

**Gathering in Aotearoa:
Understanding the Collective Spirituality
of Baptists in New Zealand**

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No other source has been used for this Thesis
except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

Abstract

This thesis follows the method of British Baptist liturgical theologian Christopher Ellis, applying it to the gathered worship of Aotearoa Baptists. The first chapter establishes the project as a 'liturgical theology' as opposed to a 'theology of worship', while at the same time acknowledging the critical step that Ellis adds to the method of Orthodox liturgical theologian Alexander Schmemmann. It also clarifies the project's methodological approach, tools, aim and scope. The second chapter uses the framework of Transplanting, Trending and Tending to provide a summary of the key developments in Aotearoa Baptist worship, from the first baptistic worship in the Nelson region to the present diverse nation-wide expression. Chapters 3-7 discuss five broad areas of Aotearoa Baptist worship: 'Sharing' (offered as a new category for description of Baptist worship), Prayer, Singing, Scripture and Sacraments. Following the first three steps of the method of Ellis, each chapter first outlines the variety of data for each grouping of activity, clarifying the meaning of that activity and discerns its wider liturgical value. The final chapter, representing the final step of Ellis, seeks opportunities for the development of Aotearoa Baptist worship for each category of activity.

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Dale Campbell
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1. Method: Researching Baptist Worship in Aotearoa

“[A]ttempts to reflect on the theology of Free Church worship are distinctly thin on the ground. Indeed ... there is a need to develop ways of understanding the free worship of the Free Churches.”

(Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering*, 7-8)

Introduction: “Gathering in Aotearoa”

Sunday by Sunday, throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, 243 Baptist congregations gather into church buildings, rented halls, homes or other spaces, to engage in ‘worship’. Just what do these Aotearoa Baptists tend to do, or indeed intend to do, in those gatherings? What similarities and differences might be discovered across the congregations of Aotearoa Baptist churches?

Existing studies of worship as a whole have tended to neglect Baptists, being dominated by the more liturgical traditions such as Orthodox, Catholic, and Episcopal/Anglican. On the other hand, treatments of Baptist worship are often focused on one specific aspect at a time, such as the chapters of Rodney Wallace Kennedy and Derek C. Hatch’s excellent recent edited volume, *Gathering Together: Baptists at Work in Worship*, written from a United States context but probing global themes.¹ In 2004, British Baptist and liturgical theologian Christopher J. Ellis published *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in the Free Church Tradition*, setting forth what arguably remains the formative exploration of, as he calls it, “the free worship of the Free Churches.”² In addition to its treatment of historical development and its engagement with neighbouring liturgical traditions and theologies, his study drew upon the results of a questionnaire and survey concerning the worship practices and attitudes of British Baptist churches, published in 1999 under the title *Baptist Worship Today*.³ Locally, discussions of Baptist worship in Aotearoa are even more sparse. The most sustained academic treatment is Steven O’Connor’s 2001 thesis, which observed the worship practices of participating congregations

¹ Rodney Kennedy and Derek Christopher Hatch, *Gathering Together: Baptists at Work in Worship* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013).

² Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (SCM Press, 2004), 8; see also his later chapter based on the same research, “Worship at the Heart of Life,” in *Currents in Baptist Theology of Worship Today*, ed. Keith G. Jones and Parush R. Parushev (Praha 6, Czech Republic: International Baptist Theological Seminary of the European Baptist Federation, 2007), 41–58.

³ Christopher J. Ellis, *Baptist Worship Today* (Didcot: The Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1999).

and sought to discern from them “the Liturgy and Theology of New Zealand Baptists.”⁴ No academic treatment since has reflected on the extent to which the theology and practice of Aotearoa Baptist worship has been shaped by subsequent cultural developments, either local or global.

As reflected in our title, this research project aims to follow the lead of Ellis’s *Gathering*. Although we shall see that in recent decades, Aotearoa Baptist worship patterns have been shaped more by global trends than its historic link with English Baptist patterns, the influence of those patterns remain, and make it fitting to link our study with that of Ellis. It is hoped that this research may be useful to both local denominational leadership and worship planners as well as others interested in Free Church liturgical theology or Baptist Worship.

Theological Methodology: “Understanding...”

Worship has been studied using a range of approaches and methods: prescriptive and descriptive, quantitative and qualitative. In constructing our picture of Aotearoa Baptist worship, both past and present, it is worth noting the challenges and limitations of the task of liturgical theology. Is liturgical theology able to rise up and regulate liturgical practice, in ‘top down’ fashion, with clear biblical and theological warrant? Or must liturgical theologians be content only to critique by comparison and contrast, working their way ‘bottom up’ to their theological understandings?

The approaches of O’Connor and Ellis study may be illustrative. On the one hand, O’Connor’s thesis, whilst engaging in description, goes further than merely unearthing the theology (*lex credendi*) inherent in the liturgical practices (*lex orandi*) of Baptists in Aotearoa. Whilst O’Connor was not aiming at a once-for-all theology of worship for all traditions, his aim was to offer a normative vision for current Baptists in Aotearoa; namely to provide “solutions” to the “discrepancies between the historically continuous Baptist vision of the church and current New Zealand Baptist worship practices.”⁵ His method was to bring together insights from i) a descriptive historical analysis, ii) a treatment of historic values unique to Baptists and thus Baptist worship, and iii) a section outlining ways in which George Lindbeck’s ‘cultural-linguistic’ understanding of Christian doctrine might endorse liturgical actions which display Christian culture and language. From those he developed his normative vision, set forth in his

⁴ Steven B. O’Connor, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi: An Investigation into the Liturgy and Theology of New Zealand Baptists” (Th.M. diss., University of Auckland, 2001); see also Steven B. O’Connor, “Worship in New Zealand Baptist Church Life: Dynamic Centre or Means to an End?,” *NZJBR* 7 (2002): 15–35; “Worship: Revealing What We Really Believe,” *NZJBR* 8 (2003): 52–76.

⁵ Steven B. O’Connor, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi,” 105.

section “Liturgy for Life – How Then Should We Worship”; its prescriptive aim being evident in the word ‘should’.⁶

Ellis, on the other hand, takes a less prescriptive or ‘top down’ approach. Early on in *Gathering*, he distinguishes between a ‘theology of worship’ and a ‘liturgical theology’.⁷ Whereas a ‘theology of worship’ tends to see theology as the normative regulator for the practice of worship, a ‘liturgical theology’ tends to see theology as a posterior reflection on prior acts of worship. Two points about the relationship between theology and liturgy emerge from the discussion. The first is historical: *liturgy precedes theology*, which is to say that liturgical action is historically prior to theology. Long before there was ever anything resembling ‘eucharistic theology’, believers broke bread together. Indeed, there will be prior theological convictions, informal or highly developed, which of course find expression in any liturgical action; however, any formal ‘theology of worship’ will be entirely dependent upon existing liturgical events for the data from which it seeks to formulate liturgical norms. The second point is critical, *liturgy needs theology*. Worship practices cannot simply be affirmed as they stand and claimed as ‘tradition’ *via* a merely descriptive ‘liturgical theology’. Like all other areas of the Christian life, they must remain open to the critique of Scripture and theology. For Ellis, although “worship embodies a theology... that theology also needs to bear the same scrutiny which any other theological endeavours may properly face.”⁸ This scrutiny constitutes the final step which Ellis adds to the three-step method of Orthodox liturgical theologian Alexander Schmemmann, forming the four-fold method he employs in his *Gathering*:

1. Establish the liturgical facts
2. Theological analysis of the liturgical facts
3. Synthesis of the inherent theological meaning
4. Liturgical meaning exposed to theological scrutiny

This project will thus be a ‘liturgical theology’ in the vein of Ellis’ *Gathering*. Chapter 2 will tell the general story of Aotearoa Baptist worship. Chapters 3-7 will focus on understanding the data from our current study. For each of these chapters, a first major section will ‘establish the liturgical facts’ (step 1 of the method of Ellis and Schmemmann), and a final section will both explore the theology inherent within these practices, and appreciate the place they have in relation to other practices (steps 2 and 3; Ellis and Schmemmann). Finally, in chapter 8, these practices will be evaluated, outlining various opportunities for development (step 4; Ellis).

⁶ Ibid., 105–23.

⁷ Ellis, *Gathering*, 15–24.

⁸ Ibid., 24.

In his use of Schmemmann's step of 'establishing the liturgical facts', Ellis is well aware of the difficulties in describing Free Church worship.⁹ Less, if any, use of stable textual content (lectionary or prayer book) makes services "different, using an infinitely variable mixture of hymns and extempore or specially written prayers."¹⁰ Like Ellis, we shall attempt to reconstruct our pictures of past and present Aotearoa Baptist worship using what limited resources we have available. As we shall see, some of those resources, such as past records of specific worship actions and present orders of service and the information contained within them, will lend some degree of objectivity to our study.

Focus: "Collective Spirituality..."

The object of our study is gathered worship, or 'collective spirituality'. This focus need not be taken to imply a dualism or hierarchy with respect to 'public' and 'private' worship. Whilst 'gathered' worship is routinely contrasted with 'scattered' mission, the intent here is to acknowledge both that mode of worship (both public and private) which occurs as a local body of believers are 'scattered' into the world, and that mode of worship (both shared and personal) which occurs as they are 'gathered' into one body ('corpus').¹¹ Thus, it is not an arbitrary amalgamation of individual worshippers, but is a shared expression of spiritual devotion; as Ellis writes, "the gathering for worship is itself an expression of communal spirituality."¹²

What are the standard components of collective spirituality? Free Church worship knows no authoritative listing of constitutive elements, but Ellis nonetheless divided his study of Free Church 'embodied spirituality' into five areas: prayer, preaching, singing, the Lord's Supper, and baptism. For Ellis, this order does not imply a Baptist *ordo*, or standard sequence of worship acts in a service, but rather signals the chief actions that express baptistic worship values. Our study will again follow the lead of Ellis, and take a themed approach for analysis in separate chapters. Our study will reframe Ellis' categories as 'prayer', 'singing' and 'Scripture', and will condense 'Lord's Supper' and 'baptism' into 'Sacraments'. Additionally, and significantly, a further category, which we will call 'Sharing' will be introduced, which will describe and understand the unique role that activities such as celebrations, announcements, and testimonies have in Baptist Worship.

⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰ Ibid., 29.

¹¹ See discussion in Alexander Schmemmann, "The Task and Method of Liturgical Theology," in *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader*, ed. Dwight W. Vogel, EBL edition. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016), chapter 6.

¹² Ellis, *Gathering*, 15.

Scope: “Baptists in New Zealand”

The scope of our study is denominationally and geographically selective: churches within the ‘Baptist Union of New Zealand’, a clearly defined population.¹³ This population will be studied by means of both secondary and primary data. The secondary data will outline historical development of worship, incorporating relevant descriptions and assessments of Aotearoa Baptist worship from the past. The sources for these descriptions include biographical accounts and opinions found in articles, celebratory documents (e.g. church anniversary booklets) and other places. These accounts will assist in our efforts to re-tell the story of Baptist Worship in Aotearoa. The primary data, collected specifically for the purpose of this research, will provide a snapshot of the present. Of the 243 member churches at the time which were invited to participate, 71 churches (comprising a total of 78 services) responded to form our sample.¹⁴ The responding churches included both urban and rural, established and newly-planted, a range of cultural mixes from multicultural to mono-cultural, and a range of congregation sizes. A survey gathered basic data about each church, making space for supplementary comments, and a document collection request sought to obtain a copy of each congregation’s ‘order of service’ for a single date: 6 September 2015. Two factors are worth quickly noting. First, this was the first Sunday of the month, on which some if not many Baptist (and other) churches have traditionally chosen to celebrate the Lord’s Supper or communion. Second, Father’s Day fell on this particular Sunday, which, as we shall see in the data chapters, resulted in the ‘Father’ theme affecting the patterning of worship to varying degrees. This coincidence provided an opportunity to witness the unique tendency for Free Churches to improvise and adapt the content of their gatherings.

¹³ This study is thus exclusive of both a) global Baptists outside of Aotearoa New Zealand, and b) local baptistic congregations not affiliated with the ‘Baptist Union of New Zealand’.

¹⁴ This includes orders of service that were repeated for different congregations in the same church community, as well as church communities that had different orders of service for different congregations, which at times reflected a shared approach to worship planning.

2. Context: Locating Baptist Worship in Aotearoa

On the walls at the front, beautifully spelled out in flowers, the years “1851” and “1951” in red and gold on either side of the Church. The organ console is centrally placed in the Church, curtained in blue. There is a wooden gothic-type balustrade around the area where the pulpit stands, about two feet six inches high, also curtained in blue behind its woodwork. The gothic style is in the design of the windows to the front of the Church, in the Communion Table and the Communion chairs. A large impressive pulpit stands centrally, and to its right are choir stalls. In front of this area stands a Communion Table with sufficient high-backed chairs behind and alongside to seat a minister and eight communion servers.

Flags stand on their staffs on either side of the organ, the pipes of which are painted silver. The walls of the Church are an unrelieved cream.

The overall effect is one of dignity and formality, intimidating and awe-inspiring at the same time. The Communion Table and chairs, and the curtained rail by the pulpit, stretching almost the width of the Church, seem to act as a barricade behind which the preacher stands at the pulpit, aloof but in control. These remarks ... simply reflect what was normal in most churches. Contrast that picture with the same scene in the Church of 2001.

The organ pipes, now in gold, are still there but the organ console has been moved to the side. The blue curtains, rich-looking though they were when new, have been replaced by wooden warm-toned panels.

The walls are of contrasting yellow and cream, the dome is in blue, and many features are high-lighted [*sic*] in a stronger, bold blue. A blue carpet covers the front area and the aisles. There are no choir stalls for there is no choir these days, but a spacious area similar to an orchestra pit has taken the place of the stalls. In this area there is room for today’s musicians and their instruments – flute, piano, guitars and drums. The Communion Table is still a centre-piece when it needs to be, but without the uncomfortable chairs. The pulpit has been removed though it still exists for anyone who may wish to use it. In its place is a simple lectern behind which it is difficult to hide! The gothic-style balustrade has gone too. Here and there are sockets and leads for several microphones for singers, musicians or casual speakers. There is an overhead projector which enables lyrics of hymns or choruses to be displayed without need of hymn-books. Sermon-notes, promotional messages, and notices are some of the other items displayed from time to time. A roving microphone allows freedom of movement for a speaker no longer restricted to a pulpit.

The overall effect is less formal, though not casual. It is warm, not cold; open, not closed; friendly, not intimidating; welcoming, rather than dignified and a bit “scary”.¹⁵

Alan Roberts, *Nelson Baptist Church*, 7-8

Introduction: A Frame for the Story

The quote above, illustrating contrasting times Nelson Baptist Church, is suggestive of wider development of Baptist worship throughout Aotearoa. This chapter endeavours to tell that story. As suggested in the title of Alan Davidson and Peter Lineham’s documentation of the development of Christianity in Aotearoa, the spread of the Christian faith can be described in

¹⁵ Alan Roberts, *Nelson Baptist Church: The Journey Continues - A Narrative of the Years 1951 to 2001* (Nelson, New Zealand: Nelson Bays Print, 2002), 7–8.

agricultural language as being ‘transplanted’ in many diverse soils since the age of the Apostles¹⁶. In the same way, the Baptist ways of being Christian, including Baptist patterns of worship, have taken on diverse expressions in various contexts. Accordingly, our first section will be concerned with how a seedling was extracted from the nineteenth century forest of English Baptist worship, and subsequently ‘transplanted’ in the *whenua* (land) of Aotearoa. We will also build upon the transplanting metaphor and consider two distinct ways in which this newly planted tree grew to what it is today. A second section entitled ‘trending’ will explore the ways in which local worship patterns responded to wider global change. A final section will explore the ‘tending’ of liturgical practice, as practitioners explored ways of establishing a liturgical ethos which reflects the unique context of Aotearoa. Although the three headings may seem to some extent to follow a chronological progression from 1851 to the present, they are better understood to be seen as overlapping modes of influence, adaptation and adjustment.

The amount of discussion given to worship in *The New Zealand Baptist*, let alone the more sustained treatments in church histories and other publications is surprisingly high, so our discussion will only survey enough detail to illustrate the aforementioned phases of establishment and change.¹⁷

Transplanting: English Patterns in a New Colony

It Began With ‘Two or More’ in Nelson

Just as the *tangata whenua* (‘people of the land’) carried within themselves the cultural forms of their Polynesian ancestors, so also the Baptist migrants arriving in a new colony called ‘New Zealand’ carried with them the substantive framework of nineteenth century English Baptist gathered spirituality. Local Baptist historian Martin Sutherland notes that, in the absence of

¹⁶ Allan K. Davidson and Peter J. Lineham, *Transplanted Christianity: Documents Listing Aspects of New Zealand Church History* (Auckland, NZ: Kereru Publishing Limited, 2015).

¹⁷ The following list is indicative of self-published church histories: Alan Roberts, *Nelson Baptist Church: The Journey Continues*; M.A. Davison, *Ponsonby Baptist Church - 1880-1980* (Ponsonby: Ponsonby Baptist Church, 1980); Stan Edgar, *The Epsom Story: A History of the Epsom Baptist Church* (Epsom: Epsom Baptist Church, 2000); Allan Goulstone and Maureen Goulstone, *Opawa Baptist Church: Our Centenary - From Then Until Now - 1911-2011* (Opawa: Opawa Baptist Church, 2011); A.F. Woodbury, *Pastors and People: The Story of One Hundred Years of Wanganui Central Baptist Church, Ingestre Street, 1882-1982* (Whanganui, New Zealand: Wanganui Central Baptist Church, 1982); Angus MacLeod, *The Hamilton Story: A Centennial History of Hamilton Central Baptist Church - 1906 - 2006* (The University of Waikato: Waikato Print, 2006); David R. Wood, *A Tale of Two Seasons: Tawa-Linden Baptist Church 1948-2000 - Volume 2: The Ministries* (Wellington, NZ: NZ Print Limited, 2005); the third chapter on music and worship is self-described as “among the few comprehensive surveys of church music in New Zealand’s Baptist denomination covering the second half of the 20th century” chronologically setting forth the “primary developments and issues” in expert fashion.

Baptist congregations, the earliest baptistic migrants “would settle, comfortably worshipping with other groups – usually Methodist or Congregationalist, sometimes Presbyterian, rarely Anglican – until enough Baptists arrived to set up their own fellowship.”¹⁸ The earliest distinctly baptistic gathered worship activity in Aotearoa seems to be associated, not with Nelson Baptist Church in 1851, let alone its first denominationally-recognized minister, Decimus Dolamore, but rather with one James Poppleton Horne, a migrant carpenter who managed to attract a small similarly-convicted grouping, and eventually wrote to English Baptist contacts in 1849 seeking a minister.¹⁹ Here we see a “nascent church” worshipping together.²⁰ Horne was primed to accept a land grant from the Crown, but another early baptistic migrant, Henry Cooper Daniell, questioned the authenticity of Horne’s group as a truly Baptist fellowship. Soon after Dolamore arrived and joined with Daniell, Horne’s fledgling group disbanded.

This early conflict and competition is significant for the beginnings of Aotearoa Baptist worship. Horne and Daniell, each in their own way, were working out baptistic convictions. On the one hand, we see the ‘separatist’ conviction in Horne, who eagerly begins preaching and evangelism without concern for establishing association with other Baptists. On the other hand, in Daniell, we see something of a ‘catholic’ impulse for covenant and partnership at local and global levels.²¹ This impulse led Daniell to seek to establish the church in connection with the existing wider Baptist movement originating in Britain. Both the ‘separatist’ and the ‘catholic’ impulses have shaped Baptist worship.

As Dollamore and other trained Baptist ministers arrived to lead the growing movement, the ‘hymn sandwich’ service quickly became the earliest established model for worship in Aotearoa. It eventually grew into the following standard order of service, outlined by O’Connor:

Introduction (Call to worship)
Hymn
Prayer (gathering, invocation)
Children’s talk

¹⁸ Martin Sutherland, *Conflict & Connection: Baptist Identity in New Zealand* (Auckland, NZ: Archer Press, 2011), 10; The pattern of a ‘fellowship’ leading to a ‘Church’ would continue, alongside instances where Baptist churches were able to plant as a ‘Church’ from the outset; see G. T. Beilby, *Road To Tomorrow: A Popular Account of One Hundred Years of Baptist Work in New Zealand* (Auckland, NZ: Baptist Union of New Zealand, 1957).

¹⁹ The correspondence of James Poppleton Horne can be read in *The General Baptist Repository and Missionary Observer*, Vol. XI – New Series (London: Benjamin L. Green, Paternoster/Row, 1849), 514-516, which recounts his sense of call to gospel ministry, his experience in doing so, and his request for the support of a minister in his fledgling but ongoing efforts to establish a church and erect a Chapel. In this we can see a small but real amount of gathered baptistic worship activity leading up to and after the time of his writing. Compare with the account of Paul Tonson, *A Handful of Grain: The Centenary History of the Baptist Union of N.Z., Volume 1 – 1851-1882* (Wellington: N.Z. Baptist Historical Society, 1982), 49-50.

²⁰ Sutherland, *Conflict & Connection*, 10–11; earlier still, it could well be that the joint baptism of Horne and one of his earliest fellows may have been the earliest example of Baptist worship in Aotearoa (an occasion which is easy to view as an echo of John Smyth’s self-baptism in the early seventeenth century).

²¹ See McClendon, Harmon and others on Baptists struggling with “catholicity”; particularly James William McClendon and Nancey C. Murphy, *Systematic Theology: Witness* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000); Steven R. Harmon, *Towards Baptist Catholicity: Essays on Tradition and the Baptist Vision* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2006).

Offering
Offering prayer (extempore)
Old Testament Reading
New Testament Reading (readings may be included in the sermon)
Prayer
Sermon (20-30 minutes)
Hymn
Benediction²²

O'Connor observes that, for Baptists, "worship in this period may be characterised as verbal, Word and sermon centred, pastor lead [*sic*], stylised yet with relative informality."²³ In the absence of a minister, Baptist worship would still break forth, initially in simple home gatherings. However, the dominant and lasting pattern was for this worship to grow to be characterised by the following well-established endowments of British Baptist churches: minister, hymnbook, organ and choir.

Minister, Hymnbook, Organ and Choir

The minister was the 'worship leader' for the entire service. Even when a congregation found themselves without a minister, another would often stand in place. The minister's role encompassed all aspects of Baptist worship, providing the overarching structure of the service and leading the participation of the congregation. First, almost all prayer in the service was offered by the minister on behalf of the congregation. A member of the congregation or deacon might give the prayer for the offering, but other than that it was the duty of the minister. Second, the singing was led by the minister. Different ministers had differing levels of musical ability, but the selection and leadership of the songs was part of their role. Third, the preaching of scriptural sermons was the keystone and climax of Aotearoa Baptist worship, and was the minister's job. Another might read the Bible reading. Fourth, in addition to preaching the Word, the minister was the one qualified to administer the Sacraments of the Lord's Supper and baptism. The minister was thus the conductor who provided continuity to services. Nonetheless, non-Baptists observing these services saw them as having a high degree of spontaneity.²⁴

The English Baptist hymnbook naturally served a dominant role in early song choice. This dominance did not restrict them from using non-Baptist hymnbooks; for example, from the first service onward at Wanganui Baptist in 1882, "Sankey's Hymns (much beloved in those

²² Steven B. O'Connor, "Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi," 22.

²³ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁴ A local newspaper's description of the opening services of Hamilton in 1906 described them as "well marked with that spontaneity which forms the chief charm of those religious bodies to which man has given the name of nonconformist"; quoted in Angus MacLeod, *The Hamilton Story*, 3.

days) were to be used until Baptist Hymnals could be bought.”²⁵ The minister could often lead the whole service from the Bible and a hymnbook.

The familiar use of organs to support hymnody did not occur immediately at the start. The initial temporary context for the gathered worship of most of the earliest Aotearoa Baptists was often the private home of a member or a rented hall. This meant that the singing of these groups was usually led and supported by whatever instruments were present in these homes, such as smaller organs, harmoniums or pianos. At times, as in the early days of Tawa-Linden Baptist worship, the organ, along with hymnbooks and lectern, were transported weekly to the meeting.²⁶ Obtained via purchase or donation, more permanent pipe organs became common. These organs needed to be pumped, such as the “two-manual Astey organ” at Wanganui Central, which was upgraded in 1924 by an electric blower with “a 1/4hp motor replacing successive generations of young men acting as organ pumpers.”²⁷

Choirs had a significant role for many churches, bridging the organ’s tones and congregation’s voices. This ranged from leading the congregational singing, facilitating hymn studies and gospels, and special choral concerts and presentations.²⁸ At times, entire services would be devoted to worship through song, such as the (at least) annual “Service of Praise” at Wanganui Central leading up to and around 1900.²⁹

The Distinctive Centrality of Music

As at home, so also in the colony, music had a particularly large role, second only to preaching in Baptist worship. Baptist hymnody was thought to have a distinctive feel to it. In the midst of his impressively thorough ‘Music and Worship’ chapter in a history of Tawa-Linden Baptist Church, local educationalist and church member David R. Wood outlines three “musical distinctives” which characterised mid-twentieth century Aotearoa Baptists:

- (i) an amateur enthusiasm – unlike some of the ore established church denominations, Baptist musicians were rarely paid, nor expected to have formal training; (ii) prominence of congregational singing (invariably led by pastors); and (iii) the selection and use of popular hymns and songs for evangelism.³⁰

The “amateur enthusiasm” Wood observes, should not be taken to imply a consistent lack of musical quality. Particularly in churches with the appropriate instrumental and musical resources, musical variety could extend to special musical performances from solos to quartets,

²⁵ A.F. Woodbury, *Pastors and People*, 7.

²⁶ David R. Wood, *A Tale of Two Seasons*, 31.

²⁷ A.F. Woodbury, *Pastors and People*, 33.

²⁸ I am grateful for the helpful comments of John Douglas on the nature of "hymn studies" (educative performances of a hymn including historical and scriptural content) and "gospels" (popular songs used in evangelistic services).

²⁹ A.F. Woodbury, *Pastors and People*, 13.

³⁰ David R. Wood, *A Tale of Two Seasons*, 30.

and even cantatas or content from oratorios.³¹ Wood also rightly draws attention to the Baptist reputation for strong congregational singing. The combination of organ, choir and congregation had a rich choral sound, where it was common for congregation members to take up a harmony part, such as alto, tenor or bass, lending support to his claim that Baptists earned “a reputation amongst other denominations as hearty singers.”³² His observation that the singing was “led by pastors” reflects an expectation that the minister would lead the singing regardless of their level of musical gifting. The leadership of the minister would thus be supported or complemented by the musical leadership of organ and choir. Finally, the reference to the evangelistic use of songs reflects the custom of morning services and singing being directed at nurturing existing disciples, and evening services aimed at winning over new ones, with Sankey songs often featuring. This final note already hints at the influence of the trend of North American revivalism.

The following portrayal shows the prevailing pattern of worship from the dawning of the twentieth century:

The pattern of Baptist worship in New Zealand was well established... Sunday morning services, usually at 11am, focused on building up believers. The Baptist Church Hymnal and the Authorised Version of the Bible were used. The minister led the whole service, which included a brief childrens' [sic] talk and a Bible-based sermon. Most churches had a choir to help with the singing and to provide an anthem. [...] The evening services were regarded primarily as an evangelistic outreach. Redemption Songs, Sankey's Sacred Songs and Solos and Alexander's Hymns were the preferred hymnbooks. Ministers were expected to preach evangelistic sermons appealing for decisions for Christ.³³

These patterns of worship, drawing on English Baptist roots, but having taken distinct forms in local soil, continued to be dominant for roughly a century. It was worship which was led entirely by ministers, sourced chiefly from the Baptist Hymnbook, augmented centrally by the organ, and supported vocally by the choir. More substantive changes were to come in the second half of the twentieth century.

Trending: Global Influences in a Growing Movement

In addition to the British influences noted above, the development of Aotearoa Baptist worship is characterised by a posture of receptivity and response to wider patterns of change. In this section, we will explore the three largest of these global trends as they influenced and transformed local worship.

³¹ Ibid., 30–31.

³² Ibid., 34.

³³ Angus MacLeod, *The Hamilton Story*, 7.

Revivalist Worship & Reaching the Lost

We have already seen how a common late nineteenth century pattern, especially for Sunday evening services, was to combine Sankey and other songs with evangelistic preaching.

Around half a decade later, this revivalist trend would have its own revival, being fueled in Aotearoa by the advent of the Billy Graham Crusade of 1959. It not only reinforced the use of popular songs for evangelism, but also boosted church attendance, congregational singing and opportunities for musicians.³⁴

O'Connor also notes the revivalist ministry of Joseph W. Kemp of Scotland as instrumental in Aotearoa Baptist worship becoming more revivalist in its use of songs and preaching.³⁵ The conservative and conversionist theological posture of Kemp affected liturgical practice, not only at the Baptist Tabernacle where he served, but through the Baptist movement.³⁶ O'Connor summarises his influence:

The religiosity shaped by Kemp maintains that evangelism is the primary task of the church, and that worship is a resource for evangelism. In this schema worship is not valued for its own sake, but only as a means to an end.³⁷

Practically, this resulted in the use of song being increased, the target of the sermon narrowed, and other elements being reduced or omitted altogether. This shift was not at the same rate for all churches. In many churches, while evening services became increasingly more evangelistic, the morning services still tended to be focused on traditional edification of believers.³⁸

Nonetheless, this increasing evangelistic emphasis represents a radical shift in the understanding of corporate worship, which was less and less seen as an activity to glorify God and edify believers, but also a context in which unbelievers could encounter and respond to the gospel.

Liturgical Renewal & Proclaiming the Word

At various points throughout the twentieth century, alongside conservative efforts to preserve existing worship patterns rather than newer developments, appeals were often heard for the recovery of traditional and liturgical forms, the latter of which came to be known as the Liturgical Renewal movement.

³⁴ David R. Wood, *A Tale of Two Seasons*, 36.

³⁵ Local Baptist historian John Tucker adds necessary context to the “fundamentalist” label given to Kemp, see “Joseph Kemp, Revivalism and the New Zealand Baptist Movement,” in *Baptists and Revival*, ed. Bill Pitts (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, forthcoming).

³⁶ Steven B. O'Connor, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi,” 27–28.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

Persistent voices, even if small in number, saw worship as too informal and in need of reverence. H.H. Driver (Thames Baptist), and L.B. Busfield (*NZ Baptist* editor), among others, called for such things as reverent anticipation instead of “incessant chatting” at the beginning of services, and kneeling at prayer rather than “the custom of sitting”.³⁹ Far from a return to “the ‘bondage’ of the prayer book”, both advocated balance.⁴⁰ Driver argued that “[i]n the Puritan reaction from formal and soul-less ritualism the pendulum swung to the opposite extreme; if we could find “the golden mean” it would be for our profit and God’s Glory.”⁴¹ He also sought an intentional use of Scripture, contending that “history and prophecy, psalm and proverb, gospel and epistle should all find due place in our weekly services”⁴² Following the example of “British Baptists”, Busfield advocated the use of “liturgical material such as the *Magnificat*, and the *Nunc Dimittus* alongside newer material such as Sankey’s hymns.”⁴³

The lasting impact of these calls seems to have been minimal. Individual ministers have had more ‘liturgical’ approaches within the Baptist movement, but such interests have never become a normative part of Aotearoa Baptist worship.⁴⁴

Charismatic Worship & Catching the Spirit

Another wave of change came with the Charismatic Renewal (1970’s), which significantly impacted worship in many churches around the world, including Aotearoa.⁴⁵ MacLeod documents the general patterns of change:

The influence of the charismatic movement spread steadily... Pop bands replaced organs. The overhead projector edged out hymn books. Choirs disappeared and worship teams took over... More people began to clap and raise their hands. Formality was out. Informality was in.⁴⁶

It would be difficult to over-estimate the influence of Charismatic Pentecostalism upon Aotearoa Baptist worship. It was not a uniform influence, neatly transitioning each congregation toward a similar expression; rather, its influence is seen just as much by those churches which resisted it as by those who embraced it, as well as everything in between. Indeed, as O’Connor notes, “all have been affected by the charismatic movement, but not all in the same way.”⁴⁷

³⁹ Ibid., 19.H.H. Driver, “Our Sabbath Worship,” *NZ Baptist* 7.61 (1889): 9; quoted in Steven B. O’Connor, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi,” 16.

⁴⁰ Steven B. O’Connor, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi,” 16.

⁴¹ H.H. Driver, “Our Sabbath Worship,” 11.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Steven B. O’Connor, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi,” 20.

⁴⁴ The level of influence appears to have been notably more amongst English Baptists.

⁴⁵ See the brief account in Roselynn Smelt and Yong Jui Lin, *New Zealand* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2008), 87.

⁴⁶ Angus MacLeod, *The Hamilton Story*, 103.

⁴⁷ Steven B. O’Connor, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi,” 34.

Often the change into this form of singing occurred when ministers or song leaders led the way. John Wimber had nation-wide influence.⁴⁸ Other leaders were local, such as John Beaumont at Hamilton Central.⁴⁹ Change was met with both suspicion and delight. On the one hand, some expressed fears of “excesses of showmanship entering the services and divisions amongst members”; whilst on the other hand, some would have agreed with the Hamilton Central voices who saw in the renewal “a deep work of the Spirit being wrought in many lives and... even signs of possible revival.”⁵⁰ The *New Zealand Baptist* contains differing views concerning charismatic change. In 1978, the Reverend F. D. Creighton wrote that worship “needs to be free and spontaneous, less formal”. In the next decade, Roy Bullen’s final comments as editor of the *New Zealand Baptist* lamented ‘praise and worship’ overshadowing the sermon. “What we used to call the ‘shorts and the feature film has now been reversed. Now the ‘shorts’ or ‘preliminaries’ seem to have taken centre stage and the visiting preacher finds himself called onto the stage 90 minutes after the opening.”⁵¹

Behind these changes was a desire to move with the waves and currents of the Holy Spirit. Also, O’Connor is right to identify Baptist values such as ‘soul competency’ or ‘priesthood of all believers’ as part of the reason the charismatic renewal had such wide influence upon Baptists.

The egalitarian ethos of Baptist church life, with no priestly class, fitted easily with the ‘body life’ ministry that was emphasised in the charismatic renewal, wherein the gifts of the Spirit were given to all believers for the benefit of the body.⁵²

Contemporary Worship & Welcoming the Seeker

Another trend, running chronologically across the previous two, was that of giving worship a contemporary style and feel, so as to make it a hospitable space for seekers. As Robert E. Johnson writes, particularly after the second world war, Baptists were aware of “declining denominational loyalty” and “found themselves forced to rethink their purpose, mission, and forms of worship.”⁵³ Willow Creek Community Church in the United States led the way in the global ‘Seeker-Sensitive’ movement, which sought to craft worship gatherings and worship songs so as to maximize intelligibility and interest for the sake of the ‘seeker’.

These concerns and efforts to address them found wide replication amongst Aotearoa Baptist (and other) churches. Wood’s description is astute:

⁴⁸ See the recent discussion of Ward on Wimber’s influence on New Zealand generally, and Baptists in particular; Kevin Ward, *Against the Odds: Murray Robertson and Spreydon Baptist Church* (Auckland, NZ: Archer Press, 2016), 84.

⁴⁹ Angus MacLeod, *The Hamilton Story*, 89.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Roy Bullen, “Editorial,” *New Zealand Baptist* (1989).

⁵² Steven B. O’Connor, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi,” 35.

⁵³ Robert E. Johnson, *A Global Introduction to Baptist Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 279.

Change, variety, energy, confusion, and division, mark... music... in the 1970's. The developing musical and literary societal trends of the previous decade found their way into the musical life of the evangelical church: a dynamic rock youth music with commercial overtones; new or more prominent electronic and acoustic instruments and musicians...; a creative energy and release that was not dependent on music tradition, training, expertise, or a professional class of musicians...; home-made music influenced by, but not copies of, British/American models; simpler and more directly biblical lyrics (unaffected by, and at times in reaction to, traditional hymn-poetry); a greater focus on global ethical issues (poverty, peace, justice) and the social application of the gospel to the community; and an increasing use of OHPs [over-head projectors] for congregational singing. Baptist church music would never be the same again.⁵⁴

One church described its “new style” Sunday evening service as “entertainment with a message”.⁵⁵ Another example is seen in Wanganui Central’s redesign of its worship space in order to “move with the times” and “satisfy the mid-twentieth century outlook”.⁵⁶ The new design (and some reactions to it) is described as follows:

Flexibility of the interior was a keynote, separate chairs on a carpeted floor allowing differing configurations at any time, and semi-circular seating to promote a more family atmosphere and a greater sense of fellowship ... It was a startling contrast to the old building – more like a lounge in effect, with wallpaper and pine timber paneling, wall-to-wall carpet, off-white individual chairs instead of pews, and the light pouring in from the narrow windows that encircled the whole building below the eaves. And the platform, moveable pulpit, and choir were in one corner instead of at ‘the end’. For some it was hard to get used to – it just did not seem like ‘a church’.⁵⁷

Alan Roberts documents various changes at Nelson with confident positivity; “uncomfortable chairs” are no longer present with the Communion Table; a smaller pulpit was chosen, “behind which it is difficult to hide”; overhead projection displays lyrics “without need of hymn-books”; and movable microphones assist speakers “no longer restricted to a pulpit”. “The overall effect is less formal, though not casual. It is warm, not cold; open, not closed; friendly, not intimidating; welcoming, rather than dignified and a bit ‘scary’.”⁵⁸

Occasionally, new forms would replace old ones, but in many cases new would settle alongside old. For example, at Wanganui Central, the organist and choir were joined by “electric keyboard, acoustic and electronic guitars, piano and flutes” maintaining “a balance between traditional and more recent music.”⁵⁹

In terms of lasting effects of these changes, both positives and negatives have usually been discerned. W. E. Edgar’s extended reflection on the experience of Auckland Baptist churches would reflect wider sentiment:

⁵⁴ David R. Wood, *A Tale of Two Seasons*, 50.

⁵⁵ Phil Smith, “New Style Sunday at 7.” *New Zealand Baptist* 104, no. 10 (Nov 1988): 3; quoted in Steven B. O’Connor, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi,” 39.

⁵⁶ A.F. Woodbury, *Pastors and People*, 47.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 50, 56.

⁵⁸ Alan Roberts, *Nelson Baptist Church: The Journey Continues*, 7–8.

⁵⁹ A.F. Woodbury, *Pastors and People*, 66.

After years of relatively formal and staid worship, led almost entirely by the minister, the content and character of services changed noticeably. Members had a much greater involvement in leading worship. There was a more informal, relaxed programme in many churches, often with much more time given to singing of newly written songs rather than hymns, often accompanied by orchestral instruments. Sound systems and amplifiers were installed even in small auditoriums. Critics complained of too much sound and too little silence, too much singing and too little praying, too much celebration that sometimes forgot confession and the cross. The new and overdue emphasis given in preaching and in practice to the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church has enriched the private life and public witness of most members. With the blessings however have come challenges and in some cases problems. Some pastors have found it difficult or impossible to minister effectively to a congregation with widely differing views on theological and particularly charismatic issues. Some members have been deprived of ways of worship valued over many years of sincere discipleship. In some places people have had little say in important decisions in the life of a church when control has shifted to a pastor and small number of elders. Occasionally, and sadly, the unity of a church has been threatened.

Some fervently charismatic churches have seen continuous growth and outreach into their communities. Others have now plateaued and some are in decline.

Strong churches of earlier years have in some instances, regardless of emphasis, grown small and are now struggling to survive.”⁶⁰

Toward the end of the twentieth century, the modern worship song movement came into its own, which in many ways continues to be a spacious style of singing, expressing contemporary, charismatic and seeker-friendly characteristics. Sutherland observes that in the 1997 *Church Life Survey* throughout Aotearoa, Baptists rated ‘Contemporary Songs’ the preferred style of music at the surprisingly high rate of 62% (compared to a national average of 30%), “suggesting that the principal distinctive of New Zealand Baptists now lay in what they sang.”⁶¹

Tending: Local Experiments in a Diversifying Network

This third and final section will reflect on ways in which change resulted not from overseas, but from within the country’s own borders, and even within the Baptist movement itself. In various ways practitioners and planners of worship have wrestled with worship practices in a way that is distinctive to Aotearoa, whilst not being without parallels elsewhere. Three of these centred on specific people, and a fourth relates to the unique bi-cultural nature of Aotearoa, and the particularly multicultural demographics of Auckland, it’s largest city.

David and Dale Garratt: Scripture in Song

Following a simple sense of prompting “to lead people to worship through music”, local songwriters David and Dale Garratt “began collecting and writing songs from Bible verses and

⁶⁰ W. E. Edgar, *Auckland Baptist Association: One Hundred Years 1892-1992* (Auckland, NZ: NZ Baptist Historical Society, 1993), 44.

⁶¹ Sutherland, *Conflict & Connection*, 249–50.

recorded them using contemporary instruments”.⁶² The resulting music was called ‘Scripture in Song’, a name which stuck. The music had rousing choruses which made the songs as popular as they were biblical. The songs were not written with the intent to respond to any sense of the insufficient lyrical content of existing popular worship songs, but many did appreciate them for that reason. Their influence and popularity has been immense, not only locally among Aotearoa Baptists, but also across the globe.

The Scriptural lyrics may not be the only appeal, of course. If it is understandable for nearby Australian music groups like *Hillsong* to influence Aotearoa Baptists, and if it is a given that they are also shaped by UK and US groups, the extent of the influence of Scripture in Song reflects a unique appreciation for ‘homegrown’ songs, which testify to the Spirit’s work in this land.⁶³ Similar appreciation exists for groups like ‘The Parachute Band’, ‘Edge Kingsland’ and ‘Worship Central NZ’.⁶⁴

Mark Pierson, Emergent Creativity and Worship ‘Curation’

Aotearoa has been host to some leading voices in the ‘Emerging Church’ movement; evidenced by two Aotearoa Baptist churches and practitioners appearing in Bryan Spink’s short list of influential Emergent leaders: Mark Pierson (associated with Cityside Baptist) and Steve Taylor (associated with Graceway Baptist Church).⁶⁵ In particular, the influence of Pierson on worship, both in and out of Aotearoa Baptist churches, has been both wide-spread and long-lived. His contributions to worship thinking and practice have included articles, seminars, events, guest contributions at church communities, lectures and courses and more. Whilst at Cityside Baptist, Pierson and others produced a digital worship resource called ‘Fractals’, which carried forward many of the ideas and experiences from his time there, including much material that introduces readers to liturgical resources and the Christian Year. A more recent, and widely engaged with, work has been *The Art of Curating Worship: Reshaping the Role of Worship Leader*. He offers concepts and terms drawn from marketing, the arts, and other arenas, but the key concept is of course ‘curation’, with the goal that readers can become curators who can say “I curate structured and ambient events and spaces that offer people the potential for liminal moments of individual and corporate engagement with the Trinitarian community of God. I am an artist whose medium is

⁶² David and Dale Garrett share their story and songs online at “Scripture in Song,” n.d., <http://www.davidanddalegarratt.com/scriptureinsong.html>.

⁶³ See discussion in Ward, *Against the Odds*, 117.

⁶⁴ Parachute Music, “Parachute Band - About,” n.d., http://parachuteband.parachutemusic.com/index.php?option=com_content&id=2:about; Edge Kingsland, “Music - Edge Kingsland,” n.d., <https://web.edgekingsland.co.nz/music.html>; Worship Central NZ, “Worship Central New Zealand,” *Worship Central NZ*, n.d., <http://www.worshipcentral.org.nz/>.

⁶⁵ Bryan Spinks, *The Worship Mall: Contemporary Response to Contemporary Cultures* (London: SPCK, 2010), 43.

worship.”⁶⁶ Readers are encouraged to be intentional, wise and discerning weavers of elements, to create worship that is biblically rooted, culturally relevant and personally engaging.

Paul Windsor and ‘Kiwimade Preaching’

Another home-grown movement that has subtly but significantly shaped Baptist worship was launched by Paul Windsor, and focuses on one particular worship activity, preaching. Paul Windsor has pastored within the Aotearoa NZ Baptist denomination, served as Principal of Carey Baptist College (including lecturing in Preaching), and has been involved with training and support of indigenous biblical preaching movements overseas. As part of Langham Partnership New Zealand, Windsor launched the ‘Kiwimade Preaching’ initiative in 2009 with a day-long forum in Auckland. Subsequent events (across the whole country) and a blog continue to encourage and resource biblically faithful, culturally relevant and skillfully crafted preaching.⁶⁷ In 2014, Myk Habets (also of Carey Baptist College) edited *Kiwimade Narrative Sermons*, a volume specifically devoted to the narrative form of biblical preaching, which includes chapters on the theology and practice of narrative preaching, as well as a host of sample sermons, both biblically and topically based.⁶⁸ The ‘Kiwimade Preaching’ initiative is now led by Geoff New (Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership), and continues to influence preachers in and outside Aotearoa Baptist churches.

Bicultural and Multicultural Concerns

Finally, Aotearoa Baptist worship has been shaped, more in some contexts than others, by the uniquely bicultural and multicultural context of Aotearoa itself. Johnson explains the demographic shifts:

“By 1980, more than 80 percent of the Maori population was urban but suffered discrimination. Protest movements have helped raise awareness of Maori culture and combat racism. In addition, a relaxation of immigration restrictions has allowed more Asians to immigrate, thus diversifying the population somewhat. As a consequence, Baptist life has become more multicultural.”⁶⁹

The bicultural partnership expressed in *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (The Treaty of Waitangi) in 1840, is evidenced among Aotearoa Baptists in *Manatū Iriiri Māori* (Baptist Māori Ministries, of The Baptist Union of NZ) which seeks “to see all Māori come to Jesus, reaching their full potential, and positively transforming their whanau [family], community and world in which they live.”⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Mark Pierson, *The Art of Curating Worship* (Hymns Ancient and Modern Ltd, 2012), 230.

⁶⁷ “Kiwi-Made Preaching,” n.d., <http://kiwimadepreaching.com/>.

⁶⁸ Myk Habets, ed., *Kiwimade Narrative Sermons* (Auckland, NZ: Archer Press, 2014).

⁶⁹ Johnson, *A Global Introduction to Baptist Churches*, 279.

⁷⁰ Baptist Churches of New Zealand, “Māori | Baptist Churches of New Zealand,” n.d., <http://www.baptist.org.nz/general/Our-National-Ministries/Maori-Ministries/>.

Together with English and Te Reo Māori, the third official language of Aotearoa is New Zealand Sign Language, which has regular use in (at least) one Aotearoa Baptist congregation.⁷¹ The most visibly seen, or indeed audibly heard, example of bicultural worship in Aotearoa Baptist churches, is singing. Long standing examples of Aotearoa Baptists singing in Te Reo Māori would include *Te Aroha* ('The Love'), *Te Harinui* ('Great Joy', usually sung leading up to or on Christmas) and the tradition of singing the first verse of the National Anthem, *God of Nations*, in Te Reo. A more recent example is the popular song, *Wairua Tapu* ('Holy Spirit'), which is 'bi-cultural' in the sense of having both Te Reo and English lyrics.

Aotearoa is also a very multicultural context as well, particularly its largest city, Auckland. The 2015 World Migration Report listed Auckland as the fourth most culturally diverse city in the world, with "more than 220 recorded ethnic groups".⁷² According to the Baptist Union of New Zealand website, there are "40 New Zealand Baptist churches and congregations made up of migrants worshipping in their own language and in a style that reflects their cultural background. These include Samoan, Chinese, Korean, Indian, Russian and Cambodian fellowships."⁷³

Conclusions

This story has seen the migration of not only baptistic individuals but an entire movement and pattern of worship, which took root and took on a unique but familiar congregational and Free Church character, where a service centering on hymns and sermon was carried forward by minister, hymnbook, organ and choir. We have seen the ways in which the currents of revivalist evangelistic fervor raised even higher still the profile, and nature, of singing and preaching; and also the ways in which, in response to this, various voices called for a return to a discerning use of liturgical forms and content. We observed how the charismatic and seeker friendly movements, aiming to be in step with the currents of the Spirit, powerfully transformed the posture and ethos, and volume, of this worship; not without resistance and complaint. And we also noted various local individuals and experiments adding colour; drastically in the case of

⁷¹ Titirangi Baptist Church, "Deaf Community," n.d., <https://www.tbc.org.nz/connect/deaf>; see also Andrew Picard, "The Gospel: Making a World of Difference," *Baptist Magazine New Zealand*, n.d., <http://www.baptistmag.org.nz/culture/the-gospel-making-a-world-of-difference/>.

⁷² Lincoln Tan, "Auckland More Diverse than London and New York," *NZ Herald*, January 17, 2016, http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11575305.

⁷³ Baptist Churches of New Zealand, "Ethnic and Multicultural," n.d., <http://www.baptist.org.nz/general/Our-National-Ministries/Ethnic/>.

Scripture in Song, and perhaps more subtly in terms of Pierson's worship 'curation', Windsor's biblical preaching approach, and bi-cultural and multi-cultural efforts.

Indeed, Aotearoa Baptist worship has come a long way since the early English patterns. Some will observe some of these patterns remaining visible, such as the way that song and sermon dovetail together. Others may feel this worship has begun to evolve, or already has morphed, into something substantially other than what it started out as. At some points, both observations may be true. Nonetheless, it is through the frame of this story of development that we will now turn to view the present diverse state of Aotearoa Baptist worship.

3. Baptist ‘Sharing’ in Aotearoa

‘Grapevine’ is a time of sharing and prayer.
It may go from 10-30 minutes and is a very important part of what we do/who we are.
(service 43)

Celebrations is a time we acknowledge special events in people[s] lives
and also give opportunity for people to speak of God happenings.
(service 61)

Introduction

In his *Gathering*, Ellis describes the ‘embodied theology’ of Baptist worship using five categories of activity: Prayer, Singing, Preaching, the Lord’s Supper and baptism. This chapter outlines another important camera angle, daring to suggest that it may be one of the most distinguishing features of Baptist and Free Church worship. The categories Ellis uses are immensely useful for relating Baptist worship to other traditions (for example, Baptist communion observance with Catholic Eucharistic practice). However, these categories ended up excluding various patterns of activity.

The diverse activity to be discussed below (including competitions, birthday chocolates, and videos) is called ‘sharing’, which is fruitful in several ways. First, accurately describes what often happens: sharing moments of celebration, milestones, and experiences of ministry and mission. Second, it echoes the language often used; such as inviting someone to ‘share’ their experience, milestone or celebration. Thirdly, and significantly, it signals the inherent pastoral theology that motivates the activity. ‘Sharing’ is directly intelligible within the ‘Baptist liturgical values’ that Ellis describes in *Gathering*; particularly the understanding of the church as a community of priests.⁷⁴ In this context, worship does not need authorized leadership, but can “involve the participation of members of the congregation in leading parts of worship”.⁷⁵ Thus, the content of our data displays a gathered community of priests, ministering, instructing, informing, celebrating and sharing with one another.

This content is not an arbitrary listing of ‘miscellanea’, consisting of what did not ‘fit’ Ellis’s categories. Rather, the very design of our project (collecting and analysing orders of service) was instrumental in signalling the necessity of this chapter, by making the consistent patterns of celebrating, presenting, interviewing and more so visually apparent.

⁷⁴ Ellis, *Gathering*, 89–93.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

The fact that our project studies services occurring on Father's Day also gives an opportunity to observe the way in which experimentation, adaptation, and celebration are a unique part of their collective spirituality. Whilst some content (e.g. blessings for, or gifts to, fathers) was explicitly linked to the recognition of this day, other content (e.g. children's games) may have been as well, or alternatively could be a regular component of worship for that community.

'Sharing': The Data

'Sharing' takes on a particularly diverse range of forms in Aotearoa Baptist worship. Expression is rarely the same. For example, a 'missionary report' could occur in one service as a loosely-planned (or spontaneous) sub-section of the 'notices', or in another it may be given its own distinct place. Sometimes, as indicated by comments for service 3, different kinds of sharing take place depending on which week of the month it is. To reflect on this diversity of activity, we will use subcategories for the different forms of Aotearoa Baptist 'Sharing'. Their order may be loosely indicative of when they typically occur in a service.

'Welcoming'

The act of welcoming looks different, depending on who was welcomed, whether the congregation, visitors (specifically or generally), one another, or new members.

The congregational welcome is such a common feature that we might assume it occurs even when the order of service lacks this terminology. Naturally occurring at or near the beginning of the service, it can be accompanied by Scripture or prayer. One service (37) lit a 'Jesus Candle' at this time, and two (33, 49) showed intentionality in their use of Te Reo Māori in the service, particularly for the welcome.

Likewise, welcoming one another took different forms. Two services (42a, 42c) placed it last in a 'Gathering' section (after a Psalm, notices and offering). Sometimes this can occur during the enjoyment of refreshments, whether early (service 50), midway (service 63), or at the close (service 49).

Sometimes visitors are explicitly welcomed (service 14), at times with a visitor 'welcome pack' (service 47). Sometimes the preacher is welcomed by name (service 4). Another service (10) welcomed the visiting preacher by interviewing them and their family.

The welcome of new members is a traditional component of Baptist worship, and occurred twice in our survey. In one service (10), it was not clear what form this welcome took.

The other (50) included “a liturgy based on Psalm 139”, and the new members signing the membership book at the communion table while the wine was being served.

‘Celebrating’

Various milestones or events were celebrated, including birthdays, anniversaries, accomplishments, and of course, Father’s Day.

Birthdays or anniversaries can involve the “celebration box” (service 5), often containing a treat to be given out. One service (35) may have a custom of listing names and number of years married for anniversaries. Various accomplishments can be celebrated, such as the completion of children’s school term projects (service 50), or “spiritual anniversaries” (service 62) presumably the date of their baptism or decision to follow Christ.

Father’s Day: A Unique Example of Aotearoa Baptist Celebration

As mentioned above, that the day our study was Father’s Day provided a unique opportunity to observe the adaptability of Aotearoa Baptist worship. Some services appear to have been shaped entirely around the theme, such as the service (51) led by a children’s group and involving children serving Communion. Other services showed a significant shift from the normal operations, with multiple related activities, such as the three items taking 20 minutes of service time (service 68). Sometimes Father’s Day content displaced standard content, such as postponing a weekly “intercessory prayer slot” (service 30).⁷⁶ Despite the diversity, there were patterns.

- The most common type of content (13 services) was the video clip.
- Eight services featured a gift (chocolate, lollies, or a symbolic object such as a rock in service 51).
- Seven orders of service (and any others in which it was not specified) contained prayers or blessing for Dads (sometimes including granddads).
- Games were conducted, such as “Where’s Wally” (service 59).
- Five services passed the microphone (to Dads, children or perhaps both) for sharing.
- Three services listed a relevant non-Scriptural reading or meditation, for example the “Father’s Love Letter” (service 33).
- Two services featured a presentation or skit.
- One service had a special Father’s Day song performed.

‘Giving’

Another kind of ‘sharing’ activity is the giving of financial contributions; offerings or ‘tithes’. The advent of electronic payment modes has not replaced the continuing practice of passing

⁷⁶ It may or may not have been a conscious decision to retain the normal number of songs (seven in this case).

around plates or bags. This expression of financial ‘sharing’ can be followed by prayer, and was paired with an ‘offering song’ twice (services 42a, 42c). Occasionally, specified giving also occurs at this time, such as the “mission envelopes” (service 31), or the “Heart for the House” offering (service 14).

‘Informing’

Another variant of Aotearoa Baptist ‘sharing’ is the pattern of informing the gathered congregation about various personal and communal activity, past, ongoing, and future.

This almost always occurs through a time of ‘notices’, where a breathtaking array of personal, communal, administrative or missional information can be shared, relating to such things as church directories, cake stalls, spring cleaning events, fundraising initiatives, funerals and more. This can take a casual ‘open mic’ format, or be condensed and edited into a video clip (service 7). Particular ministry needs can be addressed, such as when the congregation was made aware of an opportunity to support a “local family situation” (service 36).

Another common way of informing the congregation is the interview or panel. Often the interviewees are leaders of a ministry or mission initiative, such as Alpha, a popular evangelism course (service 1). Two services (6,19) had “missions” spots. In other services, church members are interviewed. One service (31) featured an interview entitled “Barstool: This Time Tomorrow”, possibly aiming to motivate the congregation towards intentional Christian living; perhaps similarly to the “Notes to the church – by the pastor” (service 70). The preacher can be interviewed (service 10). Sometimes the interview is conducted “On the Couch” (service 62).

Personal testimonies are quite common, and a central example of ‘sharing’. One service (15) calls this “God at Work”. Another (35) calls it “share time”; still another (45) blends together “testimonies and sharing”.

‘Inspiring’

Another grouping of ‘sharing’ activity seems to be aimed at providing inspiration and enjoyment. In our data, this kind of activity included musical items and dramas, readings and reflections, and videos.

One service (12) had a musical item performed by a family. Another service (8) featured a song rounding out an entire slot enacted by the kids. Elsewhere (service 25b), a fifteen-year-old member performed a song. One service (50) performed an arrangement of ‘O Sacred

Banquet' by Aquinas. Another service (59) hosted a group from a nearby Bible College who performed a drama.

Other sources of inspiration were a reflection on a Scripture passage in one service (service 61) and a reading from Pilgrim's Progress in another (service 50).

Various videos were played. In addition to the Father's Day videos mentioned above, our data included a clip about a person who was on the Titanic (service 66), and a music video, 'No Longer Slaves' (service 58).

'Expressing'

Another category of 'sharing' is characterised by spontaneous contributions by members. Examples of these from our data include charismatic 'words of knowledge' or 'prophecy', speaking out a comment or opinion, and asking a question as part of a 'Q&A' time.

Charismatic activity was seen in three orders of service (59, 33, 17) which reported times for 'words of knowledge', 'prophecy', in addition to prayers. Helpful detail was provided by the respondent for service 17:

In the middle of our main worship bracket, we always pause for a period of 5 minutes or so. The worship leader will say, "If you have a prayer or a word of encouragement to bring, please do so," or something like that. Often there are prayers of intercession for the world or us as a church. Perhaps around 40% [of the time] someone will speak out a scripture, picture or "word" that they have. The framework around this (which we have said from the front) is that this is to be general and encouraging, and if it is "prophetic" or calling for a change in direction, it needs to be brought to the pastor or elders first for discernment. It's very rare that this time goes by without someone praying or speaking.

Open times for comments and questions also feature, such as "Question time" at service 49, where members "ask questions / make statements about the sermon". One service (50) contained a slot, possibly regular, called the "Free for All", which includes questions, comments and prayer requests. Similarly, the "Grapevine" of service 43 is "a time of sharing and prayer... lasting "from 10-30 minutes". Service 63 had members sitting at café tables to facilitate this kind of sharing.

'Responding'

Aotearoa Baptists also engage in various ways of responding to their sense of God's activity. For one service (14), it was the "Altar Call", presumably not only an opportunity for first-time commitments to Christ, but also a space for expressions of renewed commitment and discipleship. Another service (51) included a "group activity", presumably in response to the sermon.

‘Sharing’: Interpretation & Value

We now turn to understand and appreciate these practices. As noted above, the activity discussed in this chapter should be understood as flowing directly from the conviction that all believers are priests, and are thus gifted to contribute in worship.

‘Welcoming’: sharing hospitality

Acts of welcome are immediately associated with hospitality, and the limited evidence from our study coheres with this. If such welcomes are usually unscripted and warmly delivered, this would signal a desire for this hospitality to be sincere. Whilst ‘liturgical’ traditions can have unscripted greetings, Baptists rarely would have ‘liturgical’ welcomes (one example being a Scripture-based liturgy for welcoming new members). Some argue that unscripted welcomes are usually lacking in scriptural language.⁷⁷ However, the effectiveness of Scripture for congregational welcome (for example 2 Corinthians 13:14 to open Catholic Mass), does not wholly discredit unscripted welcomes. Indeed, Anglicans in Aotearoa are permitted by their prayer book to be “greeted informally” before the formal and scriptural responsive greetings.⁷⁸ The practice of breaking mid-service for greetings over refreshments could be seen as an inappropriate disruption of liturgical flow; however, such a practice may be entirely appropriate, particularly if we are correct in assuming that worship in the early church could take place in the immediate context of eating and drinking, as seems to be reflected in 1 Corinthians 11. The same could be said of the ‘meet and greet’ times. It could be claimed that the scriptural language of the ‘passing of the Peace’ is preferable and more edifying. Again, whatever the benefits of such liturgical forms (brief, scriptural, and clear), greeting one another informally provides a very real opportunity for a personal hospitable welcome that is not limited by the liturgical form.

‘Celebrating’: sharing milestones

The celebration of such things as personal milestones within the service itself displays the pastoral and communal approach to worship among Aotearoa Baptists. Rather than leave them to be acknowledged in a more private context, such celebrations as birthdays, anniversaries or other achievements are shared publicly with the congregation. Not all congregations, Baptist or otherwise, will have the same patterns. Congregation size, local customs and the influence of

⁷⁷ For example, John Jefferson Davis comments on “greetings” replacing scriptural calls to worship; see *Worship and the Reality of God: An Evangelical Theology of Real Presence* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 99–100.

⁷⁸ The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, *A New Zealand Prayer Book: He Karakia Mihinare O Aotearoa*, Rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997), 404.

leadership will determine the way that such celebrations are carried out. A more formal approach may see this as distracting from the gospel, however a 'both/and' perspective can allow for such celebrations within the wider context of holy worship.

Father's Day: A Unique Example of Aotearoa Baptist Celebration

Cultural days, such as Father's Day, are also deemed appropriate for the worship service, whether playing a smaller role, or setting the scene for the entire gathering. God's blessing for fathers can be appropriated, children can participate positively in the service, and the fatherhood of God can be communicated.

Aotearoa Baptists may not be unique in these patterns. Again, more 'liturgical' traditions have varying degrees of flexibility around such accommodation to cultural days. Whatever judgment a particular congregation makes, the decision process itself of how or whether to celebrate such days is a valuable exercise in worship planning that maintains balance between gospel, communal, cultural and personal dimensions.

'Giving': sharing resources

The obvious goal of 'giving' is the sharing of resources. Songs and prayers, when used in conjunction with it, can deepen this sharing at the level of liturgical action. Comment could be made about the effect the timing has on the offering being seen as 'payment for services rendered'. It could be argued in reply that, just as payment may be made before or after a meal at a restaurant, so too, an offering is vulnerable to that association wherever it is placed in the order of service. This concern, along with the availability of electronic payment methods, may have caused some congregations to omit 'giving' times from their services.

'Informing': sharing awareness

Verbal notices, interviews and testimonies, all seem to share a goal of communal sharing in the awareness of God's activity through individuals and ministries. In some contexts, congregation size and other content in the service restrict this to pre-selected persons or events, while in others there seems to be ample time to include anyone willing to share. The point is not that 'notices' are unique to Baptists, but rather to take seriously the amount of time that is given to such activity, and include it in wider considerations of their approach to worship. Diverse expression can see notices limited to newsletters, slideshows, or videos, or open to anyone who wishes to share. Again, rather than seeing a need to decide 'for' or 'against' such activity, a

‘both/and’ approach can make space for such communal informing as a fitting expression of a pastoral liturgical spirituality.⁷⁹

‘Inspiring’: sharing experience

The clear intent behind the activity labelled ‘inspiring’ is to share an experience, through songs, poems, reflections or videos, that moves the congregation to respond in subsequent mission and ministry. Here again, is yet another activity that is not restricted to a leading personality, but open to the entire anointed community of priests, gifted for the benefit of the gathering.

Rather than affirming (or escaping) the criticism that such content is merely entertainment for passive observers, we can observe Eileen Crowley’s observation, from a Catholic perspective, that this critique “seems based on underlying simplistic judgments of worshipers’ capacity for reflection and for their active reception of media.”⁸⁰ Worship planners are more likely to be seeking to reinforce or supplement the message rather than to simply entertain. A similar critique argues that such content evidences a lack of confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture to guide worship, however it can be seen as an expression of the applicability of the Scriptural message, as it is discerned in the message conveyed by songs, poems or videos. These points aside, wisdom in use of any media remains important.⁸¹

‘Expressing’: sharing messages

The ‘expressing’ activity we observed above included charismatic activity along with comments and questions. Whereas prophetic speech would flow from a conviction that God continues to speak today, the comments and questions would signal a belief that God is not limited to speaking through confident declaration, but also is active in our own thinking and even questioning. Diverse understandings and experiences of charismatic activity are met with equally diverse responses. Comments and questions are less contested, but can be seen as a distraction. Here again, we can commend a ‘both/and’ approach which can accommodate, on the one hand, prophetic speech above and beyond – but not against – Scripture, and on the other hand, comments and questions that reflect the biblical genres of lament.⁸²

⁷⁹ See the brief comments of Townley, *Missional Worship: Increasing Attendance and Expanding the Boundaries of Your Church* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2011), 113.

⁸⁰ Eileen D. Crowley, *Liturgical Art for a Media Culture* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 39.

⁸¹ See the patient discussion of William A. Dyrness, *Visual Faith: Art, Theology, and Worship in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), esp. 129ff.

⁸² See Peter Neumann’s helpful discussion of Frank Macchia’s efforts to relate Word and Spirit in the Pentecostal tradition in chapter 2 of *Pentecostal Experience: An Ecumenical Encounter* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012).

‘Responding’: sharing action

Finally, the ‘responding’ activity outlined above seems motivated by an impulse for moving beyond mere hearing, singing and praying, to active obedience. As in other traditions, this is implied in the final ‘dismissal’ which occurs at the end of the service; however, it also finds expression in activity such as the ‘altar call’ and ‘group activity’ we observed in our study. In addition to the general posture of responsive action through faith and discipleship during the week, this activity shows an emphasis on the immediacy of the response, which occurs in the midst of the corporate gathering.

Some may see such things as ‘group activities’ as better suited to mid-week small group setting than they are to corporate worship, perhaps arguing that congregation members can explore particular applications to their own life in these times, rather than use the gathered space for this. One response might again point to a ‘both/and’ approach, where there is space for questions, encouragements and instruction (cf. 1 Corinthians 14), which can be further deepened in smaller groupings outside the corporate setting.

Conclusion

The data from our study prompted this chapter which surveys a wide range of examples of ‘sharing’, such as greeting one another, informing the congregation of the results of a bake sale, a Father’s Day video, and open-mic comments from the floor. We have dared to suggest that a full account of Aotearoa Baptist and Free Church worship demands that we take this activity, and the unique pastoral congregational concerns that lay behind it, seriously. We observed potential at every point for such content to clutter and crowd worship, and advocated that in many cases a wise, discerning ‘both/and’ posture can balance freedom of the Spirit with a scriptural framework.

4. Baptist Prayer in Aotearoa

In the middle of our main worship bracket, we always pause for a period of 5 minutes or so. The worship leader will say, “If you have a prayer or a word of encouragement to bring, please do so,” or something like that. Often there are prayers of intercession for the world or us as a church. Perhaps around 40% someone will speak out a scripture, picture, or “word” that they have. The framework around this (which we have said from the front) is that this is to be general and encouraging, and if it is “prophetic” or calling for a change in direction, it needs to be brought to the pastor or elders first for discernment. It’s very rare that this time goes by without someone praying or speaking.

(service 17)

Lord God we thank you for this opportunity to meet together to celebrate that the Lord Jesus is the Wisdom of God. We acknowledge that we live in a changing and fragile world. All week we’ve been hearing news about refugees from Syria and we feel helpless, but we thank you that we can pray. We thank you that you are not surprised by the happenings in the world. You are great, you remain great, you are the beginning and the end, you are the godhead three in one, father spirit son. Yet, as we’ve sung, there is much darkness in this your world. Help us to be your people of compassion in all situations – in our families, at work, in our streets, and in this world. As we consider our own response to the huge numbers of refugees from Syria and Iraq,

help us to remember that the Lord Jesus himself was once a refugee. Continue to give us compassion we ask, so that our praise of you which you so rightly deserve has both a vertical and horizontal component – vertical in praise, awe and wonder of the Lord Jesus, and horizontal so that praise is worked out in good deeds toward others both local and global. We pray in the wonderful name of Jesus, Amen.

(service 31)

Introduction

How do Aotearoa Baptists engage in prayer when they gather together for worship? How might it be described? This section will outline various modes of prayer, and explore its meaning and value.

Prayer: The Data

Topic: What kinds of prayers were offered?

There was a diverse topical range of Aotearoa Baptist prayer, from general and unspecified prayers, through to deliberately categorized prayers of confession, thanksgiving and intercession. Language referring to prayer was absent from six orders of service; either signaling a failure to engage in prayer for that service, or a habit of prayer that was not reflected on the order of service.

General “Prayer”

Prayer listed simply as ‘prayer’ or ‘prayer time’ (without any specific reference as to the content, purpose or subject of the prayer) was a common pattern (fifteen services). When this general label is used, the activity represented usually consists of either an individual praying on behalf of the congregation, or an open time where prayer is offered from the congregation. We may add alongside these the occasions of “corporate prayer(s)” (services 3, 21) and “Community Prayers (service 37). In a similar vein, “Prayer and Praise” from service 7 combined this general prayerful intent with a recognition of events, blessings or circumstances for which God is to be praised.

Specified Prayers

The largest topical grouping was prayer that was offered with a singular purpose. The most frequent type (at least 14 services) was prayers in association with, or for, the collection of the offering; at times a prayer with a relevant theme, such as ‘thanksgiving’, could accompany the offering. Prayers for fathers in twelve services (plus any that were undocumented) appeared to be the most universal way of celebrating Father’s Day. Two services (8, 50) widened the focus to “men”, and the rest prayed for “Fathers” or “Dads”.

Five services included prayers of confession, and two (16, 24) paired this with “absolution” or “assurance in Christ”. Service 11 linked confession with interpersonal forgiveness, using a silent contemplation on the words: “God, I forgive so-and-so for doing such-and-such – just like me.”

Several prayers seemed to focus on people and their needs. Six of these were labeled as “Pastoral” prayers, with one of these (service 48) pairing pastoral with “national” concern. Two were labeled as “Prayer for others”, with one of these (service 11) being administered via two stations where participants were invited to, “Write initials in sand tray of people you want to pray for or light a candle”. Another two were prayers for specific groups of people, in one case (service 44) “Syria Refugees”, and the other (service 14) the family of a member whose mother was unwell. One service (10) included a “Prayer for [preacher’s name] and family” as well as “community prayer” that accompanied welcoming a new congregant into membership. Service 33 included what appears to be a custom of praying for members on their birthday. Service 53 prayed for the local Lutheran church, as part of a habit of praying each week for a local church.

Another grouping of prayers were labeled with the language of mission, including a “Missionary Prayer” (33, 58), “Mission Prayer” (71), prayer for a “Mission Team” (12), and a

“Commissioning” of both an individual and a couple (55). One service (10) used candles to visually represent “overseas missionaries, prompting prayer each 2nd month”. Other prayers (both from service 60) that could easily be located in this grouping focused on a “Habitat Team” and a “Bible in Schools” initiative.

Themed or Categorised Prayers

Five services, from three church communities (and thus possibly three service planning individuals or teams) appeared to employ a distinctly intentional approach which sought to engage in various kinds of prayer. In these cases, the prayers are not scripted, but rather themes or other prompts are listed on the order of service, apparently intended to guide the content of the prayer. Service 20 included prayers of confession (after opening psalm and song), thanksgiving (after notices and bible reading) and “petition for the suffering of refugees” (after songs and Scripture readings). Services 42a and 42c opened the service with “Adoration & Confession” (after a Scripture reading), a “Thanksgiving” prayer (linked with the offering collection), and a prayer of “Intercession & Supplication” (before the sermon). Service 33 prayed a kind of adoration prayer recognising “God’s great acts on the first day of the week”, giving “Thanks for the word of God, in particular Jesus Christ as the Word”, engaging in “Intercession for a nation indifferent to the gospel, prayer for leaders national and local, schools, etc.”. Another service (34b) prayed prayers of praise, thanksgiving, and intercession.

Timing: When in the service was the prayer offered?

Our next camera-angle on prayer will observe the *timing* of the prayer within the service as a whole. When did it occur (e.g. opening, during the singing, or closing) and was it tied to another worship act (e.g. children going to programmes, or communion)?

Opening Prayers

Chronologically, the first kind of prayer was labeled with the language of opening or welcoming, and was often paired with such worship acts as a Scripture reading or a call to worship. (19, 36, 56, 58, 59, 60, 70) One service (16) calls this the “Prayer of invocation”, and another (11) calls it a “Focussing prayer”. In one service (37) this prayer followed the lighting of “the Jesus Candle”. Service 22 reported a specific intention that this opening prayer should be “Trinitarian: always acknowledges all 3”.

Accompanying Prayers

Between the opening and closing, prayer can accompany any action or transition in the service. We have already mentioned prayers of confession (often near the opening), prayers of thanksgiving (after the collection of the offering), and prayers of commissioning (for individuals being recognized and sent into a new ministry or mission initiative). Two other examples were prominent in our data. First, five services (60, 68, 42a, 17, 38) offered prayers or a blessing for ‘Children’ or ‘Kids’ as they went to mid-service programmes. Second, three services reported prayer in connection with sacramental activity. In two cases for Communion, one (50) “included two prayers and the words of institution”, and the other (42a) specified that an elder gave the prayer. Service 60 had three baptisms, each accompanied by prayer.

Prayers of Response

Another grouping of prayers seemed to be, or were explicitly described as being, in response to the sermon, or at times at least chronologically subsequent to it. The “Prayers of response” in service 31 invited an “open prayer time to respond to sermon”, whilst the “Free for all” in service 50 is “open for any one to comment or ask for prayer” and also “concludes with a prayer”. Several services used the language of “prayer ministry”, a form of corporate prayer that can be in concert with the final acts of singing, as at service 15. Other times it is more generally a time of responding to the sermon or closing the service, either administered by a “team” (13 & 14), or possibly a wider mode of open activity where congregation members are encouraged to pray with and for one another, not only in response to the sermon, but also out of attentiveness to personal needs and requests (36 & 35).

Closing Prayers

Whilst the prayers just mentioned can indeed occur at the conclusion of the service, another grouping of prayers were specifically labeled as concluding prayers. Sometimes, as at services 5, 7, 8, 17, 51, and 70, the language is simply “closing prayer”. Other times, a final prayer accompanied a final act of worship, such as a song (27), a ‘wrap up’ (71), or a Benediction (3). It can be assumed that a closing ‘Benediction’ or ‘Blessing’ would be a form of prayer, or accompanied by it at times, even when the word ‘prayer’ was absent.

Delivery: In what mode was the prayer offered?

Next, we will observe the different *modes* of Aotearoa Baptist prayer. Was it spontaneous, unscripted, ‘free’ or ‘from the heart’; was it ‘open’ for anyone to contribute; was it themed or

patterned; was it at times scripted or ‘liturgical’; did it take a congregational form that invited all to participate together; did it draw from other liturgical traditions; or did it reflect more than one culture and language? Our data included all of the above, as well as some that were especially unique, such as the five-minutes of “Breath prayers” at service 37. We have already observed the intentional use of themed or theological categories, such as adoration, confession and intercession; the rest of the diversity is represented below.

‘Open’ Prayer

A number of services featured prayer that was described or labeled as ‘open’. Sometimes this openness appears to be focused in terms being ‘open’ for everyone, not only to join in with, but to lead. We have already mentioned the “Free for all” at service 50; in a similar way, service 45 featured a time of “Open Prayer” along with “Testimony/Sharing”.

Other times, the openness seems to be about ‘freedom’ (service 59), being ‘open’ to (services 33, 61), or ‘allowing’ (service 60) a more charismatic mode of prayer in the form of ‘prophecy’ and ‘words’. Still other times, the emphasis on ‘openness’ seems to be about prayer that is ‘free’ (as opposed to scripted or written). Some comments reflected a conscious mix or prioritization of spontaneous and scripted prayer. The occasion of Father’s Day appears to have prompted a ‘scripted’ prayer at one service (30): “Various prayer throughout the service where [sic] extemporaneous, however the particular Father’s Day pray [sic] was scripted.” The extended comments of the respondent for service 15 reflected a mixed liturgical posture characterised by spontaneity, routine and planning:

We don’t have a printed order of service at all. However there is a set routine that we stick to closely and information that is considered crucial from week to week is printed in the notices and/or on the powerpoint. We wouldn’t tend to write prayers out, or write that candles were going to be lit – these things would just happen at the appropriate moment – mostly preplanned, but other times spontaneously. Neither would we necessarily write down when readings are to happen, or children to leave – again, they would simply happen at the appropriate moments. However, this doesn’t mean that these things aren’t thought about or planned for, because they are. They’re just not formally documented.

Perhaps due to a larger congregation size (upwards of 200), where such widely ‘open’ participation would take a comparatively greater amount of time, another service (14) employs the use of “Prayer Cards”, where requests are written down, and placed in the offering bag.

Written Prayers

Despite the unsurprising predominance of unscripted prayer, Aotearoa Baptists occasionally engage in prayer that is pre-written or scripted. Perhaps the most common example of this is Scriptural prayers such as benedictions (already noted; e.g. Numbers 6:24-26 and 2 Corinthians

13:14) and in particular the Lord's Prayer, or the 'Our Father', which may have found increased usage in our data due to Father's Day. In one case (25a), the particular mode of prayer was uncertain, whether one person praying on behalf of all, or read corporately in unison or responsively. One service (5) prayed the Lord's prayer "together... slowly"; another (16) used it to conclude a time of intercession; and still another (18) invited the congregation to say it "in own mother tongues – so included Te Reo and possibly other languages as well".

Two services made explicit use of liturgical books providing prayers. One (13) used a Baptist worship resource book, and another (43) use of an alternative rendering of the Lord's Prayer from a local Anglican prayer book.⁸³ The "Responsive Prayer of Confession" at service 1 may likewise have been borrowed from another liturgical tradition, or indeed perhaps locally written.

Other orders of service provided helpful and interesting records of specially-written, scripted prayers that were used. Service 31, whether uniquely on this day, or as a regular habit, included three pre-written prayers. These prayers engaged with the act of gathering, interceded for the wider world, interacted with the lyrics of songs sung in the service, asked God for help in missional living, thanked God for Fathers and for being the true example of a Father, and asked for help with listening discernment during the sermon. Another service (40) employed the following Father's Day prayer, which appears to be a slightly edited version of one found on many prayer resource websites:

God our Father,
In your wisdom and love you made all things,
Bless those fathers, who have taken upon themselves the responsibility of parenting.
Bless those who have lost a spouse to death ...
or divorce and who are parenting their children alone.
Strengthen them by your love
that they may become the loving, caring persons they are meant to be.
Comfort those who have lost a father or not know the love of one.
Be their Abba, their Dad.
Grant this through Christ our Lord.
Amen!

Intercultural Prayer

Some services seemed to particularly reflect the uniquely bicultural and multicultural nature of Aotearoa. In service 33, bicultural awareness was reflected in the use of Te Reo word for prayer, *karakia*, at three points (opening, closing and intercession). A deliberately multicultural intent was seen in the prayer at service 22 that was "Led by Papua New Guineans + Ethiopian", which was accompanied by interpretation, linked to a sermon on the gifts and fruit of the Spirit. Likewise, the respondent for service 60 highlighted the multicultural intent in Mandarin

⁸³ The text can be found in *A New Zealand Prayer Book*, 181.

baptismal prayers for two Chinese people who were non-English speakers, and English prayers for “an Indian teenage girl who speaks English”.

Location: From where was the prayer offered?

Another way of observing Aotearoa Baptist prayer is to notice from *where* it was offered. From the pulpit or stage at the front; from the congregation in their pews or chairs on the floor; or from elsewhere?

When unstated, it could be a safe assumption that most prayer would be offered from the front, often using a microphone. In the case of prayer being open to participation from the congregation, the microphone may or may not be used, and the person praying may remain in their location or at times come to the front or take a microphone; the important difference being that the prayer does not originate from the stage or those in explicit leadership. In the form of unison or responsive prayers, the focus is specifically congregational as the prayer is offered by everyone, everywhere. The only remaining example from our data was service 11 where the “Prayer for others” involved congregants being invited to two different stations where there were sand trays where they could offer their prayer through writing the initials of those being prayed for, or lighting a candle.

Prayer: Interpretation and Value

We turn now to consider the meaning and value of the prayer we have just observed. The diversity of expression set forth under the headings above leads naturally to four corresponding discussions below.

Prompted by the Spirit and Patterned after Scripture

We will first explore the various ways in which the topics of Aotearoa Baptist prayer are determined. Our data contained various kinds of prayer from the most generally labeled, through specifically titled prayers, to intentional themes and categories. We are, of course, taking cues from the terminology used in the orders of service, and there are natural limits to the precision with which we can speak here. This caveat aside, we can seek to discern the liturgical postures behind this labeling.

Much prayer was labelled generically, such that words like ‘prayer’ or ‘prayer time’ were the only language on the order of service. This language could reflect various realities. The composer of the order of service may or may not be the one also offering the prayer, and in both

cases it seems to be thought unnecessary to include any specific prompts as to the topic or wording of the prayer. At the very least, these generic terms are a placeholder in the order of service to ensure that some kind of prayer does occur at the point indicated. Verbal guidance may be given by a service leader to the one offering prayer.

Other times prayers were specified (e.g. offering, confession), with only topical guidance, leaving the specific content to the one praying. For example, the term ‘thanksgiving’ can guide an offering prayer generally, but the one praying discerns what to give thanks for in particular. The same could be true for the prayers that were pastoral (for members, whether individuals, families or groups) or missional (for outward facing projects, outreaches, initiatives or for missionaries).⁸⁴ Sometimes these prayers are prompted by a one-off occurrence, such as a birthday, an anniversary, a new member being welcomed into membership, or an increased awareness of the circumstances of Syrian refugees; other times it reflects a local custom, as in the case of praying for a local church each week, or lighting candles as a reminder to pray for missionaries each 2nd week of the month. Likewise, in the case of Father’s Day prayer, there was some evidence of the intent for the prayer to include in its scope those who are not fathers; but apart from this guidance the content is up to the one praying. The inclusion of this kind of content in the worship service would involve varying levels of intentionality in terms of theological discernment of how to incorporate it in a way that is fitting to the wider liturgical flow.

The other kind of prompting we saw was the use of themes or categories, such as thanksgiving, confession and intercession. The intent here appears to be not to prescribe the exact wording of these prayers, but rather to ensure, perhaps on a weekly basis, that those various modes of prayer are all included within the entire service.

A spectrum such as this can often be characterised in an antagonistic way; for example, unspecified prayer could be seen to be more free and spiritual than the specified, and especially the categorized prayer, which could be seen as regimented and restrictive. The opposite view might see the categories of prayer as an example of prayer that is scriptural and orderly, in contrast to the unspecified prayer which could be characterized as *ad hoc*, and dependent upon the emotional state of the one praying. Whilst all of the above is at least possible, what we can observe here is the diverse spirituality of free prayer. Like all free prayer, Aotearoa Baptist prayer is free in at least two ways, which we would be wise to see as co-existing in creative tension. On the one hand, this prayer is free in the sense that those offering prayer are often ‘free’ to pray whatever they feel led to pray for. On the other hand, it is free in the sense that the guidance of

⁸⁴ Compare with Ellis, *Gathering*, 122–23.

Scripture and theology can keep prayer ‘free’ from becoming enslaved to individualism, repetition, or a restricted focus on only one mode of prayer.⁸⁵ These dual motivations of being prompted by the Spirit and patterned after Scripture correspond quite strikingly with the liturgical values that Ellis has identified behind Baptist worship, particularly here openness to the Spirit and attention to Scripture.⁸⁶

Progressing the Service and Seeking God’s Presence

Our next camera-angle on prayer will observe the *timing* of the prayer within the service as a whole. When did it occur (e.g. opening, during the singing, or closing), and what function does its timing serve; did it accompany a worship act (e.g. children going to programmes, or communion), and what was the intent behind this?

In terms of chronology, we saw that some Aotearoa Baptist prayer operates directly in concert with the flow and order of the service. Opening prayers, in addition to calling upon God for divine presence and blessing, function to transition congregants from casual pre-service conversation to an intentional focus on God and gospel. Closing prayers, blessings and benedictions, by contrast, are a way of commissioning or sending the congregation out to carry the gospel to the world. Other prayers seem to be tied to particular transitions or formalities, most commonly the collection of the offering and the departure of children to mid-service programmes. Such prayer goes beyond mere time-keeping, and instead engenders a spiritual progression and order (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:40).

Another grouping of prayers can be described as seeking the presence of God. This is true of the prayers just mentioned, which seek both to acknowledge and deepen a sense of God’s presence; whether it be in the service generally, the mid-service programmes, or the life of the congregation through the week. Other prayers do the same. Confession prayers, particularly when placed near the beginning, seek to pair an acknowledgment of the sinful actions that hinder our awareness of God’s presence with the grateful awareness of the greater grace by which God forgives and continues to journey with us. Sacramental prayer is a way of not only adorning the practices of the Lord’s Supper and baptism with prayer, but also seeking for these acts of worship to be accompanied by divine blessing and power. Prayers of commissioning plead for the presence of God to fill and follow the ones being sent out into particular mission contexts. The most distinctive examples of this presence-seeking prayer are the open, free or ‘prayer ministry’ times, which not only create space for anyone to respond to the sermon or to

⁸⁵ For example, praise and thanksgiving could be said to be dominant in relation to confession and lament.

⁸⁶ Ellis, *Gathering*, 81–93.

promptings to share a word or a prayer request, but more generally they are seeking an expression in which God is experienced as present and active; speaking and acting in kingdom-bringing ways, initiating and empowering the faithful response of the congregation.

The various expressions of presence-seeking prayers listed above range from the more planned and patterned prayers of confession and absolution through to more spontaneous and extempore open prayer and prayer ministry. Again, what might be seen through a divisive ‘either/or’ lens, we can see through a unifying ‘both/and’ lens. Confession prayers, when paired with a statement of forgiveness in Christ, need not be seen as austere, lifeless or excessively conscious of sin, but as sober, honest and freeing for congregation members, as well as being a truthful reminder of the holiness of the God of Scripture. In the same way, an ethos that is reflected in activity such as ‘prayer ministry’ need not be seen as chaotic, uncontrolled or excessive, but can be appreciated as an expression of dynamic body life ministry led by the waves and currents of the Spirit. In this desire to be Spirit-led, Baptists resemble their Pentecostal neighbours at prayer. We saw a pastoral and communal dimension to much of the prayers in our data. For French sociologist Yannick Fer, “the conscious sympathy of ‘brothers and sisters in Christ’” often prompts this kind of prayer.⁸⁷

Expressing the Heart and Impressed by Tradition

Our third way of looking at Aotearoa Baptist prayer focuses on the modes in which it was delivered. Was the prayer composed and delivered spontaneously, apart from any written texts? Was the prayer unscripted, but following familiar patterns? Were written texts employed, including the prayers originating directly from Scripture?

Our data contained a wide range of modes of delivery. The vast majority of it, we can safely assume, was unscripted unless otherwise indicated. Here we see a cornerstone feature of Free Church worship: extempore prayer. This prayer is so central to the DNA of Baptists globally, that it may well be more a matter of assumption and instinct than an intent or plan to ‘be spontaneous’. Some of this prayer is what Isaac Watts called ‘pre-conceived’, in that it is not scripted, but nonetheless flows from a heart and mind that is always being shaped by traditional patterns and Scripture. We have no direct evidence of ‘pre-conceived’ prayer, but we might take the intentional categories of prayer seen in some orders of service as indirect evidence of this kind of dynamic. Other prayers reflected increased intentionality; providing guidance not only for ‘how’ to pray, but also for ‘what’ to pray. We saw prayers of confession accompanied by

⁸⁷ Yannick Fer, “Pentecostal Prayer as Personal Communication and Invisible Institutional Work,” in *A Sociology of Prayer*, ed. Linda Woodhead and Giuseppe Giordan (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2015), 55.

“assurance in Christ” or “absolution”; evidencing a conviction that both acknowledgement of sin and also the forgiveness of it in Christ have an important role in worship. We also saw vertical forgiveness liturgically linked with horizontal forgiveness, as participants were invited to forgive others for things they had done “just like me.” Written prayers also featured in our study. Prayers written or adapted by local individuals (such as those seen in our data) will be particularly acceptable, and perhaps most of all the various prayers found in Scripture. The Lord’s Prayer (or ‘Our Father’) looms largest among the Scriptural prayers, and the occasion of Father’s Day appeared to prompt an increased use of it in our study.

Spontaneous and set forms of prayer have often been seen to be in conflict with one another, and as Ellis documents, Baptists from the start have strongly tended to prefer the former.⁸⁸ In understanding Baptist prayer, he distinguishes between prayer that is ‘expressive’, in that it is expressed from, and engages at the level of, the heart; and prayer that is ‘impressive’, in that it is impressed by, and receives instruction, guidance and formation from, Scripture.⁸⁹ In the same vein, Baptist theologian Paul Fiddes speaks, on the one hand, of the ‘stillness’ of using a written text for prayer that allows the mind and heart to sit with and reflect on its meaning, and on the other hand, prayer as expressive of an individual’s ‘journey’ through an experience, Scripture text or relationships.⁹⁰ We will explore further possibilities for development in our final chapter, but here we simply observe that Baptist prayer, in Aotearoa and elsewhere, has the freedom to embody the positive features of both spontaneous and set forms.

Visibly Led and Congregationally Shared

Finally, we consider, the location from which prayers were offered. Was it offered from the ‘front’ by a single individual, was it offered by one or more individuals from the ‘floor’, or was it voiced simultaneously or responsively by the congregation together with a leading person?

We have assumed that, when unstated, the majority of the prayers listed were given from the front, often amplified, and often from a platform or stage. This pattern of one person leading the congregation in prayer is, again, so fundamental to Baptist gathered worship that it is an assumed, embedded practice, rather than a conscious chosen act. This is also the case for the ‘open’ times of prayer where anyone from the congregation can lead in prayer, sometimes coming to the front, possibly using a microphone, as well as often unamplified from where they are seated. Here also, we see the embodiment of Baptist convictions, particularly the priesthood

⁸⁸ Ellis, *Gathering*, 104–13.

⁸⁹ Christopher J. Ellis, “Baptist Worship,” in *New SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw (London: SCM Press, 2005), 55.

⁹⁰ Paul S. Fiddes, “Spirituality as Attentiveness: Stillness and Journey,” in *Under the Rule of Christ: Dimensions of Baptist Spirituality*, ed. Fiddes, Paul S. (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2008), 37.

of all believers, who are deemed competent to pray in, with, for, and on behalf of, the gathered assembly. In both cases, it is prayer that is both personal and public, both ‘monastic prayer’ and ‘cathedral prayer’, in the sense that it is not only motivated by, and offered as the personal intentions of individuals, but also at the same time it is offered in the context of, and on behalf of, the public assembly.⁹¹

Baptist prayer also can be expressed in a more ‘cathedral’ fashion. Sometimes this can be done in the context of intentional times of silence and reflection. We saw above the use of stations, where congregants lit candles and contemplated words that led them to consider the way in which the shortcomings of others mirrored their own. Other times, less often, prayer can take the congregational forms of unison or responsive recitation. We observed the Lord’s Prayer being used in this way, which would be common, if not weekly, to liturgical traditions, and a departure from the norm for many Baptists. We also observed a responsive prayer of confession. These prayers might signal an intentional desire among some Aotearoa Baptists to gather the congregation in concerted vocal acts of prayer.

It could be said that one person praying for and on behalf of others would contribute to the passivity of the listeners, whose only contribution to public prayer is an inarticulate ‘Amen’. This possibility, however, must not be construed as an eventuality. Both speaking and listening are verbs, and intentionality is something that must be maintained in both cases. Again, the chief contribution here for wider liturgical practice is the freedom for diverse expression. Whilst Baptists may always tend to prefer prayer that is visibly led by one person, they remain ‘free’ to adopt more shared or collaborative ways of praying as well.

Conclusion

We have sought here to understand and appreciate the meaning and value that the diverse ways of praying have in Aotearoa Baptist churches. Diverse topics for prayer flow both from a sense of prompting, as well as attempts to follow the patterns of Scripture. Diverse intentions for prayer are reflected in the orderliness of the service, attending to its ebbs and flows, its patterns and movements, particularly in the seeking of the presence and kingdom of God in the midst of sin, brokenness and need. Diverse modes of prayer range from the most spontaneous and unscripted to the most patterned, traditional and even liturgical. Diverse spaces in the gathering

⁹¹ See discussion in Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 90–91.

from which prayer is offered reflects a commitment to the free operation of a corporate priesthood; a commitment which is hospitable to occasional uses of shared spoken prayer.

5. Baptist Singing in Aotearoa

All songs are from 1998 to today. Our Target Audience is 25-50 years of age, singles and families, concentrating on contemporary worship to engage them with God...
By making this intentional shift in the worship selection of songs we have steadily grown the church from 140 middle aged to elderly folk, to a congregation that today has over half of the congregation being younger vibrant folk of 200.
(Service 59)

[Our] song choice [is] almost entirely post 1995, "contemporary" worship.
I've tried to push for hymns to be included without much success.
We may have an older song from the 70's-90's very occasionally.
2 of our worship leaders will regularly include songs in Te Reo (1 or 2 in a service),
and I've encouraged that.
(Comments from Service 17)

Introduction

We now turn to the task of understanding the collective spirituality of Aotearoa Baptists as expressed in their diverse patterns of congregational singing. A diversity of songs were sung in a variety of ways, and the meaning and value of this singing will be explored.

Singing: The Data

The data from our study includes song titles, their placement in the service, and comments from the survey. With enough time and space for analysis, even the simple data of song titles could be the subject of much investigation. Some questions remain unanswerable. This limited data nonetheless provides useful information.

Songs and Leadership

The participating churches reported a total of 242 song titles.⁹² The table below lists songs featuring in five (6%) or more services. The rank by usage from our survey is listed beside the ranking from Christian Copyright Licensing International – New Zealand (CCLINZ) for the corresponding six-month period.⁹³

⁹² Allowance must be made for possible error or misinterpretation of the titles given.

⁹³ It was not possible to estimate the degree to which their data reflects the total song choice in Aotearoa; around 20 percent of churches licensed with CCLINZ actively report their song usage.

SONG TITLE	SURVEY	CCLINZ
<i>Glorified</i>	1	3
* <i>Because He Lives</i>	2	86
<i>Bless the Lord, Oh My Soul (10,000 Reasons)</i>	3	1
* <i>Good Good Father</i>	3=	51
<i>Amazing Love</i>	5	25
<i>Great Are You Lord</i>	5=	7
* <i>How Great Is Our God</i>	5=	4
<i>How Great Thou Art</i>	5=	31
* <i>This I Believe (The Creed)</i>	5=	2

(* possible increased use due to Father's Day.)

Glorified, a locally-produced song, featured in the most services (nine), which roughly aligns with its #3 rank in the CCLINZ listing. It could be argued that a homegrown song might well rank high in the homeland, however other factors may include such things as straightforward biblical language and having a melody and rhythm that diverse ages and musical abilities can sing, much like *Bless the Lord Oh My Soul (10,000 Reasons)*, topping the CCLINZ rankings, and #3 in our sample. Four of these songs (*Because He Lives*, *Good Good Father*, *How Great is Our God*, and *This I Believe*) feature parental imagery of some kind, and thus may have achieved a higher than normal ranking due to Father's Day; this may have been the case for another song outside the above list, *How Deep the Father's Love*. Five songs tied for the fifth place: *Amazing Love*, *This I Believe (The Creed)*, *Great Are You Lord*, *How Great Thou Art*, and *How Great Is Our God*. All of these songs can be credited as being strongly accessible for congregations to sing.

Despite the dominance of these more popular songs, there is a wider diversity of songs: local and global; traditional, contemporary and modern; from a database or a hymnal. Our survey revealed that at least a few Baptist churches still use (and even more may possibly consult) the 1991 Baptist Union of Great Britain hymnal *Baptist Praise and Worship*, and they and other churches at times make use of a few locally produced hymnbooks such as *New Zealand Praise* and the more recent *Hope Is Our Song*.⁹⁴ A few orders of services listed hymnal or other songbook numbers next to the songs, indicating the use of hymnals, even if the physical hymnals may have been replaced by some form of projected lyrics; which makes sense if we are right in assuming that the use of projection technologies has increased in recent decades.⁹⁵ This mix of songs

⁹⁴ Psalms and Hymns Trust, *Baptist Praise and Worship*. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); David R. S. (David Raymond Scott) Dell, ed., *New Zealand Praise* (Hastings, N.Z.: New Zealand Christian Resource Trust, 1988); Susan Heafield and Brian Wren, eds., *Hope Is Our Song: New Hymns & Songs from Aotearoa New Zealand* (Palmerston North, N.Z.: New Zealand Hymnbook Trust, 2009).

⁹⁵ Compare, for example, the results of the following Baptist reports; Christopher J. Ellis, *Baptist Worship Today*, 14; Michel R. Belzile, "Canadian Baptist at Worship: A Survey of Congregational Worship within The Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec" (Doctor of Ministry dissertation, McMaster Divinity College, 1998), 92; Phillip B. Jones, *Southern Baptist Congregations Today* (North American Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 2001), ii; See also Ellis, *Gathering*, 164.

reflects the progression seen in the history of Aotearoa Baptist singing, toward a dominance of newer contemporary songs, with regular or occasional older hymns.

The role of the ‘worship leader’ features prominently in the singing of Aotearoa Baptists as well as the song selection, as it is often the worship leader or song leader that selects the songs for the service, with varying degrees of input or guidance from a worship committee or pastor.⁹⁶ The presence of the term “worship curator” in five (6%) orders of service is almost certainly evidence of the influence of Mark Pierson. He has influenced leaders in and outside the Baptist movement in Aotearoa through articles, seminars, and academic teaching through Carey Baptist College. This approach to worship is laid out in his book *The Art of Curating Worship*, in which he introduces the term as part of the key metaphor he develops for the planning and practice of worship.⁹⁷

One order of service (31) contained a guiding prompt reflecting a shared approach to worship leadership, which is likened to a “Head Chef” planning a meal. Service 61 reported that Father’s Day provided a “special Sunday” occasion where the “high school youth group worship band/team led the sung worship for the first time.”

Varying approaches to song selection and service planning gave rise to varied results. The respondent for service 17 reported a song mix that is “almost entirely post 1995, ‘contemporary’ worship” and “an older song from the 70's-90's very occasionally”, and also lamented that they have “tried to push for hymns to be included without much success.” Service 24 described an intentional “Blend of hymns and contemporary songs” being “chosen by worship leaders from an approved list of about 70.” Another service (36) evidenced an occasional deliberate emphasis: “this particular time was a focus on hymns.” By far the most detailed comments on the strategy behind song selection were provided for service 59.

“All songs are from 1998 to today. Our Target Audience is 25-50 years of age, singles and families, concentrating on contemporary worship to engage them with God... By making this intentional shift in the worship selection of songs we have steadily grown the church from 140 middle aged to elderly folk, to a congregation that today has over half of the congregation being younger vibrant folk of 200. this has been an intentional shift, with many who are new or returning believers of the faith now engaging with us each sunday. Only a small few are church hoppers. The older congregation are enjoying a time slot of Hymns played before the formal service fortnightly to get there [sic] hit, and are more than happy, seeing so many new faces coming to church. (some middle aged folk have left, (about 10 folk) or are unhappy and kicking up some resistance to what is happening).”

We will return to this comment in our final section, but for the present moment, we can observe that the goal behind this “intentional shift in the worship selection of songs” not only appears to

⁹⁶ Overall responsibility for the service (allowing for multiple responses) was ‘pastor’ (86.8%) above ‘worship leader’ (59.2%), however even when the pastor has overall leadership for the entire service, it may be highly unlikely that they are choosing the songs as well.

⁹⁷ Pierson, *The Art of Curating Worship*.

seek a “Target Audience” of “younger vibrant folk”, but also assumes that young people prefer songs “from 1998 to today” and old people prefer “Hymns”. It is possible that the intent is not to replace “middle aged” and “elderly” with “younger”, but to achieve a diverse mix of ages, however the wider context of the quote could be seen to reflect a special catering for the interests of the young (in the “formal service”), whilst requiring the “older congregation” to enjoy a fortnightly “time slot of Hymns” beforehand. Additionally, the elderly preference for Hymns is described with an addiction or drug metaphor (getting their “hit”), while the language surrounding the use of “contemporary worship” entails active engagement with God, along with growth and vibrancy. The comment may also reflect a particularly inflexible approach to leadership which is prepared for members to be “unhappy”, or even leave, rather than consider their “resistance to what is happening”.

Other evidence of intentionality is seen in efforts to match songs to the theme of the sermon. Other times songs assist the congregation in preparation for Communion, following (consciously or otherwise) the example of Benjamin Keach who wrote hymns for singing after the Lord’s Supper.⁹⁸ Two examples of the latter were *Jesus Christ, I Think Upon Your Sacrifice* (service 53) and *As We Are Gathered Jesus is Here* (service 34a). Other songs, such as *Come, Now is the Time to Worship* or the survey-topping *Glorified* (beginning with the prayerful line: ‘Lord I come into your holy place...’) can be strategically used to gather a congregation as it comes together for corporate worship. Similar intentionality is seen in the use of a song like *Make Me a Channel of Your Peace* as a way of sending the congregation out into the world as participants with God in bringing Christ’s kingdom of peace.

Musical and Technological Support

The survey responses to the question about persons leading, together with a few comments provided by a few respondents indicated that the support provided by instrumental musicians and operators of sound or data technologies is rightly seen as a very real part of song leadership and worship participation. Frequent reference to persons playing instruments such as drums, guitar and keyboard lends support to an anecdotal impression that much of the congregational singing will have been supported by music teams patterned on the instrumentation of a rock band. Anecdotal experience would indicate that organs remain in place in some church sanctuaries, and are at times used to varying degrees in different congregations; however, direct evidence of this did not surface in our data. What did surface, through infrequently and often in smaller gatherings, were services reporting the use of pre-recorded musical performances, where

⁹⁸ Ellis, *Gathering*, 161–62.

the congregational singing was led and supported by CDs, YouTube or DVDs. Service 66 explained that the decision to “use videos off YouTube” flows from having “no worship leader or musicians”.

Manner and Format

Our study can only observe hints and clues pointing toward the experience and feel of singing in the services. Some services evidenced very intentional linking of songs with other service components; whilst other comments showed a high value on freedom to respond to a sense of the Spirit’s leading with a song chosen spontaneously. Most often this was through the use of one or two ‘song brackets’, usually comprising between three to five songs, providing a space for the interweaving of musical dynamics and spiritual devotion. The pattern of using a single song to respond to a prayer or reading was much rarer; excepting of course the ‘final song’ responding to the sermon or message, which was commonplace.⁹⁹

In other ways, Aotearoa Baptists showed themselves to be extremely varied in their practice of corporate song. Familiar routines (e.g. a weekly ‘kids song’ in one service) are common and have a home-spun feel. More exploratory practices (e.g. singing a chant whilst the congregation circles the room) suggest at least some interest in forms other than the traditional, modern or contemporary. Other orders of service showed a great deal of strategic engineering, such as minute-by-minute timings for each component.¹⁰⁰

In terms of an overall approach to worship and singing, the language employed in the orders of service to describe the components may be of interest. That ‘worship is more than singing’ is a common enough observation; however, the use of the term ‘worship’ to designate a block of singing in 27% of the services may indicate a lingering of a different, or perhaps subconscious, understanding (by contrast, other terms used were ‘songs’, ‘worship songs’, ‘worship through song’, ‘music’ etc.).¹⁰¹

Although this chapter is focused on the singing of a gathered congregation, Aotearoa Baptist singing is not uniformly congregational. The orders of service occasionally indicated using non-congregational songs (from the music team, CD, or another source). These ‘items’ appeared in eight services to reinforce or introduce a theme. Fourteen services reported a song (pre-recorded or ‘live’) either transitioning to or accompanying the practice of the Lord’s Supper.

⁹⁹ This appears to mirror the pattern amongst British Baptists, see discussion in *ibid.*, 162–63; For results of 1996 survey, see Christopher J. Ellis, *Baptist Worship Today*.

¹⁰⁰ The lighting setting in one service was called ‘worship lighting’.

¹⁰¹ Ellis reports similar introductions of song brackets such as “And now for a time of worship”, as though prayer and preaching were not worship”; see *Gathering*, 163.

In a bicultural and multicultural context such as Aotearoa New Zealand, one might expect and look for any indications of bicultural or multicultural intentionality. Our data, however, provided an extremely limited amount of such evidence. One service (33) uniformly used the term *waiata* instead of the English word ‘song’ (along with other deliberate use of Te Reo Māori). The respondent from service 17 reported encouraging “songs in Te Reo”. There was no visible indication in our study of singing in more than one language. Multicultural expression tends toward separate congregations singing in their native tongues.

Singing: Interpretation and Value

Contemporary Songs and Traditional Hymns

Our study revealed a mix of songs, with the contemporary and popular titles being the most used. The shift away from traditional and toward a contemporary style of worship that we saw in chapter 2 continues in this pattern. There was one response that reflected a particularly strong stance along these lines. As noted above, the extended description of the “intentional shift” to newer songs with the result of changing the demographic makeup of the congregation appears to signal the presence of assumptions regarding the appeal that different styles of songs have for different kinds of people (particularly different ages, as reflected in the comment). Additionally, it raises the question of whether contemporary styles of worship music have become too dominant, and whether or not there is a need for styles and congregations to reflect the diversity of the Body of Christ. On a more positive note, we can appreciate that the use of contemporary songs can be accompanied by a sense of moving with the current movements of the Spirit. To sing these songs can be seen as a way for congregations to participate in worship together with songwriters, and music groups or bands as they weave fresh melodies and lyrics into “a new song” (Psalm 40:3).

We also saw in our data some evidence of a goal of a diverse mix of songs. We saw some seeming to intentionally sing older or less known songs. Most common, after contemporary songs, were traditional and popular hymns. Having valued the singing of newer songs just previously, we can also value the singing of songs that have been long cherished. Among other things, the use of older hymns (and hymnbooks) may signal not only the lasting influence of these older songs, but perhaps also an intent to shape worship that witnesses to the Spirit’s faithfulness in the past. Here we can discern that it is not the age of a song that makes it worthwhile to sing, but rather qualities such as scriptural language and congregational rhythm

and melody. It may be the case that some forms are more dominant than others, but we can appreciate the spirituality of a movement of churches where a diversity of songs are chosen with intent to glorify God and edify worshippers.

Song Leaders and Worship Curators

We observed a variety of terms used to describe the person who selects and leads the songs. In addition to ‘worship leader’, which was the most common, we saw the influence of Mark Pierson in the use of the term ‘worship curator’, and we saw one service which appeared to have developed its own understanding and language, seen in the term ‘Head Chef’. The accompanying prompt of this last term signals inherent values, which are worthy of appreciation, and likely to be reflected in congregations that use ‘worship curator’, or even ‘worship leader’ terminology. The reminder of their ability to “change the order of service” evidences a particular approach to the leadership culture of that congregation, namely that freedom and responsibility are entrusted to these people. This posture was also reflected in services where youth teams were given responsibility for leading a service, or perhaps a section of it. Also, in the mention of a “goal for the day, which derives from the Bible passage of the day”, we see the role of Scripture in shaping this particular service; in this case through the selection of a worship ‘goal’ (presumably didactic in nature) from the text of the Bible passage.

This kind of discernment in worship planning may well occur in similar manner in other services, even where such language is not found on the order of service. It would be an unwarranted assumption that the amount of detail on the order of service corresponds to the degree of intentionality or biblical quality of that service of worship. Here we simply observe and appreciate the value of the intentionality and planning that we did observe.

Powerful Encounters and Active Participation

Whilst a small number of services still employed a traditional practice of a song ‘sandwiched’ between other service elements, the dominant pattern was the use of song ‘brackets’. This pattern, as we saw in chapter 2, was largely part of the contemporary worship movement, in which the role of songs and singing became increasingly prominent, and popular musical instrumentation and arrangement was employed. It will likely come as no surprise that some protest the increased use of rock bands, stages, lighting and amplification, claiming that it makes the gathered singing less sacrificial worship and more dynamic entertainment.¹⁰² Others insist it

¹⁰² A recent popular example is Stephen Miller, *Worship Leaders, We Are Not Rock Stars* (Moody Publishers, 2013).

is just as valid a vehicle for worship as other styles of music.¹⁰³ We will return to this question in the final chapter, but for the present moment we can appreciate the value of an approach toward culture which is able to recognise and incorporate forms which have been made useful in leading congregations in corporate song.

Congregational participation also goes beyond only vocal collaboration. As we saw above, the influence of the charismatic renewal saw the increase of bodily expression such as dancing, clapping or raising of hands. Then and now, some will find such expression to be showy, and it could be argued that it has an isolating effect on newcomers, who may feel unsure how to join in. Nonetheless, this bodily expression can also demonstrate that singing is, as Brian Wren describes, a “corporeal” activity, involving the collective operation of not only tongues and lungs, but also hands and feet.¹⁰⁴ Such non-vocal participation may also have particular relevance for those Aotearoa Baptists who are members of the deaf community.

We also observed the consistent mention of musicians as active participants in the leading of congregational worship. We can safely assume that a large portion of services would have made use of some kind of group of musicians, even if the instrumentation will vary, and even when the order of service or survey results did not make explicit mention of them. The decision of a few (usually smaller) congregations to support congregational singing with pre-recorded versions of the songs could be due to the absence or perceived unsuitability of the musical ability of those in the congregation. We will consider other alternatives in the final chapter, however we need not assume that the use of pre-recorded versions equates to a passive expression of either the leadership or participation of gathered singing.

Globally Networked and Culturally Diverse

The gathered singing of Aotearoa Baptists fits quite well within wider global trends. The high degree of use of internationally cherished songs can contribute to a real sense of ecumenical participation and sharing in global worship trends, particularly in those sections of the global church which adopt a style reflecting contemporary, Pentecostal and charismatic influences. We also saw some expressions which, perhaps with varying degrees of intentionality, sought to identify with other parts of the global Church as well, for example through the use of a chant by Taizé. We will explore the question of whether one expression may be overly dominant in

¹⁰³ See, for example, the patient analysis within the study of Stephen R. Holmes, “Listening for the Lex Orandi: The Constructed Theology of Contemporary Worship Events,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 66.2 (2013): 192–208.

¹⁰⁴ Brian A. Wren, *Praying Twice: The Music and Words of Congregational Song* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 85–87.

chapter 2, but the reality remains that there is a significant amount of diversity reflected in our study.

Our snapshot of Aotearoa Baptist singing may not have been able to identify or measure the extent of ongoing trends of intentional multicultural or bicultural activity, but we did see some evidence of it. For example, the occasional or regular use of songs entirely or partially consisting of Te Reo Māori lyrics would better reflect the unique bicultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand. The same could be said for other cultures and languages. Any and all of such activity reflects an intentional desire to reflect, at the level of the local congregation, the wider reality that the global Church is drawn from every tribe, tongue and nation.

Conclusion

Our account of a day of Aotearoa Baptist singing has provided at least a sketch of their ongoing patterns. The mix of songs from our survey confirmed the diversity one might expect in such a grouping of congregations. Freedom from a hymnbook has opened a wide gate for song choice, with Baptists largely following popular and contemporary patterns. The freedom from the structures of such things as prescribed textual, festal or thematic cycles can provide a freedom for choosing texts and songs that express the gospel through songs that leaders or ‘curators’ of worship deem useful for any given service; though it is unclear to what extent or by what means Aotearoa Baptists are intentionally seeking to address the breadth of Scripture’s gospel themes and seasonal rhythms. The most often used songs appeared to have a combination of congregationally-friendly musical characteristics as well as scriptural lyrics. As we noted, this does not remove the urgent challenge for the writing and selection of songs that both express the richness of the Scriptural gospel, and serve the varying vocal or musical abilities in a given congregation. Finally, we saw that the tendency to follow popular trends is a source of at least some level of ecumenical connection with other churches (especially those following the same trends), yet at the same time can be a possible limiter of the diverse expression of songs, and musical genres that could reflect the unique bicultural and multicultural context of Aotearoa.

6. Baptist Use of Scripture in Aotearoa

“[W]e started this year beginning our services with a short scripture reading that is also on the front of the newsletter, usually a few verses from a psalm something to inspire worship. The sermon always begins with a scripture reading... The worship leader may read a scripture in between songs”
(Comments from service 8)

“[T]here is always a bible reading done by a member of the congregation”
(Comments from service 22)

“There were various scriptural references mentioned in the sermon”
(Comments from service 41)

Introduction

In this chapter, we aim to survey the various uses of Scripture in the gathered worship of Aotearoa Baptists. The highly verbal nature of gathered worship means that it will be characterised by a significant degree of intertextuality, as myriad texts and voices from Scripture and Culture shape its language. Echoes of scriptural idiom will naturally be heard in many songs, prayers and other verbal or textual elements.¹⁰⁵ Our study is less suited to document such ‘audible’ allusions, and will instead focus on the moments where Scripture surfaces in ways that were direct and ‘visible’ in the orders of service or additional comments supplied, such as scriptural calls to worship and benedictions, bible readings, and of course preaching.

Scripture: The Data

Frequency of Scriptural Use

Our data not only evidenced a variety of uses of Scripture, but also suggested a varying amount of uses in each service. Whilst the following should not be taken to indicate a total absence of scriptural content, 26 services had no explicit mention of Scripture (either in general, or a specified passage) in the entire service; three of these had a sermon title signaling a topical focus.¹⁰⁶ Other services had multiple references; some having as many as five (20, 34a, 42a, 42c), or six (45).

¹⁰⁵ See discussion in Ellis, *Gathering*, 80.

¹⁰⁶ Services 2, 3, 4, 11, 13, 14, 15, 23, 25b, 26, 27, 32, 33, 37, 38, 39, 40, 49, 51, 52, 55, 57, 62, 64, 68 and 69.

Breadth of Scriptural Use

We were also able to note the frequency that various sub-sections of Scripture were used in the services as a whole; 14 readings from the Psalms, 13 from elsewhere in the Old Testament, 15 from the Gospels, and (the largest category) 32 from the Epistles. This division in usage is reflected visually by the following listing in columns:

OT	Psalm	Gospel	Epistle
Genesis 2:4b-25	Psalm 2	Matthew 5	Acts 10:34-43
Deuteronomy 10:14-19, 14:28-29, 24:17-22	Psalm 8:3-4	Matthew 6:1-4	Acts 11:19-30
Deuteronomy 31:6	Psalm 23	Matthew 6:5-15	Acts 13
Judges 3	Psalm 40:9-13	Matthew 9:35-38	Romans 5:12-21
2 Kings 6:24 – 7:2	Psalm 66	Mark 1	Romans 8:12-17
Ezra 4	Psalm 85:1-7	Mark 1:40	1 Corinthians 1:18-25
Proverbs 8	Psalm 107	Mark 14:12-26	1 Corinthians 11:23-26
Isaiah 51:9-16	Psalm 116-117	Luke 2:14-21	1 Corinthians 11:23-29
Isaiah 58	Psalm 118:24-25	Luke 4:17-21	“words of institution”
Jeremiah 31:31-34	Psalm 119.33-40	Luke 19	“words of institution”
Lamentations 3:22-23	Psalm 127	Luke 23:32-43	1 Corinthians 12
Ezekiel 36:24-27	Psalm 139	Luke [unspecified]	1 Corinthians 12:12-27
Daniel “fiery furnace”	Psalm 150	John 11	1 Corinthians 13
	Psalm [unspecified]	John 13	2 Corinthians 1:18-22
		John 15:18 – 16:4	2 Corinthians 13-14
			Galatians 5
			Galatians 5:14-25
			Ephesians 1:1-6
			Ephesians 3.14-15
			Ephesians 3:14-21
			Philippians 2:1-11
			Colossians 1:24-27
			Colossians 2:1-10
			2 Thessalonians 3:3
			1 Timothy 4:1-16
			2 Timothy 2:13
			Hebrews 4:16
			1 Peter 1:7
			1 Peter 2:4-10
			1 John 2:12-14
			1 John 3:16-20
			3 John

Opening Usage

There was a clear pattern of using Scripture in relation to the opening moments of the service. For six services (20, 31, 34a, 42c, 45, 67), an opening reading from Scripture was the very first act of worship; one of these (42c) followed the reading with a period of silence. It cannot, of course, be known if or when some form of brief greeting is given before these readings.¹⁰⁷ In five services this early reading occurred adjacent to music (1 and 5) or corporate song (18 and 42a), or as part of the opening singing (53). In another grouping of services, the reading occurred in concert with or after a verbal ‘welcome’ (49, 54); often also in the context of a call to worship (17, 30) or prayer (25a, 59, 70). This pattern was described in the comments of one respondent (8) describing a practice of beginning services “with a short scripture reading that is also on the front of the newsletter, usually a few verses from a psalm” with a view “to inspire worship.”¹⁰⁸

Usage with the Sermon

For the services that specified a Scripture reference in relation to the sermon, there was often a single reference. This reference may often be read at the opening of the sermon, which was specified by one respondent (service 8): “The sermon always begins with a scripture reading”. Five services had more than one reference specified in relation to the sermon (22, 34a, 42a, 42c, 45), with 42a and 42c each having three readings from three different sections of Scripture (Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel), as part of a section of the service titled ‘WORD’. We also observed language indicating the practice of a sermon ‘series’, preaching through books of the Bible, with one respondent (34b) describing their current series as “going systematically through 2 Kings”. Again, the absence of such terminology does not indicate the absence of this homiletic practice. Readings also occurred in places other than immediately before, with, or after the sermon, and it was unclear to what extent these verses were consciously selected to anticipate or recall themes from the sermon.

The language used for another grouping of services suggested a topical approach (1, 4, 11, 19, 25a, 27, 60, 65, 68). In some cases, a sermon series may have been paused or delayed in

¹⁰⁷ This observation raises the question of when any service truly starts; with the greeter at the door, upon reaching one’s seat, with a greeting (casual or formal) from the minister or worship leader, with the first song, or at the precise planned ‘start time’?

¹⁰⁸ Despite the indication, this order of service had no written indication of an opening scripture reading, which is an example of the natural limits of our study. Because some liturgical habits may not find their way onto the order of service, we cannot assume complete continuity between the items listed on the order of service and the actual worship acts which occurred in that service, or in the wider liturgical life of that community.

lieu of a topical sermon on this day; especially likely with Father's Day topics in services 4 ("Dad's Under Pressure") and 27 ("Responsibilities to be a Spiritual father"). Service 34a explored the theme of "Fathers – top down" from a specified biblical text, Ephesians 3:14-15; additional comments described the use of verses from John's gospel "to outline God's ideal fatherhood", as opposed to understanding God's fatherhood "by working up from earthly fathers."

Service 25b (described as a "relaxed" service friendly for children) featured a panel discussion where "a range of individuals of different ages" were interviewed "on their Christian life and belief." Services 46 and 61 employed the use of a DVD message; the former was self-described as a "small church", and the latter was a youth led service for a congregation size between 150-200. Finally, children's talks, another variety of homiletic activity, were explicitly seen in services 16, 18 and 52, for which no Scripture references were recorded.

Sacramental Usage

Of the 43 services that observed the Lord's Supper, five specified that Scripture was used in connection with it. Four of these using the traditional reading from 1 Corinthians 11; two simply referring to the "words of institution", and two specifying the chapter and verse (one reading 11:23-26, the other extending the reading to v. 29). Service 30 made use of Colossians 1:24-27. The only reported baptismal activity was from service 61, which had three baptisms. Whilst prayers were noted alongside this activity, no scriptural usage was recorded.

Concluding Usage

Five services (20, 31, 42a, 42c, 49) indicated the use of Scripture as part of the closing or 'benediction'. Service 20 used one of the traditional scriptural benedictions: 1 Corinthians 13:14; while service 42c used a less common scriptural blessing: Ephesians 3:14-21. Service 31 repeated the "key verse from sermon". Two services (42a, 49) reported scriptural benedictions without reporting the text.

Scripture: Interpretation and Valuation

This data reflects a vast diversity in assumptions, intent and activity with regard to Scripture in Aotearoa Baptist worship. It should be noted that the absence of Scripture from some orders of service may say as much, or more, about varying levels of detail in the orders of service, as it does about the presence or absence of Scripture in the course of these worship services. As we

will discuss below, similar caution should be exercised throughout. Any of these services could have included as much Scriptural reference, recitation and exposition as those which had several references. We now turn to both understand the meaning of this diversity, and appreciate the value of its potential contribution to wider liturgical practice.

Scripture as Language of Worship

We saw above a vast contrast in explicit reference to, or documentation of, scriptural passages, ranging from no visible mention at all to five or six references, sometimes deliberately selected from various parts of Scripture. It would be short-sighted to assume that the quantity of biblical references on a given order of service corresponds to the level of that congregation's use of and appreciation for Scripture in its liturgical life. On the contrary, it is possible that in some cases where there is no explicit reference to Scripture on the order of service, Scripture is valued so highly, quoted so often, and so thoroughly permeates the liturgical heart of that congregation that formal documentation on a service sheet is deemed superfluous. To the extent that this is true, it reflects the role of Scripture in providing the language for worship, or a liturgical vernacular. As noted above, biblical phrases and language naturally find a spiritual habitation in the singing, supplication and exhortation of Christian worship. Scripture is assumed to be at work in the lives of individuals as they are scattered, and also on display in the worship of the local congregation as it gathers.¹⁰⁹

We cannot say with accuracy the extent to which such a vision corresponds with reality. To what extent is Scripture forming the liturgical vernacular of Aotearoa Baptists? Ellis's distinction between impressive and expressive modes of prayer can be useful as well for discussing different modes of Scriptural use in worship.¹¹⁰ Concrete readings directly from Scripture can impress a biblical language upon a community and, as a result, can resource the ongoing expression of authentically scriptural language. James K. A. Smith makes a similar point using the language of "cultural liturgies".¹¹¹ He suggests we are continually being shaped by the acts, the rituals or "liturgies" that we participate in, whether they are in secular society (e.g. a shopping mall or concert), or in a worship service; sometimes these liturgies cohere, other times they compete. To combine Ellis and Smith, the question becomes: Given the force with which alternative narratives and language are impressed upon worshippers all week long, to what extent

¹⁰⁹ See wider discussion in Ellis, *Gathering*, 80–81.

¹¹⁰ Ellis, "Baptist Worship," 55.

¹¹¹ Smith develops his argument in relation to the content and dynamics of worship; see *Imagining the Kingdom (Cultural Liturgies): How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013).

are concrete biblical readings needed in gathered worship to refresh and recalibrate their imagination and speech? We shall return to such questions in the final chapter.

Scripture as Gateway to Worship

We saw a distinct pattern, even if not a dominant one, of using Scripture at or near the beginning of the worship service. What is the meaning of such activity? Whatever form it takes, and whatever the specific timing of these early biblical readings, they are a kind of transition, passage, or gateway into worship. To read from Scripture in this way is to enable the congregation to be addressed by a voice beyond the congregation, and to be called into the presence of God. This is not to suggest that an absence of an early Scripture reading equates to an absence of a divine call to worship. To illustrate, if the song *Come, Now is the Time to Worship* was the opening act of worship, worshippers would hear and sing various words of Scripture, such as the divine invitation to “come” (Isaiah 55:1; Matthew 11:28; Revelation 22:17) and the promise that “every tongue” will “confess” (Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10). By contrast, Catholic Mass opens with a Trinitarian formula (Matthew 28:19b) and the apostolic greeting (2 Corinthians 13:14), making Scripture literally the first words in the service. Different approaches will be taken depending on the existing or desired pre-service dynamic. Here we simply observe the use of Scripture in Aotearoa Baptist worship which can represent a divine call to worship.

Scripture as Agent of Worship

Our study also evidenced Scripture having an active role in worship. Sometimes this was expressed in readings that accompanied or led up to the sermon or Communion, and other times the reading of Scripture was done for its own sake. At work behind and underneath such usage is the conviction that Scripture, whether expounded, alluded to, or simply read, has a God-given capacity to direct, nourish and instruct the people of God, or as Ellis puts it, “a readiness to order the faith and practice of the Church, as well as the daily living of the believer, in the light of what are perceived to be scriptural principles.”¹¹² Regardless of whether the text was read twenty minutes prior to the sermon, at its beginning, or at some point within it, we see this conviction at work.

The most visible and most dominant expression of this conviction remains in preaching that expounds the Scriptures. It could be argued that this conviction can only be claimed for those services which had a specific biblical text that was read and preached on. However, as we saw with regard to Father’s Day, topical preaching can just as easily embody such convictions;

¹¹² Ellis, “Baptist Worship,” 81.

and conversely, it may not always be the case that the selection and use of a specific biblical text flows from such an expectation of Scripture.

We also observed a pattern of using Scripture in relation to Sacramental practice. Whilst this may not have been the case for our single service containing baptisms (unless unrecorded texts were used), there was an observable pattern with regard to Communion, particularly the habit of using the ‘words of institution’. This practice might signal the most ‘liturgical’ (and also most ecumenical) of moments in Baptist worship, as the words of a text like 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, as they have in countless places and times for a multitude of disciples, “direct and limit the practice of the Supper, enabling the congregation to participate in the drama of the upper room as well as participate in the drama of salvation in Christ.”¹¹³ Here we see Baptists taking Scripture, and Jesus in particular, seriously, as they “do this” in remembrance of Him. Here also, and in a real sense more importantly, we hear the *vox Christi* leading the people of God in worship; the prime example of Scripture as agent of worship.

Two observations prompt a further point of discussion. First, the breadth of use across Scripture’s major categories; and secondly, the cases in which some services had a pattern of having readings from each of these categories. Some services showed an attentiveness to the distinction between “Old Testament” and “New Testament”, choosing readings from each; and we saw also the pattern of “OT”, “Psalm”, “Epistle” and “Gospel”, reminiscent of (or echoing) similar divisions employed by some lectionaries. Here we see an attentiveness to the unfolding of the biblical story, and we may discern a desire (to some extent) for the service to reflect this narrative arc. That this is not the norm in our study raises the question of the extent to which Aotearoa Baptists, in their weekly or yearly rhythms, are traversing the full counsel of Scripture. Paul Sheppy notes the comparatively lesser number of Bible readings in Baptist worship, as well as the rarity of the liturgical framing of those readings with procession, acclamation, silence or response.¹¹⁴ Locally, there are at least anecdotal concerns that there is a comparative poverty of Scripture publicly read in gathered worship.¹¹⁵ We shall, in our final chapter, consider what kind of opportunities for development there may be on this point.

¹¹³ Ibid., 192.

¹¹⁴ Paul Sheppy, “Liturgical Books: 5. Baptist,” in *New SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw (London: Hymns Ancient and Modern Ltd, 2013), 76.

¹¹⁵ See, for example, John Tucker, “The Most Revolutionary Christian Event Since the Protestant Reformation - and What We Can Learn from It Today,” *NZ Baptist Magazine*, August 2014, asking readers of the NZ Baptist how much Scripture they heard in their Sunday services, and how that compared with the Catholic congregation down the road which had readings from the OT, Psalms, Gospel and Epistles.

Scripture as Commissioning from Worship

Another pattern we observed was the use of Scripture to send or commission the congregation into the world. Sometimes the text was a blessing from an oft-used location in Scripture (for example, 2 Corinthians 13:14); other times it could be a final review of the sermon text as a concluding motivational reminder. This pattern naturally parallels and completes the above concept of Scripture as 'Gateway'. Through the Scripture, we are not only called and gathered around the gospel, but also sent and scattered into culture. The Word thus serves as the first and last word we need to hear.

Conclusion

We have seen a wide variety of ways in which Aotearoa Baptists value Scripture, and embody that conviction in their gathered worship. With a wide range of visibility and intentionality, Scripture is expressed in the very heart and language of worship, in the varied rhythms and goals of the service, in the call to draw aside from the world, in the admonition to be missional agents in it, in the visible and vocal reading and exposition of specific texts, and in the solemn recounting of the Saviour's words at his table. We now turn to consider the Sacramental posture of Aotearoa Baptists.

7. Baptist Sacraments in Aotearoa

We gather with thanksgiving for the life of God we find in each other
and more especially in the life and spirit of Jesus.
We affirm our commitment to this Jesus
who has enthralled us with his life,
challenged us with his death
and emboldened us with his resurrection.
For this is after all, and before all, the table of Jesus.
The table is set in his honour
The meal is served in his memory
The meaning is derived from his story
It is his spirit that enriches and empowers these symbolic acts,
that connects us to the sustaining divine presence.
It is in coming together to remember and celebrate that we are
reconnected
reoriented
recommissioned
reinvigorated
In one moment of time
we touch eternity
we taste heaven even as we feel earth's pain
and sense our vocation to stand in the gap
loving as we have been loved
serving as we have been served
giving as we have received
And so we say to you Jesus, God among us
thank you for all that you are, all that you've done and all that you've given
Thanks for privilege of sharing this meal of mystery with you and one another
Thank you for the bread symbol of your broken body and reminder of all that is broken
Thank you for the cup symbol of your sacrifice and reminder of our own.
(Service 43)

Introduction

We turn, for the last of our data chapters, to an examination and appraisal of the sacramental practices of Aotearoa Baptists.¹¹⁶ In what ways did they gather around the Table and the Pool?

Sacraments: The Data

Frequency of Observance

The orders of service we are studying were from a) the first Sunday of the month and also b) Father's Day. It was known anecdotally that observing communion on the first day of the month was a pattern for many Baptist churches, and a few unsolicited comments from respondents confirmed that this remains a pattern. Thus, the selection of a first Sunday of the month for our study was deliberate, so that our one day 'snapshot' of Aotearoa Baptist worship

¹¹⁶ By 'Sacraments', we refer here to the Lord's Supper and baptism.

would include as much Eucharistic practice as possible. That this coincided with Father's Day may well have influenced both baptismal and Eucharistic practice, perhaps in diverse ways. The result was that a majority of orders of service (43 of 71) included Communion, whilst only one service included baptismal activity; this confirmed another assumption that baptismal activity would be comparatively infrequent in relation to Eucharistic activity.

Timing in Service

The services in which communion was observed were almost perfectly split with regard to where communion was in relation to the sermon or message; 22 observed it before and 21 observed it after. Of those observing it before, one service (69) had it particularly early, placing it after the welcome, opening song and notices. Another service (37) shared "bread and water around tables", before the welcome and lighting of the Jesus Candle, which may or may not have been something of a Eucharistic gesture.¹¹⁷ Of those with communion later in the service, a common pattern was to follow it with a song before closing the service. Three services had it comparatively late in the service, with one (30) having only a 'benediction' after, and two simply noting the "finish" (23) or "end" (52) after communion.

As for the single baptism occurring in our data, the respondent for that service (54) provided comments about timing in relation to the Lord's Supper. "We typically have communion after the sermon (though not always). Communion was included as part of the worship time after the baptism but before the sermon this Sunday to make it more celebratory of the baptisms." This means that baptism was earliest, then communion (observed as part of a group of worship songs), leading up to the sermon.

Supporting Content

For 21 of the services observing the Lord's Supper, only the timing of the observance was indicated on the order of service (with terms such as 'Communion', 'Lord's Supper' or, 'Eucharist'), leaving any detail in terms of practice or additional content to speculation. Below we document the content and actions that were recorded.

Prior Activity

Many kinds of activity, such as Scripture readings, calls to worship, welcomes, sermons, prayers and more, tended to occur (more or less) immediately prior to the Lord's Supper or baptism.

¹¹⁷ As this is only a possibility, in the absence of any clear indication, this service was counted among those which did not observe the Lord's Supper on this particular Sunday.

Our data does not provide much to assist in terms of the range of motivations for why this was the case. What it does allow is observation of those visible instances when content or actions prior to communion appeared to be intentionally preparatory.

Nine services featured prayers prior to communion. In three of these (5, 18, & 43) it was the Lord's Prayer; including recitation in "mother tongues" (18) and an alternate version found in a prayer book from another denomination (43; noted in the prayer chapter). Another service (25a), having had a "communion prayer" earlier, featured "Thoughts on The Lord's Table and [the Lord's] Prayer" before communion, which was followed by the prayer itself (see below). It was not clear to what extent the "prayer for Syria refugees" (44) and the "welcome into membership and community prayer" (10), both of which were immediately prior to Communion, were conducted with reference to it. A clearer link was likely for the "responsive Prayer of Confession" in service 1, and the "prayer" by an "elder" as part of the "Communion" in the "SACRAMENT" section of service 42a. Service 43 featured (and recorded) a text-based lead in to communion that opens with descriptive and poetically-phrased statements exploring the meaning of the practice, transitions into a prayer of thanksgiving, and finishes with the words of institution.

Six services played music or sang songs as an apparent lead up to communion. Service 53 sang *Jesus Christ, I Think Upon Your Sacrifice*, and for service 34a it was "*As We Are Gathered Jesus is Here*". In service 25a, there was "Music on" as part of a time of confession (possibly to assist the congregation in making personal and silent acts of penitence toward God). Service 19 used language signaling some sense of separation between communion and the rest of the preceding activity, by having an "Amen" and a "closing song" before communion, which was followed by a "final song". For service 60, "communion was included as part of the worship time [a bracket of three congregational songs] after the baptism" with the intent of making it "more celebratory of the baptisms". Service 50 featured a "Music Group" singing a classical piece, *O Sacred Banquet*.

Other kinds of preparatory acts appeared in our data. Service 43 reported that "absent friends" are remembered by the act of lighting "an additional candle on Communion Sundays". "Morning Tea", for service 50, was "served on the communion table". Two services had contrasting practices regarding children. In one (10) the "Children exited after children's talk" but they "returned for communion" (the data does not specify in what way they took part), and in the other (25a) they "gather around [the] Communion table" after the "Children leave".

Accompanying Content

Our data revealed various content and actions that accompanied sacramental action. In contrast to the songs leading up to communion above, eight services used songs as part of the practice itself. In four services, recorded versions of songs were “being played” (1) “during communion” (19) “in [the] background” (11) “during serving” (4) of the elements. One song included communion “as part of the worship time [congregational singing]”, and for the other three songs it was not clear if the song was sung or played. As for the songs themselves, one song (*The Bread is Blessed* in service 43) was explicitly in reference to the act of communion. Several may have had varying degrees of relation to it (*Broken Vessel*, 1; *Oceans – Where Feet May Fail*, 4; *All I Once Held Dear (Knowing You)*, 19; *Come and See*, 39; and *Holy Spirit Reign Down*, 69). The song for service 11’s observance of communion was *Song for Olabi*, by a band called ‘Bliss’.

Four services indicated their use of Scripture. For three of them, it was the traditional institution narrative from 1 Corinthians 11: “the words of institution” for service 50, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 for service 20, and 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 for service 45. Service 30 used Colossians 1:24-27.

Another four had written evidence of prayer as part of their practice of communion. The language included a “blessing” (42a), “two prayers” (50), “two young people (female – 16 years, and male – 14 years) pray for the communion elements”, and “prayers associated with the table” (61). Prayer also accompanied the three baptisms in service 60. In this case it was organised that these prayers would be in the first language of those being baptised; Mandarin and English.

In service 13, we saw the explicit use of a “simple pattern” for the Supper found in a Baptist liturgical resource. This pattern offers ministers and worship leaders a range of traditional liturgical prayers and Scripture sentences as a framework.¹¹⁸

Finally, service 50 symbolically linked the welcome of new members and the practice of communion as “new members signed membership book at communion table while wine served”.

Subsequent Content

Much like the content taking place prior to sacramental acts, so also the content which followed this action could be the result of varying degrees of intentionality in terms of flow, such as reflection on prior events, or anticipation of later content. For the nine services following

¹¹⁸ Christopher John Ellis and Myra Blyth, *Gathering for Worship: Patterns and Prayers for the Community of Disciples* (Canterbury, 2005), 14–17.

communion with a “song” (1, 9, 16, 19, 22, 34a, 46, 47, 61), there may or may not have been a thematic link. The same is the case when a final song was paired with a “benediction” (18, 20, 21, 42a), a “prayer” (25a – where the Lord’s Prayer was used, and 27), both of these (17), or a stand-alone benediction (30).

Administration and Participation

Our data also included comments reflecting a range of approaches and efforts in terms of how sacramental practices were conducted. Five orders of service gave some indication of the method by which the elements of the Lord’s Supper were administered. For three of them (1, 11, and 70), all of the congregation was invited to the front. Service 1 added that each person has “the words ‘this is the body of Christ broken for you’ and ‘this is the blood of Christ spilt for you’” said to them. Service 42a stated that the “Distribution” was done by the pastor and the “stewards”, signaling the serving of people as they sit in their pews. A mixed approach was taken by service 50, where “bread [was] served to seat, people could choose to stay seated for juice or come and rink from two cups at communion table”.

There was also a range of approaches in terms of leadership and participation. Services 11 and 70 noted the leadership of the pastor for communion. Service 42a combined leadership of a pastor with a prayer by an elder for the elements, and the assistance of stewards for the distribution. Service 48 noted that a “small group helped with communion”, and service 52 included prayers “for the communion elements” offered by “two young people”. For the baptisms in service 60, members of the congregation participated by way of offering prayers.

Sacraments: Understanding and Valuation

Having surveyed the data, we can now turn to better understand of this snapshot of sacramental activity, and explore its value in relation to wider liturgical practice in other traditions.

Patterns and Importance

Although in a slight majority of services we saw some evidence of a lingering pattern of monthly communion observance on first Sunday for Aotearoa Baptists, it was not celebrated in many services. We might speculate that a desire to make space for Father’s Day may have been among the reasons so many did not observe it on the day of our study. Other factors could include a generally relaxed approach to the regularity of observance. Whilst an infrequent practice of Communion has long characterised Baptist practice, it has been strongly challenged by

significant voices. The comparative infrequency of Eucharistic practice, in relation to the weekly practice of other traditions, can be seen to indicate a low view of Communion. In his discussion of the Baptist practice of the Lord's Supper, Ellis, among other things, makes two points. On the one hand, he argues that non-weekly observance of the Supper does not warrant Baptist worship being labeled as "non-eucharistic".¹¹⁹ On the other, he explores the challenging question of how Baptist worship can fully testify to the gospel each Sunday "if the Supper is only observed monthly".¹²⁰ A particularly sharp challenge is found in a sermon of Charles H. Spurgeon.¹²¹ His critique of less than weekly practice of the table seems to reject a notion (possibly surviving today) that weekly communion causes the practice to lose its significance.

So with the Lord's Supper. My witness is, and I think I speak the mind of many of God's people now present, that coming as some of us do, weekly, to the Lord's table, we do not find the breaking of bread to have lost its significance – it is always fresh to us.¹²²

Perhaps there is a lingering association between weekly repetition and loss of meaningful, conscious observance.¹²³ Spurgeon also seems to suggest that another reason for less than weekly observance had to do with some feeling that some biblical themes and sermons did not naturally connect with or lead to communion. He passionately contended for the Supper to adorn each Lord's Day.

I have often remarked on Lord's-day evening, whatever the subject may have been, whether Sinai has thundered over our heads, or the plaintive notes of Calvary have pierced our hearts, it always seems equally appropriate to come to the breaking of bread. Shame on the Christian church that she should put it off to once a month, and mar the first day of the week by depriving it of its glory in the meeting together for fellowship and breaking of bread, and showing forth of the death of Christ till he come. They who once know the sweetness of each Lord's-day celebrating his Supper, will not be content, I am sure, to put it off to less frequent seasons.¹²⁴

The challenge of reform surfaces strongly in this area. We may have to admit that it is possible that some churches postpone observance due to it being seen as an optional extra that would take up too much time for other things. We will return to this concern in our final chapter, but for our purposes here, we can carry forward the challenges of Ellis, Spurgeon and others concerning the opportunity for weekly celebration to be a fitting completion of a gathering that fully testifies to the gospel each time it gathers.

¹¹⁹ Ellis, *Gathering*, 183.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹²¹ "Songs of Deliverance", Charles H. Spurgeon; quoted in David S. Dockery, "The Church, Worship, and the Lord's Supper," in *The Mission of Today's Church: Baptist Leaders Look at Modern Faith Issues*, ed. R. Stanton Norman (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 43–50.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ In which case, one might inquire why other weekly acts of worship can apparently be practiced with sincerity.

¹²⁴ "Songs of Deliverance", Spurgeon.

Baptismal activity, as might be expected, does not occur at regular intervals, but on the occasion of there being one or more candidates wanting to be baptised. It is possible that the baptistic conviction of credobaptism (or ‘believers baptism’) encourages a practice that is occasioned by the profession of belief by an individual baptismal candidate, but further research would be needed to confirm this. There are similarities and differences with communities of other traditions. The practice of paedobaptism (or baptism of infants/children) can occur on occasion of birth and presentation by the parents for baptism, with later confirmation occurring as part of Resurrection Sunday celebrations, often after a period of catechetical instruction.¹²⁵

Focus and Flexibility

We saw a near equal division between services with communion before or after the message or sermon. In the one case of baptism in our study, we saw a conscious sequencing of baptism first, followed by Communion (during the singing), leading on to the Sermon. Catholics, by contrast, have a consistent Word and Table structure, which flows directly from the appreciation of the Eucharist as the “source and summit” of the Christian life.¹²⁶ The Word (embodied in Scripture lections, homily, creed, etc.) is where the gospel is *retold*, and the congregation is thus led to, and prepared for the Table, where the gospel is *reenacted*. The Protestant Reformation, with its critique of excessive superstition in Eucharistic practice, led to ‘altars’ of sacrifice becoming ‘tables’ for a representative Supper; simultaneously, preaching came to play a more central role in the service, corresponding with the pulpit becoming more prominent. In the church architecture of some traditions the pulpit displaced the altar as the visual centre and focus of attention in the sanctuary.¹²⁷ Additionally, an infrequent observance of Communion creates a default situation where (usually) the sermon is the default central and climactic point in the service. As we saw in our historical portrait, congregational singing, already dominant in Baptist worship, gained even more prominence with the advent of the Contemporary music and Pentecostal/Charismatic movements. Baptists are not bound to any authoritative sequencing of liturgical acts, however we can observe that a weekly pattern of worship that climaxes in the Eucharist is a commendable option for congregations desiring their worship to enact the paschal mystery on a weekly basis.

¹²⁵ See discussion in Gustavo Gutierrez, *Sharing the Word through the Liturgical Year* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 79.

¹²⁶ Famously expressed by Pope Paul VI, “Lumen Gentium,” November 21, 1964, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

¹²⁷ Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 114–18.

Content and Variety

We observed various content that was used as a means of approach to, enhancement of, or a response to sacramental practice, whether traditional prayers and Scripture, songs or song brackets, or more unique acts such as candles lit to remember those absent. In understanding this diversity, we must remember that Baptists often have an antipathy toward written prayers and set content, and prefer an approach that is felt to be more creative or led by the Spirit, loosely knitting these kinds of elements together. This is not to say that Baptist sacramental practice is unusually high on unpredictability and novelty. As our study showed, there were clear patterns of the kinds of content used.

Prayers often seem to be general and unscripted (prayers “for Communion”); less often, they can be focused and specific (the Lord’s Prayer, or a Confession prayer); and even more rarely, they can make use of liturgical content and structures. The ability to adapt, use or create one’s own prayers creates a space where content like the opening quote for this chapter can be created, which has an admirable theological depth, poetic cadence and liturgical clarity.

Being a movement that has long been characterised by a thorough use of music and song, Baptists are likely to use songs in association with the Sacraments. If this is indeed something of an instinctive and embedded practice, perhaps there was more use of song in this respect than found explicit reference in the orders of service. Here again, no uniform pattern emerges, as songs can be deliberately selected to lead on to or accompany Communion, recorded performances can be played in the background, or the serving of the bread and cup can occur in the midst of a bracket of congregational song.

Other symbolic actions were noted, that also flow from the distinctive liturgical posture and openness to creativity, such as candles lit to remember absent church members. One example that was particularly striking was the act of having new members sign the membership book at the communion table while the wine was being served. That particular service also began flowing on from a morning tea that was served on the communion table. Such activity combines together at conscious and subconscious levels, with the effect that the table is both a holy sacramental sign of forgiveness and fellowship, and at the same time a welcoming and ordinary place of hospitality.

As worship planners will be aware, no approach or selection of content is always appreciated by everyone, and the same element that one person feels enhances their worship, may be found by another to hinder it. Adding to this, there is the ecumenical question of the degree to which gathered worship practices in general, and sacramental expression in particular,

could be strengthened in their capacity to express the global and historic unity of the one Body of Christ.¹²⁸ There may be opportunities for development here, which can be explored in the next chapter, but here we can appreciate a liturgical posture that is dynamic, intentional, at times creative, and always aims for the Sacraments to be observed in the spirit of prayerful gratitude, joyful celebration, or solemn scriptural obedience.

Leadership and Participation

The baptistic understanding of the ‘priesthood of all believers’ has, in practice, not conflicted with a pattern of pastors and ministers being largely responsible for the administration of the Sacraments through such things as Scripture reading, prayer, blessing of the elements, and invitation to the table. We saw that this remains the case often for Aotearoa Baptists.

Additional participation is commonly through prayer, and we saw that this privilege is not restricted to elders or adults. When the method of distribution is by stewards (to a seated congregation) or servers (to each individual as they approach the front; often with a verbal blessing), this widens the participation even further. It was not clear if there was a service that had a practice of congregants coming forward and taking the elements for themselves.

Positively, this might be interpreted as an expression, again, of the conviction that the congregation is a body of priests, needing no intermediary to access the means of grace.

Conversely, a less positive motivation may be that communion is seen in individualistic terms, where participation chiefly concerns personal spiritual benefit. To the extent the latter is the case, it would be in tension with the historic Baptist appreciation for Communion as a united act, celebrating what believers have in common through Christ.

Conclusion

Our portrayal of Aotearoa Baptist sacramental practice has observed yet more diversity of practice. Prayers, whether impromptu and passionate or patterned and scripted, are offered as an approach to and celebration of the Eucharist, often by one individual, but at times as a united congregation. The Scripture is read, with the institution narrative having its traditional role at the Table. Songs, whether directly linked to the theme or otherwise, are played or sung, both to prepare for or accompany the sacramental acts. And a host of local customs and unique practices are woven together with the more familiar ones.

¹²⁸ Steven Harmon has these goals in mind throughout his work, see *Towards Baptist Catholicity*; and *Baptist Identity and the Ecumenical Future: Story, Tradition, and the Recovery of Community* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016).

This being the last of our data chapters, we now move finally to ask if there might be ways in which these patterns of Aotearoa Baptist worship might be aided by further development, intentionality, or other considerations. How might the Sharing, Praying, Singing, use of Scripture, and celebration of the Sacraments be further strengthened?

8. Conclusions:

Opportunities for Baptist Worship in Aotearoa

As well as an upward movement from practice and experience, there is a need for a downward, critical movement, as the liturgical phenomena of worship are tested against a systematic theology which can claim to be founded on the witness of Scripture.
Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering*, p. 150.

Introduction

Having clarified our theological aims and methodological tools (chapter 1), having surveyed the historical background of Baptist worship in Aotearoa (chapter 2), and having engaged in an attempt to understand and appreciate various present modes of that worship from the data gleaned in our study (chapters 3-7), we now turn to the final step of the liturgical theological method of Ellis, which will here take the form of discerning opportunities for development for each category of activity. The wide scope of this project limits space for extended critique, however Ellis signals the need for worship to be scrutinized by Scripture and theology. Further research could seek to draw Aotearoa Baptist worship into a more sustained conversation with relevant theological literature.

As our method has suggested from the outset, our aim is not to naively construct a ‘top down’ list of what ‘should’ be done, nor to offer a benign series of ‘bottom up’ descriptions of what ‘is’ done, but rather to critically discern various opportunities where certain things ‘could’ be done. Five sections exploring each of our five areas of data will be followed by a section offering more general reflections, arising from themes raised throughout our study.

Opportunities for Baptist ‘Sharing’ in Aotearoa

In this chapter, we outlined and explored the spirituality of several rarely-discussed patterns of Aotearoa Baptist worship, from casual routines to creative experiments. Various forms of greeting, celebration, inspiration and response, each express an understanding of the gathering as a collection of priests who are equally gifted to minister to and with one another.

‘Sharing’ seems to be characterised, almost of necessity, by a high degree of informality. On the one hand, whilst informality can indeed accompany sloppiness or failure to take worship seriously, it can also accompany worship that is healthy, active and scripturally faithful.¹²⁹ On the

¹²⁹ See discussion in Ellis, *Gathering*, 92.

other hand, Ellis's concern that freedom should be balanced by order needs to be heeded.¹³⁰ The pursuit of such a balance will characterise much of the discussion that follows.

Personal Warmth and Scriptural Prayerfulness

On the surface, the various forms of greeting are standard and healthy ways of gathering as a united body, mutually aware and appreciative of one another in a spirit of personal warmth. Anecdotal experience of the experience and feel of such greeting times goes beyond what our data could report on, and worship planners and pastors will be aware that congregation members complain about such greetings being too short for meaningful interaction. How can these times best reflect the underlying desire to facilitate congregational gathering around the gospel? For congregations seeking to develop their practice here, Scripture could be a useful resource. Greetings already can occur in the context of a Scripture reading, so various passages could easily either replace or serve as a framework for spontaneous interpersonal greetings, either being recited by the leader or minister or voiced by the congregation, either in unison, responsively, or congregationally in turn between one another. The liturgical responses of other traditions could be tried, such as the 'passing of the Peace'. Some may recoil at being given specific words to say; others may be relieved of the pressure to compose their own greeting.

Another feature of this pastoral collective spirituality is that birthdays, anniversaries and other personal milestones are affirmed through announcement, clapping, singing or the passing of the 'chocolate box'. Our purpose here is not to prescribe which milestones are appropriate to celebrate as part of the worship service, but to observe the potential that prayer has to frame these celebrations in connection to the gospel. Pastorally and communally, prayer has the capacity to ensure that such celebrations are rightly recognised as gifts of God, and that due thanks and praise are rendered, thus joining a horizontal celebration with a person with a vertical gratitude to God.

Despite the advent of electronic payment methods, the physical collection of financial gifts continues. A positive feature of this activity can be its tactile, embodied nature, as offering bags or other receptacles are passed between congregation members. Likewise, lest the act of giving be construed as 'payment for services rendered', the practice of thanksgiving prayers in relation to the offering can remind the congregation of the strange mystery that what we give has first been given by God (e.g. Deut. 8:18; 1 John 19). Further, prayer for divine guidance in terms of stewardship of the gifts can be a reminder of dependence on the Spirit and the missional horizon of worship.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 85–92.

Communal Inspiration and Gospel Clarity

Time for giving notices or announcements found various expression in our study, often occurring early in the service, but also at other points. Anecdotally, congregational complaints about notices being too lengthy or irrelevant can be common. Here as elsewhere, pastoral discernment will involve consideration of congregational size, attitudes and needs, along with the goal of retaining a clear focus on God through Word and Sacrament.

Other content was of a more inspirational and creative nature, such as videos, musical items, and games. The incorporation of such activity into liturgical expression has not been without controversy. Even when isolated components may be appropriate on their own, it could be possible that too much of an otherwise good thing may hinder the simplicity and clarity of the entire service. Different activities will have different symbolic meaning in different contexts. Testimonies, for example, can be seen to witness to personal experience or to gospel power. Musical or artistic expression that closely resembles the dominant expression of culture can be seen either as compromised entertainment or culturally appropriate expression. Fuller discussion of the many questions regarding liturgical inculturation is not possible here. The summary of Catholic liturgical theologian Anscar Chupungco is apt: “[A]n inculturated Christianity will not be reduced to a mere component of culture.”¹³¹ The celebration of the gospel in any given culture requires, it seems, the courage to say both ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to its cultural components.

Spiritual Openness and Unified Diversity

Concerning charismata, Aotearoa Baptists seem to hold views from the Pentecostal to the cessationist ends of the spectrum. As at Corinth, a church divided into the apparently ‘spiritual’ and ‘unspiritual’ (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:14-15, 7:40, 12:4-11), it seems that there will always be the need and challenge for believers to share and remain in fellowship despite differing understandings and experiences of the Spirit. This has both local and denominational implications for Aotearoa Baptists. Liturgical practice can foster this common unity of the Spirit when gatherings (whether local services or regional/national events) seek to reflect the diversity in the entire movement.

Our data included ‘response’ times such as ‘altar calls’ and ‘group activities’. The former may not be entirely focused on conversions, but may well include various modes of ‘prayer ministry’ in different churches. The latter could range from dividing into groups for discussion,

¹³¹ Anscar J. Chupungco, *Handbook for Liturgical Studies, Volume II: Fundamental Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016), 339.

question and answer times (similar to those mentioned above), or even competitions and games. Criticism of such activity can have varying amounts of weight behind it, depending on the particular pattern that is being critiqued. Two examples may be helpful. Altar calls, which Pentecostal theologian Wolfgang Vondey has called “the climax of traditional Pentecostal worship”, can provide a useful, concrete and physical space for repentance, conversion, healing, and myriad forms of ministry.¹³² Like any good thing, abuses can develop. If there are tendencies for such distortions, it may be that an over-realised eschatological outlook may expect too much of the kingdom ‘now’; just as the equal-opposite distortion expects too little of it.¹³³ Likewise, breaking into groups for discussion can be a very immediate and practical way to reinforce liturgical content and discern points of action for ministry and mission. There are ways of conducting such times that enable the service to still be guided by Scripture and Sacrament, and of course it is possible for the unintended consequence of the service appearing to be an amalgamation of opinions. Paul’s calls for liturgical order (1 Corinthians 14; 1 Timothy 2:1) and the Lucan praise of the scriptural discernment of the Bereans (Acts 17:10), among other things, provide strong grounds for worship planners and leaders to ensure that God’s word sets the agenda.

Opportunities for Baptist Prayer in Aotearoa

Our portrait of Aotearoa Baptist prayer revealed them to be heavily influenced by the contemporary, Pentecostal, emergent, and other movements. It was not certain to what extent this diversity is reflected at the local level, however. Anecdotal experience and the absence of references to prayer on some orders of service even suggested that some services may have occurred with little or no public prayer.¹³⁴ At any rate, our reflections below will seek to resource congregations who wish to develop their practice of prayer in ways that increasingly reflect this diversity, along with the diversity found in the global church, as well as in scriptural example.

Breadth of Focus

Baptists in Aotearoa and elsewhere are a movement that has rarely made regular (let alone regulative) use of prayer books. The closest and most used resources would be minister’s

¹³² Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 31; a point that again underscores the shared expression of many Aotearoa Baptists with Pentecostalism.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹³⁴ For a request for more prayer, based on visits to several churches, see George Wieland, “Where’s the Prayer?,” *NZ Baptist*, June 2003.

manuals or other compilations of material to guide and assist the planning and crafting of worship.¹³⁵ More commonly, the practice of prayer has emphasized spiritual devotion and sincerity. Despite having few records of the wording of prayers offered, we saw some efforts to guide content, with some using categories such as adoration, confession, lament, thanksgiving and intercession.¹³⁶ The use of the Lord's Prayer also has the advantage of taking up the postures of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and consecration. In addition to regular or frequent use of the Lord's prayer, congregations wishing to give greater attention to biblical example can use thematic prompts to give gentle guidance to composers of prayer. For Anglicans in Aotearoa, in addition to being able to offer their prayers "in their own words", a framework in their prayer book provides categories (universal/local church, world/nation, local/heavenly community, needy/ministries) to assist corporate intercession.¹³⁷ Making use of topical frameworks may indeed be a helpful and realistic opportunity for Baptists, a number of whom may not warm to the use of written prayers. Such frameworks may help prayer to include frequently missed postures such as confession and lament. Likewise, a temporal framework of past, present and future, can prevent a service from being seen to stagnate upon (for example) prayer that exclusively pleads for present blessing, forgetting to remember past activity and hope for future final salvation.

Diversity of Atmosphere and Tone

We had scant evidence giving any clues as to the general atmosphere in the service generally, or in the prayer time in particular. Opening prayers or focusing prayer seem to be intended to draw the attention of the congregation toward the present act of worship. Prayers of thanksgiving or 'offering prayers' naturally follow or accompany a financial collection. Times of prayer ministry may have a range of atmospheric feel to them, ranging from quiet and hushed intercession to boldly expectant appeals for healing and deliverance.

Different congregations will have different goals in terms of the dynamic and feel. It could be argued that one of the things that distinguishes gathered worship from private worship is that it gathers up a whole range of emotions, seen both in the lives of individual congregants and (perhaps more importantly) in the Scriptures. It may be quite fitting, then, for a congregation to seek to engage in many modes of prayer. Examples could include: the solemnity of letting scriptural words of God set the tone by being the first words heard in the service; the tenderness of letting young children lead prayers; joyful and confident shouts from congregation

¹³⁵ Ellis and Blyth, *Gathering for Worship*.

¹³⁶ Or, to use simpler terms, prayer can seek to say 'wow', 'sorry', 'why', 'thanks', and 'help' to God.

¹³⁷ The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, *A New Zealand Prayer Book*, 481.

members of ways in which they have been blessed; tearful and courageous voicing of laments over painful personal events and global circumstances; and the peacefulness of repetition of the Lord's prayer working itself into hearts and minds.

Expressive and Impressive

We saw the use of both extempore and pre-composed prayers, and it seemed that the usual Baptist preference for the former was the case for Aotearoa Baptists. For Baptist founder John Smyth, the true form for prayer was not to have the words of the prayer impressed upon people from a prayer book but rather should be freely expressed from the heart.¹³⁸ Subsequent experience, in addition to finding such a dynamic freeing and life-giving, gave rise to occasional concern that extempore prayer was characterised too often by cliché, jargon, empty phrases, and could be just as devoid of sincerity as the reading of a prayer from a book. A couple of observations may be helpful. On the one hand, we can note that extempore prayer is not 'free' of influence. A diverse host of influences, including but not limited to Scripture, ecclesiastical tradition, local leadership, and the example of the prayers of others, all combine to powerfully shape and direct prayer. Indeed, it is possible that the sincere and biblically resonant intentions of extempore prayer can become shrouded by and enslaved to spontaneous 'vain repetition', cliché, and excessive individualism. If it is true that even the most spontaneous of prayers is borrowing from the tone, language and posture of other prayers, then it is a valid concern to seek that prayer is guided, resourced and 'freed' by Scripture and Tradition. This observation is flanked by another, on the other hand, that traditional, liturgical or 'set' prayers do not, in and of themselves, ensure the quality of prayer. The carefully balanced, biblical prose enshrined in the liturgical resources of Catholic, Orthodox, Episcopal/Anglican, Lutheran and other liturgical traditions can (just as extempore prayer can, we might add) be performed in a kind of sub-conscious auto-pilot mode.¹³⁹

Baptist congregations, in Aotearoa and elsewhere, have the freedom to embody the best of both. They are free to not only lay aside, but take up the discerning use of traditional set prayers, which are very often scriptural in their wording. They are free to exercise prayer in both 'expressive' and 'impressive' modes.¹⁴⁰ The opportunity here is for Scripture to work its way into the soul and spirit of our hearts and minds, or to impress its pattern upon our tongues (cf. Deuteronomy 6:7; Romans 12:1-2), with the subsequent and ongoing result of our heart being

¹³⁸ Ellis, *Gathering*, 47.

¹³⁹ However, the sub-conscious level of formation is one of the celebrated features of liturgical repetition. For example, see James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016).

¹⁴⁰ Ellis, "Baptist Worship," 55.

properly shaped and formed to express what it has been so thoroughly impressed by. This impressive and expressive rhythm of inhaling and exhaling, receiving and giving, borrowing and lending, can be expressed in diverse ways, such as traditional and scriptural prayers being voiced from ministers or leaders at the front, or using unison or responsive forms to train the lips and hearts of the entire congregation. Immediately relevant here is James K. A. Smith's understanding of how formation happens through immersion in repeated liturgical actions.¹⁴¹ If he is correct that this formation often occurs at the subconscious level, then this may lend context to concerns that set prayer easily becomes subconscious and routine. Concern for our conscious and sincere human response to the gospel is thus placed alongside appreciation of the power of God's word to transform us even when we are not conscious of it.

Finally, the use of pre-composed or traditional material also serves congregations which seek to balance local diversity and freedom with the ecumenical sharing of common prayer and worship. Baptists can remain committed to purity and sincerity whilst at the same time seeking unity and partnership. Baptists are free to compose their own prayers, as well as join in wider global and historic rhythms of prayer. The more immediately accessible forms might be the Lord's Prayer, Trinitarian greetings and benedictions, or the Aaronic Blessing, but Baptist freedom extends to enable the use of such elements as the *Kyrie*, *Sursum Corda*, the Great Thanksgiving, or the *Agnus Dei*.

Individuals, Churches and The Church

Another way of looking at prayer was to consider the direct human agents of it. Anecdotal experience, and the regular presence of the names of pastors, leaders and other individuals next to the act of prayer in the order of service, would suggest that the dominant pattern for Aotearoa Baptists was a single person leading the prayer while others listen. It would be inaccurate to describe this mode of prayer as being characterised by an active leader and a passive congregation. Having said that, to the extent that this mode is the dominant or exclusive mode, this constitutes an opportunity for development and diversification.

The modes of open prayer and prayer ministry are two of the most common alternatives, followed by prayer stations and prayer offered in unison, responsively or antiphonally. By its very nature, unison, responsive or antiphonal prayer requires the selection (or creation) of set wording. If it is true that Baptists tend to prefer to sing words together rather than speak them, then introducing and leading this mode of prayer requires wisdom, patience and discernment. The Lord's Prayer, again, is perhaps the most immediate and familiar prayer for a congregation

¹⁴¹ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom (Cultural Liturgies)*.

to recite together. This, and the other examples noted above are ways in which prayer can be offered by individuals, by the entire united congregation, and still wider, by the global and historic church across space and time; a reality that is likely to provide inspiration and motivation.

Opportunities for Baptist Singing in Aotearoa

Singing retains its dominant place in Aotearoa Baptist worship. Hymns and worship songs are linked with, and can be expressions of other worship components, such as prayer, Scripture and sacramental activity. At the same time, congregational song is a marriage of lyrics which are drawn from, paraphrasing or alluding to Scripture and musical forms (genre, instrumentation, melody, etc.) drawn from culture. It is perhaps unsurprising then, that discussion of musical forms of worship have often been both so appreciated and so vigorously critiqued. These potentialities and criticisms will inform our discussion of the songs, how they are used, how congregations participate in them, and how they reflect global and local diversity.

Song Selection

We observed above that Aotearoa Baptist song selection, for many congregations, has a visible correspondence to the wider population of churches reflected in the CCLINZ statistics. In some cases, the selection of popular songs occurs with little or no intent to do so; and as we observed above, other times it is indeed the result of a deliberate strategy with particular ends in view. What might be said of the dominance of popular songs?

On the one hand, it is possible to be overly negative. The singing of songs that are shared and sung by congregations around the world can express global ecclesial unity, crossing denominational and other barriers. Likewise, resistance to such songs may fail to appreciate the work of the Spirit in those who write and sing them. Songs often become and remain popular when they are composed of strongly congregational melodies and metres. On other other hand, however, the dominance of popular songs can be viewed through an overly positive lens. Neglect for older songs can fail to appreciate the work of the Spirit in the people and congregations of the past. Too strong a desire for new songs risks reflecting the influence of popular culture's addiction to novelty.¹⁴² Songs also become popular when their rhythms and arrangements are pleasing to the ear, regardless of the quality of their lyrics.

¹⁴² See the cautions of Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 184.

Indeed, for the lyrics of worship songs to correspond to the depth and breadth of the biblical narrative is paramount. The critique of former Aotearoa Baptist pastor and missiologist Brian Smith in 2001 may remain relevant today.

If the Church year doesn't appeal, let songs be written to cover the whole syllabus of theology – Trinity, creation, sin, election, atonement and redemption, church, sacraments, repentance, faith, sanctification, eschatology. We also need songs for weddings and funerals, and songs for the seasons, songs about work and recreation, and songs about home and family. The songs we are presently offered are too small, far too small. We must break their bounds.¹⁴³

When hymnbooks were more used, their thorough indices linked songs with thematic, scriptural, doctrinal or festal categories, providing a valuable resource for worship planning and song choice.¹⁴⁴ In the place of physical hymnals, which often do not have the most recent songs, Baptists and others may well be assisted by the use or development of software, online resources or other tools which could assist worship planners in song choice that plumbs the depths of Scripture's rich and diverse themes.

Liturgical Leadership

Another area for consideration is the relationship between pastor and worship leader or team. In chapter 2, we saw the transition from services being led entirely by the minister to a 'worship leader' having an important role. It is a role that continues, as we saw in our study, although different titles are used, including Mark Pierson's term, "worship curator". Subsequent research could better distinguish the terms used, and any differences reflected between them. Here we can simply note here that there is often a single person other than the pastor, whose decisions and discernment ends up being crucial for the flow and shape of a service, especially for services in which music and congregational singing constitutes a large portion of the total worship gathering.

Musical Support & Congregational Participation

Our observations also prompt reflection on the nature and goal of congregational singing. If the collaborative dynamic of participation is one of the key features that distinguishes gathered singing from, say, private enjoyment of a song, it may be useful to reflect on what enhances congregational participation. Baptists may find some wisdom from their Catholic neighbours. Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy famously outlined the liturgical principle of "fully

¹⁴³ Brian Smith, "Theology Off the Wall: From Printed to Projected Word," *Stimulus* 9.4 (2001): 5.

¹⁴⁴ See comments in Ellis, *Gathering*, 158–59.

conscious, and active participation” for all aspects of worship.¹⁴⁵ For Baptists and others, the gifts of those selecting and leading the songs, supporting instrumentalists, and those who may assist with audio-visual technical skills, gather together with the offered voices of the congregation, forming a collaborative event where the local gathered body offers praise with ‘one mind and mouth’ (Romans 15:6).

If the goal of musical instrumentation is to support the “fully conscious, and active participation” of the congregation, some reflections immediately follow. Some songs seem to be harder than others for at least some congregations. Ellis observes that the “syncopated rhythms of modern worship songs demand new instrumental provision and the amplification of voices”; however the volume of the musical performances (or recordings) must not overwhelm or render irrelevant the voices of the congregation.¹⁴⁶ Instead of hearing and participating in the unique sound of “nonprofessional singers” joining their voices in worship, one can feel as though they are enjoying a concert.¹⁴⁷ Depending on the room and congregation size, some degree of experimentation with instrumental choice or audio settings can help ensure that the music encourages rather than discourages the vocal participation of the congregation.

Musical ability is another area in which wisdom is needed. We noted above that, according to Wood, Baptists were known for “amateur enthusiasm”, which nonetheless was seemingly able to achieve a high standard of musicality at times. We also observed that some congregations use pre-recorded professional quality media to support their singing. As is often the case, there are extremes in both directions. At one extreme, the desire to maximize musical skill (1 Chronicles 25:7; Psalm 33:3) can swell into a kind of elitism that can discourage the less skillful offerings of others. At the other extreme, the impulse for sincerity over musical form can devolve into sloppiness and half-heartedness.

Baptists and others will continue to benefit from training resources and conferences that aid musical development. Songs can be chosen (and written) that are musically flexible enough to be done by music teams with accomplished instrumentalists as well as those whose skill and experience is minimal. Songs can be transposed from keys more suited to private listening into those keys more fitting for congregations of diverse ages and musical abilities.

¹⁴⁵ “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy - Sacrosanctum Concilium,” n.d., http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html, II, 14.

¹⁴⁶ Ellis, *Gathering*, 161.

¹⁴⁷ Amy Butler, “Liturgical Ties of Community,” in *Gathering Together: Baptists at Work in Worship*, ed. Rodney Kennedy and Derek Christopher Hatch (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 48.

Ecumenical Sharing & Cultural Diversity

Simply put, Baptists are not known for their ecumenism. Nathan Nettleton explains this as a logical outworking of their conviction that “God leads each congregation in differing ways, taking into account their unique context, culture and giftedness.”¹⁴⁸ To counter this tendency, Steve Harmon calls for “receptive ecumenism”, whereby “Baptists must be willing to receive from other churches neglected aspects of... radical catholicity” as part of “the ecumenical quest for the full visible unity of the church”.¹⁴⁹ What might ‘receptive ecumenism’ look like for Baptist singing? How can Baptists share songs and ways of singing with other non-Baptist members of the Body of Christ?

Even a cursory glance at the list of songs from our survey suggests there is no shortage of songs, and presumably denominational backgrounds, reflected in the singing of Aotearoa Baptists. The question may not be whether diverse kinds of songs are available, but rather to what extent are churches availing themselves of that diversity. Indeed, this is precisely the context in which we can observe that the goal of appealing to one demographic (over other demographics) through selection of particular songs or a specific style is in direct tension with the goal of drawing together a diverse congregation of worshippers into a united body.

We can rightly appreciate that Aotearoa Baptists already engage in this giving and receiving from other traditions every time they sing a song that was written by a non-Baptist, even if the driver for the song selection may most often have more to do with other aspects of the song (theme, key, popularity) than the denominational affiliation of the songwriter. However, what might it look like to not only the songs of other traditions, but also their ways of singing? Could Baptists learn from their Catholic neighbours how to sing the *Agnus Dei* (‘Lamb of God’) as a way of celebrating the Lord’s Supper with intentional reverence? Could contemporary congregations join their more liturgical neighbours in the long-standing practice of singing or chanting the metricated Psalms, as a way of regular immersion in this book of Scripture? What of the new testament hymns, such as the *Magnificat*, the *Gloria* or the *Nunc Dimittis*?¹⁵⁰ Even occasional attempts along these lines foster the kind of ecumenism Harmon and others call for.

A parallel opportunity is for singing to more fully reflect the bicultural and multicultural context of Aotearoa. As Jonathan (Hone) Te Rire points out, speaking from a local Presbyterian context, multicultural worship calls for participation from “all kinds of people” and “a raft of

¹⁴⁸ Nathan Nettleton, “Baptist Worship in Ecumenical Perspective,” in *Worship Today: Understanding, Practice, Ecumenical Implications*, ed. Thomas F. Best and Dagmar Heller (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 72.

¹⁴⁹ Harmon, *Baptist Identity and the Ecumenical Future*, 18.

¹⁵⁰ See discussion in Ralph P. Martin, *The Worship of God: Some Theological, Pastoral, and Practical Reflections* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 52.

singing genres.”¹⁵¹ Stated negatively, when particular songs, genres or leaders become dominant to the exclusion of others, the singing, less reflects the multicultural nature of the Body of Christ. It is here that the discourse over ‘rock music’ can be shifted away from an unhelpful binary debate toward a more discerning discussion of how this genre can be used appropriately whilst not dominating the imagination of worshippers and the instrumentation of music teams.

Aotearoa, with its mix of Te Reo, New Zealand Sign-Language, Samoan, Tongan, English, Hindi, Mandarin, French and other languages, provides a rich linguistic tapestry through which God is praised.¹⁵² As an entry point into richer bicultural and multicultural convivial relationship, Pentecost Sunday provides a unique and regular opportunity to celebrate the language, culture and songs of cultures other than the pākehā (non-Māori) culture which has become dominant in Aotearoa. Some Māori songs do find expression already, but this could be the result of other factors (for example, a song like *Wairua Tapu* (Holy Spirit Welcome) being very popular) instead of being driven by a desire to reflect a bi-cultural partnership. For a mostly or entirely pākehā congregation to sing *Te Aroha* is at the very least a starting place to entering into deeper partnership with Māori. Providing *pin-yin* (transliterated Mandarin) alongside the English and Mandarin lyrics of worship songs similarly helps English and Mandarin-speaking worshippers begin, even symbolically, to enter into a deeper mode of relationship. Ultimately, dominant cultures must give and receive mutual a ‘welcome’ of one another, *en route* to authentic relationship and deeper expression.

Opportunities for Baptist Use of Scripture in Aotearoa

Quite simply, Scripture is essential to Christian worship. The basic movements of corporate worship consist of a) gathering of a congregation from culture, b) taking them deeply through the heart of Scripture, and c) finally commissioning them to scatter back into culture. It immediately follows from this that the amount and manner of engagement with Scripture is crucial. Our reflections below will explore opportunities for Aotearoa Baptist worship to develop in terms of God calling, commissioning, feeding and forming worshippers through Scripture.

¹⁵¹ Jonathan (Hone) Te Rire, “God’s Ministry, the People’s Church,” *Candour* 2.6 (2011): 8.

¹⁵² For 2013 language-speaking trends in Aotearoa, see “2013 Census QuickStats about Culture and Identity,” n.d., <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-culture-identity/languages.aspx>.

The Word that Gathers and Sends

There was a pattern that was identifiable, though not dominant, of Aotearoa Baptists making use of Scripture at or near the beginning and end of their services. The language of Scripture as a ‘gateway’ to worship not only reflects this pattern, but echoes the foundational language of Deuteronomy 6:9 (repeated in 11:20) instructing Israel concerning the Law, which was, among other things, to be written “on the doorframes of your house and on your gates”, both of which are points of entry, departure and transition. Scripture has a key role in gathering, transitioning, and dispersing the people of God.

For many congregations, it seemed that an opening song and/or a verbal welcome (sometimes with a prayer) was the first act of worship. It might be tempting to assume that the chronological order of worship acts reflects a priority of importance, implying that singing is valued more than Scripture. This may not be the case, as more practical considerations may be at work, such as using music to transition the congregation from casual conversation to focused worship. Nonetheless, it is possible for casual greetings to be held until after the words of Scripture have called the congregation to worship. Here Christ’s high and priestly role as the true leader of worship is reflected when scriptural language (e.g. Psalm 51:15: “Open my lips Lord, and my mouth shall declare your praise.”) precedes casual speech (e.g. “how are we this morning?”). In the same way, it is possible to intentionally make Scripture the last words ringing in the ears of congregation members. Here too, casual language (e.g. “have a great week”) can give way to scriptural sentences (e.g. the Aaronic Blessing, or one of the Pauline benedictions).

The Word that Feeds and Forms

Our study showed various ways in which Aotearoa Baptists engage with Scripture in the midst of the service as well, primarily through audible readings and homiletic expositions. To the extent that our single-day study may have given slight indication of wider patterns of this engagement, we may offer some possible opportunities for development.

First, there is ample opportunity to increase the quantity and quality of Scripture use in worship. Locally, John Tucker has lamented the rarity of Scripture reading in Aotearoa Baptist worship.¹⁵³ Scriptural attentiveness must be seen not only in references or allusions to Scripture, but also through concrete readings. Scripture use seems highly linked to preaching. Whilst it may be possible that services featuring text-based sermons tend to have more visible Scripture readings than those featuring topical sermons, there appears to be no essential conflict between

¹⁵³ John Tucker, “The Most Revolutionary Christian Event Since the Protestant Reformation - and What We Can Learn from It Today.”

generous and diverse selections of Scripture and any particular approach to preaching. As part of his famously comprehensive multi-volume study on preaching, Hughes Oliphant Old identified five basic types of preaching: expository, evangelistic, catechetical, festal, and prophetic.¹⁵⁴ Each is hospitable to intentionality around incorporation of the full counsel of Scripture in the weekly and yearly rhythms of a given congregation's worship. A small number of congregations seemed to evidence an ongoing habit of using portions from various sections of Scripture, such as Psalms, Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel; or at times more simply Old and New Testament. Such a framework may be more realistic than use of a lectionary, although a lexical approach is not contrary to Baptist values. At any rate, if the dominance of Epistle over Gospel, OT and Psalm is reflective of wider patterns, there is considerable opportunity for Aotearoa Baptists to reconsider what texts they tend to use and why.

Second, there is opportunity to encourage a diversity of participants to collaborate in the public engagement with Scripture, and thus be fed and formed by it. Homiletically, whilst the task of preaching may most naturally rest with those with some level of training, there can be ways of incorporating the responses, reflections and experiences of others in this task. Similarly, having Scripture read by members of the congregation increases their participation in worship. Whilst those with gifted voices may seem the best for public Scripture reading, those with quieter and slower tongues can be included. Especially when projection onto a screen assists the congregation to see as well as hear, such participation can express the baptistic collective spirituality we've seen throughout; which can be seen to extend to those who struggle to stutter out their confession that 'Jesus is Lord' (1 Corinthians 12:1-3) just as it does to those whose voices are more 'presentable' (1 Corinthians 12:23-24). Responses (e.g. (reader) "This is the Word of the Lord." (congregation) "Thanks be to God!") can contribute to the reading being a shared corporate act. Standing for the reading of a passage from the Gospel can add kinesthetic and Christocentric aspects to this participation.

Third, Aotearoa Baptists can use Scripture for a diversity of purposes in the context of gathered worship. We saw some scriptural use in relation to Communion, particularly in the traditional use of the Institution Narrative. Baptists, of course, are free to incorporate any of the other traditional scriptural formulae in their practice, such as the words of the Centurion from Matthew 8:8, enshrined in the Catholic Mass: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof; but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed." As for baptismal practice, our lone example did not evidence any visible Scripture use, but this cannot provide any real indication of wider practice. What we can observe is Scripture's sufficiency to resource not only

¹⁵⁴ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Modern Age, 1789-1889* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 8–18.

Sacramental practice, but also liturgical events like infant dedications, welcomes into membership and other sharing, prayer and celebrations.

Opportunities for Baptist Sacraments in Aotearoa

Frequent Practice and Focused Observance

In terms of the frequency of sacramental practice, our study suggested patterns of observance similar to wider Baptist habits: occasional baptism and monthly communion. With Ellis, we can reject the assumption that a less frequent practice equates to the Sacraments being an unimportant part of worship for Baptists.¹⁵⁵ Ellis goes on, however, to raise a challenging question, with particular regard to the Lord's Supper: how can the paschal mystery be fully proclaimed each week when the Supper is not observed weekly?¹⁵⁶

Turning to Scripture, Baptists might observe the apparent lack of a prescriptive instruction for frequency. The instructions of Jesus to “do this in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:24-25) do not prescribe frequency, and that Paul's language of “as often as you do this” (1 Corinthians 11:26) may signal a degree of flexibility. By contrast, some have taken the Lord's Prayer to refer to the Eucharist as “our daily bread”, thus signaling a daily frequency. Is there a warrant for such frequency? To the extent that the Eucharist can, or should, be seen as a fulfillment of Old Testament offerings and sacrifices, Numbers 28-29 set forth a multi-layered range of rhythms: daily, weekly/Sabbath, monthly, and annual festivals (Passover, Feast of Weeks, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles). Perhaps the most prescriptive term from Scripture might be Paul's term “often”. Indeed, like any authentic spiritual practice, perhaps the more frequent the better.

Another area of consideration our data permits is the timing of celebration within the service. Traditionally, a pattern of Word before Table would place Scripture and sermon before the prayers and practice of the Supper, whilst some communities will have Communion at various points before the Sermon.¹⁵⁷ Our data showed Aotearoa Baptists to be almost equally divided in this regard. A range of values can be at work here. On the one hand, when a community practices Communion early in the service, it is possible that it is not to make it a matter of ‘first’ importance, but as a formality to tick off the list before engaging in the more

¹⁵⁵ Ellis, *Gathering*, 183.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹⁵⁷ Compare Gordon T. Smith's recent and strong admonition that Table must always follow Word; *Evangelical, Sacramental, and Pentecostal: Why the Church Should Be All Three* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017), 89.

central matters of sung worship and the delivery of the sermon. It is equally possible that the timing is motivated by pastoral considerations, such as enabling children to take part in Communion before departing to their programmes. On the other hand, when the Supper follows the Sermon, it could be celebrated in a manner that is rushed or tacked-on to a service that is thought to be complete without it. Or indeed, it could be beautifully and intentionally crafted to flow on from the Sermon as the central climax of gathered worship. As we saw above with frequency, the Scriptures do not prescribe the timing within the service. In some way, however, Word and Table (or Word and Pool) should be interdependent, so that Scripture explicates the sacramental act and the act realizes that to which Scripture testifies. For example, the Eucharist fails to be the climax of worship in several cases: a) when no Scripture or prayer accompanies it, b) when its sacramental action is squeezed in alongside another item (e.g. a worship bracket), c) when communal forms of distribution are abandoned in favour of self-service by individuals, often occurring when d) a single communion table from which all symbolically eat and drink is replaced with serving stations. For example, it is difficult to see the Supper being practiced with due weight if the service, including extended portions of singing and preaching, instructs congregants to take the elements from a table at the back of the room during the final song, with no Scripture reading or prayer of thanksgiving (or confession). In the same way, a baptismal service with no relevant Scripture readings or supporting content could fail to witness to the gospel story of which baptism is such a potent symbol.

This raises the challenging question concerning the extent to which Eucharist or baptism can be overshadowed by corporate singing and preaching. Our data seemed to indicate a practice according with anecdotal experience that song and sermon tend to far outweigh Supper in terms of time. We also observed Communion being postponed for another service to make room for Father's Day content, when it could have been observed if the number of songs were reduced (seven were used). Given the dominant pattern that Eucharistic practice only occurs in one Sunday a month in Baptist churches, there is opportunity here to ensure that when it does happen it is given a significant, if not central, role in the flow of the wider service.

Simple Patterns and Rich Content

Both our study and anecdotal experience suggest Baptists retain a strong tendency toward informality in their practice of Eucharist and baptism. In addition to excluding traditional elements such as the *Sursum Corda*, the Great Thanksgiving, and The Lord's Prayer, Baptists have recently embraced a contemporary and seeker-friendly approach where casual explanations of, or reflections on, the meaning of Communion become a common part of celebrations; and we saw

evidence of this in our data. Whilst it needs to be said that informality cannot be equated with flippancy, it can also be observed that informality does not guarantee sincerity, brevity or scriptural quality. Lack of planning could reflect an overly casual approach to the Sacraments, and a lack of appreciation of their power. By contrast, the use of traditional frameworks and content (e.g. acts of penitence, thanksgiving prayers, and spoken or sung versions of the *Agnus Dei*) have been helpful to countless worshippers over centuries and across continents. Baptist freedom is not antithetical to the discerning use of these riches.

Baptists appear to be more likely to use musical or other creative content in association with the Sacraments. Pastoral attentiveness is essential to ensure that such content is helpful and not distracting. At times, the power of simple and still silence may be a welcome contrast, especially when and if the default pattern does not include it. As Marva Dawn suggests, “sometimes we need holy silence to contemplate God.”¹⁵⁸ Silence can be creative rather than dull and passive when it is intentional and helps *create* a space for such contemplation. We observed creative and wise examples such as children serving the elements, youth offering prayers, having new members sign the membership book on the table during the distribution; another example could be newly baptized members distributing the bread and cup to their brothers and sisters, who earlier recited together a statement of welcome.

Another observation was the use of liturgical material from a Baptist worship book. In particular, the content used drew richly upon wider tradition from other denominations. In addition to the benefit noted above such as scriptural quality, brevity and broad coverage of diverse gospel themes, such activity constitutes a very real participation in and with the worship of the global and historic church. Further discussion of this opportunity will occur below.

Orderly Leadership and Open Participation

Baptist understandings of ministry, especially so in Aotearoa where ordination is not practiced, do not require that the Sacraments can only be celebrated by ordained ministers. Nonetheless, as seen in our data, it remains common for recognized leaders to preside at the communion table and baptismal pool. This leadership tendency did not appear to exclude the involvement of other congregation members from elders and communion stewards to youth and children. Such participation is a fitting and healthy expression of the gifted body of Christ in action.

Different ways of celebrating the Eucharist and baptism can offer different kinds of opportunity for others. For the Eucharist, rather than congregation members being instructed

¹⁵⁸ Marva J. Dawn, *How Shall We Worship?: Biblical Guidelines for the Worship Wars* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015), 90.

to 'help themselves' to the elements, various roles can be created that provide opportunity for service, such as bringing the communion elements to the table (either before, or perhaps during the service as part of a time of approach to the Table), offering a communion prayer, leading a responsive prayer of confession, and distributing the bread and cup. This act of distribution can be done either by passing trays down rows to a seated congregation, or personally passing the elements to each person as they come forward to receive them. Traditional patterned blessings can be used, such as "The Bread of Life" and "The Cup of salvation" or "The Body of Christ, broken for you" and "The Blood of Christ, poured out for you". Baptismal services can include roles for those offering prayers for the baptismal candidates. At times, some may wish to be baptised by a mentor or parent, perhaps conjointly with the minister. From this perspective, such liturgical choices are not about a right/wrong binary, but rather a spectrum of opportunities that enhance the meaning of the celebration, and assist in increased participation from the congregation.

Further Questions, Further Research

This project has embraced a method that avoids a 'top-down' theology of worship dictating how worship 'ought' to be done. Our approach has instead been first 'bottom-up' in observation, and then 'out and around' in seeking the guidance of wider liturgical practice and studies; all the while, 'looking up' in need of grace and guidance. The task of such a liturgical theology is necessarily ongoing, and there are always more curiosities to explore and more investigations to conduct. This section will explore three pairs of related areas for further research, all of which were raised throughout our study.

Scriptural Immersion & Christian Formation

Several writers have observed that a fundamental dynamic of gathered worship is that of drawing aside from culture. We who live amongst the images, texts, symbols, stories, values and rituals of culture, gather toward, around and into the images, texts, symbols, stories, values and rituals of the gospel. In corporate worship, we gather away from culture and toward the gospel; then, having been fed and formed by it, we scatter from the word into the world. Whereas seeker-friendly and contemporary movements have emphasized the legitimate need for relevant translations of the gospel into language that will be comprehensible to people in a given culture (inculturation), there is also an equally legitimate emphasis on the need to discern the points at which the gospel speaks a word that is in contrast to culture, and to embody that in our worship

and witness (incarnation). In short, we who are in constant danger of being conformed to the culture's pattern need to gather around the gospel and have our minds renewed by it (Romans 12:1-2). James K. A. Smith has had much to say about the way in which rituals (of both gospel and culture) are formative for character.¹⁵⁹

In light of all this, in practical terms, the question becomes, if a Christian community has a use of Scripture that is minimal in quantity and/or narrow in scope, how will it be fully formed according to the gospel? Does it make a difference whether concrete Scripture readings occur? Does it matter if the minister or the worship leaders are the only ones who read the Scriptures aloud? Does it have a cumulative effect when the preaching in a community is topical for an entire year? In what ways might sharing, prayer, singing, Sacraments and church layout and architecture be fuller carriers of biblical content, inviting and facilitating the renewing of the mind? Our method stops short of attempting to construct a systematized standard to regulate worship practice. We can, however, take note of the formative role that engagement with Scripture has in corporate spirituality, and we can signal the need for further consideration and action.

Congregational Participation & Ecumenical Collaboration

Our study has deliberately focused on gathered worship, or 'collective spirituality', as opposed to personal worship or private devotion. What dynamics are at work when individuals 'gather' and become a united and diverse congregation of worshippers? What are the key differences between the worship of scattered persons during the week and a gathered Body on the Lord's Day? At the very least, gathered worship is an opportunity to express and share what is held in common. We gather together to participate in worship in a way that we could not on our own.

In our singing chapter, we noted the language of Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy; specifically, the goal of "fully conscious, and active participation" of the faithful.¹⁶⁰ That description offers two helpful angles from which to consider gathered worship practices. First, for participation in worship to be 'fully conscious', it requires each person to offer their whole self. When Jesus quoted the Hebrew *shema* (Luke 10:27; cf. Deuteronomy 6:5) he signaled the scope of the entire person which includes heart, soul, mind and strength, or we might say emotion, identity, intellect and action. Communities of worship can at times tend toward one at the expense of the others: passionate affectivity, seen when singing and charismatic expression

¹⁵⁹ See particularly James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom (Cultural Liturgies): Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); *Imagining the Kingdom (Cultural Liturgies)*.

¹⁶⁰ Pope Paul VI, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium," *Vatican Archives*, December 4, 1963, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.

dominates; rigorous rationality, seen when the service climaxes in the exegetical sermon; and concerted physicality, in the unison kneeling, crossing, and recitation of liturgical worship. Fully conscious participation needs to involve the full range of these human faculties. Second, for participation in worship to be ‘active’ it requires that the tendencies, preferences and habits of each individual are temporarily suspended in order for the congregation to join together in active and shared worship practices. We share in, or give a shared ‘Amen’ to, the same prayers. We sing, clap or sway and dance to the same songs. We read, study and listen to the same Scripture. We share the same Bread and the same Cup. We embody the same faith in the same Lord, sealed by the same baptism, in the name of the same triune God. What might it mean for gathered worshippers, Aotearoa Baptists in particular, to gather up all the faculties of each person into a “fully conscious, and active” Body? What difference does it make when a service is so still and reverent that emotion appears absent? In what ways does worship cease to be “fully conscious” when gathered worship is charged with emotion and physical exertion, but light on attentive thought and study? What is lost when year after year, the only physical postures a congregation embodies are sitting to listen and standing to sing?

The diversity of this vision of worship calls to mind another challenging question. What goals should Aotearoa Baptists seek to discern and progress toward in terms of their relationship to other denominations and traditions? When we gather, we can gather ‘away from’ other traditions, in a posture of competition, or we can gather ‘alongside’ them, in a posture of co-existence; better still, we can gather ‘together with’ them, in a posture of ecumenical collaboration. This sense of shared togetherness need not ignore or deny real differences in understanding and practice, but can flow from a desire for ecclesial unity. If we grant that Aotearoa Baptists already share at least some aspects with other traditions, and that the gospel indeed calls us to seek and pray and work for ecumenical harmony of the global church, what might this mean for their gathered worship? To put it another way, what might it mean for Aotearoa Baptist worship to be characterised both by Baptist freedom and global catholicity? Baptist theologian Steve Harmon has recently published a volume exploring these themes.¹⁶¹ At the heart of Harmon’s argument is the notion of “receptive ecumenism”, which is characterised by the mutual giving and receiving of gifts between liturgical communities; an activity which requires putting aside the gifts you think you have to offer, and choosing to look for gifts that might be helpful to you. Such a posture is simply and profoundly biblical in light of calls to “value others above yourselves” (Philippians 2:3b) and looking into “the interests of the others” (2:4b). The wider context of the early verses of Philippians 2 frame the underlying Christ-shaped

¹⁶¹ Harmon, *Baptist Identity and the Ecumenical Future*.

humility that can work towards unity of thought and action. The goal, after all, is to navigate between the extremes of division and uniformity, and find the path of what missiologist David Bosch called “unity in reconciled diversity”.¹⁶² What might be the first steps toward such a diverse unity in liturgical practice? What would it look like for Aotearoa Baptists, whilst retaining their identity, to join with the worship patterns of, for example, their Pentecostal and Roman Catholic neighbours? In such a case, there need not be any reason that the same service could incorporate both Pentecostal expressions (e.g. energetic singing, prayer ministry and charismata) and liturgical forms (e.g. the *Kyrie*, the *Trisagion* and a common chalice).¹⁶³ The point is of course not to prescribe such a combination, but to state just how much freedom Baptists have to craft worship practices in accord with such an ecumenical goal.

(Bi-)Multicultural Expression & Missional Orientation

Ecumenical diversity of liturgical practice relates directly to another area for ongoing inquiry and action: the cultural diversity of the worshippers themselves. The gospel not only calls us to ecclesial unity, but also to unite across geographical and contextual divides. The uniquely bi-cultural and multicultural demographics of Aotearoa, particularly in its largest city, Auckland, provides great opportunity to begin to express the diversity of the community of heaven. Many tribes, tongues and nations call Aotearoa home.¹⁶⁴ A first port of call for migrant Christians in Aotearoa is often in communities comprised entirely of other migrants sharing their culture and language. Much slower is the further phase of ‘migration’ into other (usually English-speaking) communities, especially when the migrant believers have learned (or indeed mastered) the English language. English, however, has only become the dominant language of Aotearoa in the last two centuries, and in a real sense English-speakers in Aotearoa are not separate from the historical processes of migration. Appreciation of the recently privileged status of English could be helpful in many situations. English-speaking communities could seek a posture that seeks opportunities to partner with their neighbours, rather than waiting until they learn to speak English. Migrants whose spoken English sounds different to their own could be encouraged to participate through preaching, prayer and Scripture reading. Better still, ways of sharing and co-creating liturgical content could be pursued that a) are not dependent upon or referent to the English language, and b) flow from communities who do not assume that others need to

¹⁶² David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission, Twentieth Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012), 465.

¹⁶³ Indeed, such diversity already occurs in charismatic Catholic communities.

¹⁶⁴ Andrew Butcher and George Wieland reflect particularly on Asian migration and its significance on local ministry and mission; see “Go from Your Country”: Missiological Reflections on Asian Christians in New Zealand,” *Stimulus* 18.1 (2010): 2–8.

become like them to participate in their worship. Kathy Black contends that “culturally-conscious worship” happens when Christians “move beyond a) assimilating one worship culture into another, b) presenting new cultural content... for differing cultures become accustomed to, or c) reduce the culture to what is common to both cultures, and instead d) cultures expose their... worship forms regularly and routinely to one another.”¹⁶⁵ Such multicultural partnership is reflected in bi-cultural partnership. Communities which are heavily non Māori (*pākehā*) can embrace, welcome and share with Māori culture (*tikanga*) and people (*tangata*), and cultivate attitudes that receive as well as give. Ultimately, the enemy of this diverse unity is an assumption that one’s own culture is neutral or normal.

This kind of appreciation of culture also relates to the need to discover and rediscover the missional orientation of worship. Much has been written about the connections between worship and mission, gathering and scattering, gospel and culture, Word and world.¹⁶⁶ On the one hand, mission is about worship. The goal of the *Missio Dei* is for the all the nations of the world to worship the true God. Worship is thus the *telos* of mission. On the other hand, worship is about mission. Worshippers are a) gathered away from culture and toward the kingdom, b) formed by a Word that speaks with a different voice from culture, c) fed at the Table with a meal that feeds much more than the physical body, and d) re-commissioned as missional agents of the gospel back into culture. At every point, a balanced and biblical view of culture is needed; a view that is patient enough to appreciate traces of God’s image and activity even in the most ‘secular’ contexts, and one that is courageous enough to stand in contrast to other aspects of culture which, even if popular, are opposed to gospel values. What are the implications of such a missional outlook for worship? How can the liturgical choices of Aotearoa Baptists, along with others, be shaped neither by a naïve acceptance of cultural values and actions, nor by knee-jerk rejections of them? What might this mean for a basic posture for worship? For musical instrumentation? For the style of language? For sanctuary layout and architecture? Further inquiry along these lines could serve the Church in its calling to have confidence in the Word of Christ, and for the work of worship to proclaim it, with both relevant sensitivity and confident faithfulness. Just as Bosch wrote concerning mission, this worship would be offered in “bold humility”.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Kathy Black, *Culturally Conscious Worship* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2012), 92–97.

¹⁶⁶ Ruth Meyers in particular has several publications, see *Missional Worship, Worshipful Mission: Gathering as God’s People, Going Out in God’s Name* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014); “Missional Church, Missional Liturgy,” *Theology Today* 67.1 (2010): 36–50; *For the Common Good: Missional Worship for the Sake of the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014); See also Clayton J. Schmit, *Sent and Gathered (Engaging Worship): A Worship Manual for the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); “Sent and Gathered: A Musical Metaphor for Missional Liturgy,” *Word & World* 26.2 (2006): 121–29.

¹⁶⁷ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 430, 501.

Conclusion

This project has deliberately followed in the methodological footsteps of Ellis. Our aim was not to construct a prescriptive theology of worship and then apply that to the collective spirituality of Aotearoa Baptists, but rather was to document and understand their gathered worship, relate it to other traditions, and only then expose it to the critique of liturgical, biblical and theological studies. The framework for this portrayal was the history of Baptist worship in Aotearoa. We observed the transplanting of English patterns into local *whenua*, the trending along with various global movements, and the tending of local experimentation and development.

Our portrait drew as much understanding as we could from the orders of service and comments that were collected. We saw dominant themes alongside real diversity. We opened by suggesting that any depiction of Baptist worship is incomplete unless it takes seriously their various forms of ‘sharing’: notices, birthdays, video clips, testimonies, ministry and mission reports and more. Here is warm gospel fellowship that, if care is not taken, can be untidy and take time away from other elements, but has potential to beautifully display Baptist worship as a community of priests ministering to one another. We then noted the various ways in which prayer is offered, from freely spontaneous or broadly themed, through to pre-written or liturgical prayers. A challenge we observed was for prayer to engage the full diversity of Scripture, including lament and confession, however there is much good already present to build with. We observed the various ways in which singing is shaped by song selection, leadership, and instrumental and congregational participation. The dominance of contemporary styles suggested not only that Aotearoa Baptists enjoy singing what is new and popular, but also showed the degree to which singing communities are linked both locally and globally. This relationality can only be strengthened as worship songwriters pay greater attention to scriptural themes and Christian seasons, as instrumentalists consider the voices and abilities and hearts of the congregation, and as the diverse styles of music make our singing echo the multicultural sound of heaven. We documented the regular and routine use of Scripture in Aotearoa Baptist worship, whether opening or closing use, homiletic and sacramental use or other readings or reflections. Use of epistles was dominant compared with the Gospels, the Old Testament and the Psalms, and we observed a range of ways in which Scripture use could immerse worshippers in the full scope of the scriptural story. Finally, we constructed a sketch of sacramental practice, which saw a pattern of monthly observance of the Lord’s Supper and occasional baptism. Whilst we saw some evidence of Communion taking a significant and celebrated place in the

service, it was possible that there is a need to recover a rich, scriptural and full orbbed observance of this Sacrament, whether through use of globally available Baptist resources or through the patterns of celebration of other traditions.

With hope for all of God's richest blessings to all who lead, plan, participate in, and research Aotearoa Baptist gathered worship, present and future, we offer this closing *karakia*.

Lord God,
Matua, Tama, Wairua Tapu,
we offer you due thanks for your faithfulness,
to all creation, to your people,
and in particular to the Baptist family in the *whenua* of Aotearoa.

You alone are worthy of our worship.
It is you who got it going,
you who sustain it,
and you who will perfect it.

Forgive us when our praise is less than is could be.
When we are insincere,
when we are unprepared,
when we think too lowly of your word,
when we think too highly of our hearts,
when we desire the admiration of the culture,
when we work in competition with our brothers and sisters,
work transformation in us, Lord.

Gather us.
Call us away from the other gospels and Caesars that try to rule us.
Call us to be renewed in the ways of King and kingdom.
Speak to us.
May your *kōrero tapu* comfort and disturb us.
May your story of redemption recalibrate our imaginations.
Feed us.
Host us along with all your global *whānau* around your Table.
Satisfy our hungry spirits with your *kai tapu*.
Wash us.
Bathe us in the pure water of your *Wairua Tapu*.
Seal our redemption until the Day of *Ihu Karaiti*.
Send us.
Embolden and humble our witness to you.
May the nations come to your light.
Amine.

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