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The Role of Arts in the Process of Leadership Formation and Ecclesial Transformation

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Boston University

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Dissertation

THE ROLE OF ARTS IN THE PROCESS OF LEADERSHIP FORMATION AND
ECCLESIAL TRANSFORMATION

By

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(Boston University School of Theology, Master of Sacred Music, 1999
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Doctor of Ministry

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ECCLESIAL TRANSFORMATION


By

Olga Lipina

APPROVED

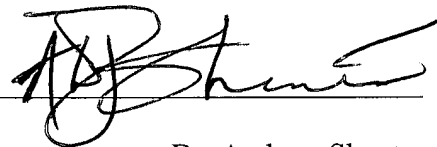
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THE ROLE OF ARTS IN THE PROCESS OF LEADERSHIP FORMATION AND
ECCLESIAL TRANSFORMATION

(Order No.)

Olga Lipina

Doctor of Ministry
Boston University School of Theology, 2010

Major Professor:
Dr. Dale P. Andrews
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates how the arts can be instrumental in the process of leadership formation and church transformation. By synthesizing results of an evaluation survey with a holistic-inductive design of inquiry, this dissertation demonstrates that the arts, as expressions of faith, can be transformative. By presenting the arts program at the Old West Church in Boston, which integrates arts as a medium for the expression of the Christian faith, this dissertation provides biblical, theological, and practical frameworks for reflecting on the transformative character of arts in the process of leadership formation and church transformation.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Statement of the Problem

This project intends to demonstrate that arts have the potential to create an environment that develops leadership qualities and leads the community to a holistic transformation. I will demonstrate this proposition through the case study of an arts program at the Old West Church.

Background of the Problem

During the years I was serving as a Minister of Music in churches, bringing together arts and theology, I noticed that the integration of the arts into the life of the church can bring increased participation and result in the community's spiritual development and transformation. This experience led me to the recognition of Benjamin Zander and Rosamund Stone Zander's concept that the undiscovered talent and potential for leadership might be recognized through development of persons' artistic gifts. In their book *Transforming Professional and Personal Life: The Art of Possibility*, the Zanders write that God gives people a possibility to use their talents in order to achieve full self-actualization.¹ Zander and Zander advocate that the spirituality of art is a transformative experience that might open new ways of being. These are the ways in which

¹ Benjamin Zander and Rosamund Stone Zander, *Transforming Professional and Personal Life. The Art of Possibility* (Boston: Harvard Business Scholl Press, 2000), 19.

people realize that they are part of God's creative process and hence creative participants.²

My internship in the course of the Doctor of Ministry degree took place at the Old West Church in Boston. The main objective of my supervised ministry was the formation of an arts ministry that comes from the context of this congregation and serves as medium for the expression of Christian faith. The arts program allowed embracing all members of this congregation into a theological mission of bringing to God's altar the variety of people's talents and gifts. The program integration demonstrated that the spirituality of art is instrumental in the process of the Old West Church's revitalization and leadership formation. The spirited process of participation in the program tremendously increased leadership excellence of the Old West Church members. It also helped Christians of this congregation to express their faith through a variety of artistic forms. This complex enterprise brought people together in a new relationship with God and with each other, and from an artistic perspective allowed all members of the congregation to apply and develop their unique talents in the service of God.

Relying on biblical description of the use of arts in the life of faith and my experience as the Minister of Music, I realized the importance of an integral concept: *arts as a medium for the expression of the Christian faith*.³ In the context of the Bible the arts

² Ibid., 26.

³ This concept originates from a particular approach to the use of arts in the religious context, and has been italicized as an indication of its theo-aesthetic approach. Though the arts have always been part of religious life, the explicit and articulated concept that the arts function as a medium for the expression of faith creates an original theo-aesthetic approach to the role of arts in the life of faith. Below, this original perspective will not be italicized again.

serve as a means for the expression of faith and are an outcome of deep and emotional acknowledgment of God's salvific and redeeming presence in this world. The Bible demonstrates that the desire to glorify God through the arts is organic to humanity and indeed to all God's creation. I also recognized that in the Bible the mode of faith expression has an inferior role in the course of this event. The superior role was human desire to express love and adoration toward God. This desire motivated people to find a form of expression that seems most appropriate to them. Relating this observation to the role of music and arts in the Christian church, I noticed the same pattern: The desire to worship God in praise and thanksgiving is *central* for Christians and should be the foundation for the ministry of arts.

Based on my experience, the main objective of the arts ministry should be to assist believers in their desire to communicate their feelings to God. This ministry should encourage members of the church to express themselves artistically in their relation to God. Since all believers have different talents and skills, it is the task of the arts ministry to "provide a milieu for creativity, exploration, and experimentation" that would allow members of the church to find their unique ways of artistic expression.⁴ For example, as a result of the arts integration, the Old West Church formed a congregational choir, found several soloists, a choral conductor, readers, and an artistic designer. The members of the congregation acknowledged that the integration of the arts program was a transformative

⁴ Vivian Nix-Early "Art: A Naturally Occurring Recourse for Building Bridges to the NU JERUZ." *The Princeton Lectures on Youth, Church, and Culture* published by Institute for Youth Ministry. (Princeton: Theological Seminary, 2003), 44.

experience for all members of the Old West Church. The arts program united all members of the church in one theologically artistic task. This spirited process gave free reign to the spiritual dynamics that guided the opening of leadership qualities in all of the participants. People were offering gifts that no one in the congregation would have assumed they had; one person came forward as a conductor, another as a designer, and another as a skillful reader. Certainly, the arts program did not leave any of the church's members unresponsive. All were involved and eager to do their best.

My goal as a leader was the development of the artistic abilities of the members of this congregation. I also had a goal of investigating whether arts can be instrumental in the process of leadership formation and church transformation. Members of the Old West Church have varied artistic talents and skills. Some of the individuals have had musical and artistic education, and as a result were more advanced in musicianship and other arts than others. My task was to give an opportunity to all members of this congregation to perform tasks that would allow them to succeed in their assignments and at the same time to develop their talents and extend their skills to a new and higher level. I also encouraged members of the congregation to discover new gifts and talents and assisted them in the development of these discovered arts abilities. For example, some of the congregational members were confident that they are "tone deaf" and consequently would never be able to sing a solo. To their surprise – after diligent work, many rehearsals, and time of prayer – several months later they were singing as soloists offering to God their love and adoration expressed in a vocal form. This kind of experience, in a practical way, demonstrated to the members of the Old West Church that

humans have the potential for development in all spheres of their lives: spiritual, artistic, and social. Theologically this experience of transformation and growth contextualizes the dynamics of God's grace in the process of human development and growth into the image of God. This phenomenon also demonstrated to the members of this congregation how art might create an atmosphere that stimulates leadership qualities.

In this period of work I had the opportunity to examine the phenomenon that Vivian Nix-Early described in her lecture, "Art: A Naturally Occurring Resource for Building Bridges to the NU JERUZ," where she writes that,

art and art-making provide a milieu for creativity, exploration, and experimentation beyond the boundaries of immediate culture and its constructs. They provide a potentially formative and friendly environment in which people can grow personally and in relationship to others.⁵

While leading the arts program I observed how people were experiencing personal transformation, which had influence on their relationships with God and with the members of the church. The opportunity for the people to express themselves in relation to God, provided by the arts program, opened for them new vision about their own potentials as well as qualities of other members of the congregation. This new vision allowed people to experience the transformative power of arts as an expression of faith.

Nix-Early affirms that art can be an "effective vehicle for reaching across the chasms of difference created by both individuals and communities."⁶ In her lecture, Nix-Early brings to the surface the social and theological functions of arts, indicating that the

⁵ Nix-Early, 44.

⁶ Ibid.

“arts in service to others, versus in performance, create a social and physical opportunity to meet difference at the borders of our race, ethnic, religious, and class enclaves.”⁷ She also points to the theological dimensions of the arts as an “expression of the indwelling of God’s creative spirit in [God’s] creation” that provide a “divine invitation to all of [God’s] creation for reconciliation and redemption.”⁸

During my involvement in the arts ministry of the Old West Church, I observed the relevance of Nix-Early’s vision of arts as “service to others” and to God. The ongoing work of the arts program not only united people in their faith, but also gave them the opportunity for better knowledge about themselves and their friends. Common efforts allowed them to expand their horizons and realize how the Christian faith might be experienced from the point of view of theological aesthetics. This approach provided the participants with the opportunity for their theological, aesthetic, and social growth. Our discussions with the members of the Old West Church about the theo-aesthetic experiences they received in the frame of the arts program gave opportunities to the members of the Old West Church to formulate their perspective on arts as a means for the expression of the Christian faith.

Developing my method of arts integration into the life of the Christian church I follow basic assumptions that,

- An arts program should be biblically based and serve as a *medium for the expression of the Christian faith.*

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

- An arts program should integrate both theological and aesthetic dimensions.
- An arts program should help believers artistically express themselves in relation to God.
- An arts program should create an environment that allows Christians to grow spiritually.

In my explanation of the theological and aesthetic elements as important parts of the arts program, I rely on Hans Urs von Balthasar's theological system that embraces aesthetics as a part of Christian theology. By utilizing the aesthetic concepts of "form" and "splendor" presented in Balthasar's *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, I provide a conceptual framework for the explanation of arts as a bearer of theo-aesthetic dimensions of the life of the Christian church.

Contextualization of von Balthasar's concepts "form" and "splendor" in relation to the Bible models the theo-aesthetic foundation of the arts program. As a structural framework for the arts program evaluation, I utilize J. Nathan Corbit and Vivian Nix-Early's theory of arts as a means of redemptive transformation.⁹ The arts program's structure adapts and integrates three stages of the Corbit/ Nix-Early's paradigm: (1). *Critical Awareness*, (2). *Working Out*, and (3). *Celebration*.¹⁰ This structural framework

⁹ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, *Taking It to the Streets: Using the Arts to Transform Your Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 163.

¹⁰ Corbit and Nix-Early, 24. Corbit and Nix-Early consider the arts as a means of redemptive transformation that leads to both personal empowerment and communal transformation. In the course of transformation people experience the following stages: 1. *Critical Awareness*, when people attain critical consciousness of a problem or issue. 2. *Working Out*, when through the different strategies the problem finds its solution. 3. *Celebration*, when the completion of the problem and its resolution is celebrated as a way of recognition of an achievement and at the same time as a beginning of a new stage of the transformative process.

helps to demonstrate how arts can be instrumental in the process of leadership formation and church transformation.

Significance of Study

The arts and theology have a long history together. However, in modern times, their correlation has encountered difficulties. Even though an affinity between the arts and theology is evident, there is not always a clear path to a rewarding union. This project aims to demonstrate that the integration of arts has the potential to activate members' leadership qualities and transform the life of the church. I base my aim on the conviction that there is an undiscovered potential incorporated in the relation between arts and spirituality.

The arts have always been a part of religious life. It is a well known phenomenon that the unique language of the arts creates a medium for better understanding a variety of ways people experience God's presence in the world. It is also widely recognized that the theological doctrines of the Christian faith imbedded in the language of music, dance, painting, architecture, cinema, and other kinds of arts express Christian values explicitly. This expression has its own language that transcends verbal, cultural, and national barriers.

However, there are more undiscovered aspects in the receptivity between religious and aesthetic experiences that should be acknowledged and theologically explained. An aesthetic experience in the religious context transcends its usual sphere of interest. In the life of faith the beauty of the artistic forms become only part of the

theological event that integrates God, the believer, and the believer's faith. This perspective prevents the arts from becoming self-contained, letting arts become an "embodiment" of the believer's faith.¹¹ In this integrated form arts and theology serve one purpose of helping believers to express themselves in relation to God.

In this integrated form some of the undiscovered potentials incorporated in the receptivity between the arts and theology reveal themselves. While leading the arts program at the Old West Church in Boston I become aware that the integration of arts into the life of the church can bring increased participation and lead the community to a holistic transformation.¹² In this dissertation, I provide a biblical, conceptual, and practical framework for this phenomenon. In my explanation I rely on knowledge that has been already accumulated in the area of correlation between arts and theology, and also extend it to embrace a new perspective. This new perspective demonstrates how the dynamics of God's grace and the human response to it by means of arts may develop leadership qualities and transform the life of the Christian church.

Literature Review

The importance of arts integration into the life of the religious communities has become the center of attention for many modern theologians. There are copious forms of literature that reveal deep interest in the potential roles of arts in the life of faith. The

¹¹ Howard W. Stone, *The Word of God and Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1988), 139. The concept of "embodiment" comes from the aforementioned book, in which Stone demonstrates that the word of God contextualized by the spirituality of the arts acquires a more pronounced and intense ability to communicate. In this dissertation the term "embodiment" carries the same meaning with regard to the artistic expression of the believer's faith.

¹² This vision is based on my personal experience as full participant observer in the arts program.

existing body of the literature reflects the presence of the arts in the religious communities from different perspectives, which I arrange in the following clusters: Arts and Theology; Arts and Theological Aesthetics; Arts and the Church.

Arts and Theology

The first cluster of the literature considers the relationships between theology and the arts in the process of theological education and church development. It looks at possibilities of integrating the arts into religious studies and reflects on the potential of arts for spiritual development. This theme is prominent in the recently published anthology of essays *Arts, Creativity, and the Sacred* edited by Diane Apostolos-Cappadona,¹³ and *Arts as Religious Studies* edited by Doug Adams and Diana Apostolos-Cappadona.¹⁴

Art, Creativity, and the Sacred is an anthology in religion and art. Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, the editor of this book, presents to the reader a collection of essays written by specialists in religion and art. The list of contributors includes artists, art historians, historians of religion, philosophers, and theologians. The editor gathers authors from a diversity of specializations in order to bring to light intrinsic and implicit attribute of spirituality of the art. There is only one aspect that unites them in their diversity: their commitment to understanding spiritual qualities of art.

¹³ Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, ed., *Arts, Creativity, and the Sacred: An Anthology in Religion and Arts* (New York: Continuum, 1995).

¹⁴ Doug Adams and Diana Apostolos-Cappadona eds., *Arts as Religious Studies* (New York: Crossroad, 1987).

This collection of essays demonstrates multiple visions on the relations between religion and art. The methodological and thematic variety of the essays presents a panoramic view on the subject giving opportunity to grasp the essence of the theme. The authors approach their task with integrity and creativity expressing interest for works of art and the religious impulse incarnated in them. In the majority of essays authors share their individual understanding of the spirituality of arts leaving space for other interpretations. This approach to the subject allows independence of opinions and offers insight on the phenomenon of human experience.

Art, Creativity, and the Sacred approaches the subject of religion and art from five perspectives. The first is introduced in part I – *Artists: The Spiritual Dimensions*. This part reflects on spiritual potentiality of art from an artist's position. It includes four essays where authors demonstrate that artistic forms are products of artists' experience and artists' capacity to create. Spirituality as a part of life finds its expression through the creative personality of the artist. This is a process that is characterized by great vitality since life is complex and subject to change. Artists stand before questions: How to express in art the deepest self and the totality of life including religious aspects of life? At the same time observers of art spend hours in contemplation trying to discern: What is the message that artists want us to understand in their work? Is it only about artists' vision of this reality or is there something more to it? Wassily Kandinsky, Cecilia Davis Cunningham, Karen Laub-Novak, Stephen De Staebler, and Diane Apostolos-Cappadona offer interpretations of their understanding of the presence of spirituality in art.

This dissertation methodologically explores the aforementioned questions regarding spirituality of arts. By analyzing integral concept, arts as an expression of the believers' faith, the dissertation presents the artistic expression of faith as a complex phenomenon. This phenomenon embraces God's grace, believers' faith, and the expression of faith in art as a theo-aesthetic event.

The second part, *Art Historians: The Religious in Art*, presents reflections on the role of religious impulse in the artistic process. Essays devoted to this theme demonstrate spiritual and theological possibilities that are present in the process of creation. Authors Leo Steinberg and Charles Scribner compel us to verify our own understanding of *Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci and *Last Supper* by Caravaggio by discussing their vision of these famous artworks. In *Nationalist Garden and the Holy Book*, Barbara Novak examines symbolic value of the landscape in American art in the nineteenth century. The theme of American art development continues Joshua Taylor. He examines process of change in understanding of the religious art from iconographic to symbolic. This part of the book concludes by Jane Dillenberg's *Abraham and Isaac* essay on George Segal's understanding of the spiritual through sculptured forms.

Part III of this book talks about connections between religion and art in world religions. Indian traditions of images; foundations of the relationships between art and religion in Japan; symbolism in religious art and its role in Islamic art; and survey on art from the ancient Judaic tradition to the contemporary time gives reader multicolored palette of ties relating art and religion in the variety of world religions.

In order to convey philosophical and theological dimensions of the subject, the editor includes essays of Paul Tillich, John Dillenberg, Lagdon B. Gilkey and others philosophers and theologians on such topics as the experiential ground of art in our contemporary world, methodological and theological approach to art, philosophical examination of the interrelation between art and religion. Linguistically and methodologically this part of the book gives opportunity to learn about the affinity between art and religion from the perspective of theology and philosophy.

This anthology concludes with the presentation of the interdisciplinary vision on the subject of art and religion. In the final part of this book John W. Dixon, Jr., Melinda Wortz, Roger Wedell, and Doug Adams approach the theme of spirituality in art from the perspective of integrity. In this part of the book, artist, artistic creation, complexity of modern life and religious aspects are considered from the interdisciplinary angle.

Arts as Religious Studies edited by Doug Adams and Diana Apostolos-Cappadona approaches spirituality of the arts and religion by academically integrating the visual arts into religious studies. The book presents different methodological approaches to the primacy of arts for religious studies, and demonstrates a creative way of incorporating visual arts as a central point for religious teaching and research. The volume includes three parts: Visual Arts in Judaism, Visual Arts in Christianity, and Visual Arts in Religious Praxis. The third part of this book presents a special course on *Aesthetic Theology*. This course illustrates the role of visual art in the areas of social justice, pastoral counseling, and religious education. It is designed as a way to investigate the relationship between the arts and religion. In general this course seeks to establish the

connections between the arts and theology. It looks to find answers to the questions of whether art is a form of theology and in what ways employing the arts can be “a method of theologizing.”¹⁵

One part of this *Aesthetic Theology* course includes a study of hermeneutical issues raised through the book *Image as Insight*, written by Margaret R. Miles. Another part provides the structure for a historical examination of the interrelation of arts and theology by examining the books *Arts and Ideas* by William Fleming and *Arts, Creativity, and the Sacred*, edited by Diane Appostolos-Cappadona. Lastly, *Aesthetic Theology* course includes Susanne Langer’s book *Feeling and Form* that studies how individual art forms may serve as a way for theologizing.

Sounding the Depth edited by Jeremy Begbie is another recently published volume on the subject of arts and theology. This book reflects on the outcomes of an international festival in Cambridge. The festival was held in 2000 and culminated the *Theology Through the Arts* project, which brought together artists and theologians in a creative process of understanding of arts as a part of the theological enterprise. *Sounding the Depth* reflects on the collaborative process of the artists and theologians engaged in the discourse on the subject of arts as an enrichment of theological practice.

The common theme of the four essays that constitute the body of this volume – *Parthenogenesis, Till Kingdom Come, The Way of Life, and Easter Oratorio* – demonstrate that theology needs arts in order to find wisdom in the circumstances of human life. All of the essays consider particular art forms such as musical theater,

¹⁵ Doug Adams and Diana Appostolos-Cappadona eds., 163.

theater, sculpture, music, and poetry as contextual grounds for theologizing. The diversity of the participants' approaches does not separate them, but brings participants to a common vision of arts as "vehicles" that help to discover theological wisdom, which opens for us "meaning that we had not suspected."¹⁶

The research project *Theology Through the Arts* demonstrates that theology and arts are "pressed" to each other because of the surrounding culture, which communicates by means of electronic media.¹⁷ This kind of communication generates many new forms of art, and results in the creation of an artistic or aesthetic "post-modern ethos," which is part of our reality.

Another reason for the arts and theology engagement is the "damaging intellectualism" in modern Western theology, which tends to separate theology from people's lives. The participants of the project argue that the integrative power of arts may serve as a cure for these kinds of "dichotomies," reuniting theology with human "bodies, wills, [and] emotional life."¹⁸

One more reason why arts and theology should find place for interactions is found in arts' ability to give "lay" theologians the "natural language" for theologizing.¹⁹ In other words, through the language of arts lay persons might find ways to articulate their theological perspectives without being specifically "professionalized" in the area of

¹⁶ Jeremy Begbie ed., *Sounding the Depth* (London: SCM Press, 2002), 1-3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

theology.²⁰ This argument is relevant to the goal of this dissertation, which aims to demonstrate that arts are instrumental for lay leadership formation and overall church transformation. One may see how the theme of leadership development resonates with the *Theology Through the Arts* project's argument concerning the ability of art to provide an avenue for the spiritual.

There is another important aspect in *Sounding the Depth* that is specifically related to the theme of this dissertation. It is the relational aspect of life. In their essay *The Way of Life*, Alistar McFadyen and John Inge write about the dynamic of an “ongoing relationship,” which through the “agency of the Spirit” allows us to experience faith each time anew depending on our concrete historical circumstances.²¹ This theme of an ongoing relationship will be discussed further in this dissertation especially with regards to the subject of the process of church transformation. Summarizing reasons for the arts and theology being together, Jeremy Begbie writes that the very “subject-matter” of theology invites artists to help theology to be “more appropriate,” “more faithful,” and “more closely to God’s truth.”²²

Another volume *Art and Religion as Communication* edited by James Waddell and F.W. Dillistone is a collection of essays that attempts to understand religion and art as communication. The essays demonstrate that art and religion are interrelated without reducing the distinctiveness of both. In their essays, the authors propose that art and

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 157.

²² Ibid., 9.

religion have common ground as a “processes of the constructive imagination.”²³ This constructive imagination allows us to communicate the experience of art and theology in their own terms and in their specific languages. It is important that both, artistic and theological languages are functional for the understanding of experience itself.

The wide spectrum of the themes presented in this book explores art and theology from different angles. For example, “In The Way into Matter” John W. Dixon reflects on arts as a way to self-consciousness, which allows us to understand not only who we are, but also to grasp the meaning of our experiences. As another example may serve E. J. Tinsley’s “The Incarnation, Art, and the Communication of the Gospel,” that describes Jesus as a prophet of “indirect communication.”²⁴ Tinsley explores the analogy between art form and the incarnation of Jesus and then the analogy of art and Jesus’ mission. This analogical approach to the life of Jesus is an important venue for believers, who are inspired to follow the example of Christ.

Perhaps, the most relevant essay in connection with the theme of this dissertation is “The Relationship Between Form and Content: Medium and Message in Christian Communication” by F. W. Dillinstone. In this essay the author argues that experience is a complex phenomenon and that the understanding of this phenomenon should not be limited or stigmatized. For example, the author proposes the relationship between the categories of “form and content” as a category that illustrates the cultural situations of ancient Greece. Then, the author considers the relationship between the “medium and

²³ James Waddell and F. W. Dillistone eds., *Art and Religion as Communication* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974), Introduction.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

message” and admits that they are the most appropriate categories for the apocalyptic age. Finally, Dillinstone analyzes Christian ethics, liturgy, and doctrine and argues that in order to find the best categories for Christian communication, theologians and the artists should explore the particularity of the given context.

Dillinstone’s search for the relevant categories in the process of Christian communication resonates with the subject of faith’s communication by means of arts considered in chapter two of this dissertation. By utilizing the aesthetical concepts of “form” and “splendor” presented in Hans Urs von Balthasar’s *The Glory of the Lord, A Theological Aesthetics* this dissertation provides a conceptual framework for the arts as an “embodiment” of the Christian faith.²⁵

Another volume that considers subject of interconnectedness between art and theology *Translucence: Religion, the Arts, and Imagination* edited by Carol Gilbertson and Gregg Mulenburg, is an outcome of a seminar at Harvard University in 2001. The seminar, organized by Lutheran Academy of Scholars, comprised clergy, theologians, visual artists, musicians, poets, scholars of literature, philosophy, art. At the center of this inter-disciplinary discourse was arts and theology.

Translucence presents the reflections of the seminar participants in the form of essays. Though not all of the seminar’s participants were Lutherans, in many cases the essays are contextualized in the frame of Lutheran theology. The central theme of the essays is the word and the metaphor *Translucence*. Curtis L. Thompson, the author of the

²⁵ Stone, 139.

“Interpreting God’s Translucent World” identifies translucence as a “shining through.”²⁶ According to Thompson this word proposes the capacity of the “natural and human worlds to allow God’s light to shine through, while that which shines through can be called *glory*.”²⁷

While the essays touch different aspects of the religious life, such as a Holy Communion, interpretation of the Scripture, and the meaning of the religious music, almost all of the themes in this volume revolve around the translucent quality of arts. In other words, the general thought of the book is that arts in the context of the Christian faith allow believers to experience the light of God’s presence. At the same time the book affirms that each of the artistic mediums is not transparent. Art is always characterized by “partial obscurity,” which means that they always leave place for both – “God’s paradoxical disclosure and concealment.”²⁸

This dissertation resonates with the general observations of this book regarding the complexity of the interconnection between arts and theology. It approaches the integration of arts and theology from the point of view of theological aesthetics demonstrating the complexity of the theo-aesthetic experience in the process of faith communication by means of artistic forms.

This dissertation takes an interdisciplinary angle on the role of arts in the religious life of the Christian church. It is a dialogue between biblical, theological, and practical

²⁶ Carol Gilbertson and Gregg Muilenburg eds., *Translucence: Religion, the Arts, and Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 3.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., vi.

dimensions of the arts as a means for the expression of the Christian faith. This dialogue helps to explicate the complex meaning of beauty, in which God, the believer, and the believers' artistic faith expression united in one theo-aesthetic event.

Arts and Theological Aesthetic

The second cluster of the literature devoted to the role of arts in the life of faith focuses more directly on theological aesthetics. It explores the place of beauty in the life of the Church. *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics* by Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Spirit and Beauty* by Patrick Sherry, *Faith and Beauty: A Theological Aesthetic* by Edward Farley, and *Arts, Theology, and the Church: New Intersections*, edited by Kimberly Vrudny and Wilson Yates are volumes that present an extensive exploration of beauty and articulate its place in Christian theology.

Von Balthasar, in *The Glory of the Lord*, presents theological aesthetics as an “attempt to develop a Christian theology in the light of the third transcendental” or, to put it in other words, “to compliment the vision of the true and the good with that of the beautiful.”²⁹ This book expresses von Balthasar’s desire to bring back the beautiful, and therefore, the glory of God. At the center of his perception of beauty is Jesus Christ as the Crucified One. The Cross reveals the glory of God in Christ. The revelation of God’s glory in the Cross is the demonstration of God’s love for all sinners. God is Love

²⁹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord. A Theological Aesthetics*, 2nd ed., ed. John Riches, trans. Andrew Louth, John Saward, Martin Simon and Rowan Williams (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), Foreword.

therefore the glorification of God is the glorification of Love. Von Balthasar indicates that the work of uncovering the beauty of faith is an intricate process.

Scholars disagree about the nature of beauty. But the impossibility of the rationalization of beauty by philosophers does not negate beauty's presence. Humanity is still in search for the clearly stated, logically polished, and rationally presented explanation of beauty and its influence. The search has occupied the minds of the most brilliant thinkers of all eras. The diligent work of the best intellectuals has not accomplished the task, but this has not stopped the presence of beauty in this world or the human ability to perceive it. Von Balthasar's observation is significant in this regard: "All those who have been once affected by the worldly beauty of either nature, or of a person's life, or of art, will surely not insist that they have no genuine idea of what beauty is." Perhaps one explanation why beauty without an official logical status continues its triumphant existence in this world, is the fact that "The beautiful brings with it a self-evidence that en-lightens without mediation."³⁰ In *The Glory of the Lord*, von Balthasar makes a distinction between the common perceptions of beauty as a pretty and a "mere appearance." In von Balthasar's view this approach seems to be more suitable since it allows "more easily to dispose of it." However, the distortion of humanity's vision of beauty leads humans to incapability to pray and to love.³¹

It is clear that the beauty of the Christian faith, with the crucifixion as the epitome of beauty, looks implausible for scholars. Therefore, von Balthasar advocates that

³⁰ Von Balthasar, 37.

³¹ Ibid., 18.

revelation is able to transform aesthetical concepts. The true meaning of the depth of revelation might be seen only by the eyes of the Christian's faith. This faith first learns how to read the natural world's language of forms through the ability to perceive the formal quality of revelation by "the aid of grace and its illumination." And later the "eyes of faith recognize how to interpret this revelation."³² The true form of Christ-crucified can be perceived and understood only by the eyes of the Christian faith. Therefore, the glory of God's love in the form of Christ Crucified may be discerned only by the eyes of Christian believers.

Spirit and Beauty written by Patrick Sherry brings together two areas of Christianity – the theology of the Holy Spirit and theological aesthetics.³³ Sherry concentrates on the role of the Holy Spirit and examines the connections between the Holy Spirit and beauty by relating them to the topics of divine glory and the nature of inspiration. This book is ecumenically oriented. It integrates perspectives of different ecclesiastical and intellectual backgrounds by representing views on the given area articulated in the works of St. Irenaeus, St. Clement of Alexandria, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Sergei Bulgakov, and von Balthasar. In *Spirit and Beauty*, Patrick Sherry makes three interdependent propositions.

First, he suggests that the Holy Spirit as one of the hypostases of the Trinity through the power of God is involved in the process of the final transfiguration and glorification of all things. Second, he suggests that the Holy Spirit will have a special

³² Ibid., 29.

³³ Patrick Sherry, *Spirit and Beauty* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1992).

affinity in this process because of the Holy Spirit's particular connection with beauty. Finally, summarizing previously mentioned two propositions; Sherry argues that in anticipation of the final transfiguration and glorification of all things the Holy Spirit is acting in creating and inspiring earthly beauty.³⁴

Sherry's central argument is that God through God's Spirit creates beauty, which foreshadows the kingdom of God. Sherry develops this thesis by discussing two ways in which God is communicating God's beauty to the world for this purpose. The first way is through the creation of natural beauty and the second is through the inspiration of artistic beauty. Sherry states that nature and art reflects God's glory and reveals to us God's beauty.

Sherry states that for theology the ascription of beauty to virtues and to intellectual spheres has an importance in the assertion of beauty as an immaterial realm. He notes that Christian theologians paid more attention to moral beauty than to intellectual. They saw moral beauty as a kind of likeness to God. For example, St. Cyril of Alexandria says that the power of the Holy Spirit perfects us in the image of the Creator in any form of virtue. Some theologians, following Wisdom 8:2, expanded the idea by speaking of the beauty of wisdom. Some, like Jonathan Edwards, were speaking about the beauty of holiness: "Holiness is in a peculiar manner the beauty of the divine nature."

A significant part of *Spirit and Beauty* is devoted to the inquiry of divine beauty and aesthetic concepts relevant to it. One of them is the relationship between aesthetic

³⁴ Ibid., 154.

qualities and divine perfection. According to Sherry, some writers created a parallel between aesthetic and spiritual beauty. For example, Alexander of Hales followed St. Augustine in defining beauty in terms of measure, form, and order: “just as beauty of body consists in the congruence of the arrangements of parts, so, too, the beauty of the soul derives from the harmony of energies and the ordering of powers.” The Christian tradition, following Plato, enlarged the concept of beauty in two ways: by including moral, spiritual, and intellectual beauty, and by appealing to some form of supra-mundane beauty.³⁵

Faith and Beauty: A Theological Aesthetic written by Edward Farley is another exposition on beauty.³⁶ Despite the widespread view that “beauty is its own excuse for being,” the author examines beauty from different perspectives in order to give beauty its place in the world of faith.³⁷ Farley opens his study with ancient Greek cosmogonies that considered “being” as appearing out of chaos and preserving a minimum of order, stability, and harmony. Later this motive of harmony and order finds its place in the “great theory of the beauty” that accepted the “harmony of the parts to a whole” as an index that constitutes the distinctive pleasure of beauty.³⁸

Continuing his search for the answers of how and why theology finds its way to beauty, Farley uses various thinkers. He indicates that for Plato, “to *be* is to be beautiful.”

³⁵ Ibid., 35.

³⁶ Edward Farley, *Faith and Beauty* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing), 2001.

³⁷ Ibid., 27.

³⁸ Ibid., 17.

However, *being* for Plato is a combination of separate forms ordered by God. For Plotinus beauty is not an order or pattern. For him it is an “enlivened intelligibility” that has its origins “beyond-being or One.”³⁹ The medieval theologians transfer this great theory of beauty into a Christian metaphysics: the world is seen as a struggle between chaos and order, and beauty as a form is located eternally in the mind and vision of God. Thomas Aquinas placed the experience of beauty in the *habitus* of knowledge. He asserted that human knowledge is driven by desire for the real and the good. Nothing can be without proportions or unity. An entity has to have integrity in order to be itself.

For Aquinas, beauty is the “resplendence of form” that is pleasing representation of proportions and integrity.⁴⁰ Eighteenth century thinkers locate beauty not in the objective pattern as did classical Hellenistic theory but in sensations. This novelty relocated beauty from the exterior world to an interior disposition and engaged taste as a way to prevent total subjectification of beauty. With time, taste became relativized and beauty became an aspect of human perception and the multiplicity of human culture. The author indicates that it was imperative to find out what beauty is and where it should be found.⁴¹

Farley notes that New England clergyman Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) resituated beauty from pure sensation into the area of imagination and discernment. For Edwards, the sensation of beauty is the felt discernment or acumen of a certain idea.

³⁹ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 22.

⁴¹ Ibid., 38.

Beauty's ground is located in "intelligent beings," "mind," and the affections of the heart.⁴² Primarily, beauty is true virtue, the benevolence of a generous heart that has the ability to discern beyond subjectivity and has the capacity for self-transcendence. For Edwards, beauty is the consent and harmony of the heart to all being, and a mode of being with all being. This benevolence of the heart is drawn to the primordial benevolence of God. Edwards's conception of beauty's experience demonstrates that beauty calls human beings out of immanence into self-transcendence.⁴³

Human self-transcendence in relation to beauty will appear later in Kierkegaard's vision of the self-transcendence as a passionate subjectivity and passionate responsibility. Edmund Husserl's statement that the human being does not determine the world "out of itself" also provides insight into self-transcendence as intentional meaning. The human being loses autonomy when called out of its immanence by things that refuse to comply with human will.⁴⁴ Another example of self-transcendence as radical responsibility is found in Emmanuel Levinas's theory about human immanence. This theory demonstrates that it is the inability to move outside of its own self-interest that reduces the human's ability to participate in the self-reality of others and experience responsibility for others.

Farley claims that in twentieth-century philosophy we observe a reinstatement of the "Great Theory" based on a different metaphysics. Whitehead's process metaphysics combined pre-Hellenic theogonies with Hellenic Platonism. He combined the theory of

⁴² Ibid., 44.

⁴³ Ibid., 52.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 54.

objective beauty (proportion, symmetry) and experience (pleasure, delight). Whitehead postulates an experience that he describes as a temporal flow made up of moments or occasions. Experience is a synthesis of subjective forms or inner moods and perceived information. Through experience, the chaos of the world and the subject come to the resolution that results in the sense of pleasure and satisfaction. Beauty is the harmonious synthesis of oppositions (“Great Theory”) and the intense quality of experience that accompanies it.

Summarizing Farley’s study, it is helpful to underline the most important proposals of *Faith and Beauty*. This dissertation acknowledges Farley’s proposition that beauty as being, sensibility, self-transcendence, and benevolence, helps theology to understand and articulate how beauty is present in the life of faith. The dissertation also integrates another insight from Farley arguing that faith as individual and social reality is the result of divine redemptive activity.⁴⁵

Another volume devoted to theological aesthetics is a recently published book *Arts, Theology, and the Church: New Intersections*, edited by Kimberly Vrudny and Wilson Yates.⁴⁶ This book presents a collection of essays written by fourteen scholars who were a part of the National Consultation on the Theology and Arts sponsored by United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. These studies were motivated by an

⁴⁵ Ibid., 83.

⁴⁶ Kimberly Vrudny and Wilson Yates eds., *Arts, Theology and the Church: New Intersections* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2005).

increasing interest in the relationship between theology and the arts apropos to the process of theological education and the church development.

In these essays, scholars offer their insights on theories regarding the relationship of beauty to holiness and the connection between aesthetics and religious experience. They also discuss issues of interpretation regarding the importance of arts in the history of Christianity, and the practical contribution of arts to the task of theological reflection in the life of the church and its ministry. The main goal of the book is to discover “where we are on this journey of understanding” the relationship between the arts, theology, and the religious life and to find out “the rich store of discovery that is possible within this new field of theology and arts.”⁴⁷

Arts and the Church

This dissertation relies on the literature devoted to the role of arts in the life of the religious communities. Two clusters of the literature described above – Arts and Theology, Arts and Theological Aesthetics – present the theoretical framework for this project. The third cluster, Arts and the Church, is particularly important for the purpose of this dissertation in its practical approach to questions of the arts’ influences on leadership formation and church transformation. For example, the recently published books *Taking It to the Streets: Using the Arts to Transform Your Community* by J.Nathan Corbit and Vivian Nix-Early, *The Word of God and Pastoral Care* by Howard W. Stone,

⁴⁷ Ibid., viii.

All in Sync: How Music and Art are Revitalizing American Religion by Robert Wuthnow, and *Art and Worship: A Vital Connection* by Janet R. Walton bring new perspectives on the transformative potential of arts.

In *Taking It to the Streets*, Corbit and Nix-Early propose a new paradigm for the arts in the life of the religious communities. This paradigm includes not only *vertical* theology of arts that emphasizes arts as a means to praise God, but also *horizontal* theology. Complimentary to the accepted vision of vertical theology, horizontal theology considers arts as a means to love God, and also as a means to love our neighbors.⁴⁸ Horizontal theology embraces the new concept that the arts are a medium for transformation and renewal of individuals and communities.

Corbit and Nix-Early also consider the arts as a means of redemptive transformation that leads to both personal empowerment and responsibility, and communal and societal transformation.⁴⁹ The authors indicate that in the course of transformation people experience the following stages:

1. *Critical Awareness*, when people attain critical consciousness of a problem or issue.
2. *Working Out*, when through the different strategies the problem finds its solution.

⁴⁸ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 20.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

3. *Celebration*, when the completion of the problem and its resolution is celebrated as a way of recognition of an achievement and at the same time as a beginning of a new stage in a “progressive spiral of transformation.”⁵⁰

They argue that the arts as “expression of God’s creativity” are the medium to “experience the very nature of God.”⁵¹ This new approach to the role of arts in the life of faith accentuates the communal experience of being a body of Christ united by the Holy Spirit and common vision.

Corbit’s and Nix-Early’s emphasis on arts as a way to experience God’s presence in human lives resonates with Howard W. Stone’s vision of arts as a way of broadening people’s understanding of the Gospel. In his book *The Word of God*, Stone demonstrates that the word of God contextualized by the spirituality of the arts acquires a more pronounced and intense ability to communicate. In this pronounced and intense form, God’s word is revealed in new ways that promote transformation of the spiritual life of individuals and their church. Stone makes an important point that the way to broaden pastoral experience is “to recall that the Spirit’s revelation occurs as the word of God [has been] embodied.”⁵²

Stone indicates that God is revealed in both spoken and visible forms: “The word of God is expressed both verbally (in preaching, teaching, scripture, reading, and other written or spoken sharing of the message of Christ) and visibly (in sacraments, an icon,

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 79.

⁵² Ibid., 139.

Brahms's Requiem, an embrace, a listening ear, a warm smile, the sign of the cross, a meal brought to the mourners' home, one's ministry of presence)."⁵³ Stone demonstrates that the "embodiment" of the word of God through the visible, audible, and sensible forms of arts highlights the transcendent and transforming dimensions of the Gospel in a new way that allows members of the church to broaden their understanding of the Gospel.⁵⁴

Robert Wuthnow in *All in Sync* expresses in a manner similar to Stone that "music and poetry, painting and sculpture, drama and dance play powerful roles in many Americans' spiritual journeys."⁵⁵ He explains this phenomenon by describing the affinities between the arts and spirituality that "spark the religious imagination and enrich personal experiences of the sacred."⁵⁶ These experiences "draw people closer to God, often by expressing what cannot be put into words."⁵⁷ Wuthnow supports this statement with a study that involved more than 400 in-depth interviews and a representative national survey of the U.S. population.

In *Art and Worship* Janet R. Walton draws readers' attention to the question of relevancy in expressing the Christian faith. In other words, the author argues that in the context of worship, faith should be communicated in the way that would allow people to

⁵³ Stone, 139.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁵⁵ Robert Wuthnow, *All in Sync: How Music and Art Are Revitalizing American Religion* (London, England: University of California Press, 2003), xiv.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

connect this communication with the realities of their lives. The author sees this possibility in the skillful incorporation of the artistic forms. Walton argues that art “can express our deepest yearnings and feelings in forms with which we can identify.”⁵⁸

By presenting art in the worshiping communities of Dura-Europos (240 C.E.-256 C.E.) and Saint-Denis (1122-1151), Walton establishes two approaches to the experience of art in the context of the Christian life. For example, art as an active expression of divine/human interaction of the Durene community presumed experiences “of confrontation, of wonder, as well as sustenance.”⁵⁹ Art’s function in the community of Saint-Denis shifted and mostly “represented the ‘otherness’” of God.⁶⁰ The architecture of the building, the theology, and the art of Saint-Denis worked together “in perfect partnership” to embody the mystery of God. They accentuated the role of professional clergy who “became actors in a staged performance.”⁶¹

Describing the role of art in the contemporary church, Walton writes that the church and artists “share in common search for ways to speak to truth” and to live authentically⁶². They both look for ways to enrich the religious experience of the believers. Walton’s argument resonates with the exploration of this dissertation into the role of the arts in the life of the Christian community.

⁵⁸ Janet R. Walton, *Art and Worship: A Vital Connection* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1988), 15.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 29-30

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 112.

The “embodiment” of the word of God through visible, audible, and sensible forms highlights the Gospel in a new way that allows members of the church to broaden their understanding of God’s presence in their lives, and leads to the realization of their intrinsic potential for creativity. The awareness of the intrinsic beauty discovered in the process of “embodiment” of the word of God through the artistic forms speaks to Christians a “new incarnation of the word” that expands their vision of God’s transforming grace in their lives.⁶³

Sources of Study

By synthesizing Stone’s, Wuthnow’s, Corbit’s, and Nix-Early’s theories, this dissertation intends to demonstrate that arts have a potential to create an environment that activates church members and leads community to a holistic transformation. An arts program at the Old West Church in Boston will serve as a medium for this practical study. During my internship at the Old West Church I developed and integrated an arts program into the religious life of this community. I also learned about the history of this church and became friendly with the members of the congregation. This fact created a valuable platform for the practical completion of this project. The arts program is designed to create space for exploration of how the development of the artistic gifts can lead Christians to the discovery of their intrinsic potential and talents.

The goal of the arts program is to provide a supportive place for holistic transformation through the spirituality of arts. This program incorporates individual and

⁶³ Stone, 58.

group activities. It invites each member of the Old West Church to explore their potential talents and ways of their expression. The arts program offers a supportive environment for people to find fellowship and spiritual nourishment through arts as a means of discovering their intrinsic gifts. Reconnection with music, visual arts, poetry, and other kind of arts persuades members of the Old West Church to discover their potential for leadership and creativity. Through individual work experience and participation in the group activities, members of the Old West are invited to contemplate spirituality of arts and the mystery of God's creation.

Method of Investigation

The purpose of this dissertation is to evaluate the arts program at the Old West Church in Boston. This evaluation gathers findings about the arts program's effectiveness in the area of leadership formation and church transformation. It also makes proposals for the other churches interested in designing and implementing similar programs as part of their ministry. This dissertation synthesizes results of the evaluation survey with a holistic-inductive design of inquiry by implementing following steps of analysis:⁶⁴

- Holistic approach to the evaluation of the arts program. This means that analysis will include observation, description, and collective information from the members of the Old West Church. By approaching the evaluation of the arts

⁶⁴ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (Newbury Park, California: Sage Publication, 1990), 40. According to Patton *Inductive Analysis* means "Immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover important categories, dimensions, and interrelationships; begin by exploring genuinely open questions rather than testing theoretically derived (deductive) hypotheses." The term *Holistic* indicates perspective in which "the *whole* phenomenon under study is understood as a complex system that is more than the sum of its parts; focus on complex interdependencies not meaningfully reduced to a few discrete variables and linear, cause-effect relationships."

program holistically, this dissertation brings together multiple perspectives on the role of arts in the life of the religious community.

- Method of a full participant observation in the arts program and its evaluation process. All participants of the arts program, as well as members of the church who have not participated in the program, was informed that an evaluation of the program has begun. Observations were guided by the holistic approach, named above, with the broad focus on the entire arts program. In this process I participated as a leader, participant, and observer of the arts program.
- An evaluation survey questionnaire for gathering information about the program's influence on individual participants in arts program.
- An analysis of the role of arts program in the life of the church. An analysis includes observation, description, and evaluation survey's information.

This dissertation will also employ historical and constructive methods of investigation into the biblical and theological foundations for an understanding of the role of arts in the life of the church. Relying on the analysis, conclusions, and insights from the arts program evaluation some major decisions, or proposals about the effectiveness and potential of the arts program will be made.

Throughout its four parts, this dissertation will develop as follows:

- Chapter one outlines the problem and its setting. This includes a statement of the problem, background of the problem, significance of study, literature review, sources of study, definitions of terms, and limitations.

- Chapter two presents biblical and theological reflections of aesthetics. By analyzing examples of arts presence in selected texts of the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures, this chapter demonstrates the complex meaning of beauty in the life of faith. The chapter aims to present the biblical and theological accounts of aesthetics germane to the arts as an expression of faith.
- Chapter three presents findings of the research that evaluates the arts program's efficiency in the area of leadership development.
- Chapter four evaluates the arts program's role in the process of the ecclesial transformation.
- Chapter five draws conclusions from the theoretical and practical findings of the previous chapters of this dissertation. Based on these findings, this chapter makes proposals about the effectiveness and potential of the arts program for leadership formation and church transformation.

This dissertation will move beyond the established knowledge of the role of arts in the life of faith by investigating how arts can be instrumental in the process of leadership formation and church transformation. By synthesizing von Balthasar's theological aesthetic, and Stone's, Corbit's, and Nix-Early's theories, this dissertation will demonstrate that arts have the potential to create an environment that motivates church members and creates a paradigm for enhanced discernment of God's grace and transforming presence in the world. The evaluation of the arts program will analyze the ways the spirited process of arts integration generates increased participation and

leadership excellence of the members in the church resulting in overall community transformation.

Definitions

Arts. According to Vivian Nix-Early, the expressive arts are defined as “all forms of expressive and aesthetic culture used within formal (that is, concerts, worship services, museums, and galleries – often called the fine arts) and informal (street, home, community – often called the community arts) contexts.”⁶⁵ Also, in this dissertation the arts’ functions are weighted in “service to others, versus performance.”⁶⁶

Theologically, arts are perceived as an expression “of the indwelling of God’s creative spirit in [God’s] creation,” that provides a “divine invitation to all of [God’s] creation for reconciliation and redemption.”⁶⁷ This dissertation defines arts as a resource “in service to God and [God’s] creation.”⁶⁸

Transformation. In this dissertation, transformation is defined as an “intentional process of bringing about change in the world – a change in which people, communities, and their systems are economically, socially, politically, and spiritually renewed, given new vision and power of capacity to live in harmony with God, themselves, one another,

⁶⁵ Vivian Nix-Early, 44.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 45.

and their environment.”⁶⁹ Vivian Nix-Early indicates three basic levels of social change or transformation: 1. personal empowerment and responsibility; 2. community transformation and renewal; and 3. societal transformation.⁷⁰

Holistic. By the term “holistic” this dissertation indicates that transformation takes place within all aspects of personal and community life including “psychological, physical, spiritual, economic, political, and sociocultural dimensions of life.”⁷¹

Leadership formation. Leadership formation will be considered in the context of J.Nathan Corbit and Vivian Nix-Early’s theory that presents arts as a means of redemptive transformation. In the course of transformation people experience the following stages: 1. *Critical Awareness*, when people attain critical consciousness of a problem or issue; 2. *Working Out*, when through the different strategies the problem finds its solution; 3. *Celebration*, when the completion of the problem and its resolution is celebrated as a way to recognize an achievement and at the same time to begin a new stage in a “progressive spiral of transformation.”⁷² The dynamics of this concept integrate personal empowerment, self-awareness, and self-expression that identify the means for leadership formation.

Embodiment. This concept is presented in Howard W. Stone’s theory of the broadening of pastoral experience. In *The Word of God*, Stone indicates that the “Spirit’s

⁶⁹ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 52.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 24.

⁷¹ Ibid., 53.

⁷² Ibid, 24.

revelation occurs as the word of God is embodied.”⁷³ He indicates that God is revealed in both spoken and visible forms: “The word of God is expressed both verbally (in preaching, teaching, scripture, reading, and other written or spoken sharing of the message of Christ) and visibly (in sacraments, an icon, Brahms’s Requiem, an embrace, a listening ear, a warm smile, the sign of the cross, a meal brought to the mourners’ home, one’s ministry of presence).”⁷⁴ Stone demonstrates that the “embodiment” of the word of God through the visible, audible, and sensible forms of arts highlights the transcendent and transforming dimensions of the Gospel in a new way that allows members of the church to broaden their understanding of the Gospel.⁷⁵

Aesthetics. This study relies on Farley’s use of aesthetics as a theory “which treats of that which is perceived (as true) and more precisely that which is *perceived as beautiful*.”⁷⁶

Theological Aesthetics. Theological aesthetic is a wonderful, recent addition to theology. Contemporary theologian Richard Viladesau in his *Theology and the Arts* writes that “the methodologically conscious and purposeful introduction of aesthetical concepts into the formal study of theology is a fairly recent phenomenon.”⁷⁷ He defines theological aesthetics in general as the study of beauty and arts in the light of God and

⁷³ Stone, 139.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 58.

⁷⁶ Farley, x.

⁷⁷ Richard Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts: Encountering God through Music, Art and Rhetoric* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 168.

revelation.⁷⁸ Viladesau also offers insight on the origins of theological aesthetic: “Implicit dialogue between theology and aesthetics leads in contemporary thought to the recognition that aesthetic categories must be admitted as genuine theological concepts that refer to and transmit a basic type of human experience, one that is incommunicable in any other way.”⁷⁹ This thesis explores how “a theological aesthetic works to uncover the way faith – that is, individual and corporate existence transformed by redemption – is beautiful and gives rise to sensibilities to beauty.”⁸⁰

Beauty. One of the most comprehensive descriptions of beauty belongs to Thomas Aquinas: “Let that be called beauty, the very perception of which pleases.”⁸¹ Regarding the application of beauty in theology we have to acknowledge that this term “is analogous, that is, there are different kinds and levels of beauty.”⁸² For this thesis, the term beauty will connote the divine beauty. For the characterization of divine beauty this thesis employs Richard Viladesau’s following definition: “The divine beauty, the source and final course of all that is beautiful, at the same time transcends all of its visible manifestations.”⁸³ This thesis supports a statement that “theology’s route to beauty should be determined initially by the way in which beauty appears in the life of faith.”⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Ibid., 5.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 168.

⁸⁰ Farley, 119.

⁸¹ Rader Melvin and Bertram Jessup, *Art and Human Values* (New Jersey: Prentice-hall, Inc. Englewood Cliff, 1978), 30.

⁸² Viladesau, 146.

⁸³ Ibid., 146.

Mysticism. The term *mysticism* draws the attention of many people who desire to find their religious belonging. While no one can give an exact definition of the term mysticism, there is a broad consensus on the significance of this phenomenon. Perhaps Evelyn Underhill's broad definition of mysticism as the "art of union with Reality" serves well for the purpose of this dissertation.⁸⁵ This concise definition by Underhill might be extended by her other definition of mysticism as "the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendental order; by whatever the theological formula under which that order is understood."⁸⁶

Spiritual Development. Spiritual development in general could be perceived as a "discovery of man, at the term of an inner and spiritual journey."⁸⁷ In the context of this proposal that focuses on the spiritual development by means of arts, J.Nathan Corbit and Vivian Nix-Early's notion of the power of arts to "translate the emotions and intellect into form, the power to express personal and community beliefs and values through concrete symbols, and the power to transform – to change one's life and the circumstances in which one lives" is especially relevant.⁸⁸ According to J.Nathan Corbit and Vivian Nix-Early, participation in arts helps a person to "develop self-awareness and

⁸⁴ Farley, 83.

⁸⁵ John Ferguson, *Encyclopedia of Mysticism and Mystery Religions* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 126.

⁸⁶ Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (New York: Meridian Books, World Publishing Co., 1955), vii.

⁸⁷ Thomas Merton, trans., *The Wisdom of the Desert* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 11.

⁸⁸ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 34

understanding and achieve a sense of self-worth.”⁸⁹ The authors emphasize arts’ role as a “catalyst in releasing people from inner captivity,”⁹⁰ that allow them to come “more deeply in touch with themselves and their behaviors.”⁹¹

Christian Spirituality. As an academic discipline Christian spirituality is a “genuine research field of study whose proper object is the Christian spiritual life as experience and whose proper methodology is a hermeneutically governed interaction of description, critical analysis, and constructive interpretation for the purpose of the fullest possible understanding of the phenomenon.”⁹²

Limitations

1. The results of this research are limited to the evaluation of the arts program at Old West Church in Boston. In order to bring all aspects of the results into consideration the evaluation will include an evaluation survey tool.⁹³
2. The amount of time for the evaluation of the program is limited to one month.
3. The difference in artistic development of the members of the arts program is a limitation; however, through the individual approach to the members of the program this

⁸⁹ Ibid., 219.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 228.

⁹¹ Ibid., 220.

⁹² Elizabeth A. Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows eds., *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 59.

⁹³ An expanded evaluation beyond the scope of this project might explore why some of the members have chosen not to participate in the arts program. This potential observation might offer insight to how the church could make the arts program more inviting to a larger number of members.

limitation could be minimized by encouragement and individual development of the participants.

4. This project has a program evaluation/case study design. This approach will illuminate the key aspects of the role of arts in the life of the church and surface important aspects of this subject for future exploration and possibly generalization.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Patton, 151 and 155. Taking into consideration all aspects of the research, this project is not designed as a full/extended qualitative research but is operating within a program evaluation/case study design. This project will follow Patton's definition of summative evaluation as a process that serves the purpose of "rendering an overall judgment about the effectiveness of a program." Also, he indicates that summative evaluation aims at "summing up judgments about a program to make a major decision about its value, whether it should be continued, and whether the demonstrated model can or should be generalized and replicated for other participants or in other places."

CHAPTER TWO
THE ARTS AS A MEDIUM FOR THE
EXPRESSION OF FAITH

Introduction

The arts are primarily an expression of a [human] relationship with God.

J. Nathan Corbit and Vivian Nix-Early, *Taking it to the Streets*

Chapter two provides biblical and theological reflection on aesthetics. By providing biblical and theological frameworks for the integral concept, arts as a medium for the expression of the Christian faith, this chapter offers a particular approach to the use of arts in a religious context. This perspective reflects the biblical and theological vision of arts as a means for affective response and acknowledgement of God's redeeming and transforming presence in human life. At the center of this vision is the ongoing dialogue between God and humanity as the Holy Spirit inspires people to discern God's love and to respond in gratefulness and adoration through a variety of arts.

The arts program at the Old West Church is a practical realization of this integral concept. In the context of the arts program, arts and theology unite their aims in one the-aesthetic task and integrate their resources forming synergistic union. This union, affected by the power of the Holy Spirit, creates an environment that helps the program's participants to grow spiritually in relation to God, each other, and the entire community.

The first section of chapter two presents biblical perspectives on arts and theo-aesthetic experience by analyzing examples of the arts presence in selected texts of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. This part demonstrates that in the biblical context arts and theology are interrelated and interdependent. In this theo-artistic interrelatedness arts serve as a medium for the “expression of a [human] relationship with God.”⁹⁵ By analyzing selected fragments from the Old Testament and New Testament, this section illustrates how arts help believers to express themselves in relation to God by using artistic languages, which “complement, supplement, and transcend verbal language.”⁹⁶

The second section of chapter two considers the theo-aesthetic aspects of arts as a means of expressing faith. This part examines what exactly we perceive as beautiful in the “intertwining duet” between God’s grace and creation’s response to this grace by the means of artistic forms.⁹⁷ Relying on the theological perspectives found in the works of Hans Urs von Balthasar, Richard Viladesau, Edward Farley, Patrick Sherry, and other contemporary theologians, this part reflects on arts through the prism of the theological aesthetics. First, it examines the meaning of theological aesthetics. Then, utilizing the aesthetical concepts of “form” and “splendor” presented in Hans Urs von Balthasar’s *The*

⁹⁵ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 159.

⁹⁶ Albert L. Balckwell, *The Sacred in Music* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 12.

⁹⁷ Robin A. Leaver and James H. Litton eds., *Duty and Delight: Routley Remembered* (Illinois: Hope Publishing Company, 1985), 48.

Glory of the Lord, it provides a conceptual framework for the arts as an “embodiment” of faith.⁹⁸

The contextualization of von Balthasar’s aesthetical concepts of “form” and “splendor” in section two reveals that the artistic expression of faith integrates God, believers, and believers’ faith expressed through the variety of arts and therefore includes both aesthetic and theological dimensions. In order to provide a theological perspective on beauty’s complex meaning in this phenomenon, the third section reviews von Balthasar’s concept of God’s revelation and his systematic description of truth, goodness, and beauty.

Section three considers von Balthasar’s speculation on the Christian life as a form that finds its best realization in the “disclosedness of being,” or stated differently, the process of the Christian’s “self-communication.”⁹⁹ This part demonstrates that arts as an expression of faith create a channel through which the truth, the goodness, and the beauty of the Christian faith can be manifested to the world in a unique way. This part also describes how through the “eyes” of the Christian faith and the freedom of God’s revelation, Christians are able to experience the truth, the goodness, and the beauty of the Christian faith and manifest this beauty to the world through the variety of artistic forms.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Stone, 139.

⁹⁹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic. Theological Logical Theory*, trans. Adrian, J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 217 and 220.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

Arts and the Bible

This section of Chapter two illuminates a biblical perspective on arts. The biblical story of God’s presence in the world unfolds in the dynamic interaction between God and God’s creation. This communication involves God’s abundant love and creation’s response to God’s love. The dynamic interplay between God’s grace and human response constitutes the “intertwining duet” that involves arts.¹⁰¹

Arts as the “accompanying counterpoint to the Divine message,” permeate creation “from eternity to eternity, from creation to judgment, from Genesis to Revelation.”¹⁰² In the Bible, arts have a practical purpose: They help humanity express itself in relation to God. The Biblical perspective on arts prevents arts from becoming “an end in itself by pointing man to its origins – in the doxology of creation.”¹⁰³ Artistic languages that “complement, supplement, and transcend verbal language,”¹⁰⁴ have the ability to “assist the believer in [the believer’s] journey toward God.”¹⁰⁵ Faith embodied in artistic forms exceeds the verbal structures of communication, giving space to the mystery and complexity of this phenomenon. This part first takes a look at the presence

¹⁰¹ Robin A. Leaver and James H. Litton, 48.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 49.

¹⁰⁴ Balckwell, 12.

¹⁰⁵ Robin A. Leaver and James H. Litton eds., 49.

of the arts in the Old and New Testaments, and then discusses the expressive functions of arts as an offertory lifted to God in response to God's grace.

Arts and the Old Testament

In the Old Testament there is an ongoing communication between God and God's creation. God's grace is evident in the orderly character of nature. The earth as its foundation reflects God's gracious law and produces a harmony and exaltation. In gratefulness for earth's beauty and wisdom, nature responds to God in songs of praise and adoration. In Job, we read that when God "laid the foundation of the earth," the morning stars "sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy."¹⁰⁶ Psalms tell us that the "birds of the air" joyfully sing "among the branches," and angels in heaven praise God and "all [God's] host."¹⁰⁷

God's love toward creation includes humanity. The Old Testament testifies to the continuous relations between God and humanity sealed by the covenant at Mount Sinai. Arts accompany this ongoing communication helping humans to express themselves in their relation to God. In the Old Testament God's people were singing the songs of the old covenant. Their song started with the Song of Moses after the nation's delivery from the Egypt's captivity. The artistic forms that expressed thankfulness to God also included instrumental music, dance, and poetry. For example, after the defeat of the Philistines, while transferring the Ark of the Covenant, King David and "all the house of Israel were

¹⁰⁶ *Holy Bible*. New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1990), Job 38:4,7. All biblical examples in this dissertation come from the aforementioned edition of the Bible.

¹⁰⁷ Joyce Invia ed., *Sacred Sound: Music in Religious Thought and Practice* (Chicago: Scholars Press, 1983), 7.

dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.”¹⁰⁸ David also sang the Song of Thanksgiving on the “day when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.”¹⁰⁹

The imagery of heaven, earth, and a humanity proclaiming the glory of God is persistent throughout the Old Testament. The *Song of Solomon* is an example of poetry that is an allegorical representation of the relationships between God and Israel as husband and wife. The traditional poetic accentuation and language of the *Song of Solomon* represent a genuine poem that is full of love, friendship, and affection. The dynamism of relationships existing in this poetry points out to the emotional aspect of the relations between God and the people of Israel. These relations are not formal, they are personal, and to some degree intimate. The atmosphere of passionate love and at the same time struggle conveys the complexity and dramatism of the relationships between God and God’s people.

The book of *Psalms* is another example of poetry that reveals human desire to commune with God. In the Psalm 103, the human soul is portrayed as an instrument of God’s glorification:

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me,
bless His holy name.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ 2 Samuel 6:5.

¹⁰⁹ 2 Samuel 22:1-51.

¹¹⁰ Ps. 103:1.

It is important to note that the psalmist uses the genre of poetry in order to express himself or herself in relation to God. The psalmist uses the metaphor of the “soul” to convey the depth of human emotions toward God. The psalmist, however, does not divide the soul and body while praising God. This indicates that all human being in its totality, including the thoughts, the deeds, the talents, and the bodies themselves, should serve as an instrument for God’s glorification.

This theme of God’s glorification by the human soul continues in Psalm 104 connecting the act of glorification with the singing:

I will sing to the Lord as long as
I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have being.¹¹¹

From this Psalm it is clear that for the psalmist singing is the symbol of vitality: as long as the human being is alive it is expected that she or he will sing and praise the Lord. It is discernible that for the psalmist the human gratitude to God is not a sporadic act, but rather a state of being in the world.

The glorification of God in the Bible has a universal connotation: All creation should unite in God’s exaltation:

Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord from the
heavens;
Praise [God] in the heights!¹¹²

¹¹¹ Ps. 104:33.

¹¹² Ps. 148:1.

For the psalmist all the universe is God's creation and it is filled with God's grace. There is no exclusion, hierarchy, or prerogative for God's glorification. All that exists comes from God, and therefore equally dependent on God's grace. Poor and rich, eminent and unknown – all are in need of God's love. The Psalm demonstrates that the very establishment of life itself is subordinated to God's power.

It is important to note that the Bible signifies not only the human soul as an instrument of God's glorification, but also the ability of the human soul to express itself through the language of arts:

Praise [God] with trumpet sound;
 Praise [God] with lute and harp!
 Praise [God] with tambourine and
 Dance;
 Praise [God] strings and
 Pipe!
 Praise [God] with clanging
 Cymbals!
 Let everything that breathes
 Praise the Lord!
 Praise the Lord.¹¹³

The desire to glorify God in songs of praise is organic to humanity and indeed to all God's creation. The praise is a natural human response of gratitude and adoration toward God. It is an outcome of humanity's deep and emotional acknowledgment of God's salvific and redeeming presence in this world.

Relying on the biblical description of God's glorification, it is evident that the artistic mode of God's glorification helps humans to express their adoration toward God and motivates them to find a form of expression that appears most appropriate to them.

¹¹³ Ps. 150:3-6.

The artistic forms of expression give space for the emotional component of faith. In singing, poetry, music, and dancing, people of God lift up to the Lord their gratitude responding to God's presence in their lives. This dynamic interplay between God's grace and human response of praise, according to Robin A. Leaver, illustrates the dynamic relationship of God and humans as "point and counterpoint" – one of the lines of this counterpoint is always incomplete; however, there is "meaning and beauty in their rise and fall, their temporal dissonance which is resolved into final harmony."¹¹⁴

Arts and New Testament

In the New Testament the arts continue to serve humanity as a medium for their relationship with God. The New Testament tells that the song of angels sounded at the birth of Jesus, and in the world to come, all the redeemed creation will join together in singing the "Song of Moses and the Lamb."¹¹⁵ In Matthew 26:30, Jesus himself sings with the disciples while going to the Mount of Olives.

The early Christian Church did not abandon singing either: in Luke 1:46-49 one may find *Mary's Song of Praise*:

My soul magnifies the Lord,
And my spirit rejoices in God
my Savior,
for [God] has looked with favor on
the lowliness of [God] servant.
Surely, from now on all
generations will call me
blessed;

¹¹⁴ Robin A. Leaver and James H. Litton eds., 48.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

for the Mighty One has done
great things for me,
and holy is [God's] name.

It is vital to note that Mary's song continues the tradition to praise God that one may find in the Old Testament. Mary praise God in the form of a song. She begins her song with the acknowledgment of her deep love toward God. From *Mary's Song of Praise*, it is evident that her desire to praise God precedes anything else: the choice of the form of her praise, or the conditions when and how she will express this praise. It is out of abundance of gratitude and exaltation to God that Mary lifts her voice in praise and thanksgiving.

In *Zechariah's Prophecy*, we have another example of praise song. It is significant that first Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and only then started his prophesy:

Blessed be their Lord God of
Israel,
For [God] has looked favorably on
[God's] people and redeemed
them.
[God] has raised up a mighty
savior for us
in the house of [God's] servant
David.¹¹⁶

In *Zechariah's Prophecy*, the presence of the Holy Spirit precedes Zechariah's praise indicating that his praise comes from the overwhelming spiritual exaltation. The work of the Holy Spirit as a manifestation of God's presence makes Zechariah's praise an expression of his inner spiritual state.

The *Song of Simeon* in Luke 2:26 reveals that God's people trust God's wisdom and praise God's name in circumstances that might look like implausible for praise.

¹¹⁶ Luke 1:68-69.

According to the Bible, it had been “revealed to [Simeon] by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.” When Jesus was presented at the Temple in Jerusalem, “guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God saying,

Master, now you are dismissing
Your servant in peace,
For my eyes have seen your
Salvation,
Which you have prepared in
The presence of all people,
A light for revelation to the
Gentiles
And for glory to your people
Israel.¹¹⁷

Simeon’s praise is especially noble, since it signifies two pivotal moments in his life: the birth of the Messiah and Simeon’s own death. This song demonstrates the gloriousness of God’s deeds: God sends the Messiah to the world and the death has no more power over the people of Israel. *Song of Simeon* proves that praise to God might have different reasons: Life is complex, however, in life and death, in joy and in sorrow people relate to God, acknowledging God’s grace and wisdom.

Although in the Bible there is a different ways in which creation express itself in relation to God, they all comes from the same source: It is a gratitude in response to God’s gracious presence in the world. This response could take a form of a female or male solo as *Mary’s Song of Praise*, *Song of Simeon*, and *Zechariah’s Prophecy*, or as

¹¹⁷ Luke 2:27-33.

Psalm 150: 3-6 states, praise can be expressed by varied instruments, dancing, and poetry. Moreover, praise to God may be perceived as incarnated in the world, in which the morning stars “sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy.”¹¹⁸

In all of these forms of expression it is important to underline the decisive role of the Holy Spirit in the process of God’s glorification. Looking at the passages of Scripture mentioned above it is evident that the motivation to glorify God comes to the human beings through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit prompts people to discern God’s gracious presence in their lives, to experience it, and out of abundant gratitude for God’s grace to raise their voices in songs and praises. In spite the seeming decisive role of humans wills in this process, the very possibility of it comes from God. Human praise and gratitude towards God comes as a response to God’s gracious initiative.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, people are able to grasp the grandeur of God’s gifts and express their gratitude in songs, instrumental music, dances, poetry, and other kinds of arts. Relating this observation to the role of arts in the Christian church, it is essential to notice the same pattern: The desire to relate to God in praise, thanksgiving, or prayer is central. The means by which this desire is accomplished is secondary and depends on the persons’ gifts and circumstances. In *The Sacred in Music* Albert Blackwell states that human creativeness, expressed in arts or religious activities, points to a relation between Creator and creation. From Blackwell’s perspective humans are

¹¹⁸ Job 38:4,7.

“created creator[s],” whose artistry echoes the divine artistry: Human artistry is enabled, underlined, and inspired by God and consequently resounds with transcendence.¹¹⁹

Emily and Don Saliers have a similar vision of the origins of human artistic gifts. They point out, that the biblical perspective on humanity origins, explains and justifies human artistic talents. According to the Bible, human beings are created in God’s own image: “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.”¹²⁰ This biblical perspective on human ontology allows the belief that desire for artistic expression so deeply embedded in the human nature is not unfamiliar to the Creator. Emily and Don Saliers suggest that all musical arts begin with the human body that was created in the image of God. They argue that the very physical structure of the human body presupposes opportunity for music to be heard and performed. The Saliers argue that human body itself produces some kind of a symphony of life: our breathing, beats of our hearts, and a variety of our emotions has pulse, pitch, pace, rhythm, and dynamic, which are foundational for music.

In the entire human corporeal symphony of sounds the breath is especially important: “And the Lord God formed [human] of the dust of the ground, and breathed into [human's] nostrils the breath of life; and [human] became a living soul.”¹²¹ The word

¹¹⁹ Balckwell, 105.

¹²⁰ Genesis 1:26.

¹²¹ Genesis 2:7.

Ruach means breath and spirit. According the Saliers, it is through the Ruach or spirit, God gave inspiration to human in the act of creation.¹²²

In summarizing biblical perspective on arts it is important to note some key aspects that make arts a meaningful bearer of its theo-aesthetic task. The first observation is that arts and theology are interrelated and interdependent. In this process of the theo-aesthetic interrelatedness, arts are “primarily an expression of a [human] relationship with God.”¹²³ The second observation is that arts in the biblical context serve as a medium for the human faith expression. The ability of arts to communicate through the artistic languages that “complement, supplement, and transcend verbal language,” helps believers to express themselves in relation to God.¹²⁴ The last observation is that in the Bible the artistic offertory to God is inspired by the Holy Spirit. The artistic offertory serves as an acknowledgment of God’s grace and may find its embodiment in different artistic forms. What is equally important for all of these forms of expression that they come to being as an act of thanksgiving in response to God’s continuing grace.

Theological Aesthetics and Arts

The first section of this chapter, Arts and the Bible, demonstrated that from the biblical perspective arts have practical purposes of helping humanity to express itself in relation to God. The aesthetic qualities of the arts have a part in this process. It is

¹²² Don and Emily Saliers, *A Song to Sing, a Life to Live: Reflection on Music as Spiritual Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Brass, 2005), Second Chapter.

¹²³ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 159.

¹²⁴ Balckwell, 12.

necessary, however, to clarify the meaning of the word “aesthetic” in a theological context. The previous section revealed that from the biblical perspective arts in the life of faith integrates theological and aesthetic dimensions and serves as a medium for the “expression of a [human] relationship with God.”¹²⁵ This section examines what exactly we perceive as beautiful in the “intertwining duet” between God’s grace and creation’s response to this grace by the means of artistic forms.¹²⁶

Relying on the theological perspectives found in the works of Hans Urs von Balthasar, Richard Viladesau, Edward Farley, Patrick Sherry, and other contemporary theologians, this section reflects on arts through the prism of the theological aesthetics. First, it examines the meaning of theological aesthetics. Then, utilizing the aesthetical concepts of “form” and “splendor” presented in Hans Urs von Balthasar’s *The Glory of the Lord*, it provides a conceptual framework for the arts as a bearer of theological and aesthetic dimensions. Finally, the concluding section of this chapter completes exposition of theo-aesthetic experience by considering it according to von Balthasar’s doctrine of the transcendentals and contextualized in the example of the *Song of Simeon*.

Theological Aesthetics¹²⁷

The combination of theology and aesthetics has its own defining characteristics and typically suggests the relationship between faith and arts. This relationship is

¹²⁵ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 159.

¹²⁶ Robin A. Leaver and James H. Litton eds., 48.

¹²⁷ Some material of this chapter I discussed in my thesis *Evangelism and Theological Aesthetics*.

complex and requires a perspective that would help to elaborate their dynamics. In the life of faith the term *beauty* acquires new meaning that goes beyond its conventional perception. Contemporary theologians Richard Viladesau, Patrick Sherry, and Edward Farley consider the vision of beauty from the point of view of Christian theology demonstrating the integrity of the theological aesthetic approach to beauty.

Richard Viladesau, in his *Theology and the Arts* writes that “the methodologically conscious and purposeful introduction of aesthetical concepts into the formal study of theology is a fairly recent phenomenon.”¹²⁸ He defines theological aesthetics in general as the study of beauty and art in the light of God and revelation.¹²⁹ Viladesau also offers the reflection that an “implicit dialogue between theology and aesthetics [that] leads in contemporary thought to the recognition that aesthetic categories must be admitted as genuine theological concepts that refer to and transmit a basic type of human experience, one that is incommunicable in any other way.”¹³⁰ He acknowledges that the application of the term “beauty” in theology is ambiguous, and that “there are different kinds and levels of beauty.”¹³¹ One of these levels connotes the divine beauty that is “the source and final course of all that is beautiful, [and] at the same time transcends all of its visible manifestations.”¹³²

¹²⁸ Richard Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 168.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 168.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹³² *Ibid.*

Another contemporary theologian, Patrick Sherry, in his *Spirit and Beauty* presents the idea that beauty has its origins in God. Sherry's central argument is that God through God's Spirit creates beauty, which prefigures the fullness of God's kingdom. He develops this thesis by discussing two ways in which God is communicating God's beauty to the world for this purpose. The first way is through the creation of natural beauty and the second is through the inspiration of artistic beauty. Sherry states that nature and art reflect God's glory and reveal to us God's beauty. Spirit through this revealed beauty creates an anticipation of the transfigured world that is the fullness of God's kingdom.¹³³

Sherry brings together two areas of Christianity: the theology of the Holy Spirit and theological aesthetics and examines the connections between the Holy Spirit and beauty by relating them to the topics of the divine glory and the nature of inspiration. In *Spirit and Beauty*, Patrick Sherry makes three interdependent propositions. First, he suggests that the Holy Spirit as one of the hypostases of the Trinity through the power of God is involved in the process of the final transfiguration and glorification of all things. Second, he suggests that the Holy Spirit will have a special affinity for this process because of the Holy Spirit's particular connection with beauty. Finally, summarizing the previously mentioned two propositions, Sherry argues that in anticipation of the final

¹³³ Sherry, 2.

transfiguration and glorification of all things the Holy Spirit is acting in creating and inspiring earthly beauty.¹³⁴

In developing his concept of beauty, Sherry indicates that beauty alone is no longer the central concept in modern aesthetics, but also may be perceived as “grace,” “elegance,” “profundity,” “motion,” “joy,” “illumination,” and “sublimity.”¹³⁵ Sherry notes that, in the objectivity of aesthetic evaluations and applications of the aesthetical terms, such subjective factors as perception and appreciation play a significant role. He suggests that God speaks through nature to different people in different ways, and that beauty may be one of the idioms of this language.¹³⁶

Another contemporary theologian, Edward Farley, in his *Faith and Beauty* also presents an extensive exploration of beauty. Farley articulates beauty as being, sensibility, self-transcendence, and benevolence that helps theology to understand and articulate how beauty is present in the life of faith.¹³⁷ He states that the term *beauty* in the context of “the aesthetic dimension of the life of faith,” explores how a theological aesthetic “works to uncover the way faith – that is, individual and corporate existence transformed by redemption – is beautiful and gives rise to sensibilities to beauty.”¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Sherry, 154.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Edward Farley, *Faith and Beauty* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2001), 119.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

Sherry's, Viladesau's, and Farley's theological perspectives reveal the distinction between an aesthetic and theological aesthetic approach to beauty. In contrast to the merely aesthetic approach that puts emphasis on the beauty of the artistic forms; theological aesthetics perceives the beauty in the life of faith in all of its complexity. The theo-aesthetic perspective on arts goes beyond the conventional perception on arts by integrating God's presence as an important part of the arts and humanity's relational complex. For example, *Mary's Song of Praise*, *Song of Simeon*, and *Zechariah's Prophecy*, which were considered in section one of this chapter, are beautiful; however, the beauty of these poetic forms is only part of the theological event that integrates God, the believer, and the believer's faith expression.

Through the lenses of theological aesthetics we recognize that the arts' theological purpose is to help humanity in their communication with God. This perspective prevents the arts from becoming self-sufficient, and instead, it points to the very origins of arts, which are the "doxology of creation."¹³⁹ It indicates that faith's interest is "transitive."¹⁴⁰ Faith is interested in sacred reality beyond the work of arts. It looks through the work of arts to the sacred and holy.

An experience of something as sacred or holy requires going beyond a meditative stance in regard to the works of art: "There is more than awareness and vision, there is hallowing and consecration."¹⁴¹ If the beauty of artistic forms becomes dominantly

¹³⁹ Robin A. Leaver and James H. Litton eds., 49.

¹⁴⁰ Rader Melvin and Bertram Jessup, 190.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 203.

important and occupies the entire attention of believers, it disrupts faith's transitive interest and in terms of spiritual attitude lapses into the sin of idolatry. This is seen through the words of Rader Melvin and Bertram Jessup when they state that "aesthetic interest shies away from the ineffable; the religious interest is directly in it. God is mysterious and 'every image of God falls short of the mark.'"¹⁴²

First section of this chapter, Arts and the Bible, demonstrated that the aim of the arts in the life of faith is to help believers in their response to the deep and emotional acknowledgment of God's redeeming presence in their lives. The Holy Spirit inspires people to discern God's love and out of abundant gratitude for it, prompts people to respond in gratefulness and adoration. The response comes from the desire of the human soul to express overflowing love toward God and is often realized by means of the arts. The beauty of the artistic forms becomes part of this expression; however, the beauty of artistic forms in this context of God's grace and the human response to it is inseparable from the totality of this phenomenon.

This theo-aesthetic approach to the role of the arts in the life of faith raises questions about the conceptual framework of this phenomenon. In *The Glory of the Lord*, Hans Urs von Balthasar presents a concept of "form" and "splendor" that helps to provide a conceptual frame for the explanation of beauty's complex nature in the "intertwining

¹⁴² Ibid., 190.

duet” between God’s grace and creation’s response to this grace by the means of artistic forms.¹⁴³

The Concepts of “Form” and “Splendor”

In *The Glory of the Lord*, von Balthasar reflects on the aesthetical concepts of “form” and “splendor” with regard to beauty. Demonstrating that form is a complex phenomenon von Balthasar writes: “We are confronted simultaneously with both the figure and that which shines forth from the figure, making it into a worthy, a love-worthy thing.”¹⁴⁴ The “interiority” of a form that which shines forth, finds its expression in external communication and signifies a form’s inner essence. This means that essence of the form is inseparable from the form’s communication.¹⁴⁵

This description of form brings von Balthasar to the definition of aesthetic reflection as “the primal phenomenon,” which is “interiority and its communication, the soul and its body.” He relates his aesthetical concept of the “primal phenomenon” to humans who are present in this world through their bodies, but manifest their inner selves “only on account of having been communicated.”¹⁴⁶ This orientation toward

¹⁴³ Robin A. Leaver and James H. Litton eds., 48.

¹⁴⁴ Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 20.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 21.

communication of the manifestation of one's being is an indication of the "primal phenomenon" of the person.¹⁴⁷

The philosophical terms found in von Balthasar's description of the concepts of "form" and "splendor," "interiority and its communication," "the soul and its body," "the figure and that which shines forth from the figure" – find their expression in the language of the Bible. For example, in Psalm 103 the human soul is portrayed as an instrument communicating humans' love toward God.

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me,
bless His holy name.

The psalmist uses the metaphor of the "soul" to demonstrate the profundity of the psalmist's faith. The psalmist in this praise does not divide the soul and body. It is a "totality of spirit and body" that communicates the "splendor" of faith expressed by Psalmist's poetry. This faith communication comes from "within" the Psalmist's soul and manifests the depth of this person's being. This is the biblical illustration of von Balthasar's "primal phenomenon" in which we are "confronted simultaneously with both the figure and that which shines forth from the figure, making it into a worthy, a love-worthy thing."¹⁴⁸ It is important to note that contextualization of von Balthasar's aesthetical concepts of "form" and "splendor" in regard to Psalm 103 makes it clear that the Psalm 103 includes both – aesthetic and theological dimensions.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 20.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

From the perspective of the theological aesthetics, which considers “beauty and art in the light of God and revelation,”¹⁴⁹ it is not only the Psalmist’s poetry, but rather the totality of the Psalmist’s manifestation of faith that culminates in the poetical expression is “beautiful and gives rise to sensibilities to beauty.”¹⁵⁰ This totality includes God, the Psalmist’s faith, and poetic expression of faith in one relational complex. The “delight” of the Psalmist’s poetry originates from “the truth and goodness” of the phenomenon, in which God’s grace and the human response to it manifests itself by means of arts.¹⁵¹ Unifying theology and aesthetics in one accord the Psalmist’s poetry generates a new level of expressiveness that resonates not only with the aesthetic sensitivity, but in the first place with the religious feelings of believers.¹⁵²

According to von Balthasar, a form is beautiful for us because of the “delight that it arouses in us.”¹⁵³ This delight originates from the fact that in the form “the truth and goodness of the depth of reality itself are manifested and bestowed” to us as something “infinitely and inexhaustibly valuable and fascinating.”¹⁵⁴ Von Balthasar claims that the form is a revelation of the depth of reality and is “a real pointing beyond itself to these

¹⁴⁹ Viladesau, 168.

¹⁵⁰ Farley, 119.

¹⁵¹ Von Balthasar, 118.

¹⁵² This example provides an explication of arts program’s approach to the understanding of beauty as a relational complex that integrates God, believers, and the believers’ artistic expression of faith.

¹⁵³ Von Balthasar, 118.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

depths.”¹⁵⁵ He poses a profound question: “What is a person without the form that shapes him?” This question implies that each person has to have a form that structures the person.¹⁵⁶ It should be a desired “life-form” in which the person would be willing to “pour out his life.” Adequately selected “life-form” allows a person’s life to become the “soul of the form” and the form to become “the expression of his soul.” This association of the form, soul, and expression “constitutes the very law of the individual.”¹⁵⁷

Von Balthasar states that “to be a Christian is precisely a form.”¹⁵⁸ Being a Christian is a grace and opportunity of life-form that is “opened up to us by God’s act of justification” and “by the God-Man’s act of redemption.”¹⁵⁹ The life form of the Christian is the “exact possibility, appointed by God for every individual in his existence as a member of Christ’s body.”¹⁶⁰ It gives every Christian a task within the body of Christ that develops mission, charisma, and Christian service. Sustaining his advocacy for the Christian life-form, von Balthasar says that it is “holistic, indissoluble” and at the same time “more clearly contoured” than any other forms.¹⁶¹ According to von Balthasar, to be

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 118-119.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 23.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 24.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 28.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

Christian is a form of “forgiveness of sins, of justification, of holiness, the miracle that transfigures and ennobles.”¹⁶² It is a pledge of the spiritual form’s future development to “the greatest of beauties,” since the Christian life-form is illuminated by Christ, the Holy Spirit, and God who is able to reach the supernatural goal without obliteration of the natural.¹⁶³

Contextualization of von Balthasar’s concepts “form” and “splendor” in relation to Psalm 103 may serve as a model that helps to understand the underlying structure of the arts program. This program includes people who have chosen for themselves the life-form of Christians and have been oriented toward communicating their being by means of arts. Arts as a means of faith manifestation offers multiplicity of modes that may transmit the innermost aspects of the believer’s religious experience. The language of arts that transcends the limits of the verbal communication allows the believer to express the implicit scope of his or her religious experience explicitly.

The arts program is designed to provide a space for the believers who embody the Christian life-form and want to express their faith externally. Through their participation in the arts program Christians are able to find a special way to manifest or, as von Balthasar says, to “express and reflect” their inner belief to the world in a very special way.¹⁶⁴ In this process the “exterior” and the “interior” are interconnected and interdependent.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

The external, artistic manifestations are inseparable from the Christian faith of the participants. In this process the aesthetic qualities of arts serve as a medium, which allows Christians to translate their inner conviction and feelings through the language of music, poetry, dance, and other kinds of arts. This “embodiment” of faith realized through visible, audible, and sensible forms of the arts leads participants to the realization of their intrinsic potentials.¹⁶⁵ The awareness of the intrinsic beauty discovered in this process gives Christians a new way of expanding their vision of God’s transforming grace in their lives.

Beauty in the Light of Christian Theology

The previous section demonstrated that human nature is fundamentally inseparable from its communication with God and with the world.¹⁶⁶ Using von Balthasar’s philosophical terms such as “form” and “splendor,” “interiority and its communication,” “the soul and its body,” and “the figure and that which shines forth from the figure,” the previous section explicated that the desire for the artistic expression of faith originates in the depth of the human’s soul and when directed to God manifests the beauty of the believer’s faith.

This beauty integrates God, believers, and believers’ faith expressions and therefore includes both aesthetic and theological dimensions. The complexity of this phenomenon requires theological exemplification. In order to provide a theological

¹⁶⁵ Stone, 139.

¹⁶⁶ Von Balthasar, 20.

perspective on the beauty's theo-aesthetic origins and its complex meaning, the following sub-sections reviews von Balthasar's concept of revelation and his systematic description of truth, goodness, and beauty.

Beauty and Revelation

To uncover beauty's presence in the religious context is an intricate task since it brings together aesthetics and theology. In the life of faith the arts provide a variety of forms through which believers are able to express their faith in unique ways. In this process of faith expression, the arts lose their autonomy and unite with theological categories. They become part of theological aesthetics, in which beauty is inseparable from the realms of *truth* and *goodness*. Von Balthasar, in *The Glory of the Lord*, presents such an explanation of beauty, in which he "attempt[s] to develop a Christian theology in the light of the third transcendental" or, to put it in other words, "to compliment the vision of the true and the good with that of the beautiful."¹⁶⁷

In his theological aesthetics, von Balthasar desires to bring back the beautiful and therefore the glory of God. At the center of his perception of beauty is Jesus Christ as the Crucified One. The Cross reveals the glory of God in Christ. The revelation of God's glory in the Cross is the demonstration of God's love for all sinners and manifestation of God's beauty. God is Love; therefore the glorification of God is the glorification of Love.

It is clear that the beauty of the Christian faith, for which the crucifixion is the epitome of beauty, for many looks implausible. However, von Balthasar argues that

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., Foreword.

revelation is able to transform aesthetical concepts.¹⁶⁸ He explains that the transformative character of revelation enlightens how the Christian faith, which embraces the sacrifice and death of Jesus Christ, may evoke sensibilities of beauty in the believers. Von Balthasar indicates that transformative character of revelation is a complex phenomenon that involves two necessary constituents: God's revelation and the believer, who is attuned to perceive it. Von Balthasar states that God's revelation is able to transform aesthetical concepts and the true meaning of the beauty of the Christian faith might be seen only through the "eyes" of the Christian's faith.¹⁶⁹

Von Balthasar explains that the "eyes" of the Christian faith first learn how to read the natural language of forms through "the aid of grace and its illumination."¹⁷⁰ And later the "eyes of faith recognize how to interpret this revelation."¹⁷¹ The true form of Christ-crucified can be perceived and understood only by the "eyes" of the Christian faith. And therefore, the beauty and glory of God's love in the form of the Christ Crucified may be discerned only by the eyes of Christian believers.

In this mysterious process of God's revelation, as well as the human's perception of that revelation, von Balthasar warns us not "to construct a system, whether openly or secretly" to attend to the subjective theological perception of the revelation.¹⁷² This is

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 29.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 417.

important not only because “faith must remain faith and cannot become open vision,” but in the first place, because the “self-revealing God remains sovereign in [God’s] every mode of manifestation and the Lord of that manifestation.”¹⁷³ Von Balthasar writes that the experience of revelation must be seen as God’s act of grace. He attends to this statement by passionate affirmation that “no achievement, no amount of training, no prescribed attitude can force God to come to us!” At the same time God’s freedom does not “stand in opposition to the simple guarantee of [God’s] grace,” and God’s willingness to “enter by the door which allows [God] full freedom of action.”¹⁷⁴ Von Balthasar states that the faith of a person evoked by the “freedom of the self-revealing God” includes experiential characteristics.¹⁷⁵

The transformative character of God’s revelation provides theological perspective on the theo-aesthetic dimensions in the process of the artistic expression of faith. As von Balthasar suggests the revelatory power to transform aesthetical concepts opens space for the exceptional experience of beauty, which integrates both aesthetic and theological dimensions. Through the “eyes” of the Christian faith and the freedom of God’s revelation, Christians are able to experience the beauty of the Christian faith. Given the impossibility to analyze this mysterious phenomenon, Christians know this experience since it contains a “self-evidence that en-lightens without mediation.”¹⁷⁶ This ability to

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 418.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 417.

¹⁷⁶ Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 37.

grasp the integrative character of beauty comes to believers through the freedom of God's revelation and also through their participation in the life of faith.

Von Balthasar, in an open-ended exposition, outlines five aspects of God's self-revelation that does not affect God's freedom and at the same time provide a milieu that helps Christians to develop their *Christian* senses. The first aspect demonstrates that since Christ is God's epiphany in the world, it is evident that the divine glory is revealed not only for a "few chosen ones."¹⁷⁷ In Christ the whole world receives a revelation of creation and redemption that for the believers results in the "displacement and magnetic reorienting of the images of the world by the image of God in their midst."¹⁷⁸

The second aspect of God's self-revelation, according to von Balthasar, is in the living reality of the Christian Church: Christ for the believer appears "within the total image of the Church."¹⁷⁹ The Church is the "immediate space" in which the Christ shines. Being illuminated by Christ's presence, the Christian Church radiates his light into the world.

The third aspect is the reality that Christ reaches all believers in the "sensory gestures of the liturgy, which includes both Sacrament and Word."¹⁸⁰ The fourth and most important aspect of God's revelation is "the image of the fellow-[human]."¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 419.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 420.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 422.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 423.

According to von Balthasar, in our neighbor we encounter someone who has been redeemed by the same blood of Christ as we have. We are compelled to respect this neighbor, anticipating from this neighbor in action the “supremely real image which the triune God has of [Christians].”¹⁸² Von Balthasar indicates that in the love for the neighbor, the *Christian* receives *Christian* senses that are the same for all *Christians*, since these senses “have been formed according to the form of Christ.”¹⁸³

The fifth, and last of the aspects of God’s self-revelation offered by von Balthasar, is our encounter with God in prayer in which “from the side of the Lord of prayer and from that of the person praying everything remains possible.”¹⁸⁴

In summary, Von Balthasar’s concept of God’s revelation presents a theological perspective, which helps to understand the phenomenon of beauty in the life of the Christian faith. He postulates that God, through the freedom of God’s revelation by grace and illumination opens to the believer the beauty of God’s love. Christ as the epitome of God’s revelation reorients all “the images of the world” and offers to the believers the reality of the Christian Church.¹⁸⁵ Through the liturgy, Sacraments, Word, brothers and sisters in Christ, and prayer, God forms in the believer the “eyes of faith,” and the

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 424.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 425.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 420.

Christian senses which are able not only to recognize the beauty of God, but also to interpret the variety of ways God reveals God's beauty to the world.¹⁸⁶

Von Balthasar's perspective, when related to the process of human response to God's grace by the means of arts reveals that the "eyes of faith" are able to differentiate the integrative beauty of arts in the life of faith. The "eyes of faith," illumined by the grace of God, are able to see the beauty of the relational complex, which includes God, believer, and believer's artistic expression of faith, in its totality. The complex configuration of this *integrated beauty* found its explanation in Von Balthasar's *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory*.¹⁸⁷

The True, the Good, and the Beautiful¹⁸⁸

The acknowledgment of beauty's presence in the life of faith leads von Balthasar to the development of a Christian theology in the "light of the third transcendental" that aims to harmonize the true and the good "with that of the beautiful."¹⁸⁹ Considering these transcendental properties von Balthasar indicates that they are mutually interwoven.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 29.

¹⁸⁷ Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 216.

¹⁸⁸ Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 19. Hans Urs von Balthasar in his *The Glory of the Lord* writes that Christian theology coalesces all three transcendentals – the true, the good, and the beautiful – into one accord. The loss or neglect of one of the transcendentals can affect the significance of the others. The connection is so vital that von Balthasar writes, "In a world that no longer has enough confidence in itself to affirm the beautiful, the proofs of the truth have lost their cogency." Lost beauty takes its vengeance and "the good also loses its attractiveness."

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, Foreword.

¹⁹⁰ Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 216.

This designates that the logical account of the “fundamental meaning of truth” might be applicable to the phenomenology of goodness and of beauty.¹⁹¹ Von Balthasar’s systematic description of truth, goodness, and beauty demonstrates that they can be “grasped only in and through one another.”¹⁹² Von Balthasar’s interpretation of the term *beautiful*, in the context of the Christian faith, reflects the multi-dimensionality of this phenomenon and provides a theological perspective on the integrative character of beauty in the process of God and believers’ communication.

The True

Elaborating the fundamental meaning of truth, von Balthasar points out that it finds its source in the “disclosedness of being.”¹⁹³ Von Balthasar indicates that the state of *being disclosed* includes two essentials that cannot be separated: they are self-disclosure and its actual outcome. There are three elements in the movement of self-disclosure: the ontological ground (one which discloses), the appearance (one which is disclosed), and the disclosure itself (movement from the ground into the appearance).¹⁹⁴

It is important to note that, according to von Balthasar, the appearance is not “self-standing” being, but rather “the exhibition, the mapping,” or “the measurement of

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 217.

¹⁹² Ibid., 225.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 217.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

the ground.”¹⁹⁵ The whole movement of self-disclosure is an act that might be formulated in the following statement: “being that appears.” The origin of this act is the ground. The disclosure of this ground is “an action, an expression, a clearing, a bestowal of participation,” which has its end in what is expressed.¹⁹⁶ Von Balthasar writes that at the end the appearance becomes intelligible because of the “inwar[d] illumin[ation],” which makes possible objectification of truth.¹⁹⁷ Von Balthasar specifies the process of self-disclosure by writing that “it is only when [being] has gone out of itself that being has truly attained itself, knows its depth, and can present itself to others.”¹⁹⁸

Taking another angle on the process of self-disclosure, von Balthasar describes it as the “ground’s pronouncing itself in the act of its illumination [*Lichtung*].”¹⁹⁹ He points out that *light* and *measure* play a central role and complement each other in this process. In other words, when the ontological ground of truth appears, it enlightens itself as well as others, and becomes understandable to itself and others. At the same time truth receives its own measure in two ways: as the image of its ground and as a ground that “apprehends itself as such in image.”²⁰⁰ In doing so it distinguishes itself from chaos,

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 218.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

becomes intelligible, and also “gives others the chance to form a true and correct image of itself.”²⁰¹

Von Balthasar’s philosophical description of truth is relevant for the examples in the first section of this chapter, which discussed the expressive functions of the arts in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. For example, there seems to be a manifestation of von Balthasar’s description of the “disclosedness of being” in the *Song of Simeon*.

Master, now you are dismissing
Your servant in peace,
For my eyes have seen your
Salvation,
Which you have prepared in
The presence of all people,
A light for revelation to the
Gentiles
And for glory to your people
Israel.²⁰²

Three elements of the movement of self-disclosure as it was described by von Balthasar – the ontological ground, the appearance, and the disclosure itself – symbolically are present in this passage of the New Testament. St. Simeon discloses himself to the world by announcing that God’s promise of salvation had been fulfilled. The appearance of his disclosure demonstrates St. Simeon as a person of faith and at the same time reveals the significance of his mission. The disclosure itself, or in the words of von Balthasar “the movement from the ground into the appearance,” is presented in the

²⁰¹ Ibid., 219.

²⁰² Luke 2:27-33.

form of poetry that announces that St. Simeon's mission is complete and that the long expected event of the coming of the Messiah had been fulfilled.²⁰³

The whole movement of St. Simeon's self-disclosure is an act of the objectification of truth in regard to St. Simeon's life of faith. His song integrates the story about St. Simeon's life, death, and the coming of the Messiah. The song as a form of self-disclosure makes intelligible for the people the truth about St. Simeon's mission. Through the light of God's revelation St. Simeon acknowledges the fulfillment of God's mystery in Jesus Christ and after self-disclosure he "truly attained [him]self, knows [his] depth, and can present [him]self to others."²⁰⁴

Functions of St. Simeon's self-disclosure and the actual outcome of this self-disclosure are symbolically relevant to what von Balthasar describes as the "ground's pronouncing itself in the act of its illumination [*Lichtung*]."²⁰⁵ St. Simeon in his song objectifies the truth not only about himself, but more importantly, the truth about God's gift of salvation. In the ten short lines of his song, St. Simeon makes intelligible the event of salvation and the beginning of the new era for the people of Israel. The truth that appears as a result of St. Simeon's self-disclosure, in the words of von Balthasar, "enlightens itself as well as others, and becomes understandable to itself and others."²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 219.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 218. This coming to "know oneself," that is, to experience "truth" in theo-aesthetic experience resonates with what will be considered "awareness" in the next chapter.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

The Good

Continuing his explanation of the transcendental properties von Balthasar indicates that considering goodness one must reflect on the same movement between ground and appearance as with the movement of truth described above. In this movement the “communicator becomes what is communicated” and there is a demonstration of the *value* of the being.²⁰⁷ From this statement it follows that being “acquires its value, both for itself and for others, through its communication.”²⁰⁸

A communicator participates in the goodness of being through the process of “self-communication (*bonum diffusivum sui*) [The good is self-diffusive].”²⁰⁹ Von Balthasar describes this as a twofold process: the being “renounces its ambition to be for itself alone,” and it acquires the “weight and dignity of a good, of a one-of-a-kind value.”²¹⁰ The ground of being, in the words of von Balthasar, is this constant process of “communication itself.”²¹¹ This process is always in progression; even when the good (*perfectum*) is already actual, it continues “the act of striving to lay hold of oneself”

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 220.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. This “communication to others” anticipates what will be considered in the next chapter as “self-expression.”

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

(*bonum honestum*).²¹² Von Balthasar comments that the notion of the good is the “complete communication of self-communicating being.”²¹³

Employing von Balthasar’s explanation of the fundamental meaning of goodness, it is easy to grasp that the truth that appears as a result of St. Simeon’s self-disclosure “acquires its value, both for itself and for others” as the good news of salvation.²¹⁴ *Song of Simeon* brings goodness into the life of St. Simeon, the lives of the people of Israel, and the lives of the Gentiles. The goodness of salvation that St. Simeon brings into the world in the act of his self-disclosure symbolically continues to be a reality of the good news for all people. Relating von Balthasar’s explanation of the truth and goodness to the *Song of Simeon* one may see how truth and goodness substantiate the beauty of the song, in which St. Simeon expressed himself in relation to God.

The Beautiful

Von Balthasar indicates that the logical account of the fundamental meaning of truth that is the movement between ground and appearance is applicable to the phenomenology of beauty. Von Balthasar states, however, that the phenomenon of aesthetic pleasure cannot be explained as a simple correspondence between essence and appearance.²¹⁵ It is rather an “incomprehensible observation” of the reality of essence that

²¹² Ibid., 221.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 220.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 222-223.

leaves us with the feeling that the essence that appears is “ever more” than it is perceived in the immediate appearance.²¹⁶ Von Balthasar indicates that it is the “eternal comparative” of the “non-appearance that appears,” which evokes in us an aesthetic delight.²¹⁷ He elaborates this statement by summarizing the entire process as “ground appear[ance] in its specificity as self-grounding groundlessness.”²¹⁸

In this movement beauty is “the immediate salience of the groundlessness of the ground.”²¹⁹ He elaborates this statement by saying that beauty is the “transparency, through the phenomenon, of the mysterious background of being.”²²⁰ Von Balthasar maintains that beauty is the “immediate manifestation of the never-to-be mastered” excess of manifestation that is in everything that manifests.²²¹ It is the perpetual “ever more” that is the essence of the being.²²²

Reflecting on the *Song of Simeon* in the light of von Balthasar’s vision of beauty it is not obvious where in this song one may find a “transparency” of the “mysterious background of being,” or the “immediate manifestation of the never-to-be mastered” excess of manifestation, which according to von Balthasar constitutes the

²¹⁶ Ibid., 223.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 224.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 223.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

phenomenology of beauty.²²³ It is only when we look at the *Song of Simeon* through the lenses of theological aesthetics and see it not only as poetry, but most importantly as an expression of faith embodied in the form of poetry that we begin to grasp the relation of this song to von Balthasar's description of the phenomenology of beauty. Through the prism of theological aesthetics, which considers how beauty appears in the life of faith, we are able to perceive *Song of Simeon* as a complex phenomenon that integrates God's grace, St. Simeon, and St. Simeon's faith expression embodied in the form of song.²²⁴

This theo-aesthetic perspective on the *Song of Simeon* illumines the context of this song's presentation: It demonstrates that the *Song of Simeon* is not an ordinary song, which is performed in the hopes of finding a favorable recognition from an audience, but it is part of the eternal circle of God's grace and creation's response to this grace by the means of artistic forms.²²⁵ From this perspective the intention of the song is an expression of St. Simeon's relationship with God.²²⁶ This theo-aesthetic approach to the *Song of Simeon* brings to the surface new dimensions of the song, revealing the complexity of the term beauty in the context of the life of faith: beauty broadens its meaning to include the "mysterious background of being."²²⁷ In the life of faith, beauty of the artistic forms is inseparable from the spiritual life of believers: through the believers' artistic faith

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Farley, 119.

²²⁵ Robin A. Leaver and James H. Litton eds., 48.

²²⁶ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 159.

²²⁷ Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 223.

expression and the grace of God this beauty is revealed to us as something “infinitely and inexhaustibly valuable and fascinating.”²²⁸

Through the lenses of the theological aesthetics we realize that the *Song of Simeon* is not an ordinary song, but rather a manifestation of faith. This observation leaves us with the feeling that this song implies “more” than could be perceived immediately. The *Song of Simeon* evokes in us the sensation that we are witnessing an event that exceeds its visible and audible presentation, pointing to God’s immediate presence beyond the song. In the *Song of Simeon* the “contents of faith and the act of faith form a unity and come together in one aesthetic act.”²²⁹ We are able to make an “incomprehensible observation” and grasp the beauty of this event that join together God, St. Simeon, and St. Simeon’s expression of faith. The *Song of Simeon* appears to us as a “pure irradiation of the true, and the good for their own sake.”²³⁰ The profundity of St. Simeon’s faith, the solemnity of the moment, and our own faith are fused in this moment evoking in us an aesthetic delight.

Developing his phenomenology of beauty, von Balthasar indicates that beauty might metaphorically be associated with the “unbegrudging self-abandonment” of the sun that spreads its radiance without any reservation.²³¹ Beauty may enter in all aspects and elements of beings and it is not affected or divided by the participants. At the same time

²²⁸ Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 118.

²²⁹ John O’ Donnell SJ, *Hans Urs Von Balthasar* (Great Britain: Biddles Ltd, 2000), 23.

²³⁰ Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 224.

²³¹ Ibid.

beauty has many modes of expression. All of them, according to von Balthasar, are manifestations of the same “mysterious ground of beauty.”²³² Beauty dwells in the mystery of being so that it can “resolve upon the utmost *surrender* of the mystery.”²³³ When beauty is evident, it becomes both absolutely defenseless and simultaneously protected “through itself alone.”²³⁴ But the most important development out of this unity of truth, goodness, and beauty is the awareness that everything is comprehensible and revealed only because “it is grounded in an ultimate mystery, whose mysteriousness rests, not upon a lack of clarity, but rather upon a superabundance of light.”²³⁵ Von Balthasar states that without the “superabundance of light” there cannot not be any comprehensiveness in the fact that the “core of being consists in love,” and that the very emergence of being as “essence and existence” has no other ground but “groundless grace.”²³⁶

Looking at the *Song of Simeon* through the prism of von Balthasar’s theological aesthetics, we come to realize that its beauty emerges from St. Simeon’s faith, which has its ground in the “groundless grace” of God.²³⁷ This leads us to apprehension that the

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid., 225.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

“essence and existence” as well as our faith in God comes to us as God’s gift of grace.²³⁸

It is through God’s grace we receive the “inexhaustible depth and overflowing richness of being” that motivates us to respond to God in thanksgiving through the variety of artistic forms.²³⁹ Von Balthasar’s theological aesthetics illumine the beauty in the life of faith as a gift of God’s grace that is part of the mystery. The *Song of Simeon* is one of the biblical examples that demonstrates the dynamics of the eternal circle of God’s grace and human response which unites faith and the expression of faith “in one aesthetic act.”²⁴⁰

The arts program is an example of how the preceding summary of the selected aspects of von Balthasar’s theological aesthetics has found its practical realization in the life of the Christian church. The underlying structure of the program integrates the vision that the Christian as a life-form finds its best realization in the “disclosedness of being,” or in another von Balthasar formulation, in the process of “self-communication.”²⁴¹

Relating von Balthasar’s concept of “self-communication” to the arts, as a means of the believer’s self-communication in relation to God, one may see that arts is a vital constituent of the Christian faith. Artistic forms create a channel through which the truth, the goodness, and the beauty of the Christian faith manifest themselves to the world in a unique way. This expression of faith arouses in us a sense of “aesthetic pleasure” and

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ John O’ Donnell SJ, 23.

²⁴¹ Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 217 and 220.

beauty.²⁴² This beauty includes both, aesthetical and theological dimensions, and points to the presence of God implied by the believer. Therefore, the totality of this integrated beauty includes God, believer, and arts as an expression of faith. Most importantly, this integrated beauty brings the awareness that in the religious context beauty's manifestation has no other ground but the "groundless grace" of God.²⁴³

Contextualization of von Balthasar's concept of God's revelation and his systematic description of truth, goodness, and beauty in relation to the arts program provides a theological exemplification of beauty's complex presence in the life of faith. It establishes the theological vision of beauty that integrates God's grace and believers' faith in a never ceasing circle of communication. One of the ways to envision this circle of communication is an image of the upward spiral development that leads believers to the better understanding of God's redeeming presence in their lives. This vision is important since it gives an insight about the dynamics within the arts program and explains the source of its efficiency. It demonstrates that the arts program creates a milieu in which the "groundless grace" of God is apprehended and praised by the believers.

²⁴² Ibid., 223.

²⁴³ Ibid., 223 and 225.

CHAPTER THREE
EVALUATION OF THE ARTS PROGRAM

Introduction

The role of the arts program at the Old West Church in Boston is to provide an environment where Christian believers may find a unique way to express themselves in relation to God. This program offers a variety of arts as a medium through which Christians express the emotional and rational aspects of their religious experience. The significance of the program is in its theo-aesthetic orientation that helps Christian believers to communicate their faith and simultaneously to develop their leadership qualities, which, in turn, guides the entire Old West community in holistic transformation.

While the arts program provides a structure in which participants have opportunities to discover and develop their leadership potential, it is important to look at the individual experiences of the participants in order to evaluate the program's effectiveness. Thus, this chapter will focus on the influence of the arts program at Old West community rather than on the nature and structure of the arts program.

A survey of ten congregants was conducted in order to assess the arts program's efficiency in the area of leadership development, ecclesial transformation, and personal

renewal.²⁴⁴ The survey included questions that were intended to evaluate congregants' experience of the Old West arts program. This chapter will primarily rely on the participants' responses to these questions. In accordance with the stricture of the survey, all quotations are anonymous.

An evaluation survey questionnaire, which gathered information about the program's influence on individual participants of the arts program included the following questions:

1. Based on your experience what would you say are the strengths of the arts program?
2. What do you think are the weaknesses of this program?
3. In what kind of arts have you participated in the program?
4. What have you learned from this participation?
5. What kind of changes in the life of the congregation, if any, have you noticed after arts integration into the Old West Church?
6. What plans do you have for your future participation in the life of the church?
7. Have you discovered new talents and interests while participating in the arts program? If the answer is yes, please tell more about your discoveries.
8. Was spiritual development part of your experience while you have participated in arts program? If the answer is yes, please describe this experience.

²⁴⁴ Corbit and Nix-Early, 24. The work of the arts program is built upon Corbit and Nix-Early's theory of arts as a way of redemptive transformation. The adapted for the evaluation purposes Corbit and Nix-Early's theory integrates three stages, which constitute practices of the arts program and its procedures: (1). *Critical Awareness*, when believers come to an awareness of arts as means for the expression of faith; (2). *Working Out*, when believers find the unique artistic form for the "embodiment" of their faith expression; (3). *Celebration*, when believers celebrate arts as an act of thanksgiving.

9. How did the art program influence your sense of self-awareness and help you in the process of self-expression?
10. In what ways has arts program prepared you to apply your new skills in your personal life, in the life of the Old West Church, and larger community?²⁴⁵

The participants' responses have been arranged in a way that accentuates general patterns in their experience of the Old West arts program. This chapter will consider leadership formation among the laity. The next chapter will discuss the ecclesial transformation in the Old West congregation, which is closely related to the process of the leadership formation.

By analyzing the survey's responses, this chapter explores whether involvement in the arts program facilitates leadership formation by developing participants' theological vision, self-awareness, personal empowerment, and ability for the effective communication. Thus, this chapter analyzes two inter-related aspects of the Old West arts program: i) what it means to become a leader in the arts program ii) the reception and development of the laity who have experienced the arts program as they undergo the process of becoming leaders.

First, this chapter looks at leadership formation in the context of the Christian faith. This perspective demonstrates that for Christian believers leadership formation is integral to discipleship and may be accomplished through the process of spiritual

²⁴⁵ The original questioner, which may be found on the page 170 of this dissertation, integrates general question (1-6) and additional questions (6-10). The general questions intended to gather information regarding general experiences of the arts programs' participants. The additional questions focused on the participant's experiences in connection with the leadership formation.

growth.²⁴⁶ Thus, the complexity of the reciprocal relations between leadership and discipleship pertain the dual approach to the arts program's influence on the process of leadership formation. This chapter must evaluate whether involvement in the arts program motivates participants' spiritual growth. Discovery of the participants' spiritual development provides foundation for the next cycle of the arts program evaluation. This investigation intends to assess the arts program's ability to provide an environment that helps participants to develop their leadership qualities.

As a structural framework for the arts program evaluation, this chapter employs J. Nathan Corbit and Vivian Nix-Early's theory of arts as a means of redemptive transformation.²⁴⁷ This structural framework demonstrates how involvement in the arts program promotes participants' spiritual growth and at the same time develops their leadership potential. The arts program's structure adapts and integrates three stages of the Corbit/ Nix-Early's paradigm: (1) *Critical Awareness*, (2) *Working Out*, and (3) *Celebration*.²⁴⁸ The analysis of the participants' data presented in the framework of the Corbit/Nix-Early's paradigm demonstrates whether the arts program's threefold structure helps participants to grow as disciples of Christ and in this process to develop their leadership qualities.

²⁴⁶ Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile, *Leadership Essentials: Practical Tools for Leading in the Church* (Nashville: Abington Press, 2006), 12.

²⁴⁷ Corbit and Nix-Early, 24 and 163.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

The Definition of Leadership as Discipleship—Theological Vision

The purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate that arts have the potential to create an environment that develops participants' leadership qualities which, in turn, leads the community to holistic transformation. Remembering the dissertation's goal, it is vital first to evaluate the accumulated patterns of the participants' responses and answer the question: How does the participation in the arts program affect participants' leadership formation?

Leadership development in the Christian church is considered in the context of the Kingdom of God, in which leadership skills are “first called to be instruments of God who are guiding others toward spiritual growth and maturity.”²⁴⁹ This perspective makes leadership formation integral to discipleship, which has its “foundation” in the practice of “growing relationship with God.”²⁵⁰ The life-transforming experience of becoming disciples of Christ is possible only through the work of the Holy Spirit. Disciples of Christ grow in their relationship to God by “placing themselves regularly under the influence of God’s Spirit in worship,” and by “intentionally seeking to grow in Christ-likeness through learning in community.”²⁵¹

While the process of the leadership formation is difficult to articulate, the survey answers provide insights about the efficiency of the arts program in stimulating

²⁴⁹ Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile, 13.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Robert Schnase, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregation* (Nashville: Abington Press, 2007), 8.

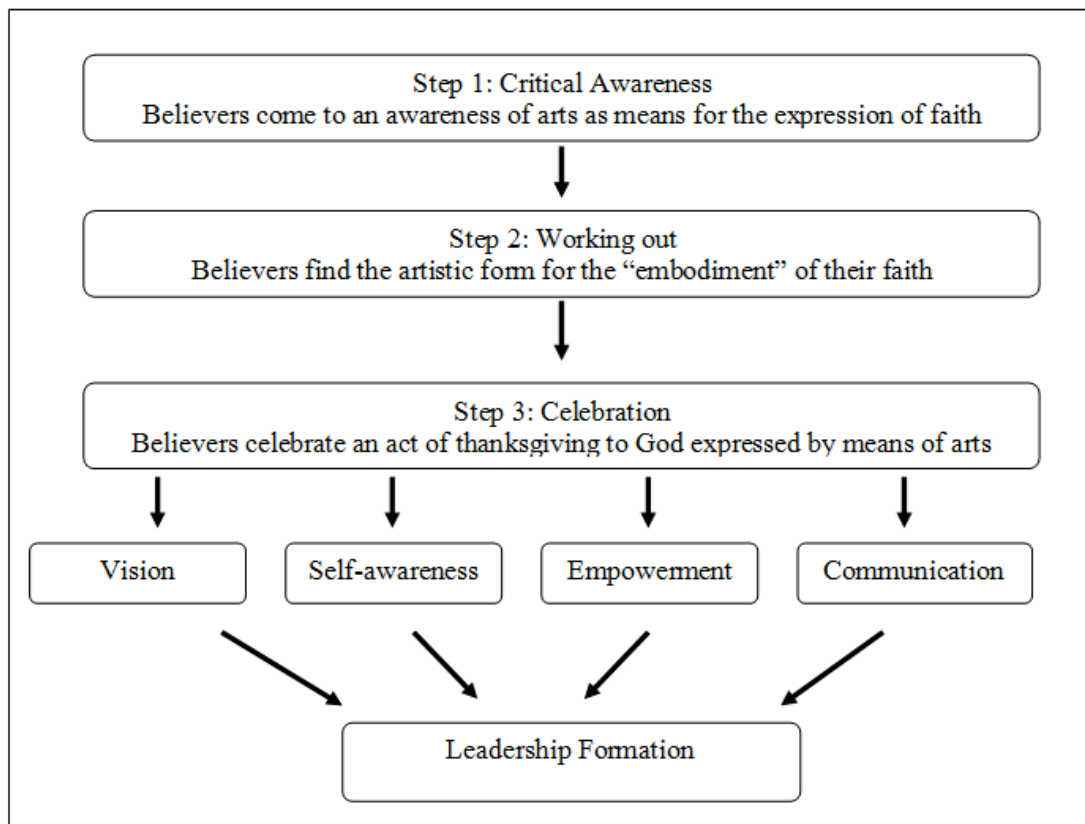
participants' leadership potential. The survey illustrates how the involvement in the arts program helps participants to grow as disciples of Christ.

The programs focus on the relationship between God and God's believers creates the spiritual foundation for the leadership formation within the arts program. The opportunity to express themselves in relation to God by means of arts empowers Christians to grow spiritually in relation to God, to each other, and to the community.

Figure 1, which is presented below demonstrates how the threefold structure of the program that integrates stages of *Critical Awareness*, *Working Out*, and *Celebration* helps participants to develop their leadership qualities. Figure 1 visualizes how the accumulated experiences in the course of the involvement in the arts program's ministry vision, self-awareness, personal empowerment, and improved communication skills "translates to leadership in the power of the Holy Spirit."²⁵²

²⁵² Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile, 19.

Figure 1: Arts Program’s Leadership Development Model²⁵³



The following chapter unfolds according to the illustration in Figure 1, which provides the model of leadership formation within the arts program. First this chapter defines the meaning of the leadership formation in the context of the Christian faith. Next, it analyzes the survey results in relation to the program’s structure looking for the survey’s patterns, which indicate participants’ spiritual growth.²⁵⁴ Finally, this chapter

²⁵³ Figure 1: Arts Program’s Leadership Development Model is developed by the author of this dissertation under inspiration of Corbit/ Nix-Early’s paradigm.

²⁵⁴ The structure of the program is build according to the Corbit/ Nix-Early’s paradigm and integrates following stages: *critical awareness*, *working out*, and *celebration*.

reflects on the survey results in search of specific leadership indicators, such as vision, self-awareness, personal empowerment, and ability for the effective communication.

For the congregants at Old West, involvement in the arts program opens numerous new opportunities motivating them to grow spiritually. This transformative process leads participants of the arts program to the discovery of their leadership potentials. The definitions of leadership are various; depending on the context. Through all the multiplicity of approaches, there are several common characteristics that identify an effective leader regardless of the specifics of any given circumstance. Paula J. Caproni describes these characteristics as follows:

Effective leaders know that creating meaning that mobilizes action is an important part of their job. They know that bullet points and executive summaries aren't enough. They use influential language and compelling stories to create a common vision, encourage a collective identity, and inspire coordinated action toward common goals.²⁵⁵

Based on Caproni's description, leadership is defined as an ability to inspire and mobilize communication that coordinates people's actions toward goals identified by common vision and collective identity.²⁵⁶ On the basis of this definition it follows that vision, self-awareness, personal empowerment, and effective communication are foundational for the effective leadership and as such generate qualities of leadership in others.

²⁵⁵ Paula J. Caproni, *Management Skills for Everyday Life* (New Jersey: Pearson, Prentice Hall, 2005), 148.

²⁵⁶ This definition is based on Paula J. Caproni's description of the effective leader.

In the context of the Christian church, leadership development connotes discipleship.²⁵⁷ Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile indicate in their *Leadership Essentials: Practical Tools for Leading in the Church* that leadership is “discipleship that has progressed to the point where the disciple is spiritually prepared and equipped to guide others along in the journey we know as the Christian life.”²⁵⁸ More concisely, their definition of leadership is the ability to influence “others for the cause of Christ.”²⁵⁹

Caproni’s, Cartmill’s, and Gentile’s perspectives on leadership are important in the context of this dissertation. While Caproni’s perspective points to the core characteristics essential for the leadership formation, Cartmill and Gentile’s perspective explains the meaning and the final goal of this process in the context of the Christian faith. Synthesis of these two perspectives identifies effective leadership in the context of the Christian church as one’s ability to inspire and mobilize Christians in the journey toward the Kingdom of God. In paraphrase, an effective leader is a disciple of Christ who effectively communicates Christian values and cultivates a “common vision” and “collective identity” among congregants.²⁶⁰

From the definitions presented above it is clear that leaders have to be “prepared and equipped” in order to provide effective leadership for the other Christians.²⁶¹ It

²⁵⁷ Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile, 12.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 14.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ These definitions are based on Caproni’s and Cartmill and Gentile’s definitions of leadership.

²⁶¹ Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile, 14.

means that potential leaders have to find opportunity to develop their own theological views and necessary skills, which would allow them to guide other believers in their journey of faith. The task of making disciples of Jesus Christ, who “spiritually prepared and equipped” to guide other Christians toward the Kingdom of God is vital for the Christian church.²⁶² With the recognition that it is only through the work of the Holy Spirit that people come to the life-transforming experience of becoming disciples of Christ, the church acknowledges the importance of “creating the right culture or environment in which the Holy Spirit will work.”²⁶³

The arts program resonates with the church’s task by creating a milieu in which the “disciple-making” process can be realized.²⁶⁴ The program provides an environment that motivates Christians to grow as disciples of Christ. It helps them to formulate their vision and develop their leadership skills. While the process of leadership formation in the context of the Christian church is a complex enterprise, the survey’s answers provide some insights about the efficiency of the arts program in stimulating participants’ spiritual growth and developing their leadership qualities, namely, vision, self-awareness, personal empowerment, and communication.

Relying on the survey’s data, the following section examines the arts program’s ability to facilitate the participants’ spiritual growth.²⁶⁵ It reflects on the arts program’s

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 19.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 20.

ability to create conditions that promotes spiritual growth and develops participants' leadership potential.²⁶⁶

Laity Development

Leadership development is an outcome of personal growth. Personal growth comes to people not without difficulties and it is not always a coherent and linear process.²⁶⁷ Describing complexity of personal growth in the world of business, Caproni writes that people can “learn some things quickly, some things slowly,” and sometimes people are not aware that they are “learning at all.”²⁶⁸ She indicates that the process of personal growth is obscure, ambiguous, and accompanied by anxiety.

Leadership researcher Wilfred Drath explains these difficulties by indicating that in order to grow spiritually people “must give up a deeply personal meaning, a fundamental way of understanding the self and relating the self to the world.”²⁶⁹ Expanding themselves to the new spiritual horizons, people have to find their new self and relate this newly emerged self to the constantly changing world. This dynamism of all-embracing change, with all its possible positive outcomes, takes away the state of comfortable stability, leading many people to the anxiety and resistance to change.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ Paula J. Caproni, 226.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 69.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 67.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

In the context of the Christian church leadership development differs from that in the world of business. Christian leadership formation is built on the “foundation of effective discipleship.”²⁷¹ The goal of leadership formation is the development of “Christian character” in believers.²⁷² This process is “spiritual in nature” and motivates believers follow the example of Christ.²⁷³ As Cartmill and Gentile points,

It’s critical to have a spiritual foundation for leadership, and one is build first upon our own relationship with God. Effective leaders are continually growing in their personal faith relationship thorough cultivation spiritual disciplines in their lives such as prayer, Bible study, worship, and service. This translates to leadership in the power of the Holy Spirit and the ability to model Christian character to those who follow.²⁷⁴

Christian leaders grow within the vision and the mission of the church. This approach is placing leadership in God’s perspective, or in other words, it reflects how “God was at work through us as we used our gifts in service,” and also, what “results God achieved through our efforts.”²⁷⁵ This perspective on the leadership emphasizes service to God and to others. The spiritual leaders in the Christian church care for their followers “in thought, word, and deed.”²⁷⁶ Together with their followers the Christian leaders model servant leadership, which calls believers to experience the presence of

²⁷¹ Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile, 19.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 17.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 19.

Christ in their service to others.²⁷⁷ Ministry to one another, then, is one of the basic premises of leadership development and it takes place in the church in the congregants mutual service.

Leadership formation is not a goal, but rather an outcome of the church's effective ministry. "Not all followers of Christ become leaders," but church leaders become who they are by first of all becoming the disciples of Christ.²⁷⁸ The church is actively involved in this process. By intentionally planning programs that offer holistic development, the Christian church creates an environment that facilitates spiritual growth.²⁷⁹ The presence of these of programs "create conditions that increase possibility" that Christians discover and develop their leadership potential.²⁸⁰

The arts program is one of them. It provides a "formative and friendly environment," in which participants grow in relation to God and in relation to others.²⁸¹ Theologically this experience of personal growth contextualizes the dynamics of God's grace in the process of human development. The discovery and development of artistic gifts in service to God and community stimulates participants' spirituality, motivating them to grow as disciples of Christ.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 20.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Paula J. Caproni, 226.

²⁸¹ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 64.

I am a strong believer of God and Faith. Church for me is like the air I breathe. It has much significance to me and especially when music is involved. I can't imagine my life without music and /or God.²⁸²

From this survey's quote, one may understand that involvement in the arts program is a significant part of the participants' life-time and goal-oriented spiritual journey.²⁸³ Lee Spitzer in his book *Endless Possibilities: Exploring the Journeys of Your Life* writes about two levels of goal-oriented spiritual journey. One of these levels is redemptive. This level is oriented toward personal and communal growth. Another level is mission-oriented with the focus on serving community.²⁸⁴ The arts program integrates both – redemptive and mission-oriented levels of spiritual development. Christians come to the program looking for possibilities to express themselves in relation to God by means of arts. Some of the participants have no special artistic education or experience. Through the development of their artistic gifts participants transform their perceptives on their own potentials and abilities to learn new skills.

While learning new skills, participants come to realize that the art in the service to God and others “bridges barriers, provides an open and trusting environment, and potentially builds the spirit of community.”²⁸⁵ Participants begin to see themselves as a

²⁸² Survey's quotation.

²⁸³ Lee Spitzer, *Endless Possibilities: Exploring the Journeys of Your Life* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Spiritual Journey press, 1997), 40-42.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 64.

part of God’s creative process in which they are creative partakers.²⁸⁶ This new perspective inspires them to strive for full self-actualization.²⁸⁷ The arts program in this process plays a supportive role by providing participants with spiritual nourishment and professional support.

The survey responses reflect the variety of the experiences that the participants received as a result of their involvement in the arts program. Each of these experiences is unique. In order to clarify how the general patterns of the survey reflect the participants’ spiritual growth and leadership formation, the analysis of the data evaluates the definition and the structure of the arts program.²⁸⁸ Remaining faithful to the quintessential aspects of the Corbit/Nix-Early’s paradigm, the arts program adapts and creatively develops Corbit/Nix-Early’s paradigm into the structure, which constitutes the practical basis of the program’s activities. The adopted structural framework of the arts program integrate following three stages of the Corbit/Nix-Early’s paradigm: (1) *Critical Awareness*, when believers come to an awareness of arts as means for the expression of faith; (2) *Working Out*, when believers find the unique artistic form for the “embodiment” of their faith expression; (3) *Celebration*, when believers celebrate arts as an act of thanksgiving.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ Benjamin Zander and Rosamund Stone Zander, 26.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 19.

²⁸⁸ The definition of the program originates from the integral concept, arts as an expression of faith, which emphasizes the theo-aesthetic dimensions of the program discussed in Chapter Two. This program is structured in the frame of Corbit and Nix-Early’s theory of arts as a way of redemptive transformation, which integrates stages of *Critical Awareness*, *Working out*, and *Celebration*.

²⁸⁹ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 24. The adapted version of the Corbit and Nix-Early’s theory of arts as a means of redemptive transformation had some modification, which while serving purposes of this dissertation does not change the core aspects of the Corbit and Nix-Early’s paradigm.

Relying on the survey's data, the following work evaluates the arts program's biblical-theological dimensions and the program's structure integral to leadership formation and ecclesial transformation. Thus, this evaluation explores two areas: 1) how the survey's data satisfies biblical and theological categories described in chapter two; and 2) how the data contributes to understanding how artistic expression generates leadership development and church transformation.

Each of the following sections: *Critical Awareness of Arts as a Medium for the Expression of Faith; Working Out, or Arts as an "Embodiment" of Faith; and Celebration – Arts as an Act of Thanksgiving* reflects on the participants' experiences mindful of their spiritual growth as a most important indicator of the leadership formation.

Critical Awareness of Arts as a Medium for the Expression of Faith²⁹⁰

Critical awareness is a state of mind when a person becomes "aware" of his or her "circumstances."²⁹¹ It is the state when a person critically perceives the way she or he exists in this world. In Paulo Freire's formulation critical awareness is a state of the "critical consciousness" about life as "reality in the process of transformation" versus "static continuity."²⁹² Any person comes to the "critical consciousness" through the process of reflection on the experiences that this person receives in any given

²⁹⁰ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 128. According to J.Nathan Corbit and Vivian Nix-Early the stage of critical awareness is the "first stage of cultural preparation for change."

²⁹¹ Ibid., 65.

²⁹² Ibid., 66.

circumstances. In short, through the critical awareness person come to understanding of the particular circumstances of his or her life.²⁹³

As was already mentioned, the survey demonstrates a wide variety of the experiences. Despite the diversity of answers, one common theme consistently sounds throughout the majority of participants. Almost all of the participants come to an awareness that the arts can serve as a medium for the expression of the Christian faith.

The survey's data reflects that while participating in the arts program, the church's members come to the consciousness that arts and faith can be integrated in one "aesthetic act."²⁹⁴

I learned that music is the kind of way to express myself, so that by doing choir, I praise God. I think this process develops my sincerity to God.

It (the Arts program) has made us more aware of the music, which forms a basis of our heritage.

I experienced moments of spiritual awareness through the inspiration of the director (leader of the arts program).²⁹⁵

It is important to note that in the quotations presented above one of the participants used the word "spiritual awareness" reflecting on the experiences that this person received in the frame of the arts program. In their answers to the survey some participants indicate that arts offer a variety of modes that help them to convey the innermost aspects of their religious feelings. Participants come to realization that "music

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ John O' Donnell SJ, 23.

²⁹⁵ The survey's quotations.

and visual elements” resonate with their inner self and help them “in transition from outside world” to the elevated atmosphere of the worship service.

I’ve always felt that the visual arts help set the mood, clear the mind etc. Music and visual elements help in transition from outside world to the service. Certainly opportunities exist for a greater connection between the message and arts.²⁹⁶

The participants come to the realization that the arts create an environment, which cultivates communal spirituality and helps Christians in their discernment process.

Music always engages the congregation in a more animated manner. It makes them have the opportunity to think about the message while the ear hears the music.²⁹⁷

Artistic expressions of faith increase participants’ worship experiences. They recognize singing as a “meaningful” part of the Christian worship service.

Singing is a wonderful form of self-expression. The opportunity to learn how to do so with more effectiveness and confidence, particularly in the context of Christian worship, was quite meaningful.²⁹⁸

Some of the participants consider their involvement in the arts program as an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the Bible.

Singing certain hymns lead me to read the biblical verse from which they originated. For instance, “My Hiding Place” originated from Psalm 32. Psalm 32 is about the joy of forgiveness and the relief obtained from confession and repentance.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

Those of the participants, who just recently joined the choir, consider the arts program as a form of “spiritual development.”

Also, in general I have liked singing in church, but have not participated in choir, so participating now is spiritual development because I am offering more of my voice to worship.³⁰⁰

For some members of the Old West Church, their participation in the arts program provides spiritual “support,” which comes from in-depth contemplations and spiritual reflections.

The hymns become more meaningful as you continuously repeat the song. You find yourself singing in the workplace and thinking about the message and how it can support you in the moment.³⁰¹

The data shows that some of the participants drawing on their past experiences come to awareness that the arts program have potentials for improvements. They describe their previous involvements in the arts ministry indicating additional avenues that may make arts program more effective in addressing specific topics presented in the context of the Bible.

Over the years, I have led/organized women to offer scripture drama, presenting scripture reading dramatically during March to celebrate Women’s History Month. Also, I created and presented “Women of the Bible” drama with each woman playing the part of one woman from the Bible.

The data demonstrates that the theo-aesthetic vision of the role of arts in the life of faith comes to the participants as a result of their active involvement in the program and is an outcome of spiritual growth. This growth is evident in the participants “critical

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

consciousness” about life as a “reality in the process of transformation” versus “static” continuity.³⁰² The data reflects the participants’ experiences and how these experiences shape their understanding of the particular circumstances of life.³⁰³

I personally feel that we create a barrier to young people’s faith journey when we insist on singing 18th and 19th century hymns full of symbols and code language that makes no sense. I have the training to translate but also find some of language repulsive and damaging, not true to the life of a 21st century Christian living in global community.

From the aforementioned responses it is evident that involvement in the arts program helps participants to discern the variety of ways that arts impact spiritual life of their congregation. For example, participants learn to think about the “message while the ear hears the music.”³⁰⁴ Also, they become “aware of the music” as a “basis” of their Christian heritage.³⁰⁵ Seeing arts as a “wonderful form” of “self-expression,” participants acquire a critical consciousness regarding the devotional aspect of their arts ministry.³⁰⁶ They see arts as a means of manifesting their faith. In other words, they see arts as a way to communicate externally what they think and feel as believers in Christ.

The awareness of arts as a medium for the faith expression leads participants to the realization of a “greater connection between the message and arts.”³⁰⁷ This experience

³⁰² J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 66.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ The survey’s quotation.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

of limitlessness in the process of artistic faith expression is reminiscent to von Balthasar's discussion of the transcendental properties, in which beauty is associated with the possibilities of "ever more."³⁰⁸ Von Balthasar describes an aesthetic pleasure as an "incomprehensible observation" of the reality of essence that leaves us with the feeling that the essence that appears is "ever more" than it is perceived in the immediate appearance.³⁰⁹ The embodiment of faith in an artistic form and its manifestation to the world leaves participants of the arts program with the feeling of a greater connections and possibilities, or in the words of von Balthasar, with the feeling of "ever more" in relation to their faith and its artistic expression.

The data shows that the participants' involvement in the arts program is a meaningful ministry and part of their spiritual development. They see arts as a means to praise God and develop their "sincerity to God."³¹⁰ At this point it is vital to refer to the biblical examples of the use of arts presented in chapter two of this dissertation. In the *Song of Solomon*, the book of *Psalms*, *Mary's Song of Praise*, *Zechariah's Prophecy*, and *Song of Simeon* one may find the analogous illustration of the use of arts as a means to praise God in a sincere gratitude for God's abundant grace. Drawing parallels between the people of the Bible and the participants of the arts program, it is noticeable that they resemble each other in their use of arts as an expression of love and adoration toward God. In both cases the sincerity of this expression and its origins found in the depth of the

³⁰⁸ Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 224.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 223.

³¹⁰ The survey's quotation.

believers' faith. The desire to praise God comes to the believers through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit prompts the believers to discern God's grace, to experience it, and to express their gratefulness toward God through the variety of arts.

The "moments of spiritual awareness" that the participants describe in their survey responses points to the depth and intensity of the spiritual process that takes place in their lives in connection with their involvement in the arts program.³¹¹ Their thoughts regarding arts' power to "set the mood," and to have a "clear mind" in the process of the transitioning from "outside the world" to the worship service reveal the organic connection between the participants' aesthetic and theological visions.³¹²

One may see from the results of the survey that the involvement in the program develops aesthetic and spiritual dimensions of the participants' lives. The spiritual growth comes to the participants as a result of their inward and outward journey. Contemplating the mystery of faith by means of artistic idioms, participants draw out their religious imagination or, in the words of von Balthasar, they have an opportunity to see the arts through the "eyes of faith."³¹³ In the context of the arts program through the power of the Holy Spirit, believers form their "eyes of faith," and the *Christian senses* which are able not only to recognize the beauty of God, but also to interpret the variety of ways God reveals God's beauty to the world.³¹⁴ Through the "eyes of faith" and the freedom of

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 29.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

God's revelation, Christians are able to experience the beauty of the Christian faith embodied in a variety of arts.

Seeing arts as a “wonderful form” of “self-expression” in relation to God, participants acquire a “critical consciousness” regarding the devotional aspect of their arts ministry.³¹⁵ They recognize arts as a means to manifest their faith, or in other words, they see arts as a way to communicate externally what they think and feel as believers of Christ. From their responses, it is evident that involvement in the arts program helps participants to form theo-aesthetic vision and to integrate arts and theology in one theo-aesthetic action. This process makes Christians more active in service to God and to each other thereby leading them to the *Working Out* part of the arts program.

Working Out, or Arts as an “Embodiment” of Faith³¹⁶

The desire to express the emotional component of their religious experience along with its rationality motivates the participants of the arts program to explore arts as way to convey the complex reality of their faith. *Working out* part of the arts program invites participants to find concrete artistic forms for the expression of their faith. This part of the program engages participants to find an “embodiment,” or in other words, an individually chosen artistic form for the expression of their faith.³¹⁷ Some participants not only know what kind of arts they will use for the expression of faith, but also have had

³¹⁵ The survey's quotation.

³¹⁶ Stone, 139.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

some training in it. However, some of the participants come to the program to explore their opportunities. The arts program offers a variety of arts, so that participants are able to find their unique way of expressing themselves in relation to God.

The arts at Old West have given an opportunity to the untrained to have structure and exposure to music, vocal and instrumental.³¹⁸

Along with the selection of concrete forms for the artistic expression of faith, the arts program provides training that helps believers to attain the necessary skills and techniques.

I learned about singing technique through the warm-up exercises and learned some techniques for increasing emotional impact upon the audience through the coaching of the director.³¹⁹

The survey's responses provide an insight on the complexity of the work that participants have to accomplish in order to prepare themselves for the participation in the worship service. They not only offer their talents, but also reflect on the outcomes of their work. Some of the responses demonstrate that participants analyze arts' ability to influence the atmosphere and the flow of the worship service.

I think our more successful pieces were the 4/4 time that we could sway to the music. The Easter Cantata offered the most variety of music. The processional is a definite marker for the beginning of meditation. We must continue to do some hymn teaching on a consistent basis so the congregation can feel connected and confident even we are not there to sing.³²⁰

³¹⁸ The survey's quotation.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

The data shows the variety of the participants' opinions about the arts programs' capacity to bring together theological and aesthetic dimensions in the context of the worship service. Along with the positive responses, which were presented above, the data also reveals a number of criticisms.

Some of the participants indicate that they are not satisfied with the music and arts selection in connection with the Scripture reading for any particular worship service. The participants indicate that they see more opportunities in arts and theology integration with the purpose of helping the congregation to deepen their understanding of the word of God. Answering question regarding the weaknesses of the program, one of the participants notice that he or she would like to see more correlation between the biblical readings from the lectionary and music selected for the given worship service.

I think choosing music, which corresponds succinctly with the biblical readings from the lectionary would aid the congregation in explicating the meaning of God's word and assist in worship through its spiritual celebration. Also a blind adherence to order can be limiting, following the lectionary often allows the music to correspond also to the time of year in the church.³²¹

Another participant writes that he or she would like to see more planning for the arts program's outreach ministry. This participant also indicates that the program needs to broaden its ministry by diversifying the artistic forms of expression. This participant writes that arts program:

Need more visual arts and other forms like poetry, drama, dance, other instruments beside organ and piano. Also, Singers is a small group, keeping sung music going 52 weeks a year is big challenge. Have not done outreach to community to recruit new

³²¹ Ibid.

singers. Need a plan for it. Also, we have talked about an art exhibit of members' work which could be very interesting. I will share a couple of my painting.

The criticism presented above reveals participants' interest to the arts program ministry. The data shows that they plan to grow this ministry and make it more efficient. They reflect on the arts program's theological and artistic dimensions, demonstrating their theo-aesthetic perspective on the role of arts in the life faith.

From the participants' responses it is evident that the artistic proclamation of faith requires a lot of preparation. Participants make a commitment to reach a certain level of excellence in their artistic presentations. This commitment requires time, effort, and spiritual devotion. As the survey's quotations show, the participants devote a lot of their creative and spiritual energy to make their artistic expression of faith memorable and meaningful.

The data demonstrates that the learning of "singing technique" and the "techniques for increasing emotional impact upon the audience" are essential parts of the arts program's structure. The acquired artistic skills and techniques allow participants to reach confidence and flexibility in their artistic faith expression. At the same time the survey reveals that the participants are interested in developing their artistic skills for a particular reason. As the data shows, the participants see the goal of their artistic development in the prospect of "explicating the meaning of God's word" through the variety of the artistic idioms. The participants indicate that selected music, "which corresponds succinctly with the biblical readings," explicates the meaning of the word of God enhancing the "spiritual celebration" of the Gospel.

Participants' vision of the role of arts in the life of the faith resonates with Howard W. Stone's theory of the broadening of pastoral experience presented in his *The Word of God and Pastoral Care*. Stone indicates that the "Spirit's revelation occurs as the word of God is embodied."³²² He indicates that God is revealed in both spoken and visible forms and that the "embodiment" of the word of God through the visible, audible, and sensible forms of arts highlight the transcendent and transforming dimensions of the Gospel in a new way that allows members of the church to broaden their understanding of the Gospel.³²³

The arts program incorporates people who have chosen a Christian form of life which includes arts as a way to communicate to God. In this context von Balthasar's philosophical terms demonstrate that the artistic expression of faith comes from "within" the participants' souls and manifests the depth of their Christian faith. In this manifestation, the presentational aspect or, in other words, the artistic forms and the skillfulness of these forms' presentation are organically connected with the participants' faith experience. Therefore, the totality of this artistic faith manifestation incorporates God's grace, faith, and faith's artistic expression in one relational complex. By integrating theology and aesthetics, the participants of the arts program generate a new level of expressiveness that unites faith and beauty in one theo-aesthetic act.

From the context of the participants' responses it is evident that in the process of self-communication in relation to God participants do not separate artistic faith's

³²² Stone, 139.

³²³ Ibid, 58.

expression from the inner experience of the Christian faith. The artistic skills are essential part of the participants' artistic communication in relation to God, and they are organically interconnected with the participants' faith. Von Balthasar's aesthetical concepts are helpful in providing a theoretical insight for this complex phenomenon.

Von Balthasar's philosophical terms such as "form" and "splendor," "interiority and its communication," "the soul and its body," and "the figure and that which shines forth from the figure," explicates the fundamental nature of human beings reflected in their communication with God and with the world.³²⁴ The aforementioned philosophical terms conceive how artistic forms, as a means of the believers' communication with God, originate in the believers' fundamental nature and, when directed to God, manifest the depth of their faith. Through their participation in the arts program Christians are able to find a special way to manifest or, as von Balthasar says, to "express and reflect" their inner belief to the world in a very special way.³²⁵ In this process the "exterior" and the "interior" are interconnected and interdependent.

The survey reveals that the process of the "embodiment" of the Christian faith in a variety of artistic forms is a spiritual and at the same time practical process. Participants offer their talents, learn new skills, and also analyze arts' influence on the worship service. It is a complex enterprise that requires spiritual discernment, commitment, and hard work. In the course of this work participants of the arts program develop their artistic skills and experience spiritual renewal. The practical realization of the two

³²⁴ Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 20.

³²⁵ Ibid.

previously described constituencies of the arts program – *awareness* and *working out* – brings participants to the *celebration* part of the program.

Celebration – Arts as an Act of Thanksgiving

The survey demonstrates that after the participants of the arts program have expressed their faith through a variety of artistic forms, they experience fulfillment and joy.

The most amazing experience for me in being part of the Old West Singers is when we process down the aisle at the beginning of service and when we sing, is seeing people in the congregation smile and when they express their appreciation for our gift of song.

I like singing hymns on Sunday and feel that music enhances worship and the revelation of God and God’s word to the individual in worship.³²⁶

The experience of fulfillment and joy comes to the participants from the opportunity to praise God and also from the opportunity to serve their congregants.

I had sung hymns from it in the past, but at those times not being familiar with the hymns was an impediment to celebrating the music to its fullest extent. In the future, I will be more familiar with the music and better able to guide other congregants simply by knowing how to sing the music and singing it with the congregation.³²⁷

The participants indicate that the celebrative mode comes to them not as a result of their personal performance and accomplishments, but mostly from the interpersonal communication and ability to “express personal and community beliefs and

³²⁶ The survey’s quotations.

³²⁷ Ibid.

values” through their artistic presentations.³²⁸

All in congregation seemed to be uplifted on a more spiritual level. I feel music changes the way people go about their lives. On Sundays when the choir sings, I can hear some members of the congregation humming the choir songs after the service as well as some of the regular hymns. Even I on occasion found myself humming the tunes we learned in choir.³²⁹

Amazing experience, appreciation, enhancement, uplifting, change – these are the words from the participants’ survey responses presented above. Usually people use them when they are in the celebrative mode. The words summarize the participants’ experience of being a part of the arts program, or to be more precise, the experience of being in communication with God and God’s people through the gift of arts. The survey demonstrates that the sense of joy and an aesthetic delight originates from many factors.

One of them is seeing that “people in the congregation smile” expressing their “appreciation” for the “gift of song.”³³⁰ Another is the participants’ feeling that “music enhances worship,” and also enhances the “revelation of God and God’s word to the individual in worship.”³³¹ One more motive of being celebrative comes to the participants from the observation that as a result of the arts program’s ministry “all in congregation seemed to be uplifted on a more spiritual level.”³³² Perhaps the most important factor for

³²⁸ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 34.

³²⁹ The survey’s quotation.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid.

celebration is the participants' recognition that "music changes the way people go about their lives."³³³

The entire array of the arts programs' activities, which integrates three stages of spiritual transformation – *critical awareness*, *working out*, and *celebration* – creates a medium for the participants' spiritual growth necessary for leadership development.

Analysis: Indicators of Laity Development toward Leadership

The survey demonstrates that the opportunity to express themselves in relation to God by means of arts empowers participants of the program to grow spiritually in relation to God, to each other, and to the community.

Now, it is vital to consider participants' spiritual growth in search for the leadership development indicators. Following pages of this chapter reflects on how the arts program affects participants' leadership qualities such as vision, self-awareness, personal empowerment, and ability for the effective communication.³³⁴ The following sections present each of the aforementioned indicators and analysis of the survey data in search for these indicators. The study will examine whether the participants' experiences substantiate the proposed thesis of this dissertation.³³⁵

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ The three fold structure integrates *critical awareness*, *working out*, and *celebration* stages of the arts program.

³³⁵ The goal of this thesis is to demonstrate that arts program has potential to create an environment that develops leadership qualities.

Vision

Cultivation of a common vision among people is one of the most important tasks of effective leadership. Leaders must have and share a vision that reflects the aspirations of their followers in order to coordinate people's actions for pursuing collective goals. As Cartmill and Gentile rightly point out: "worthy visions do that – they move and engage us. They inspire us to action."³³⁶ Furthermore, a leader's vision captures in itself a picture of the anticipated future and at the same time reflects conditions of the present reality.³³⁷ In other words, a leader's vision links together the current state of being with the future destination of the common journey. This part of the dissertation reflects on how the involvement in the arts program helps participants to form their theological vision.

"I feel the sense of the grace" writes one of the participants about the arts programs' spiritual environment. The grace of God is apprehended and praised by the believers; this grace, in a sense, becomes the participants' vision as they visualize God's grace in the arts. Participants of the program write that artistic modes of expression integrate intellectual and emotional aspects of their faith experience. This integration helps participants to articulate their relationship with God in a unique way.

Visual and performing arts are personal expressions of my relationship to God and are important doorways for emotional expression which includes but goes beyond my intellectual clarity.³³⁸

³³⁶ Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile, 46.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ The survey's quotation.

The affinity between the arts and spirituality allows participants to “spark the religious imagination and enrich personal experiences of the sacred.”³³⁹ These experiences “draw people closer to God, often by expressing what cannot be put into words.”³⁴⁰ One of the participants attends to this phenomenon by writing:

The arts program is like a meditation. It builds our minds and cultivates our life abundantly. Like the little piece of picture or CD, the arts program, can build the team spirit and be a communication with God.³⁴¹

Artistic forms create a channel through which the truth, the goodness, and the beauty of the Christian faith manifest themselves to the world in a unique way. This expression of faith arouses in the participants a sense of “aesthetic pleasure” and beauty.³⁴² This beauty includes both, aesthetical and theological dimensions, and points to the presence of God in the life of the program’s participants.

I feel closer with God on a more personal level. When I was a child, I feared God. That fear lingered inside me always. Now, I see God as someone who is more magical and someone who is so amazing to have created such beauty on earth and the universe. A God who is always patient, living and kind.³⁴³

The external artistic manifestations are inseparable from the content of the participants’ Christian faith. The aesthetic qualities of arts serve as a medium, which allows Christians to articulate their inner religious convictions. The artistic forms, as a

³³⁹ Robert Wuthnow, xiv.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ The survey’s quotation.

³⁴² Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 223.

³⁴³ The survey’s quotation.

means of the interaction between God and God's believers, express the depth of the believers' faith.

In my experience, the art program plays a role to fortify understanding of theology. This is because the area of theology is very abstract thing. In this sense, the area of faith might close to people as the abstract thing. However, through the arts program, people who can believe Christianity indirectly experience the doctrine of Christianity and also improve the sense of appreciation.³⁴⁴

The reflections cited above present vision of many arts program's participants.

This vision integrates theological and aesthetic dimensions revealing participants' present reality and their future aspirations. At the center of this vision is an ongoing circle of communication between God's grace and the believer's faith. Theological foundation for this circle of communication originates in the participants' awareness that God's grace is continuously present in their lives.

The survey demonstrates that participants' theological perspectives embrace not only *vertical* theology of arts that emphasizes arts as a means to praise God, but also *horizontal* theology. Complimentary to the vertical theology, horizontal theology considers arts as a means to love God, and also as a means to love our neighbors.³⁴⁵ Horizontal theology embraces the new concept of the arts as a medium for transformation and renewal.³⁴⁶ Some of the participants indicate that through their involvement in the

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 20.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 24. Corbit and Nix-Early consider the arts as a means of redemptive transformation that leads to both personal empowerment and responsibility, and communal and societal transformation.

arts program they “built the sense of the community” coming to an awareness of their religious belonging. The survey shows that participation in the arts program fosters “spiritual awareness,” develop “sense of community,” and leads participants to experience “joy” and fulfillment in their lives.

Based on my experience, the strengths of the art program are developing a sense of community among the participants, fostering spiritual awareness within the participants and inspiring joy in the participants and the audience.³⁴⁷

The survey’s data shows that in the course of their involvement in the arts program, participants accumulate a sense of spiritual belonging, shared values, and common goals. This perspective accentuates the common experience and common vision of being a body of Christ united by the Holy Spirit. While experiences described by the participants are very concrete, together they present an extensive vision of the Christian faith. Like pieces of a kaleidoscope, each of the participants’ perspectives, when united together, form a vision of the Christian community that represents a “God-inspired picture of the future.”³⁴⁸

This communal vision is an essential part of leadership formation. Vision forms values and defines leader’s goals. In addition to the theological vision, an effective Christian leader must possess personal leadership qualities that inspire and mobilize Christians in their journey of faith.³⁴⁹ The following section of this evaluation reflects on

³⁴⁷ The survey’s quotation.

³⁴⁸ Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile, 48.

³⁴⁹ The definition of the leadership development is presented in page 96 of this dissertation.

the arts program's ability to provide an environment that encourages participants' self-awareness.³⁵⁰

Self-awareness³⁵¹

The task to inspire and mobilize coordinated actions guiding believers in their faith's journey requires from the Christian leaders special qualities. Cultivating among people common vision, Christian leaders have to be aware of their personal "strengths" and "weakness."³⁵² They also have to be aware of the way "they are perceived by others."³⁵³ Ability for self-reflection allows leaders to understand how they "see the world," why they are doing what they are doing, and how their actions affect others.³⁵⁴

While answering the survey questionnaire, arts program's participants had an opportunity for self-reflection. The participants were presented with the following questions: (1) How did the art program influence your sense of self-awareness and help you in the process of self-expression? and (2) Was spiritual development part of your experience? These questions about the personal change lead the participants to encounter themselves and analyze how the participation in the arts program affected their personal development and spiritual growth. Through this self-reflective process participants came

³⁵⁰ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 24. The dynamics of this concept integrate personal empowerment, self awareness, and self-expression that identify the means for leadership formation.

³⁵¹ Paula J. Caproni, 3. According to Caproni self-awareness is "an understanding of one's styles, strengths, and weakness, as well as how one is perceived by others."

³⁵² Ibid., 26.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 295.

to the self-awareness that involvement in the program nurtured in them a “greater self confidence.”³⁵⁵ They also came to the realization that by participating in the program they became “less reserved” and learned “how to stay humbled.”³⁵⁶

Participants also made some observations in regard to “how they are perceived by others.”³⁵⁷ In their survey responses participants write about their impressions of how they think the congregants responded to their artistic expressions of faith in the context of the worship services. Participants noticed that they may be praised by others, that “everyone seems to enjoy every piece [they] sing,” and appreciate their “effort to be there every week.”³⁵⁸

The way participants experienced self-awareness is different. In some cases it came from learning new artistic techniques and skills.

I have learned techniques and gained confidence in my ability to sing before an audience. My voice is not traditional. I have a low register for most pieces but the ability to sing with others has been enhanced.³⁵⁹

In other cases the better knowledge of her or his inner self came to the participants as a result of a new perspective on the role of arts in the life of faith and encouragement from the program’s leader.

³⁵⁵ The survey’s quotation.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Paula J. Caproni, 26.

³⁵⁸ The survey’s quotations.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

It is different to stand up in front of everyone and hold yourself out as an expert in singing. The principle is the same: we still offer our voice to the explication of God's word through worship and gift that is the ability to sing. The Minister of Music has made participation in Old West Singers less intimidating. She has made it clear that it is more shameful to hide one's voice than to sing.³⁶⁰

Some participants experienced an increase in confidence as a result of becoming aware of their potentials. The consciousness regarding their talents and gifts led them to the acknowledgment of the "greater contribution" that they "can make to the congregation."³⁶¹

The art program has helped me become less reserved about my ability to sing and more aware of a greater contribution that I can make to the congregation. Also, I began participating in the fellowship of the art program and have become less reserved.³⁶²

The awareness of "how one is perceived by others" brought some participants to the experience of humbleness,³⁶³

I learned how to be grateful for my accomplishments and how to stay humbled when glorified by others.³⁶⁴
Or, in some cases showed the participant the next step for his or her personal development.

I gained confidence in singing before an audience. I am still training to find the right register for my voice, the most comfortable.³⁶⁵

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Paula J. Caproni, 3.

³⁶⁴ The survey's quotation.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

From the context of the participants responses it is obvious that the increased self-confidence generated in them joy and self-fulfillment.

Certainly the music (solo) provided greater self confidence.
 Enjoyed bringing music from the church in which I grew up to Old West. Contribute to diversity of church.

There has been a lot of risk-taking by members performing.
 Everyone seems to enjoy every piece we sing and our effort to be t here every week.³⁶⁶

All together the quotations cited above reveal participants' understanding about the goals of the arts program and the reason why they are taking part in bringing program's goals to reality. Participants demonstrate awareness that their artistic offerings to God serve others' congregants and contribute to the "diversity of church."³⁶⁷ Self-awareness acquired through the involvement in the arts program, lead participants to experience personal empowerment.

Personal empowerment³⁶⁸

It had been noticed that when people feel empowered they "believe that they can influence" their environment.³⁶⁹ This belief "motivates" people to take "actions that have

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Paula J. Caproni, 258. Empowerment refers to the personal belief that person "can have an impact" on the environment.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 258.

an impact on their environment.”³⁷⁰ According to Caproni, this believe influence people “to create an active rather than passive orientation” in regard to their lives.³⁷¹

We, as human beings, do not have the capacity to empower people. However, we have the capacity to create an empowering environment. The survey demonstrates that arts program creates an environment that leads Christians to experience *personal empowerment* within psychological, physical, educational, and spiritual aspects of their personal and community lives.

Personal empowerment comes to the participants of the program as an awareness of God’s presence in their lives. The assurance that “God will always stay close” affects psychological wellbeing of the participants and empowers them to “face the new challenges.”³⁷²

I now have to fear to face the new challenges that will come my way as I pursuit my life in music and art. I feel that God will always stay close to me because I know he did not provide me with talents for me to waste but to share with others through his(God’s) glory.³⁷³

The involvement in the arts program also has a positive impact on the physical welfare of the participants. One of the participants writes that singing makes him or her to “feel more/better.”³⁷⁴

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 224.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 225.

³⁷² The survey’s quotations

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

The arts engage me and others in a contemplative experience. I feel more/better when I sing. I just heard that some research has shown that when we sing or listen to joyous music our blood vessels relax and expand as much as 40%, the same benefit that aerobic exercise offers. I greatly prefer singing!³⁷⁵

The survey shows that participants experience personal empowerment through the deeper understanding of the particular musical styles and religious texts. This newly obtained perspective enhances participants' spirituality and ability for an aesthetic appreciation.

It (arts program) has helped me in terms of understanding more the lyrics and meanings of certain hymns. The style that a hymn can be sung sets its' spiritual tone.³⁷⁶

While the quotations above implicitly demonstrate that the participation in the arts program empowers Christians to grow spiritually, the following quotations demonstrate this process in an explicit way. In their responses participants refer to the experiences of compassion, patience, and humility that reflect the deepest inner transformations of a Christ-like character.

I learned to be a better listener and the enjoyment of helping others empowered me to self fulfill my own growth as a musician and an artist.

While participating in the arts program, I discovered the reality of being patient and that even though I may always strive for perfection, its okay if some things are not perfect.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ The survey's quotations.

From the citations quoted above one may perceive that the arts program “create conditions” that inspire participants’ empowerment.³⁷⁸ In the context of the arts program this inspiration comes from the program’s aspiration, which is glorification of God. Through the power of the Holy Spirit participants grow in the image of God. This growth reveals itself through the participants’ survey responses. Describing their involvement in the program, participants write about their “enjoyment of helping others,” desire to “always strive for perfection,” and about their motivation to “share” their talents with others.³⁷⁹ It shows that the arts program creates the environment, in which participants felt empowered and believe that they can make a positive impact on the life of their community.³⁸⁰

Communication³⁸¹

Communication has power to influence people. Organizations researches Linda Skirmish and Gareth Morgan explain that effective leaders persuade others by:

Framing experience in a way that provides a viable basis for action, e.g., by mobilizing meaning, articulating and defining what has previously remained implicit and unsaid, by inventing images and meanings that provide a focus for new attention, and by consolidation, confronting or changing prevailing wisdom.³⁸²

³⁷⁸ Paula J. Caproni, 224.

³⁷⁹ The survey’s quotations.

³⁸⁰ Paula J. Caproni, 224.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 114. In the concise Caproni’s definition “Communication creates, as well as reflects, reality.”

³⁸² Ibid., 132.

Explaining the dual nature of communication, Caproni indicates that communication “creates” and at the same time “reflects” reality.³⁸³ She writes that great leaders “communicate in ways that change people’s view of what is real, true, right, worthy, and possible.”³⁸⁴ The arts program provides a space that allows participants to communicate their worldviews and self-perceptions in relation to God. By communicating their faith through the variety of artistic forms, participants “reflect” their religious experiences and at the same time “create” a reality of God’s immediate presence.³⁸⁵

The Arts program is like a meditation. It builds our minds and cultivates our life abundantly. Like the little piece of picture or CD, the arts program, can build the team spirit and be a communication with God.³⁸⁶

By offering their artistic testimonies of faith in the context of the Christian worship service, participants extend themselves toward “external communication and toward connection.”³⁸⁷ They see their artistic expression of faith as God’s “gift” that they are called to share “with others.”³⁸⁸

³⁸³ Ibid., 114.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ The survey’s quotation. This quotation was already introduced in the context of this dissertation, however, the explicit multidimensionality of this quotation allows also to exemplify it in this particular context of the evaluation.

³⁸⁷ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 215.

³⁸⁸ The survey’s quotations.

Singing is a gift that keeps on giving and for that, I'm truly grateful and forever in God's debt for allowing me to be part of such a wonderful group and being able to share my love of God through singing and sharing my/our "gift" with others.³⁸⁹

This survey demonstrates that participation in the arts program makes a positive impact on the way Christians communicate to others.

I feel participation in the Old West Singers has made me kinder to strangers and more charitable. It has helped me lighten my mood in relating to people.³⁹⁰

The responses reveal that artistic expression of faith integrates both intellectual and emotional aspects of the participants' communication with God.

Visual and performing arts are personal expressions of my relationship to God and are important doorways for emotional expression which includes but goes beyond my intellectual clarity.³⁹¹

From the context of the participants' responses it becomes obvious that in the frame of the arts program participants have opportunity to communicate their faith in a very special way, through the variety of the artistic forms. By uniting theological and aesthetic aspects of their faith, participants are able to communicate the rational and emotional aspects of the faith experience. This way of faith's communication has power to influence people. In their survey responses participants describe this influence as

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

follows: “All in congregation seemed to be uplifted on a more spiritual level.”³⁹²

Participants also feel that “music changes the way people go about their lives.”³⁹³ All together, the survey demonstrates that in the frame of the arts program participants have opportunity to increase their communicative leadership skills through the practice of the artistic expression of faith.

Synthesis & Conclusion

The significance of the arts program is in its capacity to create the “right culture or environment,” in which the Holy Spirit leads the participants to grow in the likeness of Christ.³⁹⁴ The survey demonstrates that participants of the arts program in the process of their artistic faith’s expression experience spiritual growth. While undergoing the *Critical Awareness*, *Working Out*, and *Celebration* stages of the program’s structure, the participants liberate themselves from the “inner captivity.”³⁹⁵ This process of redemptive transformation allows participants to experience self-awareness, personal empowerment, and improved ability for communication. This positive change cultivates participants’ leadership qualities and expands participants’ vision about their own potentials. As a result of this new vision and increase in self-awareness, personal empowerment, and

³⁹² The survey’s quotation.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile, 14.

³⁹⁵ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 228.

communication skills participants activate their involvement in the life of the congregation.

In the survey responses participants demonstrate that through the involvement in the arts program they develop a “sense of community,” experience “spiritual awareness,” and “joy.”³⁹⁶ One of the participants gave the following evaluation of the arts program:

Based on my experience, the strengths of the art program are developing a sense of community among the participants, fostering spiritual awareness within the participants and inspiring joy in the participants and the audience.³⁹⁷

The responses to the survey’s question “What plans do you have for your future participation in the life of the church?” demonstrate that the participants plan to increase their involvement in the life of the church. Almost all of the participants expressed the desire to continue their involvement in the arts program.³⁹⁸ In addition to being a part of the arts program, participants plan to expand their commitments to other ministries and missions of the Old West Church. The list of the responsibilities to which participants have made commitment is long and diverse. For example, some of them are planning to volunteer at the West End Drop-In Center, which provides food for the homeless people

³⁹⁶ The survey’s quotations.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ In the survey’s responses participants confirm their commitment to the arts program through following statements: “I plan to sing in the choir often;” “I will keep participating in the choir and if there will be any activity in the church, I will participate in it;” “I would enjoy continued participation in ensemble singing, now with a greater sense of confidence.” Some of the participants also plan to increase their connection with the world of music by attending organ recitals: “I will attend the organ recital concerts series at Old West in the summer.”

of Boston. Other participants have short-term and long-term plans that include responsibilities for environmental improvements and evangelism.

I plan to continue to sing, serve as liturgist, preach at least once a year, help organize new mission efforts. When I am no longer working full-time I can take on additional responsibilities especially around developing a “green-living” effort and perhaps alternatives to Sunday morning that will engage more people who work and study in the neighborhood.³⁹⁹

The tasks that participants are planning to perform in the future spread to almost all ministries of the Old West Church. Christians confirm their increased interest and commitments in claiming: “I will continue participation in the visual arts, greeting, counting, and meals program;” “In addition to being a regular member of the choir, I am also church treasurer. I will continue in both.”⁴⁰⁰ The survey also reveals that among some participants’ this increased commitment spreads beyond the regular ministries of the local church. One of the participants received a spiritual call to an Ordained Ministry and will be applying for graduate School in order to become a United Methodist Minister.⁴⁰¹

In conclusion, it is important to note that none of us is born as a leader. People become leaders. The word “become” in this context means that that people are growing into the leadership. This is especially relevant for the Christian Church, where leadership first of all means care and love towards others. The Christian concept of the servant

³⁹⁹ An anonymous quotation from the survey.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

leadership implies that leader's most important responsibility is to serve God and God's people. If the disciple of Christ in the course of this service reveals the ability to cultivate people's vision and provide guidance in their journey of faith, this disciple may indeed become a leader.

As the survey demonstrates the significance of the arts program is in its ability to create an environment, which motivates the disciples of Christ to discover and develop their leadership potential. The program provides a place in which participants grow in their relationship to God and their sisters and brothers in Christ.⁴⁰² The program fosters the spirit of commitment and dedication to the Christian values in which servanthood provides the foundation for the development of the leadership qualities.

Through the service to God and God's people participants grow in the likeness of Christ, form their theological vision, and develop their leadership qualities. Participants' devotion and increase in excellence is a "concrete expression of commitment and hope for a more thriving congregation."⁴⁰³ Empowered by the Holy Spirit, participants of the arts program become "instruments of God" leading Christians of the Old West Church in their journey of the Christian faith.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰² J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 64.

⁴⁰³ The survey's quotation.

⁴⁰⁴ Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile, 13.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHURCH TRANSFORMATION

Introduction

The analysis of the survey in chapter three established that the involvement in the arts program motivates participants' spiritual growth and develops their leadership qualities. The analysis framed in Corbit and Nix-Early's theory of arts as a means of redemptive transformation. This theory integrates three stages of development *Critical Awareness*, *Working Out*, and *Celebration*. Creatively developed for the arts program's purposes, the Corbit/Nix-Early's paradigm helped to highlight the transformational process that is integral part of the arts program's ministry.

The survey's analysis in chapter three demonstrated that in the stage of the *critical awareness* participants reflect upon the role of arts in their spiritual life. They discover new talents and make commitments to advance the newly discovered talents in service to God and their community.

This commitment leads participants to the *working out* stage of the program. In this stage participants begin the process of preparation that reflects in setting the goals and strategizing the concrete ways of these goals implementation. When the preparatory part of the program is completed the participants reach the celebration stage of the program's structure. They present their artistic expression of faith during the worship

service as an offertory to God.⁴⁰⁵

These developments also established that in the context of their involvement in the arts program participants discover and develop their leadership potential. Following the program's threefold structure, participants develop their leadership qualities such as vision, self-awareness, personal empowerment, and ability for the effective communication.⁴⁰⁶

Ultimately, the spiritual growth and leadership development presented in chapter three reflects personal changes, that is, personal transformation of the arts program's participants. Along with the aforementioned indicators of the participants' personal transformation, the data also indicates changes that take place in the life of the entire Old West community.

This chapter discusses ecclesial transformation in the Old West Church, which is closely related to the process of the leadership formation. The chapter analyzes how the theological dimensions of the arts program create an environment that helps Christians to develop their leadership qualities and guides the entire Old West community in holistic transformation. While the previous chapter has focused on the personal transformation of the arts program's participants, this chapter explores how this process affects the communal life at the Old West Church. This chapter considers the relational aspects of the arts program's ministry as a facilitating factor in the process of the personal and communal transformation.

⁴⁰⁵ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 24 and 67.

⁴⁰⁶ The three-fold structure integrates *critical awareness*, *working out*, and *celebration* stages of the arts program.

To explore the signs of the ecclesial transformation, this chapter primary relies on the participant's responses to the following questions from the general questionnaire:

1. Based on your experience what would you say are the strengths of the arts program?
2. What have you learned from this participation?
3. What kind of changes in the life of the congregation, if any, have you noticed after arts' integration into the Old West Church?
4. Was spiritual development part of your experience while you have participated in arts program? If the answer is yes, please describe this experience.
5. In what ways has arts program prepared you to apply your new skills in your personal life, in the life of the Old West Church, and larger community?

The participants' responses have been arranged in a way that specifically highlights the participants' experience of change in the context of their involvement in the arts program. First, this chapter will discuss transformation as a process of positive change. Drawing on the definition of transformation and the survey's data this chapter considers ecclesial transformation as an outcome of an "*ongoing relationship*" that constitutes arts program's operational structure.⁴⁰⁷ Then, after defining transformation and analyzing the survey's data, this chapter examines six facets of an "ongoing relationship," which are the foundational elements of the arts program's organization and

⁴⁰⁷ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 58. The concept of an "ongoing relationship" comes from J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early book *Taking It to the Streets*. In this concept the authors emphasize the relational aspect in the process of transformation. This dissertation develops Corbit and Nix-Early's theory of "ongoing relationship" by creatively applying this theory to the context of the arts program. This developed model creates a system of "ongoing relationship" that explains the dynamics of the transformation in the context of the arts program and also in the context of the larger community.

at the same time integral part of the ecclesial transformation. Thus, this chapter presents each of the facets of the “ongoing relationship” and describes how the transforming dynamics of these facets relate to the ecclesial transformation of the Old West community.

Definition of Transformation

In this dissertation, transformation is identified with the “intentional process of bringing about change in the world.”⁴⁰⁸ The word “process” in the context of this definition is important, since it implies people’s intentional work, time, and to some degree their determination. In the context of the Christian faith, ecclesial transformation is a holistic process. This process manifests itself in Christians’ experience of being “spiritually renewed” and “given new vision and power of capacity to live in harmony with God, themselves, one another, and their environment.”⁴⁰⁹ This holistic approach indicates that transformation must take place within all aspects of human life including its psychological, physical, and spiritual dimensions.⁴¹⁰

The arts program’s significance is in creating an environment that brings positive change in many aspects of the participants’ lives. The survey demonstrates that through their involvement in the program participants transform their vision about themselves and other congregants. Involvement in the arts helps participants to “develop self-awareness

⁴⁰⁸ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 52.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 53.

and understanding and achieve a sense of self-worth.”⁴¹¹ Arts serve as a “catalyst in releasing people from inner captivity,” which allows programs’ participants to become “more deeply in touch with themselves and their behaviors.”⁴¹²

The program employs arts’ ability to “translate the emotions and intellect into form.”⁴¹³ Engaged in the arts, participants have an opportunity through the “concrete symbols” of artistic idioms to express personal and community “beliefs and values.”⁴¹⁴ Most importantly the program uses the power of arts “to transform – to change one’s life and the circumstances in which one lives.”⁴¹⁵

It is evident from the survey that as the result of the arts programs’ ministry the participants experience personal growth and develop their leadership. With all the attention given to each individual participant, the structure of the arts program is relationship oriented. It intends to help participants initiate and develop relationships with each other and with the larger community. The survey demonstrates that the relation oriented aspect of the arts program helps participants in the process of their personal transformation and also facilitates the transformational process of the entire Old West community. In their survey reflections participants often draw their personal experiences

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 219.

⁴¹² Ibid., 228 and 220.

⁴¹³ Ibid., 34.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

from the context of their relationship with other members of the congregation. This demonstrates the impact of the relational aspect of the arts program's ministry.

The aforementioned description of the arts program's ability to create an environment that helps participants to transform their lives as well as the life of their community raises questions regarding the means of this transformative process. The following sub-sections look at the survey's data with the aim to illuminate the character and the means of the transformative process at the Old West community.

Before turning to the sub-sections, it is vital to indicate that in this dissertation transformation is identified with the "positive change" initiated by the work and ministry of the Christian church.⁴¹⁶ This dissertation considers a transformational *process* as a journey, which brings people to a "responsible life through a spiritual relationship with God," with each other, and the larger community.⁴¹⁷ Therefore, transformation is not achieved "in a single moment."⁴¹⁸ From the perspective of this dissertation, transformation is a process that unfolds in the framework of an "ongoing relationship."⁴¹⁹

J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early in *Taking It to the Streets* present the concept of an "ongoing relationship" as a way of changing this world "into what it ought to be."⁴²⁰ In other words, the authors raise a question about the "good life" and how

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 53.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 58.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

people can attain it.⁴²¹ They write that Christians' spiritual worldviews have answers to these important questions. The good life in the context of the Christian faith is seen as reconciliation with God and reconciliation with "our fellow human beings."⁴²² In this process of reconciliation the authors emphasize the relational aspect as a means to transform people's lives and the lives of their communities.

The arts program adapts and develops Corbit and Nix-Early's theory of an "ongoing relationship" by creatively applying this theory to the context of the arts program's operational structure. This developed model demonstrates how through the system of "ongoing relationship" participants of the arts program experience personal transformation. This personal transformation, in turn, affects the life of their community leading the entire Old West Church in the process of holistic transformation.

The survey demonstrates that the arts program has integrated several facets of an "ongoing relationship," which positively impact the participants of the arts program and the entire Old West community. The dynamics of the "ongoing relationship" within the arts program initiate the positive change that influence participants' personal lives and, in turn, positively affects communal life of the Old West Church.⁴²³

Figure 2, presented below, demonstrates how the six facets of the "ongoing relationship" within the arts program bring a positive change into participants' lives and also into the life of the larger community. Figure 2 reflects the holistic nature of this

⁴²¹ Ibid., 56.

⁴²² Ibid., 57.

⁴²³ Ibid., 53.

transformative process demonstrating that all facets of the transformative process are interconnected in “ecology of transformation.”⁴²⁴ Each of the facets of the “ongoing relationship” has its own transforming dynamics, and, at the same time, all of them are connected in a broad web of transformation. The process, which begins with the personal changes of the arts program’s participants, leads to the transformation of the entire Old West community, and spreads the positive change even beyond the walls of the Old West Church.

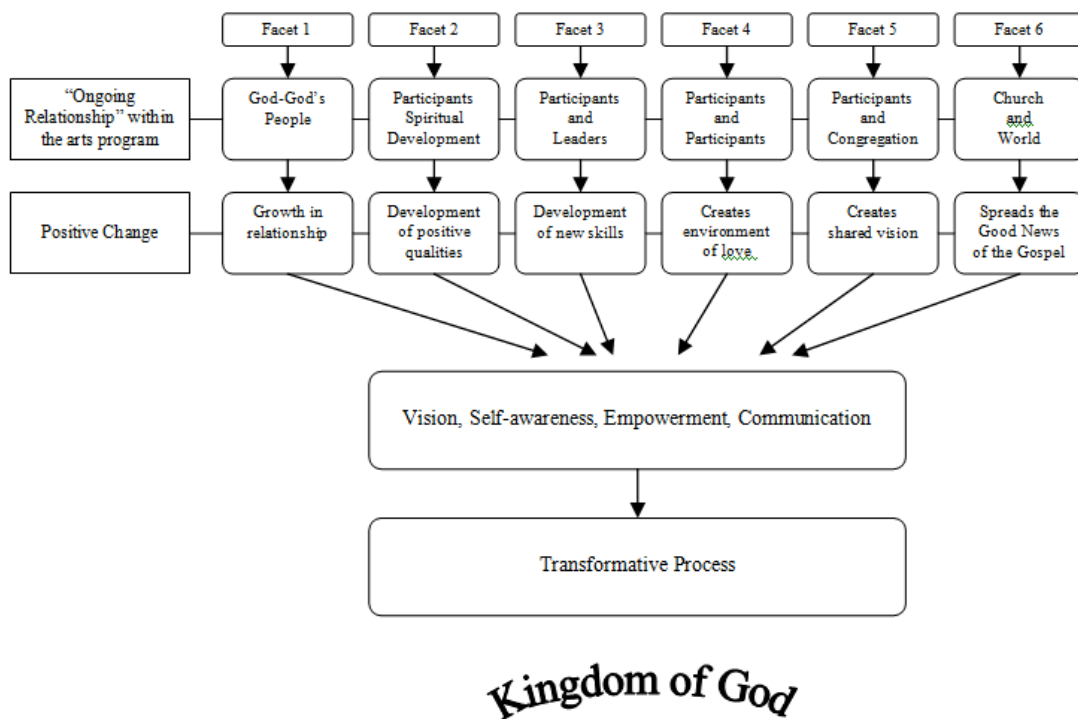
Figure 2 visually presents the multiformity of the arts program’s “ongoing relationship” and their influence on the transformational process. Figure 2 visually demonstrates that as a result of the “ongoing relationship” within the arts program, Christians experience growth in their relationship with God and with each other. The figure also shows how through the system of an “ongoing relationship” participants develop their leadership qualities and learn new skills.

The visual presentation of the “ongoing relationship” within the arts program is helpful. However, there are aspects of the “ongoing relationship” which cannot be captured by any schematic presentation. The atmosphere of love, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the common values, and shared vision are implicitly present in the context of all of the six facets of the “ongoing relationship.” These implicit aspects of the “ongoing relationship” along with the explicit aspects, which are presented in the Figure 2, create a web of the relational transformative complex. This complex allows Christians of the Old

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 54.

West Church to experience God’s transforming presence not only individually, but also collectively as a Body of Christ.

Figure 2: “Ongoing Relationship” within the arts program: How the “Ongoing Relationship” influences the process of transformation⁴²⁵



It is clear from the content of the survey that the positive changes that participants have experienced in the arts program became possible through the system of an “ongoing

⁴²⁵ The Figure 2 is inspired by the concept of an “ongoing relationship” that comes from J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early book *Taking It to the Streets*.

relationship” that constitutes the arts program’s operational structure.⁴²⁶ These relationships create the environment in which the Holy Spirit provides Christians with the capacity to be transformed and also inspires them to spread this process of positive change further to the Old West community. By analyzing participants’ data, the following sub-chapters show the varieties of “ongoing relationship” within the arts program and the positive changes that these relationships bring into the transformational process of the Old West community.

First Facet of “Ongoing Relationship” – God and God’s People

“Visual and performing arts are personal expressions of my relationship to God.” “I feel that God will always stay close to me.” These quotations from the survey indicate the most important facet of the “ongoing relationship” existing in the framework of the arts program. This relationship is between God and God’s people.

Survey responses indicate that participation in the arts program allows Old West Church members to experience God’s presence in their personal and communal lives. One of the participants attends to this phenomenon by writing, “I feel closer with God on a more personal level.”⁴²⁷ Also, the awareness of God’s presence leads some participants to experience the “team spirit,” which gives them a sense of belonging to the Christian

⁴²⁶ Corbit and Nix-Early, 54.

⁴²⁷ This quotation comes from the survey.

community: “Arts program can build the team spirit and be a communication with God.”⁴²⁸

The quotations cited above demonstrate that the arts program offers space for the continuous dialogue between God and Christian believers thereby helping participants of the arts program to grow in their relationship with God. The survey demonstrates that the expression of faith by means of artistic forms allows participants to experience the immediate presence of God. This experience transforms participants’ understanding of their relationship with God allowing them to experience closeness and the love of God. This experience also transforms participants’ relationship with their community. They come to awareness that God is present in their lives and also in the lives of other people. They come to awareness that God’s transforming presence is not limited by any boundaries spreading its transforming power to the entire Old West Church and the larger community.

Second Facet of “Ongoing Relationship” – Spiritual Development

The opportunity to express themselves in relation to God changes participants’ personal lives. This experience of personal change transforms participants’ understanding about themselves and their potential. The following statement from the survey demonstrates the dynamics of the personal change experienced by one of the participants:

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

“Singing has helped me to relieve some stress in my life and made me more jovial toward other people.”⁴²⁹

The spiritual changes experienced by the participants and their awareness of these changes indicate the second facet of the “ongoing relationship” within the arts program. This facet of relationship translates into reality within the participants’ self-reflective process. The following quotations from the survey illumine the complexity of the self-reflective process. The data shows how this new vision motivates participants’ spiritual growth that manifests itself through the participants’ acknowledgment of becoming “patient,” “kinder,” and more “charitable.”⁴³⁰

While participating in the arts program, I discovered the real meaning of being patient.

I feel participation in the Old West Singers has made me kinder to strangers and more charitable.⁴³¹

Through the self-reflective process participants come to realize God’s gracious presence in their lives. They enter new opportunities with the confidence that comes from their conviction that “God will always stay close” to them.

I now have to fear to face the new challenges that will come my way as I pursuit my life in music and art. I feel that God will always stay close to me.⁴³²

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Ibid.

In the frame of the arts program participants have opportunity to reflect on their spiritual journey in the context of the Christian faith. Looking at themselves as God’s beloved sons and daughters, Christians grow in the image of God cultivating in themselves qualities such as patience, kindness, and charity. This spiritual reflection transforms participants’ understanding about themselves and their relations to others bringing them to awareness that there are always opportunities for spiritual growth and improvement.

Third Facet of “Ongoing Relationship” – Participants and Leaders

The participants’ desire to express their faith’s experience through the variety of artistic forms needs certain skills and consequently requires an attentive help. This requirement initiates the third facet of the “ongoing relationship” of the arts program: The relationships between the participants and the leaders of the program.

I have learned techniques and gained confidence in my ability to sing before an audience.⁴³³

The data demonstrates that through the “ongoing relationship” with the program’s leaders, participants develop their skills and formulate new vision about the role of arts in the life of faith.⁴³⁴ The survey data shows that some of the participants were afraid to sing. They had perceived singing as an “intimidating” practice.⁴³⁵ Exposure to the different kinds of art in the atmosphere of friendship and care empowers participants of

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ It is important to underline that the arts program requires leaders that have both backgrounds: theological and artistic.

⁴³⁵ This quotation comes from the survey.

the program to discover their deep resources and helped them to get away from some of their stigma.

The Minister of Music has made participation in Old West Singers less intimidating. She has made it clear that it is more shameful to hide one's voice than sing.⁴³⁶

From the participants' responses one may see how the enhanced understanding of the self, acquired in the process of collaboration with the arts program's leaders, empowered participants to learn new skills and resolve their spiritual dilemmas. As a result of this collaborative work, the spiritual energy, which was absorbed by the inner spiritual struggle, was released and transformed into the positive actions.

Forth Facet of "Ongoing Relationship" – Participants and Participants

The collective aspect of the arts program creates an avenue for the fourth facet of the "ongoing relationship" – the relationships among the program's participants. Describing their experience of involvement in the program, participants use words "wonderful group" and "fellowship" as a sign of their collective belonging to the particular group of people. One of the participants writes about her or his experience of being part of the arts program:

I'm truly grateful and forever in God's debt for allowing me to be part of such a wonderful group.⁴³⁷

From the fragments of the participants' responses one may understand the dynamics of the collective transformation that takes place within the arts program. For

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

example, one of the participants describing relationships within the program, writes about her of his empowerment through the “enjoyment of helping others.”⁴³⁸

I learned to be a better listener and the enjoyment of helping others empowered me to self fulfill my own growth as a musician and an artist.⁴³⁹

This attitude of love and care helps other participants feel “less reserved” thereby developing their sense of self-worth.

I began participating in the fellowship of the art program and have become less reserved.⁴⁴⁰

It is important to indicate that the arts program includes Christians of different ages, races, and genders. It is evident that all of the participants feel themselves comfortable fellowshiping in this eclectic environment. The data reveals that the program participants appreciate diversity of ages.

It is notable that we cross three generations in the choir, it’s an inter-generational group which has the potential to attract new singers of any age.

The quotations presented above give an insight on the complex web of transformation that is implicit part of the arts program’s activities. Immersed in the spiritual togetherness of common vision and actions, participants of the arts program learn to appreciate each other’s presence and talents. Also, the example of Christ leads participants to the awareness of their talents as servant leaders. Inspired by the example

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

of Christ, participants learn how to be a “better listener[s]” and to “self fulfill” themselves through “helping others.”⁴⁴¹

Fifth Facet of “Ongoing Relationship” – Participants and Congregation

The fifth facet of the “ongoing relationship” embraces relationship between the arts program’s participants and members of the congregation.

The most amazing experience for me in being part of the Old West Singers is when we process down the aisle at the beginning of service and when we sing, is seeing people in the congregation smile and when they express their appreciation for our gift of song.⁴⁴²

In the context of the worship service, the arts program’s participants communicate with all members of the Old West Church in the liturgical celebration. Participants feel spiritual connection with their sisters and brothers in Christ. This spiritual connection demonstrates that arts have the capacity to transcend the barriers of isolation. The survey shows that artistic manifestations of faith unite congregants in a “more spiritual level” of communal existence.⁴⁴³

All in congregation seemed to be uplifted on a more spiritual level. I feel music changes the way people go about their lives. On Sundays when the choir sings, I can hear some members of the congregation humming the choir songs after the service as well as some of the regular hymns.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid. This quotation was already introduced in the context of this dissertation, however, the explicit multidimensionality of this quotation allows also to exemplify it in this particular context of the evaluation.

The survey demonstrates that participants see their artistic expression of faith as a “service to others, versus performance.”⁴⁴⁵ They care about other congregants and the overall quality of the worship service. In their survey responses the participants demonstrate the increase of their leadership qualities: they are willing to “guide other congregants” in singing with the confidence that they developed through participation in the arts program.⁴⁴⁶

I will be more familiar with the music and better able to guide other congregants simply by knowing how to sing the music and singing it with the congregation.⁴⁴⁷

There is an emotional bonding between the participants of the program and the people in the congregation. From the survey responses it is evident that in the process of the artistic faith’s expression the language of arts unites all worshipers in an atmosphere of joy and “appreciation” to God.⁴⁴⁸ The survey demonstrates that the arts program’s ministry transforms relationships within the congregation. United by the Holy Spirit congregants come to an awareness of the mutual understanding and love.

Sixth Facet of “Ongoing Relationship” – Church and World

From the context of the survey it is evident that an artistic expression of faith offered to God by the arts program’s participants resonates with members of the Old West Church. Inspired by the Holy Spirit during the Worship Service, Christians carry

⁴⁴⁵ Vivian Nix-Early, 44.

⁴⁴⁶ This quotation comes from the survey.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

into the world the message of love and hope, creating the sixth facet of the “ongoing relationship” – relationship between the church and the world. By communicating the Good News of Salvation to the people, the church empowers and transforms the world. Part of this transformation belongs to the ministry of the arts program. This part contains the beauty of the Christian faith realized through visible, audible, and sensible forms of the arts. This beauty of faith integrates in itself both theological and aesthetical dimensions. It integrates the redeeming dynamism of the Christian faith and creativity of arts in one transforming power.

Synthesis

The six facets of the “ongoing relationship” within the arts program are sources of personal and ecclesial transformation. The three fold structure of the program, *Critical Awareness*, *Working Out*, and *Celebration*, creates a space, in which the “ongoing relationship” takes place. The relational connections such as – God-God’s people; participants spiritual development; participants and leaders; participants and participants; participants and congregation; participants and world – stimulates participants spiritual growth, brings renewal, and transforms lives of the program participants and the life of the entire Old West community.

In the context of the Christian faith, the measurement of transformation comes from the acknowledgment of the reality of the positive change in the course of building a “right relationship with God through Jesus Christ.”⁴⁴⁹ The reality of the positive change

⁴⁴⁹ Corbit and Nix-Early, 53.

points to the present work of God amidst God's people. The experience of the positive change at the present time provides believers with the vision of the coming Kingdom of God leading the community of faith to the spiritual growth and transformation.

While the structure of the arts program intentionally provides an environment in which a never ceasing circle of communication between God's grace and the believers' faith finds various forms for its artistic realization, it is only through the work of the Holy Spirit that transformation becomes a reality. The arts program provides the necessary space that creates an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to lead the programs' participants in their journey of faith. The program helps believers to expand their relationship with God and deepen their understanding of the Bible. Through their personal spiritual growth participants are able to grow in their relationship to God and other members of the congregation.

This process of the spiritual growth in relation to God and other people is the source of the transformative process. The church as a Body of Christ is the place of Christian believers' unification. The transformation of the each particular member of the Body of Christ has an effect on all its members. The spiritual growth and positive change in one Christian transforms the life of the entire Body of Christ. The spiritual growth in several Christians adds to the transformational process even more. As the flow of the big river begins with the streamlets, so the transformation of the community begins with the transformation of the community members.

The work of the Holy Spirit within the six facets of an "ongoing relationship" described above produces visible signs of positive change that allows identify the process

of transformation. The survey demonstrates that participation in the arts program changes peoples' attitudes toward God, themselves, and the world motivating participants' spiritual growth. The outcomes of the transformational process manifest themselves in the participants' new vision, self-awareness, empowerment, and improved communication. The survey demonstrates that the participants come to realize themselves as a part of God's transformative process, in which they are called to be followers of Christ guiding others in their journey of the Christian faith.⁴⁵⁰ This process of positive change spreads to the other congregants bringing the transformation into the life of the Old West community.

⁴⁵⁰ Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile, 13.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

What is the role of the arts in the life of faith? This question is important for many pastors, music ministers, and members of the Christian church. There are other significant questions that relate to our answer to this fundamental question: How can the use of the arts activate leadership formation? How can such use facilitate the process of the church's transformation? This dissertation helps pastors, music ministers, and members of the church to find answers that are of great importance for the ministry of the church.

This study investigates the transformative role of arts in the life of the Christian church. Presenting the arts program at the Old West Church in Boston as a materialization of the integral concept, *arts as a medium for the expression of the Christian faith*, the dissertation provides biblical, theological, and practical frameworks for thinking anew about the role of arts in the life of faith. By synthesizing the results of the evaluation survey with a holistic-inductive design of inquiry, this dissertation demonstrates that arts are instrumental in the process of leadership formation and church transformation.

This study reflects on arts from a new perspective. It considers arts in the light of theological aesthetics in which arts and theology unite their aims in one theo-aesthetic task instead of being separate disciplines. The synergetic union of the arts and theology generate a vision of the arts as a means for a deep and emotional acknowledgment of God's redeeming presence in human life. At the centre of this vision is the continuing

dialogue between God and humanity: the Holy Spirit inspires people to discern God's love and to respond in gratefulness and adoration.

The theological contextualization of this perspective reveals that an aesthetic paradigm in the life of faith transcends its ordinary sphere of interest by helping believers to express themselves in relation to God. This theological mission prevents arts from becoming self-contained. Arts become an "embodiment" of the believer's faith.⁴⁵¹ The aesthetic aspects of the artistic embodiment of faith become part of the theological event that integrates God, the believer, and the expression of the believer's faith.

In this integrated form some interesting potentials are revealed. They become evident in the leadership development of the members of the church and in the holistic transformation of the entire community of faith. This dissertation systematizes biblical, theological, and practical aspects of this phenomenon.

The study began with the presentation of the biblical perspectives on arts as an expression of faith by analyzing examples of the arts in selected texts of the Old Testament and New Testament. The biblical perspective demonstrated that in the life of faith the arts and theology are interrelated. In this theo-aesthetic union arts serve as a medium for the human relationship with God.⁴⁵²

Next, this study examined the meaning of beauty in the context of the "intertwining duet" between God's grace and creation's response to this grace by the

⁴⁵¹ Stone, 139.

⁴⁵² J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 159.

means of artistic forms.⁴⁵³ Relying on the theological perspectives of Hans Urs von Balthasar, Richard Viladesau, Edward Farley, Patrick Sherry, and other contemporary theologians, this study reflected on arts through the prism of theological aesthetics. By utilizing von Balthasar's aesthetical concepts of "form" and "splendor" it provided a conceptual framework for the arts as an integral part of the believers' faith communication.

By reviewing von Balthasar's concept of God's revelation and his systematic description of truth, goodness, and beauty, this study established that Christian life as a form finds its best realization in the process of "self-communication."⁴⁵⁴ This theological account demonstrated that the arts as an expression of faith create a channel through which the truth, the goodness, and the beauty of the Christian faith can be experienced and communicated to the world in an artistic way.

Applying the above, this study evaluated an arts program's ministry by reflecting on the experiences of its participants. Analysis of the collected data revealed that the arts program's threefold structure helped participants to grow as disciples of Christ and in turn this process developed their leadership qualities. The evaluation of the arts program also confirmed that arts programs' ministry positively affected the spiritual life of the entire congregation, guiding the Old West community in a holistic transformation. The following sections of this chapter succinctly summarize the theological, aesthetical, and

⁴⁵³ Robin A. Leaver and James H. Litton eds., 48.

⁴⁵⁴ Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 217 and 220.

practical aspects of the arts program, creating a model that could be implemented in a variety of Christian churches.

Theological aspect of the arts program⁴⁵⁵

In the context of the Christian church, one of the required elements of the arts program is theological orientation.

- An arts program should be biblically based and serve as a medium for the expression of the Christian faith.
- An arts program should integrate both theological and aesthetic dimensions.
- An arts program should create an environment that emphasizes two theological dimensions – *vertical* and *horizontal*. Vertical theology emphasizes arts as a means to praise God. Horizontal theology considers arts as a means to love God, and also as a means to love one's neighbor.⁴⁵⁶

Practical aspects of the arts program

The organizational structure of an arts program originates from the program's theo-aesthetic orientation. This orientation allows the program to incorporate various

⁴⁵⁵ An essential feature of the arts program is the diversity of forms for its practical realization. Taking into consideration the context of each particular congregation, the arts program might find a unique way to bring its ministry into the life of many communities.

⁴⁵⁶ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 20.

projects that may embrace a great variety of artistic forms of expression.⁴⁵⁷ At the same time, the program's focus and mission remains always the same: to help believers to express themselves in relation to God. In other words, arts as a medium for the expression of the Christian faith, embodies great flexibility in relation to artistic forms of expression. At the same time, it strictly identifies the purpose of the arts program's commitment.

The structure of the arts program integrates team building with the artistic practices. While engaged in specific artistic activities and tasks, the program is relationship-oriented, which stimulates the development of diverse skills, spiritual gifts, and leadership qualities. The structure of the arts program is identified by the following aspects:

- An arts program should create an environment that allows Christians to grow spiritually in relation to God and to each other.
- An arts program should foster vision that the Christian as a life-form finds its best realization in the “disclosedness of being,” or in the process of the Christian's “self-communication.”⁴⁵⁸
- An arts program should have a common purpose.
- An arts program should nurture love and support.
- An arts program should strive for a common goal.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁷ The changeable elements of the arts program integrate various forms of the artistic expression. As examples of the changeable elements of the arts program may serve cantata, arts exhibit, or festivals of secret music.

⁴⁵⁸ Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 217 and 220.

One of the examples how the arts program integrates arts and discipleship is preparation for the Easter Cantata.⁴⁶⁰ The cantata's structure embraces all members of the arts program and a variety of their talents in a united, theologically artistic mission. A cantata is a musical composition that in contemporary context might integrate poetry, drama, visual arts, and many other kinds of artistic expressions. The cantata's form has a theological and an artistic aptitude that allows all members of the congregation to express their faith in a unique form. It is a complex enterprise that from a theological standpoint brings people together in a new relationship to God and to each other, and from an artistic perspective allows all members of the congregation to discover and develop their talents.

Within this structure, while being emerged in the theological and artistic processes, participants should be involved in the system of "ongoing relationships" that lead participants to experience transformation. The concept of an "ongoing relationship" comes from J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early book *Taking It to the Streets*. In this concept the authors emphasize the relational aspect in the process of transformation.⁴⁶¹

The six facets of an ongoing relationship within the arts program should help participants in their relationship with God, themselves, their sisters and brothers in Christ,

⁴⁵⁹ Sue Mallory and Brad Smith, *The Equipping Church Guidebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 69.

⁴⁶⁰ The following are the web pages with the examples of the Easter Cantatas:
<http://www.music44.com/X/product/8740862>
<http://www.rejoicemusic.net/index.cfm/fa/items.main/parentcat/26228/subcatid/62629/id/428226>

⁴⁶¹ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 58.

and the larger community.⁴⁶² The ongoing relationship creates an environment for dynamic interaction between God and God's believers. This dynamic interaction involves God's abundant love and believer's response to this love. At the foundation of this circle of communication is the "groundless grace" of God.⁴⁶³ This vision of the arts program is fundamental and provides insight about the dynamics within the arts program explaining the source of its efficiency.

Transformation begins with the discovery of new talents. This discovery brings participants of the arts program to realization that God gives them more talents that they had previously acknowledged before they came to the program. The survey, demonstrates that new vision about themselves changes participants' self-perspective. The awareness of the undiscovered potential for development leads participants to explore new avenues for their spiritual growth. From the context of the survey it becomes obvious that the entire process of their involvement in the arts program leads participants to new opportunities and motivates their spiritual growth. In the course of this process Christians experience the following stages:

- Critical Awareness, when people attain critical consciousness of a new opportunities to express their faith artistically;
- Working Out, when they find an appropriate artistic form for their artistic faith expression;

⁴⁶² The detailed description of "ongoing relationship" one may find in chapter four of this dissertation.

⁴⁶³ Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 225.

- Celebration, when the expression of faith by the means of arts is celebrated as a way of recognition of an achievement and at the same time as a new stage in a “progressive spiral of transformation.”⁴⁶⁴

While undergoing the Critical Awareness, Working Out, and Celebration steps of the program, participants develop vision, self-awareness, personal empowerment, and ability for effective communication that are the signs of leadership formation.

It is important to emphasize the vital role of the Holy Spirit in this process. The Holy Spirit empowers people to discern God’s gracious presence in their lives and to respond in overflowing gratitude through a variety of artistic forms. The motivation to glorify God comes to participants through the work of the Holy Spirit. Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile write that the Holy Spirit has a capacity to affect a person’s life and initiate transformation that is “necessary to make disciples of people.”⁴⁶⁵ The significance of the arts program is in its intentional efforts to create a “culture or environment in which the Holy Spirit will work.”⁴⁶⁶

The most beneficial feature of the arts program is its simplicity and variability. Every congregation can organize its arts program accordingly to its needs and resources. The arts program should come from the context of the church and, correspondingly, it should take into consideration financial and human resources of each particular congregation. The initiative should come from the leaders of the church. Pastors,

⁴⁶⁴ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 24.

⁴⁶⁵ Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile, 14.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

ministers of music, and church councils should initiate the arts program's integration as a part of the church ministry.

It is important for the leaders of the church to have access to the description of the arts program. They have to know the arts program's theo-aesthetic orientation and operational structure. Without doubt, an integral concept of arts as an expression of faith will resonate with many Christian churches. Even in a small congregation of ten or fifteen Christians there will be singers, readers, and writers, who will come forward with the aspiration to express their Christian faith in an artistic way. Of course, the congregations with well established financial standing may develop arts programs that could invite professional artists and musicians who will be very helpful in assisting the program's goals. However, congregations that do not have sufficient financial resources for hiring professionals should not be discouraged and seek professionals interested in volunteering.

They should look for the resources available for them in the context of their own congregations. In each congregation there is usually a gifted amateur artist who most probably would be willing to come forward for this task. Another option for the congregations with limited resources is to establish connections with seminaries, theological schools, and art schools. The churches might ask faculty and students of these educational institutions to help them by recommending faculty members and students who would be interested in the development of this kind of project. One more possibility for acquiring necessary help is to establish friendly connections with the museums and exhibition galleries, from whom a church might find a supportive response.

In any situation there are many approaches of how the arts program might be integrated in the life of the Christian community. It is a creative process, which when initiated, will definitely find the way of growing and bringing forth its spiritual and artistic fruits. Apostle Peter in Romans 12:6-8 writes that the Christian church as a body of Christ “have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophesy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.”⁴⁶⁷ There are many gifts in the body of Christ and it is the task of church leaders to create an environment that would encourage Christians to identify and develop these gifts.

Planning ministry in the Christian church at the beginning of the twenty-first century requires knowledge, experience, and creativity. The church’s mission to grow spiritually and in numbers has been persistent throughout the centuries. Though spiritual growth and church development are mysterious processes, the Christian church has been intentional in keeping this mystery alive. By planning a variety of programs and ministries, the church purposefully creates conditions that nurture spiritual growth and lay leadership among its members.

The possibility to increase leadership participation and transform the life of the church attracts the attention of many Christian churches. The clergy of the twenty first century explore avenues for initiating these important movements in the context of their ministry. This study is helpful resource for the churches opened to explore arts as a way

⁴⁶⁷ *Holy Bible.*

to help church members to develop their leadership qualities and transform the life of their community. This work might be inspiring and also instructive to pastors and ministers of music in a variety of ways.

First, this study provided a biblical perspective on arts as a part of God's creation. It demonstrates that arts were always part of the relationship between God and God's people. The Bible demonstrates that inspired by the Holy Spirit people of faith often expressed themselves in relation to God through the variety of arts. This expression served as a manifestation of God's grace in people lives.

Next, this study marked out a new perspective on the role of arts in the process of leadership formation and ecclesial transformation. This perspective revealed the potential that is incorporated in the relationship between arts and theology. The study encourages church pastors and ministers of music to include theological aesthetics as a part of their ministry. The theo-aesthetic perspective on arts exceeds the conventional perception on arts by integrating God's presence as an important part of the arts and humanity's relational complex.

Finally, this study presented an example of the arts program's ministry. This presentation includes the description of the program's structure and its operational mode. The study also offers a series of workshops designed to help congregations incorporate the arts as a part of their Christian ministry.⁴⁶⁸

The upshot of this dissertation reveals that the integration of arts and theology offer significant potential for the interdisciplinary studies, such as Arts and Evangelism.

⁴⁶⁸ The description of the workshops is presented on pages 173-188 of this dissertation.

Contemporary evangelism explores new resources to make visible and audible the Good News of the gospel. The ministry of the arts program creates a channel through which the truth, the goodness, and the beauty of the Christian faith can be manifested or, as von Balthasar says, can be “express[ed] and reflect[ed]” to the world in a sincere and authentic way.⁴⁶⁹

Arts as an expression of faith open an avenue in the practice of evangelism to testify that “the very shape of the people of God in the world is a public witness, or is ‘good news,’ for the world.”⁴⁷⁰ The theo-aesthetic dimensions of the arts program fosters a vision of evangelical practice implemented “in a distinctive way such that the alluring and ‘useless’ beauty of holiness can be touched, tasted, and tried.”⁴⁷¹ In this context arts become a manifestation of God’s redeeming presence in human life and a living evangelical message to the world.

Another area for future exploration is the connection between arts and theological studies. In what ways may arts inform and influence theological education? The outcome of this dissertation indirectly points to the importance of theological aesthetics as a part of theological education. As mentioned above, the implementation of the arts program in the church demands an initiative that comes from the leaders of the church. Unless pastors, ministers, and lay leaders know and appreciate the importance of the aesthetic

⁴⁶⁹ Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 20.

⁴⁷⁰ John Howard Yoder, *For the Nations: Essays Public and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 6.

⁴⁷¹ Bryan P. Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 21.

dimensions in the life of faith, the practical incorporation of the arts in the church will never become a reality.

Future pastors should be aesthetically educated and practically trained to integrate arts and theology in one theo-aesthetic event. There are many rewards that “beauty and art” illumined by God’s revelation may bring in to the life of the Christian church.⁴⁷²

Aesthetic aspects in the life of the Christian church require special attention and careful analysis. This dissertation invites theologians, artists, pastors, and believers to think creatively about an aesthetic and its place in the life of faith.

⁴⁷² Viladesau, 5.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPED TO EXPLORE THE ROLE OF ART IN THE
PROCESS
OF LEADERSHIP FORMATION AND THE CHURCH'S TRANSFORMATION

This questionnaire will be given to the participants of the art program.

General questions:

1. Based on your experience what would you say are the strengths of the arts program?
2. What do you think are the weaknesses of this program?
3. In what kind of arts have you participated in the frame of the program?
4. What have you learned from this participation?
5. What kind of changes in the life of the congregation, if any, have you noticed after arts' integration into the Old West church?
6. What plans do you have for your future participation in the life of the church?

Additional questions:

1. Have you discovered new talents and interests while participating in the arts program? If the answer is yes, please tell more about your discoveries.
2. Was spiritual development part of your experience while you have participated in arts program? If the answer is yes, please describe this experience.
3. How did the art program influence your sense of self-awareness and help you in the process of self-expression?
4. In what ways has arts program prepared you to apply your new skills in your personal life, in the life of the Old West church, and larger community?

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of the Research Study: The Role of Art in the Process of the Leadership Formation and Church Transformation.

Researcher: Olga Lipina

Dear Participant,

I am conducting a research study at the Old West Church that examines the role of the arts program in the process of leadership formation and church transformation or spiritual growth. I am inviting you to participate in this study by providing answers to the evaluation survey's questionnaire. The rationale for this research study is to learn how the integration of arts can help congregations develop leadership and grow spiritually.

The arts program invites all members of the Old West Church to participate in the arts program and its research study. The arts program integrates a variety of artistic forms of expression such as choral and individual singing, playing instruments, poetry, declamation, and visual arts. The development of the evaluation project will take place over a two month period and will be focused on the arts program evaluation. There are no foreseeable risks of participation in this research study. The data will be gathered once at the beginning of the project and you will be allowed two weeks in order to answer these questions. It will take a total of about one hour to answer the questions. You may choose not to answer any question. Your participation in this research study will be confidential and you will be given a copy of the informed consent form. No one at the church will know anything about the results of your participation or your decision not to participate

or not to answer any question. Your decision will not affect any services that you receive at the church or any other place. As a member of the same congregation your decision not to participate in this research study ought not to affect our relationships as fellow members.

I may need to quote some of the remarks from the surveys in order to illustrate the findings of the evaluation project. Since the survey will be filled out anonymously, I will not use your name or any other identifying information. You will have an opportunity to review sections of the project report where the quotations from the survey might appear. At all times, the copies of the informed consent letter and the survey materials will be kept in a confidential and secure location at the Old West Church. Survey materials will be destroyed after the study has been completed. If you decide that you would not like to be included in my study, you will have the right to withdraw.

I hope that you will profit from this chance by exploring the topic as well as your undiscovered talents and potential for leadership. Also, I expect that your participation in this project will help clergy, educators, and researchers to understand better the potential of arts' integration for the leadership formation and church transformation.

If you have any questions regarding this research study you may contact me:

Olga Lipina
350 Revere Beach Blvd. Apt. 9-10P
Revere, Massachusetts 02151
Phone: 617-835-4456
olipina@bu.edu

or, you may contact my advisor at Boston University School of Theology:
Dale P. Andrews, Ph.D.
Martin Luther King, Jr. Professor of Homiletics and Pastoral Theology
Boston University, School of Theology
745 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
Phone: 617-358-4221

Fax: 617-358-4220
andrews@bu.edu

Also, if you have any questions regarding the participant rights you may contact:
David Berndt
Boston University Charles River Campus Institutional Review Board
25 Buick Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
Phone: 617-353-4365
Fax: 617-353-6660
dberndt@bu.edu

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Olga Lipina

Investigator

Signature : _____ Date: _____

I have read this form and agree to participate.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

I would like to review sections of the evaluation report where the quotations will appear.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

WORKSHOP OUTLINE 1: BEAUTY FOR ASHES

You shall be a crown of beauty
in the hand of the Lord,
and a royal diadem in the
hand of your God.
Isaiah 62:3

Content

The workshop is based on Isaiah 62:3 and Benjamin Zander and Rosamund Stone Zander's, *Transforming Professional and Personal Life. The Art of Possibility*. This workshop helps participants to think about their lives in a way that would make them feel more important and fulfilled. The central idea is that God gives people an opportunity to use their talents so that they may come to be fully actualized.⁴⁷³ The workshop activities demonstrate that “the universe of possibility stretches beyond the world of measurement to include all worlds: infinite, generative, and abundant.”⁴⁷⁴ This new perspective gives a free rein of the best abilities bringing participants in the paradigm of the new visioning and opportunities.

⁴⁷³ Benjamin Zander and Rosamund Stone Zander, 19.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

Rationale

The rationale of the *Beauty for Ashes* workshop is to implement practically Zander's initiative of art's potentialities in the process of self-actualization and leadership formation. This initiative transforms participants' relationships "from the world of measurement into the universe of possibility."⁴⁷⁵ The workshop offers participants a new way of being thereby demonstrating that transformation happens by generating active, ongoing practices.⁴⁷⁶ The goal of the workshop is to help participants in finding answers to the question: "What kind of generating active, ongoing practices we should implement in our lives in order to reach the transformation?"

Description

This workshop includes three parts and is planned for three hours with short intermissions between the main constituting parts.

Part One

Part one is theoretical. It reflects on the Scripture reading from Isaiah 61:1-62:3 and on the Zanders' text, in which they communicate combined experience: Benjamin as a conductor of the Boston Philharmonic, and Rosamund as an executive coach and family systems therapist. The Zanders develop a model for leadership, relationship, and effective action.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 4.

The most important concept of this model is that each person has undiscovered talents and potential for leadership that might be recognized through development of their artistic gifts. In order to eliminate all fears and embarrassment of beginning artists, the Zanders affirm that by God's grace all people receive an A (or the highest grade) from the moment they were born. The authors also affirm that God creates opportunities for people to use their talents for full self-actualization.

Part Two

Part two is practical. It invites participants into transformative exercises. The activities include selection of one musical example, introduction of basic conducting skills, and practice leading the choir. During this session all participants of the workshop will be actively involved.

- Part Two begins with a lesson that introduces participants to basic conducting skills. Participants learn how to conduct music with a simple meter.
- Then the group selects their favorite hymn and learns how to conduct this particular piece of music.
- After learning how to conduct the selected hymn, participants create a choir and sing the selected hymn under the leadership of the professional conductor.
- The practical part of the workshop concludes with each of the participants playing the role of a choral conductor. One after another, the participants

lead the choir, while other members of the group support the newborn conductor by singing under his or her leadership.

Part Three

Part three incorporates Isaiah 62:3 as a foundation for theological reflection. In this biblical text Isaiah prophesies about the radical transformation of people. He proclaims “liberty to the captives” and promises the “year of the Lord’s favor.” People of Zion will receive a “garland instead of ashes.” They will get the “mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.” Isaiah promises that the people of Zion will be “called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord,” and that they will display God’s glory.⁴⁷⁷ Participants are invited to reflect on the experiences received during part two of the workshop in the context of the aforementioned Scriptural passage. The reflections are structured by the following number of questions.

- How have you become aware of your potential as a choral conductor?
- Have you been surprised by your personal transformation in the process of learning new conducting skills?
- What would be your theological vision regarding the process of human development?
- When you were a child what profession looked the most attractive to you?
- Have you tried to pursue your childhood dreams in life?
- What kind of talents would you like to explore next?

⁴⁷⁷ Isaiah 62:3.

Evaluation

Following the workshop's structure, the participants discover that the spirituality experienced through the arts offers new ways of being. It is in these ways that people realize that they are part of God's creative process in which they are creative participants. In the process of their participation, Christians discover a great capacity for creativity.

This workshop demonstrates how members of the congregation might expand their experience of the word of God through the spirituality of art, and in this process to discover their talents and leadership potential. Ultimately this workshop aims to activate the leadership of lay members, and invite new people to participate in the lay movement.

APPENDIX D

WORKSHOP 2: FROM MOURNING INTO DANCING

You have turned my mourning
 into dancing;
 you have taken off my
 sackcloth
 and clothed me with joy
 so that my soul may praise you
 and not be silent.
 O Lord my God, I will give
 thanks to you forever.
 Psalm 30:11-12

Content

This is a cycle of workshops that encourages participants into a transformative process of leadership development. J. Nathan Corbit and Vivian Nix-Early's theory of the arts as a means of redemptive transformation serves as a foundation for the workshops' activities.⁴⁷⁸

Rationale

The series of workshops demonstrate that through participation in arts Christians develop leadership qualities that foster holistic transformation of the entire community. The workshops' activities provide a milieu for creativity, exploration, and experimentation that encourages participants to express themselves in relation to God by means of arts. This process influences participants' relationships with God and with the members of the church. The transformative power of arts as an expression of faith brings

⁴⁷⁸ J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, 163.

participants to a new vision about their own potentials for leadership as well as similar potentials of other congregational members' leadership qualities.

Description

The cycle includes four consecutive sessions and develops over the course of six weeks. The workshops begin five weeks before Easter and conclude with an evaluative session after Easter celebration. Each session lasts approximately two hours with a short intermission.

The cycle is designed to engage participants into the process of transformation and leadership development through the implementation of the Corbit/ Nix-Early's paradigm: (1) *Critical Awareness*, (2) *Working Out*, and (3) *Celebration*.⁴⁷⁹ The transformative process takes place in the context of the preparation for Easter celebration.⁴⁸⁰ An integral concept of the *arts as a medium for the expression of the Christian faith* functions as an organizing element for this cycle of workshops.

First Workshop

The first workshop reflects on the role of arts in the context of the Bible. The biblical story of God's presence in human lives unfolds before the participants as a dynamic interaction between God and God's creation. By analyzing arts presence in selected texts of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures participants learn about arts as a

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.,24.

⁴⁸⁰ It could also be a Christmas or any other church celebration.

way to express themselves in relation to God. Reflecting on the examples of Mary's Song of Praise, Song of Simeon, Zechariah's Prophecy, and Psalm 150: 3-6 participants come to an awareness that God's praise can be expressed through the variety of artistic forms that include musical instruments, dancing, and poetry. All of these serve as manifestations of gratitude in response to God's gracious presence in the world.

This workshop concludes with the corporate decision about the Easter morning celebration.⁴⁸¹ Participants consider potential scenarios for the Easter Worship service that includes the variety of artistic forms. One of the common decisions is Easter cantata that has the capacity to embrace all participants in a united, theo-artistic mission.⁴⁸²

As an assignment given at the end of the workshop, participants are asked to make a decision about their personal participation in the cantata. They have to find the artistic form that can serve as the most authentic mode for the expression of their of faith.

Second Workshop

The second session begins with the concretization of the participants' artistic involvement in the cantata. Participants form small groups comprised of people with similar artistic interests.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸¹ The Easter Worship service may incorporate variety of artistic forms including thematic arts or photo exhibit, drama, liturgical dance, etc.

⁴⁸² A cantata is a vocal composition with instrumental accompaniment. In contemporary context it may also include poetry, drama, visual arts, and many other kinds of artistic expressions.

⁴⁸³ The small group may include singers, readers, dancers, painters, designers, and conductors.

This workshop also introduces participants to the Corbit / Nix-Early's theory of arts as a means of redemptive transformation. Participants learn that involvement in the arts leads Christians to both personal empowerment and responsibility, and to communal transformation.⁴⁸⁴

The participants learn that in the course of transformation people experience the following stages:

- *Critical Awareness*, when people attain critical consciousness of a problem or issue.
- *Working Out*, when through the different strategies the problem finds its solution.
- *Celebration*, when the completion of the problem and its resolution is celebrated as a way of recognition of an achievement and at the same time as a beginning of a new stage in a “progressive spiral of transformation.”⁴⁸⁵

From now on participants will be meeting in small groups for three weeks working on the *Critical Awareness* and the *Working Out* stages of Corbit/ Nix-Early's paradigm.

⁴⁸⁴ Corbit and Nix-Early, 24.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

Third Workshop

This workshop implements small group meetings that allow participants to come to *Critical Awareness* as they work through the difficulties that they encounter in preparing for their artistic presentations. Work with the professional musicians and artists helps participants in the *Working Out* stage of their artistic development.

Each particular group finds its own strategies in order to solve the encountered problems. The small group meetings have to incorporate group activities and also to devote time to the individual work with the participants. The leaders of the groups – professional artists – help participants to achieve the best possible level in participants' performance.

During the third week the small groups come together for the collective preparation of the cantata. Collective rehearsals also integrate Corbit / Nix-Early's paradigm. Participants identify difficulties in the process of integrating separate elements of the cantata in one collective performance and through the different strategies they find solutions.

The *Celebration* stage culminates during the Easter morning, when all participants bring to the altar of God their talents. The participation in the Easter cantata allows participants to express their faith by means of artistic forms. At the same time the cantata unites all these individual faith expressions in one collective celebration, when the entire community expresses its gratitude toward God.

Fourth Workshop

After Easter celebration the participants come together for the final session where they reflect on the personal and collective experiences of their participation in this cycle of workshops. At this point participants are invited to evaluate their participation in terms of personal and communal development. They are asked to share their experiences while answering the following questions:

- Have you discovered new talents and interests while participating in the workshops?
- Was spiritual development part of your experience while you have participated in this circle of workshops?
- Did participation in the workshops enhance your sense of self-awareness and helped you in the process of self-expression? Please elaborate your answer.
- What kind of changes in the life of the congregation, if any, have you noticed during participation in this cycle of workshops?
- What plans do you have for your future participation in the life of the church?

Evaluation

This cycle of the workshops provide biblical, theological, and practical frameworks for the use of arts in the process of leadership formation and church transformation. The spirited process of participation in the workshops increases the participation of the church's members. It helps all participants to express their Christian faith through a variety of artistic forms. In sum, this cycle of workshops aims to bring

people together in a new relationship with God, with each other, and from an artistic perspective allows participants to apply and develop their unique talents in the service of God.

APPENDIX E

WORKSHOP 3: GOODNESS OF GOD'S CREATION

God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good.
Genesis 1:31

Content

This cycle of workshops leads participants through a thematic, photographic exhibition called the *Goodness of God's Creation*. The exhibition composed of the photographs taken and represented by the participants of the workshop. The photographs should be coherent with the theme of the workshop that brings together theological and aesthetic perspectives on beauty as a part of God's creation. The workshops are designed to expand the spiritual imagination of the participants and deepen their sense of gratitude for the beauty of God's creation. The participants use the unique language of photography while pursuing their enduring quest for understanding the mystery of God.

Rationale

The photographic exhibition of the *Goodness of God's Creation* integrates theology and arts. The ability of photographic images to “focus, frame, or hold both place and time” may expand participants' understanding of the mystery and depth of God.⁴⁸⁶ Photography invites participants to see something that is impossible to perceive without

⁴⁸⁶ Kimberly Vrudny and Wilson Yates eds., 240.

giving to it special attention. Photography focuses participants' attention on creating avenues for encountering God's revelation.

Description

The series of workshops includes three parts: two workshops and the photographic exhibition. Each workshop is planned for two hours with a short intermission. The opening part of the photographic exhibition is planned for two hours.

The thematic orientation of the exhibition invites participants to unite theological and aesthetic sensitivities reflecting the sacramental dimensions of beauty as a part of God's creation. The focus of this exhibition is the splendor of the natural world. The photographs should have a theological descriptive contextualization that would explicate the integrity of the aesthetic and theological dimensions of the image.⁴⁸⁷

First Workshop

This workshop introduces participants to the world of theological aesthetics and photography. Participants learn about theological aesthetics as an “intellectual construction of how aesthetic informs the theological imagination.”⁴⁸⁸ Through theological reflections on presented images participants come to their own understanding of beauty as a theological category.

⁴⁸⁷ The series of workshops will include consultations with the professional photographer regarding the necessary photographic techniques.

⁴⁸⁸ Kimberly Vrudny and Wilson Yates, 73.

Hans Urs von Balthasar's theological perspective on the transformative character of God's revelation presented in his *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory*, the essays written by Kimberly Vrudny "Spirit Standing Still" and Sidney D. Fowler "Revealing" create a theoretical foundation for exploring the theological dimensions in a series of photographic images presented in some of these writings. Afterwards, participants are invited to participate in the photographic exhibition. Participants are encouraged to take their own photo-images.

Photographic Exhibition

The theme sets the parameters for this photographic exhibition. Participants are invited to present images that reflect their sense of beauty as a part of God's creation. Genesis 1:31 serves as a guideline for the participants' selection of images. Participants are also invited to give a short theological contextualization for their art works.

Second Workshop

The photographic exhibition is followed by a workshop that summarizes participants experiences received through their involvement in the exhibition. The discussions will draw upon questions such as:

- What do we see around us?
- What is our experience of God's beauty in our lives?

- What common vision can we discern from the photographic images presented in this exhibition?
- Are there some practical steps that we would like to make in order to contribute to this vision?
- What practical steps can we take in order reach these goals?

Evaluation

This series of workshops and the photographic exhibition leads participants to expand their spiritual imagination. They learn to see the different theological dimensions of beauty. One of these dimensions connotes the divine beauty that is the “source and final course of all that is beautiful, at the same time transcends all of its visible manifestations.”⁴⁸⁹

Along with the theoretical understanding of theological aesthetics as a discipline, the participants learn in a practical way how to integrate art and theology in one theological aesthetic event. Participants come to an awareness of the theological dimensions of beauty through their special attunement to God’s continuous presence in their lives reflected in their presented photo-images. The participants are encouraged to apply their photo-images to a variety of church ministries. Depending on their tradition, each particular congregation may incorporate presented images in the context of their worship services or for evangelism.

⁴⁸⁹ Von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*, 146.

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