Musics of a Village Church:
a view from the organ bench at Higganum Congregational

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements v

A Quick Foreword vii
    - Coming to Higganum viii

Introduction: Playing Church Music as Ethnomusicological Practice
    - Defining the Field xiii
    - Methods of Analysis xvii
        - Synchronic Understanding xviii
        - Diachronic Understanding xix
    - Historical Scholarship xxi
        - Demographics and Local-Cultural Narratives xxii
        - Church Music and Pipe Organ-ic Histories xxiv
    - Ethnographic Scholarship xxv
        - The Ethnomusicological xxv
        - The Sociological and Religious xxviii
    - The Research Stance xxix
        - Clarifying the Emic and Etic xxix
        - Belonging and Not Belonging xxx
    - Expanding the Inter-disciplinary Reach xxxii
        - Aesthetic Ecology xxxiii
        - Music in the Hands of Evolutionary Psychology xxxiv
    - So Why Church Music, and Why Now? xxxiv

Part I: The Music

Chapter One: Service Musics of Higganum Congregational Church, 2008-2012 1
    - The Traditional Protestant Service At Higganum 1
    - What Happens in the Space 2
        - Spatial Considerations at Higganum and Suffield 2
        - Feasibility 7
        - Tradition 9
    - The Prelude 10
        - Programmatic Power 15
    - Hymns 16
    - The Anthem, Generally 19
    - The Anthem at Higganum 21
    - The Doxology and Gloria Patri 29
    - Offertory 29
    - Postlude 32
    - Other Service Musics/Minefields 34
        - Go Now in Peace 34
        - Children’s Music 35
Part II: The People

Chapter Three: The Congregationalists – Interviews on the Music of Higganum

- How does the church enact being? 64
  - The Interviewees 66
- Higganum Congregational Church: A Little History 67
- Interview Subjects and Techniques 69
  - Stew Gillmor 70
  - Jack Calhoun 73
  - Jill Barile 74
  - Judy Hodgson and Linda Hansen, choir members 74
  - The Survey Respondents 75
- Results and Discussion 76
  - The Choral Perception 83
  - What the Survey Reveals 85
- Final Thoughts 89
  - The Ecology 90

Chapter Four: The Congregational Minister – Negotiating Worship, Laity, and Musicians 93

- Defining Size 94
  - Staff Number 94
  - The Polarized and the Dynamic Staff 95
- Ministerial Pressures 99
  - Ministers, Cross-Nationally 100
  - Denominational Identification 101
  - Worship Design 103
  - Worship as the First of Many Concerns 103
- The Reverend Max Olmstead 105
  - A Minister in Worship Mode 106
  - Musical Risk 109
  - Ministers and the Two-Service Paradigm 111
## Chapter Five: The Invisible Musicians – Organists in our Midst

- The Organist’s Social Duties
  - The Choir as the Church
  - Pastoral Disconnect
  - Getting Along from the Organ Bench
- Churches, Social Policy, and Sexuality
  - A Testable Hypothesis for a Musical Sexuality Theory
  - Denominational Policy Towards Sexuality
- Organists: Invisible Musicians
  - What Organists Do
  - The Austin Organ of Higganum
  - Should they even be paid?
  - Looking the other way
  - “You play with your feet?”
  - The Organ Superculture
  - The Pleasure of Playing
- Final Thoughts

## Epilogue: Higganum as a world, Higganum in the world

- Bounding the Field
- The Function of Site
- A First Re-entry
- The Synchronic Version
- Postlude

## Appendix One: Survey Data, Interview Questions

Appendix Two: Phone interviews with Max Olmstead

Appendix Three: Austin Opus 109, Higganum Congregational’s Pipe Organ

Appendix Four: Church Bulletins (1970-2012)

Appendix Five: Annual meetings, music committee notes; Organist contract (1965)

Appendix Six: Memories

References Cited
Table of Figures

Chapter 1

Figure 1. The Chancel and the Organ 3
Figure 2. The Choir sings on “Rally Sunday” 2011 3
Figure 3. The sanctuary, as viewed from the chancel 4
Figure 4. The Gress-Miles/Andover Organ of First Church of Christ 6
Figure 5. View from the Choir Loft, First Church Suffield 6
Figure 6. Excerpt of Mourner’s Kaddish 31
Table I. Musical Placeholders in an American Protestant church service 8
Table II. “Secular” musics presented during liturgy at HCC 2008-2012 14-15

Chapter 4

Figure 1. Two Examples of Linear Power Relations 97
Figure 2. Dynamic (albeit miasmic) interactivity within a church 98
Figure 3. Entertainment and Worship as end-points on a continuum graph 108
Figure 4. The Ministers and Music Directors of HCC: overlapping tenures 117

Chapter 5

Figure 1. Copy of letter of agreement from Wallace Porter to Austin Organ Co. 135
Figure 2. Artist’s rendering of Opus 109, Austin Organ Company (by J. Calhoun) 136
Figure 3. The inside cover of The American Organist 142
Figure 4. The back cover of The American Organist 143

Epilogue

Figure 1. Possible routes of tradition transmission, after Shelemay 2008 147
Figure 2. “Come O Fount of Every Blessing” 152
Figure 3. “Lord, Prepare Me to Be a Sanctuary” 154
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Finally, to Higganum Congregational Church. Whether that means a building, grounds, or a group of changing faces, I'm not sure. Thank you for letting me be your organist for four years.

Brian Parks, Middletown Connecticut, April 2013
A Quick Foreword

The project of this thesis is straightforward. Amidst the “worship wars,” and the situating of American Protestant musics in dichotomized positions akin to theological-political binaries – traditional/contemporary, liberal/conservative, mainline/evangelical – I argue for a wholly other space where freedom reigns and the music can be anything. The simplest way I can explain it is this: at nearly every church where I have worked (including the African-American gospel and Contemporary services I played years ago in high school and college), I have heard the invocation of “God” as “love”, usually stated as “God is love.” If God equals love, then the word “love” can substitute for “God.” Therefore, my playing Foreigner’s “I want to know what love is,” is not very revolutionary at all. In point of fact, my playing Foreigner’s “I want to know what love is,” has never been a problem in a service. Likewise, the Beach Boys’ “Don’t Worry Baby”, Led Zeppelin’s “All my Love”, Marvin Gaye’s “Precious Love,” Bob Marley’s “War,” Johnny Cash’s “Walk the Line”, the Black-Eyed Peas’ “Where is the Love?”, The Kinks’ “Strangers,” David Byrne’s “A Soft Seduction,” Angelo Badalamenti’s “Love Theme” from Twin Peaks, and U2’s “Where the Streets Have No Name,” have not ruffled any feathers. At least, I have never suffered reprisal at the hands of tacitly-offended parties when I facilitated or enacted these songs in service.

Going a bit further, much of the sermon content in churches challenges insularity and closed-mindedness, asking church congregations to be more and more welcoming to others and to incorporate pluralities of belief into their lives and, presumably, their spiritual selves. Hence, playing improvised music in the free jazz tradition, the drumming musics of Ghana, and the so-called experimental musics of John Cage, Alvin Lucier, Christian Wolff, and Tom Johnson has met with more embrace than opposition, assuming opposition existed at all. Even if opposition was real and present, it was tabled for the sake of within-church peace and harmony.

I doubt that any of the musics above fit into the Traditional/Contemporary continuum (assuming there is one, with those terms acting as poles). Certainly, these are not the only musics I have heard and played at Higganum Congregational Church and First Church of Christ,
Congregational in Suffield. Congregational hymns, the organ music of J.S. Bach, and anthems by Wesley, Noble, Purcell, and Handel have also resonated in the space. “Contemporary” Christian musics and guitar-led singing has been auditioned as well. This thesis is a musical ethnography, showing how such a diversity of musical genres co-exists and plays out in particular religious sites, and what meaning and greater import can be derived from this state of affairs.

Before getting into the thesis proper, I need to ask and answer this question: how does a Reformed Jew from the suburbs of Atlanta with no musical or other experience in a traditional Protestant worship service become the Music Director at a Congregational church in a rural Connecticut village founded long before Atlanta burned?

**Coming to Higganum**

In June 2008, I was driving from Connecticut to Atlanta with three other Wesleyan University composers for a residency at Eyedrum Gallery, a downtown experimental music and arts space. I received a phone call from the Reverend Dr. C. Maxwell Olmstead. Wesleyan’s University Organist Ronald Ebrecht had referred me to him. He asked if I was available to play organ at the Higganum Congregational Church as they began their next program year in September. I was road-tripping, and I was in a good mood. The talk was casual and jovial, and I was enthusiastic. He said that they also had an annual organ concert with an honorarium of $250, and asked if I would be willing to play that event as well? Laughing, I said yes.

My spouse Janet was very newly pregnant. As I then lived on a small graduate assistantship (which would end when I graduated the next May) in tenuous combination with her professional ballet dancing (which we knew would end as the baby grew), this job sounded perfect. Although I had no experience as a “traditional” Protestant church service organist (and not very much as an organ recitalist either), I figured, how hard could it be? You improvise, you play some hymns, and you leave, right?

I met Max at the church a few weeks later. We sat on the floor of the social room and talked academics, politics, and music. He walked me into the sanctuary, a red-carpeted room with curved-back pews finished with a perpetual light wood stain. The organ’s pipes were gold and dull; the
organ was unimpressive to me – a mere eight ranks, all 8-foot stops, and only one independent pedal rank. He opened the hymnal and I stumbled through a couple hymns, improving just enough each stanza for him to say, “The next thing is to meet with Sam Crum.”

Sam and I met a week later for breakfast at a local restaurant called Me and McGee, run by members of the Free Evangelical church called Valley Bible. I don’t know what I said, but I still didn’t really know what was going on. I assumed I’d been hired and we were discussing the salary. He asked me what my ten-year plan was. I told him that I liked living in places, not visiting them, and that I’d like to one day have some land, chop wood, and be self-sufficient. I’m not sure what he thought about that, and looking back, it was a naive thing to say. Many, many members of Higganum Congregational Church have extensive property which they farm and garden expertly, in addition to tending livestock and heating their houses primarily with their own chopped wood. We agreed on $15,000 a year for a salary. At least, I thought we agreed on that.

I spent the next month playing Sunday services and working with the choir. Only a few people came each week to the choir rehearsal. I tried to introduce some of my own music as well as shaped-note singing, using the Sacred Harp as a text. Little did I know that I was disappointing the church singers. I also did not know that the act of teaching the Sacred Harp for eventual use in worship would be highly offensive to Sacred Harp singers. Since that didn’t succeed anyway, I was spared an eventual catastrophe. The services went well, but I couldn’t help notice that at the beginning of each service, a man named Terry Smith (the clerk of the church) would stand up and announce that the church would eventually have a meeting to name the members of the search committee which would then begin to look for a permanent Music Director. On the website, I was listed as the “Interim [sic] Music Director.” After a month of these activities, I hadn’t been paid and I began to grow a little antsy.

I played the Third Annual Gladys Burr Peck Memorial Organ Concert on September 30, 2008. Before the service that morning, I mentioned to Max that I hadn’t been paid. After the service, I was given a check for $400 by Judy Hodgson. Since I was under the impression that the
above salary was in place, I told her that this seemed to be a lot less than I should have received for
four weeks’ work. She responded that this was what she had been told to give, and that was that.

I played the concert later that afternoon. The sun poured in through the golden stained glass
and bedecked the room with an incomparable yellow glow. I played pieces by Bach and by myself,
and according to the wishes of Lindamae Peck, the daughter of Gladys and the person responsible
for the concert’s organization and subvention, I led the congregation in singing two of the late Mrs.
Peck’s favorite hymns, “Christ the Lord has Risen Today” (the Easter hymn), and “Mine Eyes Have
Seen the Glory”, also known as the Battle Hymn of the Republic. It was my first organ concert.
Before the last piece, I saw composer Alvin Lucier sitting in the back row, and he gave me a
deverential nod. Considering that I never would have come to Connecticut if I hadn’t been inspired
by him, I was touched. After the concert, I said some hellos and received some thanks, and then I
walked into the bathroom and cried for a few minutes, because I was in a state of emotional
catharsis. I had just premiered two experimental organ pieces and played Bach in a rural church in
Connecticut, and people had attended and listened and given me approbation. To top it off, Max
had put at the top of the program, “3rd Annual Gladys Burr Peck Memorial Organ Concert – Brian
Parks, Music Director of Higganum Congregational Church.”

Lindamae thanked me, telling me that this was the kind of concert her mother would have
loved. She gave me a check. Max said, loudly, “is everything taken care of regarding the other stuff?”
I nodded, not knowing how to address that.

When I got home, I called Ronald Ebrecht (who had gotten me the gig) and said, “I don’t
know what to do. I had an incredible experience today and I’m enjoying the job, but I can’t play four
services and four choir rehearsals each month for $400. I was under the impression that I had a real
salary, not just a substitute’s rate. Max wrote that I was the music director, with no ‘interim’ attached.
I guess I should just accept what I’ve gotten and quit.”

Ron said, “I’ll call you in one hour.”

An hour later, Max called me and asked if I could meet him and Sam at the church. I drove
over and thirty minutes later had signed a contract indicating that I was indeed the church’s music
director, and that I had a salary of $15,000 annually. A new check was given to me to that effect, reflecting the previous month’s work. The search committee never formed, and I was officially installed into the church where I would stay for four years.

Who knows what Ron said in that phone call to Max, but what follows is a result of that overt act of organ pimping.

Brian Parks
Middletown Connecticut
April 2013
Introduction

Playing church music as ethnomusicological practice

“Movements are evanescent; the church abides.”

Defining the Field

How does a church make its music? In 2008, I was hired by Higganum Congregational Church to be its Music Director (see Foreword). With no practical experience in a mainline Protestant church, I found myself navigating a sometimes-straightforward, sometimes-inscrutable weekly musical practice. As I became more and more embedded in the church, I became more and more fascinated with its own idiosyncrasies, and with the institution of church music (as defined separately from sacred music – see Ogasapian 2007:viii). My own role and personality in the church was inseparable from studying its musical identity. My formation as a classically- and cross-culturally-trained musician, Reformed Jew, and Southerner (U.S.), affected the way I looked at documents, played hymns, and asked questions. When it came time to choose a subject for a Masters Thesis, I knew that it was this site’s music that I wanted to know better, examined through the ethnomusicological lens. Because of the inseparability of the subject from my own life (and the lives of others who similarly had roles at both the church and the University), it was going to be a thorny process from the start.

Higganum Congregational Church is very close to my graduate institution, Wesleyan University. Both places served as employers throughout this process; my institutional obligations to Wesleyan University included this thesis work and assistantship duties. When I began the job at Higganum, I was finishing my first Masters degree at Wesleyan in composition, which I completed. During my last year at Higganum, I began my first year of a Masters in Ethnomusicology. The church job provided me with sufficient financial means

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1 This term spans and includes many denominational categories and is thoroughly unpacked, historically and in terms of its present usage, in Justice 2012:17-24. Its connotive value is best equated with the word “moderate,” which approximates the posture that mainline churches take toward the personal and the political.
and security to pay a mortgage, sire two children, and develop professional skills that may prolong my capacity to self-sustain. It was not, however, my sole source of income and like most professional musicians, I pieced together income from various sources including the roles I enacted at Wesleyan.

Therefore, this paper shifts its gaze between -emic and –etic spaces: the -etic space takes up musical production and consumption involving and including all parties of the church (including the author), and brings in data from other churches. The –emic space includes my personal experience, although I use myself as a gateway to those who also do what I do in churches: play the organ and conduct music. As I discuss below (‘The Research Stance’), American scholars studying religious music describe various types, levels, and self-awareness of their insider and outsider status.

I use another dyad to structure this thesis: the music and the people. Part I is about the music that this church sonifies (Chapters One and Two), and Part II is about the people who make, receive, and in some way affect that music (Chapters Three through Six). The smear between these broad zones is frequent and needed – separating music from people is never more than a theoretical move, or as The Reverend Max Olmstead put it to me, “you can’t do music in a human body without human song” (Olmstead 2013). This study more closely resembles music-cultural ethnography than performance ethnography or music analysis; therefore, I do not shy from talking about people when they are making music (in Part I), or from talking about music when it helps explain a person (in Part II).

Chapter One sets the weekly scene – the fundamental hour of a religious service and its music, with worship and performance in sometimes tense balance. Here, I show a blueprint of musical placeholders; as we zoom in, we see how lively things get, and how complex. I report on the service musics as I perceived and enacted them, but part of that story is what musical rules weren’t there. That is, the freedom that Higganum Congregational gave me, consciously or not, as well as the autonomy afforded its previous music directors and their current director, shows the danger of assuming that an inveterate performance
tradition prevails within a church. To a great degree, the church’s musical ingredients were
and are created afresh each week with musical possibilities spanning a surprising terrain. In
Chapter Two, I focus on a particular routine of transmission prevalent in both society writ-
large and this church writ-small. Here, I examine how often digital mediation intervenes
upon the music-discovering and music-pedagogical experience in this church’s musical
curation. When I discuss “Contemporary Christian Music” generally, I allude to Monique
Ingalls’s doctoral dissertation which deals with the CCM genre in an ethnographic way, by
investigating its concert and church settings (Ingalls 2008).

In Part II and Chapter Three, I introduce the individuals of the church. I take up
how and to what degree their sensibilities inform and form the musical ecology of the site.
While there are no hard and fast answers to this broad question, I lay out the divergent
opinions and concerns that church members represent. I talk to musicians of the church as
well as those who sit in the pews (and sing hymns, we hope); interviews and survey data are
brought to bear.

In Chapter Four, we encounter the pastoral component of a church. Ministers
inhabit paradoxical positions – at a Congregational church (and others like it), they must
sermonize to their literal employers every week. Other priests and their ilk, while responsible
to the parish they serve, operate under the aegis of a diocese or larger governing body.
Inevitably, their allegiances rigidify differently. In addition, ministers tend to work in a
solitary way, responding to a nebulous, nearly-contradictory set of denominational (global)
and congregational (local) demands. Within congregations, they must satisfy a surfeit of
wants and needs pertaining to psychological, spiritual, musical, infra-structural, financial, and
relational (between couples, for instance) categories. They also must perform sacramental
rites and engage in an institutional-theological capacity. How do they manage this array of
tasks? Balance, we shall see, is difficult to maintain, and although ministers preach in
churches throughout their careers, per-church turnover is unavoidable and sometimes very
frequent. But if every church job comes with inevitable problems, why leave one for
another? I do not answer this question definitively, but I do tease out some significant musings from ministers.

And who are their musical counterparts? Must they manage a similar set of antinomies? How do we examine them as a group, if indeed they are a group, a question one scholar has already begun addressing? Chapter Five addresses these and other questions by working in a general way to identify some salient aspects of music directors (or sometimes, “Ministers of Music”). First, we recognize that many music directors are organists, and we consider them to be a group, following a scholarly move in that direction (Justice 2010). This means that the individual organist’s concern can often be understood as the group’s concern, and vice versa. I take up some of the more elusive, unknown parts of the job, which moves the discussion into more technical questions about organs, inventory oversight, and other vagaries of the job.

The Epilogue questions the point of this project. Here, I posit what the future holds as to both field research generally within Protestant music and with the field-site of Higganum Congregational Church. As a practicing church musician, there will be other sites of research. I should be able to closely describe the circumstances of those sites in as detailed a fashion as Higganum. I do retain meaningful, positive relationships with the members of Higganum; there is an ongoing “applied” project that I explain in the Epilogue. However, there is a question as to whether what I’m doing is ethnomusicology or not. Am I describing music-cultural situations, or am I overtly intervening as a musician and semi-pastoral figure? More aptly, am I describing an intervention? Is the fact that I am able to intervene so successfully itself worth bringing to light? I use K.K. Shelemay’s analysis of longitudinal paths of relations between researchers and subjects to ground the discussion (2008). Although I do not have the benefit of follow-up studies to refer to, I can draw from four years of memories to project upon what might unfold hereon, with or without my presence. The last bit of the epilogue recalls two moments I experienced one after the other, two synchronic events linked by the fragment of a hymn tune; the dual experience pertains
to sacred music generally. I hope that it may shed light on “abiding.” If the church indeed abides, does church music abide? If so, where and how does it abide? If the musics of this tradition continue to wither (as a general consensus tends to assert), where will they go, assuming that nothing just disappears? How will the music change hands? Or, how will it become subtly interwoven as unseen but constitutive cultural fabric?

The Appendixes include some examples of primary documents that I will present to the church as crucial to the church’s musical-historical narrative. These include documents about the pipe organ, reports from annual meetings, contracts, bulletins, and the like. There are many more that I do not include here, due to space considerations, such as concert programs, publishable field notes, and historical minutiae. In the Sixth Appendix, I describe the relationships and interactions I had with particular members, interactions that went through the musical, reaching to the personal. These relations harbored a musical component throughout; sometimes, a musical component came out of non-musical relationships. While highly intangible, I find this interpersonal aspect crucial to the music-ethnographic model and ethnomusicology generally; here, music is woven into the friendships that music also enabled.

In this Introduction, I situate my study with relevant religious, ritual-musical, and sociological scholarship, and suggest new angles of approach. First, I describe my analytical technique.

**Methods of Analysis**

This study is comparative by necessity. There are other churches, and other than the Quakers, they all have music programs. I am not revealing something otherwise unbeknownst. The bulk of the analysis is diachronic, but there does present a synchronic component, which I detail immediately below.
Synchronic Understanding

As a researcher, despite the goings-on of every other church on Sunday mornings, it is very difficult to observe and learn about their routines and musical workings. How then does the researcher perform synchronic analysis? Here, I use the term “synchronic” in keeping with an older anthropological definition of learning about a group of humans’ behavior “living within that society at a given period” (Mead 1954). Don Saliers’s study (2006) is consistent with this definition: here, he interviews small groups in different U.S. regions about their experience of and attitudes toward present-day hymnals and new hymns (see ‘Hymnody’ below). The more current utility of synchronic analysis – in keeping with its linguistic application – would be very relevant for studying, say, the exact keyboard accompaniments to hymns (“hymn-playing”) or the corporate volume (in decibels) amongst different congregations (“hymn-singing”) during the same period. I have found it very difficult, though, to not slip into diachronic analysis when studying anything religious; the kind of musical analysis I propose – of live hymn-realization – may be more suited to a pedagogical treatise, which organists are indeed very wont to do.

There is some opportunity for synchronic analysis, though. Two consistent touchpoints for this method throughout the study were current editions of The American Organist (the national organ guild’s monthly trade journal) and the other job that I held at St. John’s-on-the-Green Episcopal Church in Waterbury Connecticut. Briefly, I played the Noon Spanish-Language service at St. John’s after I played Higganum’s 10 AM service. Because I played two services each week, I had some frame of comparative reference. But I did not penetrate this site much beyond my musical duty. The service being in Spanish coupled with my limited language skills did not help this fact; interestingly, the Reverend who co-led these services for the last eight months also did not speak Spanish. Another weekly reference was the radio show “Prairie Home Companion.”

“Prairie Home Companion” might seem strikingly out-of-place here. Many of the indices of “Prairie Home Companion” (PHC), as with other variety shows, have near-literal
parallels in church services. This is not something that I have looked into with scholarly incision; I merely mention it to explain my own reading and interaction with the show. Throughout the two-hour program, the host Garrison Keillor, members of the house band, and guest artists render new versions of old songs. They sing simple harmonies with straightforward accompaniment. I have many times taken a song sung I heard during a PHC broadcast and inserted it into a service’s music. Like a church service, the show serves a weekly function to a fairly stable group of experiencers. In every congregational church service that I’ve played, there is a set time in the service for Prayers, sometimes called “Prayers of the People,” where the minister prays generally but also reads prayer cards submitted by the congregation. Similarly, the middle section of PHC is reserved for Garrison Keillor to read aloud the cards submitted by the live audience, each of which conveys a personal message in a public forum to a public audience. For those who listen often, they know that it is not uncommon for singers on the show to sing actual hymns in traditional ways (that is, in four-part harmony and with a choir). It is a supercultural experience; but unlike actual mega-church experiences, which are likewise supercultural, this is a supercultural projection of, essentially, a small community experience. In that way, I obtained much from its weekly airing throughout this project.

**Diachronic Understanding**

As Slobin writes in *Chosen Voices*, “[w]e start with history, with the understanding that the past is part of the present” (1989: 219). At churches, this sentiment is literally true as phrases such as “this is how we’ve always done it,” are both running jokes in churches and practical truisms. So I refer to relationships and past protocols of previous music directors frequently, because I am often musicking within templates of their design. This present/past-as-present workflow makes for a rudimentary diachronic analysis, as the way I reacted

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2 A good example of this is Father's Day 2010. On Mother's Day (May 8 2010), I heard Garrison Keillor sing Graham Nash's “Teach Your Children” (© Graham Nash 1970). The following month, I performed it for Father's Day.
to a situation is measured against how departed music directors similarly reacted. Sometimes, this analysis required going through reports of annual meetings to find out who would be the person currently present within the church best-suited to remembering an incident. This recursive pattern describes how I responded, even as an ethnographer, to information I received during participant-observation. That is, I asked people to explain what was going on, and they would refer me to the past. We would talk about the past from the present and things were clarified. Many members of the congregation had been there for decades and continue to be there, eclipsing the tenure of known musicians from Higganum’s “modern” era (1978 to present). They were useful founts of historical information, even when their reports conflicted (a diachronic-synchronic dissonance). Unlike the members, the referred-to musicians were absent from the place. Interviews with them and about them were necessarily also about the past, and through these collected memories, I began to figure out what the present traditions or “customs” (Temperly 1981) of the place were. There were other hints, though, of the musicians’ existences. These remnants were upstairs in the balcony, where a desk, file cabinets, and nooks and crannies\(^3\) housed clues into the goings-on, both mundane and thrilling, of music directors past. Here, I found once-but-no-longer-used anthem collections, old versions of hymnals, lapsed choir members’ folders, inventory systems, pictorial directories, endless Xerox copies of performed musics sometimes with frantically-written personnel assignments, arrangements for pieces that may never have sounded, and the like. Everything was annotated, and I could soon identify a document’s previous owner by quick sight of some hand-writing. These artifacts creeped out from drawers and cupboards throughout the church. I suppose I will go a step further and speculate: I found the beginnings of this thesis, a project that I now consider to be the completion (or

\(^3\) I mean this literally: I found a bundle of musical paperwork tied up in plastic in the crawl space under the stairs.
extension) of the gesture implied by, especially, Carolyn Halsted and Toby Twining, music directors’ whose tenures were consecutive with even a bit of overlap. Carolyn kept meticulous scrapbooks and transcripts of her choral programming as well as programs and bulletins from concerts and notable services. Toby’s gesture was not as fastidious, but I found yellow legal pads with attempts to organize the choral inventory of the place, a job that appears to have been abandoned. In his keeping unused sheet music that could have been thrown away, I note his own hunch that these documents were not negligible. I am glad that they were there to be found.

Lastly, this study is inherently diachronic, in that I move liberally between four different church program years (which align more or less with the academic calendar) at Higganum Congregational Church (September 2008-2012), and I include experiences and information from the current year (2012-2013) at First Church Suffield. Over the course of fifty-four months of work as a church musician, I have served under four different ministers. The comparative move is unavoidable, and natural.

In sum, I conducted research within a church-music system and reacted to the limitations binding that system; in recording those experiences as objectively as possible, I obtained fieldnotes. Working diachronically, I drew comparisons between “objective” truths by looking at the recent past and the continuum of activity with which my own participation dovetailed, that activity being comprised of the previous music directors’ tenures. Synchronic practice was largely limited to my other church job at the time and the mediated sources above, as I did not engage in frequent dialogue nor perform ethnographic fieldwork with other music directors at other churches during this time.

**Historical Scholarship**

As a literary researcher, the topic of “music in churches” is about as wide a net as there is. Throwing the net this wide, though, brings in some information not typically considered in the ethnomusicologist’s purview. Even something as general as music-
historical anthologies yield ethnographic observations in the explanation of this or that development. Charlotte Roederer, in her fascinating explanation of Guido of Arrezo’s formation of “solmization,” writes that “the purpose...was to enable performers to sight-sing without undergoing extensive theoretical instruction. The practice dilemma was the same one that choir directors face today” (Roederer 1982: 30). This means that the momentousness of the historical beginnings of solfege may have come out of a choir director’s mundane, but eminently identifiable frustrations. In the same volume, A. Planchart describes the dichotomous social and economic standing of “chaplains” and “minstrels” during the Ars Nova period, as it pertained to “music in society” (Planchart 1982: 120-3). Again, the tension between the “learned” and the “vernacular” musician present here can be read in the so-called “worship wars”, whose aesthetic conflicts play out most directly in musical ways.

While I did not read these books intending to corroborate my own research agenda, these data jumped out at me nevertheless\(^4\). In general, the works that interacted most with my own interests were often less about music and more about churches. I am leaving out many authors whose work is unquestionably relevant; I mention this not as a disclaimer, but simply because this paper at-large is not a literary analysis. I used the most specific scholarship available, to assist me in my own personal observational practice and in integrating that experience. As a result, I privileged the ethnomusicological and ethnographic texts above the more general surveys or even personal histories and philosophies about church music. Below, I categorize these sources according to content, rather than period. The categories I articulate below both deal with ecclesiastical practice: as it pertained to the culture it drew from and affected, and as it pertained to musical behaviors and production.

**Demographics and Local-Cultural Narratives**

David Dudley Field’s *A History of the Towns of Haddam and East Haddam* (1814) is a typical such volume of its time. It is a statistical and descriptive work, detailing the relevant

\(^4\) This is not to mention the Boethiusian dichotomy that privileges the music scholar over the practitioner, a dichotomy that continues to bifurcate the academy.
industries of the area and the time, giving some history, and most thoroughly, the founding years of churches (or “First Societies”), lineages of ministers, and property and financial holdings of those societies. In fact, Reverend Field wrote several such accounts of towns, churches, and families (1819, 1829, 1844, 1853, 1857) in Connecticut and Massachusetts. This one, though, pertains to his church, where he was the minister – the subtitle of the book above is “written by the Pastor of the Church in Haddam.” This account is all the more germane for our purposes, because David Dudley Field founded the church in Higganum when 100 or so members broke from the “Church in Haddam” in 18445. There is no writing from Field on this subject. But one of his successors in Haddam, Everett Lewis, discusses the schism in his Historical Sketch of the First Congregational Church in Haddam, Connecticut (1879). Other comparable studies of Congregational origins and local church activity in New England include Kathan (2004) and Daniels (1995).

These studies provide demographic accounts primarily, but they also reveal a bit of the flavor of the place as well. Field writes, “[t]he Indians were numerous. A large tribe inhabited East-Haddam…these were of a fierce and wretched character, remarkable for pawaws and the worship of evil spirits” (Field 1814: 4). He is similarly unflinching in his assessment of this or that religious practice as “godly” (ibid: 33, 41) or “unscriptural” (ibid: 39). In this way, it is philosophically coterminous with Gould (1853/1972), whose treatise Church Music in America, comprising its histories and its peculiarities… is an assessment of musical integrity as well as musical iniquity in worship, and how to differentiate between them. The archaism attached to these books may be quickly tabled while reading; the apologia of music in religion tends to be restated each generation. For example, at the churches where I’ve worked, “Music Appreciation Sundays” are part of the yearly schedule, with music making up the thematic literary material for the day, with various testimonials and special performances given that both celebrate music and justify its often-outsized presence in

5 Needless to say, I felt a great sense of dramatic irony while reading Field’s book on Haddam, writing as the newly-minted Pastor of Haddam First Society. Presumably, his own dissatisfaction lead to my writing about Higganum Congregational Church.
service. This rhetoric, disregarding the contemporary language, is strikingly similar to Gould’s message. Gould’s is the most substantial single writing on the subject of church music from the era, although individual sermons and pamphlets debating music’s ecclesiastical uses and potential for abuses are frequent.

I also include’s Why Catholics Can’t Sing (1990) in this section. Although trained as a musicologist and an organist, Day’s account is vividly ethnographic, filled with interviews with priests and parishioners and thick description of particular services over several years, including testaments from his own upbringing. The book is also historical, charting, explaining, and situating the immigration and rise of Irish-Catholicism in the United States. He is harsh in his assessment of the aesthetic problem in American Catholicism, attributing it to the preponderance of Irish-Catholic parishes in the States and particular aesthetic, especially musical, issues concomitant with that prevalence. If he is right, and it is true that over half of Congregationalists are former Catholics (an oft-asserted fact in Congregational churches, although my own research does not necessarily bear it out), then his hypothesis is transitively useful as a theory for answering my own such questions.

**Church Music and Pipe Organ-ic Histories**

There are many sources that pertain to this category. Indeed, hymnals will sometimes describe the history of their own origin and compilation, often with cultural commentary included. But the problem with music histories is the challenge of spanning large durations comprehensively while still giving vivid detail from several eras. John Ogasapian’s 2007 study is noteworthy as much for the way he organizes data as for the data itself. He focuses on published material such as psalters, hymnals, and mass-printed scores, landmark churches, and prominent composers and organists. An organist historian himself, he does well to identify the musician as alternating between being a cultural “selector” and “enactor”, to borrow useful terms from Justice (2012:259-261). His material spans four centuries very quickly; therefore, his prioritizing of data is on its own an instructive element. Snyder et al. (2002) takes up the organ itself as a cultural touchstone, about which multiple
narratives and movements play out. The authors in this volume support the following theoretical statement: that organs always are more than a musical instrument. From them, one can especially read the lines of influence, power, and aesthetic sensibility in a community. This thesis was especially helpful to me, as I dealt with Higganum Congregational’s 1905 Austin organ, and as I continuously deal with organs as a substantial portion of my music-directorial practice.

**Ethnographic Scholarship**

**The Ethnomusicological**

Ethnomusicologists have not given too much attention to the mainline Protestant music tradition, but this is explainable for two reasons. For many decades, and to an extent this is still true, post-war mainline Protestantism represented a socio-religious hegemony which did not require light to be thrown upon it. The other side of that coin, though, is that for many of those decades, the Euro-American base of researchers was too close to the material, and likewise, the material had not fully developed into something unique – did it reflect the status of American music, of patriotic music, of creative music, etc.? Here, I mean to say that although the Protestant church musical tradition was out there and known, its local Post-war version in small American churches was still forming itself. In Ogasapian’s book, most if not all of the key musical players until the middle of the 20th century were European-born; he himself, with one exception, largely avoids describing post-war church musics, no doubt because the present miasma of styles and practices does not lend itself to such survey techniques. Now, ethnomusicologists are seeing the vagaries of the tradition for what they are: indications of unique cultures, even “micro-musics”, happening right in front of our eyes, in the center of almost every town. There is even the spectre of a musical tradition slowly but surely vanishing. While not valorized by academia, these places of worship harbor a singular blend of the super-cultural with the idiosyncratic. How is the research model here different from the many listed above?
Certainly, an ethnomusicological study will also incorporate the demographic and the historical in framing and foregrounding their field research, but with an eye focused on music practice and an involvement as a participant-observer. The only example of such a study on American mainline church music, to my knowledge, is Deborah Justice’s recent doctoral dissertation (2012) on the musical structure of the Hillsboro Presbyterian Church in Tennessee. This larger scholarly endeavor is preceded by her more focused studies in 2009 and 2010, the former asking whether organists constitute a discrete group, the latter stating the analytical problems that arise from the “traditional/contemporary” paradigm which predominates intra-nationally and cross-denominationally. Because the locus of her research so closely resembles mine (without being identical), I refer to it throughout this work.

The ethnomusicological canon is expanding quickly to incorporate the practices of many of its members. Both Kiri Miller (2007) and Duncan Vinson (2010) write about general and specific groups’ affinities for archaic modes of musical expression. Miller, in *Traveling Home*, argues that the Sacred Harp community constitutes a diasporic phenomenon, bringing together not only disparate, regionally-bound groups into collaborative music-space, but the music-spaces themselves becoming destabilized from either New England (the practice’s historical roots) or the South (the practice’s now-authentic grounding). In fact, my colleague Ellen Lueck is exploring Sacred Harp’s throw trans-nationally. Vinson writes on the “secular choral society” as emblematic of the larger story of “liberal religion”, a moniker that can broadly apply to mainline Protestantism (Vinson 2010). He is careful not to overstate its function as a term, and draws out the nuances within particular communities. Both of these authors’ field research and analysis present crucial findings for my own purposes: namely, they separate the act of singing about God from the religious act. If the churches where I work present the same musics (or some abstractions thereof), do any of their drawn conclusions similarly apply?

Religion scholar Stephen Marini, while not trained in ethnomusicology, nevertheless deploys site-specific field research to discover, observe, and situate the sacred music practices
across several cultures (2003). In doing so, he captures the essence of the problem – different musical events have different levels and functions of sacred import to different people. To put it more paradoxically (and more how it is), the same thing may mean divergent things to different people, as he demonstrates especially in his description of the changing nature of the powwow, a powerful, spectacular event that nonetheless must be conscious of itself and its changing nature (Marini 2003: ‘Sacred Song Traditions of Native America’).

The model has parallels with other, similar work: with religious music, local details vivify more universal problems of valuation and ownership.

Two senior ethnomusicologists have also contributed to the prefatory scholarly history, as it were. Both deal even more directly with practitioners as individuals. Mark Slobin’s seminal work on the hazzan in America (1989) details personal histories, artistic formations, cultural-religious shifts, and actual musics that span well over a century of activity. Here, we see how a musician functions as a religious-institutional employee as well as a cultural canvas that reflects and portrays a community’s projections. We also see what is at stake – the hazzan is not merely an “enactor”, but a cultural decider as well, with lots of skin in the game to preserve his (and eventually, her) particular cultural appeal. Frisbie calls for work to be done of a similar scope on the church organist (2010). The big difference here is that she is one. This gives her the capacity to thoroughly animate some of the complexities of the job, on the level of the mundane, such as dealing with parishioners’ malfunctioning hearing aids, to the most nuanced dimensions of musicking – the giving up of a living wage in exchange for the sheer visceral joy of playing organ and facilitating the spiritual moment. She also delves into some unknown, long-repressed areas of the organist profession, such as sexuality, professional marginalization, and the problem of loneliness. As an organist, she says, “you may be treated as if you are invisible” (Frisbie 2010: 159). Frisbie lays out the scholarly call-to-arms with candor:

To date, in ethnomusicology very little work has been done on church music and church musicians in western European cultural settings. Now, with the advent of interest in popular music, we are slowly beginning to see
discussions of contemporary Christian music at our national meeting. But to
date, there are few publications about church music beyond studies, albeit
interesting and well done, and with a long history of ethnomusicology, of
hymnody among various Native American groups. Hymnody is also a major
concern in many issues of the American Organist, and in the Bohlman,
Blumhofer, and Chow (2006) volume. Yes, there is much to be said and done
about hymns—their histories, transmissions, introduction and disappearance,
role in ethnic identity, the production of hymnals in specific denominations,
the stories of their revisions over time, the struggles over change that
ensued, the resulting hybridity, syncretism, pluralism in textual and musical
aspects; and successful techniques to use when introducing new hymns in
today’s world where simpler times, when church and social life were more
coterminous, are gone. It’s all fascinating and calls for field studies,
documentation, deconstruction, thick description or what have you. But
there continues to be very little attention to the performers of church music,
beyond the studies of a few well-chosen contemporary preachers, gospel
groups, and the like. (Frisbie 2010: 148).

In this paper, I wish to answer this charge as thoroughly as possible, by addressing these
concerns but also by throwing into relief even more of the stressors and complexities that
face organists and church musicians. If knots form as a concomitant part of that intention,
then the reader will know a bit of the irreconcilability of the job as it truly is.

Other important studies take up music, but they do so under the auspices of religion
as the prevailing force.

**The Sociological and Religious**

At Mendocino Presbyterian Church, Stephen Warner performs the most thorough,
longitudinal study of an American protestant church community to date (Warner 1988). His
focus being on sociological flux and expression and not music, he nonetheless brings out
many of the problems later addressed by Justice (2012), as pertains to what change looks
like. Warner traces and shows the roots of extreme change, as the church in Mendocino goes
through what can only be described as an upheaval. He also brings to bear these structuralist
dichotomies that have long described the Protestant religious movement in America, albeit
only more recently and more monolithically applied to music (see Warner 1988: 51-3).
Warner focuses in on particular actors in the drama, and gives credence to the claim that
single, outsized personalities have disproportionate influence on a church’s trajectory (see
ibid: 240-250). He balances the raw drama endemic to this site and others like it with the national statistical pictures. In so doing, he raises key questions as to whether these local ethnographic sites obtain from larger denominational or sociological behavioral forecasts. Throughout this paper, I show the difficulty of parsing the large cultural trend from the small congregation’s own story. We will see that they are neither separate nor enmeshed but moreso vacillate between states of integration and detachment.

Another sociologist, Barbara Ehrenreich, provides further insight into the mixing of church and larger popular culture. In her study, she portrays the coeval, sometimes collusive, emergence of evangelical religion and business culture in 20th-century America (2009). She argues that the sensibility and language of Contemporary-Evangelical church protocol is continuous with business leadership discourse; indeed, she demonstrates that the trade literature shares tenets with religious rhetoric that go far beyond mere lexical scope. Numerous other studies examine the changing nature of church promotion within society, with Wade Clark Roof’s seminal 1999 *Spiritual Marketplace* setting the tone with its identification of market-forces being brought to bear on cross-national ecclesiastical behaviors. As worshippers have become “consumers” and churches “advertisers,” the notion of the religious experience, he argues, has undergone and continues to describe active change.

**The Research Stance**

**Clarifying the Emic and Etic**

Americans studying Americans (of comparable formations) is a form of reflexivity that must reconcile a set of problematics. In some of the studies above, we see some recent scholarly results of the call for the “ethnomusicology of the individual” (Stock 2001; Ruskin and Rice 2012) in concert with the autoethnographic move. In what ways do we articulate the space that defines us as inside or outside? And, how essential is it that we disentangle this murky space?
Briefly, in the scholarship discussed above, Deborah Justice, Charlotte Frisbie, and Monique Ingalls are practicing Christians. I cannot tell from Duncan Vinson’s nor from Kiri Miller’s writing much about their own religious orientation; it is not an overt component of their writing content. However, their research interests are live and local. Vinson is currently the professional music director of a Congregational church and deals with choirs and choral singing as a live practice, a practice comparable to his dissertation topic. Kiri Miller was (and was able to be) a devoted Sacred Harp singer long before she made it her field of ethnomusicological inquiry. The Christian orientation is, again, very broad, but this spiritual reference means that for the former writers (Ingalls, Justice, and Frisbie), experience of research is not wholly removed from the experience of spirituality (although one experiences spirituality and one does not, typically, “experience” research). That means that they can observe their own sensations vis-à-vis worship practice, whether or not they write it down. Justice, in examining a church’s divided worship practice, performs an act of research – few congregants besides her ever attend both services, whereas she consistently does so. Ingalls, coming out of the evangelical worship tradition – which is itself a less grounded phenomenon than a local church site – may be closer to researching and unpacking a self-originated compulsion. Frisbie provides vivid ethnographic detail by simply drawing from her own experience as a church organist. She also works in unorthodox fashion, canvassing the membership rolls of the Society for Ethnomusicology to find out about members’ own church music experiences, finding fourteen organists (!) in the ranks. She speculates on the deceptiveness of those numbers, assuming that the number of “closeted” church musicians is much higher. Her insider-ness is different than these others (unless Vinson goes on to write about his own choral direction), because she is writing as a “native” musical practitioner.

**Belonging and Not Belonging**

My stance as a researcher is not easy to unpack. Digging into the multiplicity of my roles at this church comprises both my perception of those roles, the church’s perception of
that role, and the historical perceptions of that role as can be deduced from conversation, intended interviews and paperwork. Titon speaks to the inherent complexity of observing ritual acts as a researcher (Titon 1985: 20-1); he lauds the field researcher who allows the contradictions and problems to come out, instead of ignoring them by taking on too limited a mask, or worse, by pretending to believe. As an employee of the Higganum church, I had privileged insight into its mechanistic goings-on. But I was far from an insider – in fact, the employees of the church (and there were only two of us) were the outsiders, the ones who did not “attend” the services but rather worked them. Neither myself nor the minister were “from” Higganum. I drove a short distance, and the minister lived in the church’s parsonage. While this fact gave the ministers’ on-site residence, it also meant that, should a minister ever be fired, “they [would be] thrown out of their home” (Interview 2012). As a researcher, then, I claim some credence as an outside observer recording what I see and hear. But when it comes to music (which is what it is I’m “researching”), I almost always participated, and participated in a curatorial, taste-shaping way. Still, I observed myself doing those things. In order to be ethnographically present, I use “I” and record my own behavior-as-organist as primary data.

How does this mode of research fit or flaunt the research models? Recently, Jesse Ruskin and Tim Rice have looked even closer at how ethnomusicologists treat the individual in research and writing (2012). While they do not directly take up autoethnographic work, their framework is still useful. They establish five categories for assessing “individuals” as a data-point: the importance of individuals to the study, the types of individuals, the theoretical purpose served, the “nature” of the encounter between researcher and subject, and the narrative strategies deployed. Using these categories, we can situate my own work with a degree of objectivity. Here, “I” and the “individual” are one and the same: the individual is “central to the narrative”, or type 3 of category 1 (2012:302); the individual is an
“average musician” (ibid:303-6), or type 3 of category 2; the theoretical study examines “difference in culture” (ibid:308), or type 2 of category 3; the individual is “directly encounter[ed]” (ibid:310-11), or type 1 from category 4; and the individual-centering brings out “polyvocality” (ibid:314), or type 4 from category 5. This last category is the most nebulous, because I do not pretend to be egalitarian in the distribution of voice. I represent organists and music directors in a hopelessly disproportionate way. However, as I include myself as one of several musicians, one of several staff members, and one of several church-culture experiencers, I lean closest to this categorization. In essence, this kind of study has not been taken up frequently, and the act of locating is not obvious. Likewise, Ruskin and Rice’s framework will most likely continue to evolve so as to incorporate those scholarly experiences that slip between these fresh structural tools. It will take embarking upon a larger study of organists generally in order to tease out a clearer historical and present-day picture of this group. Slobin’s study of the cantorial tradition (1989) is the model to follow for producing such a document in the future. Although the book is widely read and has been in print for over twenty years, no one has conducted a similar study of Christian liturgical musicians.

**Expanding the Inter-disciplinary Reach**

Throughout my training as an ethnomusicologist, it has been impressed upon me over and again that the ethnomusicological discipline intersects anthropology and musicology. While a truism, this statement has little practical use. The three fields are so broad in scope and multi-dimensional that such an acknowledgment takes us only so far as a generalization can. Empirical methods of anthropological observation, for instance, have lost most of their caché in ethnomusicological research, as the anti-positivist revolution largely mitigated empiricism’s scholarly value in the humanities and “softer” sciences. Regardless, biological anthropology continues to exist and provide data useful for, among
others, sociobiologists. In this paper, I draw minimally but significantly from the field of evolutionary psychology to form a testable hypothesis about the politics of sexuality that present in church communities. One minister summarized the church where ze worked as suffering from an “overwhelming fear of conflict” (Interview 2013). In such a situation, the status quo prevails, sometimes for generations. Evolutionary psychology and evolutionary ecology provide some theories as to what makes such inveteracy so functional within these environments. First, I apply the framework of ecology to this subject.

**Aesthetic Ecology**

In Higganum, I found that the margin for atypical musics, musics that neither originated from nor directly pertained to the religious situation, was very accommodating. The members and leadership were happy with me (and previous music directors) coming up with my own material, based almost entirely on the personal, musical, and acoustic resources provided by (and for) the church. There were disagreements of opinion about this or that music, but this occasional discord only reinforced the church’s own agency in its ultimate musical production. Therefore, I argue that this church crafts its own aesthetic, what I call throughout this paper an *aesthetic ecology*. The concept of ecology jibes well with Ethnomusicology in general – biologist Eric Pianka classically defines ecology as extending the limits of traditional biological research by “directing upward and outward from the individual organism to its environment” (Pianka 2011: 1). In other words, ecological studies take the environment of their subjects into account; similarly, ethnomusicologists rarely separate musics from their foregrounds and backgrounds, or what my peer M. Ishiguro referred to as that which is “around the music” (in-class discussion 2012), and which I liken to a fluid environs that music both draws from and is discrete from.

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6 This statement itself re-states professor Mark Slobin’s oft-asserted idea that music is like water and “just gets everywhere”, a quote from an in-class lecture in 2012.
Music in the Hands of Evolutionary Psychology

Evolutionary psychologist Geoffrey Miller argues that “…music is a complex adaptation, and it has costs, but no survival benefits…[t]he principal biological function of music, then is sexual courtship” (Miller 2000: 336; see also Miller 1999, 2001). Such an overarching statement means little to ethnomusicologists, unless of course they believe this, as I do. What this means, then, is that whether or not this or that individual, group, or culture is aware of their musicking for this purpose, this is the purpose nonetheless. Because there is such a depth of layering between this theory and the common experience of music as it is perceived and appreciated, I don’t mean to project any explicit exploitation of musicians or music within the ecclesiastical or any other sphere. I do find that this theory and other, more general ones that this theory itself draws from (see Dawkins 1976, 1997; and Hrdy 1999), help me to navigate the vagaries of behavior that may otherwise confound me. In this paper, and in Chapter Five especially, I use these theories to present a testable hypothesis for, among other things, the prevailing sexual orientation (homosexuality) and social demeanor of pipe organists. In filling out this hypothesis, though, I bring into the discussions personal and recorded interviews with gay organists, in hopes of presenting the most fully-formed portrait of an unquestionably problematic topic.

So Why Church Music, and Why Now?

Site-specific research allows us to get close to a subject and see how multi-layered reality is when compared to our assumptions. I argue that a single church can be unique unto itself, even counter-cultural. By counter-cultural, this may apply to culture generally, or it may refer to flaunting its own perceived and received customs. Can a church be culturally-reformative? Can one minister or music director work against the grain to shake things up and overturn staidness? Is a church capable of presenting anything but minor deviations from supercultural norms? Finally, are the power dynamics that dominate the church really the manifestations of theology and belief, or instances of mammals protecting resources and
ensuring legacy through memetic procession? This last question unabashedly invokes the above theory of evolutionary psychology and the work of Richard Dawkins, who clearly identified his intention to “examine the biology of selfishness and altruism” (Dawkins 1976:1).

The ethnography that I embark upon in this thesis is not an attempt to conjure up positive or revolutionary answers to those questions at all costs. I cannot deny that something unusual was allowed to happen at Higganum Congregational on a weekly basis, and that there is an undeniable uniqueness to the story, one I do not shy from. I also cannot speculate that such uniqueness is, paradoxically, unique at all. How many other churches operate so detached from regulatory radar and with counter-cultural motivations? As I begin to practice music in another church, will I find that a new “aesthetic ecology” is present or ready to be tapped? Perhaps there are many churches that occupy similar states of aesthetic, even ideological tenuousness. But the more stark reality is this: within the exciting, inspiring moments I unveil, there are also stories of disappointment and failure, of resignation, confusion, and compromise, of incompatibility and miscommunication. This ethnography paints a portrait of complexities and cross-purposes, of personal relations amidst corporate worship, of fundamentalism and utter ecumenicalism in simultaneity and shared space. It is full of contradictions and hot emotionality. In other words, this paper is the accidental love story between me and a religious community, grounded in weekly ritual, shared meals, passionate friendships, and public fights. In that way, it is the essence of ethnomusicological activity: the musics of the world come from actual worlds and we dismantle music from its context at a cost. Herein, I describe the world of Higganum Congregational Church as I perceived it from the organ bench, as its Music Director.
Chapter One

Service Musics of Higganum Congregational Church, 2008-2012

The Traditional Protestant Service At Higganum

In this chapter, I lay out the multivalent issues that foreground the assembling and preparing of musics for a typical Sunday service, based on my 54 months as a “Minister of Music” for Congregational churches in Connecticut. The two churches where I’ve acted as the senior musician are both mainline Protestant churches, and the services themselves ascribe more closely to the Traditional side of the polarized continuum, a dichotomy often referred to as the “Traditional” and “Contemporary” (Justice 2012, Ingalls 2008, Roof 1999, Long 2001). Traditional services do adhere to a formula – as a competent pipe organist, I could walk into any comparable (“mainline” Protestant) church throughout this country ten minutes before service begins on a Sunday morning, grab a bulletin, and get through the service just fine, musically speaking. However, individual church services such as Higganum’s, depending on their lay and clergy leadership, may not ascribe obviously to either pole as indicated above, nor may those dyadic constructs be useful as referents. These services may involve creative deployments of instrumental and personnel resources, as well as unconventional programming and performance gestures. If the elders of a church especially are fairly lenient in terms of laying down ground-rules, as Higganum’s elders were, such a creative environment can take hold. At Higganum, live musical choices, based specifically on the site and its particularities, supplanted the the rigors and predictable tropes of the “Traditional” mainline service. Likewise, a church’s sacrosanct “customs” (Temperly 1981) sometimes end up being more supple than might otherwise be. Given certain acoustic, social, and ideological restraints, what musics emerge? And how supple are those limits? The restraints are many and varied; they depend largely on the church and what and who is in it, and the music director's capabilities.
What is Possible in The Space

At a typical Sunday service at a typical mainline church, a churchgoer hears: an organist play a Prelude and Postlude, a choir sing an Anthem, and one other performed music – a vocal solo, another pipe organ piece, an instrumental piece, a children’s choral piece, or another, possibly contrastive, choral selection. This churchgoer will also sing two or three hymns, reading notes and words from a hymnal when indicated in the “order of worship”, known more colloquially as the church “bulletin.” Lastly, she will sing along to two short inveterate liturgical pieces, the “Doxology” and, usually, the “Gloria Patri.” Later, I go into great detail about Higganum’s own realization of these placeholders. First, I want us to have an image of the musical space. The space is a metaphor for what is possible generally – you can only do what the space allows for; similarly, you can only do what the congregation is capable of or ready for.

Spatial Considerations at Higganum and Suffield

Most every American mainline Protestant church has pews, an altar, microphones on the pulpit and a corresponding set of public address speakers, a pipe organ or piano, and an area that the choir sings from. The physical placement of instruments, choristers, and worship leaders within the worship space has an undeniable influence on what can and cannot be done within that space. The next pages (Figures 1-5) include photographs of the sanctuary spaces that this chapter's musical details apply to. The majority of my description comes from Higganum Congregational Church (Figs. 1-3). Figures 4 and 5 show the organ and chancel of First Church Suffield.

Referring to Higganum (Fig. 1), we observe that the chancel is easily crossed in a matter of seconds, handy for those occasions when it was necessary for me to move between the organ and piano on the other side of the room (the piano was removed in these pictures because of ongoing ceiling leaks). Likewise, if the minister needed to get a message
Figure 1. The Chancel and Organ
The distance between the pulpit (podium on viewer’s left) and the edge of the organ bench is fifteen feet.

Figure 2. The Choir sings on “Rally Sunday” 2011 with me conducting from the organ
from l-r, singers only: Peggy Morrill, Paul Lewis, Linda Hansen, Ken Wendt, Stew Gillmor, Lori Chadwick, Rogene Gillmor, Claire Tine (she is seated, and a music stand and another singer largely blocks her, but you can make out her glasses and the pattern of her dress), and Anne Rhodes
to me quickly, he or she inconspicuously could do so in, say, the middle of a hymn by walking down the few stairs and whispering in my ear, a frequent occurrence. There was a period of many weeks in a row where the Reverend Judith Cooke relayed important messages to me during the first hymn that she did not have the chance to tell me amidst the rush of pre-service activity. This setup is intimate; the choir members jam into a small square of carpet hemmed-in by the organ, the back wall, and the organ console (Fig. 2). Because of proximity to the pews (the first pew is a yard from the organ bench), the organist can hear exactly how loud and confidently a congregation sings its hymns. He or she can tell which organ registrations, tempos, and other factors are most effective in bringing out spirited singing (this being a relative term). The closeness makes the organist very vulnerable as well. Generally speaking, it is nearly impossible to get through a service without making some mistakes here and there, however innocuous. At Higganum, I found that making mistakes only endeared me to the congregation. Two memorable moments stick out, both involving
hymn-confusion. I mention them because the friendly, sympathetic reactions below are emblematic of this space’s possibilities.

My daughter was born on Friday, March 13 2009. The Sunday following (the 15th), I came to play the service since I didn’t have many days off. People were a little surprised to see me, but I felt fine. Halfway through the hymn introduction (where I typically played an unaccompanied verse), I heard some murmuring behind me. Thinking nothing of it, I launched into the first verse even though very few voices joined me in singing. Reverend Max Olmstead sauntered over casually and said, "You’re playing the wrong page." I stopped abruptly, and the congregation laughed heartily while Max joked, "We can forgive him that one, right folks?" A few years later, the bulletin included a hymn that I hadn’t heard before, “I Will Lift the Cloud of Night” (© Clifford Jones 1916; New Century Hymnal), #482 from the NCH. I strode over to the piano for this one and started a half-vocal (with clapping), half-piano introduction. Then, when the hymn proper began, I yelled out, "I need everyone to sing with me!" That's when Judith calmly said, "You're playing from the wrong hymnal." It was Communion Sunday, and since those services are better-attended, there was quite a bit of laughter.

The intimacy also afforded me the chance to ambush congregants at a moment’s notice to turn pages for me. Typically, I asked choir members, but a too-packed choir square meant that it wasn’t always feasible for the best-suited choir member to get to me. Because good friends of mine, the Gardners, typically sat close to me when they attended, I usually cajoled Kamilla Gardner into turning pages, which she enjoyed. One can imagine the myriad opportunities for spontaneity this space afforded, thanks to the lack of distance between clergy, musicians, and laity.

Comparatively, the larger sanctuary space of First Church of Christ in Suffield is more traditionally European. The organ itself is responsible for much of this fact. It is
Figure 4.
The Gress-Miles/Andover Organ of First Church of Christ, Congregational (UCC), Suffield

Figure 5.
View from the Choir Loft, First Church Suffield
designed in the *werkprinzip* style, meaning that chests are exposed and geometrically aligned so that tonal blending is mellifluous\(^1\) (see Figures 4 and 5, previous page). These Neo-Baroque organs are also known for being very loud, if not shrill\(^2\). The ideological implications for these organs are multi-faceted. As a person, the organist is not visible. In point of fact, s/he is effectively invisible, bestowing on the organ and organist the mystique associated with acousmatic effect, that of "a sound that one hears without seeing the causes behind it" (Kane 2011: 214; see also Kane 2012 for further discussion on the literary and philosophical roots of acousmaticity, some of which involves mysterious sounds in a church). As we shall later see, the sheer loftiness of the organ has implications on who may be in the choir loft. Suffice to say, there is no elevator. Obviously, the Suffield setup precludes spontaneous communication between myself and the ministers, and it is equally impossible to communicate with congregants mid-service. The interaction at Higganum is more electric.

**Feasibility**

The choosing of musics and the implementation of those choices is at the mercy of its "capability of being done", the Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of “feasible.” Feasibility is tested and stretched along these points in the musical routine: the musical capacity of choral singers, the musical capacity of the congregation, the aesthetic-ideological tenets that ground the congregation, and the traditions or “customs” of the church that are untouchable. Therefore, feasibility is both a question of practical and ideological concern. The combination of answers that emerge from these two concerns form a site’s unique

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\(^1\) The *werkprinzip* movement also implies certain registral conventions that builders adhere to and that organists abide by. See Baker (2008: 31) for a basic discussion; also, Peter Williams (1965: 66-7) gives a tidy, poetic summation.

\(^2\) This is a subject that demands further research. Why would replicated organ designs from one site be so aurally unattractive in another? Organist and organ historian Ronald Ebrecth submits that American churches did not factor in the enormity of the spaces they were copying; hence, a *ruckpositiv* chest that sits 40 feet off the ground in a German church with an 80' high arched ceiling, will have a far different effect than the same set of pipes, 15 feet off the ground in an American church’s sanctuary.
music-productive state, its aesthetic ecology. In response to these ideological concerns, we can ask, in what environments are new ideas “too new”, even incendiary?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Instruments</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Mood/ Affekt</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Congregation's Attentiveness/ Participation Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prelude</td>
<td>Organ or other solo instrument or instrumental ensemble</td>
<td>2'-5'</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td>Prepare for worship</td>
<td>Usually “classical”; may be improvised</td>
<td>High/ Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthem</td>
<td>Choir, a cappella or accompanied</td>
<td>2'-5'</td>
<td>Depends roughly on goings-on in liturgical narrative</td>
<td>emphasize theological theme or message; may reflect liturgical calendar</td>
<td>Any; but most choirs require scores ascribing to Euro-American conventions</td>
<td>High/ Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymns</td>
<td>Congregation plus choir with organ accompaniment</td>
<td>2'-6', depends on length of verse and # of verses</td>
<td>Besides Easter being triumphant and usually in major keys, hymns per season span variety of emotional states</td>
<td>To facilitate corporate participation, collectivize cultural ethos; enhance message</td>
<td>Range from Plainchant to Bach Chorales to “Nero Spirituals” to “Contemporary” styles; Episcopal tradition given preference by traditionalists</td>
<td>High/Varies on familiarity of hymn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria Patri/ Doxology</td>
<td>Congregation plus choir with organ accompaniment</td>
<td>30&quot; each</td>
<td>Triumphant, laudatory</td>
<td>Only liturgical moments that are identical week-to-week</td>
<td>16th-century tunes (“Old Hundredth” the “Gloria Patri” by Henry Greatorex)</td>
<td>High/High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offertory</td>
<td>Organ solo or Choir with Organ</td>
<td>2'-5'</td>
<td>See listing under ‘Anthem’; for organ soloists, often an improvised piece</td>
<td>To score the giving of monies to the church</td>
<td>See listing under ‘Anthem’; for organ soloists, they may improvise so as to underscore the mood of the sermon, which the Offertory immediately follows</td>
<td>Varies (according to readiness to hand in envelope); Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postlude</td>
<td>See “Prelude”</td>
<td>2'-7'</td>
<td>Generally exuberant</td>
<td>Traveling exit music</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td>Varies/Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE I. Musical Placeholders in an American (mainline) Protestant church service
Musicians – the category as applied to all the music-makers at churches – make different kinds of mistakes than others: the kind that people hear. Generally, playing a wrong note is far less dangerous than playing an offensive piece of music. Predicting what might give offense requires great tact and sensitivity. But without taking those risks, does the music itself risk becoming an historical referent; or will it still happen in and as the present, a component of sacred practice? This chapter, as well as this paper generally, attempts to dig into those questions.

**Tradition**

The concept of tradition, though, comes into play during this chapter as well. There are many lively paradoxes at work in churches, and they vary as to the amount that they produce tension. One is this idea of a larger denominational or national musical “tradition”, co-present with each congregation’s singular aesthetic ecology. Throughout his writings, Nicholas Temperley does well to throw into relief the reality of tradition which he unpacks as active “customs”.

Conservatism is always a strong force in religious music, and indeed in religious customs in general: many elements in Christian liturgies are older than Christianity itself. Religion, after all, deals in eternal truths, and this means in practice that the older members of any community tend to guard the customs they knew in their childhood, which seem eternal. (Temperley 1981:512, emphasis mine).

Despite this catholic embrace of eternal customs, musical customs tend to be highly regionally variant. Temperley goes on to quote 18th century music reformers in England who complain that “there are no two churches that sing alike. Yea, I have myself heard ... ‘Oxford’ tune sung in three churches with as much difference as there can possibly be between ‘York’ and ‘Oxford,’ or any two other different tunes” (ibid:525). Custom-guarding, then, may only perpetuate unique aesthetic ecologies instead of preserving of a more ecumenical, cross-congregational sacred music.
How did Higganum handle these counter-pressures? Table I (previous page) lists the major indices, with some descriptive notes. We will begin at the beginning.

**The Prelude**

This category, along with the Postlude, provides the most opportunity for music directors or organists (when the position is not combined) to choose music. For a given church, certain other environmental factors contribute to its general aesthetic. At some churches, the prelude begins unannounced while people are finding their seats and socializing beforehand.

At such locations, the organist is not under severe pressure to “perform,” considering the music is largely atmospheric, even “furniture”-like, to borrow an idea from Erik Satie. At Higganum Congregational Church, my tenure began according to this protocol. No one gave me any particular instructions, and so I based my playing on the few Christian weddings I had attended where organs scored the seating. During this period, I was most comfortable improvising on the instrument. As it dawned on me that the congregation expected a more formal preludic moment, I began to wait for a cue from then-minister the Reverend Dr. C. Maxwell Olmstead before beginning a “concert” piece. I use the scare quotes to introduce the idea that concert protocol is part and parcel of religious liturgical music. Obviously, many churches, as part of their multi-function, serve as community concert halls.

Sometimes, preludes are listed as nothing more than “Prelude” in the church bulletin. During my first four months I rarely gave names to these pieces. Eventually, I planned pieces from the canon or planned to improvise and indicated these choices appropriately in the bulletin. Significantly, the names given to instrumental pieces are often very reduced as to be untraceable, or they are misleading. I’ve seen many old and current bulletins where the

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3 And why didn’t they? I used to think two separate but related ideas contributed to the void of instruction: deference to my assumed knowledge, and politeness, that they didn’t want to butt in or tell me how things used to be done. The Reverend Jonathan Lee, though, argues that such behavior is more indicative of a New England maxim: “figure it out yourself, and if you get it wrong, then we’ll come after you.”
prelude’s title will be printed as “Adagio,” followed by an inch of space, followed by, say, “Mozart.” Played on organ? On piano? Violin or Oboe with keyboard accompaniment? Why would organists be inclined to give such vague information?

Sometimes it’s not their fault. Organ anthologies give us some clue as to that practice. The collection “Organ Voluntaries, selected, arranged, and composed by Alexander Schreiner” (1937), for instance, contains five different pieces each with the title “Andante”, by Beethoven, Gluck, Grieg, Guilmant, and Mozart-Schreiner (Schreiner 1937:index). Similar titles are present throughout (“Adagio” being another frequent one). Reading through them, the casual reader might notice some very familiar pieces – the middle movements from Beethoven’s “Appassionata” Sonata #23 (Op. 57) and “Pathetique” Sonata #8 (Op. 13) comprise an “Adagio” and a “Adagio Cantabile” in these titles. This kind of protocol makes it difficult to trace musics from the information provided in a bulletin.

This is where being an organist is very helpful. For example, while going through old documents in the summer of 2012, I found a 1970 Higganum bulletin that read “Andante Cantabile” for the prelude with the composer listed as “Widor.” Cynthia Klitsch was the organist that day, a revelation unto itself. It was an especially serendipitous find, because I had just finished playing that exact same piece for the Prelude earlier that day, and I knew it to be the second movement of Widor’s 5th Symphonie. Rather, I should say that I am very confident that if she played the piece printed that day, then that was the piece she played. In point of fact, I probably did not play what was printed ten percent of the time. I always felt a little guilty about this, like I was lying to the congregation. I used to announce changes before services, but that felt like a waste of time, and every service is timed either overtly or tacitly, leading us to the topic of durational limits. We see the limited extent to which bulletins are able to function as documents of descriptive record. Lest I be accused of making a claim based only on my own experience, the reader need think only of concerts they have attended, where changes are made to programs. Bulletins are, in the end,
prescriptive devices and like any script, things get excised or altered. A tidy bulletin, though, is valued by some members and clergy. A tidy bulletin may incur a more efficient service.

Here is some out-and-out truth: Mainline Protestants get really agitated when services approach ninety minutes. A lean, quick service is held in high regard. At Higganum, if the services lasted seventy-five minutes, I heard about it almost immediately. In defense of the complainers, those services did have poor pacing, and we could have accomplished what we accomplished in less time. Admittedly, music directors have some real power over durations. Note that the timings of nearly all non-hymn musics in Table I bear out this claim of limited durational leeway. Most published Anthems are fairly short compositions, and the editing-down of longer compositions is very common practice in hymnals and in Anthems, especially those designed for youth choirs. Because time limits were tacitly imposed, I found that contemporary pop music (operating under comparable time restrictions) lent itself well to becoming church music.

From the beginning at Higganum, I was given the opportunity to take some risks with Preludes. By playing preludic music well before the service started, I had music filling the room as soon as people walked in. For “World Communion Sunday”, in both 2008 and 2010 a denominationally-designed service theme that the United Church of Christ encourages churches to take up on the second Sunday of October, the church’s children and I sang *gahu* songs for several minutes prior to service. I taught them the songs at 9:40 or so and we kept singing them until the service started at 10. For outdoor services especially, I relied heavily on Ghanaian bell patterns or songs to introduce services. At the church where I now work, I have also played some Ghanaian music. At both churches, vernacular musics are, by and large, encouraged during Prelude. Both Higganum and Suffield responded very positively to the stride-piano rendition of “Sunny Side of the Street” (that I transcribed off

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4 The altering of strenuous components in iconic pieces for feasibility’s sake takes place ubiquitously in the publications of sheet music for all levels of volunteer choirs.

5 *Gahu* is an iconic *Ewe* (Volta River region in Ghana) drum-dance. I taught the songs as they were taught to me over a six year-period by Abraham Adzenyah.
of a Harry Connick Jr. album called “Twenty” when I was sixteen). In 2009, I began playing self-arranged versions of Popular songs from the Rock, Indie Rock, and Folk genres. Table 2 lists some of these Popular but non-liturgical songs that I presented as Preludes and in other service-music slots since 2008, with relevant recording artists and deployed instrumentation.

When I started, HCC likewise offered no directives as to the generic or aesthetic requirements of non-hymnal service musics. They trusted me. They might not, however, have known how ignorant I was of Protestant music tradition, although they were very well aware of my Jewishness. Or, my not having had extensive traditional fore-grounding might have been to their preference. The actual truth includes both of these realities, and different people would no doubt posit different summations of that situation. Whatever the reason, the Prelude spot remained extremely fluid. For the October 9, 2009 service in my second year at Higganum, then-graduate students Aaron Paige and Raphaelle Brochet played Karnataka music (South Indian singing with mrdangam accompaniment) for the Prelude, Offertory, and Postlude. On November 6 2011, the last day of a festival at Wesleyan University honoring experimental music composer Alvin Lucier, I performed a very unstructured improvisation with flutist and sculptor Michael Pestel as the Prelude. On still other occasions, things sprung up last-minute. That same Fall, a congregant and her husband put together a Powerpoint-esque slideshow of photographs comprised of church members doing things at various activities. They ask me to provide some live scoring for that presentation minutes before it was projected. At the time, we had in place an “Artist-Residency” program with soprano Anne Rhodes singing in services once each month. I asked Anne to open up a bible, pick two lines of text from the book of Luke, and improvise using that text while I played functionally-harmonic chords underneath her voice.

The Prelude requires scrutiny, simply to understand what and why it is. It is probably the most open-ended of service musics, and it is the musical moment where the congregation, choir, and clergy are most captive. Whereas a prelude may have once scored the clergy and the clergy’s entourage procession through a large European cathedral, it is
now music that facilitates congregants’ “entering worship” (Fidler 2013). I know for a fact that, despite my weak singing voice, the effect of seeing me sing a Kinks song with guitar self-accompaniment as the first thing in a service convinced at least two people to join the Higganum church. The UCC denomination’s preoccupation with multi-culturalism also gave me a kind of official dispensation to present (not perform) the Ghanaian and Karnatak musics in direct fulfillment of service-music indices. Was this passivity, muted resentment, or tacit endorsement? Whatever the individual opinion, the church functioned with this mixture of generic and performance styles, musical eras, and cross-culturality. The one music that we did not present consistently was Contemporary Christian Music in its rock band format.

From what I experienced, though, I doubt this would have been rejected either.

**TABLE 2. “Secular” musics presented during liturgy at HCC 2008-2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Artist (with whom I associate it)</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wild Horses</td>
<td>The Rolling Stones</td>
<td>Organ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All My Love</td>
<td>Led Zeppelin</td>
<td>Organ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Worry, Baby</td>
<td>The Beach Boys</td>
<td>Organ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Want to Dance with Somebody</td>
<td>Whitney Houston</td>
<td>Organ (played 12 February 2012, the day after the pop singer’s death)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach Your Children Well</td>
<td>Crosby, Stills, and Nash</td>
<td>Singing and Playing Guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Want to Know What Love Is</td>
<td>Foreigner</td>
<td>Organ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagine</td>
<td>John Lennon</td>
<td>Organ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Here Comes the Sun</td>
<td>The Beatles</td>
<td>Organ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have You Ever Seen the Rain?</td>
<td>Credence Clearwater Revival</td>
<td>Organ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You've Got A Friend</td>
<td>James Taylor</td>
<td>Singing and Playing Guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackbird</td>
<td>The Beatles</td>
<td>Organ, Guitar, Piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will You Love me Tomorrow?</td>
<td>The Shirelles</td>
<td>Organ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forget</td>
<td>Daniel Clay</td>
<td>Harpsichord and Voice (Janet, my spouse singing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isn't She Lovely?</td>
<td>Stevie Wonder</td>
<td>Piano, voice (me). and Tenor Saxophone (Stew Gillmor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Soft Seduction</td>
<td>David Byrne</td>
<td>Organ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strangers</td>
<td>The Kinks</td>
<td>Guitar, Janet and me singing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galileo</td>
<td>Indigo Girls</td>
<td>Guitar, Janet singing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song</td>
<td>Artist (with whom I associate it)</td>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let it Be</td>
<td>The Beatles</td>
<td>Organ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where You Lead</td>
<td>Carole King</td>
<td>Organ and Voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In My Life</td>
<td>The Beatles</td>
<td>Singing and Playing Guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk the Line</td>
<td>Johnny Cash</td>
<td>Singing and Playing Guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shower the People</td>
<td>James Taylor</td>
<td>Singing and Playing Guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I did for love</td>
<td>Marvin Hamlisch</td>
<td>Organ with Janet singing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Programmatic Power**

Given all this freedom of musical expression, are there still parties with greater control of the reins? If so, which parties? To answer this, we need to think about the larger functioning of the church.

Fundamentally, Congregational churches identify themselves as independent entities that make their own decisions and run their own show. This is true in many facets of church life: property upkeep, financial solvency and policy, long-range planning, recruitment, children’s education, etc. The amount to which internal control dominates these categories does vary slightly from church to church (e.g., Higganum’s primary administrative assistant is a member, Lori Chadwick, who refuses to be paid, whereas First Church employs a non-member who is paid a substantial annual salary). But I argue that when it comes to music and worship in general, the congregation as a discrete body does not “decide” things. There may be a congregational consensus that is tacitly felt, but without its being articulated, a programming trope can go on indefinitely, sometimes until the proponent dies. In *New Wine in Old Wineskins*, Stephen Warner puts forth compelling evidence supporting the theory that dynamic individuals within the right set of social circumstances can and do enact sweeping reforms that will change a church’s direction. In the Presbyterian church in Mendocino that he describes, the two primary individuals that he discusses are a lay leader and a minister. The former’s neo-conservatism paves the way for the minister’s entrance into the church. The minister then grows the church tremendously under his leadership (Warner 1988: 31),
but eventually these two compatible individuals vie for power, eventually leading to a split. In this particular split, both parties leave the church. Looking at it more broadly, Warner states that these two parties plus the leaders before them “have left Mendocino, but the church abides” (ibid: 30).

My own experience has borne this out. If a person wanted something to happen at Higganum, and they voiced their desire with authority, that thing happened. My being hired at Higganum was the action of the minister at the time acting with authority; because no one voted on it, I was in a no-man’s land for a month, but ultimately he pushed it through (still with no congregational or committee-led vote), and I had a contract. While Suffield operated differently, it is clear to me that one person’s vision on the committee led to my application’s consideration, my interview and audition, and ultimately the job offer. From the decoration of the sanctuary to the charitable causes to the liturgical musics, a strong opinion has real purchase within a Congregational church; combining this assertion with Warner’s own finding through field work, I claim that the individual voice has the greatest authority amongst church members. I want to caution, though, that their influence pales in comparison to denominational materials. Denominational materials, which include things such as hymnals, texts for spoken prayers, thematic ideas for services, outreach projects, and educational curricula, are the warehouses that those with the outsized voices sift through to find their cause. No matter who does the ordering, the denomination makes the menu. Unless the church decides to go off-menu, the aesthetic ecology always reflects more than a little of the national ecology, the environment of the denomination.

**Hymns**

Hymnody being an aspect of liturgy that is widely discussed, I appreciate the many points of view that this topic tends to bring to boil. Here, I will discuss only the particulars of programming. At the churches where I’ve played organ and conducted research, ministers are the officially sanctioned choosers of hymns. This is borne out as well in Deborah Justice’s field research at the Presbyterian church at Hillsboro. Jeffrey Brillhart, organist and
music director at Bryn Mawr Presbyterian in Philadelphia, likewise assured me that hymnchoosing is, in the formal Presbyterian church, a ministerial affair. But even here, there is per-church variation. Alan Rodi, the current music director at Higganum, played as a summer substitute at another congregational church, and they encouraged him to pick the hymns. During her tenure at Higganum, Carolyn Halsted shared weekly phone calls with ministers to co-curate hymns, a ritual she remembers fondly. During Interim periods (when churches are without a “settled” pastor), the onus to program the liturgy and pick hymns fell on her even more directly. Whether the church has a strong authority presence in the clergy position can influence how this plays out, but the prevailing convention is for ministers to “select” and the organist (and congregation) to “enact” (Justice 2012: 259).

When I began at Higganum, this was a happy arrangement for me, considering I didn’t know any Protestant hymns, other than the ones that had made it into the superculture, such as “Amazing Grace” and “Jesus Loves Me.” I also tended to inadvertently innocently recast them, due to the absence of a hymn-playing standard in my life. Memorably, I played “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” a traditional hymn set to the tune “Beecher,” in the style of a 70s rock song, comparable to The Steve Miller Band’s sound. To me, it wasn’t a radical move. To the church, it was. I remember The Reverend Max Olmstead being very pleased at this rendition. Conversely, the Reverend Jonathan Lee asked, “did you hear from any of the ones who weren’t?”

Generally, ministers are frustrated with their congregations for their reluctance toward singing newer hymns, such as ones printed in the New Century Hymnal (Pilgrim Press 1994), known in most Congregational churches as “the Black hymnal.” The roots of that frustration, though, are complex. How does it get put together, week-to-week? Ministers typically work from the Lectionary, meaning that they are in either Year A, B, or C. Hymnals

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6 The Lectionary is “A book containing ‘lessons’ or portions of Scripture appointed to be read at divine service; also, the list of passages appointed to be so read” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2013). After completing Years A, B, and C of the Lectionary, all pertinent scripture will have been read. Having grown up Jewish, I liken it to the assigned weekly Torah portion.
recommend usually seven or eight hymns that correspond with that week’s scriptural readings. Considering that there are two hymnals which share some redundancies with each other, a minister will have about ten or twelve hymn choices. When cross-referencing bulletins with lectionary recommendations, I found that ministers’ choices correspond to the lectionary lists, although the ministers I consulted with resisted this as a comprehensive explanation. Ministers with strong musical opinions will reject hymns that they personally do not enjoy; also, if the sermon does not conform to the Lectionary reading (or if they are indeed going off the Lectionary that week), then the hymn-choosing becomes more idiosyncratic. We should be aware here that musical content – melody, rhythm, key, phrasing – is not a part of the formula for hymnal editors. Hymnal editors categorize hymns according to lectionary readings based solely on hymns’ lyrical content. Tunes should be understood as fairly neutral – the same hymn-tune may show up four or five times in a single hymnal.

When hymnals recommend newer hymns, there runs a risk that the tune will be unfamiliar. In these cases, the minister asks his or her senior musician if the hymn is “singable.” This is a delicate question because if they are compelled to ask the question, then the answer is probably “no.” Keep in mind that ministers are exposed to more hymns than anyone and they go to church more than anyone. If a minister can’t easily sing it, it’s probably going to be difficult for a typical church member to do so. While it is one of the great points of organists’ pride to be able to get robust singing out of any congregation singing any hymn, the organist with average hymn-accompanimental skills will probably have trouble making an unknown melody immediately “singable.” So, when a minister asks me this question, I ask them if they can sing it, hoping to head off the service discomfort right then. We proceed from there. Invariably, awkward hymns make it into services. Sometimes, the music itself is ill-suited to organ accompaniment. In those cases, I try to play them on piano or another instrument, but this is not always manageable from a spatial consideration. If a minister really wants to get a particular hymn into the church’s consciousness, though, it
is necessary to program that hymn over and over so that it becomes second nature, rather than a sight-reading nuisance. In proof of that, the hymn “I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry,” which is sung at every Baptism performed at First Church (and at Higganum Congregational, during my final year there) and at First Church’s Confirmation Sundays is one of the church’s favorites. It is a comparatively new hymn, having been introduced with the New Century Hymnal. To my mind, the tune is infantilizing, sappy, and New Age-y, usually hallmarks of disliked hymn-tunes. But because of its inveterate presence and its simplicity, it has caught on. My analysis of this phenomenon has been the same since I was twelve years old: whatever is heard a lot gains in value, simply due to the ethologically-correct comfort of familiarity. For other churches, “Morning Has Broken” is sung at baptisms. In fact, this is the case at Higganum for the majority of my years. I play the Cat Stevens version as literally as possible, which always made the Classic-Rock-enjoying caucus in services very happy. Hymns are an excellent meta-study in feasibility – those hymns that have lasted owe their longevity to their musical simplicity and lyrical plasticity.

**The Anthem, Generally**

The choral Anthem is highly enigmatic. I had never heard the word "Anthem" before coming to the Congregational church. When I was told, “the choir sings an Anthem each week,” the first thing I did was call my friend Daniel Clay. He grew up going to church and worked for many years as a professional musician. I asked him why he had never mentioned Anthems to me previously. He had never heard of the term.

The various definitions provided by the Oxford English Dictionary and the Grove Dictionary combine to form a more general definition of “something with lyrics that is sung.” The origin for the word refers to the Latin *antiphona*, indicating some vocal or choral alternation, and the tradition of the antiphon is indeed a crucial historical component of both the Latin Mass and the early Anglican church, although the Anglican church changed the title or eliminated it. For centuries, the English church made official proclamations which referred obliquely to the Anthem as “...the best sort of melody and music that may be
conveniently devised” (Harper et al. 2013). For both the Latin Mass and English service, Anthems were often the main liturgical event, “the focus of the ceremony” (ibid.), and they would typically take place during the Matins (Morning Prayer) or Vespers (Evensong), the English service orders of which still follow the “Book of Common Prayer.” Considering that the Congregational service is most closely related to Morning Prayer, the musical category itself, despite its non-sacramental status, is part of historic liturgy.

The music is now, however, quite diverse. The polyphonic root of the word antiphon somewhat still applies; the choral Anthem, since it is sung by the designated singing group and not the congregation, is more musically complex than a standard congregational hymn. But the current corpus writ-large does not hearken back to the responsorial structure indicated in the root antiphon. In reality, the above definition does not give much literal prescription for what current Anthems should be, and in fact, there is no common element running through the Anthem as a genre. It turns out that anything can be an Anthem if it is sung by more than one person and listed under the heading "Anthem" in the bulletin. So what exactly is it? Who sings it? And most pressingly, why is it in the service?

By and large, the Anthem is a piece of choral music, sung by the house choir as a separate event within the church service often with no specific liturgical relation, although choral Anthems often score the Offertory (collecting of financial gifts). When I claim “no specific liturgical relation,” I mean that there are no liturgical texts that function as some “official” Offertory (in the way that the “Lord’s Prayer” or a benediction require particular texts), nor are they required to be overtly scriptural. In fact, the chief complaint from informants, those being ministers and music directors with years of experience in the field, is that “Contemporary” Anthems are almost entirely individual-focused and not scripturally-based. This made me wonder about more liturgically-bound worship traditions, such as the Catholic Mass. My research did not veer very far into the Catholic realm, but having played and sung several Catholic masses, I can attest to the fact that in these masses, the choirs sang liturgical texts for liturgical purposes, often retaining the Latin text.
Certainly, the canon of sacred musics contain through-composed services. Composers in both Jewish and Christian traditions have written musical works that set an entire service (there are numerous examples in Christian music; see Slobin 1989:214 for Jewish composers writing through-composed services), but this immediately implies a different style of liturgy, namely that belonging to a Catholic or possibly high-Episcopal church. Higganum Congregational Church presented a full Requiem in 2010, packaged somewhat as a “Good Friday” service. Of course, it was nothing of the sort – no minister (or anyone else) presided. It was, in fact, a concert.

And so the church Anthem is a mini-concert. At many churches, the choir sings two Anthems. Because, as mentioned above, Congregational ministers and music directors are operating at strict (albeit tacit) duration restraints, it is much more efficient if the Anthems do take place during some sort of liturgical moment (that happens regardless of a choral presence). There are, for example, many sung “Benedictions,” usually set to the words that a minister might speak immediately prior to dismissing the congregation.

### The Anthem At Higganum

At Higganum Congregational, I encountered an issue that mitigated against the straightforward programming of choral musics: a dearth of humans. At the first choir rehearsal I ran in September 2008, only three people attended: Paul Lewis, Linda Hansen, and Judy Hodgson. At the next rehearsal, Sandy Nightingale also came. We were not able to get much work done, as my concept of the choir included different groups of singers, each representing different “SATB” vocal parts. Speaking generally, the fact is that very few volunteer choirs possess crack sight-singers. This is not a commentary on their singing.

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7 It may help to here indicate musical indices within the typical Roman Catholic liturgy, simply to note that the variability of a Congregational service does in fact derive from some formal origin. This brief but vivid description comes from Jeffrey Brillhart, Lecturer in Organ at Yale University's Institute of Sacred Music. The Processional was a lengthy span of time where the priest and his cortège entered and “incensed the place” (Brillhart 2012: personal interview). In a large cathedral, this could take ten minutes. The “Offertoire” remains fairly similar in function as gifts are presented. The Eucharist (referred to as “Communion” by American Protestants) could take a very long time for all in attendance to be “wined and dined” (ibid.). The Recessional musics accompanied the vestry’s exit as well as all those in attendance’s eventual disassembly. In order to accommodate these long, variable-duration sections, organists were nearly all expert improvisers. The Congregational service derives from an Episcopal distillation of those intra-service events, namely the “Morning Prayer” service.
voices, which are all useful chorally. I hypothesize that, given a random selection of one hundred consistently-attending choir members from across the United States, less than ten are able to accurately read a line of unfamiliar music, meaning that they would sing correctly the pitches and rhythms at any regular tempo. I base this on years of choral accompaniment with literally dozens of choral groups of various sizes and functions. Good choirs are not made up of great soloists; rather, they require a critical mass of people needed to produce a blended sound. With so few members, I was at a loss as to what the choir should do. At some rehearsals, no one showed.

At the time, no one told me that those four people were, in fact, the choir. To my mind, four people did not constitute a choir. After interviewing former Director of Music Carolyn Halsted, I came to realize that throughout her tenure, she mounted choral Anthemic music each week with those above members, herself, and another female singer (Mary Aduskevich), with other singers referred to as inconsistent but occasionally present. At one time, the minister and her husband sang with Carolyn’s group, thus increasing the size of the choir by twenty-five percent and doubling the number of male voices. In some pictures from old directories, there are only female choirs represented, with numbers totaling five or six people. This is all testament to Carolyn’s sensitive ability to mine steady production from her modest choral resources. Why did the church not encourage me to ask for her help? Again, I conjecture that they afforded me a certain deference and did not want to make me feel penned in by their past, and they wanted me to have musical freedom above everything else.

Not knowing how to proceed, I decided on gradually learning choruses from Handel’s Messiah as well as other traditional choral pieces from the canon that I happened to like. I recruited aggressively. Before services, I delivered heartfelt appeals to the congregation that I needed more singers, especially men. Ken Wendt, now treasurer of the church, came aboard simply due to that first begging (and remained throughout my tenure). Eventually, Stew Gillmor and his wife Rogene joined that winter. And I cajoled the minister Max, his wife Marie-Laure, and my spousal affiliate to sing with us as well. All of a sudden, and for
Christmas in 2008, we had a choir. The choir stayed at those numbers, more or less, and with that percentage of men until I left (that is, about four to five men, and seven women) in 2012. It turns out that a perfect storm of antinomies contributed to my good fortune; I elaborate upon this partially here, but moreso in Chapter Three, where inter-personal relationships play a more functional role.

There are choir directors out there who present, and on a weekly basis, Anthems sung by choirs of such few members. I am not sure what they sing or how “good” it sounds. This can be a major point of tension that, if unresolved, may be the fulcrum upon which a job hinges. Therefore, there is a fork in the mental road that describes the choosing of music: what a choir wishes to do – say, sing two Anthems weekly – and what a congregation wants to experience in worship. While the two can be mutually compatible, there arose at Higganum a sense that the choir existed to please only itself and that it was not interested in enhancing the congregation’s experience. As one congregant who wishes to remain nameless put it,

[The choir’s] whole point was “This is our time to show off, this is our time, this is why I’m here. I’m here, basically, so people can see me singing because I love to sing and this is what counts”, and that was [X’s] point: “God said make a joyful noise to your Lord,” and I said, “But the joyful noise is a lot better if somebody knows a little bit about what they’re doing.” Untutored, bad-quality singing just because you want to get out there and sing – [interrupting himself to continue the recalled dialogue] “Well, everyone should be-”...[continuing as himself] Well, to a point everyone should be welcome, but if you’re sitting in the audience and you’re listening to a really poor production of something, I just can’t put up with it...do you want, I mean I don’t want to get too tough, but do you want everybody just to get up and replace [the minister] every Sunday, get up and say what they’d like to say, with perhaps no education but getting up and feeling good and telling people something?

(Church Member 2011; italics indicate voice emphases)

At most churches, the choir has its own sense of self as separate from the congregation. Naturally, with this new selfhood comes distinct wants and needs that require mindful attention. The choir director must satisfy both the choir and the congregation, and
sometimes he must make a choice. Since the choir comprises the people that the director actually works with each week, it is in his interest to please them, but not at the expense of alienating those in line with above-quoted informant.

In terms of my own experience and the perfect storm mentioned above, I eventually pieced together the puzzle and found out the following: the minister at the time of Carolyn’s tenure, Max Olmstead, was unhappy that a small number of players held a disproportionate amount of power in the church. He observed the choir as being emblematic of that fact. While technically true, a choir director only works with whomever she has – there is no audition, per se. Further, it is not surprising that people who become involved in a small church will involve themselves in more than one capacity, possibly out of necessity. When I began my tenure, I did not frequently deploy the choir, instead focusing on a children’s experimental music program on the weekends and working towards choral presentations in service only when pieces were fully prepared. Pastor Max brought this up in a meeting of the Diaconate (the Board of Deacons that oversee worship) by asking “Has anyone noticed that the choir isn’t singing very much?” The response was overwhelmingly indifferent, with those attending commenting that they were fine with how things were going. By simply not knowing how to work with a tiny choir, I inadvertently pleased the minister and some dissatisfied members of the congregation. Again, this was due to my naiveté and ignorance of contemporary choral musics, a substantial portion of which is geared towards fulfilling extremely-limited church-choir resources.

The Anthem, then, does contain some inexorable heat – it is the performance moment for the choir. The ideology and aesthetic sensibility of the church is on display. I don’t mean to say that the Anthem is that ideology and aesthetic sensibility, but it is hyper-salient. In light of that, here are some songs that we sung as Anthems:


We sang “War” in service because I had a personal reaction to an event a week prior. On May 1 2011, I was hired to play piano and sing for a Yom Hashoah service at Temple
Beth El in West Hartford, Connecticut. It was an unnerving event. I say unnerving because of the palpable dichotomy of politics presented in the room. Although the event is technically a religious service honoring survivors and those who died during the Jewish Holocaust, this particular one also resembled a political rally. Martin Schiller delivered the “sermon,” such as it was, and claimed rampant anti-Semitism in the ranks of all colleges, governments, and other religions, inciting some of the crowd to a hawkish fervor while alarming those with more “liberal” views towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, among other issues. Applause and boos both rang out through the space.

So for the next week’s Anthem, we played this popular Bob Marley song that I remembered from college. The message is not complicated – war exists not only when it is waged with weapons, but when inequality is allowed to fester amongst all peoples anywhere. Mostly I played guitar and sang, but from the second verse on, the women in the choir sang the word “War,” on a high tonic note (in this case ‘D’), on the downbeat of every measure. While the piece was not scriptural, it was a suitable Anthem for the day, more in keeping with the above quote as to the “best sort of melody and music,” which I submit is allowed to take precedence over the message, if the messaging is not scriptural or “Christian.”

**“Stand by Me”** © Ben E. King, Jerry Leiber, and Mike Stoller 1961, Atlantic.

This very popular song from the Black soul tradition was sung at our church using scores comprised of lyrics and plenty of frantic annotations. I gave the whole group an ostinato to sing: the primary rhythmic motive of the piece, consisting of two dotted-quarter notes followed by two eighth notes corresponding to the basic harmony of the piece (I-vi-VI-V). They sung this on “doo.” Once we established that ostinato reliably, I assigned solos around the choir to cover each verse. One of the singers whom I associated most with the Higganum choir over its last few years was Claire Tine. A mother of ten, she was wheelchair-bound, requiring me or a fellow chorister to pick her up at the small apartment that she shared with her husband Joe in the center of Higganum’s “downtown.” It was no small feat for her to come to church, but I needed her voice in the choir. When the weather was
particularly inclement, sometimes she could not come. Worse, sometimes the schedule as to who picked her up got confused, and no one did (this situation was rectified when Lori and Alan Chadwick just decided to pick her up every week, unless they were out of town). Her soulful rendering of the second verse in “Stand By Me” was especially memorable. Stew Gillmor also sang a stanza with confidence and gusto, as did tenor Ken Wendt. At the end, veteran Paul Lewis tagged the final line three times, with the choir humming the ostinato. The lyrics of this piece do derive from religious texts, and the Methodist hymn “Stand By Me” has very comparable lyrics to the version used by Ben E. King\(^8\). The version, however, is known popularly; there was no dissonance that I could perceive in its being inserted directly into the morning service. We didn't even change the words “darling, darling” that introduce each chorus refrain.

“Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich” by F. Mendelssohn

This staple of the choral repertoire also became one of the Higganum choir’s perennials. The piece is traditionally-notated and sounds complex without actually being so (the desideratum of choral music). It begins with the men singing in unison the German line

Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich,  
Herr Gott zu unsern Zeiten.  
Es ist doch ja kein ander nicht,  
der für uns könnte streiten,  
denn du, unser Gott, alleine.  

Translation: In these our days so perilous,  
Lord, peace in mercy send us;  
No God but thee can fight for us,  
No God but thee defend us;  
Thou our only God and Saviour.  

(translation from the ChoralWiki\(^9\))

The text is the same throughout; it goes to two parts (all women/all men) in the second verse (using the same lyrics) and separate to traditional SATB harmony in the third section. There are strezzo entrances at the end, all things that require careful rehearsal, but all things that can be achieved through listening and good practice.

“Non-Deterministic Amen” by B. Parks

\(^8\) The United Methodist Hymnal, #512

\(^9\) http://www1.cpdl.org/wiki/index.php/Verleih_uns_Frieden
The Higganum choir was kind enough to sing my pieces frequently with little to no griping. This one was very hard to pull off, but twice we tried it. The score is entirely textual and calls for the choirs to separate themselves into two or more same-sized groups and to form lines out of those groups, with two members of each group placed at each end of the line. Those two people have to choose tones and sing them on the syllable “Ah-” or “-men.” The other members match the pitch class and syllable of the starting person (I call them ‘bookends’) and keep singing their note and syllable until the line switches direction and comes back to them. It is a very difficult thing to do, because you have to listen very carefully to the people adjacent to you while blocking out the other choir completely. I like to set the two choirs on opposite sides of the congregation.

We tried this piece on two Pentecost Sundays, the liturgical event where highly-prominent religious composer Dan Locklair once told me that the church composer could get away with “wildness” (private composition lesson, Yale Institute of Sacred Music, 2010).

There are two things worth noting here: first, none of the above musics are overtly “Christian,” in that they do not reference new testamental material. In the same way that hymns with non-divisive lyrics exist across wider swaths of culture, this cut moves in the opposite direction, with popular lyrics serving multi-function. The “secular” listener can hear a song to a lover, the churchgoer can hear a plea to the Lord. The repurposing of existing popular musics, the classical canon irrespective of liturgical function, and new, aleatoric compositions were all fair game at Higganum Congregational. I submit this as significant data to the developing field of theomusicology. Further, these compositions co-existed, often in one service. These were not “blended” services, but rather totally other terrain than that addressed by the current aesthetic division associated with mainline Protestantism and its musics. Ethnomusicologist Deborah Justice probes effectively into the dicey terrain of the Traditional/Contemporary split services that typically dichotomize a single church’s musical offerings (Justice 2009, 2011, 2012). But even at a place like Higganum that did not wish to add services and bifurcate their congregation, they still wanted multi-generic music.
They also didn’t want a jukebox to play these pieces but rather for the music to be recast for and by their own congregants. This is crucial.

And lest this might be seen as wholly outlying, observe these comments from separate issues of ConnTact, a mainstream, Conference-wide newsletter for UCC churches in Connecticut, the sweeping majority of which are Congregational churches. In her description of the newly-formed rock band at Rocky Hill Congregational Church, of which writer Valerie Triblets is a member, she writes (in defense of Ma Rainey’s blues music as fair game in church) “...I’ve long held the belief that any music that sincerely shares and expresses the human condition is prayerful and brings us closer to God” (Triblets 2011). She later writes “...the band consists of musicians who play by ear and would consider Jimi Hendrix for sainthood.” A different edition of the same publication features an article entitled “When is Music Sacred?” Here, author Drew Page cites two instances of non-liturgical musics appearing in Congregational church services without any sanitization. The first is Michael Jackson’s “The Man in the Mirror” performed in a Contemporary service at First Congregational Church in Willimantic, Connecticut. The music director John Hinkley defends this programming, saying “The Bible says make a joyful noise to the Lord...That includes any kind of instrument that you feel makes a joyful sound” (Page 2012, quoting Hinkley). At Storrs Korean Church, the article continues, “Reverend Ho Jun Chang occasionally uses Korean Drumming as a call to worship [despite its] once [being] considered a form of idol worship by American missionaries” (ibid.). Citing a mildly-opposing voice who is wary of music that becomes “Me-centered” instead of “God-centered”, the author still concludes that “[j]f the performer and the audience experience God in the music, then the music is sacred and worthy of praise” (ibid.).

These are examples of the bubbling-up of issues that contend with the prevalent norms of sacramalized practices that typify church cultures. The many problems (of misappropriation, racial insensitivity, etc.) that are concomitant to these ad hoc installations of this-or-that ensemble, or my own rendering of vernacular musics, are not brought to bear
in the discussion of appropriateness. That is a topic for a larger analytical discussion; for
now, we need to know that, appropriate or not, these musics are happening in churches.

**The Doxology and Gloria Patri**

I have played many, many services for different churches that belong to the umbrella
category of mainline Protestantism. For all such Sunday morning affairs, I’ve played the
Doxology to the tune of “Old Hundredth” (15th cent., attributed to Louis Bourgeois) and
the “Gloria Patri”, always sung to a tune by Henry Greatorex (1813-58). The Reverend Max
Olmstead speaks of these songs as “Pavlovian,” where “[a]s soon as they hear those opening
chords, they’re on their feet instantaneously and singing loud” (Olmstead 2012). Having
grown up as a faithful Jew, these two musics remind me of the “Sh’m’a” in service. Similar to
above, the Sh’m’a’s tune indicated that the congregation should stand, cover our eyes, and
sing what I still consider to be a comforting, beautiful melody.

**Offertory**

This section of music is often where the “Anthem” happens, and so the narrative
above applies here. The only difference is that many times the organist will solo or an
instrumental ensemble will perform. The musical genres implied are not so different from
the Prelude and have nearly as much freedom. The difference between the Offertory (when
it is organ music) and the preludic organ music is that during the Offertory, there is more of
an emphasis on matching the timing to the collection duration. This is difficult, because you
have to keep one eye on either the rearview mirror (that many organists have on their
consoles), a television monitor, or on a blinking light on the console that ushers sometimes
trigger to tell you to “wrap it up.” This may mean ending a written piece prematurely by
finding a cadence. This is the one hold-over from the above footnoted description of the
Roman Catholic service (besides, maybe, Communion) that still remains as is, meaning that
the ability to improvise is very useful. There is very little scholarly information on the
practice of improvisation in churches, despite the preponderance of influential organists
and pedagogues who stress its value. No doubt, the lack of notation and the difficulty of transcribing organ musics have contributed to that dearth. Two scholarly dissertations exist, though, that recognize this unique realm of musical activity (Weidner 1984; Gehring 1963), and scores of practical tutors exist (written by Dupré, Tournemire, Hancock, Overduin, Brillhart, and many others), as well as innumerable articles for *The American Organist*.

I found that, similar to the deployment of popular musics throughout the service, the playing of older jazz standards or Dixieland chamber music was incredibly effective at Higganum and continued to function well at Suffield. I played the Gershwin tune “Our Love is Here to Stay” and Rodgers and Hart’s “Where or When?” at the church in Suffield on October 14th 2012. Afterwards, I received heartfelt testimonials that parishioners felt emotionally moved, in fact transported to their childhood homes. The greater emotional resonance congregational members felt when hearing mainstream popular music in the service has been influential to my curating of service music. In a psychological study entitled “A Comparison of the Effects of Sacred and Secular Music on Elderly People” (Lowis and Hughes 1997), the authors tested whether “sacred” musics from the “classical” canon, that is, musics written expressly for liturgical purposes, invoked greater sensations of “spirituality” in listeners simply by virtue of the music itself. Their hypothesis was that no technical material from a piece of music was innately more spiritual than technical material from another piece, and their conclusions affirmed this hypothesis although they admit that the study lent itself to imperfections and subjectivity. One line, however, caught my attention: “[a]nother unexpected finding was the significantly higher ratings of secular music on a number of evoked feelings when compared with those of the sacred selections” (Lowis 1997:53). They do not say which feelings were “evoked,” but the findings are corroborated by this higher emotional impact elicited by members’ hearing musics from the larger culture within the sacred environment. One could refer to this phenomenon as the sacralization of the popular.
Stated above, the Offertory acts as a placeholder for instrumental performances in the church. Especially frequent performers were Stew Gillmor on various brass and woodwind instruments, and Greg Shields on clarinet. Stew, Greg, and I played pieces from the jazz repertoire together; more often, we played jazz renditions of appropriate hymn-tunes – we played a lead sheet transcription of Duke Ellington’s “Come Sunday” in the New Century Hymnal. We also performed “Precious Lord, Take My Hand” frequently. For the first three All Saints’ services (the first Sunday in November 2008-10) at the church, we brought in Danny Hollenbeck, a young member of the church and a crack drummer, to form a Dixieland band. Besides the tunes above, we accompanied the hymns in church, played tunes from old versions of the Real Book, such as “Down by the Riverside” (from the illegal copy of The Real Book Volume II), and “When the Saints go Marching In.” As I described in Chapter Two, Stew and I were asked to play these pieces at Bill Stetson’s funeral, and we played the “Saints” until everyone left, a twenty-minute undertaking.

Greg also accompanied me on a choral rendition of the end of the mourners’ kaddish that I remembered from growing up in Temple. He lead the melody on Clarinet, and I provided chords and a pulse on the organ, while the choir sang:

![Figure 6. Excerpt of author’s transliteration and transcription of the sung finale of the Mourner’s Kaddish; transcribed from author’s memory](image)

During the program year September 2011 to September 2012, a new person began attending services. David Comas-Diaz, a native of Dominican Republic, was an effusive new member with two young daughters. He was especially appreciative of the music I played, and

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11 “Precious Lord, Take My Hand”, #472 in New Century Hymnal, ©Thomas A. Dorsey 1932
he went out of his way after each service to let me know that. It also turned out that he was a musician with commendable recorder chops. We ended up playing two movements from Benedetto sonatas in services (I kept my virginal at the church there for the last two years of my tenure). Beyond providing some service musics, he and I engaged in a weekly practice. Usually, we worked before choir rehearsals, but he came to Wesleyan a couple times during the summer to work in the air-conditioned Memorial Chapel. On one evening in May, he presented me with a fine Moeck soprano recorder so that I could learn to play and prepare duets with him.

One day after our practice, he took me down to Middletown's Main Street for Indian food with his daughters. After the meal, I told him that I was leaving for Suffield. This confession remains one of the harder things I’ve had to do, to tell a new friend that our relationship, for all intents and purposes, would be almost impossible to keep up. This exemplifies why many older organists have advised me to keep an emotional distance from parishioners. It is the plight of church musicians to leave beloved spaces as long as free agency is part and parcel of the profession.

Postlude

The Postlude is almost always a solo instrumental piece, and in most churches that have them, the instrument is almost always the pipe organ. Typically, a postlude is exuberant and inspiring, sending congregants on their way with an uplifting soundtrack. At some churches, the postlude is meant for traveling. The reader may find it surprising, then, that the postlude garners the bulk of discussion regarding service musics within church policy-makers, those people being the Diaconate (Board of Deacons), Music Committee, and Minister. Why should such an unchanging, straightforward musical moment receive such attention?

At this point, organists reading this are nodding their heads knowingly. Perhaps this recent anecdote will illustrate the problem: On December 2nd 2012, the first Sunday of Advent, the Choir loft at First Church Suffield was overrun with singers, the result of
rehearsing Handel’s *Messiah* after worship for three months in preparation for Advent. It was an exciting day and I am proud of the group. Because of the surge in choral preparation, I had chosen an old workhorse of mine for the Postlude, Bach’s *In dir ist freude*, BWV 615 (organist-readers continue to nod). A flashy concert piece when played at a fast tempo, it is still festive and good for traveling when played more moderately. Typically, I play it on a *plenum* (the foundation stops plus mixtures) with a reed in the pedals to punch up the catchy ostinato riff.

On this Sunday, though, Seminarian Diann Bailey announced that the congregation should remain seated for the Postlude in order to maintain the reverence of the service, her exact words being, “I invite you to be seated after the Benediction and to listen to the Postlude. This will be our practice during the season of Advent, and who knows, maybe it will become a practice all year long. But I thought it would be a good idea in learning patience as we wait, [and] to also fill our hearts and souls with the beauty of our organ and Brian’s playing...not to mention Bach.” I had not been previously notified, so I grinned and winced simultaneously, nervous for the sudden spotlight that the elimination of departure hubbub would induce. This continued throughout Advent, so I prepared accordingly. I was fortunate that for that first unexpected service, the piece I happened to be playing was not excessively long – two-and-a-half minutes. As January 2013 began, this “rule” remained in place. But after an exceptionally long service on January 6, Pastor Bridget Fidler became nervous that we were holding everyone captive and that they would riot during my next Postlude if it was long. So the next week, she announced, “For those who wish to leave during the Postlude, please do so quietly in order that those who wish to listen may do so without distraction.” Now, this statement is printed in the bulletins. When I first began my tenure at First Church, the postlude was attended to only by the choir members. I felt free to play longer pieces, because the congregation used it for departure anyhow. Now, I measure my postludes with the same discretion as I do preludes and other musics. But this is only half the problem. After the particular Postlude described above, the congregation *applauded*. Since
applause is a reaction to a “performance”, a tenuous line was crossed. This line comprises the most confusing, blurry, and controversial issue connected to the musical act in churches: the enhancement of worship must not cross the line into musical performance for its own sake. Applause is a too obvious marker of the latter having taken place.

At Higganum, a similar dynamic arose. At the beginning of my tenure, I improvised blustery music at the services’ end as people got up and loudly moved about the space, opening the doors to the Sunday School room, etc. As I became more refined as an organist, a majority of people began to attend to the Postlude by quietly remaining seated. Because of the confines of the space, that quickly became the corporate reaction. In common practice, most seated groups of people that listen quietly to someone playing music applaud at the end of that person’s performance. The Higganum congregation abided by that normative custom. No matter which minister I’ve served under or which church has employed me, the issue has come up as to whether this is appropriate and how to practically eliminate its happening. At stake again is the idea that applause is never appropriate during a service. I agree with this; but it is difficult to quell people’s applause without sounding either ungrateful (if the chiding were to come from me) or punitive (if the chiding were to come from some church leader). At Higganum, I made an announcement that, while I was grateful for the show of support, applause was not necessary. Other members of the music committee did the same, but to no avail. At my current church, the applause invariably happens after I finish playing, possibly out of politeness (and because the precedent was reset). As the Reverend Judith Cooke once said about this inveterate dilemma, “They either clap, or they yap.” Somehow, the debate continues.

**Other Service Musics/Minefields**

*“Go Now in Peace”*

Almost to the person, the most simultaneously loved and despised service music at HCC was a sung congregational benediction called “Go Now in Peace”12. My interview

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subjects could not pinpoint the song’s introduction into the church; an annual meeting from 1992 indicates that it became the church’s sung benediction that year. Presumably Alma Zyko, then organist and music director, brought it to the church, but that is by no means certain. Regardless, “Go Now in Peace” had remained the church’s signature song for two decades. Many in the church loved it with a passion that bordered on fetishism; the song itself is an excellent example of Contemporary Church music from the 1980s, featuring nearly all consonant harmonic intervals and an easily-grasped melody. Reverend Max Olmstead referred to it as “pap,” and Interim Minister Keith Jones couldn’t stand it either. The Reverend Judith Cooke and I never discussed it at length, because at that point I knew there was no fighting it. Disinclined members sung it very begrudgingly, understanding that singing it made so many other people happy. Max understood its value at the church, and he scheduled it once a month. Keith typically forgot to, and I reminded him now and then. Judith and I likewise put it in when we remembered to. The song was one of those aesthetic-ecological items where best friends at the church might have widely-divergent opinions. For many, they would just as well sing it at the end of every service. For others, they would just as well never sing it again. The lyrics are printed at the back of every hymnal. Interestingly, many church members identified it as a hymn. In a survey that church members filled out in the Spring of 2012, one of the questions was “What is your favorite hymn?” with a write-in response. A proportion of respondents (5 out of the 17 who chose to list a favorite hymn) chose this song despite its not being, technically, a hymn. The musical content more closely resembles an easy Anthem, but the fact that it is sung congregationally does lend support to its functioning as a hymn. This gives merit to the idea that definitions of liturgical music categories are functionally nebulous, if not interchangeable.

**Children’s Music**

Another undefined arena of musical function in the Higganum church was Children’s Music. In keeping with the thesis of this chapter, Children’s Music was a moving programming target because its liturgical function was unknown, or at least unspecified.
There is a general desire at almost all churches that “the children do something.” But at Higganum (and most Congregational churches in Connecticut), Sunday School took place at the same time as the service. This had an impact upon what was feasible. Most Sundays, children were dismissed early in the service, after a “Children’s Message” (HCC) or “Story for all ages” (First Church). Sunday School teachers, then, taught their day’s lesson during the service’s remainder, a difficult act to balance, considering the durational variability of that remainder. This put a lot of pressure on teachers from the outset. Finding time to teach music was difficult and required a separate “children’s choir” rehearsal. At a small church, finding the critical mass of kids could be difficult, especially if you wished to divide the children into different choral age-bands to correspond roughly with cognitive development. At Higganum, I tried many different tactics with varying degrees of success. For a while, I snuck out of the sanctuary during the sermon to lead a ten minute session of songs. That routine ran into the same issue of unpredictable interruption of the teachers’ classes. Later on, I did a version geared to the younger children in the nursery area. But this was highly impractical, as I never knew when the sermon would end. I was always a little frantic, checking the sanctuary by putting my ear on the door every few minutes.

Ultimately, debates and opinions over children’s music led, albeit circuitously, to a socio-relational impasse and my ultimate departure from HCC. Many of the issues I perceived to be present at Higganum were also present at First Church (although I am personally not entangled with them, because I have not been there very long). One of my predecessors, Carolyn Halsted, established a smooth protocol that enabled her to put on multiple small musicals with kids, with help from some adults and parents. Again, she deftly combined scope with resources to consistently mount productions involving all ages. To reiterate: tradition is sacrosanct at churches, but no one tells you what the tradition is, or how it is to be carried off. And, there can present many different narratives that describe traditions, often at odds with each other. This lack of information and lack of consistency may lead to holes in the knowledge of a group’s effective habitus, which may lead to
resentments. Until I talked to Carolyn, I didn't have a clear picture of what the musicals were or how she managed them – she was the first person to show me programs, sheet music, recordings, and photographs from the events. I worked independently with the kids and developed my own style, more or less. By going through archival data such as Annual Meetings, Music Committee minutes, etc., I found that HCC has always had (or at least since they began documenting the subject) an issue with establishing and maintaining children's choirs. The history of children's choirs intra-nationally is a topic worthy of further research, although beyond the scope of this study. In the end, we were able to put on some very effective children's musics, although with limited rehearsal time and often very limited rehearsal attendance. This, I am told, is how things are outside of very large churches with funded children's music programs. Such programs are not feasible in small churches. The next chapter provides a vivid recounting a children's musical performance, based on a popular hip-hop song.

For a final example of a musical minefield, I will here publish a chain of emails between the Reverend Judith Cooke, myself, Mark Slobin and music theorist Yonatan Malin, the latter two being music professors at Wesleyan University. Reverend Cooke wanted a shofar to be played during Palm Sunday. The following emails (all from March 29 and 30, 2012) ensued:

Me to Professor Slobin:
hi Mark,
...the new minister at Higganum wants a shofar player on church on Sunday (Palm Sunday). Do you know of anyone who plays a mean shofar? I feel a little weird asking someone to play 'teruah' and 'tekiah' at a mainline Protestant service, but the minister doesn't seem to be conflicted at all. Can you recommend anyone? Or should I claim 'best effort' and move on?
Brian

Mark to me:
Brian—why don't you ask Yonatan Malin, since he knows who does that at the Middletown synagogue, to which he belongs. -Mark

Me to Yonatan:
hi Yonatan,
i hope you're well. i am wondering if you know of a good shofar player. the new minister at the church where i work wants someone to play on Palm Sunday. i am conflicted about this, but she isn't, so i'm being a good employee.

thank you for any names you can give me. see you soon.

brian

Yonatan to me:
Hi Brian,

There are a bunch of people at the synagogue who blow shofar, but to be honest, I am not sure that anyone would feel comfortable blowing on Palm Sunday as part of a church service—and I don't really feel comfortable asking people. Sorry I can't help you here.

Best,

Yonatan

My email to Judith:

after two days of contacting different people about shofar blowing, i was told to ask this person (a professor in music at Wesleyan). here is his response from a half-hour ago:
(I put Yonatan's above response below)

Her response to me:

We got my shofar to blow with a trumpet mouthpiece held to it.

Would you have access to a mouthpiece? Do we have anyone other than Stew who can play a horn?

My response to her:

I don't know of anyone. I think the thing to do is to use the horn on the organ. I can play the specific calls you ask for. If you like, I can contextualize this according to the Rosh Hoshanah reference in service (unless you're already doing that).

If that doesn't appeal to you (and I can see how it might not do it), we might want to scrap it. Bring yours tonight and let me give it a shot just for the heck of it.

Brian

My next email, after no one is able to play it:

Hi Judith,

I know how much this means to you, but it is my opinion that we should nix the Shofar stuff and reprint the bulletins. We have a lot of material on Sunday (with three music things), and I don't know that the stress is worth it. I do have some misgivings about having a shofar blown in a non-Jewish religious service. I understand that there are some historical implications that justify it, but the reaction that I got from my Jewish contacts in Middletown was pretty icy—thatsaid, I see where they're coming from. These are two very fine
scholars of music theory and history and are very devoted Jews; one has written two books on the subject, one on the Jewish cantorial tradition in America and the other on the Jewish immigrant musical experience, and I do respect his knowledge. If we had a good Shofar and a good practitioner, that would be another thing. I can get one of my good ones from my childhood home in Atlanta and work on it over the next year and be ready for next year’s service. This is my opinion only. I mean no offense, and I respect your discretion and final word on the matter, whatever it may be.

Thanks, Brian

Her response back:
Hi Brian,
While I understand why Jewish shofar players may not want to play in a church, Christianity shares the Hebrew scriptures. There is nothing inappropriate or questionable about our using a shofar in a worship setting. If you are not able to find someone, I will need the shofar back so I can try to find someone.
Judith

Then her email from an hour later:
Just talked to Lori. She is fine to reprint. We will nix the shofar. No worries. Maybe we can do the shofar part next year. J

I provide this email chain to show how much effort and how much interpersonal negotiation might go on, even for something that proves to not be feasible. Judith and I both had a point – there are in fact many Jewish shofar players who play in churches, and there is quite a bit of debate, especially in online forums, related to Shofar-blowing’s appropriateness in church services. In this case, three factors mitigated against our resolution: we ran out of time, I never felt comfortable soliciting shofar players, and my contacts were similarly reticent. Contrastively, Reverend Cooke did not feel conflicted about this curatorial choice, but by deferring to my musical authority, she had to contend with my own conflicts. As it turned out, they did have the shofar blown the next year, using a mouthpiece inserted into the ram’s horn, blown by Stew Gillmor.

Outdoor Service Musics

Summer services were more casual, but they still took into account the major service indices with the exception of choral Anthems, since there was no choir. I typically played
guitar to accompany hymns, and I tried to prepare either classical guitar pieces or, more often, popular songs comparable to those listed above. The attendance was usually very low, and the singing volume was almost non-existent. This service type was the brainchild of the Reverend Max Olmstead, who initially provided the music himself at these services on his own guitar. Ironically, I only played one outdoor service with Max leading the service, as he was in France with the ecumenical youth group during the bulk of the 2009 Summer. Interim Minister Keith Jones kept the tradition alive, but Keith is a traditionalist by nature, and so the services were exact copies of the services that we performed an hour later inside the sanctuary. Judith Cooke and I approached the topic together and ask the Diaconate how they envisioned this service. Many of them had no specific vision for it, but they liked the tradition. I argued that it was not really a tradition, because it had come about so recently and at the urging of a departed minister. With his exit, I argued, exited the vision. They decided to maintain the program but in a limited capacity, with three services planned for the summer of 2012, on the first Wednesday evening of each month. Since I was not involved with the decision-making, I was not able to voice my own irreconcilable conflict, that I would be teaching my summer course on that Wednesday. The next service fell on the evening 4th of July, and it was canceled the Sunday prior.

But we did carry off the service in August. Judith was out of town for this one, and so the lay leaders conducted the service. We brought out fifteen folding chairs to the Memorial Garden as well as a comparable stack of bulletins and hymnals. Jack Calhoun, Terry Smith, Dick Matregrano, and Claire Hoover officiated over the liturgy (and ended up being its only congregational attendees as well), and I brought a guitar and a drum. The drum was for a song that Judith had asked me to sing. She remembered it being sung by a First-Nations Congregational minister, and she sung it into a tape recorder for me. I had no idea what drum I should use, nor was I versed in First-Nations American Indian song-styles, despite my having read a bit of David McAllester’s and Charlotte Frisbie’s writings on the
subject. What I once heard at an SEM gathering, while compelling, was not something I in any way felt comfortable mimicking.

So I sang the version that Judith remembered, and I kept time on a Ghanaian oprenten drum. Musicking in this way surely misappropriated something if not many things, but it also worked to avoid conflict.

The service was very, very casual. Jack Calhoun generally likes to “give people stick,” as he puts it, and he and the gang were fooling around a little as we moved through the ceremony. Claire was the most serious of the bunch, but even she had a good time. There was a part where a deacon gave each of us a small square of soil, and we chose some seeds from an assortment offered to us. We planted the seeds and sprinkled the soil with water.

For the summer services of 2010, the postlude consisted of John Cage’s 4’33”, a piece consisting of only silence, or rather the sounds that are extant throughout an intended silence, or both. One Sunday, during rain, we held the early outdoor service inside. It was very hot inside, and two loud fans ran throughout the service. 4’33” having become our tradition, we listened to the fans during the postlude.

Non-Musical Weekly Rituals

There are two behavioral components worth mentioning that, while not musical per se, help to fill out the picture of Higganum Congregational. In service, there was and continues to be the “Passing of the Peace.” For whatever reason, I most remember Interim Minister Keith Jones’s deep voice and tall figure standing on the chancel. He was the only minister I served under who wore the iconic white collar with the black vestments. When he announced, “The peace of Christ be with you all,” the congregation responded, “And also with you.” In Catholic practice, they now say “The Lord be with you,” with the people answering “And with your spirit.” What happened after that exchange at Higganum, though, is the crucial part. Everyone started milling about the church, shaking hands. Some were less effusive than others; they might shake one or two hands immediately next to them and then sit down. Some folks walked across the entire church, shaking hands and slapping backs. I
usually found someone that I hadn’t seen in a while whom I missed and gave them a hug. Sometimes whole conversations took place on an especially busy day. I knew one member in particular, Lindamae Peck, who reviled this custom. From my perception, most members enjoyed the formal informality of it, and they especially considered it an essential feature of Higganum’s service. Usually the “passing” ended as people returned to their pews, and as children gathered on the steps of the chancel for the “Children’s Message.”

The other non-musical and even less-liturgical part of the service was the Coffee Hour. Held immediately after the postlude, it was and is a time for all in attendance to drink caffeinated or decaffeinated coffee or tea and to eat primarily baked goods, although a groundswell of insistence resulted in fruits, cheeses, and other foods being offered. At Higganum, this was a boisterous affair, and the social room was often filled with activity and conversation. It would be a bit too much to say that this was where the business of the church took place, but it was a place where one might hear comments about the music.

After the new wing was completed, the location of the coffee and food shifted slightly to be nearer the new kitchen, and fresh paint was applied to the walls and new carpet to the floors, but the place retained its cachet as a hub for post-service conversation. Because of the compactness of the church, it was a true space of convergence for staff, members, and children. At the time of this writing, with cracks in the sanctuary’s ceiling, this “Fellowship Hall” was repurposed as the sanctuary space for Lent and Easter.

**Occasional Musics**

**“Big Day” Music**

For clergy, the term “C-E Christians”, or even better, “ChrEasters”, refers to people who only attend on Christmas and Easter (comparable to Jews who only attend synagogue on High Holidays). It may be snarky, but it is a functional moniker. These are big days in the church, certainly the most populous days in the sanctuary, although I should note that Congregational churches have their big service on Christmas Eve, not Christmas Day. How is it that I’m just now getting to these most important days of the year?
The answer is this: they are the most iconic and therefore the least surprising, the most predictable of the 60-odd services presented annually. That said, they are high-pressure situations, moreso for the minister than the music director. For the former, they must produce unique, memorable sermons that possibly incite the lapsed to attend more often. Musically, and after a week of intense services (including the wrenching Maundy Thursday service), the choir will sing a big, boisterous piece, such as the Hallelujah chorus from Handel’s *Messiah*. The hymns always include “Christ The Lord is Risen Today”\(^{13}\), which must be played perfectly so that the congregation can sing loudly. Because of its predictability, though, I would not call this service stressful – that is, it is very much a prescribed event, and the organist’s marching orders are explicit (and fairly cross-denominationally applicable).

On Christmas Eve, the lights will go out as we sing “Silent Night,” and the rest of the service will be filled with all of the superculturally-known carols – “Hark the Herald Angels Sing,” “O Come All Ye Faithful,” etc. This isn’t to say that these are not fun, musical events. But they do belong to the realm of the supercultural and the spectacular – they belong to the cultural studies niche that takes up holiday celebrations and the like. This is the area of church music that people are right to make certain assumptions about; it does not require the ethnomusicological lens.

**Sad Services, and Weddings**

There are two fundamental sad services in Congregational churches: Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday. At Suffield, they also have a service called “Blue Christmas,” an Inter-faith event, attended by bereaved community members who have lost a loved one in the previous year. Each light a candle after the deceased’s name is read. In 2012, the service fell on the Wednesday after twenty children and six adults were massacred at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. The church read the names of those killed as well as the shooter and lit candles.

\(^{13}\) Pilgrim Hymnal #582; text by Charles Wesley, tune arranged from the Lyra Davidica, 1708 (anonymous composer); New Century Hymnal #233; same attributes
For my first year at Higganum, Max Olmstead had us wash each others’ feet during the Maundy Thursday service. There was widespread grumbling about this, but I washed Rick Dennis’s feet, and he washed mine. We collaboratively chanted the prayer responses over an organ pedal point, and we used Taizé material – repetitive refrains of Latin or English short texts – as the primary musical material. The churches where I have worked typically stage a “Last Supper” Passover Seder, with Deacons reading scriptural texts as the lights go lower and lower. The church is finally cloaked in total darkness and all exit in silence.

Musically, the process of making decisions is not fundamentally different, although again, if a Minister or Music Director wants the service to go in a particular direction (as did Max, above), then they have the license to make decisions as they see fit. There is a general mood of solemnity, though, that the music tends to articulate.

These services have generally been referred to by interview subjects and in conversations as the most personally affective. Lori Chadwick once said to me about Maundy Thursday, “People have to come to that. It’s why we’re all here every week.” I liken it to funerals, which similarly tend to be profound experiences and musically very rich. I once asked Max Olmstead why he thought that the funerals were so markedly different in effectiveness. Max, who is especially fond of the funeral celebrations that he has presided over, said, “Because everyone in the room is there for the same reason. It was about this one person, that’s why funerals can be awesome; everyone knows why they’re there, and you’re designing it to be unique but with everyone on board. The different motivations become one motivation. You’re a Jew...Shema. You’re there for one reason, to worship God.” This, I think, can be applied to Maundy Thursday or Ash Wednesday. These services are not similar to the weekly Sabbath observance, where reasons for attending may be endless plural within the congregation. Rather, the spiritual agenda tends toward uniformity. Because the music accommodates that agenda, musical choices reflect solemnity, gravitas, darkness, and sadness.
This opens up the musical terrain tremendously; choirs are also very willing to work very hard on these services’ behalf.

Weddings are, lamentably, more akin to the “Big Day” services I describe in the previous section. That is, people in attendance may or may not be avid churchgoers, and bridal couples tend to ask for the same musics that you see and hear on popular television and cinema: the Bridal Chorus from Lohengrin (often referred to as “Here comes the bride”) for the bridal procession, Pachelbel’s Canon in D for the wedding party’s procession, and the Wedding March from Mendelssohn’s “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” as the recessional music. I will accommodate special requests from couples, though, for an extra fee. As a result, I have played many of the more popular musics that I list above, as well as film musics from Star Wars and Superman, many different selections from the early-century hit movie Love, Actually, as well as songs by Tom Petty, Chris Brown, Taio Cruz, etc. I have also been asked to play Iron Butterfly’s “In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida” for many processions. When I have inquired as to the reason, discrete couples have been uniform with their answer: it is a tribute to the church organist’s rendition on the television show “The Simpsons.”

**Final Comments**

It is impossible to discuss Higganum Congregational Church’s present-day musics without bringing in the experiences of other churches, Higganum’s own musical past, and the denomination’s musical profile. These components varied by degree of influence but were always present at Higganum: the minister and organist drew from the other churches, synagogues, and schools where they had worked, been trained, or attended. Church members guarded the customs of Higganum (to use Temperley’s phrase), and those that had come from other worship spaces brought their own musical memories and sensibilities with them. Finally, the United Church of Christ was and is an invisible force to be reckoned with, providing particular literary and musical materials. Even more pivotally, the denominational
reach comes into the church’s walls because the church picks its minister from the United Church of Christ’s profiles.

Despite this complex foreground, a church’s music can only be made by the people there on a particular Sunday. In this way, the church is in dialogue with its “that-day” environment – singing voices, instrumentalists and instruments, and the space’s acoustic resonance. This provides the foundation for the aesthetic ecology I claim to be the pervasive psycho-cultural region that fields the musical activity. The past is important, and custom-guarding will always be present, but the customs can and do change. Music Directors, Ministers, denominational leaders, and individuals with outsized voices all change in two ways: as those individuals develop and reveal themselves in the local or national site, their opinions and values will have greater or lesser influence throughout their tenure. This can affect everything from the church’s buying a set of handbells to a certain style of hymn (out of a hymnal) becoming privileged in service, both of which directly affect a church’s music. The second change is more obvious: people resign, retire, are fired, switch churches or move, or become disillusioned with the church. What does not leave, however, are the placeholders themselves. Until the placeholders themselves disintegrate, there will always be people making decisions about worship. While it is true that those people may align themselves wholeheartedly with either the “Traditional” or “Contemporary” worship-style paradigms, the greater likelihood is that they will not be locatable as either/or, but rather somewhere between those two polarities, or perhaps they will have a completely unique idea about musical function and content. In Congregational churches, then, individuals – ministers, organists, choral directors, and members – have the opportunity to shape the sacred music of a sacred site by taking on a voice of authority and stating a vision. The more individuals who speak up, the more the musics of a service convey a plurality. In so doing, the “mainline” label ceases to be aesthetically fixed and instead indicates a musical openness, to be interpolated, interpreted, and realized as participants see fit.
Chapter Two

Case Studies, or YouTube as Encyclopedia and Teacher

New Musical Realities

Here, I throw into relief some ways in which technological mediation intervenes in the programming, transmission, and performance of music in churches. The data is taken from four case studies at Higganum. In each study, I lay out the worship goal, the song itself, the process of preparation, when the piece came off (or didn’t) in service, a brief ethnography of performance, and an analysis. After the second study, I embark upon a longer analysis of the Traditional/Contemporary dichotomy in current sociological-religion studies. This is the area in the paper where this aesthetic dyad is directly taken up.

Case Study #1:
“Mary, Did You Know?”, sung by the Sunday School teachers, accompanied by Brian Parks on a classical guitar on December 18 2011 (the same service as the Christmas Pageant)

Goal:
To have the Sunday School teachers sing during worship. Because Sunday School took place at the same time as worship (the children exiting the service 15 minutes after it begins), there was a real disconnect in terms of shared experience and information. Besides the children and teachers’ missing out on the pastor’s sermon, most service musics, and monthly Communion, the congregation did not have many chances to see or know what the children did throughout the year. There is typically a “Children’s Service” at the end of the school year in most Congregational churches; at Higganum, the Sunday School and the children performed the Christmas Pageant mid-service usually on the third Sunday of Advent.

The five teachers or “helpers” who sang this piece had also sung with the senior choir on more than one occasion, either on Sundays, in rehearsals, or in our Messiah two years prior. The
singing teachers were Jill Barile, Lisa Marie Harry, Sandy Nightingale, Kris Tupay, and Mary Aduskevich.

Song:
“Mary, Did You Know?”, lyrics by Mark Lowry with music by Buddy Greene (© 1984).

Preparation:
I was given an unmarked burned CD. I had no idea what artist I was listening to when learning this. The first track consisted of a woman singing the song with a backup band consisting of drums, guitar, bass, and “Latin percussion” – I heard some generic hand-drumming and a guiro. The next track was the same, with the vocals removed. The third track was the same piece transposed down a whole step in key, with the voice re-inserted. The fourth track was the transposed version without vocals. The piece was very, very simple, and I picked it up after one listen. I planned to play it on organ.

Performance:
After rehearsing it on the day of the performance once or twice with the organ, we were not getting it – the organ sounded too different than the band on the recording. I picked up my guitar and sat in the first pew on the far audience-left (chancel-right) side of the sanctuary. This way, I could look directly at the singers and conduct as needed with nods and facial gestures. The five women sang in unison in direct mimicry of the female soloist on the recorded track.

Analysis:
This was an unremarkable musical event; we did not try something like it again but that was not due to the performance being unconscionably poor or something akin to that. Rather, it was always difficult to accommodate a decent presentation, considering the schedules of the individuals involved as well as the church’s own choral rehearsals. I found the learning of the piece somewhat unusual, though, despite its musical formulaicism. Six of us separately listened to a burned recording, communed together, and found a feasible performance version. At first, I had difficulty finding a way to personally make it work for me on an instrument. If I was unable or unwilling to prepare a version, though, it was conveyed to me that they would sing along with the vocals-removed, Karaoke
tracks. While I had become aware that such a thing does in fact go on in churches, I was loathe to allow it to happen in the church where I ostensibly oversaw musical concerns. This is why I insisted on accompanying the teachers personally even though it was not a song that I would have chosen.

Case Study #2:
“Where is the Love?”, as sung by the church’s children on “Children’s Sunday”, June 10 2012

Goal:
for the children to sing a group song on Children’s Sunday, the last day of Sunday School.

Song:
“Where is the Love?” © Black-Eyed Peas, off the album Elephunk (2003)

Preparation:
In February, I was asked by Kris Tupay, mother of Kyle, Jordyn, and Andrew, if I would arrange a rap song for the church’s children to perform, based on the Black-Eyed Peas’ “Where is the Love?” I didn’t know the song, so she played it for me from her iPhone. I couldn’t hear it that well, but she told me to wait for the chorus, and when it arrived, I heard a repeated melody line along with a very standard Pop chord progression (I-V-vi-IV). I told her that it was possible, and I encouraged her son Kyle to memorize the rap so that we could perform it. It was not mentioned again, until I received an email from Kris, months later, ten days before the service in question. We met the Saturday before the service. That morning, I went on youtube.com to find a version of the song. I listened to the first one I found¹, a monetized youtube URL with, at the time of this writing, over 68 million hits. I memorized the chord progression and went to the church.

Only Kris and her children showed up at the rehearsal time (this was fairly common). They practiced along with me, but it was slow going. Rapping in a church from a lectern is not easy. I hate to admit that I had done so previously, when I rapped with Interim Minister Keith Jones after he found rap lyrics for the “Zacchaeus” story and printed them off some online church-cultural source. In the course of the rehearsal, her older son Kyle broke down from the stress and needed a minute to cool off. Mike Barile showed up and he practiced his part, that being the bridge between two

¹ “The Black Eyed Peas - Where is the Love?”, accessed online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpYcekQkAdc
iterations of the chorus. The chorus itself was basically identical to the sung component in the original version of the song.

Performance:
As often happens, about fifteen more kids showed up the next day to perform it. The teachers wrote up cue-cards and sat on the first pew, holding the cards up so the kids could sing from them. I played a rock beat with the pedals, like so: ̇, and I punched the corresponding chords on the manuals in this rhythm: ̇̇̇. Kyle, Jordyn, and Mikey did a good job speaking into the microphone, and the chorus of twenty kids sang enthusiastically and at a good volume, even though most of them were exposed to the song's road map and the performance design only minutes before.

Analysis:

Learning how to perform musics by watching online streaming video is becoming more and more of a standard transmission protocol. Another standard part of the protocol is that in a small church or a church without a dedicated, weekly children's music program, many more kids show up to perform than come to rehearse. Similarly, many children only attend Sunday School on the weeks prior to the Christmas Pageant. No one is turned away. But, it means that the children are performing in a very under-rehearsed way; this is not their doing, of course, but usually their parents'. Still, this particular piece was straightforward enough that childrens’ absorbent minds easily learned, memorized, and reproduced a chorus melody after only a few hearings.

One of the comparatively younger members of the church, Troy Monroe, had a much more charged reaction than did I. He loved the performance and recorded it on his iPhone. He told me how much it signified the way forward in church musics. I pressed him on this through email questions. His answers were eloquent, reflecting attitudes of both clergy and disenchanted mainstream churchgoers. The following conversation was transcribed from email correspondence.

Brian Parks: Without consulting video, what remains in your mind as to what took place during the song?
Troy Monroe: A few things come to mind when thinking of the experience. The genuine interest of the children and their interest in seeing how the congregation would react to something out of the norm, the uncertainty in the church members faces and how they quickly warmed up to the song selection, and most importantly the excitement that came from the performance.

BP: How did you feel about the [altered] literary content?
TM: It created a tone of self-reflection and connection to our culture / society. The fresh approach to content showed me, as a younger member of the church, that there's opportunities for changing our interactions with fellow members.

BP: What was your perception of the musical content? Did the children perform "well"?
TM: I thought the kids were perfectly imperfect. The spoken word portions of the song were tough to understand at times but the chorus rang loud and confidently. You could tell there was a genuine connection to the song selection, which many younger church members lack. The kids were enjoying the song, and we as attendees were enjoying the performance. Heck, I liked it so much I took out my phone and started videotaping.

BP: Was the music appropriate in the church service?
TM: ABSOLUTELY. It challenged conventional musical content in all the right ways and proved, without a doubt, that with the right selections by the music director church services can be fun, interesting and entertaining. A family member of mine attends a nondenominational church in South Carolina where they have built their services around a full band. Music is a major reason for their membership totaling over 7500 people and they have 3 services a weekend. It's a point of entry and brings young people through the doors to hear god's message. Connection doesn't just live in religion, for many of us connect with our thoughts about life and religion through music.

BP: What potential growth do you see in performances such as those in service? (Hidden question: if it happens every week, would it have the same effect on congregants?)
TM: These types of performances may lose their novelty on the older, weekly church-goer but in any congregation looking to grow their young membership inclusion of more recognizable tunes could help bring new families through the door. I've always thought of music as one of the two most important aspects of a church service (the other being the sermon) and if a goal is growing a congregation redefining "church music" is a logical place to start...with a lot of possible impact on the characteristics and success of participation in weekly church services. (emphasis mine)

These notions emerge organically from congregational stakeholders when they are asked to assess the state of a church or church music. The issue of deploying vernacular musics or vernacular music tropes within worship is an inevitably tense topic, seeing as it confronts elusive and fluid notions of the more meta-dichotomy of “secular and sacred.” Slobin (1989:215-9) and Ogasapian (2007,
“Vernacular musics”) depict the battle over musical appropriation and appropiateness for, respectively, Jews and Christians in America. Sometimes, the rhetoric framing the opposition appears to be no more than promotion for whatever music-style the debater wants to see flourish. These battles took place most audibly in the 1960s and 70s, long before the term “Worship Wars” might be used to describe particular rifts within Protestantism. But really, this issue is ancient and even in America, Warner points out, “American Protestantism...has been internally divided for a century” (1988: 51). He is talking about ideology, but in the section where he discusses this, he animates the discussion by using a hymn-tune’s recasted lyrics as the important datum.

Despite this inveterate split, it is useful to observe the promulgation of the defense of popular-music infusion and its counter-foil. Mark Slobin depicts how it became “possible to legitimize the trend” (1989: 216), and quotes hazzan Raymond Smolover, whose apologia is especially poetic: “I realized that we had been asking our children to accept our God...and what he sounds like. I realized after almost twenty years of teaching them the sound of my God, that I must listen to the sound of theirs...It may be that the Folk/Rock Service is not completely their sound nor my own. It may be what happened, when their God met mine.” Another of Slobin’s informants puts it thusly: “Whatever turns Jews on is good for the Jews...” (ibid: 217). Other cantorial composers supported and contributed to this musical realm; but a direct counter-claim comes from cantor David Putterman, who writes “[w]e must not demean our houses of worship...the Hazzan is not a performer” (ibid.:217).

In Protestant Christianity, Ogasapian describes a more mono-genetic source of culture disruption, where the equivalent of a hip-hop mix tape makes it across the Atlantic from an Anglican church:

Some years earlier there had circulated among some Episcopal clergy and musicians a tape recording of a peculiar piece of service music from England, indifferently performed by a nondescript group of amateurs to the throbbing accompaniment of an electric organ. Composed by an English priest named Geoffrey Beaumont, who called it “A Twentieth-Century Folk Mass,” the piece was repetitious and full of musical clichés. Nevertheless, it caused a brief stir out of proportion to its substance. Indeed, Alec Wyton [venerable titan of American organ and church music] made mention of the setting at the close of his address to the 1959 convention of the
Royal Canadian College of Organists, in which he pleaded for a major contemporary composer to turn his or her talents to writing church music. (Ogasapian 2007:256).

Organists honed in on the composer Beaumont’s own rationale. Beaumont writes in the preface to the written score for the music heard on the tape above that, “The theory behind this setting is that the music used at the Holy Eucharist in apostolic days was the normal music of the day…” (257). Theologian Erik Routley refutes this claim, saying “Nothing...was further from the apostolic mind than that Christians should make any concessions whatever to the ‘normal’ and ‘everyday’ standards of the non-Christian world...although the idea of bringing the popular music of secular life into the church may nowadays be an admirable one, it was not an apostolic one” (ibid.). Nevertheless, Ogasapian concludes, popular and vernacular musics made inroads into Christian worship musics. In fact, Beaumont’s explanation, however historically-problematic, is a common sense argument made regularly by ministers, musicians, the laity, and cultural producers, as my interview above bears out. The Reverend Harold Lewis points out, in the Introduction to the 1993 African-American Hymnal *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*:

*LEV AS II* is not being published solely to enable previously stuffy black Episcopalians to become ‘sanctified’ ones. It is intended to be a resource for the whole church. For as Archdeacon Murphy observes: ‘White people, too, want to rejoice and sing ‘Blessed Assurance’ with abandon. This is especially true of young white children who can’t get with the program on Sunday mornings after rocking out to Michael or Whitney Houston all week.

(Lewis 1993: xv)

It should be noted that for a time, organists tried to accommodate the coming paradigm shift by incorporating Jazz and Rock elements into their worship musics. Even the American Guild of Organists commissioned wildly misguided jazz and fusion oratorios and the like for its national conventions, and organists eventually revolted. But the move towards more “relevant” worship did not stop; rather, organists were replaced by guitarists, solo singers, and rock musicians who could better perform in these genres. Choosing to be an organist and choosing to be a Praise Team singer/electric guitarist are, in fact, disparate music vocations. The situation is akin to the medieval schism between the formally-trained musical chaplain and the folk-trained minstrel (see Planchart 1982), the
difference being that in the modern case, both sets of performers take on liturgical roles. While the “Traditional/Contemporary” split is cast along aesthetic and ideological lines, it also has to do with cognitive skillsets.

The dissonance that sometimes bubbles up has something to do with exploding aesthetic sensibilities, but that does not mean that only aesthetic or taste-driven issues precede service bifurcation. When bifurcation occurs, sometimes one or the other service will relocate. What was the reason that Hillsboro held its contemporary service in the multipurpose gymnasium space and not the main sanctuary (Justice 2012)? The reason was infrastructural – it was too difficult to accommodate the instrumental shifts required by the Contemporary band. From another perspective, though, “Free evangelical” churches, sometimes called “Bible” churches, typically hold their services in spaces free of iconography and ecclesiastical architectural forms (see Ehrenreich 2009:145). In these cases, it is an aesthetic, ideological choice, not compelled by space. Perhaps when one space holds both musics, a certain discomfort emerges. I will now inscribe a memory within this case study to illustrate this point.

In January 2011, I traveled to Paris to perform and lecture at the behest of American expatriate composer Tom Johnson. I flew in on a Sunday morning and, at Tom’s request, met him at the church service he regularly attends at the American Church in Paris (ACP). I arrived at ACP exhausted, minutes after the service began. After getting past security (by dropping the first name of the prevailing music director Fred Granamm), I found Tom and joined him in singing that morning’s opening hymn. At the service’s end and during the Postlude, we wandered up to the Beckerath organ (mechanical-action instrument whose design embeds the performer within the towering organ case itself) to watch Laura Potratz skillfully finish Buxtehude’s Fuga in C (BuxWV 161). I was giving a concert the following Saturday but would not have a chance to rehearse until the Friday night before. As I talked to Laura and greeted another composer, Chris Adler, I tentatively tried out some of Chris’s music, programmed on the following weekend’s concert. But this proved to be near-impossible, as a rock band was simultaneously setting up and sound-checking in the space. The band

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2 Although it should be noted that many formally trained musicians also have experiences in informal community musics or rock bands – it has even become a point of pride to play in vernacular music traditions. My own upbringing in jazz and free improvisation as well as my facility in cross-cultural music practices is a distinguishing element I put forth when applying for organ jobs, for instance.
consisted of a trigger drum set, two guitarists, electric bass, between two and four vocalists, a pianist, and a keyboardist\textsuperscript{3}. The sanctuary and chancel, with its Tiffany windows, Italian marble, and “hand-carved Hungarian oak”\textsuperscript{4}, seemed out of place with the music. Perhaps it was the literal fighting of pipe organ against amplified guitars that made it especially jarring.

This issue is not going away, and in fact \textit{The American Organist} is in the practice of publishing monthly articles directly addressing “the implications for the American Guild of Organists of current and developing socioeconomic phenomena” (TAO 2013: 56). In one such article, David Voegls warns that, “[i]f current trends continue, the traditional field of classical music is on its way to extinction. The AGO can ignore these trends and become a dinosaur, or it can follow the example of unconventional organizations that are blazing a path toward popular appeal” (Vogels 2013: 57). The “unconventional organizations” he refers to, though, are hardly that: Bang on a Can, Alarm Will Sound, Eighth Blackbird, the Kronos Quartet, and the Philip Glass and Steve Reich ensembles. The AGO considers itself to be on the edge of a cultural precipice. Above, I have depicted some of the reactions to these trends. While there can be a peaceful coexistence, there can also be cultural dissonances occupying the same theological territories, vying for the same congregants. Judging from the premonitions of both Troy Monroe, the Higganum congregant, and David Vogels, the AGO’s commentator, choices and changes should be made. But modeling other organizations, while perhaps useful for institutional survival, may not apply as directly to church-sites themselves. Such a strategy does not recognize a particular church’s own purchase as a capable, culturally-productive site.

\textbf{Case Study #3}

“The Summons”, sung by Jill Barile for the installation of the Reverend Judith Cooke,

January 29 2012, 5 pm

\textbf{Goal:}

To provide a musical solo within a denominationally-sanctioned service that officially recognized Reverend Cooke as Higganum’s settled minister

\textbf{Song:}

“The Summons”, lyrics by John Bell and Graham Maule (1987), © Iona Community

\textsuperscript{3} Director Natalie Raynal of ACP graciously provided me with a description of the band and their preparation for each week’s contemporary service music.

\textsuperscript{4} Architectural information taken from the website of American Church in Paris, accessed online at http://www.acparis.org/welcome/architecture-history-tours
Preparation:
Like the pieces above, I learned this piece off of youtube.com, from a link that Reverend Cooke emailed me\(^5\). The song repeats a melody over and over with lyrics that generally invoke the idea of being “called” by God. This theme is useful to Congregationalists, who deploy the “call” system in their hiring of ministers. Again, I did not know the singers on this particular Youtube version, one of dozens on the site, and for ethnographic purposes I wish to convey that I was herein operating as a musician, not as a researcher. That is, for the purposes of this service, there was no reason to know who was singing. I merely needed to learn the chords and melody. Judith asked if the choir could perform it, but that seemed excessive for a repetitive, unison-melody song. We decided to have a soloist sing it; I asked Jill Barile, and she agreed. She also learned it off of Youtube, although she preferred a different version. We rehearsed it on the day of the service, immediately beforehand. Her voice was hoarse that day, and it cracked on many of the notes.

Performance:
Jill used a microphone in performance, but her voice was still failing her on particular notes. It was a rough performance because of this fact, and I felt sympathetic. Still, she soldiered through it.

Analysis:
Again, what is notable here was the transmission protocol – a Youtube link was sent, and this comprised the necessary information for later realization.

**Case Study #4**
Two unrealized performances of Contemporary Christian Songs (they did not happen in service)

**Goal:**
One song was to be sung by the Children’s Choir and one was to be arranged for choir (or as a solo piece) on Palm Sunday

**Songs:**
“You, You are God” by Gateway Worship and “Above All” by Michael W. Smith; I link these two song-experiences together because of some thematic similarities that contributed to their fate.

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\(^5\)“Will you come and follow Me, The Summons. a Christian song of following a calling from God”, accessed online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8IOfMjtzdE
Preparation:

At the beginning of the program year (September 2011), we made a tentative plan to conduct children’s choir by having the kids learn the pieces in Sunday School followed by collaboration with me to organize and implement a presentation suitable for and feasible in worship. Jill Barile handed me a burned DVD with the words “You Are God” written in red Sharpie marker. On the DVD was a rock band playing in front of an arena crowd. Searching on Youtube, I found the title and corresponding artist (that are printed above) as well as a video matching the DVD given to me\(^6\). The Youtube version has roughly fifteen to twenty people on stage, mostly vocalists singing in unison. I should mention that every singer in the video spends a good portion of the song jumping up and down. But there are also three guitarists, a bassist, drumset player, and an auxiliary percussionist. The personnel is vaguely multi-racial, and the bassist as well as one of the backup singers appear to be from the Indian sub-continent, in somewhat reification of Warner and others’ concept of Evangelical Christianity as racially heterogeneous (see especially Warner 1988:52-3). Although the descriptive comments on the website assert that this recording is “live worship”, it appears to be a music video with all of the music pre-recorded. Either way, I was unclear as to the best way to arrange this for an unknown number of children, ages 5-12, with either piano or organ accompaniment. I also found the music and message to be a bit heavy-handed. The song never materialized in service. I tried not to be obstructionist, but it was true that I did not feel comfortable preparing this song. It was the first time that I felt more like a musical jukebox than a musical director, and so began my wariness with Youtube links as programmatic prescriptions.

For the second song, Michael W. Smith’s “Above All,” I was sent a Youtube link\(^7\) in an email from Reverend Cooke, asking if I could prepare it for Palm Sunday. In this Youtube video, Michael W. Smith performs in a concert arena setting, singing along to his own piano playing. As a soloist, he sings in a stylized manner, sliding into notes in a highly personal way. The piano he plays is multi-colored with swirly shapes. Ninety seconds into the song, the drums and backup band and singers come in. I do not doubt that it is a live performance (as in the previous song). The crowd sings

\(^6\) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xa0ElFFc6xk; “You, You are God led by Thomas Miller”; accessed 2/20/13;

\(^7\) accessed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7Sn5rV6oM0; “michael W Smith - Above All”
along during the choruses, arms raised in the air (typifying the Contemporary Christian service reaction) with their eyes closed. Again, I did not feel comfortable performing this song personally, and I cited my own lack of theological empathy with this music or style of music-making. It was the first time that I explicitly claimed limits that invoked a theological objection. While I consider myself an employee of the church, these two instances made me realize that there were limits to what I was able to do from both a musical and ideological vantage point. When I realized how much my own posture might obstruct the enactment of a vision shared by other church leaders, I began to look for other jobs.

Analysis:

In case study #2, I describe organists’ difficulty incorporating vernacular musics into the liturgy during the 1960s and 70s; their corporate problem aligns with my own inability to effectively enact the genre of Contemporary Christian music. In these cases, there was what I perceived to be a too-vast distance between the online musical information and the musical resources available to the church. Using the now classic music-locating categories of strategy, resources, and agenda as put forth in Slobin’s *Subcultural Sounds* (1993), these recorded concert musics overwhelmed the church’s resources, those being my own musical ability and sensibility, the instruments within the church, and the other personnel. In larger churches or in Evangelical churches where rock bands comprise the musical-instrumental support system or where there are split services, there are fewer obstacles to realizing these songs. However, Higganum Congregational had and continues to have only one employed music staff member, and these pieces proved to be beyond my powers of translation, arranging, or performance – that is, my resources. These songs also interacted dissonantly with the church’s theology and aesthetic morals, as I understood them. I use these terms cautiously – as I worked week-to-week to make music, I did not spend a lot of time analyzing my own sensibilities towards these things but rather reacted to situations. These musics indicated that there was a limit to which I can shelve my own agenda, as unconscious as it may have been. It was also a case where I realized that, beyond the chasm indicated by these members’ musical desires and the church’s

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8 The gesture I refer to involves the worshipper raising their right hand when moved to do so, either swaying in time to the music or merely keeping the arm raised. I have heard the gesture described by some onlookers as “chilling.” I personally would agree with this assessment.
musical resources, there was a chasm between my theology and aesthetic morals, and their theology and aesthetic morals.

A Combined Analysis

What do these four case studies, in toto, imply? These examples are not the only instances where Youtube videos or other online forms are put forth as pedagogic materials. I submit that there is a slippery duality here; while the Youtube pedagogical phenomenon is the subject of recent, vivid documentation and analysis (see Miller 2012), and while I draw from this research, I cannot speculate as to whether this goes on cross-ecclesiastically in the way that Youtube pedagogy is designed to reach far-flung audiences, or in the way that other forums, such as video-gaming, presuppose intra-cultural interaction and recasting (Miller 2009). In larger churches that employ the dichomotized model described in Justice 2010 and 2012, or that have multiple choirs and multiple directors, sheet musics still provide much of the information to the ensemble formations. At Higganum, comparatively, we had neither the financial resources set aside, nor the appropriate bureaucratic conduits (to secure proper licensing, etc.) necessary to establish and maintain those musicking models. Rather, the music director was called upon to learn a music through mediated Internet feeds, internalize it, and transmit the music to the resources available at the time. This kind of system is highly fallible, because so much is lost in translating say, a full rock band with amplified vocals, to a group of unamplified children's voices accompanied by organ, piano, or classical guitar. A significant limitation in the research process also presents here. I cannot deploy the diachronic analytical techniques that I otherwise rely on to situate my experience alongside the church's previous manifestations of phenomena. This style of cultural-production is too new a transmission model and requires new analytic methodology, such as the digital philosophies promulgated by Miller (2012) and especially Sinnreich (2010; 2013, in press). Sinnreich argues that everyone is involved with a blurred form of “configurable culture”, broadly referring to “mash-ups”, where cultural memes are combined in ways that reflect a “consumptive-adjacent” or “productive-adjacent” engagement of every interactor (Sinnreich 2013). Certainly, these live re-purposings of internet-
musics (that are themselves mash-ups) must constitute some point on the continuum that he describes as vacillating between the productive and the consumptive.

The ethnomusicological project incorporates varied ethnographies of music learning. Ample ethnomusicological scholarship demonstrates, even valorizes, orality as the most resilient transmission paradigm. Are the above examples instances of oral transmission? This is difficult to answer. Oral transmission can be highly supple. It is how North and South Indian musics have been taught for millennia (Nelson 1991, Viswanathan and Allen 2003), how bird-songs are transmitted amongst the Kaluli (Feld 1982, 1986), and how Ghanaian master drummers pass on their complex drum-poetics. It is how the Suzuki method of violin and piano differentiates itself from “traditional” classical music pedagogy. Even Euro-American musicology lauds the by-ear virtuosity of 15th century singers performing complex harmony by rote (Temperley 1981:529), or the more epic memory of our ancestors learning languages, chants, and choral technique in the early days of the University of Notre-Dame (Roederer 1982: 78-9). Orality is an effective transmissive protocol for complex music.

Contrastively, the musics in the case studies are not complex, nor are the musical examples given by Kiri Miller in Playing Along, suggesting that there is a communicative threshold in mediated pedagogy which delimits particular material from being transmitted, with that delimitation coming at a cognitive level. In fact, it is not the path of transmission that concerns a music director. Music directors are eager to please, but they are aware that in pleasing one person or group, they may alienate other, lurking factions. Since the music director is among the most influential forces in shaping an aesthetic ecology, s/he is responsible for both quality of performance and curatorial depth-of-scope. And while learning through Youtube, compact disc recordings, or other mediated forms might be separable from its embedded musical material, we might go further by not disassociating the two. Observe:

1. It is harder to do hard things than easy things.
2. All things being equal, more easy things than hard things will take place in an environment.
3. More easy things will be videotaped and uploaded than hard things.
4. Things that are easy to videotape will be videotaped more than things that are hard.
to videotape.
5. It is easier to teach easy things than hard things.

From these above terms, we can conclude that:

A. If the dominant mode of music transmission is through Internet-mediated videos or sound recordings, then

B. Easy things will be learned from digital mediation platforms in disproportionately greater numbers than hard things.

We may bifurcate “easy things” further into learning types and specific musics. An example of an “easy” learning type is the literal, physical learning of notes; the efficient, artful production of tone on an instrument exemplifies a “hard” learning type. An “easy” specific music might include unison melodic lines against “block” triadic chords (homophonic texture) that follow repetitive structures of symmetric antecedent-consequent phrase relations, as in all of the songs presented in the case studies. If the transmission model cited above becomes prevalent in any site, a music director will find that the site privileges both of these “easy” things in disproportion. In reaction, the printed score – sheet music – becomes the talisman of the “Traditional” guard, with hymnals and abundant choral inventories providing protective bulwarks.

Both modes of teaching and learning musics have costs and benefits. It is fair to assume, though, that when the American Guild of Organists publishes articles warning of the coming demise, they are speaking directly about the demise of through-composed, scored musics that require demanding and particular music-cognitive skillsets. Music directors, aware of that demise, have a high degree of autonomy when it comes to shaping their particular ecology to either ward off the end-days scenario, or to craft their own site-specific music-scape. Warner writes, “denominational and congregational fortunes need not mesh...the congregation is not the denomination writ-small” (1995: 149). Similarly, the American Guild of Organists’ demise does not necessarily signal the demise of any one particular organist or music director’s program, despite the

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9 The irony here, and it is substantive, is that these musicians, notwithstanding their holding of scores, learn music by hearing directors play melodies for them and by repeating phrases over and over until achieving a sufficient muscular and aural memory. It is not dissimilar from YouTube or like transmission. The difference is that it is live and interactive, with the sound and direction being in three dimensions and not undergoing mediation that removes the teacher from embodying specific corrections. The sheet music itself, I argue, is largely a canard.
AGO’s insistence upon its own relevance. So why are not more choral directors and organists taking this issue into their own hands and writing music for their churches in the tradition of their long-deceased European and American predecessors, such as Bach, Tertius Noble, et al.? Evangelical composers do it, and black Gospel musicians constantly compose or arrange and craft their church’s musical resources to suit material. One could say that they are attuning better to their aesthetic-ecological stewardship.

Many of the above observations are self-evident, or they do not require the ethnomusicological eye to bring to light – the Christian Rock band, for instance, is not a sub-culturality that I’m exposing. Rather, ethnographic detail and analysis here apply to the varied and slippery ways that cultural production manifests; mediated musics combine with complex social expectations\(^1\). To review: A band records a song and video; someone records themselves or someone else playing that and uploads it to Youtube; that data comes through less-than-optimal audio hardware, all of which compresses the material and contributes to reduced resolution (higher signal-to-noise ratio per musical grain). This workflow reflects a particular modality of music familiarity and music transmission, which I refer to above as “easy things.” The easy things respond to the pragmatic concerns of worship design – sometimes, a song needs to be consumed and learned quickly. Out of pedagogical necessity, the music itself is easy to access, upload, and digest, and the notes, rhythms, and style-essentials are easy to learn.

Music directors, under severe time and resource restraints, are compelled to learn and teach these mediated musics due in part to these musics’ preponderance as cultural objects. Such protocols rigidify the gap between the construed dichotomy of Traditional and Contemporary worship. We see here that the polarized titles refer not just to music genre, but to the model of transmission.

**Final Thoughts**

Ultimately, music directors teach and choristers and musicians learn orally, whether or not people hold pieces of sheet music in their hands. Pedagogical methods such as the Suzuki Method

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\(^1\) The social expectation being that a link to a video on a file-sharing site is adequate information to learn and arrange a musical piece for a wholly other ensemble formation.
of Talent Education have for many years recognized this state of affairs and taught to it, incorporating technological innovations into the pedagogy as those innovations have emerged. Digital mediation may or may not be a real innovation, but it is prevalent and it is eminently accessible to particular people describing particular demographics. Even more, it is incumbent upon musicians to have this access and to be willing to learn musics through these media.

As more and more humans “get” music from Youtube and like Internet-mediated sites, the fluid trickling of these mediated musics into “Traditional” church music production is a foregone conclusion. Higganum provided an odd laboratory for studying these phenomena. Its music came from or out of its selves; yet the influences of the digital environment bore down upon it. Looking forward, how the church integrates modernity, digitality, and changing generational hegemony into its sacred space is as musical a project as it is theological. Whether the “Traditional” service can withstand such encroaching modernity remains to be seen. Some voices would rather see this service type live on, even in a compromised form, and so urge the powers-that-be to modernize or accept potential extinction. Organ music and organists, thus far, do not necessarily heed this concern. Music directors for mainline churches continue to learn musics from the Western canon on pipe organs and pianos and continue to work with choirs of mixed voices singing English, European, and American “classical” musics. While I would not call it a “worship war”, there is a marked difference in the aesthetic morals promulgated by conservatories, church denominations, ministers, organists, print and digital media, laity, and in the strategic conservations between power brokers who head the institutions. Organists will continue to play along, as the situation at-large plays out.
Chapter Three
The Congregationalists: Interviews on the Music of Higganum

- “I can’t tell the rock bands from religions.”
  Daniel Clay, “Zion”, from his album *The Protestant*

We need to hear from the mouths of churchgoers, those individuals who worship corporately. In relation to musical activity, they represent a whole spectrum of musical training and predilections, but they all sing together. Rarely do paradigmatic shifts in musical or cultural practice play out per worship service, because as illustrated in the first chapter, the placeholders do not change and the routine that activates them likewise indicates a fast-moving current of activity. That being said, I also showed that individual people do have influence on what happens and that they can and do enact change. Here, we see what is behind the realities, changing and static, of a church’s music; what are the wants and needs of its members? As we will see, church members perceive music from very different angles, depending largely on their level of participation, training, and investment. Music can be deeply symbolic to some, representing the church’s past and their own perception of what church *should* sound like. To others, music almost literally comprises a territory in which they are landowners with skin in the game. To get to these areas, we will examine the church in terms of its own past so as to better understand its present situation. Whomever the present individuals are, they are aware of the institutional Church’s history, this particular church’s history, and their personal history as having interacted with both historical threads. In contributing to this discourse, I piggyback off of Deborah Justice’s similar questions and answers that she comprehensively explores and posits through her own ethnographic experience and analysis.

**How does the church enact “being”?**

In churches and synagogues, there is a lively duality present in most worship services: the liturgy recognizes the individual’s needs but only through corporate rites and language. The terms
“community of faith” or “faith community” usually accompany descriptions of church populations, phrases that lend a certain dignity to the enterprise.

Indeed, Higganum Congregational Church “was” or, Higganum Congregational Church “is.” So what exactly is or was? Throughout my presence there, HCC was a group of folks for whom the church played a more-or-less pivotal role in their lives. The church provided a site where many different socio-religious agendas could play out. The weekly or monthly meetings of the church bore this out: the Board of Finance met every third Monday night, the Board of Deacons (Diaconate) every second Monday, the Church Council on the first Tuesday night, etc. Then, the Choir met every Thursday night for rehearsal, the Friday Night Fellowship every other week to play Setback (a card game), and members of the Prayer Shawl Ministry multiple times a month as well. These committees’ memberships, other than the Deacons, did not change considerably during my tenure. The Board of Finance felt especially entrenched, with each member seeming to have served on it since the dawn of their respective memberships. Similarly, Christian Education retained a similar identity for decades. None of this is that surprising; considering the size of the church, those members who conveyed interest and, moreso, a willingness to commit their energies were probably more indispensable than great ministers or organists. But this kind of by-committee separation – the Reverend Bridget Fidler (of First Church Suffield) refers to this phenomenon as “the silos of the church” – can lead to members having widely divergent preoccupations and understandings as to the church’s workings and vital needs.

My involvement musically led me to an appreciation for and a novice’s understanding of ecclesiastical politics and bureaucracies in all of their structural strangeness – the word “Byzantine” often comes to lips when ministers, church members, or staff discuss the paths of process in Congregational churches. This chapter, though, focuses on particular individuals who belonged to or worked within these groups at Higganum. Through parsing the recorded interviews with the above
parties, I lay out the multivalent positions on music and music-making in the church. We shall see that these individuals' relationships to music are distinct – some play, some listen, and some *value* the music. Within those relations, there is further variation. We will also examine some illuminating survey data.

**The Interviewees**

The interview respondents were key members of the church who regularly attended services. Stew Gillmor served the church in many capacities; at the time of the interview, he was the chair of the Music Committee and a choir member, although he has since “retired” from singing. His spouse Rogene was and is a member of the Prayer Shawl ministry and also a long-time musician of the church and a fine flutist. Jill Barile was and is the superintendent of the Christian Education Committee, a position that began to receive funding for the first time in the fall of 2011. She attended staff meetings as well as Christian Education Committee meetings. Jack Calhoun was a deacon of the church for all of the years I served. He was also a “lifer,” born and raised in a handsome house across the street from the church, his father Hazen the well-respected town doctor and his step-mother Laura the church's administrative assistant for much of her life. My interviews with Linda Hansen and Judy Hodgson were focused on choral activity, due to their long-time involvement with the choir. But both women carried out other important duties in the church: Judy had been Assistant Treasurer for nearly two decades, and Linda served as a deacon throughout most of my tenure. She also served on the Christian Education Committee and was a past member of the music committee. I had come to know and invest in all of these people; during my four years, we shared many, many experiences and musical collaborations. If I have not already done so, let me impress upon the reader the difficulty of interviewing a church attendee who does *not* also work for the church in some capacity.

I compiled the survey data during April and May of 2012. With 31 respondents (out of a regular church attendance of 72), these included significant enough returns to draw some conclusions regarding many things musical in members’ personal and church-going lives. Namely,
the questions and answers span a range of topics, including musical taste, religious commitment and personal theology, the church’s cultural identity, distinctions between Congregationalism and other denominations, musical literacy, and musical reform in worship. This survey also compiled information on age, geographic origin, and gender of each respondent. We will explore these data and determine some useful points of conjunction and fracture.

While this church could be most conveniently described as mainline Protestant, the individual traditions that undergird that title are not uniform in points of origin, and the informant reflect a more pluralist denominational upbringing. Speaking bluntly, if someone is not from New England, then they will probably not have grown up as “Congregational,” with some rare exceptions intra-nationally. My interview subjects describe different places of birth, occupations, and ideological postures. What implications does this have for the musical identity of the church, and in what ways does that identity correlate with the changing face of mainline Protestantism? Specifically, how does a church handle theological-aesthetic antinomies as a simultaneously socio-cultural and liturgical site?

**Higganum Congregational Church: A Little History**

Much of my research regarding the church’s founding is colloquial – gleaned through repetitive conversations with church elders. The critical information is this: prior to 1818, a town in Connecticut was not recognized as such until it had a congregational church and a settled pastor (See *An Historical Narrative*: 6-10), thus forming a “Society.” For the town of Haddam, this dictum was satisfied by the Congregational Church of Haddam (“First Society”), located 2.4 miles south of where Higganum Congregational Church now stands, founded over a century before the Higganum church existed (not listed as “Society”, because Haddam had already filled up with other such societies, and because Higganum was seen as a split more than it was an independent formation). Much of the following information comes from the Reverend Edmund Lewis’s *A Sketch of the First*
Congregational Church of Haddam, a volume dating from 1879. The Haddam church had for years maintained a tenuous balance between its two geographically-distinct factions. The northern part of Haddam, called Higganum, had long clamored for a church closer to its core population. This did not appear to be a contentious point for anyone, but distributing the church’s funds was a somewhat heated dispute (Lewis 1879). More significant and unexplained is the transition of Haddam’s settled pastor, the renowned David Dudley Field, to Higganum (the new church) as their pastor. One of my interviewees, Stew Gillmor, commented that “finding out why this man left the Haddam church in his 60’s to lead the new church would make a great book.” Lewis admits that the debate within the church regarding this split caused “alienation.” This is an understatement. To this day, the Higganum church members refer devilishly to “stealing their minister” (meaning the Haddam church’s then settled minister) as the cause for persistent turbulence between the two groups. The ongoing clashes and squabbles between town and churches are coeval with many like progressions ongoing throughout New England during this time period (Bumsted 1967). Although Lewis’s book is now one hundred thirty three years in age, one comment (beside the quiet feud between them) still rings true – the sizes of the two churches remain almost identical. Since 1881, both churches’ memberships have shrunk slightly, but they have shrunk together and all in all, the membership numbers are similar. So the churches are in near direct, albeit microscopic, competition. In 1979, the Haddam church (renamed “First Congregational Church of Haddam”) burned down. The Higganum church offered its facilities for worship. The Haddam church accepted but requested a different time of worship “in order to preserve the identity of [their] membership” (Church Member 2011). Needless to say, the acrimony is still thick in the air, as Dr. Gillmor pointed out in our interview. I have personally witnessed it on a number of occasions. In reading D.D. Field’s own *A History of the Towns of Haddam and East Haddam* (1814), one can sense the pride he feels as the pastor of Haddam’s "First Society.” Everett Lewis’s authorship takes on a similar aura. Field was more than
just a witness for the historical split, considering his position, he must have been a pivotal entity; while at first I viewed the feuding rhetoric as provincial hoopla, I began to sense the realness of it as I remained at the church. That said, I never personally felt the rivalry inside me (although I engaged in the rhetoric).

Regardless, the Higganum church formed in 1844, dedicated a chapel in 1871, and subsisted adequately throughout the next one hundred forty years. In 1904, the wealthy Scovil family (whose identity remained very present in the church throughout the next century thanks to children Philip “Bud” Porter and Mabel Porter), donated the Austin organ with other wealthy benefactors modernizing the facilities and constructing stained glass windows. In 1961, the church joined the United Church of Christ, a national ecumenical agency, along with most other New England congregational churches.

The church had not added to itself structurally since 1914, and its size and facilities sometimes became a source of debate. In 2009, the church voted to begin a fundraising campaign in order to build a new wing on the East part of the property (on the last Sunday that the Reverend Dr. C. Maxwell Olmstead preached). Ground was broken in April 2011, and the new wing was dedicated in March 2012. The church also hired a new settled minister in August 2011, the Reverend Judith Cooke. Incidentally, the church's "program" year from September 2011 to August 2012 marked the first time in the church’s history that they simultaneously employed a female settled minister and a male music director. This continued after my departure, when Alan Rodi became the organist.

**Interview Subjects and Techniques**

I interviewed five members of the church: Jack Calhoun, Stew Gillmor, Jill Barile, Linda Hansen, and Judy Hodgson. The latter two both being choir members, the tenor of the conversation addressed the church’s choral activity. These members had different stories to tell, indicating the church’s underlying cultural differences. In choosing these five, I wanted most of all to get a cross-
section of membership. Jack has attended the church since 1942, his year of birth. Stew came to the church in 1973, and Jill first came in 2006 (becoming a member in 2008). Linda and Judy joined in the 1980s. I used a template of seventeen questions, divided into two “types,” one for questions of personal history (type “A”), and one for questions indicating personal opinion on church music culture (type “B”). The questions are listed in the Appendix. The questions were open-ended, though, and I did not ask the gamut of questions in any interview. Typically, the questions led to conversations that indicated other appropriate questions. I let these conversations unfold naturally. I didn’t want to be too leading, because I did not have an agenda other than wanting as much information as possible. Although I enjoyed the conversational format, some questions proved difficult to answer on the spot. For two respondents then, I followed up with email discussions. Each interview was recorded onto cassette tapes using an “over-the-counter” RCA tape recorder. I used a separate microphone to clarify sound.

Although I made full transcriptions of the individual interviews, here I inter-weave my interviewees’ answers, facilitating a simpler comparative view of the responses (see Zheng 2010: ‘The Poetics and Politics’). To begin, though, I will quickly describe my interview subjects as well as the settings of our interviews, all of which are germane to the discussion at large. Most biographical aspects of these descriptions came out of the interviews themselves. I told my respondents that the purpose of the interviews was to establish some ethnographic data about the church in its current state through the lens of specific members. I used a tape recorder and a computer to make notes and check questions, although in the case of Jill, Judy, and Linda, I did not consult my pre-written material to conduct the interview. Again, most interviews were very conversational; this is where my standing as an interviewer came to bear. I tended to get excited by the answers elicited and jumped into dialogue too keenly.

**Interviewee #1: Stew Gillmor**

On November 25th, 2011, Stew and I met at my house under unusual but certainly apropos circumstances. The sexton of the church and longtime church member, William (Bill) Stetson, had
passed away suddenly after taking a fall in his garage a few weeks prior. I liked Bill very much although I knew him and his wife Charlotte, a very colorful member of the church (and the member with the longest tenure), only casually. Still, Bill played golf at the course I also frequented. Nearly every week, I saw him teeing off as I left the course. We would exchange pleasantries over the game. Of course, other golfers would scratch their heads at the oddity of our acquaintanceship – the clean-shaven Protestant octogenarian with impeccable attire, playing in a proper league; and the harried Jewish 20-something with an untucked shirt, ripped jeans, and an overgrown beard, who played alone before the course opened. Moreover, Bill was one of only three staff members at the church – the pastor and myself being the other two. He performed crucial, rudimentary duties of cleaning, preparing the sanctuary for service, and general maintenance, for which he received a small stipend. Besides the golf course, I would see Bill during my practice hours at the organ and my office hours in the balcony. It was our mutual place of employment, no matter the difference in scope.

It was the day after Thanksgiving, and Stew and I had just finished playing Bill’s funeral service. It was the most crowded I ever saw the church. The church holds about one hundred seventy-five people comfortably, with every pew accounted for. There were two hundred twenty there. People were standing just outside the church and in the balcony (and sitting on the pew and extra row of chairs we had set up), which was more of a storage area than a seating area. People stood in the little choral square area behind the organ on several chairs turned in to face the chancel. They had set up extra chairs everywhere they could get them. Bill was 83. I’ve played many funerals for 83 year-olds. Never have I seen such a turnout.

Among other slow, mournful musics, I played the b-minor Bach organ fugue (BWV 574) as a prelude. Then I accompanied myself on guitar as I led the congregation in “Just A Closer Walk with Thee.” Stew and I played a duet of J.J. Johnson’s Jazz ballad “Lament” straight out of the Real Book, with Stew playing melody and solos on flugelhorn. Finally, he played cornet, a 1947 Olds, to my piano for the postlude of “When the Saints go Marching In.” This last song took us both to the edge of our stamina as the recession knew no end.
Stew was born in 1938 in Kansas City, Missouri. He is a Professor Emeritus (History of Science) at Wesleyan University. In addition, he was the leader of the Wesleyan Pep Band for over a quarter-century. He is a musician of the highest order, whose breadth of training is antediluvian in its comprehensiveness. His family moved around the States extensively before he was nine, and he took piano lessons wherever he found himself at the time. As a result, he is a very fine pianist and competent sight-singer (one of the few in the church choir). He has substituted for me at the organ in services many times. He is a crack brass player (notwithstanding the mutual train wrecks he and I shared that I describe later in Chapter 4). In service or extra-liturgical musical events, he has played trumpet, valve trombone, flugelhorn, pocket trumpet, cornet, double-belled euphonium, tuba, and sousaphone. I had composed flute duets for him and his wife Rogene to realize in service. He even played tenor saxophone on occasion. When Max interviewed me for the position in August 2008, he said to me, “We have a lot of different instrumentalists in the church, but they’re all basically Stew Gillmor.” I shamelessly relied on Stew to provide instrumental flair to many services, especially the big ones (Christmas and Easter).

Stew played with composer and woodwind player Anthony Braxton in various ensembles for over a decade. Their duet album, “14 Compositions (Traditional) 1996” on Leo Records, features Stew on a variety of different brass instruments as well as piano. Certainly, there are few academics in the world that can boast of a distinguished scholarly career as well as a successful side career as an avant-garde multi-instrumentalist. Probably even fewer still are devoted Congregationalists.

Stew came over to my house after the reception at the Elks Club in Middletown. We were both wearing our suits from the funeral. He sat at my small living room table that also serves as a dining room table. The late afternoon sun poured in through the blinds, bedecking him with strips of light.

As a historian, Stew often situated his own story amidst the stories and narratives of the era/area. His answers were very handy for my purposes, because he contextualized data. For example, when I asked him about the choral membership when he arrived at Higganum, he
mentioned that the choir had up to twelve people at times, but “you can’t trust the pictures from Easter.” When I asked him what material constituted the music, he said,

Higganum was just sort of hymns and we had – the interesting thing was old Gladys Kingsland, who at that time her son Lenny, who’s deceased now I think, Lenny was in town, but Gladys had a Masters in music from Yale, but she belonged to our church but was the organist at the Haddam church. She didn’t want to be the organist at the church she belonged to, and she taught piano lessons and our kids took piano lessons from her for a couple years. So here’s Gladys, a little like Mrs. Peck, you know, kind of an educated woman who’s in this because Gladys had probably married a local farm guy, I’m guessing, um, Everett! That’s right, Everett Kingsland! And here was Gladys, the organist down there; we never got to have her as our organist. Our first organist, one or two, I can’t even remember because they were non-existent, and then they left and I got on the group that had to try to find replacements. (Gillmor 2011)

**Interviewee #2: Jack Calhoun**

Jack was and is a “lifer.” He was born in Haddam in 1942, was baptized and raised in the church, and ultimately returned to the church after attending college and serving in the U.S. Air Force from 1961-1964. In fact, he was born in a house only a few hundred yards from the church. At the time of the interview, he served as one of the twelve church members that comprise the church’s Diaconate. He worked as a Connecticut State Trooper from 1966-89 in the major crime and auto theft units, as well as serving a year as the Resident Trooper for Haddam. He joined Travelers’ Insurance in 1989 as an Environmental Investigator, traveling to different sites to determine the historical aspects involved with a property’s claim. His children were both baptized in the church and attended the church growing up, but neither retained church-going habits. They continue to live in Connecticut. His brother and sister both live in an unspecified part of Haddam. Jack and I met on Sunday, November 27th, 2011 at about 2:30 in the afternoon.

I drove to his home on Jacoby Road, about a mile-and-a-half from the church, on a brisk, gray day. His house consisted of dark red wooden boards, with high ceilings inside and forest views on all sides. We sat at a large wooden table in a room filled with pictures and books. Jack has a powerful singing voice (I’ve heard it during hymns in the outdoor service), and he was a good sport
to have a go in the choir one year. However, we were rehearsing Handel’s “Messiah,” an intimidating piece in which to make your rookie appearance. He consistently gave me a bit of stick about that one (his term) whenever I encouraged him to try singing again. He professed to have no musical know-how and wondered what use he could possibly have to offer me in my research.

**Interviewee #3: Jill Barile**

Jill was the youngest of the informants and the newest in terms of church membership. She was born in Wausean, Ohio in 1972. She attended a “family” service at HCC in 2006, a monthly service designed and run by then pastor Max Olmstead and then superintendent of Christian Education Donna Paradis. Jill remembers enjoying the service, although she did not return for over a year. She has three young boys aged 11, 8, and 7, and as she puts it, “I wanted my family to grow up in a church the way I did.” Interestingly, and she admits this, she and her husband did not visit any other churches in the area, even though she grew up Methodist and he grew up Catholic. Both of those denominations are represented in Higganum, less than a half-mile from the Congregational church (St. Peter’s and Higganum United Methodist). Jill is a full-time real estate agent and administrator for William Raveis, Inc., but in September she also became the superintendent of Christian Education for Higganum Congregational Church. This marked the first time in the church’s history that the position was funded.

Jill grew up in Ohio and traveled extensively throughout the United States and the Caribbean. She grew up in a church community and sung throughout her childhood in church and in her high school’s “show choir.” She had sung in service multiple times, twice as a soloist (once in a very last-minute context), once with other Sunday School teachers, and once in a large ecumenical choir that performed a John Rutter choral work (a contemporary liturgical composition). She and I met in the church’s social room on a rainy morning in December.

**Interviewees #4 and #5: Judy Hodgson and Linda Hansen, Choir Members**

Judy and Linda are choir members and have been since the late 1980s, Linda joining in 1986 and Judy in 1989. Both women recalled joining the choir before joining the church, a fairly common
occurrence. Linda had been married at the church and one of her children was baptized there, but she was not a regular church-goer. She began attending regularly after baptizing her second son, joining the choir the next year. Judy’s story is a bit more dramatic. Her marriage dissolved after a hectic series of moves and property switches in various parts of the country; at the point that her marriage dissolved, she found solace and community in supportive members of Higganum Congregational. She gave back by joining the choir and offering her skills to the finance committee. She has been Assistant Treasurer of the church for decades – this is an incredibly sensitive role. Interim Minister Keith Jones told me that she was the only person in the church who knows exactly how much money each member pledged, privileged information indeed. She was also the only female on the “business committee” (which I place in quotes because it is sometimes referred to under a different name, such as “Finance Committee,” “Board of Finance,” etc.). While I was director, Linda sang soprano and Judy sang alto, although choir directors in general do not hold on too fast to these designations in a choir of limited personnel. I made Judy especially hop around between parts almost on a weekly basis. Judy and Linda articulate how their involvement in the choir was and is musical only to a point; their belonging to the choir functioned on a deeper level than hymn- and anthem-singing. They were aware of this and spoke of it openly.

The Survey Respondents

Names, ages, and respondents’ answers are provided in Appendix One, along with the other data pertaining to this chapter. I received a significant number of responses. It could have been more, certainly, but a number of the active members gave answers and often wrote at some length. With 31 respondents out of an average attendance of 72\(^1\), and with the majority of that 72 consisting of either couples or larger families, I received a representative response from nearly every couple or family that attends. I must temper that claim by admitting that the weekly 72 emerges out of a practical church membership of 150. This means that my 31 responses, despite a Gallop pollster’s

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\(^1\) Data compiled over the four-year period of my tenure as music director, 2008-12; provided by Terry Smith, clerk of the church.
possible assertion to the contrary, may not reflect the actual variegation of opinions and world-views that comprise the church’s attendees.

**Results and Discussion**

Throughout the respondents’ varied answers on many topics, common points began to emerge. Each person preferred a “variety of music” (Hodgson interview) and thought that the variety of music should manifest itself in the weekly church service. This statement requires some clarification: it is not that each service should contain an eclectic musical offering (although that does seem to be the best of all worlds) but rather that from week to week, different genres are represented. Indeed, it is this state of affairs – that pluralism is valued despite their being few practitioners capable of "sonifying" pluralism – that flummoxes music directors and organists, often to great points of frustration and eventual resignation. While we will examine the organist’s plight in Chapter Five, it should be noted that in a practical way, the practicing church musician is called upon to satisfy the divergent affinities presented here.

The questions elicited very different manners of response. As a historian, Stew Gillmor tended to situate his answers with very elaborate back-stories explaining the “why” as much as the “what.” His historical facts were nearly always exactly true when cross-referenced with pertinent documentation. This tended to reinforce the veracity of his more colloquial data. Jack also remembered things in terms of era, and they each used ministers to identify era. Jack also has an interest in the past, especially family lineages and local history, and his answers had comparable depth to Stew’s.

For questions regarding the immediate first memories of the church, including its music, no respondent could remember the name or gender of the organist at the time, except for the choir members. For Jack, this was understandable: he was a young child and only attended the “real” service during the occasions when Sunday School was not in session. At those times, the spectacle of a crowded church on Easter or Christmas Eve precluded much detail-retention. But as he said, “As a child, you remember two things: the power of the organ and the stained glass with Jesus on
it.” Because many organs, and especially electro-pneumatic ones, do not situate the operator of the instrument anywhere near the actual sound-producing objects, it is not uncommon for the pipes to be separated physically from the organist. So Jack’s focusing his attention on the “organ” and not the organist corroborates this separation. At that time in the church’s history, the floors were not carpeted, and in fact the chancel was raised from the ground without steps bridging it as it does now. There is also a possibility that the church did not have a regular musician at the time but relied on monthly musicians, weekly guests, or lay volunteers. This dearth of information about organists (up to a certain historical point) is frustrating, no doubt. But it is also useful – the fact that the organ’s existence is much more chronicled than any of its actual operators is not innocuous information. Further, if we are to assume that a lay member with some musical skill played the organ in service, this fact suggests that an increasing professionalism crept into Higginum’s own liturgical-musical sensibility. By 1978, when Alma Zyko became the organist, there was a different sensibility in place.

Stew also does not remember the organists during his first years – he called them “nonexistent.” Jill Barile associated me as the musician at the console when she first attended. But if she indeed began attending a year or even eighteen months after that first visit in 2006, I could not have been the musician, as I did not play my first service until September 2008. Most likely, the church was going through a rotation of guest musicians, after terminating John Lampe’s contract in the spring of 2008. It remains to be seen how this odd little data-point of not noticing, common to the first three respondents, figures into the church’s larger music narrative. At the time of Linda and Judy’s coming to the church, Alma Zyko was firmly installed as the organist. Her tenure, from 1978-1994, remains the longest according to current documents.

For each respondent, the reason for settling on this church was different. Jack really had no choice – this was the family’s church and he lived across the street. Stew liked it as the “local” choice; Jill appreciated the family-centered dynamic that presented itself. Linda’s reason somewhat corresponds with Jack, Stew, and Jill: it was a local choice (after she had tried others), and she liked
its personal warmth that distinguished it from her Catholic upbringing. Judy’s story is the most dramatic, and the most unique. Besides enjoying musical multiplicity, all interviewees converged on one other point, that the church was full of “extremely selfless, giving individuals” (Gillmor interview) or as Jill put it, “the people are the focus here. We have such a good group.” Stew Gillmor came to the area because of his professorship at Wesleyan University. Jill’s story is a bit different and points to the current trending within the church. Although she thoroughly enjoyed her above-mentioned upbringing in her church community in Ohio (as well as her life generally there), she asserts that “one of my major things of success to me was to be far away from my hometown, not that I didn’t like it...but I just didn’t want to stay where I grew up or in the area where I grew up.” She traveled extensively throughout the United States and the Caribbean but settled on Connecticut and the area due to her husband’s occupation as well as his familial roots here. This move towards patrilocal settling is consistent with certain gendered labor-driven analyses of locality in North America (Ember and Ember 1971), but generally, the desire to establish herself separate from her place of origin, independent of partnering influence, is consistent with modern American norms of identity (Small 2001: 217). Her assertion of “success” being attributed to dislocation is a trope borne out throughout anthropological literature and of course continues in nearly all modern societies. Indeed, the “business traveler”, the touring musician or professional athlete, the superstar academic, and the diplomat continue to harbor prestige as professions, partly due to their consistent dislocating. There is no question that the church, despite missing me when I concertized, was proud of my performing internationally. For our purposes, though, Jill’s story brings another set of experiences and traditions into this previously insular church community.

Musically, there are distinct sensibilities converging as well as different notions of tradition. “Tradition” does have some grounding in hymnody, as represented by the church’s worn-down versions of the Pilgrim Hymnal and the newer New Century Hymnal, released in the late 20th century. The survey respondents confirmed that singing hymns from the Pilgrim Hymnal represented the "traditional music" of the church. This is seen as the backbone of the church’s
music, although much of its notational content is vestigial – the church membership does not or cannot read in “parts,” so the inclusion of four-part harmony for nearly every hymn is immaterial to modern needs. All interview respondents supported the idea that the hymns were definitive elements of the Congregational musical identity. They also all obliquely or directly alluded to the lack of men participating as singers in the choir and even generally during hymn-singing. While I have found that the number of participatory men varies drastically church to church, this observation is consistent with historical trends of gender roles in liturgical singing (Gates 1989). Certainly, speculating as to the the gender-polarities of singing is imprecise. But my personal experience bears out greater proportions of female singers in each church or community choir that I’ve worked for, either as director, singer, or accompanist. The exception is liberal arts colleges’ a cappella groups and auditioned singing ensembles (although the fact that they are auditioned obviously has an impact on the member balance).

Stew said that he supported “good music,” which he associates with “choral works in parts by noted composers.” By this, it can be inferred that this is music continuous with the Mainline Protestant tradition: four-part choral music, possibly in English, but allowing for Latin, German, and French texts that represent settings of various Mass offices or other liturgical services (such as Requiem Masses) or rites (such as Communion) by 2nd-millennial “masters.” This aligns with Duncan Vinson’s assertion that the tenets of religious liberalism and the cultural production of mainline Protestantism are cooperative concepts (Vinson 2010). A key ingredient to this argument is that corporate worship includes a fundamental suppression of the self and the self’s theological bias during worship. Vinson quotes Peter Thuesen’s argument that “Mainline logics...places primary emphasis on the collective aspects of Christianity – on what it means to be the church in the world.” Vinson continues,

Choral music fits hand in glove with this sense of liturgy, which dictates that blending into a cohesive sound is more important than individual expression, and that maintaining continuity with centuries of tradition is more important than meeting the needs of the present moment. (Vinson 2010:344)
It should be noted, though, that Stew was game for anything, and there is no question that the church reacted favorably to the Dixieland group that we put together twice a year.

Jack Calhoun professed to liking the musics that Stew and I played in church, most of which had little to do with this above egalitarian sense of communal musicking and much more to do with jazz-improvisational practices more related with the black Gospel tradition. Jack said, “I love when you get into the Gospel and Ragtime, or any of that stuff, you know, it’s got a beat to it where you can hopefully look around and get the white guys going!” Here, Jack was referring to those musical services where we incorporated Dixieland renditions of “Negro spirituals” (renamed “Spirituals” in the New Century Hymnal) through instruments such as the piano, drumset, and solo brass and wind instruments, a “tradition” begun during the co-tenure of Max Olmstead and Toby Twining, both of whom enjoyed more vernacular musics that lent themselves to improvisational singing and instrumental solos. When Jack said that he liked to see “the white guys going!”, it should be noted that no one actually danced, stood, clapped, or sang along. This is consistent with Deborah Justice’s analysis of congregational reaction to “Contemporary” services. She states that despite the congregational absence of overt physical engagement, they nonetheless describe the music as “defrosting,” with “this defrosting…based on the potential for free expression and movement” (Justice 2012: 252).

In writing, Jack offered the following assessment of music’s function in church:

In general music is in support of the mission of the church. It is the binder between the various parts of the Higganum C.C. Sunday Service. When first entering the sanctuary on Sunday morning it is music that signals it's time to relax and let your mind drift away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and prepare for thoughts of fellowship and forgiveness. The music should be in concert with the Christian Calendar or celebration of events, Sermon and Children's message when appropriate. Music can be enjoyed while listening or participating and helps to bring the Congregation together. Our church has many talented singers and musicians (not to mention the "ringers" from Wesleyan) and it is wonderful to hear them. We all have
listened and watched and felt good to hear the sounds of music from the Children, when they preform [sic], the Church Choir and instrumental back up. The enjoyment of those providing the great sound is obvious.

For several years it has been my experience our church music program has been a major factor in persons attending or joining our church. You can’t spread the message without people in the pews. (Calhoun, email communication)

These final two sentences corroborate a comment he made during his interview: “We wouldn’t be in the position we are in now financially if it wasn’t for the music.” As a former trustee of the church and a deacon of the church, he tended toward the pragmatic in his assessment of cultural activities. His monitoring of the music and its effect on congregants and church attendance indicates another way of perceiving music and its role in church life.

Jill Barile’s tradition included contemporary Christian solo and choral works that may be more typically associated with evangelical worship. As Vinson asserts, “...[E]vangelical worship has a more instrumental and pragmatic role for music. Music should be immediately intelligible and applicable to the life of the person hearing it” (2010:344). Jill’s sensibility is continuous with this remark, as she says, “To me, what’s more meaningful is the message,” a stance supported by other scholars that attribute Christian contemporary music’s effectiveness to a theology that addresses the “individuals’ felt needs” (Shibley 1998:75).

This is where the dichotomies such as “evangelical” and “traditional” become nebulous and ineffective on one end and incendiary and divisive on the other. Musics that align with a popular aesthetic do not necessarily belong to any one denomination, but because of innate impulses to categorize, musical genres tend to be placed in particular contexts. Ethnomusicologist Deborah Justice encapsulates the near-inescapable usage of the binary system that typified the 1990s-manner of categorizing worship experiences:

Ultimately, two main camps emerged in these so-called “worship wars”: proponents of guitar-band-led ‘contemporary’ worship versus supporters of choir-and-organ-based ‘traditional’ worship. The pervasive rhetoric of
this dichotomizing debate exerted such force that most mainline churches came to label their worship based upon its musical genre: either ‘traditional,’ ‘contemporary,’ or a ‘blended’ mixture of both styles. Describing worship music without employing this new opposition of ‘traditional’ versus ‘contemporary’ now failed to relevantly position the music within its cultural context. (Justice 2010: n.p.)

The formation of separate “Contemporary” services at many Protestant churches, which Vinson and others refer to as a prevalent religio-cultural norm (Howard 1992, Shibley 1991, Shibley 1998, Macchia 1999:20, Ingalls 2008, Vinson 2010), remains the dominant model in churches of a particular size. However, Jill Barile asserted an inherent value in an intra-church (that is, one service) variety of musical types, and that the church could support it:

We are a certain size – not big enough to really split. That’s the thing. If we do split [into separate services], it’s going to be mediocre on both sides. When we’re bursting at the seams, let’s talk about it then. ‘Cause there’s there is a need for the traditional, even for the young’uns, there’s a need for the traditional, and there’s also a need to bring in something new, and that’s why I think this church is great, because you have the freedom to do that whereas in other religions, it’s so stringent that you don’t have the freedom there. This is a good mix, we have a great mix of people, and because we have certain people that appreciate the music so much and they’re backing you one hundred percent, that’s what’s going to be great because then they’ll let you bring in all this new stuff. But we can even do a lot of contemporary stuff and keep it traditional in some respects, meaning like you’re playing the organ [as accompaniment]. (Barile, personal interview)

Instead of dichotomizing old and new musical sensibilities into the separate-service model, this church, lacking the critical mass to do so, must operate on a more collective interaction of aesthetic eclecticism (although within the confines of sacred music\footnote{See the listing of non-sacred musics in Chapter One, though, that are allowed to represent the sacred in a church service.}). Congregationalism, which resides under the banner of a mainline Protestant denomination (United Church of Christ), is still locally-managed. This means that the global issues that mainline Protestantism faces are not necessarily issues that Higganum Congregational Church faces, or rather, Higganum’s small size and concomitant hyper-
activity of communication (everyone knows everyone else), allows for multiple lines of influence to co-exist. If we examine the demographic history of the church, even on a cursory level, this flexible strategy of eclecticism is consistent with the trend. Five decades ago, most members of the church were generationally linked to the locality of Higganum. Assuming Small’s assessment of American nuclearity has some merit, then it is logical that the church’s membership remain similar in terms of numbers decade to decade, but that its overarching identity sensibility would change to incorporate a more intra-national cultural mixture; that is, a greater regional and ethnic pluralism begins to describe the congregation. In other words, the children of members do not go to this church like they used to – Stew’s children have not lived in the area since 1992. Jack’s children do not attend this or any other church, although they do live close by. Rather, new families with no prior association with this area such as Jill Barile’s (including her spouse and three young boys) are taking up that void.

The Choral Perception

Linda and Judy sing because they “love music.” But Linda also unequivocally referred to the choir as her “support group”; Judy echoed that comment, saying “if I was having a bad week at work, or a bad day, I always knew that I could come to choir and just forget about everything and sing.” Linda recalled the choir’s membership consisting of only two humans when she began attending the church, and this indicated to her that she could serve a very useful role if she joined the choir. The choir rehearsal provided and continues to provide one of the few social gatherings within the church that has no specific charitable, business, or other strategic goal in mind. Ostensibly, it exists solely to enhance worship. Stew and Rogene Gillmor represented the only couple that came to choir together, despite the great majority of other singers’ married relationship status. I perceive that for Judy and Linda, the choir rehearsal, while not escapist, was a chance to be expressive, to have fun, and, perhaps ironically, to be an individual outside of the “veils” taken on at workplaces and in family life, to borrow the metaphor philosopher James Carse employs in *Finite and Infinite Games* (1987). These choir members’ comments might not be fully representative of every
singer’s experience and/or *raison de chanter*, but I suspect that this notion of a safe space to be expressive and artistic would resonate with them.

There have never been many men in the choir. Paul Lewis attended about fifty percent of the time during my tenure, and Linda and Judy confirmed that he came and went prior to my installation. From an interview with previous Music Director Carolyn Halsted, I know that one of the minister’s husbands, Lynn Anderson, sang bass for a spell. Stew Gillmor also sang bass intermittently during his membership, although he was utterly consistent throughout my tenure; occasionally, other women would sing tenor parts. The core choir was four or five women for most years. In some ways, then, this micro-data moves us to a different realm than the literature currently provides for; Vinson’s studies on choral societies imply a larger membership wherein the music itself remains stable in its canonic location. That is, Higganum rarely had the luxury to pull scores off the shelf, hand them out to everyone, and practice. Many minutes were spent figuring out who would sing what part, what might be cut, and who was going to be in attendance on the Sunday in question. Judy and Linda were foundational members, allowing some consistency to emerge so that a music director could begin to figure out his or her strategy for that week. Even Justice’s analyses rely on critical masses of people to balance the traditional choir against the contemporary band as separate but equal valences. The choir at Higganum worked very hard, and one could argue that they took huge risks; it is one thing to be a single soprano in a group of five or ten sopranos. It is another thing to be the soprano section; Linda Hansen had been so deployed throughout five different music directorships. Under Carolyn’s tenure especially, this small group was united and functioned very smoothly; certainly, they enjoyed each other and the social bond that formed. Somewhat ironically, it was partly this solidarity that brought the choral activity under the scrutiny of Max Olmstead.

This paper does not purport to carve out a theory of choral activity, although such a theoretical undertaking is warranted. But in churches, much of music’s power and purchase comes from the singing, with the choir given a particular privilege. In a congregational church, where members are at least ostensibly granted some say over message, politics, and liturgy, choir members
possess a nuanced but significant leverage. They attend church more frequently than most other members; they participate in the liturgy; as a result, they tend to become involved beyond the choral. Simply, they are there regularly, they are there as seen participants, and they are there for years. Their voices are heard in more ways than one.

**What the Survey Reveals**

More or less, the survey bears out the following dynamic trends: first, the church has many members for whom this church is part of a longer family tradition; by this I mean that membership goes back multiple generations. These members include Clark and Kamilla Gardner and other family members when they are in town, George Morrill and his son Tim and daughter-in-law Peggy, Lindamae Peck, Charlotte Stetson and her family when in town, and Jack and Jeanne Calhoun. Then, there is a large circle of members that have been at the church for over two or three decades; most likely, they were married and their children were almost certainly baptized at HCC. This sub-demographic comprises the majority of the church, and holds the majority of pivotal positions within the church’s self-governing committees. There is a smaller but significant number of “younger” families. Very often, these families are the younger versions of the second category. But, like Jill Barile, many do not hail from Higganum or even from Connecticut.

Although many questions were multiple-choice, many required a written response. Fundamentally, there is a shared conviction that “Congregationalism” itself implies a congregationally-run church. This idea of self-governance was, in fact, listed as the most prevalent distinction between Congregationalism and other Mainline denominations. Some responses included: “decentralized structure allowing congregations the autonomy and opportunity to make their own priorities and choose their pastor and leadership”; “We are independent (mostly) and can ‘hire and fire’...”; “independance [sic] from ‘central controls’”; etc.

Some responded from a theological reference; here, a parallel story came through: “...able to choose the paths we wish to follow, rather than being instructed as to what we must believe and do”; “I was raised in the Methodist Church in the mid-west. Congregationalism seems to encourage
thoughtful consideration of theology and is more open to a variety of opinions.” Some of the more blunt responses stated, “Congregationalism seems to embrace atheists in their church. There is a relatively loose interpretation of the bible”; and, “Basically, no one tells you what, how, and when to follow one’s faith journey.” This latter response’s language here aligns directly with some contemporary sociological theories vis-a-vis modern church dynamics (see Roof 1999 and Warner 1988, 1995). And although Congregationalism is lumped into the encompassing stew of Mainline-ism, these comments are a bit prickly. Does Methodism really not allow a “thoughtful consideration of theology,” or was that respondent’s viewpoint more a condition of that site’s geographically-induced ordering? Do Congregationalists really “embrace atheists in the church?” That begins to sound more like Unitarians, who are not typically listed as belonging to the mainline hegemony (if such a word still applies).

Others differentiated the church from its brethren from an interpersonal point of view: “willingness to embrace and foster all people”, “less ritual oriented and more open and people-oriented”; “Caring community”. To think that other churches would not be “caring” is striking, but this is a fairly common reason that many newer Congregationalists come over from more liturgically-strict denominations, especially Catholicism. In point of fact, many of the jokes in sermons in all of the congregations I’ve worked for, even as a guest, refer to many of the attendees’ previous Catholic lives, the joke being “I got over the wall.” However, five respondents admitted little distinction from other mainline groups, and some mentioned that services themselves were not strikingly different.

There is a self-fulfilling nature to these responses; if people join a church perceiving it as self-run, these are probably people who are at least nominally eager to take part in that governance structure. Certainly, the underpinnings of Congregationalism are theological as well as political; one respondent even alluded to Connecticut’s state law that every town must have a Congregational church and settled minister, and that even non-churchgoers were required to pay taxes towards that minister’s salary. While this draconian measure was lifted in 1818, the Congregational church still sits
in a central location within most Connecticut towns, and people’s attendance still reflects a civic
duty as much as the individual’s spiritual journey.

Musically, this duality of the individual and the community as co-existent focal points of
church participation plays out in worship “styles,” lamentably reduced to “Traditional” and
“Contemporary” banners. Justice argues that within these too-general headings, many smaller binary
descriptors are attached, sometimes contradictory ones. She also proposes the individual/social
dichotomy, relieving it as the “private/public” categorization (2010). Within this congregation, a
paradox is at play: there is an essential populism inherent to the system – most of the congregation
affirms and articulates this, and the “openness to everyone” sensibility is highly valued. But the
church is not officially “Open and Affirming” (ONA), the United Church of Christ’s moniker for
being open to homosexuals, applying to the clergy and laity. Therefore, gay marriage ceremonies
have not taken place in the church, and they have not had other than a heterosexual minister in the
modern era (see Chapter Five for a more in-depth discussion of ONA problematics). Additionally,
because individual church members can set and enact policy, then some individual’s own
sensibilities, moral and aesthetic, can end up determining the course of worship and larger decision-
making within the church. So, for the system as described to function at its best, many voices are
encouraged to participate, and indeed many voices are recruited. But, like the choir, many
committees will describe the same social lineage for decades. Bruce Ricker was the church’s treasurer
for twenty-nine years, and Mary Aduskevich was the superintendent of Christian Education (the
Sunday School program) for many years before handing the reins over to her daughter Donna
Paradis.

This sort of convergence is on display in an answer to another survey question, the open-
ended query “What is your favorite hymn?” Despite the hundreds of hymn-tunes and hymn-texts
sung over the years in the church, 5 of the 17 respondents answered the question by choosing a
sung benediction, an “Anthem” if you will. The song “Go Now in Peace,” is sung congregationally,
sung by memory or by looking at lyrics glued on to the back cover of every hymnal in the sanctuary.
There are innumerable settings of this text and texts like it. It could be said that the sheer prevalence of this answer at least throws the question of “What makes a hymn?” into the air; to this group, a “hymn” must refer to any song sung congregationally during a service. So, “The Star-Spangled Banner” would not be a hymn, necessarily, but the Doxology – “Praise God from whom all blessings flow” – would be. Had “Go Now in Peace” not been picked by some music director or minister (or member), the congregation would not sing it so inveterately, and it would not be the beneficiary of such corporate favoritism – it might never be heard at all, since it is not actually a “hymn,” according to its non-inclusion in a hymnal. It is a telling example, though, of how this paradox between the presumption of congregational autonomy and the reality of top-down cultural curating sometimes plays out.

Overall, hymns were connected with both the tradition of the church, and more than one respondent described this is as being “conservative.” This takes us into the extremely abstruse web of labels that so many scholars are wary of: here, so-called conservative or traditional music is connected to liberal theology, whereas contemporary music is connected to evangelical or conservative religion.

The survey bore out some information that I was prepared for: most church-goers, despite regular attendance and participation in public singing with sheet music, are very uncomfortable auditioning a tune without external sonification, as evidenced by less than one-third of the respondents’ recognition of “Take me out to the Ballgame” from my transcription of the melody. I am keenly aware that music literacy in most churches is low; I do not have the personal history to tell me if it is waning or waxing in my own little world-view, and this is not the kind of thing music cognition researchers have looked at, although music educators decry this phenomenon to a point. But I do know that asking congregations to sing in parts or to sing unknown melodies in regular hymn practice is not very practical. While nearly all literature that takes up the success of Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) in Evangelical churches does so on the basis of its theology and cultural inclusiveness, the simple point of music cognitive skills is conveniently side-stepped.
Even those who want the old traditions to survive are not active proponents of those traditions. Evangelical churches, by simply using lyrics on a screen and repetitive melodic tropes, establish a mistake-proof zone where those wishing to sing need only find the melody that coincides with the song’s “chorus,” a more-than-recognizable popular music trope. I do not doubt that the volume of the music also contributes to an atmosphere of raucous participation (whether the congregation is singing or not).

The survey also bears out the “marketplace” mentality of modern church-goers. The church wants a little of everything – CCM, traditional hymns, choral polyphony, gospel music, all sorts of instruments, etc. And why not? The survey questions asked what they wanted in church, and when given the forum to voice fantasies it is not surprising that there was a variety of answers. What is significant, then, is not that there was such variety of generic types, but that so many people saw all of these musics fitting seamlessly into a mainline Protestant church service. I did not sense a feeling of questioning the appropriateness of this or that genre or song; rather, if people like it, then they might also like hearing it in the church service.

**Final Thoughts**

**The Ecology**

This thesis at-large posits that Congregational churches, and small churches generally, describe their own aesthetic ecology. The paradox is that the more marginalized the churches are, the more they may rely on institutional materials to produce music; but, also given the potentially small pool of participants, the actual pieces performed and sounds made are unique to that place, deriving from singular components. In these interviews and this survey, informants and respondents provide strong words and sentiments about music, and they express affinities for many different musics, all of which they enjoy seeing in service. I do not mean to say that this pluralism is unique to this church; but the fact that the pluralism presents so readily means that a music director and other leaders must work uniquely to fulfill those varied demands, depending on the available pool of willing participants, and their own toolkits. A person like Stew Gillmor, with particular musical
abilities and understandings, will naturally play a significant role in the music-making of the church, should he decide to become involved. A person like Jack Calhoun, who likes to see people in the pews, wants the music to succeed and may be less biased towards this or that musical type.

While there is some consensus about what musics typify the church, there are plenty of contradictory opinions occupying one space, working at cross-purposes. Since attending members of the church tend to be fairly involved with the church in other administrative or functional arenas, we can also assume that their opinions will have an actual influence upon ecclesiastical undertakings, such as worship design. These differing opinions about music might all be given voice in a service; this may be literal, as particular singers’ voices will shape the church’s soundscape, and in terms of curation, an aesthetic opinion voiced to the right person may result in a particular song being sung in worship. Therefore, churches do reflect the aesthetic sensibilities of their members, and this contributes to the prevailing aesthetic ecology.

Church members certainly want their music to be vital. Due no doubt in part to the marketplace rhetoric that permeates the church’s public self-promotion, church websites always proclaim to have a vital and vibrant music program. (I urge the reader to peruse any church website in order to corroborate this claim). Positivity is essential to current religious literature (see Ehrenreich 2007: “The Dark Roots…”), but it can blind congregations to truths and delay needed reform from taking place.

I will end this chapter by bringing in some voices from the past, specifically past members’ writings on behalf of the music committee in annual meeting reports. From 1960 to 1965, Higganum Congregational’s annual reports regarding music are either minimally informative or downright grim. They lament the “failure” to generate a junior choir (1960); the 1964 report spends some time tallying the five organists who supplied music over the year after the resignation of Miss Eileen Dennis. It ends by thanking the Men’s Club for “their very thoughtful and useful gift of a dozen nice new chairs for our choir. They will be greatly appreciated and of course, as usual, we are looking for new members to fill those new chairs.” Still, these messages are mild in tone, and none
too admonishing. But in 1965, Evelyn Halfinger writes, “We are looking forward to a new year of good music. However, if some new members of the choir are not found soon, it is thought that we shall have to dispense with the vocal music.”

She put these words in writing for a reason – music matters, and if we can’t do it well, we’d best not do it. This statement also lets us know that the musical struggle in a church is not solely the organist’s burden. These words, coming on the heels of reports of mediocre participation, are not reiterations of a plaintive wail, but a depressing culmination. It would seem that as the church abides, the problem of making music in the church abides as well.

The current Higganum’s church members are eloquent and aware of music’s unique power to galvanize the flock. They are invested in expressing their theological and aesthetic values through music, and it is doubtful that such a statement as appears in the 1965 report would reappear any time soon. But lest we remember, it is not that the music is unassailable, but rather that the music is able to shift and change to meet the needs of its present members. As long as the members’ voices remain active, the music should not lag too far behind.
Chapter Four

The Congregational Minister: Negotiating Worship, Laity, and Musicians

This chapter takes up the ordained ministers of the Higganum and Suffield churches, that is, their pastors. Mostly, we want to see how the complexities of their job weigh upon the musical activities within worship, but the focus of this section widens occasionally, in an effort to show the larger sphere of pastoral concerns which press upon the minister’s life. Higganum employed three ministers (not counting the four substitutes, including one lay member) during my four years there. Hence, my interviews with the Reverend Max Olmstead are not limited topically to our one shared year together, but rather incorporate his Higganum experience before I arrived as well as his Dover Church experience after he repaired to that faith community. Much of this chapter puts us in the mind and service behavior of Max. Likewise, the comments of Jonathan Lee, an academic administrator now after a career as a preacher, contributed greatly to this discourse, despite my not having served under him. Our paths have crossed serendipitously for my purposes – beyond his acumen pertaining to this topic, he is now a tenor in the choir I conduct in Suffield. The other ministers I’ve worked with have all been very contributive to this project, answering all of my questions promptly and thoroughly.

Before we delve deeply into how the minister’s situation pertains to music, we have to understand what the ministerial situation is, especially in a small church. And to do that, we have to figure out what is meant by “small.” In this thesis, I have referred often to Higganum and churches like it as “small.” But this is a vague term, and it is time to specify. What makes it small? Is a small church different than a “big” church, and how does the “small church” stress differ from the “big church” stress for ministers? In the following pages, we will observe the complex obstacles ministers must face daily; the issues they must confront often demand that they shield their fellow staff members from complaints. In other words, what musicians see of ministers’ lives is only partial. I
am getting ahead of myself, though. We must spend some time understanding the gritty aspects of the small-church job, and this means delivering that small-and-big differentiation.

**Defining Size**

We can identify many germane statistics, the most obvious being the weekly attendance. This varies tremendously in a small church. The Sundays after Thanksgiving or Christmas do not attract a large attendance and are sometimes referred to as “Low”, although the Sunday after Easter is the official “Low” Sunday (and the moniker does not having anything to do with attendance, at least not liturgically-speaking). At Higganum, a poorly-attended service included anywhere from one to ten people. In 2011, we ended up canceling our outdoor summer services, because zero people show up for consecutive weeks. The average attendance, even accounting for the low summer turnout, was about seventy-two people per Sunday from September 2011 to September 2012, and there were many instances when Sunday attendance rivaled that of “bigger” churches. Especially in a state like Connecticut, where the cities no longer house populations that dwarf the towns’, churches with large physical plans built during more prosperous, populous times may appear quite empty during many Sunday services. Are these sites still “large” because of their heyday attendance? Or is it their more massive physical layouts that make them “large”?

The structure plays a part in categorizing a church’s size; the Higganum church comfortably seated about two hundred people. The Suffield church seats four hundred fifty. Cathedrals are so-called because they seat thousands. For outreach lecture-presentations I gave at First Church in Waterbury in 2009, I played for six hundred fifth graders at each hour-long demonstration. These sites can, conceivably, house raucous affairs. Most of the time, though, attendance is sparse. For our purposes, though, neither physical size nor attendance statistics contribute to the identification.

**Staff Number**

The data-point that I use to determine small churches from large is the number of hired staff. Higganum Congregational Church, throughout my tenure and tenure-cum-fieldwork, was about as small as churches get. There was no secretary; although Lori Chadwick filled many of the
associated duties, she did not have regular office hours and did not answer the church phone (not that I didn't call her personal cell phone many times a week). Rather, the minister answered the phone because the office was in the parsonage, that being the minister’s house. After the new wing went up, an office with a telephone for the first time existed inside the church proper. But the main phone was still in the parsonage office. This meant that during the interim years of 2009-2011 when no one lived in the parsonage, no one answered the phone.

The minister was Higganum’s one full-time staff member. The music director was a part-time position. The sexton received a small stipend but did not attend staff meetings. In September 2011, a small salary was put in to pay the Superintendent of the Sunday school, Jill Barile. In a common exchange, that money was in all likelihood given back to the church in the form of her family’s pledge. The sexton was Bill Stetson, the longest-serving person on the staff as well as a long-time member, and after he passed away in the fall of 2011, Tim Matregrano took his place. Tim is the son of Carol and Dick Matregrano, two especially kind and supportive members. Higganum grew physically; perhaps in the future a part-time paid administrative position will be instated. At the time of this writing, though, Lori is still the administrative assistant, and she does not allow herself to be paid (no doubt to the private relief of the business committee). Betsey Booth also performs far-flung administrative duties, including the editing, printing, and distributing of the monthly newsletter, “The Belfry”. In point of fact, Higganum had and continues to deploy virtually the same number of functional staff personnel as a “large” church, but they are volunteers. This means that they work on-demand rather than according to a schedule, and they can’t be fired. It also means that they are doing it out of something akin to love, a crucial differentiating element.

**The Polarized Staff and the Dynamic Staff**

Suffield has a (nearly) full-time secretary and lines for a full-time minister, half-time youth minister, part-time children's music director, and half-time minister of music\(^1\). It is still not “big,”

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\(^1\) Or does it? Annual Meeting reports are difficult to parse and human interpretation begets many different readings. But these lines technically exist on that report, and so I include them. Some stories tell of a very recent staff roll call that included all these roles with at least nominal payment for each. Suffield especially functions with a surfeit of line items, that allow staff members to pick up and put down different lines throughout their tenure. For example, when I begin conducting the Campanelli (Youth) Bell Choir in the Fall of 2013, my salary will not be increased, but rather I will receive the the money associated with the line item, “Director, Campanelli Choir.”
but it is “bigger” than Higganum. I emphasize this because the crux of the worship programming, the show’s design, is conceived and enacted by the staff. If two individuals comprise that staff, then those two will be the only ones who realistically control the worship aesthetic, pacing, and content. If they do not see eye to eye, there will be conflicts. Because there are no other participants and no real mediators, those conflicts will be unseen and may fester, unchecked. Those conflicts often result in the departures of one or the other staff member.

And lest I overstate this case, multiple staff members do not guarantee any prevention of conflict. In fact, there is more room for catastrophic conflict, because the number of people who, as go-betweens, act as casualties of battle increases per person. Either way, it is best to not make the relationship a straight line (see Figure 1, next page). Irrespective of staff number, lots of people do many tasks, all crucial to a church’s function. At “larger” churches, more of them are paid. Figure 2 (page 98) portrays a situation indicating equal opportunity for dialogic exchange. It is not a practical model, per se, but something that many churches and especially Congregational ones, hold up as optimal.

It is not just personnel turnover that is at stake here; rather, the very nature of church formation and ideological projection is in the hands of those who actually have their hands in the worship design and policy writing. While the congregation insists upon its autonomy, it is unclear how that autonomy plays out. Those surveyed (see previous chapter) admit that a big portion of their “Congregational” power comes from the church’s ability to vet, hire, and choose salaries for their own staff. It is clear from that statement and from my experience that once those staff members are picked, they are in charge of the church and can/should run it as they see fit. Not all members would agree; at Higganum, the Diaconate is ostensibly in place to shape and design worship, and other committees are in place that interact with the Minister and perform unofficial but ongoing evaluations. That said, I rarely received information from the Diaconate in my four years, other than general positive vibes and occasional changes to the wording of “don’t clap” in the bulletin. Although “evaluations” loomed none were ever specifically conducted. It was mentioned
Figure 1.
Two Examples of Linear Power Relations between Polarized Music Directors and Pastors in Congregational Churches

Figure 2a. “Larger” Church with expanded (paid) staff (random order of interpolated elements; staff members indicated in bold)

Figure 2b. “Smaller” church: two-person paid staff (random order of interpolated elements, those elements being imaginary singletons from potentially-interactive subgroups)
to me that I should perform my own evaluations of the church’s protocols, services, etc., but follow-up inquiries as to how to go about submitting such an evaluation were not answered. Annually, I submitted information to a Music Committee member for HCC’s “Annual Report”, and Paul Lewis (2008) and Stew Gillmor (thereon) integrated that into their official reports.

This is where the loneliness of the positions can be devastating. Without some advisors or confidants, it can be difficult to truly gauge how things are going. Ministers have occasionally told me, point-blank, that they have no idea how a congregation feels about their preaching. Luckily, music directors work with choirs that give them regular feedback, if only in terms of practical data – what they are able to sing, and what they sound like. I was able to rely on a few confidants off whom I bounced ideas; largely, they trust my instincts and curatorial decisions, although it must be reiterated that I operated with no personal past history with church musics. Music Committee
meetings invariably leaned towards “how-to” questions of publicity, recruitment, and decorum. Ministers, unless they have extremely open relationships with their Diaconate, engage mostly on bureaucratic levels, without much qualitative feedback. Therefore, the dependence that the music director and minister have on each other as both colleagues and, inescapably, friends, is often very high.

My eventual departure from Higganum is, for the purposes of this ethnography, unfortunate. Without a doubt, my relationship with the Reverend Judith Cooke came into the picture. We had different wants and needs vis-a-vis worship content, and in a place like this and as I emphasize throughout, there cannot be such disparity of opinion regarding worship programming with only two people running the show. The minister’s vision does trump the music director’s, and that will probably always be the case. Mutual respect – which we no doubt shared – did not make up for divergent aesthetic views. When a church is larger, and more voices enter the programmatic conversation, then more room for dissent is possible. This ethnography, though, focuses on the particulars of a “small”, two-staff church. This assessment, therefore, applies to this church and possibly other churches like it. I feel confident in this claim as it pertains to Higganum, or at least I am confident that in the years since Max Olmstead came to the church, this was the case. Whether this analysis may be useful to other churches is for the actors in those churches to judge. I would conjecture that not only is it applicable to other small churches, but also there are occasions when it applies to larger churches as well, especially when the positions of Music Director and Minister become polarized, as in Figure 2 above.

Ministerial Pressures

“My fear, my feeling is the musical crisis is based upon the spiritual bankruptcy of our culture. Because music is basically spiritual; and if you are living Shalom, you can do it. Even to listen to Howlin' Wolf scream out ‘How many more years you gonna treat me wrong?’ ’cause he was ‘Shalom’-ed in there; it was whole in his broken-ness. He knew of what he sang.”

- The Reverend Max Olmstead from an interview at The Dover Church, Dover Mass., August 2012
Ministers, Cross-Nationally

There are some ministers out there who don’t mind having an outsized, sensational aura. They could be said to belong to the lineage of televangelists that emerged in the 1980s, with personalities like Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Jim Bakker; they, of course, piggy-backed off of the enormous supercultural success of Baptist preachers Oral Roberts and Billy Graham. Their modern incarnations are, sometimes, the exact same people (Pat Robertson’s social purchase has not flagged) and also include African-American preachers as well. My home state of Georgia is particularly known for two entrepreneurial African-American ministers, Creflo Dollar and Eddie Long. This is an area that demands some real scholarly inquiry, considering the many narratives that co-present in the situation. From a performer’s perspective, I would argue that some of the theatrics Bishop Long engages in rival Andy Kaufman for pure histrionic spectacle\(^2\). These kinds of ministers are part of a supercultural but also subcultural norm and are written on colloquially by newspapers and online media sources, primarily due to the wake of scandal that accompanies their liturgical goings-on, such as they are. White preachers remain very prominent in this field of “performance evangelism”, as I’ll call it. If there is a tie-in ideologically, I would identify it as the “gospel of prosperity”, which purports that faith and financial investment will yield long-term financial gains for the individual worshipper, although this philosophy is not merely confined to the supercultural televangelist. This “theology” is promulgated by, among others, such nationally-known preachers as Kenneth Copeland. There is a difference between “national” ministers, such as Benny Hinn and Copeland, and those who have some grounding in a physical church site. This is significant, simply because it allows us to table these phenomena as belonging to the “big” churches, churches that are run like businesses because their membership is larger than most Connecticut towns’ populations\(^3\).

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\(^2\) Having himself wrapped in a “Holocaust” Torah by a “Messianic” Jew in order to become crowned “king”, for instance. This incident garnered ample mainstream news coverage. (see “Bishop Eddie Long apologizes to Jewish group after Torah ceremony.” at http://www.cnn.com/2012/02/05/us/georgia-eddie-long-apology, accessed 27 February 2013

\(^3\) Actual numbers differ from websites, but data from the Hartford Institute for Religion Research (at Hartford Seminary) shows 315 churches nationally with memberships over 5,000. Eddie Long’s “New Birth” has 15,000 members (and claims 25,000 on its website). Joel Osteen’s “Lakewood Church” in Houston tops the national list at 43,500 members
Ostensibly, congregational ministers in New England have little to do ideationally with these cults of personality that bubble up in (newer) metropolises. In fact, only 1.1% of officially-designated “megachurches” (churches with over 1,800 members) are in New England, by far the lowest regional percentage in the United States (Bird 2011: 6). There are crucial similarities, though, shared by all of these ministers: they are public figures who lead worship. The New England minister operates within a different scale of presentation, or the spectacle is lesser in scope. Nonetheless, there are aesthetic and ideological demands that a minister must see and preach to. This is where history and the present become so intertwined. David Dudley Field describes the salary given to Mr. Noyes, pastor of Haddam (First Society): “a house built for [the previous minister], the right of land reserved for the first minister, and 40l. as a salary, payable in produce” (Field 1814: 31); and for the pastor in Middle Haddam, “Mr. Boardman’s settlement [the amount paid to “settle” the minister] was 200l. and his salary at first 65l. then 78l. and 20 cords of wood, and at length 95l. without wood” (ibid: 33). In an interview about The Dover Church conducted in 2012, the Reverend Max Olmstead told me that “the woman who gave the money for the parsonage also bequeathed eight acres of land for the minister to cut his firewood.” Which he does. Is a minister compelled to uphold the sensibility concomitant with these lifestyle practices as much as she is the epistemological traditions? Are they part and parcel? Or is this “cultural lag” catching up to these churches; in other words, are these sorts of ante-diluvian notions inseparable from the larger problem of dwindling relevance in contemporaneity?

**Denominational Identification**

New England ministers contend with a unique set of complexities. We need to understand a bit about what they are navigating in order to determine how the music might become collateral damage in that navigation. First, there is the juggling act of denomination versus congregation. Why

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4 The “l.” is an “abbreviation for the Latin libra or pound. This refers to a Connecticut pound. In New England the basic rate was the Proclamation Rate, [where] a Spanish eight *reales* was valued at 6s[hillings] (72d [pennies]). This meant £1 (240d) British = £1 6s8d (320d) Connecticut.” (personal communication, Louis Jordan, University of Notre Dame, Department of Special Collections)

5 I also received produce and eggs from various members of the Higganum and on a consistent basis, although it was not an official appendage to my salary.
should there be required such reconciliation between the two? Sociologist and Religion ethnographer Stephen Warner puts it simply:

Sociologically, the most important contrast between denominations and congregations...is that the former are staffed by religious professionals – those who earn their living in the field of religion – and the latter are constituted by religious amateurs who spend their time, and some of their money, in the name of religion. (Warner 2005:150-1)

The minister is in an odd place, ascribing to both the particular church’s aesthetic and theistic ecology while perhaps “belonging” to – that is “coming from” – the nebulous “denomination.” For some, a denomination may pre-dominate at the seminary that ordains the ministers. Andover-Newton Theological School, where Max Olmstead graduated and Suffield's Diann Bailey attends, primarily gives degrees representing the UCC and the American Baptist Churches. Lancaster Theological Seminary, where Bridget Fidler received her divinity degree, has a comparable profile (Fidler 2013). It is worth reiterating Higganum’s overwhelming self-perception that they, as Congregationalists, are free of shackling overseers. But are they? Their ministers are, from the outset, tied in with the United Church of Christ. Congregational churches are trickier than others, because their “denomination” is not “Congregationalism” but rather the “United Church of Christ.” The minister, then, does not really invoke the national church as a tradition unto itself (because the tradition is still “Congregationalism”), but rather as a political agency that works for social good, and that is good to belong to and ascribe to in a general way. In response to a question about the UCC’s “influence” upon his worship design, Max Olmstead wrote “I do not feel pressured by the denomination in any way. I am very sympathetic to the mission and aesthetics, but find the liturgical and some of the aesthetic suggestions too wordy. I like what they’re aiming for, but often feel I am a better wordsmith and worship planner for this site than the materials they send out. So some I adapt, some I take the idea and go my own way with, and some I let go” (email communication 2013).

6 Other denominations are represented as well, but these are the ones that are most commonly conferred upon graduates, according to insiders. See the school’s website at www.ants.edu/studyprograms/accreditation for an institutional statement.
Worship Design

Worship is indeed a very amorphous thing, not governed by either national or local denominational overseers. In other Christian liturgical traditions that I’ve observed through organ playing – Catholic masses (I’ve played about twenty), Episcopal Eucharists (about fifty), and other “bigger”-church mainline services (about ten) – the kind of looseness found in Congregationalism is not there. First Church Suffield, due primarily to its senior minister Bridget Fidler and a particularly progressive Moderator (Robin Zatony), similarly embarks on eccentric paths in worship7. It is not easy to tease out if this destabilized worship routine is a Congregational thing or a “small church”-thing. About a particularly stirring theatrical service that the Reverend Judith Cooke staged for Palm Sunday, she wrote “[t]he idea for the service itself came from a book of worship ideas – I used some parts, added some parts, changed some parts...like most special liturgy, I pick and choose what I think will work and what I think I can pull off” (email communication 2013). When she and I designed our summer service, there were no hard-and-fast rules to the service. If there were liturgical constants, they were the sung Doxology and the spoken Lord’s Prayer. Since these indices combined comprised about two minutes of service, much was left up to the co-curator. Worship design is exactly that, and it is collaborative. If a small staff do not share similar senses of what works and what is needed, the situation is untenable.

Worship as the First of Many Concerns

Ministers focus much of their energy into each weekly service; despite the general framework of the Morning Prayer service, much changes week to week in terms of interpolation. In the Catholic Masses or High Anglican services that I’ve played, this was not the case – I played the exact same things on the organ week to week. Designing worship is a primary concern for ministers, and the pressure to design in a variety of worship styles likewise weighs heavily on their weekly list of duties; but it is only in addition to the other duties of being the only minister. These duties include all pastoral care, sitting in on most committee meetings, keeping stock of infrastructural needs,

7 While there are not many other paid worship leaders, Janet Banks has consistently run the two bell choirs (one for adults, one for the youth) for decades. She is imaginative, musically-knowledgable, and outspoken. She is one of those rare people who states her opinion as a member and holds a curatorial stake in the worship design.
representing the church politically, engaging in ecumenical dialogue, officiating over all weddings, funerals, and Baptisms (and the family consultations that come with them), etc., make for a complex, stressful work environment. At the time of this writing, I work with a compassionate minister with whom I share a meaningful bond and close relationship. I should mention that this relationship exists despite us only seeing each other for sure on Sundays, and even then, we are in different sanctuary locations and different mental spaces. We commiserate and strategize very much cooperatively. One day we spoke on the phone, and the stresses we felt due to our job and life situations was palpable. I mentioned to her a bit sheepishly that I was grateful that she was also struggling. She responded, “Because it makes you feel less lonely. We are talented people working in the strange, complex system called church. And academia is its own church. And family is its own church.”

This is a circuitous way of explaining why interviewing ministers always begins with them telling me how little they will say on the record. They have too many stories, too much information, and they are under a public microscope. Unlike other preachers who want a certain amount of publicity to retain their larger-than-life promotional image, New England congregational ministers are focused much more on their local problems – perhaps their own spiritual journeys, or their church’s week-to-week function. I don’t mean to say that they are not ambitious professionals, but their economy of scale is different from their Southern and Western counterparts. The distraction of scandal through either mis-speaking or being mis-represented by a scholarly greenhorn is too big a risk. Talking about music provides a certain kind of safe space, but as this thesis has proven thus far, some of the most seemingly banal musical topics are laden with layers and layers of thorny subtext and pre-history, layers which require sorting.

I included an epigraph to this section, because I knew that the details were going to be tedious – denominational tie-ins, salaries, etc. The epigraph reveals one minister’s deep desire for unadulterated authenticity, which he connects to the Jewish word and concept shalom, although he doesn’t explain to us what that shalom signifies. For him, a man screaming about being a scorned lover is more shalom than not. I found this statement to be almost perfectly continuous with Jon
Michael Spencer’s understanding of the Blues and “evil” as co-present manifestations of the black sacred music experience (Spencer 2006). I interpret this statement as a disconnected but visceral response to the shackles put on ministers by the antinomious demands listed above.

**The Reverend Max Olmstead**

Max was the first minister I worked for, and he was an impressive figure at that. There is a surfeit of literature on dynamic super-cultural ministers (such as Billy Graham et al.). I will formally introduce Max Olmstead, though, through Warner’s ethnographic work that takes up less famous, but equally scintillating minister personalities.

Stephen Warner’s long-term sociological ethnographic research into the Mendocino Presbyterian Church (1988) exhaustively charts the church’s membership changes, relating them in large part to pastoral identity. Warner is loathe to assign group behavioral shifts to the actions of one person, but he cannot escape the reality that ministers’ postures have tangible effects on church membership, survival, and behavior. In his chapters on Peter Hsu, a politically-activist, outspoken minister at Mendocino in the 1960s, he says “[i]t could not have been easy to be a young pastor in the 1960s preaching social justice to a conservative congregation” (Warner 1988:99). No doubt true, I will say the same thing about Max Olmstead now: it was not easy to be a socially-minded minister, preaching to an insular congregation for whom the information is in many ways academic. For example, Higganum’s and Suffield’s leadership would like to see the church become more officially welcoming to outsiders (see Chapter Five for a discussion on the “Open and Affirming” (ONA) moniker, for instance). But what good would it do the church? The idea of this policy is that it would welcome in those who previously have felt unwelcome. Does the church really want outsiders? Or, to be more realistic, do these outsiders live in Higganum or Suffield? Are not these places either places where you are born, or where you go partly because they are not urban? The Higganum-ites spoke of Middletown as a place of sin, crime, and social problems. This is not altogether untrue, but more to the point is that Middletown was understood to be a “city”, one fraught with problems, whereas Higganum was a “village.” It didn’t matter that I, in the North End of Middletown (Middletown’s furthest-away point from Higganum), shared a grocery store with
most Higganum-ites and saw at least one or two members every time I went shopping. It didn’t matter that I ran, biked, or walked to Higganum Congregational over twenty times a year. There was an ontological difference, and the idea of continuously bridging that gap, of continuously engaging with the urban plight in the worship service, was not a tenet shared by everyone and not one that Max, nor any other minister, could implant and maintain. In Warner’s story of Peter Hsu’s church, the church indeed began to shrink as Hsu’s zeal for political activism-as-church-life weighed on their minds.

Max grew up in the church – “there was nothing else to do on Sundays back then”, he says – but he did not continue to attend on a weekly basis. The shift for him came when he was well into his academic career. In an interview, I asked him why he became disenchanted with the academy. He responded thusly:

At that point, I had not really awakened to what my problem was. But later, I realized that I was breaking the first and second commandments. I was guilty of adultery, that my profession was my God and that my ambition, my drive for success and everything I did for my profession, was my worship. I had become very dissatisfied with academia, and I couldn’t figure out why, because it was going exactly the way I’d hoped and I’d achieved everything I’d set out for, but something felt wrong. Then I heard a sermon about the ‘Shema’. Oh my god! My profession is my God – that’s why I’m messed up. The guy said, “I’d like you guys to close your eyes and think about where you are in loving the Lord your God with all your heart and strength.” My God was being a professor. Not even knowledge or wisdom or truth or something, but being the professor. (Olmstead 2013).

In a different interview held during a quiet day in the Dover Church, Max told me about going to a conference once, where the speaker said, “Your job as ministers is to go in there and in one hour, convince someone not to blow their brains out.” Max took that charge seriously; I got the feeling he asked himself how best to do that before every service.

A Minister in Worship Mode

If we look at the program year 2008-2009 at Higganum, we find ourselves in the ethnographic present of Max Olmstead’s last year of preaching at Higganum. How did Max deliver his politically- and personally- disruptive message? What Max was able to do, was to put his frustrations, invective, compassion, and intensity directly into preaching and worship. As he put it, “I
don’t mean to sound crazy, but when it was me and Toby up there [his second music director] or you and me up there, it was like standing next to the Tabernacle” (Olmstead 2012). Unlike loud but heavily-mediated “Contemporary” services with rock bands and large screens, and unlike revival meetings with an evangelical thread of born-again testimonials, Max, in order to create volume, poured his heart into the small sanctuary. If the music director did not pour alongside him or score the pouring, there were clashes; two at-odds aesthetics would vie for the prevailing influence within the church’s larger ecology. Max’s tenure only lasted five years, and yet it encompassed the activity of four different non-interim music directors.

How did some of this unpredictable energy play out? Here are examples: at Higganum (and other churches) the “prayers of the people” follow the sermon. This is where the minister generally prays for both the congregation’s, the nation’s, and the world’s well-being. The minister thanks the troops for their military service and prays for our nation’s leaders. Reading from yellow prayer cards handed to ushers and then to the minister during the first hymn, the minister prays specifically for particular persons or families, usually undergoing some form of trauma, illness, or dislocation. I played organ underneath Max’s usually spontaneous musings. This is common in African-American churches, but it was not common to improvise in this interactive style at Higganum or other Mainline churches. Max liked this, and the force of his liking it was enough to bolster my continuing to do it. I did not do this with every minister, not necessarily because of the ministers, but because parishioners have told me that doing so obscures their ability to hear the prayers. Perhaps it was the loud tenor of Max’s voice, or perhaps it was that the members sensed the inextricability of the voice with the music, but people did not voice those complaints to me when Max presided.

Max liked to change things at the last minute – he preferred a “supple” weekly Bulletin (containing the Order of Worship), one that was elastic enough to handle changes. He favored having only the word “Prelude” at the top of the bulletin, rather than “Prelude” followed by some piece of classical music. This way, things could start in whatever way they were moved to start on a particular morning. This was where my ignorance of standard protocol helped me out. I could align myself with Max’s sensibility to “let the Spirit come.”
On Easter 2009, Max came in after having a revelation that morning: to sing the first line of a hymn, “I woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Jesus”\(^8\), as the coda to his sermon. He wanted to do it by singing the first note, out of nowhere, as a sustained tone on the word “I”, really loud. I should note that he and I discussed if this would work logistically, agreeing that if I were to give him a note on the piano it would make the gesture too obvious. In service, he sang this first note loudly and confidently, then moved deeper into the song. I joined him tentatively in the chorus, but it must be remembered that the Euro-American human voice is conditioned to tune to pianos, so Max adjusted to me (he was less than a step away), and we moved into the next verse. The congregation, then, was supposed to or encouraged to join along – the hymn number was written in the bulletin.

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\(^8\)“I Woke Up This Morning”, African American spiritual, #85 in New Century Hymnal; arr. Jeffrey Radford (1993)
But this whole spectacle was too much of a change of protocol to manage. Typically, the congregation could use a whole verse to find the hymn number in the bulletin and then locate the appropriate hymnal and exact page. Here, they hardly had time to figure out what was going on.

I asked him if he thought this experience made for a successful worship moment. Max was of two minds:

Well, it’s hard to tell if it was worship or entertainment. I think that people were sort of dumbfounded by my being into it and extroverted. (Me: Did they sing?) Well yes, in a Rural Suburban Connecticut Anglo-way. But were they into it because I was doing it, or did they understand what it really was, was a prayer...an act of prayer? (Me: If they don’t join, then is it entertainment?) To a point, yes. (Olmstead 2013)

This is an example of aesthetic-ecological dissonance in the air; Max’s intention was to incite participation. The congregation’s reaction was to watch Max. This dissonance is most apparent if we accept the assessment that music resembles entertainment when more people watch than participate (see Figure 3, previous page). Certainly, mere observation is not the only stipulation that makes something sacred an entertainment piece – the sacraments a minister performs before the Eucharist are often “watched” by the congregants. When it comes to music, though, there is much more at stake over whether the musician or minister is performing music (entertaining) or eliciting music (facilitating worship). Ministers and musicians in congregational worship are wary of being labeled performers; this is why organists are often the most vociferous opponents to allowing applause at the end of postludes.

Musical Risk

When it comes to taking performance and musical risks, Max asked, “Are they going to get up there and do it?” At Higganum, Max personally fomented a culture of musical risk-taking. As a result, all of the musicians of the church became musical martyrs at times, especially Stew Gillmor. Sometimes in taking these risks, there were more overt problems. Many things went musically incorrect at the church (I illustrate this with the hymn-problems in Chapter 1), and the church continuously affirmed that the risk was worth it. A wonderful example is that seemingly every Easter, Stew Gillmor and I attempted some big trumpet-and-organ number, either his playing the
high descant as the introduction to “Christ the Lord is Risen Today” (Pilgrim Hymnal # 582) or, on the other hand, playing the trumpet part to the aria “The Trumpet Shall Sound” from Messiah (a very tall order). Invariably, there was a train wreck. We were often under-rehearsed, or I didn’t cue very well; either way, it was an odd tradition that we kept up. The congregation always thanked us. What were they thanking us for?

They thanked us for affirming and sonifying the site’s aesthetic identity. Max realized that the ineffable function of risk, even when things failed, was to implant the occasion into the congregation’s head, which in turn helped to articulate its aesthetic ecology. Adult choirs exemplify this idea. Adult choirs, it must be remembered, are social units that last for decades (unlike Children’s Choirs, whose membership is constant in its change). There will always be voices in an adult choir that cannot sing in time or in tune. A director may overtly or subtly try to oust them from the group. Over time, directors come to understand that these voices are valuable. They contribute to that site’s “sound.” Similarly, Stew and I getting up there and occasionally making fools of ourselves was part of the lore/ure of Higganum.

Performing badly in the name of doing your best, as much as it angers people, has likewise had proponents throughout church history. The idea of the anointed, talented musician is present throughout most American social strata and certainly, the “gifted” are treated with awe cross-culturally as well. But in many churches, especially the farther you get from high Episcopal churches, music can easily become too elitist and uppity in the eyes of members. The church musician may get more distance from humility than from attempting the spectacular. Certainly, music being too “distracting” to the worshipper’s communion with God has been debated in official capacities for centuries. Nicholas Temperley provides an excellent glimpse into the minds of those who turn an admonishing eye towards fanciful musicians, quoting Heinrich Bullinger in 1569:

‘Let no man think, that prayers sung with man’s voice are more acceptable to God, than if they were plainly spoken or uttered; for God is neither allured with the sweetness of man’s voice, neither is he offended, though prayer be uttered in a hoarse or base sound. Prayer is commended for faith and godliness of mind, and not for any outward show.’ (Temperley 1981:514).
Tradition, a pervasive word, can now be tied in with the aesthetic ecology of the place. Screw-ups in church, if they’re the right kind, are endearing agents. In fact, they animate Bullinger’s final sentence above – a poor “outward show” equates to greater “faith and godliness”. Why? Because “tradition” and “faith and godliness” are somehow bound together. The powerful move made by associating behaviors with tradition, is that it gives the behaviors a sense of non-time, where their actual happening is conflated with their always having happened. Stew and I became a tradition-of-the-church, even over a short period (not unlike Max’s “outdoor summer service” in Chapter 1). As a musician, I had to become careful not to stumble unawares into a tradition and treat it with nonchalance when it required mindful address. I became more and more savvy about pausing before making judgment on this or that musical habit of the church.

This is a parochial way of understanding this sentiment, though. Sincerity of intention is a value that, some argue, makes the musical product more viable: “[t]o be sure, there is a cherished tolerance in the African American community for unusual voices, and a good singer, one who sings with sincerity and conviction, is preferable to the singer who possess a beautiful voice, but who sings without conviction” (Boyer 1993: vii-viii, emphasis in original). Max wanted to attempt the spectacular, but he took comfort in knowing that the failed attempt would still garner respect for its “sincerity and conviction.” If the above quotation is right, it is better to be good than beautiful. How churchgoers feel about that statement has far-reaching implications into what happens musically in a church. If we consider the church to have any extra-ecclesiastical cultural influence whatsoever, then those implications will go beyond the church’s walls.

Ministers and the Two-Service Paradigm

One method for dealing with the multivalent influences weighing upon ministers and musicians is to re-categorize and dichotomize. We can begin with categories as general as “old and new,” or “secular and sacred,” but the convention in modern, mainline Christianity is the worship polarity of “Traditional” and “Contemporary.”
Deborah Justice writes perceptively on the costs and benefits of bifurcating the congregation into two opposed worship styles: in fact, she uses the binary labels reluctantly, and only because the churches themselves do so. She states,

...the pervasive frame of the “contemporary-traditional” binary creates an opposition. The contrasting music and musicians – and related nuances, such as institutional implications and theological content – are conceptualized largely positively as increasing the congregation’s cultural vitality within the context of broader American society, but they also carry implicit negative overtones of compromised internal congregational identity and unity. (Justice 2012: 15)

At Justice’s field research site, the paradigm shifted a while ago (mid-1990s), but a measured analysis of the upshots and fallout of the shift has not been possible until recently. Her participation-observation took place at a time where she could see the numerous effects of the split. But Higganum had only one service. Does this mean that they did not need to split the way that Justice’s Hillsboro Presbyterians did?

The “need” to split, though, is not necessarily one of faith, but of business. As Justice and others note (ibid. 2012: 6, Roof 1999, Sample 1990) churches don’t want to lose that business to other churches. Higganum as a whole did not really face that dilemma – it was never a given that the church wanted to get bigger, as it may have been for other churches Justice’s analysis rightly illustrates the costs of splitting services, that it fosters “implicit” disunity. The benefits for two services are many, she also illustrates. I submit that in smaller, one-service churches, such a disunity may still exist, but without the outlet of a second, stylistically-distinct service. Minister and musician must reconcile distinct but co-present sensibilities. Because the congregation perceives itself to be the commanding agency, it does not necessarily want the minister to have an opinion but rather to skillfully mediate the antinomies. Of course, one such opinion is that many congregants do want the minister to drive the bus and enact the vision she or he has. Is splitting the service an act of compromise, an act of rupture, or an act of empowerment?

For our purposes, this question is merely academic, because at Higganum and First Church Suffield, there was no two-service solution. In such a situation, not only are congregants’ discordant opinions co-present but the leaders’ opinions as well. As I argue above, there are not enough buffers
in the system to allow that to work. We see that the Reverend Max Olmstead enjoyed working spontaneously. In keeping with the theory of small churches presented here, greater staff numbers may buffer programmatic tensions. At his new church, and despite that church’s already employing two musicians (albeit a married couple), Max has also hired another musician to accommodate more spontaneous decisions, thus giving him an outlet for that part of his personality and relieving pressure from the single relationship.

But with his former director of music at Higganum, Carolyn Halsted, there was no “other” staff, and his turn-on-a-dime modality did not pan out smoothly. She had a tight bond with her choir, and they liked to be prepared. During their shared tenure, it was no secret that Max felt that the church’s routine needed to be shaken up. Carolyn recalled his proposing a change to an anthem prior to a choir rehearsal one day. He wanted to accompany the anthem on guitar. On Sunday morning, though, he announced that the anthem would now be sung as a congregational anthem. He had prepared a sheet music insert for the bulletin but had disregarded copyright protocol; while Carolyn acquiesced to these late changes, she felt that the process undermined professional collegiality, choir efforts, and her musical authority.

Max did try to initiate extra services – he installed a monthly early service for families, and he began the early outdoor service during the summers. After he left, both services eventually dwindled down to nothing and were ultimately shelved. At The Dover Church, he said that he’s waiting for the weekly attendance to hit 150, which he calls the “magic number where the place feels like it’s full even when it’s not, and you can leverage the attendance into a second service” (Olmstead 2013).

Conflicts and Irresolutions

In the difference of opinion illustrated above with Max and Carolyn, I am trying to be neutral in my depiction of the particular episode. I have been on the giving and receiving end of that exchange on many occasions and recognize the difficulty of the situation. Max had a vision for the church, and spontaneous change was part of that vision. Carolyn was trying to get everything she could out of limited personnel and instrumental resources, and having an organized service was
essential to that efficiency. This incident also may seem fairly innocuous to an observer. These small situations, though, escalate. Because a) the staffs of these sites are so small, b) small staff numbers demand very compatible relationships, and c) the other workers are also members of the flock to whom you must never show negative emotion, tensions tend to cascade and exacerbate, usually manifesting in the departure of a member. This is the repeated pattern of small (and large) churches. Let’s examine some miniature case-studies. Two of these come from longer interviews; the stories themselves are rich with detail. But I did not receive permission to either give names or details, and so I speak about them with merely enough detail to differentiate them from each other.

- A nationally-prominent organist at a large church in a major city serves that large church for over two decades; a new senior minister comes in, and the organist has only positive impressions. Soon, the new senior minister is forbidding certain types of songs – in this case, spirituals – and protesting the over-abundance of organ music, or the organ at all. Soon thereafter, the organist develops high blood pressure and anxiety attacks. He is, after all this time even after having a dream organ built for him, about to quit. He has tentatively set up a new gig at a different church, when a call comes on the phone that the minister has finally been ousted. He stays. (Personal interview with organist who requests anonymity, 2012)

- An organist at a medium-sized church in a modest city serves that church for over three-and-a-half decades. A new minister comes in, insisting that “Contemporary” music be offered. The organist rejects the idea, and publicly describes her perception of the position and the way that she is equipped to handle that position, based on her experience thus far and her abilities. The new pastor goes into a meeting of church leaders without the organist present and says that she won’t listen to reason and is holding the church back. She is pressured to leave, and eventually resigns from the church. (Interview with church member who requests anonymity 2012)

- The most famous sacred musician in America lands a prestigious job and “everything [is] going fine ...until [the rector is] paralyzed by a stroke...and die[s] two years later...Within two years, musical services [are] discontinued, and [this musician] ‘contended that he had slight chance to show what he could do in the way of presenting a beautiful service of music.’” (Smith 2013: 96). Our revered musician asks for a “two-month leave of absence. Instead he [is] granted six months” (ibid.). When he is about to return, he is told that he has been replaced. When he “protest[s] against this arrangement, he [is] informed that there could be no change” (ibid).

The musician whose name I removed above is Dudley Buck, an important American music-historical figure whom John Ogasapian refers to as a “genius” (2007:230) and who is known during his era as one of the leading American composers (ibid.; Orr 2003). But his fame is no protection.
There are some other hire-and-fire behaviors that have more auspicious implications, if one digs in and speculates a little. When Max Olmstead left Higganum in 2009, I was at first disappointed, nearly crushed. We played a wedding together a month later (there is nearly always a loose knot that gets tied after these things have played out), and while it provided some closure, it also meant a second farewell. Higganum Congregational Church spent the next two years without a settled pastor, and this did wonders for my growth as a musician. Churches are very loathe to have only interim staff (considering the frequency of limited staff in churches, this can look bad to the congregation and to church-shoppers). As a result, the church leaned on me to define its worship style and to keep its musical identity vibrant and unique, much as they did with Carolyn during the two interim periods that her tenure encompassed. I came to appreciate how much thought went into service-building and how tirelessly the church members labored with selfless ardor, especially when they perceived the church to be on tenuous legs. Consider that during those two years, the political and bureaucratic obstacles were pushed through in order to build their extra wing, the church’s first additional construction since 1914.

Max must have known that when he resigned, he basically assured me of a job for at least the time that it would take to “call” a new settled minister and probably for a year thereafter. Of course, this is exactly what happened, resulting in four consecutive years in a supportive work environment (that allowed me to sustain a spouse and new infant). He told me that once I became established at Higganum, he felt better about his own leaving. Whether this was true or he said it to boost my morale, it was a nice sentiment to accompany a very generous departing gesture.

Comings-and-Goings

Figure 4 (page 117) gives an approximate timeline of the tenures of ministers and musicians since 1978, the year that Alma Zyko became the organist, and the year where I perceive a shift in the commitment of the church towards its music program. I do not need to spell out the information within; the reader may make inferences that departures were precipitated by relationships, but details are where the lives of the stories are, and those details are difficult to publish. In a way, the gossip is
the document that remains, but the gossip itself comes haltingly, and even from my limited experience, I know how different the same event might appear to two people observing it synchronically.

What we know for sure is that ministers and musicians come and go, but the timeline probably isn’t going anywhere. We should understand, though, that it is not as grand a statement as it sounds. When Warner said, “Movements are evanescent; the church abides,” how should we interpret the word “church?” I am referring to the “timeline” as the abiding church, but I do not mean that the church as an institution is invulnerable or eternal, nor do I mean to say that a particular church has no beginning or end (although that is closer to what I’m getting at). What the timeline represents are people themselves. At least fifty people in that church experienced those personnel comings and goings in the same way that a succession of presidential terms articulates the American lifetime into eras. Unlike a flat timeline, these people articulate the time as they see fit, and their memories and reactions are what breathe life into these statistics and graphs. The stories are the lore of the church, and whether or not they come out into the light, they remain the living and the breathing, that which abides.

**Final Thoughts**

I close this chapter by providing a bridge to the following chapter’s complementary content. I will next embark upon an involved discussion into the musical-social world that organists and choral directors inhabit. But fundamentally, and in order to understand what makes the situation so entangled, we have to respect the gamut that ministers themselves face.

Ministers act as psychologists, authors, orators, stage managers, scholars, custodians, and public relations representatives. To elaborate, respectively: they confidentially advise and provide therapy to distraught members, they write sermons and newsletter articles, they deliver sermons and read scripture, they liaise with sound and lighting technicians and design workflows and cues for weekly staged rituals, they teach “Bible Studies,” usually consulting scholarly theologians to do so, they are there as much as anybody and end up cleaning up a lot, and they represent the church to the greater community at public events and gatherings on-site. Then they have to deal with musicians. In
Figure 4.
The (settled) Ministers and Musicians of Higganum Congregational Church: Overlapping Tenures 1975-Present
(interim ministers, other than Keith Jones, not listed here)

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5/2008: Lampe's contract not renewed.
order to accommodate these many relations, ministers sometimes deploy “visioning”, sometimes in
groups, in order to develop a cohesive vision and eventually enact it. This vision can act as a
comprehensive methodology for addressing the situations incurred by taking on that surfeit of roles.

The vision will also account for many worship decisions. The strategy imposed by the vision
will have an effect on most things that happen in the church, including worship. If the music
director does not fit in the vision, it is very possible that conflict will arise. If there is no one else
with whom to engage, it is very possible that conflict will arise. Ministers have a higher decision-
making rank in a church – they are the closest thing that a music director has to a boss. This, in
addition to the inordinate number of other jobs that they must see to, gives them greater power.
Therefore, although ministers want to avoid conflict, they know that conflicts with musicians are
conflicts that they can prevail in.

Ministers generally cannot win against entire congregations, though. Yet conflict arises
between ministers and congregations frequently, because part of a minister's charge is to shake up a
congregation on the level of ideation. On walking this tight balance, Max Olmstead and I shared this
exchange:

Max Olmstead: You have to push, and you have to accept and I don't know; some
days I can pull it off and some days I can't; acceptance can become resignation,
which is not a healthy thing; and pushing can be a pain in the ass which is futile
which is also not a healthy thing. You have to be comfortable being where you are,
because that is where you are.

BP: So what leverage do you have?

MO (laughing): Just keep trucking out their own lofty aspirations.

Bridget Fidler once said to me, “The church has a crippling fear of conflict.” She could equally have
meant the universal church or the church where she and I work. But ministers and musicians are not
above that fear. It may be our embodiment of this fear that perpetuates it.

Lastly, the church is said to be in a state of dwindling to its death. Nearly every recent
edition of The American Organist certainly bears that out. The Reverend Jonathan Lee is a
Congregational minister as well as the Director of Institutional Advancement at Hartford Seminary. 
He told me that he does not foresee the traditional Protestant church lasting another fifty years, and the ones that do will “be museum pieces.” Perhaps these issues are more dire than they were thirty or forty years ago. If this is the case, ministers and their musicians are acting in a desperate way to preserve their livelihood and, ostensibly, the intellectual and aesthetic practices they represent. As they come to realize this, they also must determine what those practices are, if they are worth protecting, and how best to adapt to the future tides of corporate worship-making as they continue to come ashore.
Chapter Five

The Invisible Musicians: Organists in our Midst

“History is full of well-meaning church people who have tried to guide musicians but have succeeded only in making judgments which no musician could accept and remain a musician.”

Erik Routley, *Church Music and the Christian Faith*

What do the musicians of a church do? They make music, of course. Making music, it turns out, demands that organists navigate complex relational webs, represent the church artistically, create musical traditions, obey musical traditions, oversee diverse groups, and tend to instruments. If there is time to practice, they do so. They are also in contact with usually only one other employee, the minister, who many organists perceive to be their boss (Guenther 2012). We will get to the collaboration between organists and ministers, but first we will examine things from the organist's perspective. Throughout this chapter, keep theologian Erik Routley's epigraph in mind. See how often the organist is forced to consider music last in the prioritizing process, so as to keep peace, balance, and the job.

Some churches retain separate music directors and organists. Deborah Justice goes into great detail in describing a church in her dissertation *Sonic Change, Social Change, Sacred Change: Music and the Reconfiguration of American Christianity* (2012). This church employs both a choral director and an organist for each Traditional service, and yet another installed music director directs the Contemporary service. The church where I've worked, and many others, hire a combination choral director and organist. There is no doubt that a comprehensive study of church musicians warrants a meta-analysis of church data to determine exactly how many organists are working how many hours and performing how many different jobs. Most small churches cannot afford to retain two music professionals on staff, and so they use a combination organist and choral director. Such has been the case everywhere I've worked, although I have substituted for organists at larger churches, working under a separate choral director. This chapter takes up the music directorial situation in sum, but I assume a combined organist/choral director role, and when I refer to the position with one word, I use the word "organist." Briefly, a church’s organist could also be their choral director. But a church’s
choral director is probably not also their organist. Mary-Beth Bennett, writing in *The American Organist*, sums up the polymorphic reality of the job:

This year as I gathered my documents to prepare my taxes, I was aware of the many hats we organists often wear. A pile of 1099 forms attested to the fact that this "part-time" musician made her living by combining many different jobs. You might say I'm a "full-time part-timer," and I suspect that many of you are also. Even full-time people often add another part-time position to their already full schedules. For all of us, finding the right mixture of part-time employment opportunities can mean the difference between a fulfilling work life and a hectic, exhausting nightmare. (Bennett 2011)

The tone of her introduction is light, but there is nothing funny about a hectic, exhausting nightmare. This chapter enumerates the duties of organists: instrument stewardship, choral library oversight, service and concert programming, practicing, and honoring a particular social code. Most churchgoers are dimly aware of what the organist does on a technical level, and society at-large is similarly ignorant of the lives of organists and the bizarre set of circumstances they navigate daily.

**The Organist’s Social Duties**

In traditional mainline Protestant services, organists are musical contributors. Organists also show up in Reformed synagogues on occasion, and most African-American gospel churches have organists, although they are more likely to play an electronic version, such as Hammond B-3 (the organists at Tabernacle Baptist in Atlanta played a B3). The “pipe” component is largely unnecessary for mainline churches as well. Digital organs continue to make inroads technologically and professionally, and many churches house such organs (I have played one concert on a digital “pipe” organ). As stated above, in many smaller churches with only a single minister and musician, the organist will often act as a choral director. Many churches, while desirous to hear their organ, will privilege proficient pianists with good choral backgrounds over “pure” organists when hiring. There are at least three meta-jobs involved – keyboard playing to accompany hymns and choral pieces, choral direction in rehearsal and performance, and the two in simultaneity, a task that I insist is different than either one on its own. These are the technical responsibilities. The first social group to whom the organist is responsible is the choir.
The Choir as the Church

There are musical signifiers in the church, but the most iconic human one is the church choir. Does the choir represent the church, writ-small? Certainly, the members of the choir attend as much for social-personal reasons as out of religious or ecclesiastical duty. Beyond Linda’s and Judy’s testimony that bears out their reliance on the choir for emotional strength and camaraderie, Paul Lewis once told me that the choir was the best kept secret at the church, that they had the most fun, “dipping each other’s hair in inkwells.” Churches in toto likewise take on a particular social aura that, while open to the public, feel like clubs. This may be why church memberships can remain so vigilantly static year to year, and decade to decade. As entrenched as I thought the choir at Higganum acted, the choir in Suffield is even more so, and I quickly learned there that things have been a certain way for a long time, and it doesn’t work when changes are made. Indeed, music directors are to the ministers as choirs are to the congregation, and just as the minister must tend to the corporate and the individual in simultaneity, so must the music director honor each choir members’ wants and needs, irrespective of the director’s own agenda. Or, instead of the choir reflecting the larger congregation, the complementary analysis would be to call it a congregation within a congregation. The choir’s distinct participatory function in worship speaks to this perspective.

Pastoral Disconnect

I do not doubt that there has always been and will always be sources of tension between institutional leaders, even in the comparatively small arena of a local church. But I wonder if the nature of the disputes ever changes. I asked all of the ministers that I’ve worked under plus one more what their required musical component was in seminary. Here are their responses to an email sent to all of them:

Jonathan Lee: Musical wisdom and knowledge was assumed not overt. Look at the result.

Bridget Fidler: They taught us how to use the index in the back of the hymnal!

Max Olmstead: Very good question. Shocking answer, when it dawned on me: none. I think you have hit on a very important point. Mind-boggling.
Judith Cooke: I had no musical classes required whatsoever. In my field education work (like student teaching, but for pastors), the supervising clergy discussed how to pick appropriate hymns, but that was very informal.

Diann Bailey: I took one class called Christian Worship and Music. It was a Worship elective. It was a good course, but very basic—though helpful to me.

Keith Jones: I am unaware that Harvard Divinity School has any musical requirement. HDS asked that we be alert to foreign languages and take a homiletics (preaching) [sic] course if we were thinking of working in the local church.

Musicians are sometimes trained theologically, but in most cases, they will have as little formal theological training as ministers have musical training.

**Getting Along from the Organ Bench**

The organist job is inherently fraught with strange perils, but as I mention in this paper's introduction, the organists’ own rhetoric is often blindingly positive. In Eileen Guenther’s book (2012), which bears the provocative title *Rivals or a Team: The Clergy-Musician Relationship in the 21st Century*, she spends significant time encouraging the reader (presumably an organist) to stay positive and to engage in open communication whenever possible. She tempers this with realism, recognizing that impasses emerge in the situations such as those depicted in Chapter Four, when no matter how invested an organist is, she or he must go. The testimonials, though, at the end of the book do the most to reify the dichotomized states of attitude that mark the profession. The testimonials may be divided into those informants who furnish their name and those who don’t. Informants who provide their names say sincere but extra-musical things such as “[i]t’s about knowing that you would keep making music even if no one but God was there to hear it” (Guenther 2012:167), or “I have found that keeping God and the people first in mind tends to resolve turf issues appropriately” (ibid. 151). Some quote the New Testament, and many invoke their being “committed disciple[s] of Christ” (ibid.:155). Another testimonial describes the job as “focusing the use of my talent to foster seamless, Christ- or God-centered worship” (154). This is the most interesting statement, because it at least suggests that the job does not involve believing, but providing the means to belief.
A contestation may be made that this is mere show; Ronald Ebrecht describes organists as “hid[ing] behind this 'highercalling' b.s., or some other delusion” (Ebrecht 2013, email communication).

The counterparts who respond throw into relief the many dichotomies that tend to bubble up in discussions of religion. These “name[s]-withheld” testimonials paint dark, disturbing pictures of church politics; they more vividly bear out the templates I sketch above, even down to the physical illnesses that accompany being pushed out of a job. One anonymous informant says “I have moved on but cannot say that even after a few years I have fully recovered from the experience. My symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (diagnosed by my physician) have thankfully abated with time” (Guenther 2012:169). Many use the term “abusive” to describe the situations they have lived through. One named informant uses survival and paralysis as a description: “I survived it all and have moved on. What choice did I have?” (ibid: 162). Needless to say, the informants with painful stories do not invoke Christ with the same frequency as their optimistic counterparts.

As a Jew in the church, I do not believe in the Christian image of God, but I do believe in presenting music as well and genuinely as possible and carrying out the charge of facilitating congregants’ relationship with the deity they choose to worship. There is not much literature about Jews working as organists in Christian churches. But there is some historical material on Christians working as organists in synagogues in 19th-century Germany (Frühauf 2005: ‘Sharing the Console’) and in America, closer toward the century’s end (Slobin 1989). Synagogues with organs continue to employ church-raised or -trained musicians to play them. In her study of the organ’s outlying existence as a “Jewish” musical instrument, Frühauf points out that Jewish law at the time defined instrumental music-making in service as “work”, and therefore forbade observant Jews from overtly engaging with the instrument on Shabbat services, this taking place during the German Reform movement (1810-1880). Such proscription lasted for many decades, before policy-makers reinterpreted music-making as artful and therefore not an instantiation of labor (this of course points to numerous other topics that we will explore below, as to the perception of laboriousness the religious choose to ascribe to the organist). After decades of debate, a “Jewish organist”
emerged as the ideal, since they could imbue proper theological understanding into musical production. No church where I have applied has objected to my being Jewish, even though they are not technically equal opportunity employers. I cannot tell if an equally-skilled and equally-priced Christian organist would be more preferable than me, if churches were to come down to such a decision. Perhaps my Jewishness is an asset to some, in the ways that Christian musicians were at one time (and to an extent, still are) valuable to synagogues. I am dubious that, at a church, explicit atheism could be avowed without some reprisal being levied.

**Churches, Social Policy, and Sexuality**

The fact that churches do take sexuality into account when hiring and performing rites is problematic. One can here note the most glaring paradox about the church even observable to an outsider — that is, someone who mostly reads, hears, or televisually views the popular media. Namely, the sacralized rhetoric of the UCC — “no matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here” — does not align, per church, with membership policy. Surely, people and corporations alike are guilty of such a natural occurrence, of intending two opposing things at once. We know that churches genuinely appear to be open when it comes to interviewing and hiring Jews, if my experience is evidentiary. But while I can talk openly about being Jewish during an interview, I could not talk up-front about homosexuality and expect it to be as breezily integrated into the search committee’s collective understanding. I also do not mean to be cavalier by assuming that all churches would so quickly put aside my Jewishness as a problem when hiring. While the UCC at-large is “Open and Affirming!,” the two UCC churches where I’ve worked have not been so. Being ONA is more than a stamp, the UCC requiring that a meaningful, church-wide discussion take place. Discussing things in a church is, in the end, very very hard to do. Keep in mind that the chart shown in Figure 3 of Chapter 4 describes ideal inter-religious communication, not the working norm. The

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1 “Open and Affirming (ONA) is the United Church of Christ’s (UCC) designation for congregations, campus ministries, and other bodies in the UCC which make a public covenant of welcome into their full life and ministry to persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.” accessed at: http://www.ucc.org/lgbt/ona.html on March 2 2013. Other denominational equivalents include: the More Light (Presbyterianism); “Reconciling [or -ciled] in Christ” (Evangelical Lutheran Churches of America); Dignity USA (Catholic); Integrity USA (Episcopal); Welcoming and Affirming Baptists; Evangelicals Concerned Inc.; World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations; Affirmation: Gay and Lesbian Mormons; but fundamentally, denominational stances do not indicate whether an individual church will perform gay marriages or civil unions, allow gay ministers to preach, or, if they are “walk-in closets,” have any public or online information indicating that open-ness.
problem is that the both Higganum and Suffield’s basic message, “everyone is welcome,” is emphasized without real application. Despite such an all-pervasive statement and sensibility, there are no African-American members of the congregation, nor did any ever enter Higganum Congregational Church during my four years there. Two Africans came to the church a few times: Wesleyan University professor Abraham Adzenyah gave a post-service concert there once with me, my spouse, and other students playing supporting drums. He also attended a concert there and a dress rehearsal of Messiah by Handel. A Ugandan composition graduate student at Wesleyan named Branco Sekalegga attended frequently as a paid guest musician. Branco also ran an orphanage in Uganda called “Bitoné.” Through Higganum, he raised thousands of dollars for that organization, and the children of the church made and sent baskets of school supplies and other needed items to the site. There are obviously no ethnic or racial proscriptions that the church affects, either colloquially or formally.

I knew of at least one gay person who came to the Higganum church frequently. He did not come to worship but out of friendly responsibility. That is, he was best friends with a longtime church member (an atheist), who attended due to his family’s legacy vis-a-vis the church. No church would ask this person to leave, of course. But Higganum would also not marry him.

First Church Suffield is an older and more populous church. In her comments to me on this topic, the Reverend Bridget Fidler has told me, “We don’t exclude openly gay people – the policy applies more to the calling of a minister. I have done openly same-sex family baptisms at First Church.” However, this does not equate to being Open and Affirming through and through, with all of its implications and institutional meanings.

The churches quite obviously have no policies against anyone physically entering the church, and they did not have to officially “policize” an Open and Affirming status towards blacks or Jews, etc, even though being ONA does take into account other social parameters such as ethnicity, race, class, and accessibility. But inescapably, sexuality is a different issue altogether. As seminarian Diann Bailey put it once, and with heroic deadpan, “it’s not an issue for the church because there are no gay people here” (personal conversation 2013). When I say “with deadpan,” I assume she meant this
statement ironically, that the church merely refused to recognize homosexuality, and that it used
selective vision in understanding its own fold. I realize now that she could have meant two other
things as well: that Suffield and like churches are, by virtue of not being ONA, discouraging to
homosexuals, to the point that none attend or let themselves be homosexuals.

If we examine the first interpretation of her words, one cannot help but sympathize with
this stance. If a church or a group are officially “against” homosexuality, but they also want to
embrace everyone who comes to the church, then the best way to facilitate the latter is to ignore
instances of the former, the essence of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (see below for the discussion of
“walk-in closets”).

Since 1970, First Church Suffield has employed five non-Interim Ministers of Music – Bruce
Henley, Carol Spinelli, Jim Rogers, Kaestner Robertson, and myself. Bruce and Jim were both gay,
albeit not openly. Jim Rogers died of AIDS in 2005, after thirteen years as the Minister of Music. By
all accounts, it was devastating to the congregation; he was a spirited, talented organist with an
excellent singing voice and a top-notch choral conductor. The issue becomes confused, though; in
Suffield, the former youth choir director and youth ministers were openly gay. Or so it has been told
to me. Others have insisted that no one knew they were gay and would not have approved of it. So
what is the truth of the situation? The youth minister in question left the church over, ostensibly,
the church’s inability, unwillingness, or slowness to increase her position. I found out these facts too
late to pursue the issue further with direct interviews; an expansion of this study demands that such
interviews be conducted.

Fundamentally, these churches operate according to a “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” protocol.
Warner tells us that “some [churches], whose advertisements appear in gay newspapers, are overtly
welcoming; others, known by word of mouth in gay and lesbian circles as ‘walk-in-closets,’ keep a
lower official profile” (2005:195). So if the policy is a tacit agreement, and few talk or write about it,
then why can’t I shut up? Because, some voices are speaking.

In her incisive article on church musicking, Charlotte Frisbie (2010) enumerates a dizzying
array of topics, all too long overlooked by those scholars who might best address them:
ethnomusicologists. She brings up the repressed problem of sexuality because repressed things usually end up smothered. Academics like sexuality to exist in its own department, and phenomenologist philosophers and other Continental philosophers disdain its discussion as being distastefully specific. And lest we think all organists are silent on the subject, virtuoso organist Cameron Carpenter talks directly about sexuality in a full-page New York Times article (Schweitzer 2009). Vivian Schweitzer writes “[h]e feels it is vital to be open about his sexuality...because in the organ world, ‘there is a huge gay community that is really repressed’” (ibid).

I read Schweitzer’s article on Carpenter when it came out after only two years of organ study in the isolated but diverse Wesleyan University community. I found his statements preposterous, my frame of reference being primarily University Organist and Artist-in-Residence Ronald Ebrecht. Ebrecht was utterly not repressed and was completely forthright about discussing the sexual identities of organists. While not self-consciously iconoclastic à la Carpenter, Ebrecht was open about his own longtime relationship with his spouse, the late Dr. Jacques Gres Gayer. He was also consistent in one aspect of analysis pertaining to this discussion: that organists were treated as second-class wage-earners, similar to women, throughout the 20th century. While equal pay for women is still a struggle and still a political issue, it is nonetheless in the public consciousness, and places like schools and corporations deal with it. It is doubtful that equal pay for organists, a group with no union or political muscle, will ever be championed by any equal-rights causes, despite its being an exemplary case of sexuality-based marginalization. Throughout my tutelage, Ebrecht often referred to organists as “the original pink-collar profession.” I always assumed that he was connecting the color of music-academic regalia – pink – as a nod to organists being both gay and the founders of many academic music programs. But he wrote:

...a pink collar profession was an expression for all women professionals c. 1960...Straight organists were/are so rare that they did/do not set the market and did/do not count. (Ebrecht 2013, email communication)

Here, Ebrecht is highlighting this marginalization. But I find that, as I move amidst the community, that Carpenter and Ebrecht are, in their outspoken-ness, outliers. I can’t remember finding a single mention of sexuality in the many years of reading editions of The American Organist...
In fact, the only recent writing in TAO that refers to sexual orientation is the obituary for Ebrecht’s spouse Jacques, in which thorough biographical information is furnished, including Jacques’s ordination as a Catholic priest in addition to his 37-year relationship with Ebrecht, culminating in their marriage in 2011 (The American Organist (n.a.) 2013:37). Ebrecht said later, “I’m surprised they printed it.”

**A Testable Hypothesis for a Musical Sexuality Theory**

So why are the preponderance of male organists gay? Should it matter to anyone? A small exploration into this matter might reveal something about the structure of church *in toto*, and this in turn might shed some light on the nature of their musical-aesthetic formation as well.

In *Chosen Voices* (Slobin 1989), little mention is made of hazzanim’s sexuality. However, the data-point that I found corroborative within the book is in Samuel Vigoda’s “path to America” (1989: 78-82). He vividly recalls one episode as he is migrating to America, when auditioning for a job in Zurich:

They call a meeting...they told me to go in the other room while they will discuss the matter of hiring him...I was no fool; I decided to listen in through the keyhole. ‘A young man who is not married cannot daven for us.’ What am I gonna do now? So I decided there and then to say I’m married; what else can I do? I must confess, I lied...I wrote to my sister, that she should write letters to me; I’ll say that’s the letters from my wife. (Vigoda, in Slobin 1989: 81).

Within the discipline of evolutionary psychology, human behaviors can be said to demonstrate some larger evolutionary adaptation or selective process. Generally, these theories are seen as cold, and indeed they tend to discredit altruism for its own sake, preferring a gene-selection theory promulgated by, among others, biologist Richard Dawkins (1975, 1978, 1995). There are design theorists, especially William Dembski, that counter such theories, claiming that some behaviors do not comply with evolutionary theory nor its sociobiological spin-offs such as evolutionary psychology (Schloss 1998). One of these behaviors is altruism, which has both social and biological connotations, although they become fused with E.O Wilson’s move toward applying biology to sociological method (1975). Certain theories, such as “inclusive fitness,” are used to explain altruism, but even these sub-theories are daily contested by more purist evolutionists who claim that natural
selection (Nowak et al. 2010), or gene selection theory is supple enough to account for this kind of altruism.

One of the primary tenets of evolutionary psychology is that of paternity certainty, which acts as a generative impulse for more and more complex social customs that arise amongst a group or a society. These customs are intended to increase paternity certainty, which in turn compels fathers to invest more fully in resource-sharing, thus providing better environments for an extended kin network (see Hrdy 1999 throughout). New research proposes “religion as a means to assure paternity” (Strassman et al. 2012), and attempts to “shed light on the reproductive agendas that underlie religious patriarchy” (ibid.) To qualify, this study’s context is the Dogon group of West Africa, an often-studied group famous for their rigorous vetting of women’s bodies to determine “true” onsets of pregnancy. It is a style of study anathema to ethnomusicology. Without wishing to embark upon a discussion of ethics, we will accept these studies as useful for the development of this theory.

Getting back to our hazzan Samuel Vigoda, why is it so important for him or his ilk to be married? Why have I not met a straight, unmarried male organist working in a church? Or, why are single male organists in churches nearly always gay? Partly, Ebrecht’s above fiscal explanation holds some water – churches have to pay people but do not have a lot of money, and if they can hire someone with a comparable skillset for less money, they will. (This statement does not require an MBA to justify). My claim is this: a gay organist guards against sexual scandal and paternity uncertainty, agents which would destabilize church communities. Is the church organist’s homosexuality, then, one way of taking a resource-protective measure? Or, more likely, is this a multi-valent paradigm, contributed to by various other cultural trends and histories? I submit that church members, at least those members of “walk-in closet” congregations, are willfully blind regarding sexuality in toto. Otherwise, how could Suffield mourn their late organist Jim Rogers, lionize his legacy, and yet not mobilize to become “Open and Affirming”? Therefore, and very

\[2\text{ By this latter statement, I mean that my theory may contribute to the prevalent state of affairs, but the paradigm is now inveterate, a part of church, gay, and organist culture. Therefore, Cameron Carpenter’s sexuality is a phenomenon irrespective of this theory – he is not a church musician but a concert organist.}\]
much unlike the Dogon, Suffield (and Higganum) members are not consciously aware and perhaps not responsible for whatever policies do or do not exist within the church’s official legal apparatus, internally- or denominationally-speaking. While I doubt that many members of the church are overtly homophobic, addressing the issue in an official capacity would cut to a psycho-emotional quick that does not currently reflect the churches’ narrative of essential, pivotal matters, those being more easily assigned to financial, personnel, and infrastructural issues. These latter issues can make the claim of prioritized normativity, which perpetuates the push under the table of this vital matter. For both Higganum and Suffield and we may assume for churches in comparable situations, bringing the ONA issue to the explicit fore might be overwhelmingly contentious. No longer will this reality of the profession be invisible or part of a church’s subconscious hiring policy.

**Denominational Policy Towards Sexuality**

Above, we have two theories that deal with the subject of organists’ sexuality, one from an insider (Ron Ebrecht, a gay organist), and my position as a semi-insider (non-gay organist), submitted through the lens of evolutionary psychology. While I cannot think of denominations ever once publicly addressing the sexuality of their musicians (despite a preponderance of public media that takes up sexual issues amongst clergy), I wish to bring in a mainline church denomination’s official literature on sexuality. Single churches, unless they overtly assert sexual inclusivity as part of their identity, do not state whether they are a “walk-in closet” or not. They can remain mum. Denominations to which they belong do not have this luxury and are compelled to make official statements on the subject. Because their policy may not reflect the policy-in-the-field of a particular church within the fold, these denominations do not state things in a broad way, but rather cover tracks and unveil multi-ness of meaning. Although denominations do provide information, it can still be difficult to find and the information will not answer a single church’s questions what they should do. Rather, they lay out the germane issues that may apply to a particular church’s internal discussion. The UCC has multiple web pages devoted to unpacking its “ONA” moniker, but I still cannot tell if the UCC is “Open and Affirming,” or whether you can merely become “ONA” through the UCC (what is referred to as becoming a “setting of the UCC (a local
church, campus, or ministry etc.) [that] is ‘Open and Affirming’” (UCC website). I could not find the page on the site by clicking through in various locations. So I searched the phrase “Open and Affirming”. This is not a strenuous search method, but it should be noted that I knew that term going in. And as a researcher in a university, I spend a lot of time using search engines. So how accessible is this information? Is the UCC just a really big, denominational walk-in closet?

Individual ministers argue against that perception, saying that the ambiguity online is a result of being “technologically backward with a poorly designed website – no hidden agenda” (p.c. 2013). But it remains true that the denomination cannot and does not speak for individual churches. I argue that the online ambiguity is intentional, so that casual observers and visitors will not equate all UCC churches with the UCC denominational politic. It is to the UCC’s credit that member churches do not automatically receive the denotation of ONA. By requiring that a concerted effort be made to engage the church’s corporate consciousness, churches are responsible, legally and morally, for their own decision.

Those denominations that make literature public are very thorough to bring out the nuances of the discussion. For example, the Lutheran “Social Statement on Human Sexuality” is a dense document, a combination of theological exegesis, mid-century Post-War Euro-American philosophical pondering, and legalistic multi-channeling (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America 2009). Rather than submit a monolithic practical stance that individual churches or even the denomination itself should follow, it presents a complex priority list that, in the same way that evolutionary theorists might relate behaviors back to reproductive or counter-reproductive success, the Lutheran theologians relate things back to divine countenance. One of the effects of the document is to name and “recognize...with conviction and integrity” (ELCA 2009: 20), the range of attitudes, as they perceive them. They list the attitudinal types from conservative to progressive (yet another inescapable dichotomy), starting each category with “On the basis of conscience-bound belief, some are convinced that...” (ibid.) What are they convinced of? Or rather, what are the salient

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3 http://www.ucc.org/lgbt/ona.html#Open_and_Affirming_ONA_Information_and_R, accessed online 10 March 2013
points concomitant to each attitudinal type? That “same-gender sexual behavior is sinful...”, that “homosexuality and even lifelong, homosexual relationships reflect a broken world...”, that “the scriptural witness does not address the context of sexual orientation and lifelong loving and committed relationships...”, and that “the scriptural witness does not address the context of sexual orientation and committed relationships” (ibid.). Let me explain the near-identicality of the last elements in that array: the first recognizes “lifelong loving” but does not think that these unions should “equate with marriage.” The latter element believes that “same-gender” relationships should be convened in marriage and hold all legal and social perquisites therein. It is legal stuff.

The paper is countered by its opening, where its tone is tender but firm, patriarchal but compassionate:

God created human beings to be in relationship with each other and continually blesses us with diverse powers, which we use in living out those relationships. These include powers for action, reasoning, imagination, and creativity.

Sexuality especially involves the powers or capacities to form deep and lasting bonds, to give and receive pleasure, and to conceive and bear children.

The paper goes on to expand upon the multi-dimensionality of sexuality, but it never castigates this or that lifestyle:

Sexuality consists of a rich and diverse combination of relational, emotional, and physical interactions and possibilities. It surely does not consist solely of erotic desire. Erotic desire, in the narrow sense, is only one component of the relational bonds that humans crave as sexual beings.

The authors make a profound move: they do not comment at all on the same-gender or same-sex union issue, but rather only on the depth and complexity of human love. If it is skirting the issue, it is doing so with mindfulness and great tact.

In recognizing the many ways in which people misuse power and love, we need to be honest about sin and the finite limitations of human beings. We also recognize the complexity of the human and societal forces that drive the desire for companionship, for intimate relation with another, for belonging, and for worth. The deep interconnectedness of the body with the mind and spirit suggests the complexity of such situations. (ELCA 2009)
The church addresses these concerns with as much nuances as it is able. I bring these issues up to show that an organist is a technician, but a technician operating within a loaded cultural-informatic system.

Organists: Invisible Musicians

What Organists Do

The first time I read Charlotte Frisbie’s article on church organ-ing, I laughed with satisfaction and joy. It is an article that is too long and, I suppose, humanities-driven to be included in the two organ trade journals, and it certainly does not belong in a music theory journal. So it belongs to the domain of anthropology and ethnomusicology. This means that few organists will ever read it. The fourth subheading of the article is entitled “The Other Side of the Coin: The Frustrations.” I can’t list them all here, but its import is this: you have to fight for pay, for time off, time to practice, and for feedback. (“You have to fight” is her exact language when mentioning the difficulty of maintaining the instruments sufficiently). She also mentions the stress, the physical wear, and the loneliness. (Frisbie 2010: 158-9).

Organists are de facto stewards of the instrument. Some organists are very knowledgable about the instruments they play – the current organist at Max Olmstead’s church, The Dover Church, helped design and build the organ as an employee of the organ-building firm C. B. Fisk. The current organist at Higganum, Alan Rodi, is an employee of the Austin Organ Company, and he has retained their services now for tuning, no doubt saving the church money and eliminating communication discrepancies between tuners and organist. Organs are very expensive to maintain – Higganum’s 1973 Budget shows the organist’s salary at $800 for the year, and the organ maintenance budget at $250, meaning the two tunings a year cost almost a third the money as the organist herself cost at the time.

The Austin Organ of Higganum

Austin Organ Company of Hartford Connecticut built Higganum’s organ “for the sum of Two Thoudans [sic] Two Hundred and Thirty-Five ($2235.) Dollars, and to deliver the same in good order and ready for us in the Higganum Congregational Church on or before the 30th day of June,
1904” (‘Memorandum of an Agreement’ 1904). On the same day of the agreement’s drafting, Wallace Porter wrote a handwritten note that confirms “permission” (see Figure 1, next page). A note on a copy of the financial papers, barely saved from fire damage, states that the organ indeed was completed on July 2nd. The specifications for the organ to be built are very close to what actually transpired and has remained in place since, with the exception of the original 16’ Phoneuma, an invention of Austin’s then designer, the eccentric Robert Hope-Jones. It is not known whether that antique instrument was installed or not; regardless, the 8’ violin diapason sits in what might have been its place. The organ is a truly unique instrument, although this is a tautological statement, since no two pipe organs are exactly alike. However, many are similar to each other, and I’ve yet to play another organ with three string stops out of a possible eight ranks.

Figure 1. Copy of letter of agreement from church member Wallace Porter to the Austin Organ Company to the effect that the church has agreed to purchase an organ: “Gentlemen. I have received permission from Mrs Scovil to sign the contract as it stands. I herewith enclose one copy. Have notified Mr. [unclear] that he may prepare plans for alterations in the church. Very truly yours, Wallace Porter.”
The church is very fond of its organ. Many consultations were made between the church and Jonathan Sibley, a Haddam entrepreneur with extensive technical knowledge of organs. He recommended a tonal overhaul in the 80s, advocating for the replacement of some 8’ stops with upper work, a 4’ octave, 2’ waldflute, and three-rank mixture, replacing two string stops in the process. The church did not take up these recommendations over its history, instead opting to re-leather, clean, and in general maintain the original instrument. Below, I have inserted a lovely ink sketch of the instrument by church member Jeanne Calhoun, a document that was photocopied and

Figure 2. Artist’s rendering of Opus 109, Austin Organ Company (by Jeanne Calhoun)
used as a cover illustration for mailed fundraisers on the organ’s behalf (Figure 2; a copy of the full mailer is in Appendix Three). Unless a church has an outsized or endowed budget intended for organ maintenance, the organist will most likely be called upon to fix things in pinches (and must be able to work around spontaneous problems). At Higganum, I would occasionally tune individual pipes that had gone out of tune; I would also re-seat pipes. I would spend time as well attempting to identify and mitigate against the nuisance of hard-to-trace buzzings that arose. Documentation pertaining to the organ, including specifications for the instrument (as well as that of Suffield’s), appears as the third Appendix.

**Should they even be paid?**

Above, I mention this curious debate over whether playing the organ is “labor” or “art,” the implication being that art is not laborious, as it pertains to the question of observant Jews playing the organ for Shabbat services in 19th century Germany. The modern-day incarnation is a little less conscious; one can see it in the number of times a lay member replaces the musician for a planned absence compared to how often a lay member replaces the minister. A more conscious example can be found in this job description, published online⁴ by the “Church of God in Christ (COGIC), International - Massachusetts State Diocese.” Under “qualifications,” the posting lists, “The Ministry of Music is one of the most vital ministries in the local church and viewed as a sacred office. This person called to ministry as vocalist with the ability to lead worship from organ, keyboard, or both, able to articulate the gospel with enthusiasm creating an exciting and welcoming worship atmosphere. [sic]”. Under “Salary,” it reads:

> The Massachusetts State Diocese of Church of God in Christ (COGIC), International is in the developmental stage and not able to provide a salary. Therefore, we are seeking someone of faith, that believes that were God sends He will provide. “For we walk by faith, not by sight” 2 Cor.5:7) and someone that is not serving for the money,” not greedy of filthy lucre” (1 Tim.3:3) However, it is especially the duty of a minister of the gospel to be free from it. He/she has a right to a support, 1Cor.9:1; and following, but there is nothing that more certainly paralyzes the usefulness of a minister of the gospel or servant of the Lord than the love of money.

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⁴ I copied the full text from the now dormant link; most job openings are removed in two or so months’ time.
This above example may seem extreme and eccentric, but the posting had to get through the “Professional Development” branch of the American Guild of Organists in order to reach me, one of its credentialed members. Charlotte Frisbie also comments on this sometimes-tacit, sometimes-stated sentiment that organists should not be paid for what they do, as if playing the organ should and can only be an act of religious virtue. A student organist at Wesleyan recently quit a job she enjoyed at a small Episcopal church, simply because she could sense a storm brewing, and the storm had to do with the church being able to afford her. While many at the church treated her well and valued her artistry, there were some, especially the lay people who had provided music for free before she came, that resented her. The rector assured her that she would stay and would continue to be paid; the choral director told her that her time was up. She did not want to stay and be a point of contention. So she left. How many other Euro-American professions operate under a basic assumption that the issue of compensation is debatable? Perhaps this condition highlights Routley’s epigraph the most: here, the musician is not able to literally remain a musician, as she is told in so many words that she is not worth the money.

**Looking the other way**

Yet, despite the conditions indicated by Frisbie and the overt professional diminution portrayed above, the organist position belongs to the world of the perceived hegemony: the Western church, the Euro-American dynasty. The organ is not really a world instrument, and other scholars, engineers, and the like take care of the organological research aspects. So ethnomusicologists, the people perhaps best equipped to look into the musical practice-as-culture, have pushed it away or ignored it; perhaps the willful pushing begets the unwillful unknowing of it.

The majority of my life has been spent as a performing musician and as a composer. I have taken ample history courses of Western music as well as numerous composition classes and seminars dealing with composers. Until I became an organist, organists never came up as musical figures, nor did their repertoire enter the discussion. Even when studying Bach, as do nearly all musicians who take any formal lessons anywhere (including much of the non-Western world), his organ work is rarely if ever studied, although his employment as a church musician is obliquely
referred to. Certainly, Mozart and Beethoven are never referred to as organists, either colloquially or in history surveys, despite their being employed as organists and writing organ music, both of which they were and did for significant portions of their careers. Instead, we hear and study their symphonic work or string quartets, and we learn their piano sonatas and concertos. I am moving past the other canonical composers whose identities are only mildly associated with their often immense organ output, these including Handel, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Liszt, and Schumann. Moreso, the number of composers who write more exclusively for the organ are shut out from the discussion of compositional traditions. These composers include Balbustre, Tournemire, de Grigny, Sweelinck, Tunder, and Gigout. Growing up, I played many Baroque composers on the piano, but I knew nothing of Buxtehude (who primarily wrote for organ and harpsichord); I knew the music and historical significance of Debussy, Ravel and Satie, but I did not hear of Widor, Vierne, or Dubois, Alain, or Durufle. The exception to this rule was Messiaen, a very known and respected “serious” composer as well as a church musician (although typically, his organ music is studied less than his symphonic or chamber works in composition or history classes).

Growing up, as I become more of an “experimental” composer and a free improviser, I did not move any closer to the pipe organ. I knew of Charles Ives, that most worshipped of American experimentalists, as a piano and song composer and as a radical symphonist. I knew of David Tudor as an experimental pianist and electronicist. I associated neither with being virtuosic organists and church musicians, both of which they were. Despite my obsession with improvisation, I did not make a connection with the organ’s vast association with improvisational craft. My ignorance was of my own doing; it was also ecological. Were I to grow up Catholic in France or Germany and attend conservatory there, I might have engaged with those composers and musical traditions more readily.

In graduate research, a student also becomes aware of the institutional historical continuum that one occupies. The story of the departmental model that prestigious universities enact and copy

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5 While Sweelinck is not an unknown figure, he is not given the esteem due someone of his prolific output and influence.

6 Although Ives’s organist past is not ignored in scholarly literature: see Burkholder 2002.
– the now scholarly-emphasized model – often began with organists: John Knowles Paine at Harvard (Hall 2000), Palmer Christian at Michigan (Heger 2000); at Princeton, where Alex Russell and Ralph Downes were the first teachers of music, “an approach towards a more formal [music] program comes in 1917 when Henry C. Frick donated the great organ” (Knapp 1978). Here, in Wesleyan’s worldly music department, Joseph Daltry, the University Organist, became its first Professor of Music as well in 1931.

Despite the influence and contributions of organists to Euro-American music history, church musics, and academia, they go un-discussed. In an otherwise amicable conversation that I had with ethnomusicologist Kiri Miller, I brought up weak hymn-singing in churches, a problem I find that exists cross-denominationally and intra-nationally. She made the claim that this decline in corporate congregational singing was the fault of organists and the widespread installation of organs into American churches beginning in the 18th century. Indeed, the claim is in her first book (Miller 2007:8), although the endnote which accompanies the text – “elsewhere, four-part congregational singing declined in favor of prestigious organ music and formal choirs” – gives no supportive evidence. In sum, scholars are largely dismissive if not outright antagonistic, and organists themselves are handcuffed professionally and personally.

“You play with your feet?”

In churches themselves, few members know how organs work or are heavily invested in the upkeep of the instrument. Until most people see me play up close, they have no idea that the feet are involved. Memorably, I gave a mini-performance for a group of visiting scholars at Wesleyan University. I played a piece of mine as well as Bach’s “Passacaglia” (BWV 582), a complex prelude and fugue with plenty of footwork. The organ was in the center of Memorial Chapel’s chancel/stage area, with no obstructions to the visual aspects of performance. Afterwards, a music professor with an earned doctorate asked me, pointing to the pedals, “What were you doing with those? Making the air?” I do not mention this to mock an academic – had this person not seen me play, it could be interpreted as a fair question (although the pedals are in the exact layout of a keyboard) – but rather to draw attention to the point that the organ is as invisible as its practitioners, despite its outsized
bearing within an ecclesiastical site. The organ has little influence on music education en masse or on music-historical consciousness.

**The Organ Superculture**

While I herein discuss the hidden psychical duties of organists, it should be mentioned that they are part of a larger organist culture, and their interaction with that culture is largely mediated by *The American Organist* and *The Diapason*. Every month, the inside front cover and the back cover show the faces of concert organists managed by Karen McFarlane and Phillip Truckenbrod. These are the faces of the successful organists who tour constantly, dedicate organs, and live the lives of celebrities, at least ostensibly (figures 3 and 4, next pages).

It remains to be seen whether these organists make a living as concert musicians, the way that professional touring golfers do, for instance. Most of them also hold down church jobs and academic jobs, and they must juggle the many vocational demands as carefully as does Mary-Beth Bennett, our Part-Time musician in the beginning of this chapter. It is significant, though, that the myriad of church experiences, pipe organs, and musical possibilities is narrowed, in these magazines, to these smiling headshots performing giant works on larger-than-life organs. Similarly, the radio show *Pipedreams*, aired by American Public Media, privileges to an extreme the largest organs in the world. This is an itself a logical extension of capitalist influences – organ companies want to sell big organs, and they want their most elaborate specimens heard, as played by the most luminous concert artists. Lamentably, these are the organists we know of, and they are the ones we tend to hear at conventions. In many ways, such tendencies defeat the thesis of this paper, which promotes the unique and varied organists in our midst as being the most crucial cultural producers. I enjoy hearing these concert artists, but I always wonder about my local peers. On the occasions when I do hear them play, I am usually very impressed and excited by their choice of repertoire and their style of music-making.

Despite all this, organists do have fun and kvetch with each other. I herein submit the complexities of it all in a snapshot. American entrepreneurialism, as presented in a Classifieds notice
The Invisible Musicians

Figure 3. The inside cover of *The American Organist*
in *The Diapason* magazine, encapsulates more that I could say about the job, albeit in a much less inhibited way:

**ATTENTION CHOIR DIRECTORS!** Are you fed up with working so hard to plan and lead a choir rehearsal, only to have choir members arrive late, or miss numerous rehearsals entirely? Are you tired of the results of this – sloppy final consonants, flat or sharp intonation, poor blend when the divas crank it up? We have the answer – the Virtual Church Choir! Your choir can sing their parts at home, record them on their computers, and e-mail the file back to you. From the comfort of your home you can edit your choir into a thing of beauty – fixing those sour notes, poor entries or cutoffs, minimizing the over-prominent voices, and repairing the wobbly ones. Our Virtual Church Choir package includes a supply of microphones, speakers, and all the software you need to mix choral masterpieces – and reproduce them on Sunday mornings. Order yours today! Email Box-Choir Con at...*(The Diapason 2012: 39)*

**The Pleasure of Playing**

I wish to convey the joys of being an organist as well. I hope that the first and second chapters, as well as the epilogue to follow, especially highlight the unendingly fascinating relationships one enters by virtue of *being* the organist. Playing music for a living at all is something that many claim to envy, and indeed I cherish practicing the organ and rehearsing choirs and presenting those efforts on a weekly basis. It is magical to sit in a vast resonant space, alone for hours, and tinker with the body’s ability to affect sound, and sound’s ability to sonify space. David Comas-Diaz, whom I mention in Chapter 1, told me after service that when I play Bach, he “sees Christ’s face carved into the air as music,” that statement being a paraphrase of Romanian philosopher Emil Cioran. Being appreciated on that level, by people that you care about and who care about you, is a gift not to be trifled with. In addition to Ebrecth’s analysis that churches give organists places to hide, and my own cold theory as to the inveterateness of that paradigm, there is another reason that organists are very hesitant to rock the boat: we love playing the organ.

**Final Thoughts**

In a church, the theological and musical leaders are simultaneously iconic and vastly unknown figures. A church organist is often lonely: “it is not uncommon to have no teamwork among clerical people, music people, office individuals or others...You may be treated as if you are
invisible” (Frisbie 2010: 159). The joys of both professions are incomparable; ultimately, they belong to the realm of the liminal, and it is those inexpressible, intangible moments that tend to ensconce practitioners often for long durations of their lifespan. Practicing the organ is addictive; I am always privately entertained when new Wesleyan undergraduates take up organ with Ronald Ebright. The students tell me that they will now have a chance to casually “keep up” an instrument alongside their studies of astronomy, physics, and economics. A few months later, they have a church gig on Sundays and they are practicing from midnight to 3 AM multiple times a week. There are many benefits and costs to speak of, and this paper only mentions some of the more complex issues that deserve some attention. Much more work remains to be done on the study of the organist's musical and “lived” life, with Slobin's 1989 monograph on the American cantorate, mentioned multiple times throughout this paper, serving as the research model.

The relationship between ministers and music and between ministers and musicians requires more disentangling. It is also very difficult to research, considering that the relationship is often a dyad within an institution requiring comparative study; a researcher must be in contact with many sites, ideally on a longitudinal basis. And it is hard for people to open up on these issues, as Guenther's many anonymous sources indicate. The Reverend Max Olmstead is an exception – he is going for something elusive and actively-redemptive in each service, and he is not ashamed of that fact, nor does he hide it. This goal requires like-minded individuals. Although the “power dynamics” are often referred to as being the most problematic silent entity between ministers and musicians, ideologies, aesthetics, and commitment levels surely also come into play.

I have been told colloquially that a church is at its strongest and most well-attended self when ministers and musicians have long, shared tenures. From the stories we have heard in this chapter, and from the trying nature of the jobs, we see just how difficult that paradigm is to establish. For a small church, it may be the hardest of all. When Keith Jones was the Interim Pastor at Higganum, I asked him what kind of person he thought should succeed him as the settled minister. He recommended an older person, someone for whom this was a terminal position. There might be truth to that for a musician as well. The church otherwise acts as a stepping stone to bigger
gigs. In the end, though, if the wants and needs of the minister and musician are met amicably and creatively, a long relationship is possible. But a church is a place where people’s ontologies do diverge, no matter the monothematic projections that popular culture throws upon it. Emotion, passion, and desperation are given voice in these places, and the atmosphere is more rife for continuous change than staid routine.
Epilogue

Higganum as a world, Higganum in the world

Part of ethnomusicology is the questioning of ethnomusicological method and challenging its situation in the disciplinary continuum. How one conducts oneself as practitioner, culture-bearer, and researcher in preparation for, in the midst of, and in future dealings with the research field is a topic requiring continuous review. In this epilogue, I discuss my own concept of and plans for continued involvement. Here, I wish to invoke Kay Kaufman Shelemay’s reflection upon her longitudinal research amongst Syrian Jews in Brooklyn New York (2008). She takes up much of the classic modeling associated with ethnomusicological fieldwork – personal study with a guru, deep involvement with a discrete group’s patterns – but does so in order to talk about the fuzzier ways and consequences of interaction that more closely animate the relational space between researcher and subject(s). She asks to what extent ethnomusicologists “preserve, memorialize, and mediate tradition”, assuming that the three moves are elemental to the ethnomusicological project (Shelemay 2008: 152). And she gives examples of transmission moving in multivalent ways, from native carrier to researcher to non-native students, or from native carrier to researcher to indigenous group (once a researcher becomes a living archive herself) (ibid: 150), or from native carrier to non-native students by virtue of a researchers’ facilitation or the native carrier’s eventual renown (see Fig. 1

![Diagram](attachment:figure1.png)

**Figure 1.** Possible routes of tradition transmission, after Shelemay 2008
above). Certainly, this workflow quickly proved itself to be real for me at Higganum. But was there a guru, a master of tradition, in my case?

The church itself was the guru, and while musical practice was part of the teaching, the art of conveyance – of how to convince people – was impressed upon me to even more pronounced effect. A competent culture-bearer and preserver should know how to devise and enact change, how to best fulfill oppositional, co-present musical tastes, and how to coordinate all available resources in the most efficient way possible to manifest some acoustical presence that could be recognized as immanent, spiritual, and numinous. Similarly, once the church let me know what its traditions were and how they were to be enacted, then I was to be the new source of that tradition, responsible for its promulgation and proliferation. I would even be allowed to create tradition.

In this epilogue, I explore that surface between the Higganum church as I knew it and its now self, and what future relationship may yet unfold with this research project and our shared musical past as a basis. I close this section with something (made out of two discrete things) that I experienced very much alone.

**Bounding the Field**

Certainly, I will probably never be Higganum’s organist again. But I retain relationships with the church, and I use the church as a model for thinking about and rethinking the church musics paradigm as the practice itself evolves cross-denominationally, locally, and globally. All of these co-present elements imply a continuing relationship with the ministers of the church (past and present) as well as members with whom I continue to interact. Their memories of me can’t help but influence their music-making in church, just as my memories of them inform my musical direction hereon. Promulgation and proliferation of church musics, as I perform those actions, will always include Higganum as my primary informative source. This is the first extending of the field, to recognize its ineffable presence as constitutive in both the church’s and my own trajectory.

This paper also deals with the figure of “the organist.” This focus allows a smooth continuity of research, since I can take myself-as-organist with me wherever I go. Therefore, I am in a position to discuss how new experiences in the field reflect back upon the scholarly
understanding of the organist as a musical subject (such as the scholarship exists). Three questions come to mind, if we take seriously the organist and the organists’ practice as the musical and ethnographic subject: if the field of study is not bound to a particular church-site, Higganum’s or otherwise, then what is the field of study, apart from site? How much does site matter? And how do we locate sites?

Here, I distinguish “field” from “site,” but only so that we can better understand that the aesthetic ecology is a fusing of each discrete component with the other. For me, the field must include music, and therefore it must include some people to do it and hear it. The site can be solely physical, referring to the delimiting space that houses those people and possibly the instruments that aid and abet them. I argue that the field is extremely spacious and fluid and includes all of the people that I continue to make music with, in the church-music capacity. This study’s longitudinal implications, then, imply a continuity between all churches and denominations that employ organists as musical directors or influential roles. I don’t mean to flatten the field quite so drastically – the populations that inhabit each field are to be separately considered, with the knowledge that the organist navigates a new field of participants with each intervention, each collaboration. Still, if we are to give credence to the unique aesthetic-ecological theory as it pertains to each “field-site”, we must recognize that the larger ecclesiastical body is itself comprised of other discrete churches. There is continuity between them; sometimes, that continuity is literally inscribed by organists themselves. I do not know the average number of churches that a professional organist will work for in his or her lifetime – we can add it to the essential data that needs to be collected in a dissertation – but from the organists in my own life, those organists depicted in books such as John Ogasapian’s, and extrapolating from my own experience, an organist may work for several different churches over the course of a career. Think of the surreptitious influence this musician will have across denominations and across geographies, as a result of that cross-musicianship.

The Function of Site

The site’s import spatially was taken up in Chapter 1. What else falls under the site’s jurisdiction? Certainly, we can include church property as the site, and perhaps the immediate
environs itself – the way the church sits within the town, for instance. If our goal is to locate sites, though, and the field involves people with whom the organist interacts, what else comes into the purview? We need to include sites that further incorporate the organists’ habitus. I do not mean to suggest his or her dwelling, but I do mean to include the site of his or her training, as well as other venues that employ the organist – a school or college, a music store where he or she teaches, and the professional chapter that he or she belongs to, assuming there is one. Even these sites are not always locatable: an AGO chapter might have no geographic locus but rather may meet at different members’ houses and churches. In this case, the people themselves, as individuals who identify with a location, give strength to AGO chapters’ function as sites. Similarly, an organist can teach for a school and rarely step foot in it: Jeffrey Brillhart teaches improvisation out of Trinity Church in New Haven, but by the same token, he is teaching “at” Yale University. The research site would therefore be two-fold; a site folded into another, more conceptual site. Disregarding their murkiness, these are locatable areas where organists enact their craft and where research can take place. Such research is needed to form a more comprehensive understanding of the organist.

A First Re-entry

Shelemay asserts that the “fieldworker inevitably moves beyond the management of cultural capital into the negotiation of human relations in the field” (ibid: 149). While not everyone at Higganum knew exactly what went into writing a masters thesis in Ethnomusicology, they were aware I was doing it. It had always been my intention to present the document to them and to explain why I wrote it. In the summer of 2013, and assuming the thesis’s approval after faculty review, I will present the church with a copy of the thesis, along with the documents that I deemed most useful to my study. I will recommend that the church display them and others they deem noteworthy as part of its music history. I have no doubt that other treasured artifacts might come crawling out of the woodwork (again, perhaps literally). Currently, the majority of churches do not make much mention of their music’s history in public ways. Likewise, nearly every church lists their minister’s name on signs outside the building, but less frequently is the music director’s name posted (although there are many exceptions). The Church in the Wilderness (the colloquial name for
Emanuel Church in Killingworth, CT) does have a small kiosk that includes the correspondence between the church and various consultants as well as the organ-building firm (Karl Wilhelm) that built their recent organ. While I do not expect the church to erect a permanent edifice commemorating their musical history, I hope that the one-time event piques their interest in the subject, and encourages them to take seriously their musical past as worthy of commemoration.

Future interactions with the Higganum church are manifestations of present friendships and shared interests with church members, mostly those who had some affinity for or participatory role in the music program. Just as Shelemay could not have predicted the ways she would be compelled to act as broker and representative for the Syrian Jews she learned from, I do not know exactly the way these relationships will play out. Beyond the subtler ways I hint at above, I do not doubt that a live musical presence will continue to play out between me and the church. I just cannot predict in what way.

Those friendships alluded to are important ones. I elaborate upon them with anecdotes in Appendix Six of this paper. It is important to me that there is a record of the people with whom I shared so much and for whom I have such affection and respect.

* * *

The Synchronic Version

On Sunday March 3rd, I spent a long day at First Church Suffield. After the Youth Bell Choir and some final practice at the organ, I drove back to Middletown and pulled into Wesleyan University to drop off my organ shoes and music scores in my locker in the Chapel. But I didn’t leave the car for a while, because I was transfixed by the re-airing of a story on NPR’s “Snap Judgment.” A woman was describing an episode from her childhood, specifically a series of cataclysmic moments taking place in a church and the church’s Parsonage, which she aptly described as “the house that a church owns that a preacher lives in with his or her family” (“The Pastor” 2013). It was a vivid short story, and the details struck me because I could so clearly imagine every
Come, O Fount of Every Blessing

Ps. 30:7-9

Robert Robinson, 1756, alt.

1 Come, O Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing your grace;
2 Here I pause in my sojourn, giving thanks for having come,
3 O to grace how great a debt or daily I am drawn anew!

Teach me some me-lo-dious son-net, sung by flam-ing tongues a-bove.
Je-sus sought me when a strang-er, wan-dering from the fold of God,
Prone to wan-der, I can feel it, wan-der from the love I’ve known:

streams of mer-cy, nev-er ceas-ing, call for songs of end-less praise.
Let that grace now, like a fet-ter, bind my wan-der-ing heart to you.

Praise the mount; I’m fixed up-on it, mount of God’s un-fail-ing love.
Came to re-scue me from dan-ger, bless-ed bod-y, pre-cious blood.
Here’s my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for your ver-y own.

Converted to Methodism at age twenty, Robert Robinson soon became a Calvinistic Methodist preacher and later gained great popularity. The melody, associated with this text since 1813, is an American folk tune.

Tune: NETTLETON 8.7.8.7.D.
John Wyeth’s Repository of Sacred Music, 1813

Figure 2. “Come, O Fount of Every Blessing.” © 1995 The New Century Hymnal.
aspect of the story: the interior rooms of the Parsonage, the church pews filled with scandalized members, the minister at the pulpit giving a charged farewell speech. I placed everything that happened in the story into the environs of Higganum Congregational Church.

The format of the show is “storytelling with a beat,” meaning the stories are musically scored by the show’s editors. During the climactic point of the story, an a cappella boy choir sang “Come, O Fount of Every Blessing” (printed on the preceding page, Figure 2), a hymn sung to the tune “Nettleton.” It was a touching theatrical effect – it was also, of course, totally bogus as a nod to the actual church she was describing. Pristine, perfectly harmonized young voices resonating fearlessly off of cathedral stone is not the sound of lay churchgoers reading through a hymn while an organ blares away, slightly ahead of their every sound. The show’s producers did not intend to convey reality, of course, but to enhance the drama by invoking the sacred sound. What a hymn really is in lived experience, and what it can represent in its most caged, expertly framed form, are different cultural objects. Here, the hymn-tune was a meta-referent, designed to convey something obvious to an anonymous, pan-cultural audience.

I did not wait for the end of the story but got out of the car and walked to the chapel. I arrived during Father Hal Weidner’s Eucharistic preparations. The Catholic service was, as usual, sparsely attended; I counted fifteen people. Everyone had gone up to the front row to be closer to one another. A young man was standing with an acoustic guitar, strumming chords and singing “Lord Prepare Me to Be a Sanctuary” (Figure 4, next page). I had sung this song myself, albeit a cappella, and not by choice, at an Ash Wednesday service two weeks prior. The most bothersome aspect of the song to me is that the first melode is blatantly ripped from “Come O Fount of Every Blessing,” the hymn-tune described above, except that the rhythm is sanitized, its 3/2 meter squared off for ease of realization. Despite that accommodation, no one was singing along with this guitarist, who strummed and sang the same words to the same melody and chords until Hal had completed his performative gestures.
What did this mean? Was this proof of the death or impending death of a tradition? This hymn-tune had just happened in cultural simultaneity, and yet it hadn’t. Rather, its sound image was deployed to bolster the emotional narrative of a quasi-edgy radio short; then, it was taken, simplified, and repurposed to accommodate the limited musical skills of interpreters, presumably to
enable congregational participation. In its “Traditional” form, it was a referent. In a reduced form intended to elicit involvement from greater numbers, the fifteen people who attended the live service version did not sing. What was the next step for this hymn-tune as an embodied musical object? Disposal? Placement in an archive?

**Postlude**

I’m leaving this thesis with this question unanswered, because my experience as a church organist and music director, as of yet, does not bear out the forecast of doom espoused throughout popular media and the subculture’s own discussants. The week-to-week routine for a church musician is too desperately harrowing in its minutiae for me to dwell on the extent to which I feel myself drifting into obsolescence. I am aware of the trends, and I see many options as to palatable survival strategies. I try not to be blind; I also see the world at-large, including the religious mainstream. The guitar-led song above represents what is called the “Contemporary” in religious music. The “Traditional” is quaint but not quite real – the show did not broadcast a congregation singing a hymn but a refined English boy-choir performing for a record label.

The Congregational churches in Connecticut did not start within a Roof-ian spiritual marketplace. They were mandates, extensions of British colonizations, that essentialized themselves within communities. Even when tempers and sensibilities flared in the two Great Awakenings, break-off groups formed other Congregational churches. The way to authenticate one’s group as a society was to install a meeting-house and settle a minister.

Congregational churches, obviously, do not serve this function anymore and they do not pretend to be as instrumental or automatic in the lives of any citizens. There is a stoic lustre granted to them by their physical inveteracy within those localized regions called towns and townships. But the intimidation is gone. Message, personnel, and music are trying to invite people in again, without the ability to compel fear of reprisal.

The future is, therefore, not necessarily the past. And that is why the doomsday talk is so plentiful and quickly accepted. I consider the church to be an open aesthetic space. If the church considers itself an open space for dialogue, creativity, and changing aesthetics and ontologies, then
they must accept that some things indeed may become less hardened as new practices emerge. At its best, these sites of production can change into a spiritually- and creatively-productive form that we cannot ascribe to this or that polarity. Music, that most ephemeral of “real” things, can shape the direction of that evolution as the Church winds its way through past and present, its head squinting into unknown terrain while its tail drags along all of the remnants of its prior path.
Appendix One

Survey Data (comprehensive) pertaining to analysis in Chapter Three (‘The Congregationalists’);
Interview questions for Chapter Three

Note: some respondents wrote down two answers for questions (those who did not fill out the
survey on the computer) or indicated two answers when an “other” response was allowed. In those
cases, I counted both responses even though the written ‘other’ responses are also listed. Sometimes
this makes the responses come out larger than the actual response pool of 31. I have left the text as
is with no edits or corrections.

1. What factor (or who) brought you to this church originally?
   Location: 15
   Theology/ideology: 5
   Family history: 1
   A friend: 2
   Other responses:
   - Transfer from Trumbull, CT UCC [this is the minister’s response]
   - The music was inspirational
   - Reutation [sic] of pastor
   - Neighbor
   - worship service and theology
   - location AND theology/ideology
   - Jack
   - Our wedding
   - A visit by the minister. We were new to town.
   - obligation

2. What factor keeps you coming back to the church?
   Location: 3
   Theology/Ideology: 2
   Community – the people: 24
   Worship experience: 7
   Other responses:
   - chance to participate
   - #’s 1,3,4
   - a combination of all of the above
   - obligation
   - both theology/ideology & community—the people

3. How far did you travel to attend church today?
   Less than one mile: 6
   Between one and three miles: 11
   Between three and five miles: 6
   Between five and ten miles: 4
   More than ten miles: 4
4. In your opinion, what differentiates “Congregationalism” from other Mainline Protestant denominations?
- Less formal (and thus more meaningful) worship
- Can make our own decisions
- The autonomy of Congregationalism [sic] – to be able to choose the paths we wish to follow, rather than being instructed as to what we must believe and do
  - Basically, no one tells you what, how, and when to follow one's faith journey
  - Congregationalists allow the people of the congregation to “run” the church. We allow everyone who wants to take part in church decisions to do so. This allows for a much more agreeable atmosphere.
- Decentralized structure allowing congregations the autonomy and opportunity to make their own priorities and choose their pastor and leadership
- Progressive, world-view
- Tradition of reaching out with evangelizing
- Management of the church is performed by its members, rather than a traditional religious hierarchy
- The services are very similar but I guess the Cong. Church has fewer, if any, set rules or theological requirements that you have to believe.
- Not much
- Not much differences. However if mainline includes newer Bible type or others that have conservative fundamentalist methods and beliefs then that's significant
- Whole-hearted openmindedness and a willingness to embrace and foster all people.
- Caring community.
- Congregationalism focuses on the idea that you are loved unconditionally by God. There is no fear about your salvation, you are accepted as you are. Guilt is not involved.
- Feels more “real” such as the people, events, fundraising, and outreach. I can identify more with a church that is open and willing to try new things.
- Less ritual oriented and more open and people oriented. (Personal comparison: Methodist, Baptist, Episcopal, Presbyterian)
- Strong sense of power among the church members vs. minister, strong sense of history in Higganum. A little bit bigger than others, strong sense of tradition, puritan values overriding enjoyment like refusing to substitute wine for grape juice – sad indeed
- Independence – self rule
- I grew up Presbyterian and there is virtually no difference betwn that and Congregational as far as I can tell
- Don't know. Don't like how ridge it catholic churches are.
- The independence of the congregation to administer its own leadership (choose pastor). A less rigid adherence to biblical interpretation. I was raised in the Methodist church in the mid-west. Congregationalism seems to encourage thoughtful consideration of theology and is more open to a variety of opinions.
- My only experience [sic] is with the Catholic Church so I found more freedom in this church.
- Not many at all
- Not sure
- We are independent (mostly) and can “hire and fire”. Even though there is a conference we belong to we have the freedom to run the church in the best way we know how and hope to make the congregation happy.
- Congregationalism seems to embrace atheists in their church. There is a relatively loose interpretation of the Bible.
- Congregational is closer to main-line Presbyterianism than it is to Methodism, or Baptist and is not as close to Lutheranism and Episcopal. Has something to do with historical geographical location of the main bodies. Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Congregational are non-Evangelical. Congregational was official Connecticut religion until about 1835. That's why Wesleyan U. was listed as a University, not a college, in 1831, since it gave them more religious freedoms at that time.
- Individualism, less strict ties to interpretation of doctrine.
- Independence [sic] from “Central Controls!”
- I grew up in a Protestant church – Cong church seems to be governed by members. I don’t remember that at my previous church, but I was young and not involved with the organization/running of the church
- Not enough info to compare
- The local congregation determines the direction the local church takes, choosing the pastor, the music director, other employees and volunteers for key positions. It also approves its bylaws and activities independently from other churches. It is responsible for financing all expenses it budgets.

5. Where are you from originally?
   Here (Haddam/Higganum): 2
   Connecticut: 13
   New England: 0
   United States: 15
   Outside the United States: 1

6. Do you have a favorite hymn?
   Not particularly: 14
   Yes, and it is called:
   - This is My Father’s World/A Mighty Fortress is Our God
   - In the Garden/ Also, Go Now in Peace – very meaningful – could sing it every Sunday
   - What a friend we have in Jesus
   - This is really hard to choose but I guess ‘I come to the valley alone’
   - Lift High the Cross, Hallelujah, one other which I cannot recall the name of now…
   - Amazing Grace
   - Go now in Peace, not sure if this is a hymn, but I love it!
   - I love the hymn sang sometimes at the end of church [Go Now in Peace – author’s note]
   - When in the Hour of Utmost Need – ornamentation by J.S. Bach
   - Amazing Grace
   - Like Christian music on radio
   - In the Garden
   - Go Now in Peace
   - Go Now in Peace – I think this has become “our song”
   - Lots of well-liked hymns
   - I like older more complex hymns
   - Dear Lord and Father of Mankind
   - Just a Closer Walk with Thee
   - Bless be the Tie That Binds
7. How loudly do you sing hymns during worship?
   I don’t sing: 1
   Very softly: 2
   At a speaking-voice level: 21
   Very loudly: 7

8. On what occasion is this tune typically sung? Enter answer in the ‘Comment’ field. Please figure this out without the aid of an instrument or another person.
   I don’t know: 15 [or 17, see below]
   It is sung on: New Year’s Eve (14 gave this correct answer)
   Other responses:
   - I need a piano to figure this out
   - Gloria Patri

9. What are the first six words to this tune? Please enter your answer in the ‘Comment’ field. Please figure this out with the aid of an instrument or another person.
   I don’t know: 21
   They are: Take me out to the ballgame (10 gave this correct answer)

10. Describe your musical upbringing/training: (ex. “I sang in junior high chorus” or “I took three years of piano lessons”)
    - Piano lessons as a kid, music education major in college
    - none
    - Piano lessons as a child – 3+ years; High school chorus & Glee Club; Church choir
    - Unfortunately I never took any formal music lessons with the exception of 18th century rudimental drumming. I have played most acoustic [sic] stringed instruments; learning as I went along. Sang in college concert choir and church choirs where I have been a member. Music was not a part of my early family life. I started during my college years.
    - The ordinary music in grade school and up.
    - Took instrumental lessons and played HS bands and orchestra, and occasionally thereafter
    - Only formal singing in elementary school chorus
    - Sang in 5th and 6th grade choir. Played clarinet from 5th grade through soph year at college – in school bands. Our high school band did marching in the fall. Played a little guitar in high school and college.
    - None
    - None
    - Typical chorus and recorder in grade school. Piano lessons for several years. Music has always been a part of my life – more as a listener as I have grown older. Until I had children I was ‘connected’ to the local music scene in all places I have lived. Usually friends with many band members. I even used to use music to study for Latin (etc.)
    - Church songs
    - 1 year of cornet in 5th grade, chorus from Kindergarten-senior, Showchoir 10th grade-12th grade; Church Youth Choir – all through school; Private paravoice lessons a semester in College
    - Just received my first musical instrument [sic], a guitar, 3 years ago and just learning how to play. No prior musical experience.
    - Piano lessons during junior and senior high school. Church choir until I went to college (children’s and youth and adult). High school chorus.
- 2 years in church choir as teenager; 4 years piano instruction
- none – tried piano, violin
- not much
- I took piano lessons at an early age, walking up the street to the local teacher. Flute lessons began in the 3rd grade when my fingers were really too short. I played in band and orchestra in junior high and high school. In college I played in small ensemble groups. As an adult I have played in small groups, in local town bands and in church.
- Zero
- Sang in grade school as a part of music class
- Took trumpet lessons when I was young. I had a difficult time reading music.
- Piano lessons…mother was a piano teacher…I didn’t practice so dropped the lessons. We had mostly classical music and opera growing up.
- I sang throughout grade and high school and studied piano up until the obligatory quitting age
- Many years of piano and brass lessons. Even music theory at New England Conservatory as 3rd grader
- I came from a large family and we all took piano lessons. I was never very good or particularly interested but glad I was made to do it. (Now). Sang in jr and sr high school choirs. Liked that lots better.
- Children’s choir, high school choir, adult choir, piano lessons
- Parents played piano; father, sister and I sang harmony; voice lessons 2 years; took every musical course in high school; sang in Saengerbund (?) Chorus 2 years; other choruses and choir choirs (Catholic); sang in night clubs way back when
- I was in choir in jr high; church choir; took piano for 3-4 years
- None

11. Who are your favorite musical artists?
- Bach, Mozart Beethoven, Ravel, Charlotte Church, Adele, Peter Paul & Mary, Joan Baez
- John Philip Sousa – marches – orchestra numbers, Chopin
- Peter, Paul, and Mary; Simon and Garfunkel; '70s folk; Barry Manilow; Johnny Mathis, Edie Gorme, Chopin Mozart
- Most all composers and always loved the Eagles! Rogers and Hammerstein musicals
- I was told that my music was not “real”. So I don’t feel the need to answer this question.
- Almost anything from Gershwin to James Taylor to traditional Irish music to Diana Krall to name a few
- Variety of soft rock
- I like the old folk singers – John Dever etc. and the modern singers found on stations like 100.5
- J. Fogarty Paul McCarthy, Stvie Nicks
- Jim Fogarty, Paul McCarthy, Marty Robbins, Stevie Nicks, Audell
- Beach Boys, Nora Jones, Imogen Heap, ACDC, Alanis Morissette, Edith Piaff, Beatles, Green Day, Weezer, The Strokes, Modest Mouse, Squirtgun, Skillet, Bach, Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Killers, Keane, Pearl Jam, Pink, Katy Perry, Aerosmith (old), Billy Joel, Carrie Underwood, Taylor Swift, Cub, Live, STP, GunsNROses, Rat Pack, Etta James, Billy Holliday, more!
- Santana
- I like contemporary pop, country music, any music that moves me. The music that moves me is about the lyrics not about the tune
I like a variety of different musical bands from many different genres including country, hip hop, and even blue grass.

Barbra Streisand, Frank Sinatra, Barry Manilow, Neil Diamond, Billy Joel, Harry Chapin, James Taylor, John Denver, Reba McIntire, Josh Grobin, Jim Brickman, Straight-no chaser, Celtic Woman, Vivaldi (Four Seasons especially)

the Who, Pink Floyd, Abdullah Ibrahim, Monk, Haendel, Bach

Joyce Breech; jazz; 40s and 50s music

Judy Collins, Crosby Stills Nash, Elton John, Bob Seger

Bach, Mozart, several jazz greats, etc.

50's Rythym [sic] and Blues Blue Grass some jazz

Gershwin, Mozart, Moody Blues, many more

Rock, easy listening, polka’s

I am a country music fan but also enjoy opera and show music.

Brian Parks

Bill Evans, Count Basic Orchestra, Joe Bach, many others

Classical: Bach, Beethoven, Bach, Vivaldi, Tallis, Copland; Jazz: Miles Davis, Parker, Ellington and Armstrong; Classic Rock: Beatles, Presley, James Brown, Jimmy Hendrix, Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder; Female: Etta Jones, Whitney Huston, Aretha Franklin, Barbara Streisand; Other: Brian Parks

(no response)

Vince Gill, Statler Bros., Alabama, Frank Sinatra

Brian Parks

Ella Fitzgerald, Cole Porter, Bob Dylan, Ray Charles

12. Through what medium do you primarily listen to music?

Radio Broadcast: 15
Compact Disc, Cassette Tape, or Phonograph record: 10
iPhone, iPod, or other mp3 playing device: 4
computer (desktop, laptop, or tablet): 3
in person (hearing live musicians): 4
by playing an instrument myself: 2
all of the above: 2

Other responses:
- pretty equal between radio, cd computer…wish I were able to see more live
- playing myself, but also listening on radio
- TV music

13. If your answer to the previous question was one of the first three choices, do you usually listen through headphones?

Yes: 3
No: 24

14. In which of the following environments are you most likely to be when listening to music?

In car: 12
At home, through a stereo system: 11
At home through computer speakers or an mp3 player: 0
While exercising (through headphones): 1
In person (at a live context, such as church or a concert): 3
None of these: 1
Other responses:
- in the car and at home on stereo
- all
- formerly at home, now in car

15. What do you see as the primary function of music in a worship service?
   To enhance or facilitate a spiritual experience: 111
   To provide aesthetic pleasure: 0
   To animate scriptural or theological themes: 1
   To engage group participation:
   Some combination of the above: 18
   Other responses:
   - to Love God

16. What year were you born?
   - 1925-1930: 1
   - 1931-1935: 3
   - 1936-1940: 4
   - 1941-1945: 2
   - 1946-1950: 7
   - 1951-1955: 5
   - 1956-1960: 2
   - 1961-1965: 1
   - 1966-1970: 0
   - 1971-1975: 2
   - 1976-1980: 1
   - 1981-1985: 2
   - I only have 50 characters to answer this?

17. Would you be willing to answer more questions in person?
   Yes: 23
   No: 7
   No response: 1

18. The most essential music in church is:
   The organ by itself (preludes, postludes, etc.): 4
   The congregational hymn-singing: 20
   The choir singing an anthem: 0
   other instrumental music (not organ): 0
   Soloists (singers or instrumentalists performing as highlighted performers): 0
   All of the above: 7

19. My favorite music in church is:
   the organ by itself: 8
   the congregational hymn-singing: 10
   the choir singing an anthem: 3
   other instrumental music (not organ): 2
   soloists: 2
the children of the church singing: 0
all of the above: 5
no response: 1

20. What kind of music best typifies this church’s musical tradition? (Write-in responses summarized below)
- Hymns: 14
- “Traditional” or “Conservative”: 7
- organ music: 3
- “Not sure”/no response: 4
- Prelude, anthems, congregational singing, postlude: 1
- Music that follows the religious calendar: 1
- All Music When people gather together: 1
- “Traditional hymns from the hymnals; I don’t care for an excessive African style music”

21. On a scale of 1-10 how important is it to you that a church embody and perpetuate tradition, from 1 = Not important – the church should be whatever it needs to be for the times, to 10 = very important; practicing a church’s traditions is an essential part of the church’s cultural responsibility
Mean: 6.51
Mode: 5
Min, Max: 3, 10

22. What would you like to see a Contemporary worship service include musically? (write-in responses summarized below)
- “Rock Band” + Organ – could be quite interesting and engaging.
- Don’t know
- Open mind
- (no response)
- (no response)
- (no response)
- Not sure what this means
- Small singing groups with or without musical support
- More instruments – the harpsichord is awesome, would love to hear more of it and other types of instruments
- World music
- I have little experience with contemporary music in church. I would like to try a new experience.
- Some more songs accompanied by various instruments – guitar etc. and I like the music of other cultures. Some New Orleans type music is fun sometimes
- Drums and other instruments occasionally
- More instruments like drums but not in every service. Could try new script or overhead projector versus hymnal
- Hmmm. An enthusiastic audience that is not afraid to participate. Maybe an instrumental piece… how about an outdoor service with the African drums? Not sure if that would be considered contemporary or primal
- NO
- Music that you would hear on from contemporary Christian music, or older hymns with a contemporary twist
- A variety of different music to appeal to different people
- Guitar playing, dancing
- Hymns- only those written before the Victorian age
- 20th century classic, improvisation around new jazz or any jazz, generally speaking; anything before 1820 or after 1895 is possible; however: no pop songs or contemporary Christian rock
- no opinion
- guitar/folk-type
- I do not like “contemporary” worship services with a rock band approach to worship
- Some upbeat music
- Gospel, Blues
- Additional instruments. But not overpowering
- Love to hear you play the piano as well as the organ. Upbeat things that kids could “get into”
- Silence
- I would avoid it
- Well written “Contemporary” material

*23. I attend church:
   Every Sunday: 14
   Two or three Sundays a month: 12
   Once per month: 4
   A few times a year: 1
   Christmas Eve and Easter:
*due to survey technique, this questions is probably not representative of the membership at-large; the people who responded were people who either picked up surveys or heard me advertise it in a service

24. In service, I would prefer to sing more:
   traditional hymns, such as those found in the Pilgrim Hymnal: 20
   recent (post-1980) hymn-tunes such as those found in the New Century Hynal: 11
   Contemporary Christian Music, supported by a praise band: 6
   Taizé musics (cyclical refrains sung indefinitely, originating from the monastery community in France of the same name): 3
   Other responses:
   - a mix of the above
   - Not sure however I think a mix works
   - I don’t have an opinion on this; I am not in service to know the difference
   - Some of NCH, and some of better red PH hymns
   - Mix of styles but well written material

25. What are this church’s primary functions (check all that apply)?
   To provide a weekly worship service: 24
   To provide food, shelter, fuel, and other goods and services to those in need: 14
To provide a place for people of like values to come together in fellowship: 19  
To provide more guidance and theological instruction to the young: 21  
Other responses:  
- Encourage contemplation  
- More guidance and theological instruction to all  
- To serve as an example to the community of Christian philosophy  
- Develop spiritual growth for all who wish it (all ages)  
- Source for marriage of men [the word “and” erased] women; funerals and memorials for those we’ve lost; perform baptisms

26. I am:  
   male: 12  
   female: 19

**Interview Questions**

**Category A: Personal relations with and perceptions of experiences and people**

A - What is your first memory of this church?  
A - What is your first memory of the music of this church?  
A - What has been your relationship to formal musical activity in the church – as a soloist, choral member, committee member, or curator?  
A - What is your musical history?  
A - What is your relationship with sacred music outside of the church?  
A - What is your relationship with non-sacred music?  
A - What is your perception of the organ in this church?  
A - How do you see music serving the church?

**Category B: Opinions or commentary on the church as a functioning, corporate organization**

B - What do you perceive is music’s role in the functioning of a church?  
B - How has the music changed at this church since you’ve been a member?  
B - How do you perceive music evolving in this church today? Where would you like it to go?  
B - How does this church differ in its music from other churches? What do you perceive an “average” church music experience to be?  
B - What is your opinion on organs in churches generally?  
B - What should a minister’s relationship to the musical activity?  
B - How much does a church’s value to you depend on the worship experience? How much does it depend on its other programs?  
B - What is your perception of the congregational tradition? Is this church doing that?  
B - What role, if any, should the church have in providing music education? Speak to Higganum specifically or the Church at large?
Appendix Two
Phone Interviews with Max Olmstead

14 February 2013

Brian Parks: How do you enact change in a congregational church? I’m trying to start a children’s choir now, but I’m nervous about these first meetings.

Max Olmstead: You have to push, and you have to accept and I don’t know; somedays I can pull it off and some days I can’t; acceptance can become resignation, which is not a healthy thing; and pushing can be a pain in the ass which is futile which is also not a healthy thing. You have to be comfortable being where you are, because that is where you are.

BP: So what leverage do you have?

MO (laughing): Just keep trucking out their own lofty aspirations.

BP: And what about their aspirations being wrapped up in their past “glory”?

MO: There is that interesting faux memory thing: that one event where three children sang becomes “that vibrant children's music program.” I had that experience in Dover, when everyone was whining about having a children's choir. So I find this kid at the high school during a Baccalaureate service. He’s in his early 20s, with a group of twelve kids singing a cappella. And it’s incredible. I approach him afterwards and say, “I’m the minister at the congregational church, and I’d like to hire you to do this at our church.” So now we have this young guy in there every week and a children's choir with twenty, twenty-five kids rehearsing. The funniest thing is everybody’s getting enraged because they say he’s poaching the kids from other places. But now the trustees are all up in arms about it and griping.

BP: How?

MO: The trustees are stingy: the argument being that he’s teaching out of his office at the church, so they should get some of it. I’ve seen it with you, I’ve seen it with Toby. He’s getting a nominal check to run a children's choir of twenty people, which went from zero kids to twenty kids and once a month, they sing in service. He also teaches music out of his office in church. The trustees think they’re getting ripped off somehow, referring to it as a gold mine.

BP: How do your other musicians feel about this?

MO: They don't help; they don’t help coordinate; but they don’t get in the way. I would prefer a team effort, but I’ll take what I can get.

BP: I argue that you really can’t have a church staff function if the minister and music director are at odds.
MO: For the M.D. question, it depends on what you want to achieve. If you want real worship, it needs to be collegial, inspired, risk-taking. If you're just putting on the same show week to week, you don't really need an engaged relationship. The old model was that the minister made the service, and the music person chose some anthems and some organ music. That's a very different thing than designing unique worship experience on a weekly basis, which is what I think good worship is. So a perfect example would be some of the really good funerals we did. They were one-offs. There were certain things we were going to do, but everything else, who knew what was going to happen until you put it together.

BP: What gave those funerals such depth?

MO: (very small pause) Because everyone in the room was there for the same reason. It was about this one person, that's why funerals can be awesome; everyone knows why they're there, and you're designing it to be unique but with everyone on board. The different motivations become one motivation. You're a Jew... Shema. You're there for one reason, to worship God. Like when you had the drummers in the room; you couldn't escape what was going on in the room. That's why aboriginal people; that's why their worship is so physically intense.

BP: Speaking of that, why is multi-culturalism so big for the UCC?

MO: I think it's driven by our position on the Gospel, our recognition that we're a white middle-class church for most of our history, but in fact the Gospel is for everyone so we need to bring in other people's musics and languages and stuff to be welcoming, although I have to say that there is a certain amount of tokenism singing “Negro” spirituals.

But if it were done well, the actual thing is to pull us outside of our box of 17th-through -19th century European and North American hymnody. To just pull us outside and say, “this is worship, too.” Once you're there, then you can get into other things. One of the things you didn't get because you started with me, but for a lot of people, jazz and blues isn't worship. Even though “Precious Lord” is a North American song...the hymnal is a box you climb inside – a blast shield that people hold in front of their faces to avert their eyes to the explosion that could be happening all around them. Even when they know the song, they're looking down into their hymnals. White middle-class Americans are introverted and afraid of demonstrative reality.

BP: Why?

MO: Second World War. Everyone went in the army and became militarized. Then they came back, and maybe they were a poor immigrant kids before the war but they came back and put on a tie and jacket and went to college and went to work, moved out of cities and moved into Levittowns. And it's one of those things – it's like in the church, these by-laws came about post-war. Do you know the “Roberts Rules of Conduct?” (BP: Yes. I've heard of them.) Do you know who Roberts was? (BP: No.) General Roberts, a Civil War general. This military method to holding meetings – the “motions” – were adopted by the church and the rest of society as American became more of an industrial military place. I would say WWII is the glory day of the American Protestant denomination. 1945-1975. And that was because of post-war boom of everything. Up until 1975 everyone was still in the army.
The whole hippie thing was the revolt of the children of the WWII-era folks against the homogenization and the suppression of their life force. After the hippie thing was over, we got back on the homogenization model with Reagan.

BP: What about you? I remember the story of when you were in a history department and everyone was going around the room at the chair’s behest, saying why what they taught was important. And you didn't feel that what you taught was “important.”

MO: At that point, I had not really awakened to what my problem was. But later, I realized that I was breaking the first and second commandments. I was guilty of adultery, that my profession was my God and that my ambition, my drive for success and everything I did for my profession, was my worship. I had become very dissatisfied with academia, and I couldn’t figure out why, because it was going exactly the way I’d hoped and I’d achieved everything I’d set out for, but something felt wrong. Then I heard a sermon about the Shema. Oh my god! My profession is my God – that’s why I’m messed up. The guy said, “I’d like you guys to close your eyes and think about where you are in loving the Lord your God with all your heart and strength.” My God was being a professor. Not even knowledge or wisdom or truth or something, but being the professor.

All the heart, strength, mind, soul, and spirit I had was directed at being the professor.

BP: Where did you go to Seminary?

MO: Andover-Newton.

BP: Does everyone else go through these weird complexities with their churches?

MO: Yes. They want you to be fired up and do great things; and they want you to magically metastasize the church into sameness – make it great but nothing’s going to change. They’re always caught in the same bind. Everyone of them. Save us, pastor, save them. You show up, you start cranking up the chainsaw, and they’re like “Whoa! Stop doing that! We can’t take it!”

BP: How did your peers in seminary feel about music in worship? I don’t imagine they were as radical.

MO: Most of them sang; a lot of them wanted new worship, break-out worship. And a lot of them probably ran into a brick wall when they got to local churches. I don’t think I did. All bets were off with Toby. Then I got you and we kept it going.

BP: Is that unique to Higganum, though? Can every place incorporate people like Toby?

MO: It’s partly the mentality of the church: “We are a small church.” The core group at Higganum – they were there all the time. Whereas in larger churches, it becomes much more fluid. I never met a group of people who attended church that regularly. When I was a kid, we went quite a lot – there was nothing else going on during Sundays when I was a kid. There was a long period of my life when I didn’t go at all. Then when I went again, I was very regular. But I just came – I didn’t do Deacons, Coffee hour, accountancy...etc. But at
Higganum, the *same* people come every single week. The same sixty people. I’ve never seen anything like it.

Phone Conversation March 8 2013

(First, we figure out what happened on Easter 2009 – see Chapter 4).

BP: What is the point of doing things like we did that Easter?

MO: I tried doing that at my church here, but my senior musician said, “Why don’t we just have Stacia [his wife and the Resident Artist (soprano)] do it? And I said, “Because she’s not preaching the sermon.” But we had her do it.

BP: Maybe the advantage of the small church is that there are less people to offend.

MO: You have to ask yourself, are people entering the space and having a great humanistic experience? Or are they open to it? I mean, I was free-styling every moment at Higganum because there was nothing going on when I got there.

BP: How do I get this church to understand that a youth chorus in residence at the church doesn’t threaten them or threaten other churches either?

MO: It’s all about returning the church to its medieval function as a center for performance and art. It’s part of the church’s reason for being. They’re all gifts of the holy spirit that allow us do these things, and we have not only the rooms but the instruments and someone on salary who can do it. Open it wide-open and say you’re welcome to have our choir come sing at your church.

BP: In a way, I’m surprised they have this position at all, considering the thriftiness and the dearth of people who actually sing the hymns in the church. I mean, it’s already started with how it will fit into the line items and whether my contract specifically stipulates this anyway.

MO: The church pays for it because you can't do music in a human body without human song. the quibbling…once you start knuckling about how many sessions and the hours, you're moving away from the point, although they do have to pay for thing. You have to remember, that they're looking for quantifiability. They want a number and want to know what they're getting for that number. What are they paying, and for what exactly?

I'm okay with it [a contract] not saying that, because I'm in a relationship with the guy. I can ask him what’s going on and see how he’s working things out, because you don’t know what kids you’re going to get, so how can you pin it down on a contract? They're singing three times during Holy Week; it’s not in a contract, but it’s what I want and I'm working with the guy to get it.

BP: Is the senior musician threatened by the children’s choir singing so much for Holy Week?

MO: His choir is welcome to perform too. But I want this youth choir to sing on three services.
Appendix Three

Austin Opus 109, Higganum Congregational's Pipe Organ

Known specifications for the organ since its installation (although first design called for one eccentric stop, the 16' Phoneuma, whose existence is not documented)

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<td>32 Pipes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## GREAT
1. OPEN DIAPASON 8'  61 Pipes
2. TIBIA DURA 8'  61 "
3. OCTAVE 4'  61 "
4. MIXTURE III 183 "
5. CHIMES

## SWELL
6. VIOLA 8'  73 Pipes
7. STOPPED DIAPASON 8'  73 "
8. WALDFLUTE 2'  73 "
9. HORN 8'  73 "
10. TREMOLO

## PEDAL
11. SUBBASS 16'  32 Pipes
Jeanne Calhoun organ sketch used in 1986 organ fundraiser mailer

ORGAN FUND DRIVE

The following work is needed:
1.) restoration of the swell reed
2.) clean the swell division & pipes
3.) move the 16' Burdon pipes that block the entrance and impede access to the pipe area
4.) regulation of the organ

An estimated $5,000 is needed to complete this work. It is again time for generous giving on the part of our members and friends so that the organ that is a part of our history can be preserved for future generations.

HIGGANUM CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
ORGAN FUND DRIVE CARD

Name
Address
Phone

In Full
1st by May 20
2nd by June 20

Donation or

I will pledge hrs. if volunteer help is needed to repair organ.

Make checks payable and send to:
Higganum Congregational Church
P.O. Box 304
Higganum, Conn. 06434

Built in 1964, our organ is an Austin pipe organ. Originally it functioned with pneumatic action having a slender lead tube from each key; in 1946 a new console with electric action was installed. There are seven ranks each with 73 pipes making a total of 511. It is a particularly well built organ with a vibrant, bright tonal quality especially suited to hymns and church music. Originally the organ cost $2,000, today it would cost more than $78,000 to replace. This fine instrument that is responsible for a major portion of our worship each Sunday is ours because of the generous gifts of church members over the years and because the church as a whole has taken the responsibility to maintain it. But now we have come to a point in time where routine maintenance is not enough.
Appendix Four

Church Bulletins reproduced in chronological order

Page 181:
1970, 29 November: Reverend Courtney Johnson (interim), pastor; Cynthia Klitsch, organist
- Reproduced in full size

Page 182:
1996, November 17: Reverend Howard Seip (interim), pastor; Carolyn Halsted, organist and music director
- Reproduced in full size

Page 183:
2007, June 10: the Reverend Dr. C. Maxwell Olmstead, pastor; Toby Twining, music director
- annotations by Toby Twining
- Reproduced at 65% reduction in size

Pages 184-5:
2011, February 13: Rev Keith E. Jones (interim), pastor; Brian Parks, music director
- Order of Baptism excised from this reproduction (was included in original bulletin)
- spans two pages here
- reproduced at 65% reduction in size

Page 186:
2011, December 18: Reverend Judith Cooke, pastor; Brian Parks, music director
- Reproduced at 65% reduction in size
- Christmas Pageant included in service
- NB: Colleen did not play the “Silent Night” postlude; opted for an arrangement of “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” instead

Page 187:
2012, February 5: Reverend Judith Cooke, pastor; Brian Parks, music director
- Reproduced at 65% reduction in size
HIGGAMUM CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Worship 10:45 a.m. November 29, 1970

Prelude: *ADANTE CANTABILE*

Choirs

HYMN: No. 110

Call to Worship,

Invocation — Lord's Prayer — Response

Responsive Reading: No. 62 — *Gloria Patri*

Scripture: *Romans* 13: 8 — 10

Anthem: *HOLY, HOLY, HOLY*

Unison Prayer: O God, who in the days of old didst make thynself known to prophets and poets, and in the fulness of time didst reveal thynself in thy Son Jesus Christ, Help us to meditate upon the revelation of thyself which thou hast given, that thy constant love may become known to us, and that we may feel thy presence always with us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Silent Prayer — Pastoral Prayer — Response

Announcements

Call for the Offering

Offertory: *LARGO*

Doxology — Offertory Prayer

HYMN: No. 103

Sermon: *LIVING ON TIP TOE*

HYMN: No. 111

Postlude: *VIVEMENT*

Wider

Interim Minister: Rev. Courtney Johnson
Organist: Mrs. Cynthia Klitzch

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mini Fair and Silver Tea will be held in the Social rooms of the Church on Saturday, December 5th, from 1 to 5 p.m. Mrs. Santa and Kitty Cat will be present, and Santa will be present from 2 to 3 p.m. Donations for the various tables will be appreciated. For information call Mrs. Louise Wiley at 345-4554.

Mr. Leif Peterson is now treasurer of the Church Memorial Fund. Phone — 345-4867.

Persons knowing of any friends or members of the Church who are ill please call Mrs. Lawrence Eaton — 345-4866 or Mrs. Stephen Smith 345-4866.
HIGGANUM CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
November 17, 1996  10:00 a.m.
Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

PRELUDE  Partita on "O Worship the King" Currie

*CALL TO WORSHIP
L: We give thanks to you O God with all our hearts;
P: Before all people, we sing your praise;
L: We come into your holy temple in humility.
P: We give thanks to you for your name which is great;
L: And for your love which is steadfast
P: And your faithfulness which is everlasting.

*HYMN #558  "O How Glorious, Full of Wonder"

PRAYER OF INVOCATION AND LORD’S PRAYER (trespasses)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION
Almighty and most merciful God, we have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep. We have followed to much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against your holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought not to have done. Have mercy upon us. Spare those, O God, who confess their faults. Restore those who are penitent, according to the promises declared to all persons in Christ Jesus. And grant, O most merciful God, for Jesus' sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

*THE GLORIA PATRI

WORDS OF FELLOWSHIP

ANTHEM  "Then Will I Jehovah's Praise" Handel

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE
(Children are dismissed for Church School)

SCRIPTURE LESSONS
  1 Thessalonians  5:1-11
  Matthew  25:14-30

SERMON  "It's Not Thanksgiving Without It"

*HYMN #565  "God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending"

SILENT PRAYER AND PASTORAL PRAYER
OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS AND OURSELVES
Offertory

*Doxology
Praise God from Whom all blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures here below,
Praise God above, ye heavenly host;

*Prayer of Dedication

*HYMN #419  "Nun danket alle Gott"  (Now Thank We All our God)

*Benediction

POSTLUDE  "Allegro" Handel
(Now Thank We All our God)

*All who are able, please stand.
Fellowship and refreshments follow immediately in the Social Room.

(See insert for this week's announcements)

CHURCH STAFF
The Rev. Howard Seip INTER. MINISTER  345-4304
  (Home)  873-2120
Carolyn Halsted MUSIC DIR. & ORGANIST  343-0677
Kim Carey  SECRETARY  345-3818
Bill Stetson  Sexton  345-2781
Higginum Congregational Church
A United Church of Christ

Organized May 14, 1844 - Dedicated July 25, 1845

June 10, 2007
Second Sunday after Pentecost

SUNDAY SCHOOL SUNDAY

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRELUDE

Amazing Grace

GREETING, WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP
Pastor: This is the day the Lord has made.
All: Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

HYMN OF ADORATION

"I Wake Up This Morning" NCH 95

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Eternal God, we come with hungry hearts, waiting to be filled; waiting to be filled with a sense of your presence; waiting to be filled with a touch of your spirit; waiting to be filled with new energy for service. Come to us, we pray. Be with us. Touch us. Empower us as your people that we might worship you here and act in the world for Jesus' sake. Amen.

GOD'S WORD FOR US

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

O God, by thy Spirit tell us what we need to hear, and show us what we ought to do, to love and obey Jesus Christ our Savor. Amen.

ACCLAMATION

"Hallelujah!" - Abraham Masire
from the HEBREW BIBLE
Deuteronomy 6:1-9 OT 181

THANKING OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS
May Preachers a bit

PRESENTATIONS BY OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL

HYMN

"Jesus Loves Me" NCH 327

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

PRAYER RESPONSE

"More Love to Thee, O Christ, more love to thee!"
Hear now the prayer I make, on bended knee;
This is my earnest plea, more love, O Christ, to thee,
More love to thee, more love to thee! Amen.

EXCHANGING SIGNS OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

OFFERTORY

Reception of Our Gifts
Doxology
Praise God from whom all blessings flow!
Praise God all creatures here below!
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost: Amen.

HYMN OF PARTING

"This Little Light of Mine" NCH 524

COMMISSIONING

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Serving You in Worship This Morning

Music Director: Toby Twining
Deacons:
Pastor: the Reverend Dr. C. Maxwell Olmstead

Childcare is available during worship in the Sunday School.

Pastoral Concerns
For all pastoral concerns, please contact Reverend Olmstead in his office at the parsonage Tuesdays-Fridays at 860-345-4304, at his cell (506-862-0422), or through e-mail: maxolm@yahoo.com.

Worship Aids
Our ushered are here to assist with your special needs so that you might fully enjoy and participate in worship. Please ask for: Hearing assistance devices, pew boxes with quiet toys for the children, booster cushions for any age, magnifier sheets for easier hymnal use, large print bulletin and hymnals for the morning.
Welcome!

No matter where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here. We are delighted you have chosen to worship the living God with us this morning. If you are a guest or a visitor, we greet you, pray that you have found what you came for, and welcome you back always. If you would like to receive our mailings or speak with the pastor, please fill out a visitor’s card in the pew. God be with you and bless you this day and every day.

*Assurance of Pardon
Friends, hear a word of grace: God in our sure hope, and steady font of healing. Be free in God to live, choose, and love with passion and unbridled joy at home and at play in your hearts. Amen.

*The Act of Praise
Gloria Patri

*Exchanging Signs of Peace and Reconciliation
May the peace of Christ be with you. And also with you.

Service of Reception of New Members

Introductions

Owning the Higginum Congregational Church Covenant:
In the presence of God and the members of this Church, we do now pledge ourselves in faith and love and holy obedience, to God, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. AWARE of our dependence upon Him, we do sincerely desire and, with His help, do promise to seek and cherish the truth, to walk faithfully in the statutes and ordinances of the Lord, and to honor our neighborhood toward our fellowmen. We do also pledge ourselves to this Church of Christ, accepting its order and discipline. And do covenant to walk with its members in Christian love and faithfulness and to promote together its peace, purity and usefulness to God in the service of His Kingdom in our community and the world.

With humble trust in the grace of God, we do so promise and covenant.

Welcome by the Congregation:
We then as members of this church, gladly welcome you to be a part with us in the hopes, the labors, and the joys of the Church of Christ. We promise to walk with you in Christian love and sympathy, and to promote, as far as in us lies, your growth in the Christian life.

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism for Hudson Davis Beckman (see insert)

(Children are dismissed from worship.)
"Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.' But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let your word be ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one."

The Sermon “Jimmy Carter Moments” Rev. Keith Jones

RESPONDING

"Hymn  "Take My Life and Let It Be" FH # 404

Prayers of the People and Silent Prayer

The Lord’s Prayer:
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and power and the glory forever.

Presentation of Tithes and Gifts:
We have received so much from our God. Let us return our tithes and offerings for His work.

Offertory:  "Stand by Me" King/Liether

*Deaconess
Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures here below; praise God above, ye heavenly hosts: Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Unison Prayer of Dedication:
We are open to your Holy Spirit and alive to the Christ, who was, who is, and who comes. We gather in thanksgiving, O God, offering you our adoration, our acclamation, our gifts and our very lives to your glory. Amen.

Hymn  "Forth in Thy Name, O Lord I Go" FH # 406

Sunday Morning Live:

Please join us for coffee hour! We look forward to getting to know you.

Welcome to:
Dave and Jamie Beckman (son Hudson) live at 205 Jackson Rd., Hopkinton, CT. (600) 345-1247. Dave is a mortgage banker with a Massachusetts firm and Jamie is a First Grade teacher. They have a Labrador named Cosmo and a cat named Rudy. They enjoy outdoor activities such as skiing, trail running, hiking, biking and more.

WARMTH BANKS: Preliminary numbers are $270 was collected in the warmth banks. Well done—we should have raised more so that others will be warmed with our donation.

Friday Fellowship: Fun and Food on Friday—do we have anything better??

Setback at the personal growth in January-February 18, 2011. We have lots of talent, charm, and cargo. (We usually have an odd number of players, so anyone is encouraged to join in) Bring a snack to share (if you want to), and a beverage if you think you’ll work up a thirst. If you still aren’t sure about setback, bring a different game!

Youth News:
* Haddam-Killingworth Middle School in collaboration with Youth & Family Services of Haddam-Killingworth is hosting a talent show for fifth through eighth grade middle school students. Fifth and sixth grade will perform on March 30 at 7 p.m., and seventh through eighth grade will perform on March 31 at 7 p.m. The talent show will take place in the K-K Middle School Auditorium. Any student who is interested in performing or helping backstage should contact Mrs. Greene. All members of the community are welcome to attend the show.

Youth and Family Services of Haddam-Killingworth Inc. in collaboration with the Haddam-Killingworth Middle School and Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) will be hosting the nationally recognized SADD speaker Stephen Wallace on March 22, 2010 at 7 p.m. at the Haddam-Killingworth Middle School. This speaker will provide parents with information about the real world of today’s teenagers and outline concrete steps they can take to help keep youth safe both on and off the road. All members of the community are welcome to attend.

SAVE YOUR RECEIPTS!
Please save your receipts from Grimsell Country Market, bring them with you on Sunday morning and put them in the offering plate. The Rickers will take them back to the store and the church will receive a check for 4% of the total! Every little bit helps.
John the Baptist

Christmas Pageant

Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord

The Census

Hymn

Christmas Eve in Bethlehem

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Let all your gifts to Jesus bring

Mary and Joseph

Youth Choir

The Virgin Mary Had a Baby Boy

Angels and Shepherds

Hymn

Angels from the Realms of Glory

Joseph and Mary Sings of Glory

The Manger

Hymn

In the Manger

Mary’s Ponderings

Song

Mary Did You Know

Good News

Hymn

Joy to the World

Elijah

December 18, 2011

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Children’s Christmas Pageant

*Please stand, if you are able, at these points in the worship.

Chimes

Greetings & Announcements

Prelude

Harpist Colleen Theobald

Call to Worship

Praised: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward all.

Praised: Peace be with you

Praised: Peace be with you

Praised: Peace be with you

Praised: Peace be with you

Praised: Peace be with you

Praised: Peace be with you

Opening Hymn

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Prayer of Invocation & Lord’s Prayer

Holy God, Loving Christ, Living Spirit: You are present in the everyday occurrences; you are revealed in startling and wondrous encounters. Let this revelation of your mystery unfold again this day, that we may see it together. Let the secret of the ages shed new light on our relationship to you and each other, as we praise the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Response of Praise

Sharing the Peace of Christ

The Church at Prayer

Offertory

“Lauds festis et magna”

Harpist Ben Theobald

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

We come with joy, thankful for the many blessings we have been given.

May these gifts and the service of our hands, make a difference as we seek to follow Jesus’ way.

Amen.

Closing Hymn

What Child is This? Who Leads Us Now?

Hymn

Benediction

Postlude

Silent Night

Harpist Colleen Theobald

Welcome!

No matter where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.

We are delighted you have chosen to worship the living God with us this day. If you are a guest or a visitor, we greet you, pray that you have found what you came for, and we welcome you back always.

If you would like to receive our bulletin or speak with the pastor, please fill out a visitor’s card in the pew.

Please join us for fellowship hour immediately following worship.

We look forward to getting to know you.

The flowers were given by the Kocis Family.
Higganum Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Organized May 14, 1844 – Dedicated July 23, 1845
23 Parsonage Road, Higganum, CT 06441
(860) 345-4304 www.hcucc.org

Ministers: Members of Higganum Congregational Church
Pastor: Judith Cooke
Music Director: Brian Parks
Deacons: Jack Calhoun and Terry Smith

February 5, 2012 – 10:00
5th Sunday after Epiphany
Holy Communion
Reception of New Members

CHIMES

GREETINGS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL PRELUDE
“Have You Found What You’re Looking For?”
Mick Jones

CALL TO WORSHIP (Responsive)
Pastor: Come, you who are weary and heavy laden, and God will give you rest.
People: Come, you who have a guilty conscience, and God will grant you forgiveness.
Pastor: Come, who are discouraged, and God will give you hope.
People: Come, you who are weak, and God will give you power.

PROCESSIONAL HYMN
“Psalm 130: A Hymn of Prayer for Forgiveness”
PH #13

PRAYER OF INVOCATION/LOD’S PRAYER (unison)
Gracious God, we come to you with hungry hearts, waiting to be filled; waiting to be filled with a sense of your presence; waiting to be filled with the touch of your spine; waiting to be filled with new energy for service. Come to us, we pray. Be with us and touch us. Empower us so that we might worship you here and serve in the world. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

RECEPTION OF MEMBERS
Chris Rothmiller, David Cosman-Davis, Holly Sorens, Claire Time

INVITATION & ADDRESS

QUESTIONS OF THE CANDIDATES

Deacon: Do you desire to affirm your baptism into the faith and family of Jesus Christ?
Candidates: I do.

Deacon: Do you profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?
Candidates: I do.

DOXOLOGY
“PSALM 130: A Hymn of Prayer for Forgiveness”
PH #15

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (unison)
God, we bring these gifts – a portion of our lives, and in this offering find ourselves not scattered, but yearly worthy, truly wondrous, and deeply blessed. Amen.

HYMN
“Is We Gather At the Table”
NCH #932

THE INVITATION TO THE LORD’S TABLE

CONIRMATION PRAYER

CONSECRATION

SHARING OF THE ELEMENTS
“Holy, Holy, Holy”
F. Schubert

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

RECESSIONAL HYMN
“I’M In Glad Jesus Lifted Me”
NCH #474

Benediction

ORGAN POSTLUDE
“Toccata from Suite (Op. 5)” by J. S. Bach

Welcome!
No matter where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here. We are delighted you have chosen to worship the living God with us this day. If you are a guest or a visitor, we greet you, pray that you have found what you came for, and we welcome you back always.
If you would like to receive our mailings or speak with the pastor, please fill out a visitor’s card in the pew.

Church Calendar

Tuesday, Feb 7: 9:30am
Preparative Team with Ed Williams

Thursday, Feb 9: 7pm
Choir Rehearsal

Friday, Feb 10: 5pm
Youth Group

Saturday, Feb 11: 5pm
Progressive Dinner

CHILDREN’S TIME

OLD TESTAMENT READING
Isaiah 66:10-12
page 741

GOSPEL READING
Mark 1:29-39
page 36

HYMN
“Is We Gather At the Table”
R. Lau

SERMON

THE CHURCH AT PRAYER

OFFERTORY

“Is We Gather At the Table”
R. Lau
Appendix Five

Higganum Congregational Church, Annual Meeting 1965. Cover page and music committee notes;

THE ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE
HIGGANUM CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
Wednesday, January 20, 1965
8 P.M.

Call to Order
Opening Prayer
Election of Moderator
Minutes of Annual Meeting, 1964
Special Meetings, 1964
Reports:

| The Clerk                      | 1 |
| The Church Council            | 2 |
| The Assistant and Benevolence Treasurer | 3 |
| The Treasurer                 | 4 |
| The Board of Trustees         | 5 |
| The Business Committee        | 6 |
| The Every Member and Friend Canvas Committee | 7 |
| The Deacons                   | 8 |
| The Religious Education Committee | 9 |
| The Church School Superintendent | 10 |
| The Church School Treasurer   | 11 |
| The Cradle Roll Superintendent | 12 |
| The Pilgrim Fellowship        | 13 |
| The Women's Association Secretary | 14 |
| The Women's Association Treasurer | 15 |
| The Men's Club                | 16 |
| The Music Committee           | 17 |
| The Pastoral Committee        | 18 |
| The Nominating Committee      | 19 |

Any Other Reports

The Election of Officers for 1965
The Proposed Budget for 1965

Other Business

Adjournment
REPORT OF THE MEN'S CLUB

The Men's Club held 10 meetings during the year 1964 at which there was an average attendance of about ten men per meeting.

During the year the men participated in two fund raising events. These were a roast beef dinner with the women of the church and the fourth annual auction held in November. These events raised the bulk of the funds used on our projects for the year.

The following projects were accomplished during the year. One hundred chairs were purchased for the Sunday school rooms with the expense being shared equally with the Women's Association. The flag pole in front of the church was repaired by Mr. Nevers and the flag was a gift of the Gardner family.

The Men's Club purchased paint and supplies for part of the work being done in the parsonage. Manpower was supplied by men of the club as well as several other members of the church.

The new officers for 1965 are President William Grue, Vice President Hugh Johnson, Secretary E. C. Hemmann, and Treasurer Lawrence Eaton.

Respectfully submitted,
Charles E. Halfinger, Secretary

REPORT OF THE MUSIC COMMITTEE

During the year of 1964, the choir of the Church has been very faithfully doing the job of supplying music for the Church worship services.

The music for Easter Sunday was enhanced by the addition of a junior choir. For the Christmas season the addition of adult voices was very welcome. The music committee and organist, Brian Baxter, wish to thank these people for their efforts, and also to thank Mrs. Linn from Haddam for substituting at the organ during Mr. Baxter's absence.

A vote of thanks must go to Mrs. Everett Kingsland and the Haddam Church choir for their kindness in loaning us Christmas music, which was used and enjoyed.

Mr. Geddes tuned the organ in December, and with the exception of some work which should be done soon on the chimes, found it in good condition.

We are looking forward to a new year of good music. However, if some new members for the choir are not found soon, it is thought that we shall have to dispense with the vocal music.

Respectfully submitted,
Evelyn B. Halfinger
It is agreed that as organist and choir director of The
Higganum Congregational Church, my duties shall be as follows:-

1.- Select and direct all anthems for each service.

2.- Rehearse and direct the Junior Choir from 7:00 to
7:45 P.M. each Wednesday, and the senior choir
following this from 7:45 to 8:15, from the first
Wednesday of September through the first
Sunday of June. There will be a short ten minute
rehearsal fifteen minutes before the time of service.

3.- Play for all regular services from the first Sunday
after Labor Day through the First Sunday in June.

4.- Play for the special service Maundy Thursday evening
and for any special services if required.

5.- Obtain a substitute, if possible, if I should not
able to play for a service. If I am not able to
obtain a substitute I will notify a member of the
music committee as far in advance as possible.

*** *** *** *** ***

A salary of $12.50 a week shall be paid for these
services, with payments to be made monthly.

Transportation shall be provided between Higganum
and the college on rehearsal nights and on Sundays.

This contract shall become binding and be effective
as of , 1965 and continue through the
first Sunday of June. If at any time I wish to
terminate this contract, I shall give the Music
Committee at least sixty days notice. The Music
Committee agrees to give the same sixty days notice
should it wish to terminate this contract prior
to its expiration.

Should either party not wish to enter into a new
contract at the termination of the present one, notice
must be given by June first of 1966.

Organist- Choir Director
Music Committee

Dated Jan 7, 1965
Appendix Six

Memories

These stories take us beyond the strictly musical spaces and into the literal fields of Higganum. I briefly depict some memorable episodes that took place with the people that I met and came to know. I feel very fortunate to call them friends. I refer to events in the past tense but describe the people in the present tense. Although I am no longer their organist, I retain close ties with them, due in part to this research project. They remain much more so family than former employers.

Clark and Kamilla Gardner (and his mother Phe, whom I never met)

Clark and Kamilla are a husband-and-wife couple who more or less belong to the church. I don’t know that they pledge, and even during their most consistent attendance periods, they only came once a month. But they clearly enjoyed something about it – Clark’s enjoyment was begrudging, though. Probably an atheist, he is nonetheless bound deeply to the land, the family house, and the church, despite himself. Kamilla is German, and she especially enjoys the weirdness of the church. One anecdote she especially enjoys, is a service where the deacons forgot to bring the appropriate bread for Communion. All they could find was a bagel. And so the bagel was literally passed from person to person throughout the church, each person taking a tiny chunk from it to serve as the body of Christ. She found this communal thrift charming, hilarious, humble, and honest.

Clark inherited his parents’ house on Maple Avenue, within sight of his cousin Lindamae Peck’s house (his mother Phe and Lindamae’s mother Gladys were sisters). He has at least three large events there a year, in part to honor his mother’s love of throwing parties. We have eaten Thanksgiving dinner there and usually attend two summer picnics. He invites us with his family for Saturday meals before Easter; his extended family treats us like family. He gave me his deceased
father’s putter that he retrieved from “up attic” (his phrase, complemented by “down cellar”). In addition, my family goes over to their house many times a year without the excuse of a large event taking place.

One Thanksgiving, Clark had me and all of the men of his family – his nephew Eric, his brothers Eugene and Frank, his childhood friend Tim, and me – lift and carry a giant length of wire set off by large wooden poles every ten feet. I’m not sure where it came from, but he wanted it to be two hundred yards from where it then lay. So suddenly I was holding clumsily to this large wooden pole, while we trudged through mud, an unpredictable web of wire thrashing about around us. Communication was difficult, since the unwound coil spread over fifty yards in a line, and we could not really coordinate lifting and pulling or the desired direction. I did not know why we were moving it – I assume none of the other men did either. Still, I realized that, despite my outsiderness and tangential role in their lives, I was treated enough like family that I had been asked to perform a bizarre and unpleasant task.

Clark is also a member, by legacy, of the Grange. This paper cannot take up what the Grange is in its totality; speaking speculatively, it appears to be a somewhat secret society of Christian farmers that meet monthly or so to sing hymns, observe an order of behaviors, and discuss business matters pertaining to their landholdings within a town. There are Granges throughout Connecticut, and they usually retain some visibility per town. Clark is the gatekeeper of the Haddam grange; I have been to their meeting room to get chairs for one of his picnics. I glanced through one of their secret booklets delineating the movements and responses of members in a meeting. I am not sure what I’ve glimpsed therein, but being a church organist got me there.

**Stew and Rogene Gillmor and their sudden surfeit of granddaughters**

Stew Gillmor has been mentioned throughout this thesis. If it has not been made clear, it should be known now that Stew and Rogene are unfailingly kind, generous people who always looked out for my wife and I as we moved through dislocation from family, the births of our children, and my own difficult path through, ultimately, a failed academic arc. They especially treat my daughter Orion like one of their own granddaughters. Their daughter Allison had four daughters
in eight years; she and her husband both being physicians, the Gillmors took on extensive alloparental caregiving. Throughout Stew and Rogene’s increased familial responsibilities, they continued to attend church and choir practices weekly and engage bureaucratically within the church as well.

One day during the hot summer of 2011, Stew invited my daughter Orion over for a tractor ride. His own then two year-old granddaughter Piper was also there. Janet, Rogene, Piper, Orion, and I clambered into the tractor bed, and Stew drove the tractor through his meadow and vineyard and on into his woods. We traversed the breadth of the property at the equivalent of a slow walking pace, the tractor purring along while the girls giddily admired the forest canopy and the many paths Stew had carved through the woods. Janet and I took in the bucolic sweetness of it all. Playing the organ for Higganum had elicited Stew and Rogene’s alloparental care of Janet and I as well.

**A Special Concert, Alan Chadwick, and Lori Chadwick**

Stew was instrumental in helping to facilitate the largest vocal concert in recent memory in Haddam, when we brought in the Naugatuck Valley College Choir (a community chorus in Waterbury) to sing a concert at Higganum Congregational. I threw together a group of singers made up of Wesleyan professors and my own choir members (and other folks along the way) to supplement the large chorus, and we put on a memorable show. Richard Gard conducted, and I played organ. The church was completely full; we opened with Handel’s “Zadok the Priest,” which begins with two minutes of a quiet, slow harmonic progression arpeggiated evenly, followed by a sudden crescendo and the entire chorus singing the syllable “Zay-”, as loud as they could, on a huge D-Major chord. I consider that moment the musical climax of my time at Higganum (see Figure 1). While playing, I snuck a glance behind me to look at the faces of those in the pews when that first chord hit: there were looks of awe, there was spontaneous crying, and I saw huge grins on most church members’ faces. For the church to mount that concert meant, fundamentally, picking up the risers from Naugatuck Valley Community College. Brian Thayer and Stew Gillmor rode in one truck, and Alan Chadwick and I rode in another. Alan had attended the school back when it was
called Waterbury State Technical College. Alan spoke his mind and he and I had a lively conversation, as we always did. Alan's confidence, I surmise, derived from his ability to do anything constructive. The balcony of Higganum had a high rail, and the pew immediately behind it was nearly impossible to use – one could not actually see over the wall while sitting on it, so people had to either stand or sit on the back of the pew instead of the seat. As we were expecting too many people for the main seating, he realized that we needed to fix that problem. Within 24 hours of his realization of that fact, he had elevated the entire 20-foot pew up two feet and added a foot rest; he had just given the church fifteen seats.

On the day of the combined plant and bank sale in the Country Store parking lot at the bottom of the hill, I had signed up to work the last shift. We showed up, and about twenty members of the church were there anyway. I felt fairly redundant, so I bought some plants and lots of cake to make up for it. Alan had restored a 1939 Ford Tractor and was displaying it on the lawn by the plants. Eventually, everything had to be taken down and brought back to the garage at the church. Working efficiently and calmly, he first created a track for the tractor to use as a ramp by hitching
slats into the panel of his truck. Once the tractor was on board, he had to get the perfect angle of truck to panel to hitch it and secure it. My daughter and I watched the process, inspired by his expert hand and patience.

I always thought that Alan suffered me gladly because of his wife Lori’s impassioned investment in me as crucial to the church’s thriving. When Lori sensed in the beginning that I was receiving push-back from some members, she joined the choir and outspokenly insisted that others do the same. When someone mentioned how singers in the town would probably want to “sing with [Richard] Donohue” at St. Peter’s (Catholic) church, I remember Lori loudly saying, “Well now they’re going to want to sing with Brian!” To call her a volunteer would be wildly misleading, but she accepted no money to perform an unending spate of tasks for the church, acting as its primary administrative assistant after Max left, as well as providing the spiritual backbone of the place. It may be that there are Loris at every church. She is the imprint that I will carry with me.

She made sure that we felt welcomed at her family’s functions and we came often. She and Alan would perform parental tasks such as driving us to and from the airport and having us for holiday dinners. In late October 2011, a freakish snowstorm crippled Connecticut, and we lost power for a week. I am not a hardy person, and I did not have a backup plan for heating our house. We sealed things up as best we could, but our drafty basement let in cold and everybody in the house was freezing. We didn’t know what to do. Lori called us and told us to come over. She had not lost power. We stayed for four days; they gave us a car so that I could get back and forth from Wesleyan and so Janet and Orion would have mobility. They were the people who took my family in unthinkingly. Janet was very newly pregnant at the time, as well; I was beyond grateful.

I mentioned earlier that Alan’s wry New England taciturnity sometimes confused me – did he like me out of obligation? Two events dispelled that hunch. I was running from Higganum to Middletown one day when a car passed me and then stopped about two hundred yards past me. I turned around and saw a man running towards me, wearing a collared shirt and jeans. It was Alan. He asked how I was. Then he ran with me six miles back to Middletown on a humid 88ºF day, all while wearing jeans and a collared shirt (he did have running shoes). On this run, he tried to
convince me to stay at Higganum. We talked about the many reasons that I felt contributed to my leaving, and why I felt that they were irreconcilable. He made good points – I will always feel conflicted about leaving.

I had scheduled a concert for the 30th of September, the Seventh Annual Gladys Peck Memorial Organ Concert. It was my last official event at Higganum, just like the Third Gladys Peck Concert had been my first, four years earlier. I opened the concert with Alvin Lucier’s “Hands,” where the organist merely plays the three lowest tones on the pedals (three pitches related by two semi-tones) that correspond to facade pipes (meaning those on the outside of the organ case). Two or three people (or more) then use their hands to block the wind coming out of the mouths of pipes to change their frequencies and elicit beating patterns. For the concert, Alan Chadwick and Greg Shields climbed two ladders to reach the corner pipes of the facade. I jammed the notes down, and they slowly manipulated the wind, creating primordial rumblings and tensions from the organ. It went on for seven minutes. I had written bios for most of the performers in the concert, but Alan wrote his own. It read, “Good sport, and big fan of Brian Parks.”

Rebecca Williams and the Button Factory Farm

Rebecca Williams’s understated elegance cannot be overstated. She was one of the first people at the church to affirm Janet’s nursing relationship with our daughter – in a society that has had to pass a law protecting a woman’s right to breastfeed, this kind of warm approbation meant the world to us as new parents. Rebecca brought us eggs from her chickens. I had never received eggs from hens that I would one day meet. She also brought us vegetables galore: garlic scapes, lemon cucumbers, haricots verts, swiss chard, asparagus, and mushrooms. She remains the only person I know to harvest mushrooms, which she does on a fairly grand scale, with hundreds of logs lying meticulously under blankets or shade, producing mushrooms on annual cycles.

One day, she invited us to her house to help her pick vegetables. She met us and took Orion to see her game hens and turkeys and then to the dozens of chickens roaming around her two spacious coops. Orion reached in and picked warm eggs from under chickens and put them in a basket. Eventually, we filled many bags and baskets up with vegetables and berries that Rebecca gave
to us. We repeated this on many occasions, with the occasions sometimes culminating in a swim, complete with dogs jumping in the water, competing with each other over tennis balls. Orion was in heaven.

After a tense staff meeting in June 2012 where I expressed some dissatisfaction with my treatment, word got out that I was upset, under excessive pressure, or both. While practicing harpsichord-recorder duets with David two nights later, Rebecca came in with bags of vegetables for me. And a chicken her husband had killed for us. This was her personal contribution, in addition to the sizable cash bonus that the music committee had contributed to us in preparation for our second child, expected in a month. After she left, I ran out after her. I told her that I would need to leave the church soon. She said, “You’d better not leave until you have a great job lined up.” She said it with care and concern for me and Janet and Orion.

I played her daughter Gwen’s raucous wedding on a sweltering day in August, the Reverend Jane Hawken officiating. Rebecca and John's four other children sat in the first pew in front of them; her four daughters are spitting images of her, and her son is handsome, with bright eyes, a wide grin, and irrepresibly red hair. I don’t know that I’ve played a happier wedding, or that I’ve been happier to play a wedding.

Greg and Sue Shields: caregiving, clarinet-ing, and golfing

Janet and I are natural birth advocates. I am very outspoken about this and get into lots of trouble because of it. I have learned that birth is a topic you tread lightly around, although I have come to sense when the subject is broachable and when it’s not. During my first year at the church, I took very few risks with the subject. One day after church, though, Greg Shields, a deacon of the church as well as a fine clarinet player in the klezmer and jazz traditions, stayed to ask us about the birth we were planning. A family practitioner at Middlesex Hospital, he was intrigued by our decision to birth in Danbury (over an hour away from our home) due its being the only freestanding birth center in Connecticut. Mostly, he was happy that we were birthing without interventions or overt medical management. Greg is another man of many talents – he built the cabin that he and his wife first lived in in New Hampshire after he finished medical school, and he was taught from a young
age that one should repair one’s own house, car, and other possessions, a trait that ran through the Higganum congregation *in toto*.

His advocacy of our birthing, parenting, and commitment to baby-led weaning gave us the strength to be the parents that we envisioned ourselves being. His confidence in Janet’s ability to birth bolstered us; he affirmed our choice to empower ourselves through extensive self-education about obstetrics, midwifery, and lactation. After we became childbirth educators, he recommended students to us, including one of the doctors in his practice. When we decided to birth our second child at home, he was the person to confirm that it was the best choice for us. In fact, he is one of the primary subjects of a Wesleyan University undergraduate thesis by Vanessa Stubbs (2001) about limited birth practices in America. At the time, he was a physician liaison for home birth midwives, and she was able to perform cultural and statistical analysis based on this involvement.

Greg was also a willing musician. In addition to his performance in “Hands,” he played clarinet for several services and for Christmas Eve. He even accompanied the choir as I led them in iconic Jewish rendering of the “Osch Shalom Bimromav,” the last verse from the Mourner’s Kaddish (see Chapter 1). He played rousing solos on “When the Saints go Marching In,” when him, Stew, and I played it the every first Sunday in November for All Saints’ Day. His mother was Jewish and his father Catholic, and while I never questioned him too deeply about why he belonged to this church, it was clear that he valued the openness of it and the sincere goodness of its members.

Although he did not accept new patients when we met him, he accepted all of us. On one Sunday morning in January 2011, Janet had crippling back spasms. Our daughter was too young to take care of from a supine position, and so I called the church to let them know that I couldn’t be there. (Incidentally, Alan Rodi, their current organist, substituted for me on thirty minutes notice). Greg and his wife Sue, a nurse at Middlesex Hospital, came by that afternoon to take care of her and help see what might be a possible diagnosis and treatment, if any. It should be noted that Greg takes seriously Janet’s reticence to self-administer allopathic medicine and usually prescribes her homeopathic remedies first (himself being trained in homeopathy).
This past fall, after I had already left Higganum, I accidentally dropped a stool on my daughter’s great toe while holding my son in the other hand. It shattered her toe; she had to go to the emergency room, where they had to perform an emergency surgery. She had to be put under anesthetic for the operation. It was a tough series of weeks for me, but Orion healed and life went on. But she was scared of the toe and did not like it to be touched very often. At follow-up appointments, there had been some tears when tape had to be removed or other things had to be done to it. She had gotten more resilient as time went on; still, we were scared when it came time to remove the eight stitches. So we called in Sue Henehan (Greg’s spouse), an Emergency Departmental nurse at Middlesex Hospital. She came over to our house; she removed the stitches. Because Higganum Congregational Church saw fit to hire an organist and I lucked into the job, we were cared for by expert hands as a matter of course, as if we were family. I also competed with Greg and Sue on the same team in the church’s annual golf scramble tournament. We went out two weeks prior to the event to prepare ourselves for the format, as per Greg’s suggestion. I was surprised and delighted to know of his latent competitiveness.

These examples above are not superfluous to me. These were the people that I played music for and with; my reciprocation for their kindness was to invest more and more fully into the musical process, to bring out the most meaningful music into their corporate spirituality.
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