for this new service, I created an order of service quickly. A variety of sources were used, including *The Book of Worship for Ordinary Radicals* that was part of the Micah Group program at Fuller, the *Order for Compline* at the Sisterhood for St. John the Divine in Toronto where I often spent time in silence, the *Wee Worship Book* that I found when I visited the Iona Abbey some years earlier and the Presbyterian Church in Canada's *Book of Common Worship* that was already very familiar to me and to the congregation.

At the first service there were nine people in attendance. We achieved a quiet space and although it was not yet dark, candlelight was welcome as the sun was setting. Being unaccustomed to such a gentle service, I felt awkward and clunky as I spoke and moved. My own nervousness resulted in shorter periods of silence than I had hoped for. Worshipers were hesitant also, unsure of themselves in a new setting. Clearly,

contemplative prayer was a skill to be learned and this new project would require patience.

After that first week, attendance stayed at about eight to ten people, although some weeks it swelled to fourteen or dipped as low as six. Even in the first month it became clear that despite the fact that each week the numbers were small, the service was drawing from a much larger pool of people. With only one or two exceptions, the faces were different every week. Children and teenagers came with their parents; several mothers came by themselves; two couples liked to attend together. To our surprise, one evening midway through the liturgy, the sanctuary door opened and an unfamiliar man walked in. He sat silently in a back pew, far removed from worship, where he could barely be seen. At the conclusion of the service, I took the bread and cup to him and asked if he, too, would like to be fed. As he smiled and took up my offer, I realized that he was a parent waiting for his child to finish a music lesson. He apologized for intruding, explaining that he attended another church, and I responded by offering words of welcome. It was a beautiful moment in which I was honoured to extend a small moment of hospitality. This would not be last time God's beautiful welcome would become visible.

The informal feedback I received in those first three months was all positive. Some of the people who attended acknowledged their introversion and were glad of the silence. Others were extroverted and happy to experience a new kind of worship. For that reason, I asked the session if the twelve-week trial period could be extended and they agreed. Plans were put in place to continue the services after the Advent and Christmas seasons, with a break of two weeks over the busy holiday period. Attendance stayed

consistent during that time and the service continued to welcome new visitors and repeat guests.

As planned, there was little or no chatting before or after the time of worship. Most people arrived promptly at 7 p.m. and left quietly as soon as the candle was extinguished. I began to notice, however, that there were occasionally small conversations between worshipers as they prepared to leave. In one such exchange, a man new to the church made a passing reference to being cold. The elder inquired further and discovered that after being evicted from his apartment, he was living in his car. He hoped that this was only a temporary arrangement, but the elder was immediately and justifiably alarmed. It was January, and the nighttime temperatures were below minus ten degrees. Having met only months before, the elder invited the man home for a shower and a good night's sleep. Later, they would offer additional help finding housing and moving belongings. It was a glimpse of God's Kingdom where all are fed, love is shared and welcome abounds.

In June 2016, the service, like most activities at the church, was suspended for two months. Because I would be away for nine weeks on study leave, on vacation and offering conference leadership, this seemed reasonable from a leadership perspective. It also took into consideration that many families would be travelling and on vacation themselves. Upon return to the church in the fall, I asked the elders whether they felt the weekly Eucharist should continue. As long as I was willing to lead it, they felt it was helpful to the congregation. The services began again in October 2016 with continued, steady attendance from the congregation.

That season, two young guests arrived for worship. The brother and sister came from the congregation's low-income partner neighbourhood. I knew them both from the

weekly fresh food distribution, and had once visited the young woman in hospital at her mother's request because she was suffering with severe mental illness. Their discomfort was clear, as they were almost entirely unchurched. However, a church member ensured that they picked up worship bulletins and directed them to sit down and they settled into worship. It was during the sharing of the elements that I was suddenly faced with a new situation. The young woman, as I stood in front of her, looked at me and said, "I can't do this. I have OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder)." I smiled and continued to serve the others. Once the bread and cup had been shared, I moved back to her and placed my hand on her forehead, offering a very brief word of blessing. She smiled back at me. The two have been back from time to time, and now are known by name by several church members. I marvel that the Lord's Table is a place where all are welcome.

Leadership

As an already busy pastor, I knew to be careful not to overload my schedule as this new service was added. My strategy was to keep everything simple, so that after the initial investment of planning and creating, it would require little time or energy to sustain. The weekly order of service was static and would need no weekly attention, as the Sunday bulletin did. Because it was such a brief service, I began to schedule other Bible studies, visits and meetings at its conclusion so that I was not out an on additional evening during the week. Wearing robes meant I could simply attend in street clothes; this was especially important because on Wednesdays I was usually in jeans in order to work at the fresh food distribution. The sanctuary arrangement was static, with the table and one large pillar candle kept in place from week to week.

The service was created with optional music. This was for two reasons. One was that it prevented the service from being overwhelmed with sounds or wordy hymns. The other and the most important reason was leadership. Our current music director faced a family crisis in the spring of 2015. He was already overwhelmed and not able to take on additional responsibilities. While the congregation boasts a large variety of musicians, scheduling one each week and choosing appropriate music would have added stress for both the music director and for me. It was agreed that music was not necessary.

Not long after the services began, I was approached by a church member who played acoustic guitar. He asked if it was permissible to play at the service whenever he attended. He advised me that he may not know ahead of time whether he would be there and that I should not count on him, but that it was a worshipful and contemplative activity for him. I agreed, wanting to make room at the Table for all of the gifts that God might bring together. When in the service he could play and the kind of songs that would be helpful were agreed upon. Those gathered were pleased with his offering and he even now continues to come many Wednesdays, playing quietly after the longest silence. This gave permission to other musicians, who also wanted to share their gifts. There is now flute and cello from time to time, always playing gentle songs as unaccompanied solos. The sound of bagpipes has also been welcomed from a member who plays the “kitchen pipes,” a much smaller and quieter instrument than is familiar to most people. This was especially beautiful during Advent when, after hearing a Scripture passage about longing for God, he played a quiet and mournful chorus of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.”

Just as I was hesitant about the burden of scheduling weekly musicians, so I was reluctant to create a roster of lay assistants for each Wednesday. Thankfully, this lack of

planned leadership has not resulted in more work for me, nor in a failure of others to participate. Surprisingly, a quiet dance has developed in the little community that now meets, in which someone always comes to the door of my office before the service, offering to carry the bread and the cup. There are several people who enjoy reading Scripture, and who read it well with no preparation. I simply hand them a small paper with the evening's lessons and they participate accordingly. At the conclusion of the service, there is always another person who will help to carry the elements to the kitchen and dispose of them, which at times has left me free to tend to the needs of a parishioner. None of this is planned ahead of time and much of it occurs wordlessly. It is a quiet and gentle opportunity in which introverts feel at ease and are glad to serve.

Resources

The church rented the sanctuary out each Wednesday evening, but the music school had agreed that they would leave the space empty and quiet from 6:55 p.m. to 7:45 p.m. This was a good compromise that ensured much-needed rental income while allowing the church's mission to proceed. In practice, unfortunately, this was not as successful as had been hoped for. At times, I had to physically enter the sanctuary and remind the music teacher of the time, either by speaking or by making myself known. Dressed in liturgical robes, my point was clear and the response was immediate. On several occasions, music stands and chairs needed to be moved so that worshipers could access the front corner of the worship space. From time to time parents or teachers, forgetting that worship was in progress, would walk into the sanctuary and disrupt our silence. The largest problem by far was the noise. Children would often play on the other

side of an entrance door, giggling and talking. Parents, waiting for their children, would engage in hearty conversation. This was a particular problem when concerts were to begin at the conclusion of worship and guests gathered in large numbers outside the sanctuary.

This was dealt with in several ways. First, the music school director was alerted each time there was a problem. Often, she apologized and promised to remedy the situation. Second, I waited to begin worship until the musicians had finished moving, parents had taken their children home, and the noise had subsided. This usually meant a delay of only about five to seven minutes. Third, and perhaps best, worshipers began to learn how to be still regardless of their surroundings. When silence was interrupted or outside voices could be heard, everyone practiced simply being motionless and silent, continuing to direct his or her attention to worship. Now into the second season of this weekly Eucharist, the music school has learned how important the worship is to the church. Interruptions are infrequent and children are consistently quieter. On the night of the most recent concert, worshipers were astounded to leave the sanctuary and discover that a crowd of more than fifty adults and children were waiting outside, absolutely silent until worship concluded.

Every Wednesday I brought a small bun or loaf of bread from the community food distribution. Wine, however, had to be purchased. At first, I simply brought a leftover bottle of wine from home, which was simple and required little effort. When the services continued past our initial twelve-week plan, I asked the administrator to regularly purchase red wine and leave it in the church office. For any emergency situations that might arise, grape juice for the regular Sunday morning Communion service is available

from the church pantry. A bag of buns from the food distribution is also kept in the freezer in case it is needed.

During the winter months, Trafalgar prints a notice in the weekly bulletin, advising worshipers of the policy developed by a public health nurse and adopted by Session several years ago:

In this season of cold and flu, during the passing of the peace, you may want to offer a sign of peace or a fist bump, as an alternative to shaking your neighbour's hand. During communion, you are invited to use the provided hand sanitizer. Please do not drink directly from the chalice and keep your fingers out of the cup. Hand sanitizer is also available near the front doors.

For this reason, hand sanitizer was purchased by the Administrator and placed in a prominent position near the front of the church, along with the Wednesday order of service. Most people, already familiar with the church policy, cleaned their hands as they entered. I, too, learned to use the hand sanitizer before worship began, making sure that others could see me. In this way they were assured that the hands breaking bread were clean and also reminded any who had forgotten.

Once the order of service was created (Appendix A), the administrator agreed to format and print copies on beautiful bulletin covers that had been donated by the local funeral home. Plain white, with all but a small nature photo on the front cover, they were visually appealing and gave a feeling of calm and order. Because they remained the same each week, a large stack was printed, folded and kept on hand, yet another detail that did not burden the church with added work.

Assessment and Analysis

In the winter of 2017, I was finally ready to conduct a more formal evaluation of the new service. A short questionnaire, asking for responses from those who had participated even once was shared in the congregation (Appendix B) via email and through printed forms made available on Sunday mornings. From an estimated forty-five people who have attended the Wednesday service since it began, twenty-one anonymous responses were received over the course of four weeks. Twelve considered themselves to have introverted personalities, eight indicated that they were extroverts and one suggested that he was midway between the two, having previously participated in the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. While it was anticipated that both types would participate, it was surprising that the numbers were so balanced. A contemplative service was more inviting to extroverts than expected, although as one participant pointed out, “Even extroverts like a little quiet sometimes.”

While patterns of attendance were mixed, with four people indicating that they participated only once, eight present more than once and nine present most of the time, all of them noticed a difference between Sunday morning worship and the Wednesday contemplative service. Many observed differences in the physical space: dimmer lighting, a smaller seating area, fewer people and a slower, more relaxed atmosphere. At least four responses noted the silence and an equal number noticed the weekly repetition of the liturgy, which allowed for “focus on my personal relationship with God” and “time to think and ponder what is being done and said.” Almost all (twenty) felt that they accommodated the needs of introverts, offering peace, quiet and “a welcome, peaceful break from the busy, stressful, fast-moving day.” The environment, some noted, was

welcomed by introverts, “as well as others who may be mentally or spiritually worn out and need time to just sit quietly in the presence of God.”

The comments clearly revealed a contrast between the social demands of Sunday morning and freedom from them on Wednesdays. Almost half of respondents (ten) noted that there were no social obligations or the need to interact with others. One even remarked that they liked the contemplative Eucharist because “our Sunday morning service is generally a noisy and active time and doesn’t offer much to someone who needs to sit quietly (in fact we’re so friendly that some might think there’s something wrong with someone who wants to sit still!).” Others appreciated that there was little talking, singing or socializing required, and three responses indicated a sense of relief because “no one is watching or judging.” One of the most revealing comments came from a key church leader who wrote, “We can leave quietly after and are not expected to do any church business.”

Overall, the responses were encouraging and appreciative. Although follow-up conversations were offered, none were required but short comments were made from time to time since the service’s beginning in 2015. Wine instead of grape juice was mentioned as favourable and the seating arrangement was surprisingly comfortable for all but one worshiper who found it “awkward.” Although the elders predicted that this second service would be accommodating for those with busy schedules, only one participant said that the service was helpful because it was a better fit for their weekly schedule. For introvert and extroverts alike, the attraction is a unique spiritual experience and contemplative style.

CONCLUSION

Trafalgar Presbyterian Church is a busy congregation in an established Canadian suburb. When the church was planted thirty years ago, the ministry strategy focused on fun and friendship, which was effective and fruitful. Over time, however, both the church and the neighbourhood began to change and this approach became less helpful. The increasing challenge of diversity and a leaky roof left the church's leadership exhausted and discouraged. Still, the elders reached a time in which they believed that God was leading them to consider possibilities for fresh growth.

This project created an opportunity for development that was deep and wide. It acknowledged that the character of Sunday morning worship is boisterous and joyful, and that such an environment can be demanding for those whose personalities are introverted. It sought to offer greater welcome to those on the margins by recognizing the unique needs of those who are introverts and extroverts, each to varying degrees. An alternative service in a contemplative style not only recognized the presence of introverts but celebrated their need for silence and less social interaction. This act of hospitality resonated with the character of the community while enlarging the circle of welcome and making room for those who are too easily overlooked.

The new weekly Eucharist increased the congregation's access to the Lord's Table and offered essential nourishment. Meeting weekly to break bread and share the cup gathered the community together so that their hunger and thirst were satisfied in God's grace. A new Mary-and-Martha rhythm of action and contemplation was created in the life and work of the church. Not only are people engaged in intense local mission programs among neighbours who struggle with poverty, mental illness and housing; now

there is also time set aside for intentional concentration on God and for quietly seeking God's transforming power.

This project, while seemingly small in scope, had a remarkable effect on the Trafalgar community. What began as project rooted in hospitality for introverts grew into a service that offers hospitality to extroverts and introverts, church visitors, local colleagues, children and teenagers, those who are poor and those who are mentally ill. In no way did it divide the congregation into two worshiping communities based on personality type. Rather, it created a new sense of appreciation for different types of people and different styles of worship, proving that "when introverts and extroverts are mutually celebrated, not only in word but also in practice, both the depth of the church's ministry and the breadth of her witness are enhanced."¹ It ensured that there are different opportunities to be fed according to the needs and abilities of all those who make up the body of Christ.

This project also helped the congregation take up the ancient practice of contemplative prayer. Because the elders felt it would be helpful to continue the service beyond the initial twelve-week trial period, it has been possible to practice being silent and still until it comes more naturally. In a noisy world, this is a counter-cultural way to worship, but bears fruit among those who engage in it. As a leader I am now more skilled in leading worship, having learned to be more aware of my physical presence and more comfortable in silence while in a group setting. The contemplative prayer has overflowed beyond Wednesday evenings, too. The order of service was used in a recent service at

¹ McHugh, *Introverts in the Church*, 202.

Knox College, the Presbyterian seminary at the University of Toronto and at a retreat for new mothers hosted by Crieff Hills conference centre in Ontario. It was also used by the Trafalgar Session at its January meeting to set the tone for a new year of God's work together. Each time this method of prayer is used it sets up fresh opportunities for God to be at work.

There are signs that this project is having a positive effect on the life and work of the congregation. New friendships have formed among those who attend services together. Tired leaders are finding refreshment through the opportunity to be guests rather than hosts. There is even some evidence of new leaders emerging, having been made ready to begin new initiatives such as a senior's tea or a children's library project. Glimpses of God's Kingdom have strengthened and inspired church members to greater faith. God's Spirit of joy emanates from this initiative, with introverts feeling a sense of belonging and extroverts deepening their spiritual experience.

The Wednesday evening services will continue until June, and the elders will then decide whether they would like to resume them in the fall of 2017. Meanwhile, the results of the questionnaire will be shared along with portions of this paper, so that the community can celebrate its fruitfulness as well as find inspiration for the future. The rhythm of contemplation and mission that has been discovered and the rich gifts that come with thoughtful hospitality will surely give way to more possibilities for growth in the years to come.

APPENDIX A

Communion (Eucharist) Service in a Contemplative Style Wednesday Evenings at 7pm Trafalgar Presbyterian Church

All are welcome to receive communion. Tonight we celebrate with red wine and you may indicate to Rev. Kristine if you prefer bread only. Please ensure that cell phones are off.

L: Blessed be the name of the Lord
from this time on and for evermore.

**P: From the rising of the sun to its setting
the name of the Lord is to be praised.** (Ps 113: 2,3)

A candle is lit.

L: Lord, it is night.

The night is for stillness. Let us be still in the presence of God.
(silence is kept)

It is night after a long day.

What has been done has been done;
what has not been done has not been done. Let it be.

The night is dark. Let our fears of the darkness of the world
and of our own lives rest in you.

The night is quiet. Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,
all dear to us, and all who have no peace.

The night heralds the dawn. Let us look expectantly to a new day,
new joys, new possibilities. Amen.

L: Listen for the Word of the Lord

P: Our ears are open.

Readings from Scripture

L: The Word of the Lord

P: Thanks be to God.

Meditation, poetry or other reading

A hymn may be sung

L: Each thing we have received came from God. Each thing we enjoy
is of God's giving. Each thing for which we hope will come from God. Let our offering
be infused with gratitude.

The offering plates are available as you leave worship.

L: In the homes of Peter and Jairus, Martha and Mary,
Jesus was always the guest.

**P: At the meal tables of the wealthy where he pled
the case of the poor, he was always the guest.**

L: Upsetting polite company, befriending isolated people,
welcoming the stranger, he was always the guest.

P: But here, at this table, he is the host.

L: Those who wish to serve him must first be served by him,
those who want to follow him must first be fed by him,
those who would wash his feet must first let him make them clean.

**P: For this is the table where God intends us to be
nourished; this is the time when Christ can make us new.**

L: So come, you who hunger and thirst for a deeper faith
and a better life and a fairer world. Jesus Christ, who has sat at our tables now invites
us to be guests at his.

L: The Lord be with you.

P: And also with you.

L: Lift up your hearts.

P: We lift them to the Lord

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

P: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

L: Lord, our gratitude, praise and our hearts full of love—these you
deserve. For when we were nothing, you made us something. When we lost our way or
turned away, you did not abandon us. When we came back to you, your arms opened
wide. So now, in gratitude, we join our voices together:

**P: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and
earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in
the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

L: Lord, for us you were born. For us you healed, preached, taught
and showed the way to heaven. For us you were crucified and for us you rose again.
Although our hands our empty and our hearts often full of wrong things, with you is
mercy and the power to change us. This is your mystery:

P: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

L: Lord as we come to share the riches of your table, we cannot
take bread and forget those who are hungry. We cannot share the cup and forget those
who are thirsty. And so we pray that you will take our prosperity and put it at the
service of the poor; take our fullness and put it at the service of the empty. Let your
Spirit settle on this bread and this cup, and let your Spirit heal us and nourish us, that
we may share your love until your kingdom comes again.

P: Amen.

L: He whom the universe could not contain is present to us in this bread. He who redeemed us and called us by name now meets us in this cup. Take this bread and wine: in them God comes to us so that we may come to God.

Bread and wine are shared

L: Lord, support us all the day long,
until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes,
the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over,
and our work done; then Lord, in your mercy,
give us safe lodging,
a holy rest and peace at the last. Amen.

L: On our heads and houses

P: The blessing of God.

L: In our coming and going,

P: The peace of God.

L: In our life and believing,

P: The love of God.

L: At our end and our beginning,

P: The arms of God to welcome us and bring us home. Amen.

It is good that you have come to worship tonight.

Please speak to the minister after the service if you need further care or wish to receive more information about the Trafalgar community. Visit our website www.trafalgarChurch.ca and follow us on Facebook.

APPENDIX B

Trafalgar Presbyterian Church
Wednesday Evening Eucharist Worship Survey
January 2016

I am conducting research as a part of my Doctor of Ministry studies and may use this anonymous information for my final project. Please fill it out and return electronically or in print form no later than January 14th.

This project will explore introverts in the Church. Introverts are often marked by a preference for quiet spaces and smaller groups, and enjoy a rich inner life. They are renewed by spending time looking inward, perhaps alone. Extroverts are drawn to busier environments and the company of others, and often recharge by interacting with the world around them. Each has their own gifts and challenges.

1. Do you consider yourself to be an introvert?

Yes

No

2. Have you participated in Wednesday worship Eucharist services?

Once

More than once

Most Wednesdays

3. Did you notice any difference from Sunday morning worship?

Yes

No

What did you notice?

4. Do you feel that these services accommodated special needs that introverts might have (a need for quiet, avoiding forced personal interaction, etc?)

Yes

No

How were these needs accommodated?

*Thank you for helping with this project.
If you would like to discuss this further please contact me
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