

***Vocational Understandings:  
An Exploration of the Nature of the Tensions  
in the Musician-Cleric Relationship***

by

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## ABSTRACT

### **Vocational Understandings: An Exploration of the nature of the tensions in the musician-cleric relationship**

Alexander Coulter Graham, IV

Go up to a group of clergy and say, “let’s talk about Church musicians...” and the eyerolls will be ubiquitous and revelatory. Go up to a group of Church musicians and do the reverse, and expect to encounter the same dramatic response. As a priest who was first a musician, I understood both worldviews personally, but needed to explore them on a larger scale.

Through individual interviews, I sought to explore the nature of the unique and unusual relationship between musicians and clerics. What made it work? Where were there problems? How does one group tend to view the other? I then brought the participants together for a plenary session to test what I thought I learned and to discern together in a group what makes for a good relationship, and where the tensions might lie.

One of the significant learnings (for both myself and for those musicians and clerics participating) during this project was that the stories of epically tragic cleric-musician relationships, while perhaps entertaining, are far more widespread than encountered in real life, and do not match the overall experience of the participants or their colleagues. Problems – even daunting ones – do arise, and can be addressed, but they do not escalate to the level of popular expectation.

VOCATIONAL UNDERSTANDINGS:  
AN EXPLORATION OF THE NATURE OF THE TENSIONS IN THE MUSICIAN-CLERIC RELATIONSHIP

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE CONTEXT

*I assume from the outset that nothing should be done or sung or said in church which does not aim directly or indirectly either at glorifying God or edifying the people or both. A good service may of course have a cultural value as well, but that is not what it exists for; just as, in an unfamiliar landscape, a church may help me to find the points of the compass, but was not built for that purpose.<sup>1</sup>*

### PERSONAL CONTEXT

I live in two worlds. I discovered music and rediscovered the Church<sup>2</sup> at the same time in my life, and have danced between the two ever since. At one time in my life, I was absolutely certain that I had a vocational calling to be a professional musician. I sang, conducted, composed, I played flute, guitar, and even the bagpipes. I graduated college with a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance and another in Choral Education, at first intending to follow my training and passion to become an opera singer, and then, with my gifts of teaching and love of choral music, believed I would be a music teacher. I taught music in several schools and led music for worship services. Music is not just a hobby, pastime, or tool to me, it is the foundation of my understanding of vocational call. I understand the worldview of the musician. As a teenager, I felt a definite call to Church work, even priestly work, but later turned my back on it,

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, "On Church Music," in *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1967) Kindle Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Some years ago, under the influence of Hans Küng, among others, I came to believe that there is no difference between the Universal and local Church; that neither could exist without the other, and that they were one and the same. It has altered my mindset on many things (particularly diocesan work), and I have ever since capitalized Church whenever I write. It is my hope that context provides better understanding, and in cases where this may be confusing I opt for other words like "congregation."

thinking that perhaps this was some bizarre adolescent obsession with the life of the Church at an impressionable time in my life. I later returned to this calling; I have often explained my priestly call by saying, “When God wants you to do something, God will keep beating you over the head with it until you eventually give in.” As an ordained Episcopal priest, I live into the worldview of the clergy, and I know far too well the perceived rift between the Church musician and the priest. Go up to a group of clergy and say, “let’s talk about Church musicians...” and the eyerolls will be ubiquitous and revelatory. Go up to a group of Church musicians and do the reverse, and expect to encounter the same dramatic response.

#### PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT

At the time of this project, I had been serving as the Associate Rector of St. Andrew’s in Burke, Virginia for two years. During that time significant friction arose between the new rector and the organist and choirmaster who had been in place for many years. Some parishioners began to choose sides along predictable fault lines. Choirs understandably have close ties with their directors, with whom they spend considerable amounts of time in what is an expressive, creative, and sometimes emotionally charged artistic setting. I found myself in a (transparently!) consulting role, as each person knew from my background I understood their general point of view and could speak the general point of view of the other. I was a translator of sorts. Long before things came to any sort of crisis mode between the two or within the parish, the organist and choirmaster accepted a new job that fit him quite well in an area of the country which allowed him easy access to beloved family. Because of my braided background I was invited into the hiring process and was able to mediate and assist in the preparation work, conversations with the advisory committee and rector, and the audition process. I was able to define exactly what it

was the non-musical rector was looking for in terms a musician would understand, and to establish the audition parameters which would highlight the musical leadership skills in line with the needs and desires of the parish. Along with my dual background, working through these things with my parish helped fuel this project idea.

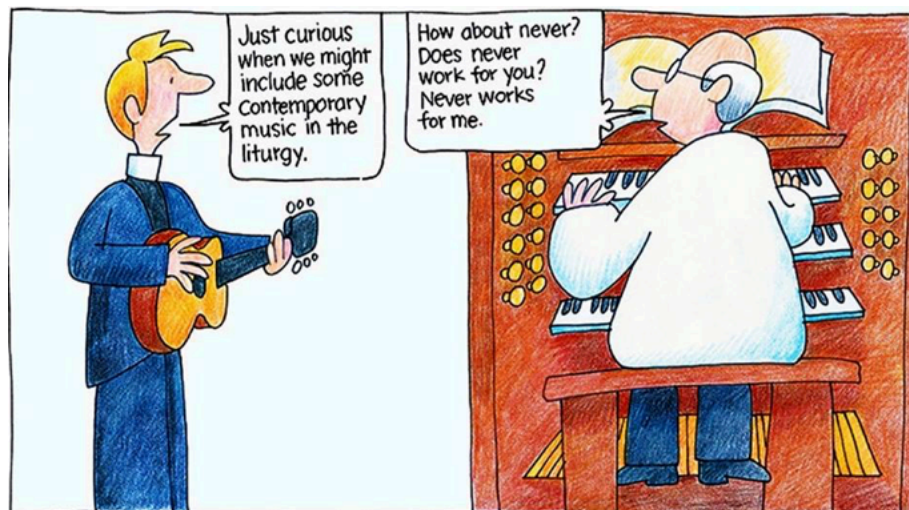
It soon became evident, however, that the exploration of this subject for doctoral work would require an expanded stage, and so the research field for the project centered on musicians and clergy in the Northern Virginia area, though their individual experiences connected us all to a much larger area of the nation. With the help of Ellen Johnston from the Center for Liturgy and Music at Virginia Theological Seminary, I was able to connect with a large but workable cross section of musicians and clergy throughout the region.

The original proposal for this project and thesis was to create and test a program of intentional relationship-building between clergy and Church musicians – something akin to marriage counseling. While it is true that using the marriage analogy for this particular relationship breaks down after some scrutiny, there has always been a general understanding that the relationship needed some work. This original proposal was favorably received and seemed a foregone conclusion that it would be approved. Toward the end of the approval process, a stark realization came to light – in order to develop the program, one would first have to delve into how the tensions were unique – not analogous to spouses, not simply boss and employee – what makes this particular relationship (and the obstacles, triumphs and failures associated with it) so different? What is the essence of these vocations, if indeed they both are seen as vocational?



There is a general understanding that these relationships might need help – but what is the nature of the relationship in the first place? What makes it unique, where does it go wrong, and how does it go right?<sup>3</sup>

#### THE PROBLEM AT HAND



In the Episcopal liturgical tradition, music is as important a factor as the spoken word. When those who lead these ministries – the parish clergy and the parish musician – do not approach each other’s ministry as having equal vocational value, their relationship breaks down. Dysfunctional relationships within the church staff leadership translate into parochial dysfunction. The relationship between clergy and musician is particularly prone and public, and when this relationship is in distress, so is the parish itself.

The two main leaders in most Episcopal Churches are the cleric and the Church musician, and as such, they are individually and together public signs and symbols to the congregation. For

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<sup>3</sup> I believe a project of intentional relationship-building between Church musicians and clergy is still worthy, and hope that this work aids in that endeavor.

<sup>4</sup> Jay Sidebotham, Cartoon from “Life at St. Swithin’s” collection. (New York: Church Pension Fund, 2007).

some they represent the Church itself, for others perhaps an ideal of Christian piety to strive for, and in their partnership they can display the overall ambiance of the place – warm and friendly, respectful and distant, creative and joyful - but for some reason, the relationship between the two is consistently portrayed as acrimonious. Amusing and horrifying stories abound about troubled and restless parochial staff relationships, yet clergy-administrator or clergy-sexton relations do not have the level of stereotypical expectations that the clergy-musician scenario has reached. Why the clergy-musician cliché – where the Church musician is the guardian of the Anglican Choral Tradition while the cleric seeks to dismantle it; where the cleric desires to grow the Church while the musician seeks earthly power – ranks with Mother-in-law jokes within a setting that promotes partnership and liturgical unity is somewhat of a puzzle. It is also important to acknowledge that an acrimonious relationship between the two is by no means inevitable – one of the significant learnings (for both myself and for those musicians and clerics participating) during this project was that the stories of mythically and catastrophically tragic cleric-musician relationships, while perhaps entertaining, are far more widespread than encountered in real life, and do not match the overall experience of the participants or their colleagues. Problems – even daunting ones – do arise, and can be addressed, but they do not rise to the level of popular expectation.

It is also important to note within the Episcopal framework these two roles have unequal canonical authority. This reality almost certainly complicates the relationship in at least three ways: liturgical decisions – including music – ultimately fall under the authority of the priest, employees of the parish are ultimately hired or fired by the priest,<sup>5</sup> and, with the possible exception of some more experimental faith communities or special circumstances across the

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<sup>5</sup> Though the financial aspect of their employment is controlled by the lay leadership body and there may (hopefully) be a Letter of Agreement or Contract softening the immediacy of dismissal.

Church, a priest is the only prerequisite position for a Church to exist; all other staff are optional (canonically speaking).

A troubled ministry team relationship between the clergy (typically the rector) and the musician (typically organist-choirmaster) is a stereotype – almost a caricature – of real parish life, yet the relationship between these two influential (and frequently only) parish staff members greatly impacts the worship and spiritual life of the local body of Christ. Both are ministers within the church, passionately involved with their work; rather than seeing each other as obstacles, an increased mutual understanding and teamwork would allow their passions to combine, as Bach put it, *solī deo gloria* – to the glory of God alone.

#### CHAPTERS AND ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The central thesis is outlined in chapter two. We will explore the uniqueness of the relationship between Church musicians and clergy as well as the core challenges that relationship faces. That relationship, played out publicly and in worship, is an icon of how the beloved community might live together and has a profound impact on the health of the congregation as a whole.

Chapter three explores the questions from a theological perspective. How is this relationship consistent with our liturgical understanding? What's going on in the Body of Christ at worship that provides framework for the relationship between music and liturgy, and by extension cleric and musician?

Chapter four brings the project under the lens of sociological reflection. How does the cleric-musician relationship reflect the health of the congregation as a system, and to what

degree does it imprint on the people they lead? What other forces are at play which not only affect this relationship, but the way in which these two individuals are able to effectively interact with the congregation as a whole? How does the internal life of these individuals affect this process?

Chapter five shows the project as it was worked out. A series of interviews of individual clerics and musicians were held, mostly over long-distance. Some initial observations were made, and a plenary gathering of the interviewees – musicians and clergy – was held to test those observations and to gather new data from a group prospective.

Chapter six analyzes the data gathered from the interviews and plenary sessions. What did we find? How similar or dissimilar were the experiences of the participants over the course of their careers, and how did that compare to the popular trope of strained ministerial and personal bonds between these two groups?

Chapter seven pulls together what was found with what was theorized, reflecting on conclusions made by the individuals involved and looking for a deeper and more meaningful patterns of relationships to present a more accurate “icon” for us to contemplate. It also is a place to wonder about the possibilities of future work to shore up this relationality and to more effectively lead the congregation to the worship of and connection with God within the context of a beloved community.

## CHAPTER TWO

*The first and most solid conclusion which (for me) emerges is that both musical parties, the High Brows and the Low, assume far too easily the spiritual value of the music they want. Neither the greatest excellence of a trained performance from the choir, nor the heartiest and most enthusiastic bellowing from the pews, must be taken to signify that any specifically religious activity is going on. It may be so, or it may not.<sup>6</sup>*

### THESIS

Dysfunctional relationships within the church staff leadership translates into parochial dysfunction. The core relationship of cleric and musician is particularly prone, public, and is connected to a particular myth of incompatibility, even though the ideal would be for them to flourish together, particularly in the heart of liturgy. We recognize the nature of the relationship as dynamic and often problematic, yet we don't have a good grasp of the origins or nature of the problem.

Through interviews and plenary sessions with musicians and clergy I will strive to identify the core challenges faced and give a comprehensive explanation of the component factors at the heart of these relational tensions; including but not limited to issues of differing liturgical theology and style, power and influence dynamics, and even Human Resources concerns.

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<sup>6</sup> Lewis, Kindle Edition.

### CHAPTER THREE

*There are two musical situations on which I think we can be confident that a blessing rests. One is where a priest or an organist, himself a man of trained and delicate taste, humbly and charitably sacrifices his own (aesthetically right) desires and gives the people humbler and coarser fare than he would wish, in a belief (even, as it may be, the erroneous belief) that he can thus bring them to God. The other is where the stupid and unmusical layman humbly and patiently, and above all silently, listens to music which he cannot, or cannot fully, appreciate, in the belief that it somehow glorifies God, and that if it does not edify him this must be his own defect. Neither such a High Brow nor such a Low Brow can be far out of the way. To both, Church Music will have been a means of grace... They have both offered, sacrificed, their taste in the fullest sense.<sup>7</sup>*

#### THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

*I think that all of us are called to show up in the world in a meaningful way – so I think that everybody has an aspect of call in their lives – so I think that many church musicians are – that’s how they’re responding to the gospel as well – that they have somehow experienced – or might – that they experience it as a call as well – to share however – what I would call the promise and possibility of abundant life in Christ, the presence of God – whatever it is – they’re called to show up in the world in a particular way and to bring those gifts in to the world and for those who are Christians it’s intertwined with their faith. – from an individual cleric interview*

*...it was a strong calling to work with people and a love for the organ and the people of the church to share that and promote that and help people experience the gospel through music. So that won out over... shall we say the more lucrative career [laughter]. And I think for the clergy it would be similar... and this urging... so I think there’s this urge that goes on... and sense to work in the Church to preach the Gospel and that sort of thing – so... I’ve heard some wonderful stories of call – how people have come to the ministry... I view very much the same kind of way a musician might be called to serve the Church. – from an individual Church musician interview*

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

This chapter explores the theological underpinnings and implications of the musician-cleric relationship, and for that purpose several building blocks must be established. I first consider the role music itself continues to play in the liturgical and theological life of humanity. This is followed by “The Body of Christ at Worship,” which examines that staple biblical metaphor and how it leads us away from understanding worship as a merely clerical practice toward viewing worship an incarnational practice of a living organism replete with the gifts of both clergy and lay spiritual leaders. In “Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Partnership” I explore the analogy of the effectual coupling of text and tune in hymnody with the partnership of clergy and musician in all of their giftedness and sense of vocation. The core virtue of humility is then explored as a foundational element in both this partnership and the well-ordering of the Church. In “Vocare” I write about the sense of spiritual calling (which is not constrained to the clerical order!) and how a mutual understanding and respect of God’s calling to our partners in leadership can lead to healthier relationships while simultaneously living into a fuller understanding of God’s action in our midst. Finally, in “The Whole Body of Christ at Worship” I expound on the earlier exploration (“The Body of Christ at Worship”) to see how this fundamental metaphor should not only expand our understanding of ministry beyond the clergy to include musicians (and other lay leaders), but to how they together can teach, preach, and model that the congregation as a whole is the Body of Christ.

#### WHY MUSIC

*I hear the faint cacophony of many distant cell-phone rings in the train car - snippets of Mozart and hip-hop, old-school ring tones, and pop-song fragments - all emanating out of minuscule phone speakers. All tinkling away here and there. All incredibly poor reproductions of other music. These ring tones are ‘signs’ for ‘real’ music. This is music not meant to be actually listened to as music, but to remind you of and refer to other, real, music. These are audio road signs that*

*proclaim 'I am a Mozart person' or, more often, 'I can't even be bothered to select a ring tone.' A modern symphony of music that is not music but asks that you remember music.*<sup>8</sup>

There is something primal about our seeking of deeper meaning, connection, and things spiritual, and something primal in the way that music connects with humans; we are reached by it even as we are reaching out. In the book co-written by Don and Emily Saliers (a professor of theology at Chandler School of Theology at Emory University and his daughter, half of the folk-rock duo the Indigo Girls), they mused that “Human communities have, from the beginning of time, explored identity and destiny in music and song.”<sup>9</sup> Music has been intertwined with human spirituality since well before Christianity – perhaps before the advent of anything to which the modern term “religion” might apply.

The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not in them, it only came through them, and what came through them was longing. These things – the beauty, the memory of our own past – are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshipers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited.<sup>10</sup>

If we were to observe the mystical role of music in human existence – from the banal to the sublime – for the first time as a whole, we might see ourselves as Paul standing in front of the Areopagus, wandering through the town and observing the objects of their worship and finding the people there “religious in every way” because of the very nature of these numinous objects.<sup>11</sup> Not unlike Paul’s altar “to an unknown god,” music – both in this moment and through our

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<sup>8</sup> David Byrne, *Bicycle Diaries* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 22.

<sup>9</sup> Don Saliers and Emily Saliers, *A Song to Sing, a Life to Live: The Practices of Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 1.

<sup>10</sup> C.S. Lewis, “Weight of Glory,” *THEOLOGY* (1941).

<sup>11</sup> Acts 17:23ff



collective memory – connects with us on the deepest level, and has been claimed, shaped, heightened, and even co-opted by many religions throughout the centuries.

It has long been posited and widely accepted that the oldest portions of the Hebrew Scriptures as well as the New Testament are portions what we might commonly call “songs.” The book of Psalms is the most obvious, but dozens of other “songs” are found throughout the Bible. Following the current canon, Moses is the first raise his voice in song, after crossing the sea with his people, followed quickly by Miriam singing on the same theme.<sup>12</sup> The last “song” is also attributed to Moses, overheard in the vision of the book of Revelation. Connecting to the deep yearning and daily experience of the people of God, songs of praise, lamentation, and even teaching are found throughout the Old Testament, but music is found throughout the New Testament as well. The Letter to the Philippians includes a credal text which is likely a preexisting hymn of early the Christian Community expounding on the divine nature and actions of Jesus as Christ.<sup>13</sup> Even the ancient Latin Mass hearkens back to an earlier era of music by incorporating the text – not in Latin, but remaining in the more-ancient Greek – of the *Kyrie Eleison*.

As avenues to express the largely inexpressible, the art of liturgy and the art of music come together for the common purpose of relating to and with each other and God those yearnings, lamentations, praise, and wonder. Liturgy has its own cadence, rhythm, and flow, similar to music, and the two together can synchronize or clash, depending on skill or intent. Anglican theologian and teacher, Evelyn Underhill, writes of the nature and essence of the liturgy and the essential experience of corporate worship in her work, The Principles of Corporate Worship. She writes:

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<sup>12</sup> Exodus 15

<sup>13</sup> Philippians 2:6-11

The corporate life of worship has...an importance far exceeding the personal salvation or blessedness of the individual worshippers, or the devotional opportunity it gives to them. It stands for the total orientation of life towards God; expressed both through stylized liturgical action, and spontaneous common praise.<sup>14</sup>

Underhill holds that worship within the Church, particularly as expressed in liturgy, weaves together the personal life into an expression of the whole Body of Christ.

...there must be a traditional worshipping act of the Church, a great liturgical life, of which the sectional worship of its various groups and branches will form a part, and to which the many-leveled action of its isolated members with all their varying moods and insights contributes; an act which includes and harmonizes all apparent differences, looking ever more towards that perfected heavenly life of adoration where these differences vanish...<sup>15</sup>

The bond between music and liturgy cannot be overstated. While there certainly can be liturgy without music and music without liturgy, music, like any of the arts, has the ability to transcend common speech and afford us glimpses of the divine as we stretch out for some sort of connection to it. As Don Saliers once noted, “Because music is so close to human emotion and feeling, and because faith is a matter of both the head and the heart, it leads us again and again into the realm of spirituality.” He goes on to quote his song-writing daughter, Emily: “Anyone who struggles with love and suffering and searches for the mystery ends up singing—or at least listening to music.”<sup>16</sup> Awe-inspiring in their own right, music and liturgy have the ability to come together in a powerful way, expressing and influencing the depths of human experience. How we bring them together, how we treat those who lead both worship and music, and how they themselves come together has the potential for both painful dissonance and rich harmony.

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<sup>14</sup> Evelyn Underhill, “The Principals of Corporate Worship,” in *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader*, ed. Dwight W. Vogel (Pueblo Books, 2000), 48.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 49.

<sup>16</sup> Saliers, 17.

## THE BODY OF CHRIST AT WORSHIP

The understanding of the role and ethos of clerical leadership is not universal. It has changed throughout history and varies from congregation to congregation – likely even from person to person. Rampant clericalism can take many forms and arise from many sources. Hierarchical systems within certain denominational contexts, which define roles, authorities, and responsibilities, rather than offering clarity and harmony, can be taken instead to elevate the worth of certain individuals within those systems while seeming to downplay or dismiss the worth of others. To be sure, this elevation can be very tempting to the cleric, but it can also prove tempting to lay members of the congregation or lay employees, particularly if they do not feel, for whatever historical or contextual reason, competent or confident in their own role. In the latter case, abdication of role to the priest is a common result. Laity – the baptized faithful – are not only the backbone of the Church but also its flesh. It is the most crucial and foundational order. Endeavors as diverse as personal and communal discernment of God’s will, care for neighbor, and the building of up the Church are too frequently seen as the sole responsibility of the sacerdotal few. A nun friend of mine calls this the “professional Christian syndrome” – the expectation for the people who are trained and/or employed by the church to do whichever work the lay person is unsure they themselves have the authority or ability or calling to undertake. Sometimes this shows itself in something as simple as a prayer: while all the faithful are called to relationship and regular communication with God, frequently in a group setting when it comes time for prayer, all eyes turn to the cleric when it comes time to pray. The sharing of ministry and the fulfilling of – and calling to – various roles in the Church have often suffered under the same misdirection.

Within the Catechism of the Episcopal Church, the ministry of the laity – the ministry of

all the baptized, is not only raised up, it is presented as a vocational reality within the worshipping Body of Christ. This is also vocational ministry – a crucial *calling* to do the work of God in the world – and not one set below the clergy, but simply set apart and unique in its own right.

Q. Who are the ministers of the Church?

A. The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.<sup>17</sup>

Laity are clearly described here as “ministers,” and listed first among those ministers. It would be difficult to argue here that these ministers are listed in rising hierarchical order, as bishops are the next group of ministers mentioned.

Q. What is the ministry of the Laity?

A. The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ’s work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.<sup>18</sup>

Not only are the laity called “ministers” in the previous question, but here their ministry in the world on behalf of Christ is defined in a vocational sense, in relation to their own giftedness. Not only are they not to be excluded from any particular corner of the Church structure, but they have their own place all of the Church’s workings.

Biblical corrections to the dismissive understanding of the laity or of solo “superstars” also abound. Moses, that singular prophet and patriarch, depends on the giftedness and companionship of Aaron and Miriam,<sup>19</sup> and though Jesus called Peter the “rock,”<sup>20</sup> he chiefly works with a group of twelve disciples in his earthly ministry. When they were commissioned and sent out, Jesus sent them in pairs<sup>21</sup> rather than as solo agents. Paul and Timothy, among others, carry these connections into the early Church.

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<sup>17</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 855.

<sup>18</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, 855.

<sup>19</sup> Exodus 4ff

<sup>20</sup> Matthew 16:18

<sup>21</sup> Mark 6:7

When it comes to descriptors for the Church itself, the primary biblical imagery is Paul's "Body of Christ." In the letter to the Ephesians the Body of Christ is the image invoked to promote unity. The gentiles are no longer to be perceived as outsiders but through the grace of God "members of the same body,"<sup>22</sup> and Christians are called to growth "in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love."<sup>23</sup> In the epistle to the Colossians, the image is connected with a long list of directions for how the community is to work together – which attributes, characteristics, and interactions would best serve the community. This includes the admonition to "...let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful."<sup>24</sup> This togetherness, the unity coming from the exhortation to "bear with one another" as the community is called to "clothe" themselves with "compassion, kindness, humility, meekness... patience..." and above all, "...love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony,"<sup>25</sup> is at the heart of the Body of Christ imagery. The faithful community, focused on and acting in love, lives into its essence of the Body of Christ. Likewise, our modern faith communities, led by the example of its lay and clerical leadership, must follow the same path – striving for unity, centered in love, and all for the Glory of God.

The "Body of Christ" as a symbolic manifestation of a unified Church appears throughout these epistles, but it is perhaps most well-known from the longer exploration in the First Letter to the Corinthians.<sup>26</sup> In this epistle, the Body of Christ metaphor is preceded with an

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<sup>22</sup> Ephesians 3:6

<sup>23</sup> Ephesians 4:16

<sup>24</sup> Colossians 3:15

<sup>25</sup> Colossians 3:12-14

<sup>26</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

explanation of the variety of spiritual gifts,<sup>27</sup> that they each come from the same Spirit. This juxtaposition links the variety of spiritual gifts with the variety of parts of the body. Body parts are not only a metaphor for individuals generally speaking (as in, “person A and person B are of equal value and both an inextricable part of the whole”), but of a variety of people with a variety of gifts given by the same Spirit (as in, “you need both wise and the knowledgeable, the prophet and the preacher,” or perhaps even “the priest and the musician”). Indeed, the beginning of the chapter can be translated from the Greek either as “Now concerning spiritual gifts...” or “Now concerning spiritual *persons*...” Here the Corinthians are told that all members of the body are necessary to the whole, that none can be truly independent of the body, and that no one part of the body can fulfill all of the needs of the whole: “If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be?”<sup>28</sup> The Church is incomplete without each of these parts – each form of giftedness. None is sufficient on its own, all are reliant upon the others, and no one gifts reigns supreme over the others. Here worldly hierarchies are once again upset for the sake of unity and the building up of the whole, bound by love.

Finally, the chapter comes to a close with a promise of showing “a still more excellent way.”<sup>29</sup> All of this culminates in the next section of the epistle, an exploration of the necessity of love. “If I speak in tongues of mortals and of angels... if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge...” (all gifts just mentioned in the previous passage) “but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal... I am nothing... I gain nothing.”<sup>30</sup> We are first told that there are many spiritual gifts. That we are all of us needed and part of the one body. That none of us can do without the other. That no one type of body part or

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<sup>27</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

<sup>28</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:17

<sup>29</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:31

<sup>30</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

spiritual gifts makes up the body by itself. Then we are pointed to the lifeblood of the body itself, that love which binds us, makes us whole, makes music and harmony instead of the cacophony of “noisy gongs and clanging cymbals.” Evelyn Underhill explores the function and necessity of the whole Body of Christ at worship when she writes:

The total liturgical life of the *Corpus Christi* is not merely a collection of services, offices, and sacraments. Deeply considered, it is the sacrificial life of Christ himself... acting through those ordered signs and sacraments by means of these his members on earth.<sup>31</sup>

The visible leadership of the musician and the cleric at worship is an icon<sup>32</sup> of what is possible: unity and respect of the gifts and calling of others in the liturgical community points to the vitality of the whole, and the image of healthy, living and breathing Body made manifest in the sign and symbol of this partnership.

#### AMAZING GRACE, HOW SWEET THE PARTNERSHIP

Though it did not appear in official Episcopal publications until 1981,<sup>33</sup> *Amazing Grace* has been one of the most well-known hymns throughout Christian Churches for over a century. The story of its author, John Newton, is well known also, as his own wrestling with once being a captain of slave ships lends authenticity and depth to the poetry of the words themselves – “... a wretch like me” continues to be evocative these many years later.

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<sup>31</sup> Underhill, 49.

<sup>32</sup> Icons are images (symbols) which point to a larger reality: one might pray “through” an icon of Jesus in the attempt to connect with Jesus, for example. Whether helpful or not, clergy are often seen occupying the place of God in people’s imagination; children sometimes imagine the priest’s voice to be the voice of God. Good or bad behavior by (or attributes of) the priest is frequently superimposed onto an individual’s notion of God. I wonder about the *relationship* between these two central leaders as the icon. God in Trinity is sometimes explored as relationality personified; the attributes of the relationship between Church leaders may shed light (at least in our collective imagination, and again for either good or ill) on not only how our own relationships are intended to be, but also on that nature of God.

<sup>33</sup> Raymond F. Glover, ed., *The Hymnal 1982 Companion* (New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1994), 1236.

Although most clergy are familiar with that part of the story, Church Musicians are more likely to also be familiar with the story of the music itself. It is of course quite common for hymn texts to be written simply as poetry, or with a certain tune in mind, but the ideal pairing of text and tune often take years to manifest, and in the case of *Amazing Grace*, nearly a century. Today, when a bagpiper plays the tune we generally call *New Britain*,<sup>34</sup> the plaintive tones evoke funereal rites or lonely gravesites, even though no words are spoken or sung. The haunting melody certainly helps with this association, but overall it is something we have learned by rote association with the hymn text of *Amazing Grace*. Were Newton to hear that same bagpiper, he wouldn't have had any idea what he was hearing, as the first time this tune was published seems to be 1829, a full twenty-two years after his death.

Neither the text nor the tune saw much circulation or prominence until their pairing was ultimately cemented in 1835.<sup>35</sup> Michael Curry speaks of another hymn which never overcame this early fate. Written by William Cowper, a contemporary of John Newton and often associated with him, the hymn "God moves in a mysterious way" is largely unknown today. Curry believes this hymn is the origin of the oft-repeated phrase of his grandmother (and so many other grandmothers), "God moves in mysterious ways." However, he is quick to admit that he never heard her or anyone else singing the music associated with the text, and all but that first phrase of text is forgotten. In fact, as a young priest he once chose that hymn to be sung in his congregation, "but I never scheduled the hymn again. No one knew the tune, though everyone seemed to know the words of the first stanza."<sup>36</sup> Curry goes on to make a comparison with other hymns: "Say the words, 'What a friend we have in Jesus,' and a tune comes to mind... Say the

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<sup>34</sup> Much simpler yet still recognizable versions of the tune were previously published with various titles.

<sup>35</sup> It is hard to imagine the 1832 text published with the tune, "There is a fountain fill'd with blood" having the same staying power through the years.

<sup>36</sup> Michael B. Curry, *Songs My Grandma Sang* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2015), 71.



words, “Just as I am, without one plea,’ and a song starts singing in my consciousness. Say the words, ‘Amazing grace, how sweet the sound...’ and music comes to mind. But say, ‘God moves in mysterious ways,’ and no melody makes its way into my mind.”<sup>37</sup>

Once that bond has been made, however, it is strong and often difficult to extricate text from tune. During one year of our annual joint Lenten series, the other parish’s rector and I delved into our parishioners’ favorite hymns. Sometimes the tune was of particular interest, and we took that apart and analyzed it, while other times the text was evocative theologically or emotionally, or it was exemplary of a shifting context of ideological or sociological preference – *Amazing Grace*, for example, displays a shift from hymns relating basic truths about God or paraphrasing scripture to relating a personal, emotional experiences of the divine, reflecting a shift in popular Christian tendencies of its age. The difference can be noticed when comparing a hymn like *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*, for example, with *Amazing Grace*. The former speaks of God as a fortress, a bulwark, a helper, prevailing “amid the flood of mortal ills,” while the latter uses a plethora of singular personal pronouns (completely missing in the other hymn) recounting relatable, intimate struggles of a particular individual: “...that saved a wretch like *me*... *I* once was lost... now *I* see... through many dangers, toils and snares *I* have already come...” The power of the words and the story behind them, the relatability and the fond and poignant memories our congregants held all seemed to evaporate when we tried a little experiment. One member of the group had wondered what the numbers and letters at the bottom of the hymnal pages meant, and I explained that they represented the metrical underpinnings of the hymn text. To explore this in an experiential way, I noted that *Amazing Grace* happened to have the same poetic metrics as an equally familiar hymn, *Joy to the World!* Singing *Amazing*

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 71.

*Grace to Antioch*, the tune of *Joy to the World!* produced much laughter, but also a general feeling in the group that they had just engaged in some form of blasphemy – though whether this was toward God, the author, the composer, or to childhood or communal memories, was unclear.

We know that there is a strong connection between memory and music, as songs or small bits of melody have been used by students for centuries to remember facts for an upcoming examination or quiz. When leafing through the Bible to get to a certain passage, the old Sunday School song “Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers Deuteronomy...” plays in my head much like the “Alphabet Song” most of us learned as children might as we look to find or sort something alphabetically. Music and text well-partnered in a beloved song or hymn attaches itself to a sort of “deep memory,” where memories of childhood or families (grandmothers, in Bishop Curry’s case) or meaningful occasions and places come to mind. I have often found the mostly non-communicative hospice-bound patient either perks up or even starts to hum or sing along when an old familiar hymn or other tune is sung or played.

What might this musical pairing say to the potential ministerial collaboration of church musician and cleric? The opportunity for mutual success, the heightening of the liturgical experience, the deepening of mutual bonds of affection, and the beacon that fruitful and respectful relationship might represent in the life of the local congregation are all desirable outcomes. The cleric and the church musician might partner in this work as do hymns texts and tunes, and at this apex of collaboration reach people in a way they could never do alone, praising God together in a grace-filled way.

#### HUMILITY

*When a parson has no ear he generally has the wisdom to put the music under the charge of some one who has. It should be just the same when he has no eye. He must remember that those who have not this defect will be driven from the church by faults which to them offend not only against the eye, but against the intellect and*

*the heart as well. If the vulgarities both in music and other forms of art, with which nearly every church is at present soiled, do not soon pass away, the quiet alienation of the most educated sections of the community may go too far for recovery.*<sup>38</sup>

The worship of God is no small thing. It is central to our existence and identity as Christians – primary, even – and so the preparation and practice of liturgy is rightly taken quite seriously. At the same time, those engaged in this work need not become too self-important that they neither recognize the crucial contributions of their counterparts nor their own role in the overall collaborative effort.

As Moses struggled with the enormity of the tasks he had been charged by God to perform, he recognized his own shortcomings as a leader, particularly in communicating publicly with the people he was to lead, and lifted this particular obstacle to God. Whether intended by Moses to avoid this particularly daunting service or out of an overall desire for the mission to have the best chance of success, God intervened with the addition of Aaron, noting his particular charisms, that together they would take on the commission God intended for Moses.<sup>39</sup> Aaron would speak to the people, and Miriam – not Moses – would proclaim in song and dance the deeds God had done on behalf of God’s people. Even so, Moses’ role was not diminished by the works of his kin. He interceded on behalf of his people, meeting God on the mountain and leading his people toward the promised land. Leadership, however, was also shared, roles reflecting the giftedness of the other leaders with Moses on this journey.

The Canons of the Episcopal Church make it clear that the liturgy, which necessarily includes the music it contains, is the responsibility of and lies within the authority of the priest. “It shall be the duty of every Minister to see that music is used as an offering for the glory of

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<sup>38</sup> Percy Dearmer, *The Parson’s Handbook: Twelfth Edition Revised* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 118.

<sup>39</sup> Exodus 4ff

God and as a help to the people in their worship in accordance with The Book of Common Prayer and as authorized by the rubrics or by the General Convention of this Church. To this end the Minister shall have final authority in the administration of matters pertaining to music.”<sup>40</sup>

The clarifying of role and responsibility is paramount to the running of any organization and even within collegial relationships, and it is therefore important for the Episcopal leadership to be familiar with this canon. Church musicians, no matter their skill, experience, or years of service in a particular congregational context, do not occupy this role, regardless of how new, inexperienced, or even inept the cleric may be. Percy Dearmer, an English priest of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was known for being rather particular when it came to liturgy, and rather focused on the person and role of the priest. Though not bound by the Canons of the Episcopal Church, a common understanding can be noticed: “A Parson is not necessarily a musician, but he is responsible for securing certain broad principles which are both musical and moral.”<sup>41</sup>

Just as crucial are the two sentences that follow in that Canon, for they highlight not only what would be effectual for the work itself, but also offer an outline for a proper and more rewarding relationship. The first of these likely requires a healthy amount of humility in the cleric: “In fulfilling this responsibility the Minister shall seek assistance from persons skilled in music.”<sup>42</sup> Though often thought of as clerically-minded, Dearmer has no patience here for the priest who is out of their depth: “When a parson has no ear he generally has the wisdom to put the music under the charge of some one who has. It should be just the same when he has no eye.”<sup>43</sup> He makes it clear that the importance of the liturgy itself demands collaboration,

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<sup>40</sup> Canon 24, Section 1.

<sup>41</sup> Dearmer, 189.

<sup>42</sup> Canon 24, Section 1.

<sup>43</sup> Dearmer 118.

particularly when the priest's own abilities are not up to the task. But for Dearmer this extended beyond the planning and execution of the music, to the musical and vocal performance of the cleric as well. "The parson cannot expect to render his part of the service properly unless he has lessons in voice-production, elocution, and singing... To give directions in this book would only tend to put off the one necessary thing – that the parson who is untrained should lose not time in putting himself under a good master. When he does so, it is safe to prophesy that he will be surprised at the mistakes he has unwittingly made even in the simple matter of reading the prayers. These mistakes are generally doubled in those parts which are sung."<sup>44</sup> The humility required to rely on others to increase the effectiveness and success of something over which you exercise authority can be a difficult thing to accept. But to "put yourself under a good master" when it comes to something as personal – indeed, *embodied* – as your own vocal production requires perhaps an even greater level of humility, one assisted chiefly by focusing upon not our part but of the whole of the liturgical purpose. For Dearmer, the importance of this point goes beyond expounding on what reasonable clerics should do out of compunction, and actually expresses the desire for outside authorities to intervene, "How long shall we have to wait before the bishops insist on the clergy being properly trained in voice-production before they are ordained?"<sup>45</sup> The motivation must be the centrality of the liturgy itself. Here, Dearmer seems his judgmental best as he laments the lack of care for something so important: "It is difficult to see why a priest should take less trouble over the training of his voice than an actor, except that, in this, as in the other arts, there is a tendency to consider anything good enough for the worship of God."<sup>46</sup> As a priest, it is not my voice, but what I'm voicing that the worshiping community

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 185.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 186.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 185.

together needs, and as such, I must remove what distractions I can and produce only the best from what God has given me.

The final sentence of this section of the Canons regarding music paints a picture of mutuality and collaboration: “Together they [the “minister” and “persons skilled in music”] shall see that music is appropriate to the context in which it is used.” The ultimate authority certainly rests with the cleric, but the importance of the task of worship requires the priest to utilize the giftedness of those who may possess more skill in music, and certainly to work together for the greater glory of God. The confluence of authority, humility, and call for collaboration set forth in this Canon was deemed so important that it has been quoted by the last two primary hymnals of the Episcopal Church (1982 and 1940, respectively).

#### VOCARE

As Christians, we throw around words like “discernment” and “calling” quite a bit – perhaps too frequently as they begin to lose meaning and focus, or in some cases, are diminished by too tight a focus. While certainly much discernment must be done by and about those who believe they are called into ordained ministry, we must not lose sight that discernment and calling are touchstone elements and disciplines for every person of faith. All of us are called: into community, into God’s service, and with particular gifts of the Spirit. And all of us are better served by times of intentional discernment: prayerful listening to help the noise of the world subside and the static in our minds and hearts to dissipate so that we might attempt to learn which way God might be leading us; or perhaps to learn which voices we hear might be from God, and which might not. Throughout the Episcopal Church there have been attempts to correct

our thinking – to make sure that we know that these words refer to much more than simply the ordination process itself or to those who undertake it.

A “calling” may be a simple thing. Throughout scripture God calls individuals by name (frequently twice, as we can be a stubborn and distracted people). We read about the voice of the Lord calling “Abraham, Abraham!” or Jacob, Jacob.” “Moses, Moses!” or “Samuel! Samuel!” or “Ezra, Ezra!” or “Ananias.”<sup>47</sup> Early in the book of Genesis, when God asked Adam and Eve “Where are you?” they do not reply with their whereabouts, or respond to the call with a readiness to serve or wonder about what God had in store, but with admission of hiding from fear after their defiance in doing the one exact thing God had asked them not to do.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps in a grand corrective to a disobedient, fruit-filled Adam and Eve, these other call stories all involve the formulaic response, “Here I am,” or “Here I am, Lord.” For Samuel in particular, we are given a window into the world of someone unaccustomed to receiving such a calling. Though some comic misunderstandings take place, Samuel is ultimately assisted by the more experienced Eli, just as we might benefit from relying on others during our own discernment. Call stories also appear in the New Testament, with the previously mentioned Ananias, and prominently with Mary’s response to the angel Gabriel’s announcement of her impending pregnancy and birth-giving to the “son of the Most High.” She follows the typical conversational path of those called in the Hebrew scriptures: confusion, trepidation, and questioning before ultimately expanding the well-established formula by saying, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Genesis 22:11, Genesis 46:2, Exodus 3:4, 1 Samuel 3:4ff, 2 Esdras 14:1-2, and Acts 9:10, respectively

<sup>48</sup> Genesis 3:9-10

<sup>49</sup> Luke 1:38

One of these biblical call stories is included as an optional reading for the priestly ordination liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer. In the passage, Isaiah sees a grand vision of an enthroned Lord surrounded by heavenly beings. Here God does not call anyone by name, but rather calls out with a desired mission, allowing anyone who might hear him to respond. “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’” For his part, Isaiah responded, “Here am I; send me!” This evocative encounter feels more inviting to an ordination setting (or perhaps any stage of a call discernment, lay or clergy) as it happens during a vision. This seems more timeless than a more context-driven Moses or Samuel. It has an openness of call as God asks, “Whom shall I send?” rather than, “Isaiah, Isaiah!” and Isaiah’s response adds to the formula a bit, answering not only God’s call, but his specific mission within the call. With this ageless calling from a vision of God in heaven, generations since have responded with Isaiah, “Here am I; send me!”<sup>50</sup> This is the implication, at least, in this passage’s inclusion as one of the choices for the ordination rite, but it need not ever be seen to be limited to those about to be ordained.

Scriptural call stories involve God reaching out to prophets or leaders or other servants of God rather than priests, certainly not priests in the way of the modern Church (though Abraham was called to make sacrifice, then later called by name to modify this same sacrifice). Those called were given special missions to speak on God’s behalf to those in power or those who had been led astray or to lead God’s people in some new direction; or to give birth to the Messiah. Some of these things are part of an average priest’s calling, but none of them are specific to those called to the priesthood.

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<sup>50</sup> Isaiah 6:8



Some of this misunderstanding of calling as a solely priestly experience, and some of the separations inherent in having priests seen as being “called” and Church musicians as only ever “hired” is bound to the positions themselves. As several interview respondents noted elsewhere, clergy have a process, a particular education and proscribed path to follow. Church musicians as a group are not groomed to fulfill their roles; even in a time in the early Church when lectors and service ministries around the altar were considered “minor orders”, music leaders were not included in that list.

There are four categories of “ministers of the Church” as outlined in the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer, and the list purposefully lists lay persons first – they are the most abundant category but also the most crucial and fundamental to what Church is. Stewart Zabriskie once wrote that “there is one ministry of the body, which is Christ’s ministry as exercised through that body. All vocations contribute to the efficacy of that one ministry, expressed in mission. All baptized people – lay and ordained – participate in it according to the gifts given them.”<sup>51</sup> For Zabriskie, vocation – calling – was something much more widespread than those preparing for ordination, and the variety of spiritual gifts were both a sign of these callings and a tool for the work faithful people are called to undertake.

It is true that clergy, particularly in smaller parishes, play many roles, but they are not – nor have ever been – the Body of Christ by themselves. As partners in ministry, the musician and the cleric have the opportunity and the responsibility to live into their particular giftedness and present a model to the parish of faithful companionship. It is nigh impossible to effectively call others to “respect the dignity of every human being” if we are demonstrably hostile toward our partners in ministry.

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<sup>51</sup> Stewart C. Zabriskie, *Total Ministry* (Herndon: Alban Institute, 1995), 7.

The main vocational purpose of both cleric and musician is to glorify God. Each is called by God into their specific ministries, and to honor each other's ministry is to honor each other's vocational call. To dishonor that vocation is to "grieve the spirit" – to bring God's call into question. To lift up the *shared* vocation of liturgy and parish leadership is to honor the Spirit at work in the other person on behalf of the Body of Christ.

#### THE WHOLE BODY OF CHRIST AT WORSHIP

The most public aspect of musician-cleric mutual ministry is the liturgy itself. As *leitourgia*, oft understood as the *work-of-the-people*, it is clear that this holy work is the work of more than one (or two) people. As Irénée Henri Dalmais has put it, " 'Liturgy' referred, therefore, not to cultic actions of individuals or private groups but only to those of the organized community, that is, the entire people, who realized that they shared a single destiny and a collective memory."<sup>52</sup> Through a more recent analysis of the word *leitourgia* in its original context, we can begin to understand "liturgy" as that which was done not necessarily by the people, but on behalf of the people. Ruth Meyers writes that

*leitourgia* is formed not directly from *laos*, 'people' but from *leitos*, which means 'concerning the people or national community' – that is, "the public" or "the body politic. In the ancient Greek world, it was a technical political term used for services rendered for the body politic... Gradually the term came to be used more generally for an act done in the service of another, not necessarily for the body politic (the *leitos*). It also began to be used to speak of service to the gods – that is, worship. When the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek, *leitourgia*... was used almost exclusively for the worship of God performed by the priests and Levites...<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Irénée Henri Dalmais, "The Liturgy as Celebration," in *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader*, ed. Dwight W. Vogel. (Pueblo Books, 2000), 18.

<sup>53</sup> Ruth A. Meyers, *Missional Worship, Worshipful Mission: Gathering as God's People, Going Out in God's Name* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), Kindle Edition.

This same etymological movement continued into the life of the early Church, where *leitourgia* referred first to service, and then “gradually the concept of priesthood from the Hebrew Scriptures came to be transferred to Christian clergy, and increasingly the term came to refer to the action of worship, particularly the Eucharist.”<sup>54</sup> Though the Eucharist is a sacerdotal act, involving the specific vocational call of the priesthood, it is not merely a priestly endeavor:

Far more than a collection of individuals, the people of God gather as a local assembly in a particular place at a particular time. They represent the whole people of God throughout the world and over time. The communion of members of the assembly with one another manifests the communion we have with God in Jesus Christ and anticipates the fullness of communion that is God’s promise, the new creation in which the world is reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:17-20).<sup>55</sup>

Through the liturgy we are drawn in and made into the Body of Christ at worship. If we, as the Church, are to *be* the Body of Christ, we must lean into that reality – to make it so, and to treat it as holy. “After all, at a basic level, any assembly we call ‘church’ is just us. Local people are here. If we come, what we encounter will be our words, our music, our bread and wine, our water, our meeting place, our cultural conceptions of what it is to meet at all. But by the mercy of God, it also will be those things ‘broken’ to serve a new purpose.”<sup>56</sup>

The openness, respect, and sharing nature of the musician-cleric relationship must not be simply a symbol seen from the pews, it must be emulated; a sign and symbol distributed through them to the whole. Here the cleric and musician must not simply share the leadership with each other, they must share it with the faithful gathered in worship.

In the Episcopal tradition, priests are reminded of this shared vision of ministry at the ordinations. At the *Examination* portion of the liturgy, the ordinand is exhorted by the bishop: “My *brother/sister*, the Church is the family of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the

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<sup>54</sup> Dalmais, 18.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), Kindle Edition.

Holy Spirit. All baptized people are called to make Christ known as Savior and Lord, and to share in the renewing of this world” and asked, “Will you undertake to be a faithful pastor to all whom you are called to serve, laboring together with them and with your fellow ministers to build up the family of God?”<sup>57</sup> In words embedded into the ordination liturgy itself, the soon-to-be priest is reminded that the Church is a family, reinforced with the Body of Christ imagery. The role of all of the members of the Church is emphasized, as is the *shared* ministry of the world’s renewal. The question (one of many) asks the ordinand to *labor “together”* with all of the faithful in the building up of the family of God. This is not a solo mission, nor is it even work for a pair. It is intended for the entire gathered community of the faithful.

The Celebration of a New Ministry is a liturgy within the Book of Common Prayer intended for a congregation which has called a new priest into a pastoral relationship with them, and during that celebration, the bishop prays, for priest and people, saying “...grant that together they may follow Jesus Christ, offering you their gifts and talents...”<sup>58</sup> For their part, the people of the congregation pray together in the post-communion prayer, “...Grant that we, with *him/her*, may serve you now, and always rejoice in your glory...”<sup>59</sup>

Published much more recently, *Enriching Our Worship 4* intentionally deepens the connections between the priest’s ministry and the ministry of all the baptized. When a Bible is presented, the new priest is invited to “Join us in the ministry of telling the Good News to the World.”<sup>60</sup> As the whole community prepares to renew their baptismal vows together, they are asked “Will you work together as partners in the mission of the Church, to reconcile all people to

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<sup>57</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, 531-532.

<sup>58</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, 560.

<sup>59</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, 564.

<sup>60</sup> The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, *Enriching Our Music 4: The Renewal of Ministry with the Welcoming of a New Rector or Other Pastor* (New York: Church Publishing, 2007), 5.

God through Christ?”<sup>61</sup> and as they prepare for communion, the priest is exhorted to “Join us at God’s table to offer and bless our gifts of bread and wine.”<sup>62</sup> Multiple symbols of ministry are brought forward and presented in both the earlier and new rites, but here not only are the presented in a different manner, a thanksgiving is said over them that signifies the shift in focus: “We offer thanksgiving to God for the ministries represented by these symbols, and ask God’s grace to live ever more fully into the commitments we have made in Baptism.”<sup>63</sup> The emphasis is now on the plural “ministries” rather than solely the ministry of the priest, and the commitments of all the baptized are recognized and reinforced both at the end of this prayer and with the Renewal of Baptismal Vows earlier in the liturgy. Entitled “The Renewal of Ministry with the Welcoming of a New Rector or Other Pastor”, this rite is intended as an alternative to the older liturgy. “From a baptismal-ministry frame of reference, the rite entitled ‘A Celebration of New Ministry’ in the Book of Common Prayer focuses almost entirely upon the priest, with little recognition of the ongoing ministry of the congregation. Since the development of that rite, the imbalance has been noted and further attention has been paid by the Church to naming and celebrating the role of all the baptized.”<sup>64</sup> A noticeably positive relationship between clergy and Church musicians can give a palpable demonstration of this desired reality through their own partnership, and together they can further this work with intentional congregational involvement. This work, like this newer rite, sets “ordained leadership within the context of baptism, and commending a variety of gifts...” and the liturgy echoes the desire of the healthy relationship of musicians and clerics to “incarnate mutuality among the ministers of the Church.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 3.

There is no direct parallel to the priest's ordination liturgy for Church musicians, though for those beginning in a new ministry setting, there is a commissioning liturgy. This is not comparable to the priest's Celebration of New Ministry in terms of length or significance, as it does not appear in the central Book of Common Prayer, but in a separate Book of Occasional Service, and even then only inhabits one part of one page. Nevertheless, this commissioning points to a collaborative ministry. It incorporates an antiphon highlighting King David's intentions for worship: "David commanded the chief of the Levites to appoint musicians who should play loudly on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise sounds of joy." As the Levites were the priests of the Hebrew Scriptures an inherent parallel in the minds of the participants would be made between David asking his priests to incorporate musicians into the worship of God, and current day priests supporting the ministry of the musician being commissioned as well as Church musicians more generally speaking.<sup>66</sup> A following prayer, which is also found in a collection of prayers within the Book of Common Prayer and titled there "For Church Musicians and Artists" asks God to "...be ever present with your servants who seek through music to perfect the praises offered by your people on earth..."<sup>67</sup> makes clear that not only are musicians (and artists, in the Book of Common Prayer version<sup>68</sup>) to be considered just as much servants of God as priests are, but also intimates that their work involves the lifting of the praises offered by all people.

In my current context in the Diocese of Hawai'i, we look to the example of King Kamehameha IV and Queen Emma, the founders of what was to become the Episcopal Church in Hawai'i. Their faith and their vision, inspiring to generations of Christians and others in

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<sup>66</sup> Though it should be noted that Levitical priesthood and Christian priesthood are far from parallels.

<sup>67</sup> *The Book of Occasional Services* (New York: Church Publishing, 2003), 188.

<sup>68</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, 819.

Hawai‘i, earned them a place in the Episcopal Church’s calendar of remembrance – *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*. Christianity had already taken root in the islands decades earlier, but the royals looked to have a different witness from a Church denomination they believed would connect better with and respect the culture of their kingdom and their people. They asked Queen Victoria, with whom they were already connected, to send a bishop, and they would build a cathedral on royal grounds and start this new endeavor throughout the islands. Impressively, King Kamehameha IV translated the English Book of Common Prayer into ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i<sup>69</sup> himself, adding his own theological and practical reflections in a preface which appeared both in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i and in English. His thoughts there reflect the desire “to teach the priests of God their own particular functions and those things which they have together with the congregation to perform in the sight of God...”<sup>70</sup> The priests had an important and specific role, to be sure, but their role in liturgy is not singular, but rather crucially involving the people of the congregation, worshiping God *together*. This mutual and communal work is

to make one voice of prayer and supplication common to all, and so to establish the method and the words even of adoration that men need not only then worship in common when they worship in one congregation. This unison in adoration is no new thing, indeed it is very old; nor does it conflict in anyway with the Word of God, because therein lie the prototypes of what this Church system is. Let us look to Moses and Miriam and the daughters of Israel; to Aaron with his sons, when they blessed the people; to Deborah also and to Barak; and who will deny the purposed composition of the Psalms of David...?<sup>71</sup>

The very idea that ministry itself is to be mutual, communal, and deeply involve the ministry of all people is difficult for many Christians to accept. Influenced by centuries of clericalism or neglect, convincing Christians in many places throughout the world of their pivotal

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<sup>69</sup> Hawaiian for “Hawaiian.”

<sup>70</sup> Kamehameha IV, Preface to the Book of Common Prayer composed by the Late King of Hawaii (Honolulu: Episcopal Church in Hawaii, 2012), 4.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

and vital role in the life of the Body of Christ – other than “the ones that fill the pews” – is an uphill battle. Charles Price and Louis Weil put it this way, “For most people, the word *ministry* calls to mind ordained persons – bishops, priests, deacons. In fact, the word *ministry* has far broader reference than merely to the ordained. Its essential meaning originates in baptism. It pertains to every Christian person.”<sup>72</sup> This links to the concept of the “priesthood of all believers,” inspired by the German reformer Martin Luther’s writings and preaching. A principal scriptural passage to this understanding comes from the First Letter of Peter: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”<sup>73</sup> The “you” here is most definitely expansive, as it refers back to the previous verse “To you then who believe...” The royal priesthood, then, those who are to proclaim, are the believers themselves, not only the priests or those who lead music (or teach Sunday School, or run the outreach programs, etc.).

Price and Weil continue in their lament, “Unfortunately in the course of the Christian centuries we have lost that association. The idea that every Christian is a minister comes to the ears of many as something strange and new... We often picture the church as a group of active clerical suppliers to passive lay consumers, with the laity not as the basic category of church membership but as quite a secondary one...”<sup>74</sup> It is critical that Church leaders – most frequently and most visibly a cleric and a musician – not lose sight of the basic fact that they together are not the Church, and lead the faithful into the same realization and powerful new way of seeing the Body of Christ.

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<sup>72</sup> Charles P. Price and Louis Weil, *Liturgy for Living (The Church’s Teaching Series)* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 57.

<sup>73</sup> 1 Peter 2:9

<sup>74</sup> Price and Weil, 57.



This truth is transformative to the way we do everything in the Church – not the least of which is the worship of God. We must continually remind the whole Body of Christ that the “church is the people of God. Within the *laos* there is an extraordinary diversity of ministries, each of which expresses some particular way in which a member of the body of Christ actualizes the Christian liturgy in the world.”<sup>75</sup> That expression may be based on leading sacramental table fellowship or rousing the faithful with the breaking open of God’s word while preaching. It may also come from inspiring the congregation with music – connecting words overheard to deeper understandings deep within themselves – or pulling together a worshiping community of disparate people as though they were a heavenly chorus, ringing out in one voice, expressing their hoped-for unity in song. “Through the singing practices of our religious communities, each of us has received spiritual gifts. When a religious community sings of its great need for mercy or shares hymns expressing thanksgiving and awe, something is given to each soul, something that is then released into the world’s life stream.”<sup>76</sup> We receive grace in various forms and then express it to the world. This response is essentially sacramental, as they are “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace...”<sup>77</sup>

These innumerable gifts reflect the many parts of the overall Body of Christ. “What should be done then, my friends? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.”<sup>78</sup>

If the worship of God is indeed central to our purpose as Christians, the components of that worship are paramount and those who steward those resources are crucial to our common purpose as a community. But unlike many other art forms – liturgy is participatory and therefore

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 57-58.

<sup>76</sup> Saliers, 14.

<sup>77</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, 857.

<sup>78</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:26

keeps us cognizant of not only otherworldly beauty, but our place as part of it together, our place in the whole Body of Christ at worship.

## CHAPTER FOUR

*But where the opposite situation arises, where the musician is filled with the pride of skill or the virus of emulation and looks with contempt on the unappreciative congregation, or where the unmusical, complacently entrenched in their own ignorance and conservatism, look with the restless and resentful hostility of an inferiority complex on all who would try to improve their taste—there, we may be sure, all that both offer is unblessed and the spirit that moves them is not the Holy Ghost.<sup>79</sup>*

### SOCIOLOGICAL REFLECTION

*It's as if you need to be vulnerable to each other, you know? You know your stuff and they know their stuff, but... it's more than just respect of the other. You've got to be real with them. And it has to feel safe enough to do that. – individual Church musician respondent*

In any group, it is important to gain a fuller understanding of what is going on in the people with whom we interact but also, crucially, what is bubbling up in ourselves. Cultivating the emotional and social intelligence amongst a staff in a secular setting, evidenced in the work of Daniel Goleman (psychologist and author of the influential books Emotional Intelligence<sup>80</sup> and Social Intelligence<sup>81</sup>) and others, would improve working conditions and output far more than other technical skills which may be expressed or honed in well-educated individuals. Not everything from the business world translates well into the ecclesiastical one, but the desire to have healthy relationships and a productive and creative workplace certainly synchronizes well within a setting that strives to “love our neighbors as ourselves” and “respect the dignity of every

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<sup>79</sup> Lewis, “On Church Music,” 120-121.

<sup>80</sup> Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 1997).

<sup>81</sup> Daniel Goleman, *Social Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 2006).

human being.”<sup>82</sup> Clergy are likely to have some training in emotional and social intelligence and other social science fields, but it is generally not part of a musician’s formal training (while also noting not all Church musicians have been formally trained at all).

There are also significant power dynamics at play within the cleric-musician relationship. What Ronald Heifetz, former Clinical Instructor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and author of multiple books on leadership, describes as both formal and informal authority are at play here. Formal authority is generally bestowed by a recognized source, while informal authority is more organically realized with or without such recognition. For example, the cleric has canonical authority,<sup>83</sup> but the musician is especially influential with the choir (a typically influential and active group in their own right). Authority is one thing, but a parish choirmaster of twenty-five years wields more power than a new rector, and though a rector might plan a liturgy, once an organist of any tenure begins the hymn, there is no question of who holds the service at their fingertips!

I was once called in to help ease tensions stemming from a particularly discordant musician-cleric relationship in a large Church system. The relationship had fallen apart, with definite hard feelings on both sides. The cleric had left the Church after a frustrating few years of ministry, and the long-standing music minister remained in place. He was there long-before the cleric had arrived, and everyone had every reason to believe that he would continue in his post for many years to come. The music minister had quite a reputation and following within the community, and in music circles, and he had established a paid choir ensemble and a juggernaut of a program. With the sudden departure of the cleric, the anxieties of the unknown began to

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<sup>82</sup> Jesus exhorts us to love neighbor as well as ourselves in multiple places within the Gospels - Mathew 19:19 among others, and this is also quoted in the Baptismal Covenant along with the second quote in *The Book of Common Prayer*, 305.

<sup>83</sup> See note on page 22.

rumble, as questions about the future, the funding, the program, and the road ahead began to surface. Also beginning to make its way to the surface was the acrimony and dysfunction that had permeated the cleric-musician relationship, and the power / authority struggle that had existed through the course of the cleric's time in the congregation. This power differential was left suspended with the cleric's departure. That departure left a significant void in the congregational system, as well as some resounding and burdensome issues for any incoming cleric. It is quite impossible for me to say without a great deal of speculation whether or not there was much potential of saving that previous cleric – musician relationship. Nevertheless, with the concern for the future of the role of the cleric within this system, intervention on behalf of the Church system remained critical. Much like the end of a marriage, there is a certain point of no return, and it had emphatically been crossed in this case. The 'marriage' of concern was that between existing musician and the cleric. The possibility of leadership potential through a collaborative relationship between the cleric and musician in a place fraught with years of dysfunction was diminished and would require considerable effort – and time – to rebuild.

The parallels with marriage counseling are helpful to explore. In the case of divorce, clergy often lament that, despite the enormity of the risk, the general finality of the decision, the notion that marriages are sacramental and worth saving when possible, and that clergy remain a resource for troubled relationships (at least in the emergency sense), that clergy are among the last to be approached. The old saying is that "by the time they've talked to the clergy, they've already talked to their lawyers." This is despite the expectation, even ensconced in the canons of The Episcopal Church, that the couple seek help with a priest before looking into legal action.

When marital unity is imperiled by dissension, it shall be the duty, if possible, of either or both parties, before taking legal action, to lay the matter before a Member of the Clergy; it shall be the duty of such Member of the Clergy to act first to protect and promote the

physical and emotional safety of those involved and only then, if it be possible, to labor that the parties may be reconciled.<sup>84</sup>

Common experience tells us, however, that well before the cleric is involved the separation is essentially a *fait accompli*.

Not too long after the cleric had departed and the wonderings and anxieties about the future of music came tumbling out, and the percolating of the past had surfaced, it was announced that the musician was also moving on, leaving the entire system wholly suspended in uncertainty and pain. The unresolved tensions that remained were particularly acute within the choir, many of whom had been hired and paid to sing, relying on the parish for not only an outlet for their talent and gift, but also for a consistent paycheck and resume-builder. To continue to stretch the marital metaphor, the choir were somewhat like the children of a divorce, whose world was in upheaval through no fault of their own. They were caught in the middle, some inevitably taking sides in the conflict, and even those who attempted some semblance of neutrality felt the same anger at the situations in which they found themselves and unsure of their standing in the overall organization. Misinformation regarding the musician's departure and rumors about the future of the whole music program's future ran rampant, as they often do even in times of relative tranquility, but the added anxiety, heightened emotions, and pulls of loyalty toward musician or cleric morphed these elements into a particularly harmful and clumsy six-ton elephant in the choir room. Could a cleric, any cleric, ever be trusted? Would the music program ever achieve a leader like the one who had been here? Would this congregation ever attract a musician of that caliber again, and if not, what about the future of music in this place? Could collaborative leadership in a cleric – musician partnership ever happen in a place with such complicated and complex history? Was the whole system infected? A staph infection, it is

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<sup>84</sup> Canon 19, Section 1.

commonly understood, is caused by the staphylococcus bacteria which are commonly found on the skin of healthy individuals. In times of injury or other stress when our immune systems are compromised, these pre-existing and common germs wreak havoc. Worries, concerns, and even nominal bad behavior normal within a Church system were more damaging in this compromised state. What would the future hold for this Church? Now, years later, all of this is still being worked out. Clerics and musicians have passed through and steady progress made, and better patterns of partnership have been developed, as old patterns have been dismantled. Without the truth-telling and the toxicity being exposed and addressed in that first meeting, and in the meetings since, there was only a bleak and uncertain future.

Premarital counseling is expected within the Episcopal system to help a couple begin to understand their relationship and how their personal identities and tendencies affect each other, as well to equip them with spiritual and practical resources intended to help them have a fulfilling marriage. This generally includes tools to work through contentious moments and seasons.<sup>85</sup> The period of counseling, however, is intended not only to equip and prepare the couple, but to give them the experience, early on in their relationship, of opening up and exploring that relationship with a third party, so that when troubles might arise, the newness of speaking about such intimate and interpersonal issues is not itself an obstacle to seeking help. It would instead, hopefully, feel familiar or even comforting in such a time of turmoil.

Within the cleric-musician relationship it is somewhat difficult to imagine, given typical timelines and responsibilities even at the very start of a new position, but what might it look like to have pre-relational sessions at the start of this new collegial reality? What might the fruits be of that work? Many staff retreats (generally in larger contexts) include the exploration of

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<sup>85</sup> Though there is a universal expectation to have premarital counseling, there is no singular proscribed course; it is left to the individual priest to design and implement.

Meyers-Briggs typology or even DiSC profiles<sup>86</sup>, offering employees the opportunity to become more self-aware and effective, while also coming to understand, when their profiles are shared, how their various inclinations tend to interrelate with other personality types and behavioral styles within their system.

Some understanding of family systems and differentiated leadership theory might shed light on the relationship of clergy and musician. One can envision how the health of the core relationship would directly impact the health of the system. Strengthening of that core relationship should translate into an environmental improvement of the parish. The concept of relational constellations also applies – those connected with but outside of the main relationship have influence upon that relationship. Like the sketch of a constellation, the two principal stars in it will have lines connecting them with any number of auxiliary stars within the overall picture. The behavior of the other points of life within the constellation affect the whole. Borrowing from another trope of difficult Church leaders, a particularly off-kilter Altar Guild head, for example, would affect this core relationship with erratic or irrational behavior. One can imagine how much more potently the improved health of the two most visible leaders – typically the cleric and the musician – would be to the Church system.

#### FAMILY AND CHURCH FAMILY SYSTEMS

We are, each of us, uniquely and wonderfully made, endowed by our creator with particular gifts, and formed by families and communities – systems which are similarly uniquely and wonderfully made and formed. Family Systems Theory, theorized and championed by

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<sup>86</sup> Meyers-Briggs identifies “personality types” by identifying an individual’s basic preferences in four contrasting areas. DiSC profiles plots personality styles along a continuum of four areas.



psychoanalyst and author Murray Bowen, the renowned father of family therapy, neither creates this uniqueness nor is it the first to elucidate it. The family system is seen as the laboratory in which the behaviors and perspectives of those within that system are grown, and those behaviors and perspectives pervade well beyond life within the family unit to the overall life of the individual. It helps to identify how each of us is unique and to understand the formative nature of our context. Through the expansive work of Edwin Friedman, who applied Bowen's theories about families to explore and understand faith communities, it also helps us recognize how our congregation is likewise formed. Inasmuch as we as humans are called to be co-creators with God, how very appropriate it is that we should not only understand the processes in which we are uniquely formed, but also that we should use that knowledge to participate in or at times resist those formative forces in our attempt to reconcile ourselves and our contexts with God and the vision of God's Kingdom.

Bowen theory helps us read the processes of our own formation as individuals and communities and is a resource for deciding how these forces of process are aligned with (or not) God's purpose in any particular situation. The root idea of this theory is that we understand ourselves better when we examine the circumstances in which we were raised or gained new consciousness; and the more we understand ourselves, the healthier we, and by extension our relationships and our communities, have the opportunity to be.

Some of this relates to unrealized and unspoken expectations we might have of ourselves, our spouses, or others around us based on models we observed in childhood. In marriage preparatory classes, I always explore this with couples by retelling a story about the earlier moments of my relationship with my wife. Lost while driving in an unfamiliar city (in an age before GPS), I became increasingly agitated with her because she was sitting in the passenger

seat, without a map open or any attempt to help find our way. I took the map at a red light, asking her to tell me when the light changed. A few moments later, she began a comment about a man wearing all green, but at the word “green” I started to move and nearly ran him over. The ensuing argument highlighted for me that my expectations that she be the navigator stemmed from childhood memories of my father always playing the role of the driver while my mother always played the role of the navigator. I never expressed this expectation to my wife, who, as it turns out, doesn’t enjoy navigating nor does she feel that she’s particularly good at it. (Additionally, in her family her father was the navigator and her mother the principal driver). Indeed, I didn’t realize that somewhere in my subconscious my image of a “good wife” was that she helped by navigating; it was a role some part of me expected her to play. I realized how silly it sounded once it came to the forefront and I was able to take it apart, but without serious thought about where the feelings came from, the emotions themselves would continue to inform my choices by themselves. When the sources of our emotions and our unexplored motivations and understandings are explored, we can help to create a healthier relationship and community.

While it is helpful to understand how we are both positively and negatively influenced by models and exemplars in our lives, much of Family Systems theory goes beyond this and delves into our particular roles in our families of origin, and how these might be playing out in our current reality. The eldest child, for example, might continue to feel an innate responsible for others, or the middle child might find themselves playing the role of the peacekeeper over and over again.

Clerics and Church musicians could improve their relationships with each other and with the congregation at large with this self-understanding, and further that impact with the realization that the way they interact may be largely influenced by each other’s tendencies and unspoken (or

unrealized) expectations. When leaders are engaged in this level of discernment, it enables and empowers similar work within the congregation. We must appreciate that not only is corporate prayer more natural with a group of people who each pray themselves, and corporate music-making more successful with people who enjoy music on their own, but the frequent seasons of discernment Churches enter into would be the most fruitful with individuals who do the same internal work. As Charles Olsen writes in Transforming Church Board into Communities of Spiritual Leaders, “Corporate discernment assumes the practice of individual discernment by participating members.”<sup>87</sup>

This internal work and the realizations they bring are also helpful at the Church level. Leaders may begin to see not only how the influences they and members of the congregation bring from the outside affect their life together, but also how overall systems within the faith community relate to one another – positively, negatively, and often somewhere in between – just as a family might. “You are a system as complex as the one you are trying to move forward... you also need to appreciate that your behaviors and decisions stem not just from forces within yourself as a system but also from forces acting on you in any given organizational situation.”<sup>88</sup> These influences come to bear from every direction in a Church system, but they also arise from it, as the Church has its own family system dynamic.

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<sup>87</sup> Charles M. Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders* (Herndon: Alban Institute, 1995), 89.

<sup>88</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz, Marty Linsky, and Alexander Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2009), 181.

## PARALLELS

One of the challenges of this work is the recognition that there is something unique about the partnership of Church musician and cleric. There certainly is a significant correlation to the boss-employee dynamic, particularly in the Episcopal system wherein a rector has all of the authority to make hiring and firing decisions, as well as the canonical authority over choices of music more generally speaking. Any parallel to the secular counterpart isn't exact, however, as the reversal of power dynamics described above (with, for example a beloved and/or long-term and beloved musician connected with an active choir), and the liturgical and creative partnership desired within a worshipping community, are specific to churches. The reality of the employment situation also does not describe the nature of the relationship on a day-to-day basis. Is this more akin to the owner of a small store and a trusted manager? A CEO with an Executive Vice President who has a certain level of autonomy and creative control? The size and identity of the individual Church may also play a factor in which boss-employee relationship starts to come closest to the cleric-musician one. Within the Church, particularly during the liturgy, there is a shared leadership, one that is handed back and forth, and the respect for one another, the trust that they are working together toward the same goal with same (at least similar) motivation is noted by and internalized within the congregation at large. This element of leadership within a community of faith gives another layer of complication to finding a workable parallel to this relationship.

Although the origins of this thesis came from wondering whether or not (or how) something like a "Marriage Encounter" program might positively influence the clergy-musician dynamic, and through them the overall health of the congregation they serve, the parallel of musician and cleric to a married couple is fraught with problems. At least in the modern

Episcopal Church, an equality of partnership is seen as the ideal. Though earlier marriage rites in the Episcopal tradition as well as current ones in some other denominations reinforce a disparity of authority and an inherent hierarchy between husband and wife, within the current Episcopal liturgy the vows each individual takes are identical, and the opening proclamation of the priest asserts that “the union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity...”<sup>89</sup> As we noted before, there does exist an inherent inequality of authority between musicians and clergy. Family Systems Theory, particularly as it relates to the health of the whole as influenced by others, is sometimes over-simplified as “Mom and Dad are ok, so I’m ok.” Although we desire a similar healthy influence on the Church system by a healthy partnership of a cleric and a musician who are themselves healthy, the desire for appropriate boundaries would clearly dictate that they would not have their lives as intertwined as a married couple would.

The friendship dynamic is a similarly difficult parallel to maintain. While it is certainly desirous for the relationship to be *friendly*, both in terms of the ability to work together, the environment of the workplace, and as a symbol to the congregation, there is an intrinsic difficulty with trying to simultaneously maintain a friendship and a workplace relationship, particularly, as noted with the exploration of the spousal dynamic, when an authority disparity is unavoidable.

A Nurse-Doctor relationship demonstrates some of the inter-reliance and handing over of leadership and care to each other in similar way that clergy and musicians do. They too have separate but related courses of training and combination of both interrelated and somewhat

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<sup>89</sup> Although the current prayer book (1979) does not include language for same sex marriages, more recent rites which do and are authorized for use in the Episcopal Church continue with the same theme of equality and contain identical vows.

independent roles within their workplace, all focused on a common vision and purpose of their work. They also often work together in tandem, and the mutual respect and trust they have for each other changes the overall feeling in the room and the effectiveness of their overall work (particularly, say, in the operating theater). There is also an inherent and perhaps comparable authority imbalance between them, which may or may not relate to their power in any given moment within any particular context.

The principal-teacher dynamic has some similar parallels as the doctor-nurse dyad in terms of training (though not always), role, and hierarchy, but are less likely to work in tandem in front of the students as are doctors and nurses with patients or clergy and musicians with parishioners. More apt might be relationship between the Head of School and an Associate Head of School, as they share elements with the principal-teacher duo in terms of the autonomy of the latter, while remaining in similar circles and interacting both privately and publicly for the good of the school and are seen as more representative of the institution at large.

One musician respondent suggested the concertmaster and conductor duo as a possible analogy for musician-cleric relationship. For those who have seen an orchestra perform, they will remember the concertmaster as the lead of the first violin section coming in just before the performance is to start (to audience applause), and then tuning the orchestra. This “first chair” role also involves important functions less obvious to the outsider – the concertmaster is generally expected, by means of excellent musicianship and hard work in advance, to be the first to learn new music in order to lead the string section accurately by their own manner of playing. Decisions of bowing (how the strokes of the bow most efficiently and accurately express the music at hand) are ultimately made by the concertmaster for the violin section (and in some cases all of the string section). The concertmaster will also often lead rehearsals or portions of

rehearsals in the absence of the conductor. The conductor, the more identifiable and public role, directs the entire ensemble in making music that best expresses the score (written music) as interpreted by the conductor. Both these orchestral and ecclesiastical relationships are certainly united in overall purpose and motivation while maintaining disparate roles and authorities and receiving different training in order to fulfill their roles. They are mutually supportive and one is somewhat compartmentalized and specialized, while under the overall direction (and vision) of the other.

The ultimate difficulty facing any of these analogies is the setting and nature of the work itself. One musician respondent acknowledged: “yeah the priest is my boss, but also a really important spiritual leader for these people, he knows about them more than [I do]...” How the two roles interact and affect each other within their own relationship must also incorporate what these two roles mean for the system at large. The Church system itself is not only complex, but as the Body of Christ, it’s purpose is so vastly different than those of the secular world – one priest respondent pointed out “[the relationship] is different because it’s about a soul” to which a musician respondent added, “It’s different because the Church is different than anything else.”

#### KNOW THYSELF

*The only reason we can imagine you would want to do this kind of work is to serve purposes that matter to you deeply. Identifying your higher (orienting) purpose—figuring out what is so important to you that you would be willing to put yourself in peril—is a key element in the process of understanding yourself as a system.<sup>90</sup>*

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<sup>90</sup> Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow, 221.

Understanding yourself and your place in the overall system connects with, among other notions from Bowen, the Societal Emotional Process, by which the emotional system governs behavior at a societal level (to either positive or negative effect). The process itself is not necessarily good or bad – in the same way that it is an excellent thing that the cast iron doorstep is heavy when it holds my door open, yet an awful thing when dropped on my foot. Our ability to recognize the influence of the process is paramount as we discern how and when to engage with or against it. The emotional process forces which Bowen illuminates are neutral. The theological relationship with God gives us a plumb-line for discerning our alignment with them, and the concept of self-differentiation helps us to not only know where we stand, but when necessary take a stand amidst predominant forces pulling or pushing us. Without self-differentiation, we could not hope to get that larger picture or to run counter to it when necessary. To be at one with the heart of God in the midst of our ministry context and to stand firm and recognize and utilize our own unique giftedness requires faith. Taking on this theory in a Christian context might be look like knowledge of self as a uniquely and wonderfully-made creation, connected to relationship with and trust in God.

When Jesus was asked which commandment was the greatest, he responded that it was the full and unadulterated love of God. He added that “a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”<sup>91</sup> Notably, Jesus mentioned the second commandment without being asked about it. One might conclude that the way we are intended by God to interact with each other, our interrelation with other humans, was fundamental enough for Jesus to add it without any prompting.<sup>92</sup> The love of others is the subject of much of scripture and many sermons, but the mention of love of self here

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<sup>91</sup> Matthew 22:39-40

<sup>92</sup> And likely influenced by extra-biblical teachings of Hillel or those influenced by Hillel.



is also notable. It might be assumed that it was simply mentioned to raise the bar for the amount of love we should show our neighbor, as if people loving themselves was a standard and expected element of human existence. It may also be that this is a reminder that our ability to love others hinges on our ability to love ourselves, to see ourselves as worthy or capable of receiving love – and in the context of our work here – to know ourselves.

Friedman describes self-differentiation as “the capacity for some awareness of [one’s] own position in the relationship system.”<sup>93</sup> The popular saying “you can’t be all things to all people”<sup>94</sup> reflects some of this notion. If you know yourself, and your role and place within a system, you are less likely to take on responsibilities, anxieties, or complaints that do not fall under your control or your authority. You are similarly more able to avoid overstepping your bounds and less likely to become agitated about those things which are out of your control. The Apostle Paul begins to sound like a proponent of self-differentiation when he writes “If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”<sup>95</sup> The desire to live peaceably and to do what you can to make that happen remain, but the phrase “so far as it depends on you” illuminates a deeper understanding of the way human systems interact. Indeed, sometimes it does *not* depend on you. Sometimes that is something you cannot control, something that you don’t have the authority or positioning to affect.

Understanding of role and positioning in a self-differentiated way can help lead to the hoped-for ideal of the “non-anxious presence” offered by Friedman. Though this ideal is presented in terms of its transformative power in inter-personal relationships, I first encountered the term as it pertained to my role within the liturgy. With so many moving parts, many not

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<sup>93</sup> Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2011), 27.

<sup>94</sup> Perhaps Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:22 was the last to claim it was possible...

<sup>95</sup> Romans 12:18

altogether understood by all of the participants – with instruments that won't tune and choirs with members that forgot to come to rehearsal and acolytes who showed up thirty seconds before the opening procession and hymns printed incorrectly in the bulletin and lectors worried about mispronouncing long biblical names – all vying for the attention of clergy and musician leaders, a non-anxious presence (or even a really well-faked one) on the part of the leader puts people more at ease and allows people to proceed with confidence in the whole, even when unsure about their own part in it. A non-anxious presence in any part of the system can have a calming and clarifying effect on the whole.

Trust and vulnerability were consistent themes throughout the interview and plenary portions of this project. The link between the two seems self-evident, but the need for both were constantly called for in order to have both a fulfilling collegial relationship and the space and safety to be creative and imaginative in the development of liturgy and program. One respondent remarked, “it's as if you have to be vulnerable to each other to make that happen.” Another nearly shouted her epiphany of the moment “Trust and vulnerability – it helps the person who trusted as well as the person who is being trusted!” This vulnerability, this showing of trust and willingness to “go out on a limb” with a new idea or wondering, is a powerful agent of transformation, change, and creativity. Brené Brown, a research professor in social work well-known for her TED talks and influential books, offers this reflection on vulnerability in Daring Greatly: How the Courage to be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead,

Vulnerability is not weakness, and the uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure we face every day are not optional. Our only choice is a question of engagement. Our willingness to own and engage with our vulnerability determines the depth of

our courage and the clarity of our purpose; the level to which we protect ourselves from being vulnerable is a measure of our fear and disconnection.<sup>96</sup>

In an environment that puts emphasis on the pursuit of understanding, it is a powerful thing to admit one doesn't actually understand. Admitting my own difficulty in this area in a reflection for one of the courses associated with this doctoral program prompted a wise response from the professor,

Lack of understanding has a graceful side and may be promoting of self in the congregation: when you recognize you don't understand, you can be open to them helping you understand allowing them to self-define, and you depend on them to minister to each other rather than you taking responsibility for it all.<sup>97</sup>

Clarity of role – both yours and others' – as well as a healthy understanding of your own proclivities, helps to create the safe space in which this work can take place. If I know that I tend to be overprotective of a certain style of liturgy or part of the service, I can name that and then open up to what others are suggesting. If I know my role, and the roles of those around me are well understood, I am less likely to cross those boundaries and collaboration and innovation can flourish. Brown, quoting consultant Peter Sheahan, writes:

The secret killer of innovation is shame. You can't measure it, but it is there. Every time someone holds back a new idea, fails to give their manager much needed feedback, and is afraid to speak up in front of a client you can be sure shame played a part. That deep fear we all have of being wrong, of being belittled and of feeling less than, is what stops us taking the very risks required to move our companies forward. If you want a culture of creativity and innovation, where sensible risks are embraced on both a market and individual level, start by developing the ability of managers to cultivate an openness to vulnerability in their teams. And this, paradoxically perhaps, requires first that they are vulnerable themselves. This notion that the leader needs to be 'in charge' and to 'know all the answers' is both dated and destructive. Its impact on others is the sense that they know less, and that they are less than. A recipe for risk aversion if ever I have heard it. Shame becomes fear. Fear leads to risk aversion. Risk aversion kills innovation.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (New York: Gotham, 2012), 2.

<sup>97</sup> The Rev. Jacques Hadler, Jr. in the context of the "Introduction to Bowen Family Systems Theory" course.

<sup>98</sup> Brown, 65-66.

Sometimes self-analysis is the most effective way to understand choices and the motivations behind them. Sometimes, the choices we find ourselves making are in themselves the best illuminators of the motivations. Roberta Gilbert, inspired by Friedman's thoughts in her Extraordinary Relationships, prompts us to wonder whether not, in any given situation, we are allowing our "Emotional Guidance System" to override our Intellectual one – when might we be acting out of a place of discernment or when might we be simply shying away from discomfort? Brown reflects on this in her *Engaged Feedback Checklist*:

*I know I'm ready to give feedback when:*

*I'm ready to sit next to you rather than across from you;*

*I'm willing to put the problem in front of us rather than between us (or sliding it toward you);*

*I'm ready to listen, ask questions, and accept that I may not fully understand the issue;*

*I want to acknowledge what you do well instead of picking apart your mistakes;*

*I recognize your strengths and how you can use them to address your challenges;*

*I can hold you accountable without shaming or blaming you;*

*I'm willing to own my part;*

*I can genuinely thank you for your efforts rather than criticize you for your failings;*

*I can talk about how resolving these challenges will lead to your growth and opportunity; and*

*I can model vulnerability and openness that I expect to see from you.<sup>99</sup>*

This checklist speaks of a collaborative leadership relationship, marked by a mutual respect between those engaged in that relationship. We are more able to connect with the other when we

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 204.

better know ourselves. With time and practice, a common understanding and respect can grow out of the work of knowing ourselves and our place within the local Church system.

### CHOIR LOFT VIEW

I joined the Church choir when I was in high school. It wasn't something I had planned to do – in truth, I had gotten pretty good and “playing hookie” from Church – good enough that my parents had not only stopped trying to get me to go, but stopped going themselves. On one fateful Sunday that we did all make our way to Church, my parents took the opportunity to abandon this poor teenager to the untold horrors that compromised “Youth Group.” Despite my misgivings, I had a great time. After Youth Group, as I was waiting for a ride back home, the rector and I were chatting. When he heard that I was to not only start in the school choir the next year, but also the small singing ensemble, he doubled-down on my potential parish involvement with those fatal words that I can hear as clearly today as I did that Sunday long ago, “You mean you’re going to be in the choir at school but you’re not in the choir at Church?” As a shrug was the best defense that I could come up with in the moment, we were soon at the other end of the building and I was being introduced to the choirmaster. Next thing I knew I was singing scales for him, testing my range and ability, and in a blur I was fitted for cassock and surplice and singing with the choir at evensong that night. A very unsuccessful day of playing hookie. Involvement in those two ministries sparked the beginning of a reconnection with the Church and a deepening relationship with God that helped lead to the eventual reaffirmation of my faith, involvement in campus ministries, and eventual ordination.

That rector, it seemed, was able to see the “big picture.” He knew the needs of his choirmaster and recognized the opportunity to reconnect a high schooler with his Church.<sup>100</sup> Connecting people with ministries in which they actively utilize their spiritual gifts is a sure way for increased spiritual fulfillment as well as growing a stronger bond to a given spiritual community.

I spent many years looking down at the rest of the congregation from the choir loft. Beyond initial concerns that I might drop a hymnal on someone and initial joy at learning that few people could see us up there and I could “goof off” a bit, it gave me an entirely different perspective on how Church worked: both the liturgy and the organism itself. I could see where people chose to sit, who knelt and who stood, how the procession moved and music guided the liturgy. I could also see the nervousness of a first-time lector as they fidgeted with their bulletin in the front row, the missed cue of a distracted usher who kept falling asleep. I could even see that my friend’s parents were having trouble again by the distance apart they began to sit from each other. Gaining that perspective can be paramount for faithful and effective ministry.

Ronald Heifetz (et al) in The Practice of Adaptive Leadership points out the danger of being too close to a situation to really see what needs to be done in their well-worn analogy of getting off of the dance floor and onto the “balcony” for perspective on the overall dance.

We use the metaphor of “getting on the balcony” above the “dance floor” to depict what it means to gain the distanced perspective you need to see what is really happening. If you stay moving on the dance floor, all you will see will be the people dancing with you and around you. Swept up in the music, it may be a great party! But when you get on the balcony, you may see a very different picture. From that vantage point, you might notice that the band is playing so loudly that everyone is dancing on the far side of the room, that when the music changes from fast to slow (or back again), different groups of people decide to dance, and that many people hang back near the exit doors and do not dance, whatever the music. Not such a great party after all. If someone asked you later to

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<sup>100</sup> Alternatively, he was just lucky and a bit of a schemer, but I prefer this version.

describe the dance, you would paint a very different picture if you had seen it from the balcony rather than only from the dance floor.<sup>101</sup>

In building their relationship and to increase the effectiveness of their work together, Church musicians and clergy must not get lost in the dance. There are always pressing matters that draw the attention of both of these Church leaders, but merely “keeping up” or “keeping our heads above water,” as our respondents too often felt trapped in doing, was quite simply not good enough. Those who not only planned the liturgy for the upcoming Sunday but planned liturgical seasons together so that they could creatively express the flow and themes of the Church year expressed a closer relationship, more fulfilling work, and the feeling that the ensuing liturgies held together better and connected with their congregants more.

Heifetz wrote, “You have three core responsibilities, to provide (1) direction, (2) protection, and (3) order.”<sup>102</sup> Each are crucial in their own way to the work of the priest and the work of the musician, and each leader is only fully capable of providing them when the “big picture” perspective is gained. When they climb the steps of the balcony together, the potential is enriched exponentially.

## CHANGE AND RESISTANCE

The two most shocking, and potentially most helpful, things I read from Ronald Heifetz involved change and the system’s tendency to resist it. The first seemed to me shockingly pessimistic:

There is no such thing as a dysfunctional organization, because every organization is perfectly aligned to achieve the results it currently gets... enough important

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<sup>101</sup> Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow, 7-8.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 28.

people like the situation exactly as it is, whatever they may say about it, or it would not be the way it is.<sup>103</sup>

It reminded me of Dr. Phil when he would appear on the Oprah show so many years ago and his tough-love response to people who were stuck in some way – stuck in their continued behavior, stuck in a relationship or stuck with inaction. He would inevitably ask the intractable guest what they were getting out of continuing to act the way in which they were acting. Despite immediate replies of desires to change, it always came back to the idea that there must be something the person's getting out of acting a certain way, otherwise they wouldn't be doing it. It should be no big surprise that something similar should hold true for organizations, even (or especially) Churches. Clergy micromanaging the music program (even when they might not possess the skills to do so) may enjoy the feeling of power or perhaps envision themselves a musical prodigy. A Church musician who avoids or even refuses the direction of the clergy may be indicative of a Church system which honors music and liturgy as consumers rather than participants. Whatever the possibility, even things which feel dysfunctional – on the part of musicians, clergy, or other Church leadership, committees, or even the congregation as a whole - are not necessarily that way due to a design flaw, and it is well worth the time and energy of Church leadership to wonder about the motivating factors together.

The second shocking and helpful<sup>104</sup> Heifetz quote that stuck with me puts an old – and yet still commonly uttered – saying on its head. As he put it,

You know the adage 'People resist change.' It is not really true. People are not stupid. People love change when they know it is a good thing. No one gives back a winning lottery ticket. What people resist is not change per se, but loss. When change involves real or potential loss, people hold on to what they have and resist the change.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>104</sup> Perhaps shockingly helpful? Or Helpfully shocking?

<sup>105</sup> Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow, 22.



The old adage may give some comfort to the exasperated cleric or musician who was unsuccessful in their attempt to change the status quo in their ministerial settings, but this easy dismissal misses what's really happening pastorally and sociologically. Blithely saying "people don't like to change" might accompany an abandonment of a course once thought worthy enough to be pursued. Here the work (and title) of Edwin Friedman's posthumously published Failure of Nerve seems to chime in as well. Friedman expands on his previous work to declare that leaders back off in the midst of conflict when they should be remaining true to who they are, putting forward common vision and goal despite (and in some ways because of) the trouble faced. Just as troubling, shrugging and grumbling that "they just hate change" can be the excuse we use to ignore the actual fear held by the people we are called to love and serve and be in community with in order to press on with our agenda anyway. Knowing one another and valuing and caring for the relationship between them, musician and cleric will want to know what losses the other cares about, and find a way to work together to find a solution to move forward together. Understanding the culture and fears and desires of our ministry contexts allow them to move their congregations forward together. Getting to the deeper problems, affecting the system itself rather than simply dealing with symptoms, is part of what Heifetz terms "adaptive change," and he asserts that "adaptive leadership almost always puts you in the business of assessing, managing, distributing, and providing contexts for losses that move people through those losses to a new place."<sup>106</sup>

Rather than doom-and-gloom, which is a temptation too often given in to in my experience (and certainly echoed by the musicians and clergy involved with the project), knowing the obstacles and understanding the losses that keep people from moving forward with

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 22-23.

you or trying a new thing is far more like stepping up to the plate than it is hiding in the dugout.

Brené Brown is here helpful once more:

Again, there's no question that feedback may be one of the most difficult arenas to negotiate in our lives. We should remember, though, that victory is not getting good feedback, avoiding giving difficult feedback, or avoiding the need for feedback. Instead it's taking off the armor, showing up, and engaging.<sup>107</sup>

As strange as it might seem, keeping a little off-balance can be helpful. The “productive zone of disequilibrium...” is described as “enough heat generated by your intervention to gain attention, engagement, and forward motion, but not so much that the organization (or your part of it) explodes.”<sup>108</sup> Composure often instills confidence, but getting things done frequently requires sweat. Calm is comfortable, but our own comfort zones also need to be stretched if we are to continue to do the hard work of leading parishes to more fully live into its Godly potential.

Heifetz states plainly “Adaptive leadership is the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive.”<sup>109</sup> I am reminded of another shocking quote from my youth: I heard once in a sermon (I can't remember who it was that was preaching) “I am absolutely convinced that God doesn't care whether or not this Church survives.” I don't remember whether or not the preacher was talking about my parish, my denomination, or Christianity itself – I had just reconnected with the Church and had started to find both solace and strength in what the Church had to offer, and I didn't like what I heard. After an appropriately agonizing silence, the preacher added, “I just think God cares about whether or not this Church *thrives*.” The ultimate loss people often worry about is the closing of their beloved Church, and the legacy it stands for. Some of those fears may start to be allayed when the clergy and musician leadership offer a

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<sup>107</sup> Brown, 206.

<sup>108</sup> Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow, 29.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 7.

united vision of *thriving*, buoyed by their open and healthy, public relationship, full of mutual support, optimism and creativity.

## CHAPTER FIVE

*For us, the musically illiterate mass, the right way is not hard to discern; and as long as we stick to it, the fact that we are capable only of a confused rhythmical noise will not do very much harm, if, when we make it, we really intend the glory of God. For if that is our intention it follows of necessity that we shall be as ready to glorify Him by silence (when required) as by shouts. We shall also be aware that the power of shouting stands very low in the hierarchy of natural gifts, and that it would be better to learn to sing if we could. If any one tries to teach us we will try to learn. If we cannot learn, and if this is desired, we will shut up. And we will also try to listen intelligently.<sup>110</sup>*

### THE METHOD AND THE MADNESS

My interest in this particular ministerial intersectionality comes from my own experience, so I knew firsthand that I needed to delve into the experiential knowledge of both clerics and musicians individually. I would need to connect to more musicians and clerics than I knew personally. I needed to connect with a specialized group of people for an in-depth look at the realities of their positions and their relationships. It was clear that *purposive samples* (as defined by Tim Sensing) would yield the best results, and individuals would be best selected based on their awareness, knowledge, and position to provide data that was richer and deeper than a random sampling could offer. Sensing lists a dozen criteria that would help the selection process, many of which were central to the choosing of participants for this project. Of particular import were:

Folks that are politically savvy, have a vested interest, or are key stake holders...  
A typical population that is generally knowledgeable about the subject at hand...  
A group that fits a certain demographic... People who represent the emerging case... people who represent the typical case... People who have a particular reputation (Sensing 83-84)

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<sup>110</sup> Lewis, "On Church Music," 121.

Sensing's list also includes "Participants chosen by someone else (often a key informant like a church board or ministerial staff)" (Sensing 84), and I was assisted in that endeavor by Ellen Johnston from the Center for Liturgy and Music at Virginia Theological Seminary. Johnston enthusiastically offered assistance in finding and recruiting clergy and musician participants from varying backgrounds. I focused on solo rectors where this relationship is likely to be tighter. Due to the diversity of music programs across the Church, both full-time and part-time musicians were interviewed. I avoided first-time clergy and musicians to ensure they would have enough experience to draw upon, as well as those in relationships that would be considered in the "mid-range", rather than looking for someone who was well known for either their glorious triumphs or spectacular defeats in this arena.

Through a series of interviews of both clergy and musicians I gathered data to more fully understand the dynamics of fulfilling and poor musician-cleric relationships alike. I developed non-leading and open-ended questions for the individual interviews that encouraged deep and thoughtful sharing. These questions and prompts spanned a fairly wide gamut to get to the various aspects of vocation, relationship, experience, and whatever understanding of shared vocation may exist, while attempting to remain straightforward, uncomplicated, and on point. Each participant was asked the same set of questions, but time and space was allowed for individual stories and a sense of relationship.

Participants were asked to reflect on past experiences – both negative and positive, and to speak to their understanding of their own ministerial vocational call as well as the potentiality of the call of the opposite profession, what barriers they expected when working with someone in that profession, and what vision they might have for the Cleric/Musician ministry together.

Individual interviews were then conducted with nine clerics and ten musicians, none in a working relationship with another interviewee so that a future plenary session might be more open and honest. Each was interviewed by video or phone conference and, with their permission, recorded for clarity.

Answers from these individuals were compiled and patterns sought, so that the upcoming plenary session would also have some observations to test after the focus group talked through the original questions together.

The follow-up plenary session was then conducted to further explore and process the cleric/musician relationship and within a group setting. Participants were able to process differently in that environment, and they considered the clergy-musician realities in both small groups and as a whole. The findings from the previous individual interviews were shared anonymously with the entire group for feedback. Which insights resonated? Which seemed a little off? Which seemed like nonsense? What about the relationship between clergy and musician is missing from these findings? There was both agreement and disagreement, and as they listened to each other new stories and narratives were shared as individuals were reminded of situations or feelings.

The individual interviews helped to ensure that feedback was genuine and untainted by others. The plenary session allowed individual experiences to be amplified and memories to be rekindled. Together they shared a vision for what was possible, a vision for what the musician-cleric relationship *could* be, and what that might mean for the Church.

## CHAPTER SIX

*When it succeeds, I think the performers are the most enviable of men; privileged while mortals to honour God like angels and, for a few golden moments, to see spirit and flesh, delight and labour, skill and worship, the natural and the supernatural, all fused into that unity they would have had before the Fall. But I must insist that no degree of excellence in the music, simply as music, can assure us that this paradisaal state has been achieved.<sup>111</sup>*

### PROJECT ANALYSES

*It sounds wonderful, and I think it's really needed – there's an awful lot of assumption in the professions that things don't go that well, and yet when you talk to individual people, and their particular relationships, they usually seem to be going much better than the assumptions – Individual Church musician interview*

### ANALYSIS – INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

The individual interviews proved to be very rich, and there was a real sense that both clergy and Church musicians have been waiting and even eager to have this conversation. The only reticence noticed throughout the process was from some clergy regarding the question “What brought you to the work you are now doing?” This was perhaps due to memories of the ordination process, when candidates are repeatedly expected (and in some places required) to explain their personal understanding of their own call to ministry to family, parishioners, rectors, bishops, diocesan bodies, seminary admissions officers and faculty, or even random people on the street; some retain a reflexive reaction against questions of personal calling. One clergy respondent started their answer, “Let’s see... how to answer that in *not* a COM<sup>112</sup> ten page

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<sup>111</sup> Lewis, “On Church Music,” 122-123.

<sup>112</sup> Commission on Ministry – the main elected diocesan body encountered numerous times by someone seeking ordination in the Episcopal Church.

response...” Though said jokingly (and with a certain sense of comradery), it reflected some underlying discomfort. This participant went on to happily and openly respond to the question, however, as did all of the respondents.

This question was purposefully vague – the word “call” was intentionally omitted, and the more open question of “What brought you to the work you are now doing” could have been perceived in multiple ways, including the more mundane understanding of how one heard about a particular job or responded to an online advertisement. Though there is a general assumption that clergy have experienced some sort of call into their priestly ministry, I did not want to put words into their mouths, and certainly did not want to make any assumptions on behalf of the musicians. Nevertheless, the vast majority of participants took it to be referring to vocational call, and though this is an intensely personal subject, their sharing was open, deep and profound. Even those who answered this question without reference to such a calling touched on this aspect of their ministry in some significant way as the interview continued.

The similarity in these “call stories” were striking. Both Church musicians and clergy narratives ran the gamut from simple inevitability of a continuing (but perhaps expanding) reality – “I don’t remember not being a part of it, if that makes sense, and so one thing led to another, and there was never really any choice about the fact that I was going to be following the path of Church musician,” and “ the Church was just always *there*, you know? And my dad was a pastor, so the family always assumed... I just didn’t feel right anywhere else” – to profound life-changing moments of clarity: “As a teenager I was already a pianist, and one time... the organist quit a Sunday before Easter, and they just put me up at the organ and said, ‘hey, it looks just like a keyboard...’ and it was this funny thing, but all of my connection with God and the Church and my recent awakening, you know... I was wondering about how to serve God and then in that



moment I was worshipping in a way that I didn't know was possible and helping others to... to connect with God and it was amazing” or the priest who shared that they were

...somewhat mulling over a masters in social work or going into psychology or going into teaching, and while I was going through all of this I was working as a leader of our church youth group that I was part of when I was in High school; I was back in my hometown, and in the process started to realize that those ministries all exist within the context of what I'd seen in a priest that I'd identified – that was the beginning, and started to grow from there... started the conversation I'd never had before.

The call narratives from both groups were similar enough that, removing reference to keyboards or COM, one might have a hard time discerning which belonged to Clergy and which came from Church musicians.

There was more divergence in the following questions, in which respondents were more specifically asked to think about call (the word was used this time), but in a more general or theoretical sense. They were first asked how individuals in the other group might be called to their work, and then how people of their own cohort might be called.

When either group considered clergy callings, they tended to use more theological or spiritual language: “[some] had a God-centered moment that has convicted them of their call to ministry... a just transcendent experience that left them – for the rest of their lives – assured that God is calling them to that ministry” or “there's this urge that goes on... and a sense to work in the Church to preach the gospel and that kind of thing...” or “...when God has a call on a person's life for a particular thing, it's compelling and maybe even inescapable – that's how I've heard clergy speak about it...”

There was far more variety in response when considering musician callings, regardless of cohort: “I think there's a diversity – I think there are some Church musicians who are... musicians who find their creative outlet within the Church, or by a steady opportunity within the

Church, and I think that there are those... that I think their pursuit from the beginning was Church music – that they squarely are Church musicians – that’s been a clarion call – I think there’s diversity in that.” There was a sense among both groups that some musicians, while capable, are performing a job rather than following a calling. “I’ve come across those who have found a place to express those musical gifts, and then I’ve also run into people who knew from the onset that they were going into music to – they were formed within their Churches musically, and they vocationally, educationally sought Church music as a vocation.”

Whether that same diversity in clergy (i.e. job versus calling) was noticed or expected was never mentioned. Perhaps the very thought didn’t seem acceptable, due to the need for those in the Church to see such spiritual leaders as spiritual themselves. When asked, “How do you feel clergy might be called to their work?” one musician answered, “well, I guess by the Holy Spirit? They’d have to be, right?” As much as the cleric and Church musician duo can be an icon, priests are often seen as such by themselves. It is important to note here, as several respondents did, that while the regular, expected, and sometimes required sharing of clergy call narrative is normative, it is far less expected – if expected at all – from Church musicians.<sup>113</sup> Regarding clerical vocational call, one musician participant offered “...it’s compelling and maybe even inescapable – that’s how I’ve heard clergy speak about it...” Whether cause or effect (likely a mixture of both), the imbalance in how the spiritual aspect of these two professions are viewed is likely linked to the inconsistency in the spiritual expectations themselves. As one musician put it, “Ability to play the organ will be on a job description. Faith leadership probably won’t.”

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<sup>113</sup> Or perhaps even laity in general.

There was a wondering, which almost came across as a hope and a yearning, of the majority of respondents from both cohorts that this lack of knowledge or expectation to share musician call narratives did not reflect an actual lack of a sense of call: “I’ve heard some wonderful stories of call – how people have come to the ministry... I view very much the same kind of way a musician might be called to serve the Church.” One clergy respondent noted, in reference to their own musician, “I can just see that it’s been... it’s part of a whole with [them]. [They] don’t just *happen* to do music in a Church... it’s all... it’s a real sense of call to ministry in the Church through music... I definitely see that in the passion that [they] bring to worship. The excellency [sic] of musical ability and this call are all wrapped up together in one.”

Discussions about personal relationships were particularly fruitful, and brought forth one of the more striking assessments across the board: the troubled relationship between musician and cleric is almost mythic, and everyone was familiar with that cliché; however the myth wasn’t borne out by personal experience or the experience of most of their colleagues. These relationships might be on par with other famous tropes – in the same way “...we know about mother-in-law jokes, and maybe we even tell them, even if our own mother-in-law’s just fine!” The participants recounted that they have heard plenty of horror stories, but they themselves have rarely been part them or had direct contact with someone who had. A very typical response to the prompt “Could you tell me about a time when work with a Cleric was particularly challenging?” follows:

“Hmmm... hard for me, because I’ve been blessed with *all* the clergy I’ve worked with... umm...”

“Glad to hear you’ve had good experiences, but it’s also why I asked about a *time* when it was challenging; not passing judgment on anyone as a whole... could you think of a challenging time?”

“... Umm... gosh, trying to think here... I have had times in my career thus far when I’ve had differing opinions... from clergy, but not in the sense that it was... it was more of an opinion about the process, not the outcome (if that makes sense)... I wouldn’t necessarily call those *conflicts*, just how you go about business, you know?”

Even one who jokingly responded to the question, “how long do you have?” made it clear that over their long career difficult relationships were in the minority. Three stories that came up in this portion ended up dealing with personality clashes that were much larger in scope and scale than the simple musician/cleric relationship. One involved a cleric who was later defrocked for inappropriate contact with parish youth; one person who was “profoundly ambivalent” (agreed with whoever was in front of them), and one who was “terminally angry” with everyone and everything. Potential hyperbole aside, these tensions were lived out far beyond the particularities of this relationship.

There was far more energy around the question of when things worked well in the cleric/musician relationship, and stories abounded. Some centered around the back-and-forth that happened as they developed a new and holistic plan for Holy Week together, others around the type of permission-giving that happens when trying something new or the understanding which grew over time which allowed them to deal with new issues that came up quickly and efficiently, even in the midst of leading worship. They all revolved around central themes – respect for the other person and their role, common goals shared, and a sense of partnering to achieve those goals. Building on those, respondents recalled a sense of playfulness and experimentation, when

both members of the team were open or indeed, as one priest put it, “it’s as if you have to be vulnerable to each other to make that happen.”

The health of their opposing colleague in ministry, particularly as played out in people who had passion for and vision in their own work, added to the health of the relationship. “I realized that this great moment that we were having – where the music was just, oh, it was just so great and the choristers were improving so much, it came from the choirmaster taking part in the RSCM<sup>114</sup> training, and all this improvement – I realized it was all this long-term growth... a lot of ground work coming to fruition.” Seeking personal and professional development and desiring it for yourself and the person in the opposite cohort strengthened the relationship.

The expected barriers to the relationship likewise highlighted the growth potential of each side rather than relational issues. Concerns were brought forward about the gap between the training and support clergy or Church musicians receive. “We are trained – most of us – trained as musicians, many of us with degrees in music – but even though I might use that every day, there are the other realities of leadership, particular in a pastoral setting, that I don’t know much about. There wasn’t that sort of information and support that would have been helpful.” Several clergy participants recognized that they would be able to more fully entrust music choices to their respective musicians (particularly those newer at their jobs) if only their musical expertise were paired with liturgical training. “They’re equipped to make the choices – at least musically – but maybe not theologically and maybe not thematically with the rest of what a priest is trying to accomplish... I do think that’s something that’s an inherent tension.” The difference in support is also noted: “We’re so set up for collegiality; you almost have to hold collegiality at arm’s length

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<sup>114</sup> Royal School of Church Music.

to get work done; Fresh Start,<sup>115</sup> retreats, and deaneries, and it seems like - CREDO conferences<sup>116</sup> – it seems like clergy self-care is – at least in this day and age – very much on the front burner – and I’m not sure we take as good a care or we create as much synergy between church musicians; stuff at deaneries where all the church musicians get together like clergy do; so I think there can be some isolation there; depending on the church musicians...”

On the clergy side, the foreseen barriers tended to involve lack of musical knowledge or understanding of what it takes to have a successful program. Some of these are symbolic – the rector looking to save money who can’t understand why each choir member needs their own copy of the anthem<sup>117</sup> or why the organ or piano needs to be tuned again (“I know I’m tone-deaf, but it sounds fine to me”) – which end up feeling like a devaluing of the music program (or, more globally, the ministry of music in general). There is an expectation and a hope on the side of the Church musicians that their clerical colleagues will understand that they are simply trained differently – “for instance, I expect when I work with a clergy person they might not obviously have as much musical training or knowledge as I do – I don’t have as much theological knowledge as you... that’s kind of back to that whole respect thing...”

Respect was a common theme when participants talked about their vision for the utopic cleric/musician relationship. “There’s interpersonal respect, but also respect that you know your stuff... there’s that, too. There’s one thing that I respect you as a human being, but there’s also ‘I respect the knowledge and background you have to give me an opinion that is worthy.’ We should get and give respect both professionally as well as personally.” The heart of this for several on both sides was the question of whether or not clergy and Church musicians saw each

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<sup>115</sup> Fresh Start was a program of the Episcopal Church which sought to support new clergy, or clergy starting a new position.

<sup>116</sup> CREDO is a clergy wellness program sponsored by the Episcopal Church’s Pension Group.

<sup>117</sup> At the very least there are copyright issues that could potentially bankrupt a Church.

other as colleagues – rather than reserving that term and understanding only for people of their own cohort. The commonality of purpose, in particular each knowing their part in how to prepare for and lead meaningful worship together leads to a certain bond which allows for an environment of more ready trust and support.

#### ANALYSIS – PLENARY SESSION

*It's all because you're two professionals trying to lead people to a spiritual life.*

At our plenary session, there were no big surprises, and the themes from the individual interviews flowed seamlessly into our conversation as a group. Our conversations consistently returned to themes of training, respect, and vulnerability.

There was a desire for Church musicians to have more training in general pastoral understandings and systems theory. Choir directors in particular form a tight bond with a small and dedicated group within a congregation, and seasoned clergy understand that due to both the nature of their music making together and amount of time they spend together, many choir members will turn to their directors for help first. If there is a desire for the choir – as a small group – to be healthy, the choir's leader is in need of some training and support.

When it came to the needed training for clergy, curiously no one expected the clergy to receive more *musical* training (even though their lack of musical knowledge was listed as one potential barrier to a good working relationship in the individual interviews). There was more of a recognized need on both sides for increased clerical training in Human Resources and as managers of employees or non-profit realities. “Sure, the musician can take care of music and the

priest the pastoral and theological, but if the priest's also the boss, how do [they] learn to do that well?" In this case, the potential tension doesn't arise from a lack of knowledge or understanding of the other person's craft, but from lack of ability or training in how to appropriately and effectively manage the relationships themselves.

One musician made sure to acknowledge their rector's role as "boss," while going a step further – "not only [are they] my boss, but it's also crucial to realize that [they are] a really important spiritual leader for these people, and knows about them more than [I do]." There is a sense of respect here for not only the authority role, but an understanding of how the peculiar role of priest is to be played out in their particular context. Musicians hoped for a similar respectful understanding from clergy, hoping that it would start from the very beginning, with the expectations of the congregations and those tasked with finding the next rector: "Search Committees should ask, 'What do you think about music?' – that would help out from the start, and would set the stage that the Church members cared, too." For priests already in place, the participants most hoped for someone who would actively lift up the musician as a leader in the congregation rather than simply a hired hand. There was a sense that one "must trust that the priest is called by God to lead here, and they have to trust that the same goes for us." Respect was so prevalent a theme in our time together that Aretha Franklin's *RESPECT* was frequently invoked. For one clergy participant, it all came together in a new way – respect not only for the expertise and career abilities of our varying cohorts, but also in the uniqueness of our mutual work of leading faith communities rather than coming together in a secular workplace. "It's all because you're two professionals trying to lead people to a spiritual life." One musician responded "...for a priest to even acknowledge [the musician's spiritual leadership] means a lot to us." It was noted in the individual interviews that there was a diversity in motivation or calling



of musicians (some seeing it as a “job” rather than spiritual, *per se*), but there was agreement in the room about that musicians and clerics sharing a common purpose offered a mutual bond and unity. That respect and unity was seen as “palpable to the congregation,” and modeled either healthy relationships, or as those in the room hoped, not only right relationships with each other but ones centered on a more divine purpose and relationship.

Although mutual respect of person, calling, and role was definitely seen as the firm foundation upon which the healthy Church musician-cleric relationship was formed, when we spoke of exciting and Spirit-filled ministry, a new theme emerged and continued to resurface. Time and again, often surprising the participants themselves, the common thread in our conversations was vulnerability. The ability to allow oneself to be vulnerable – either as clergy or as Church musician – was the catalyst for exciting new endeavors, depth of relationship, and liturgical and pastoral successes on a scale which had never been expected by the participants when they began their careers. There was certainly an acknowledgement that respect, and the belief that the other person “had your back” was a necessary forerunner to allowing for such vulnerability. It took trust to know that “...even though someone knows better than me or that there’s wisdom in the room other than mine” that this does not impede or lessen the authority or importance of your own position. Humility was key. There was also an acknowledgment that Church musicians, who have less canonical authority or standing, already exist in a vulnerable state – “we ignore [the] power differential at our peril!”, but the vulnerability we kept coming back to was a self-imposed one, a risk-taking, faith-requiring state that felt as though it was leaving more room for the Spirit to “work its magic.” Clergy participants offered up their own sense of vulnerability – particularly as clergy newly arrived to a congregation when the organist/choirmaster was beloved and had been in place for a significant amount of time, or

whenever they might be feeling or acting out of a sense of “embarrassment that we don’t know what we’re doing, like in HR or managers of employees/non-profits.” Vulnerability allows clergy and Church musicians alike to be open to new opportunities, new ministries, and to more deeply delve into the work God has entrusted them. There was an agreement among all present that trust and vulnerability helps both the person who is being trusted *and* the one who is doing the trusting.

Together we were also able to explore what made the cleric-musician relationships so unique, and musical analogies hit home with the group: “It’s a fluid, live situation – whether about liturgy or personnel – and isn’t music that way anyway!” It was recognized that part of the difference had to do with uniqueness of the context – nothing else is quite like the Church, and no other work is quite like Church work. As one respondent put it, “It is different because it’s about a soul” and another, “It’s different because the Church is different than anything else.” Perhaps the difficulty in finding an appropriate or analogous relationship parallel came down to something entirely simple: “These are two unique positions, so therefore this is a unique relationship.”

## CHAPTER SEVEN

*We must beware of the naïve idea that our music can ‘please’ God as it would please a cultivated human hearer. That is like thinking, under the old Law, that He really needed the blood of bulls and goats. To which an answer came, ‘Mine are the cattle upon a thousand hills’, and ‘if I am hungry, I will not tell thee.’ If God (in that sense) wanted music, He would not tell us. For all our offerings, whether of music or martyrdom, are like the intrinsically worthless present of a child, which a father values indeed, but values only for the intention.<sup>118</sup>*

## FINALE

*We view leadership as a verb, not a job. Authority, power, and influence are critical tools, but they do not define leadership.<sup>119</sup>*

## COLLABORATIVE DESIRE

*...leadership is collaborative. Leaders work with others to achieve shared goals. This is particularly important in voluntary organizations in which motivation and participation go hand in hand. Leaders, thus, must empower – give power to – others. Yet the failure to collaborate often is the point where congregational leadership breaks down. A leader may have a vision of where he would like the church to go, but if he does not empower others to participate in the process of shaping this vision, then he is unlikely to achieve lasting change.<sup>120</sup>*

Clergy and Church musicians are leaders in the Church. Churches also have treasurers and vestries or Bishop’s Committees or boards, and larger ones may add administrative and programmatic personnel to that list, but within the liturgical context, these two are quite often the main (if not only) and most obvious leaders of the Church. As the majority of Churchgoers’

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<sup>118</sup> Lewis, “On Church Music,” 123.

<sup>119</sup> Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow, 24.

<sup>120</sup> Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), Kindle Edition.

primary (if not only) experience of the Church and the Church system is connected to Sunday morning worship, it falls to these two leaders to be an icon of healthy relationship in the community, whether or not they desire the honor.

Every act of ministry, exercise of leadership, or way of relating to others in the church comes from an underlying belief, or theory, about how human beings function. We make assumptions about what motivates others and guides their functioning, about how they create problems for themselves, and about the resources they have for dealing with difficult situations.<sup>121</sup>

Although the two roles have their own sets of associated specialties, responsibilities and limitations, and may (hopefully) have a job description or letter of agreement which enumerates these, leadership itself is a lived and organic experience. These roles often are intertwined and inhabit the same space while they (again, hopefully) head toward the same goal. How the two individuals view each other and work with each other is noticed by those around them. Speaking of this core sense of team with a clerical colleague, one Church musician related:

– everyone *knows* that we work well together – it shows in what we’re *doing*, and that kind of thing and so we have been able – like I said earlier – I have her back, I know she has *my* back... and she has come to bat for me several times, and I have gone to bat for her – in the public – in the view of the congregation, and that kind of thing... so that we are a united front and a united team – in doing ministry...

There was a consistent desire for this level of teamwork and collaborative leadership with each of the respondents, particularly in response to the question, “What vision do you have for the Cleric/Musician ministry together?” It was a constant theme in the individual interviews, and gained a particularly energetic and, well, collaborative response in the group plenary. In the midst of this group of Church musicians and clergy playing off of one another, one said:

I think – go back to my respect thing here – but when there’s mutual respect both ways – it works well; and it is such a crucial team or relationship for the church, that only good can come when that’s working well. And that that obviously takes

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<sup>121</sup> Ronald W. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), 24.

interpersonal skills, and understanding and great communication, and that kind of thing – that... regular *meetings* between clergy and musician is *very* important...

Not only did this illustrate the desire for collaborative ministry and the recognition of the role this partnership plays in the role of the Church system, the call for regular meetings brings this back to a personal and relational level. Meeting regularly allows the clergy and musicians to become familiar with each other – not only their liturgical proclivities and musical tastes and tendencies, but as people inhabiting these central roles within the Church family.

Given this common desire for collaborative ministry, where, when, and how might it be encouraged and supported? Much of the work would be done behind the scenes – interrelational work naturally would be, as well as potential trainings and education. However, there is also great possibility for public, even liturgical expressions of mutual support and respect for these ministries and their collaborative potential.

#### RUMINATIONS ON EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND PROCESS



<sup>122</sup> Jay Sidebotham, Cartoon from "Life at St. Swithin's" collection. (New York: Church Pension Fund, 2002).

It has been noted already that musicians' training centers entirely on the making of music. Bill Roberts, formerly a professor of music at Virginia Theological Seminary, put it this way:

...future church musicians, studying in conservatories or universities, receive a very different sort of education. Music students concentrate on the acquisition of skills as performers. Usually that emphasis is upon attaining the highest possible quality in performance... Courses in music theory, history, and literature exist primarily to develop excellence in performance. There is absolutely nothing wrong with these criteria; they are, however, designed for the world of professional music, not for the church.<sup>123</sup>

For conductors and directors in the secular setting, this certainly involves working with a number of individuals – sometimes scores of them – in a choir, orchestra, or band, but interpersonal, pastoral, and systems education or training is not a part of a typical musician's schooling or preparation. In a Church context, their leadership is stretched in a new direction as they become "pastors" in their own right.

Clergy, on their end, receive scant musical education in most seminaries. Roberts weighs in again:

Clergy are trained in preaching-homiletics being one discipline every seminarian has to study. Music, on the other hand, is often given short shrift in theological training-a large number of schools, in fact, require no instruction in music at all.<sup>124</sup>

There may be a few elective possibilities, but these are often populated by seminarians who have a preexisting interest in or predilection toward music. In the seminary I attended, there was a single required course in Church music which involved finding our way through the hymnal, reflecting on music experienced in area Churches, and learning something about chanting which clergy may choose to do within the liturgies of the Church. There was an urgency from the part

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<sup>123</sup> William Bradley Roberts, *Music and Vital Congregations: A Practical Guide for Clergy* (New York: Church Publishing, 2009), Kindle Edition.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

of the professor who pointed out that clergy, in our denomination, had complete authority of the music in their Churches, whether they knew what they were doing or not – so we'd best at least know a little.

Increased education and training on both sides would not only potentially increase the respect each had for the other's skills and labor, but would also assist them in their own work while cultivating an atmosphere of common understanding. Training, continuing education, and collegiality offerings are similarly one-sided. As the plenary group wondered together about the intentional opportunities which might be possible, a musician's lament about the lack of them prompted an epiphany in one of the clerical members:

we're so set up for collegiality; you almost have to hold collegiality at arm's length to get work done; Fresh Start, retreats, and deaneries, Credo conferences – and it seems like clergy self-care is – at least in this day and age – very much on the front burner – and I'm not sure we take as good a care or we create as much synergy between church musicians; stuff at deaneries where all the church musicians get together like clergy do; so I think there can be some isolation there...

Along with increased training possibilities both before and after these professional roles have been undertaken, the process of entering into them should be examined. The ordination process is well-defined and generally very extensive, and the vocational calling of someone seeking ordination is not only expected but required to be shared and often scrutinized. What of the call stories of the Church musicians? Every one who was a part of this project felt a definite sense of call.

What brought you to the work you are now doing?

A strong sense of call... back when I was in seventh grade it was a – do I go into church work, or do I become a meteorologist? And I did everything through my junior high and high school years fighting that, you know, pursuing other things... and in college it was a strong calling to work with people and a love for the organ and the people of the church to share that and promote that and help people

experience the gospel through music. So that won out over... shall we say the more *lucrative* career [laughter].

If we allow the previous theological assertions in this thesis that lay ministries themselves are vocational, this should not come as much of a surprise. The respect of these vocational stirrings connected with a God-given giftedness and sharing these stories as witness to God's generous Spirit would not only honor the transformation nature of what the Church musician was giving themselves over to, but be uplifting and empowering for the whole Body of Christ.

The bond between each Church musician and cleric could also benefit from significant and deliberate attention. The unique nature of their work in the Church as well as their individual and communal roles in it puts their relationship through unique tensions while they remain on display in front of the congregation and larger community. The original concept for this Thesis Project involved a "Program or Curriculum of Intentional Relationship Building" between these leaders. Something on the level of "Marriage Encounter," but tailored to the realities of the cleric-musician context. This would still be worthy and worthwhile work, considering what is at stake – both for these individuals but for the whole Body of Christ which they serve.

#### FINAL THOUGHTS

Ultimately, this work is about people. People are created with an infinite number of variations in style, tendency, desire, preferences, and perspectives. Any relationship between two people multiplies that level of variation to a staggering degree. To take that one step further, this has been an exploration not of one particular priest and one particular musician within one particular relationship, but all those relationships across the Church, whose variations would



amount to something altogether unfathomable. As such, nothing can truly be definitive. As liturgist Gordon Lathrop once wrote,

There is no one absolutely pure and godly music, for example, commanded by God or required by the church, by which alone we may sing ourselves into heaven. There are only a variety of human musical traditions, some better suited than others to enable the assembly to gather around the word and the sacraments, suggesting harmony and dialogue, diversity and unity, holiness and accessibility in their singing.<sup>125</sup>

The exploration remains worthwhile, however, as the crucial and central roles these leaders inhabit are so influential in the overall life of the Church. As this research took shape and started to gain momentum, the idea of the relationship between the priest and Church musician as an icon of the relationships both essential to and rooted in the action of the worshipping community was reaffirmed. They are together an icon – definitely because of their very public appearance, but particularly as they lead with different God-given gifts and are capable of coming together in glorious harmony in the service of God.

The two worlds I personally inhabit come together – sometimes gloriously and sometimes excruciatingly – in the Church. They marry here in a unique and strikingly beautiful and otherwise unimaginable way. The vocational call to each braided together by the central thread of the ultimate glorification of God. As C.S. Lewis notes in the quote at the head of this chapter, God has no need of our music, nor, for that matter, does God have a need for our liturgy or our preaching or our most impressive bit of pastoral care, or even our doctoral theses. Our intention – both to serve God and be visible signs of God’s grace at work in the world, is what gives the most significance to our labor. In this vein we commit to

...be filled with the Holy Spirit, as [we] sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among [ourselves], singing and making melody to the Lord in [our] hearts,

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<sup>125</sup> Lathrop, Kindle Edition.

giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>126</sup>

Offered in all humility in the spirit of Shakespeare's Puck in the epilogue of *A Midsummer Nights Dream* ("If we shadows have offended..."):<sup>127</sup>

And now, this important work being brought to a conclusion, it is hoped the whole will be received and examined by every true member of our Church, and every sincere Christian, with a meek, candid, and charitable frame of mind; without prejudice or prepossessions; seriously considering what Christianity is, and what the truths of the Gospel are; and earnestly beseeching Almighty God to accompany with his blessing every endeavour for promulgating them to mankind in the clearest, plainest, most affecting and majestic manner, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Saviour.

Philadelphia, October, 1789.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ephesians 5:18b-20

<sup>127</sup> *A Midsummer Nights Dream*, Act V, Scene I. Also offered in deference to my daughter, the Shakespeare scholar.

<sup>128</sup> From the preface of *The Book of Common Prayer*, p11

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## APPENDIX

### Interview Prompts

*Desiring to keep the questions/prompts open to receive the most input*

1. Understanding that this will be recorded for academic purposes only...
2. Name/position
3. Length of tenure
4. What brought you to the work you are now doing?
5. How do you feel Church Musicians (Clergy) might be called to their work?
6. How do you feel Clergy (Church Musicians) might be called to their work?
7. Could you tell me about a time when work with a Cleric/Church musician was particularly challenging?
  - a. Follow up as necessary, getting both individual stories and a sense of relationship
8. Could you tell me about a time in your ministry in which you and a Church Musician/Cleric worked particularly well together/things really hummed along/things clicked?
  - a. Follow up as necessary, getting both individual stories and a sense of relationship
9. What barriers do you expect when working with a Church Musician/Cleric?
10. What vision do you have for Cleric/Musician ministry together?