

Negotiating the Flow: An Ethnographic Study of the Way Two URC Congregations Shape and Are Shaped by Members

By

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Abstract

This study was conducted with two congregations from two different joining denominations within the United Reformed Church in two post-industrial towns. I spent two years with each congregation as a participant observer, taking part in congregational life and interviewing members for a total of four years.

My interest is in the activity that members of these congregations undertake to sustain and change their congregation's identity. What particularly interested me was how a Reformed cultural identity was sustained, as there is no central body preserving the tradition.

In tackling these issues, I explore the interplay of identity with location, community and worship. The recurring tensions drew my attention to the ways identity is renegotiated, which I explore further by engaging with the dynamic metaphor of flow and turbulence. I formulate a concept of belonging by modifying Foucault's understanding of technology. I go on to explore the way that this technology of belonging is a driver of members' interaction with the congregational identity.

I therefore argue that congregational identity is a recapitulatory process, which engages the members' understanding of themselves as belonging to the congregation. In doing this I demonstrate the unsettled, contraplex nature of members' engagement with the congregation's identity.

Dedication

To Revd. David A. L. Jenkins who saw the seedling of this thesis before I did, nurtured it but
died shortly before fruition.

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Introduction

This thesis is a whole-congregation study; it includes the clergy, members and others who attend events. It looks at how congregations construct their identity, along with what constrains and influences them in doing so. Why do congregations seem to return to the same battles and critical issues over the centuries? What makes these congregations United Reformed Church (URC); what is it that connects them with the nebulous minority tradition that the URC comes from? How do URC Congregations sustain and change their identity?

1. Where to Start?

The point of departure was standing in the February slush, outside the front of what is now my home congregation. I was not thinking of a PhD; I was *en route* to a job interview. As I was early, I investigated a nearby building that turned out to be a United Reformed Church.

Eighteen months later, I sought membership of that congregation. I had a different job and had attended the congregational worship there several times. The congregation had a membership of around 200: it had a Junior Church and a youth group. Its social outreach was well developed: it had an active social group, provided helpers for a weekly lunch for older people and helped to run a small homeless charity. There was both a decent musical tradition and a lively intellectual approach to faith: qualities that should have allowed it to exploit its closeness to the local University, where its minister was a chaplain. Also, it had called a new minister about a year earlier.

However, I repeatedly heard members say that the congregation would be dead within ten years. There were a number of reasons for this feeling. The congregation had, under a popular minister,

been over four hundred strong a decade earlier. Many of the stalwart members were becoming elderly. The natural constituency of Scots employed in industrial towns in the North of England had started to decline in the 1950s. This process accelerated when the National Health Service no longer needed to recruit doctors trained in Scotland. These changes meant that there were fewer first-generation Scots coming to the city than before. Finally, the Synod Moderator had commented that it was unusual for congregations in such a location to thrive.

This gap between the official position and what I was experiencing in congregational life led me to characterise the congregation as depressed. I do not want to argue that the congregation had a mind of its own. There certainly were acceptable behaviours within the congregational settings that limited what behaviour was possible and these provided a repertoire that members drew on in interacting with each other; members would have similar patterns of reasoning (R. Benedict 2006 [1934]). However, a pattern of reasoning is a considerably weaker proposition than the existence of a group mind. I am, therefore, chary of presenting an analogy that might obfuscate what was happening rather than adding clarity. Nor am I arguing that everyone in the congregation was depressed. Although there were people who were depressed in the congregation, that was accepted within the congregational environment and thus being diagnosed as depressed was accepted behaviour (R. Benedict 2006 [1934], 232): however, not everyone was suffering from clinical depression, and there was no obvious connection between these people and the depressed stance of the congregation.

Rather, it was a strong discourse from the congregation's repertoire: one that was particularly used by older members of the congregation, but which impacted on much of congregational life. This discourse produced disjuncture between the reality as it would have been seen by an outsider and that which was experienced by members of the congregation. In using this

discourse, they had developed a ‘negative identity’ and groups with negative identities are not likely to thrive (Woolever et al. 2006, 54).

2. Exploring the Vision Process

My first reaction was to try to counteract this negative outlook. To facilitate this, I enrolled in a church training course, which used contextual theological reflection as one of its tools.

On the course, I came across ‘the vision process’ – the prevailing idea in congregational development circles, partly due to the popularity in Evangelical circles of Rick Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Church* (1995). In this book, he describes such a purpose: “The starting point for every church should be the question “why do we exist?”” (Warren 1995, 81). He outlines ways of developing a purpose, including: small group Bible study to discern the mission; drawing people in; and ‘*Seeker Sensitive Services*’ (Warren 1995, 251). Warren’s book has been criticised by many over the years. Among criticisms are that it offers a consumerist brand (Einstein 2008), that it does not challenge the social injustices inbuilt into modern society (Metzger 2007, 49–54) and that it changes worship into entertainment (Spinks 2010, 63-90).

Despite this, many other writers have had similar ideas to Warren’s ‘*purpose*’. Jean Vanier catches the essence of ‘*purpose*’ when he says, ‘If people come together to care for each other, it is because they feel more or less clearly that as a group they have a mission’ (Vanier 2006, 84). However, Jean Vanier, as a Roman Catholic, explores the role of mission in intentional communities rather than a local church. George Thompson, an American Presbyterian, writes of the vision process, ‘At the heart of every dynamic congregation is a strong vision’ (G.B. Thompson 1999, 6). Thompson is writing from a similar tradition to this thesis, albeit in the United States. Warren’s idea of the ‘purpose-driven church’ is not solely a creation of American Mega-Church

Evangelicalism, but something that is echoed in other traditions.

Warren and Thompson describe similar processes, with the differences between them being explained by the difference between church planting and congregational consultancy. Both of the processes they describe reflect that described in Mark Lau Branson's book on using Appreciative Inquiry within a congregational setting (Branson 2004). The processes described are versions of a learning cycle (see Figure 1). Warren, coming from an Evangelical background, starts the process with Bible study (1995, 97), then looks to codify it before implementation and review. Thompson begins by exploring the congregational context (G. B. Thompson 1999, 39), then moves on to the theological – a form of interaction with the Bible – then application and formulation before application and review. Branson uses the standard cycle from Appreciative Inquiry. These cycles are relatively similar to the Pastoral Cycle as described by Green (1992 [1989]): Laurie Green's Pastoral Cycle is based on the work of Paulo Freire (1996 [1970], 68–105) and Juan Luis Segundo (2002 [1976]) (See Figure 1). Warren is entering at a slightly later point in the cycle, due to there being no congregation. The single solution of a learning process was therefore proposed.

The next step was to get the congregation to adopt that solution. So with the backing of the congregation I set up a study day; the idea was that such a day would suffice to kick-start the process. It was then repeated, as it was felt to be a useful day. The result was that people who came appreciated the day, but they were mostly the committed members who usually turned up for events. It did not create a dynamic that would allow the process to move forward. So, although the education event was supposed to start the process of engagement, the study day became merely a brief hiatus in congregational life.

Figure 1

AI Cycles		4I cycle (Branson 2004)	Pastoral Cycle (Green 1990)	Thompson (1999)	Kolb Learning Cycle (1981, 235–237)	Hermeneutic Circle (Segundo 2002)	Hermeneutic Circle (Gadamer 2013, 302–318)	Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (Duminuco 1993) [§]
4D Cycle (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005)								
Topic	Initiate	Experience	Call, Heritage & Context	Experience	Experience	Experience	Anticipation	Context
Discovery	Inquire	Explore	Theological Reflection	Observation	Application/analysis	Interpreting	Experience*	
Dream	Imagine	Reflect	Futuring	Conceptualisation	Theological reality	Signification	Reflection	
Design	Innovate	Respond	Moving Ahead	Experimentation	New Hermeneutic	Inscription	Action	
Destiny							Evaluation	

[§]This predates the formal reference by about 400 years (DeFeo 2009, 11–12)

* **“EXPERIENCE** for Ignatius meant “to taste something internally.” In the first place this calls for knowing facts, concepts, and principles. This requires one to probe the connotation and overtones of words and events, to analyze and evaluate ideas, to reason.” (Duminuco 1993, 14–15). Thus I think differs fundamentally from the experience that is the starting point of many of the other cycles.

Table outlining a variety of cycles that are used as models of the learning experience, including those from Appreciative Inquiry, various church sources and wider literature.

So I went back to the literature, searching for explanations as to why the idea had not succeeded. Firstly I noted that the literature is predominantly written by people in a leadership position and for leaders. They tend, therefore, to focus on ways of shaping and changing a congregation. This results in the role of the congregation being marginalised: they assume that ordinary congregational members will adapt to the role assigned them. The focus on the powerful is true of the wider literature, even of books which seem to concentrate on the broader aspects, such as system psychology (Steinke 2006) or culture (Chand 2011).

When the congregation is included, then they are treated as willing participants. Laurie Green (1992 [1989], 36–37), in common with Ian Fraser's *Reinventing Theology as the People's Work* (2005 [1998]), states that there is a desire to create a wider participation in theological debate. However, it is assumed that the congregation will be prepared to participate in formal study; there is no room given to explore the way people are already doing theology. The minister is still cast as a teacher, even if the member is now an active (rather than passive) learner. The expectations, which were often unconscious, reflected the approaches the leaders had to these issues; they are leaders who expected congregations to behave similarly to them. Thus, there is no questioning of who is in charge of the process. However, my congregation, by not participating, did not take up the role ascribed to them. The assumption that the congregation was ready to be moulded by the process was wrong. It might, however, have been the case that the issue that needed tackling was in part creating the disconnect between the congregation and the process (Woolever et al. 2006, 54).

Secondly, I began to observe that congregations often took a decidedly different perspective from the leadership. They often take a much longer-term view than ministers. The minister would be gone in ten years (maybe twenty), and if they did not like what the minister had done

they could return to the original practices when the minister left.¹ Ministers' pastorates are ephemeral to members who have been there for forty, fifty or more years and families who have been involved for centuries. Therefore, while ministers may be looking for changes and success in seven to ten years, congregations may well be looking at twenty plus years. A change made by a minister that the congregation dislikes can always be undone in the next vacancy.

At this stage, I went back to the textbooks looking for insight into why my congregation had not adopted the vision approach. A small section in Thompson stood out: 'No single formula offers an effective way to engage the congregation. Your challenge, then is to design activities to increase the likelihoods that the eventual goal – a shared vision – is reached' (G. B. Thompson 1999, 33). It assumed that there were ways to motivate congregations, but these differed among congregations. If the congregation was not buying in, then I wanted to understand why; so I needed an approach that took the congregation seriously.

3. Searching for an alternative approach

I began to wonder about who was not connecting, and I became interested in congregational culture and the roles that members of my home congregation saw as theirs. My interest in the congregation's perspective made an approach through Congregational Studies appropriate.

Congregational Studies originated in late 1980s America. A *project team* was formed out of an informal collaboration between various bodies, including the Alban Institute, Hartford Seminary and the research offices of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (Carroll,

¹ A classic example of this was the number of ministers it took to reduce the number of hymns from five to four in the normal Sunday service. My count, from fairly reliable sources, is that it took three. In the vacancy following the first two ministers to attempt it, the congregation simply returned to having five hymns. In my view, the final minister's change was retained because she introduced a psalm instead of the fifth hymn.

Dudley, and McKinney 1986, 3). The project team produced a number of conferences and publications. At around the same time Hopewell's seminal text on congregations (Hopewell 1988 [1987]) was published. People studying congregations before this were in different disciplines such as Organisational Studies, Contextual Theology and Social Anthropology. Thus, Congregational Studies became a distinct entity only in the late 1980s.² The drawing together of people from a variety of disciplines has resulted in a subject area with a broad range of academic and interpretative approaches.

Attempts have been made to characterise the different studies within the area. Hopewell identifies four '*approaches*': *contextual*, *mechanical*, *organic* and *symbolic* (Hopewell 1988 [1987], 19). The *contextual* is predominantly sociological and examines the way congregations function within the wider sociological setting. The *mechanistic* approach asks what made congregations most effective, often defined by church growth, and draws heavily on organisational studies. The *organic* approach focuses on the way congregations function as communities, looking at both discrepancies and the way subsystems participate as a whole. Finally, the *symbolic* approach looks at the identity and the role of personality within the congregation and studies the structural form that the symbols take within that grouping. Hopewell connects the symbolic approach with social anthropologists who think of religion as a symbolic system (Geertz 2000a [1973]).

Carroll lists four '*dimensions*': *program*, *process*, *context* and *identity* (Carroll 1986, 12-13) for congregational exploration. There are differences between '*approaches*' and '*dimensions*' as classification systems; whereas a study will normally have one *approach*, it may address several *dimensions*. However, by the time of the production of the *New Handbook* (Ammerman et al. 1998)

² There are still studies of congregations being undertaken that make no acknowledgement of the existence of Congregational Studies as an area of study, particularly when not linked with Religious Studies departments (F. MacDonald 2002; Webster 2013).

a decade later, the dimensions had disappeared. Instead there are ‘frames’: *ecological, culture, resource* and *process*. The use of ‘frames’ brings us closer to Hopewell’s ‘*approaches*’, but a single study still may use multiple ‘frames’.³

In the British context, similarly, there are two different ways of structuring the studies in the area. Woodhead, Guest and Tusting initially divide the area into two *categories: intrinsic* and *extrinsic* (Woodhead, Guest, and Tusting 2004, 1). The *extrinsic* category examines those studies that have broader goals than just looking at the local congregation: they are interested in comparison across multiple congregations. Subcategories of extrinsic studies include: ‘*Communitarian*’, ‘*Church Growth*’, ‘*Organisational*’, ‘*Church health*’ and ‘*Theological*’. The *intrinsic* studies look at the behaviour within congregations and subdivide into ‘*Self-contained*’, ‘*Typologizing*’, ‘*Contextualising*’ and ‘*Multi-focused*’. Equally, in *Studying Local Churches: A Handbook* the division is into four *strands: ‘Anthropological*’, ‘*Sociological*’, ‘*Organizational*’ and ‘*Theological*’, which correspond to the main disciplines that are involved in the area (Cameron et al. 2005). These ‘*strand*’ classifications are very similar to Hopewell’s ‘*approaches*’ although they explicitly link to academic disciplines.

Listing these briefly like this can obscure differences and similarities. Hopewell’s description of a ‘*symbolic*’ approach not only links it with ‘*anthropology*’ and thus ‘*culture*’, but also ‘*identity*’. Equally, although Ammerman’s ‘*ecology*’ initially appears similar to Woodhead’s ‘*contextualising*’, closer reading indicates significant differences. ‘*Ecology*’ looks at the interaction between the congregation and its setting; in this it is similar to Carroll’s ‘*social context*’ (Carroll 1986, 13), which is similar to ‘*contextual studies*’ in Hopewell (1988 [1987], 19). However, Woodhead et al. define contextualising studies as ‘*those that seek to relate congregations to their wider socio-cultural contexts but have*

³ This suggests to me that the popularity of ‘frames’ is due to the rise in mixed methods research, as a similar analogy is used within that research method.

no wider or pragmatic agenda' (Woodhead, Guest, and Tusting 2004, 13). There is thus a change from the narrow confines of an *'ecological'* study, which might well have pragmatic ends, to that which seeks to 'situate congregations against broad social trends'. The metaphor used for classifying studies may lead to these discrepancies. *'Approaches'*, *'dimensions'*, *'frames'*, *'categories'* or *'strands'* are classified in different ways with various levels of overlap allowed. Hopewell's *'approaches'* and the Studying Churches' *'strands'* are most similar, yet the freedom of the of *'approaches'* to draw together what feels similar contrasts with the disciplinary mapping of the *'strands'*.

In my attempts to take the experience of the congregation seriously, I was drawn towards the *'anthropological' strand*, which is close to Hopewell's 'symbolic'. Hopewell (1988 [1987]) looked at the narrative that congregations told about themselves and the worldview that was normative for the congregation. The study sought to understand why a course he had organised had failed. Hopewell gathered the congregational narratives through ethnographic participant observation, but to obtain the congregation's worldview he conducted a survey based on responses to a questionnaire. The approaches have two very different understandings of how to determine the perspective of the congregation and he does not make any connection between worldview and narrative. His solution for why the course failed was that it did not fit with the narrative of how the congregation understood themselves. There are a number of questions raised by this: 'How does the congregation come to this collective identity?' 'Who has the power to shape and change this identity?' and 'What drives them to define it?' However, his attempt to discern this narrative does suggest an interest in the culture of the congregation.

Culture is a word which has a range of meanings. Working within Organisational Studies, Schein defines culture as *'a pattern of shared basic assumptions, that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore,*

to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems.' (Schein 2004, 21). Organisational Studies have been influential in Congregational Studies right from the early days (Ammerman et al. 1998; Carroll 1986; Woodhead, Guest, and Tusting 2004). In the UK, the involvement pre-dates Congregational Studies; a paper on the organisational aspects of congregations dates back to the 1970s (Benson and Dorsett 1971). The above definition by Schien provides a *mechanistic approach* (Hopewell 1988 [1987], 24) to culture and does not cover the complexity within congregations that seemed relevant. Indeed, by this definition, *culture* was taken seriously by the books cited in exploring Vision. The processes were designed to change the culture of the congregation; that is, to make the congregation ready to reconsider its assumptions.

Social anthropology has a much more sophisticated understanding of culture. It understands culture as the product of the many '*imponderables*' that go to make up communal life (Malinowski 1922, 18). Malinowski works with four different levels of culture: what people should be doing, what they say they are doing, what they think they do and what they actually do. These layers slide over each other and are sometimes congruent and sometimes incongruent. Given the adoption of Malinowski's layered understanding by social anthropologists, it is not surprising that an '*interpretative*' approach developed (Geertz 2000b [1973]). Culture is developed like a photograph, with the precise description of the ethnographer being the developing process. Thus, culture can be understood as created by the ethnographer (Wagner 1981). This also leads to critiques of the interpretative framework of culture such as that by Gupta and Ferguson (1992). This *interpretative approach* allows anthropologists to critique the assumed analytic framework in the way Barth explores how cultural boundaries are often geographically defined (F. Barth 2000). Equally, culture can only be explored through the medium of ethnographic

exploration. Therefore, culture is an interaction between the discourses of tradition in Social Anthropology and the everyday lives of those studied.

In starting out on this project, the questions I had at the front of my mind were those that I formulated earlier in relation to Hopewell's work: 'How does the congregation come to this collective identity?' 'Who has the power to shape and change this identity?' and 'What drives them to define it?' The complex understanding of *culture* in Social Anthropology gives a definition that allows for a more nuanced reflection on these questions than that derived from Organisational Studies. It also enabled me to think critically about the problem I had with the Vision Process in ways that were not available if one uses Schien's definition (2004, 21). Thus I was drawn to the 'anthropological' strand.

When I explored the wider anthropological strand in Congregational Studies, two different areas attracted my attention, as they had not been mapped in previous reviews of the literature. One of these was the role that worship plays in the study. Worship undoubtedly plays a role, but reviewers did not focus on it, despite there being studies that were centred on it. Secondly, I was interested in how theology was handled in the research. Theology is another of the 'strands', but it also exists within the congregational context in a complex manner. Researchers can therefore take a variety of approaches to this theology.

There has, however, been a regular contribution by ethnographers to Congregational Studies (Cameron et al. 2005). In America, where Congregational Studies is better developed than in the United Kingdom, this includes studies that involved teams of ethnographers. Nancy Ammerman conducted a study that looked at how congregations survived within their local environment (Ammerman 2001 [1997]). The study was an extensive programme covering some nine communities and around 500 congregations within those communities. Each team was allocated

a congregation about which to produce a case study, using the ethnographic method. However, the focus of the study was on congregational survival and thus fitted with American Congregational Studies' interest in church growth (Fukuyama 1986): its conclusion was that congregations needed to be able to adapt. Due to its wide base, it largely failed to engage with how worship and theology related to this.

Robert Wuthnow has conducted a similar-sized study on the role of support groups (many of which were church Bible studies or fellowship groups) within wider society (Wuthnow 1994). The focus was on the ways that small groups were influencing American society. He noted that most of the small groups were to some extent church-connected; though this varied from hiring a church room to being deliberately set up by the congregation as a method of discipleship. Indeed, small groups are an important evangelistic tool in America (Dougherty and Whitehead 2010). There are anecdotes in Wuthnow's text, and it would seem plausible that the ethnographic approach was used. However, his methodology only explores the way that a large survey was analysed. The explanation appears to be that while the survey had many set answers, there were also open questions that allowed respondents to talk more widely about support groups. The study is interested in the sort of community that these groups build and not in worship or theology. The prevalence of the small group is very different from my experience in local congregations.⁴

There are smaller studies from America, including that of Penny Edgell Becker on conflict within congregations (Becker 1999). Becker's work looks at the issues that cause conflict and relates these to a typology of congregations: '*house of worship*', '*family*', '*community*' and '*leader*' (Becker 1999, 48). Thus, her initial analysis seems to depend on established typologies. Her 'house of worship'

⁴ Church-based small groups, though common in the UK, tend to be a minority interest.

has a focus solely on worship – but how that worship is conducted, apart from ‘well’, is irrelevant. Her data collection depended on spending time with the congregations and particularly on the information given by people involved with the congregations. A subject named Martha, who comments ‘*she was not going to the same church they were*’ (Becker 1999, 2), initialises the final level of analysis into conflict. Analysing the conflict typical of each typology, she found that catastrophic conflict occurred when groups within the congregation had different views on which type the congregation was. In another study, Nancy Eisland (2000), explored the ways a variety of congregations thrived, survived, or died within the exurb.⁵ This study is part of a wider project which she had tailored to her interests, thus allowing her to spend a significant amount of time with and around four congregations. In many ways, it reflects the conclusions of the Ammerman study, with examples of how congregations have changed and adapted. Worship is briefly described but not analysed and theology is ignored.

Funding in America for Congregational Studies has often been from mission departments (Fukuyama 1986). This results in a concern with growth and survival. This has enabled the existence of large studies that permitted the development of typologies; however, the cost of the studies is large, so the need is for them to be as generalisable as possible. Thus worship and theology are often ignored as idiosyncratic to the congregation. Also, with denominational funding the studies may assume a commonality of worship and theology. This means that items such as the congregational worship practices and theology tend to be treated as extraneous to the analysis. Such denominational support also means that studies have, as Woodhead et al. (2004) would put it, an ‘extrinsic’ focus. These large studies set the tone for the smaller ones.

In the UK, denominations’ mission departments do not have the same resources. Thus

⁵ Suburb-like housing outside the traditional bounds of a city.

Congregational Studies is less well developed but the social anthropological input is stronger. The nearest to the extensive studies described above is the Kendal Project, a review of religious and spiritual activity in Kendal (Heelas et al. 2005). This study was a survey which used ethnographic techniques for data collection.⁶ However, its focus was '*extrinsic*'. It looked at the way religious practices were changing, trying to ascertain whether spirituality was replacing church-going. Its conclusion was that, although spirituality was growing by huge percentages (about 200% in the 1990s⁷), the small number of people meant that the overall level of religious and spiritual participation was still in decline. Its focus was on the number of people involved in associational practices and it did not look at what the practices were, so neither theology or worship were covered.

There has been a certain amount of work by solo researchers who have focused on a social anthropological, ethnographic approach. Timothy Jenkins, in his studies of the village at Comberton and the Whit procession in Kingswood in Bristol, observes the role churches play in the community. He focuses on how local people's involvement with religious practice reflected their social standing in the wider community (T. Jenkins 1999), specifically at how belonging to a church was a sign of social status (T. Jenkins 2004). As a parish priest, he is naturally based within a congregation, yet his approach is '*extrinsic*', although the context is the immediate environment of the congregation and is therefore not sociological. However, his focus is strongly social anthropological and theology makes an appearance only occasionally.

In contrast, there are a number of researchers who have an intrinsic focus, often on worship. James Steven explores charismatic worship in the Church of England (Steven 2002). He

⁶ Similar methodology can be seen in 'Policing and Public Health' (Maher and Dixon 1999), one of the chapters in *Ethnographic Research: A Reader* (Taylor 2002).

⁷ That is, tripled in size.

examined six congregations who had differing involvement with charismatic renewal, both attending worship and interviewing members including clerics. Steven's involvement with six congregations limits him to attending worship only twice. He draws upon the way that public worship acts as an 'event horizon' that enacts the shared values, memories and culture of the congregation (Steven 2002, 49). He shows that there is a variety of ways that charismatic worship is included in Anglican worship, and in so doing looks at how theology is present within the worship discourse of the congregations. His analysis of worship as an event horizon is in many ways comparable with Goffman's analogy (1990 [1951]) of the performance on stage. The congregation's participation in charismatic renewal is marked by it having 'times of worship' and 'prayer ministry' (Stevens 2004, 210). He draws on both sociology and theology, offering his own theological critique.

Martin Stringer carried out an ethnographic study on four Manchester congregations (Stringer 1999). His analysis started when he was in his first congregation, a Baptist one. There he found that his respondents answered his questions as he expected; however, when he reported back, this was not how the congregation understood worship (Stringer 1999, 89). He concluded that he had used leading questions and so he had obtained only expected responses (Stringer 1999, 90). The straightforward statements obscured a complexity; the notion of how God related to worship was both taken for granted and unknowable or incommunicable. Thus, the congregation used narrative to approach the unapproachable rather than formal position statements. In the following chapters, he explores the ways that the culture of the congregation shapes not just the expression of worship, but also what can be expressed within the tradition. That he studies only four congregations allows him to spend longer worshipping with each congregation. Therefore, he gains an insight into the cultural dynamics that shape experience of worship in the

congregation. The question remains whether the worship was a separate system or whether it related in other ways to the nature of the community that existed within the congregation.

Another study that focuses primarily on worship is Desmond Ryan's work on the Roman Catholic parishes around Birmingham. Its focus is similar: 'It was not just the nuts and bolts of running a parish that was coming across, but the local experience of the Church in the modern world' (Ryan 1998, xiv). It relies almost exclusively on interviews with clergy and in so doing focuses on the clerical perspective. Thus, even though it is very much an exploration of the parish as an organisation, it pictures it as a spiral rotating around the central core of the Mass (Ryan 1998, 186). Worship is explored both in the chapter on Liturgy and in that on Sacraments, while there is a whole chapter on faith which looks at theology. The study therefore has concerns about both public worship and theology running through it at multiple levels; however, its concentration on priests as informants means that worshippers' views are sidelined.

There is a different tension between theology and ethnography in Matthew Guest's research on evangelical⁸ identity, which is based at St Michael le Belfry, York. It examines that how members of the congregation identify as evangelical (Guest 2008). He chooses to define 'evangelical' by an external statement, which includes: emphasis on conversion experience; an attempt to live a lifestyle coherent with the Gospel; a regard for the Bible tending towards literalism and the theological; and a concentration on crucifixion as sacrifice (Guest 2008, 20). By adopting this definition, when the congregation departs from these tenets it is always considered as an indication of liberalisation. The use of evangelical identity reflects the debate, well-known in

⁸ 'Evangelical' is a problematic word for someone from a Reformed heritage. Fraser MacDonald in his study refers to conservative Presbyterian congregations as "evangelical" (F. MacDonald 2002) and equally Raymond Brown's book *'Spirituality in Adversity'*, which covers English Non-Conformity 1660-1689, is printed in a series entitled "Studies in Evangelical History and Thought" (R. Brown 2012). Evangelicalism and the Reformed tradition are overlapping entities but they are not identical.

Reformed circles, characterised by Richard Niebuhr (2001 [1951]), as to how far the church should negotiate with culture. Use of the definition in this way is problematic for two reasons. First it assumes that all church cultures fall along theological dimensions: where the extremes are labelled 'evangelical' and 'liberal', this would imply that Roman Catholics and Orthodox are liberal. Secondly, the definition has no statement that links directly to the need to evangelise the gospel. In my experience, evangelicalism is a loose coalition drawing from many different traditions; it cannot be directly made synonymous with a particular theological stance. The theological content of worship is part of the study and allows Guest to decide how evangelical the current regime is and also for members to place themselves on Guest's dimension with respect to it.

At the other end of the theological spectrum is the study by Peter Collins (2004; 2002) of a Quaker Meeting. He captured the role of narrative and community within a local Meeting where he was the person employed to take care of the buildings. Therefore, his take on identity is structured from within the Quaker Meeting, and the way they develop discourses. Identity is central, although differently perceived from Guest's approach. In Collins' study, identity is a shared narrative rather than a set of tenets subscribed to, and worship is part of the experience. He distinguishes three types of narrative within the setting: '*Canonic*', '*Vernacular*' and '*Individual*'. The '*Canonic*' would be closest to Guest's '*Evangelical Identity*', but Collins focuses on what is counted as canonical by the Meeting. The theological content is thus contained largely within the Canonic discourse. Similarly to Guest, Collins sees worship as one setting where members use these discourses.

There are three intrinsic studies from the wider tradition, all based in Scotland. The earliest is by Al Dowie (2002), which explores the culture of Riverstane congregation. He claims his study of

Riverstane may be *'generalisable to all other congregations or comparable to some other congregations, or particular only to this one congregation'* (Dowie 2002, 1). However, Riverstane is an unusual congregation from within the Church of Scotland. It is, in Becker's typology (1999, 48), a Leader Congregation, in that it relates nationally and is disconnected from the local. As the Church of Scotland is a parish-based organisation, a church maintaining this level of disconnection is exceptional. Intriguingly, in Dowie's study, after deciphering three cycles (of difference, deference and dissonance) (Dowie 2002, 184-191), he then goes on to explore their theological implications. In his description of the congregation, he does look at worship, but he treats the congregational statements as primarily about identity and preference. The quote 'The sermon is just part and parcel of the hour's worship – other things are just as important' goes uncommented on. The handling of the statement is puzzling, as the speaker has quite deliberately set it against the Word-centric stance of the Reformed traditions. Also, worship is formal, and formality is often a technique for allowing the participation of people with widely differing theological stances within a single act of worship. The result is that Dowie focuses on worship as an attempt to distinguish the congregation from other churches around rather than linking it to the theological perspectives in the congregation. Thus the theological understanding of the members is treated as not theologically significant for the study, but his own theological understanding is.

The next study I examined was carried out by Fraser MacDonald, a Human Geographer, of conservative Presbyterian churches in North Uist. Fraser MacDonald comments on the lack of research, saying, *'Indeed, the paucity of reliable scholarship on contemporary Presbyterianism serves to perpetuate the more exotic mythologies of Calvinism (alcoholism, mental illness, gloominess) while being simultaneously blind to its everyday meaning and politics.'* (F. MacDonald 2002, 62–63). He appears unaware of Congregational Studies as a research area. Thus he does not cite Dowie (2002) and takes an

entirely different approach, using the ideas of Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) about the production of space. He does discuss worship in relationship to sacred space, pointing out that, though the congregation would deny that they have any sacred space, there are clear conventions about what can and cannot happen in the buildings: that the understanding that sacred space should not be signified by symbols leads to a signification through their absence (F. MacDonald 2002, 74). Also, members modify their behaviour within the hall, and a social hierarchy is observed which differs from that in force outside (F. MacDonald 2002, 66–68). Though theology is introduced, with arguments about how the iconoclasm of the Reformation has influenced Reformed worship space, there are few indications given as to the theology of the members. He notes visual indicators, such as not wearing headscarves and using modern translations (F. MacDonald 2002, 75). These indicators are contextualised by a reference to conservative Presbyterianism without any exploration of what the symbolism meant. Similarly, worship is analysed socially and spatially but not theologically.

More recently, Joseph Webster (2013) has conducted a study of religion in the fishing village of Gamrie in Aberdeenshire, where the dominant form of religion is Brethren. Even the Church of Scotland required that members of another local Church of Scotland congregation that had closed would only be admitted following a new profession of faith before the Kirk session: the intention was that they should testify how they were born again in line with Brethren teaching. He spent 18 months involved with the six churches in Gamrie; he attended worship as well as social functions and helped out at the seamen's mission in Fraserburgh. His focus was on how the Brethren ethos created in the congregations reflected the ethos of the fisher community's daily life experience. He argues that the concentration on end times reflected not only the theology of their congregations, but also their demographic and economic factors. Thus, the

people of the ‘*saved*’ village⁹ of Gamrie had a holistic theology that explained their secular lived reality, as well as the spiritual one. He relates this back to Weber, who ties economic situatedness with religiosity (Weber 1992 [1905]; Weber 1946). Thus, just as with Stringer’s Roman Catholic congregation, where the understanding of tradition depended on the way it was used in the situation (Stringer 1999, 133–136), so too the ‘enchantment’ of the church attendees in Gamrie makes sense of the discursive context they are in. Thus, the theological involvement is the way the ‘*saved*’ *village* understands its experience through eschatological theology. As a social anthropologist, he does not offer a separate theological analysis and seems unaware of the area of Congregational Studies. Worship is described multiple times but analysed as a setting for the performance of the eschatological discourse.

I have looked at several intrinsic studies that have an ethnographic approach to Congregational Studies within the UK. These studies, although sharing a broad methodological framework, make a variety of different assumptions about theology and worship. In all of them, except Macdonald, theology is a focus of the study. However in some, such as Steven’s (2002), there is a separate theological critique of the ethnographic conclusion, as in the study by Dowie (2002). Other studies, such as Stringer (1999) and Webster (2013) focus on the theological discourses that occur within the interpretative space only. A third option is to take a ‘canonic’ external theology such as Guest (2008) and compare what happens in the setting with this. As can be seen with Stringer (Stringer 1999, 89), when such identification occurs it can mislead. There is thus a variety of treatments of theology in these intrinsic studies.

Equally, the treatment of worship differs. There are those where it is a primary focus (Stringer 2005; Steven 2002), and there are those where it is more part of the wider congregational setting

⁹ He distinguishes between the *saved* village of those who go to church and the *damned* village of those who do not.

and acts within that (Dowie 2002; F. MacDonald 2002; Guest 2008). Some make the connection between worship and theology (Ryan 1998; Steven 2002) and others do not (Dowie 2002). This is in marked contrast to the extrinsic studies where the role of theology and worship are largely ignored.

4. Theoretical choices around Identity

The path to looking at the topic of identity was not straightforward. I started out with the fact that I faced a congregation that acted as though it was depressed. Also, members of the congregation chose not to participate in the workshops that looked at building a communal congregational vision. It is hard, when talking of these phenomena, to avoid language that implies that congregations have a mind. This attitude could not be a case of groupthink (Turner and Pratkanis 1998) (a psychological phenomenon where a group of people returns a decision contrary to the view of any of them) as this was not a one-off. Equally the supposition that a congregation has a mind is to stretch the biological analogy further than it can be sustained. Two issues seemed to fit within the concept of congregational identity: the ways a consensus was formed within the congregation about itself and the roles that people felt they had as members..

In preparing for this PhD, I had done a Masters with the Open University which included a course called Identity in Question ('Identity In Question - OpenLearn - Open University' 2014). In taking the course, I learnt that there had been a massive development in the debate over the last fifty years. The development was partly due to feminism, changes in the global economy, the increased presence of lesbian, gay, black and minority ethnic communities, but also changes in the way people think. There had grown up '*a plethora of particular and probably non-transferable debates*' (Du Gay, Evans, and Redman 2000, 2) around identity. The course divided the thinkers into

three strands: those who saw identity as mainly about meaning, those who thought that identity connected with the emotions and those who recognised identity as being a set of behaviours.

In the category focused on ‘meaning’, the thinkers included post-structuralists, but with their focus on words, it was not easy to think how they might apply in congregational settings. It also included the work of Louis Althusser, with his idea of the creation of the individual by the ‘ideological state apparatus’ (Althusser 2006 [1970]) and Judith Butler, where gender is ascribed to a child at birth (Butler 2011 [1993]). Their ideas pointed to the way the wider society creates a discursive space for the individual. These spaces are due to both overarching ideologies and the local performances, such as a midwife delivering a child. These create discursive spaces that people inhabit within society. Intriguingly, although Althusser and Butler give a very fixed transcription of these spaces, Lacan’s mirrored self (2006 [1949]; 2006 [1953]) provided a much more fluid approach. Just as a child becomes aware of their mirror image as relating to them, so language presents us with the mirrored-self, which is always historical and fails to represent the ambiguity of the ‘real’ self; for as one reaches for a representation of the self, in the semiotic realm intrinsic to it is also a denial of the self. For Lacan, it is that which is denied that becomes the ‘other’. Perhaps the most remarkable text using this notion is by Žižek (1991), which suggests that in becoming defined a topic loses some of its content. The act of interpellation from Althusser thus becomes not just a claiming of identity but also a loss of identity. So it might be the case that congregations, in representing themselves, by necessity produce an account that is historical and partial. The result is a self-identity which is more determined by societal structure than by an individual, and yet eludes those structures.

By contrast, in the ‘emotional’ group the emphasis is on the creation of an internal awareness of self. These thinkers drew on psychoanalytic approaches, focusing on the work of Klein with her

emphasis on the development of the child (1997 [1932]) with particular attention paid to how a child comes to differentiate themselves from the general environment, particularly their mother, and so creates an internal '*I*'. The process was seen as traumatic, and the child needed mechanisms to cope with the separation. Thus having a self-identity entailed bereavement, which created a sense of '*other*'. Thus, a person understands themselves as a being through the difference between who '*I*' am and who '*the other*' is. The '*other*' therefore differs from Lacan's definition and is described as 'that which I am not'. This concept also drew on the work of Winnicott (2005 [1971], 1–35), who looked at the way children used a '*transitional object*' in producing their identity. This transitional object is somewhere between the '*self*' and the '*other*'. In just such a way, an organisational identity can, for its members, stand between themselves and the outside world. The emotions are thus in play, not just with self-identity but also within the organisations to which a person belongs.

These ideas were developed by the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (The Tavistock Institute 2013; De Board 1978) so that they connected the individual with institutions. This work started with Jaques (1955), who hypothesised that individuals used institutions they belonged to as a defence against morbid anxiety. He examined the way workers managed to split the managers whom they worked with from the management who made decisions. The ideas were developed by Menzie-Lyth (1989 [1986]; 1988 [1959,1961,(1961b), 1970]) in her work on the functioning of nurse training colleges. She explored the way the system was working against nurses dealing with anxiety. In particular, the idea that professional nurses provided high levels of care without getting emotionally attached to patients was detrimental to performance. Also concern over nurses making incorrect decisions led to responsibility being passed up the line. This resulted in the nursing school being unable to meet its aims as nurses dropped out. That one

might have emotion tied up in an organisational identity does not mean that that identity is always going to be helpful to the self or the organisation.

What is perhaps more interesting is the focus of their work on the organisation itself with emotion analysable in four dimensions: '*task*', '*structure*', '*identity*' and '*ecology*' (Armstrong 2004, 28). These organisations have: a purpose (*task*); procedures for accomplishing it (*structure*); ways of indicating who they are and boundaries (*identity*); and they work within a wider setting (*ecology*). This differs from treating organisations as selves, to seeing organisations as systems created by humans, which in part, are used to contain emotions. What sets these thinkers apart from those who have applied system psychology to congregations, such as Steinke (2006), is that all members would have an investment in the '*anxiety defence*' mechanism. Therefore, members of the congregation would choose to play specific roles within the congregation in order to preserve the '*defence mechanism*'.

Institutional psychoanalysts are not the only ones concerned with the interaction of groups and individuals; there are also social psychologists. 'Social Psychology is all about people influencing people. Social Psychology is the scientific attempt to explain how the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of other human beings' (Fiske 2014 [2004]). As such, it is looking *down* through the social structure at how groups affect individuals, whereas this thesis is trying to look *up* at how individuals affect groups. Within Social Psychology, there is a sub-genre called Social Constructionism which covers a number of areas. Firstly it drew on the idea of Symbolic Interactionism developed by George Mead (Mead 1967 [1934]), which gave it an emphasis on signs: this fitted well with the idea of religion as a system of signs in social anthropology (Geertz 2000a [1973]). However, this focus on symbols led to a concern with the relationship of self to text that is similar to semiotic analyses,

particularly those of Mikhail Bakhtin (Michel Holquist 2002, 55). Secondly, Social Interactionism draws on the idea of reification of social conventions as described by Berger and Luckman (1967 [1966]). These emphases changed how a person was understood. A person is not solely the product of societies' structures, but participates in the creation of them. However, the drawing together of these threads is commonly dated from a paper by Kenneth Gergen (1973) in which he outlines the case for it.

It is one of the most versatile research approaches, being used not only by Social Psychology but in Sociology and Organisational Studies (Mendy 2007): and because of its concentration on the way individuals create meaning within the institutional setting, it lends itself to Social Anthropology. This ability to fit within different disciplines has led to it being criticised for being an approach that can encompass anything (Craib 1997); however, this ability could also be seen as a strength in a study that is deliberately cross-disciplinary. The problem with pure approaches is that 'the interior discourses spin on feeding upon themselves and becoming increasingly rarified' (Gergen 1994 [1994], 65): they become like closed systems, tidy and highly sophisticated but failing to capture the messiness of life. Approaches that focus on trying to capture the messiness are often convoluted and unpredictable.¹⁰ However, it does mean that I need to spell out what is useful within the ideas of Social Constructionism. To a large extent, the work within this research strand that has interested me is that around Gergen, who defines Social Constructionism as follows:

- What we consider to be experience of the world does not in itself dictate the terms by

¹⁰ This analogy is the same as an applied mathematician studying the fluid dynamics of a liquid flowing around an object and an engineer looking at the airflow over a plane wings. The mathematical model is clean and tidy: unfortunately it achieves this at the expense of ignoring small factors that are crucial to the performances of a plane's wing. The modelling of these factors is so difficult that physical models were used to test ideas by engineers.

which the world is understood

- The terms in which the world is understood are social artefacts, products of historically-situated interchanges between people
- The extent to which a given form of knowledge prevails or is sustained across time is not essentially dependent on the empirical validity of the perspective in question, but on the vicissitudes of social processes (e.g., communication, negotiation, conflict, rhetoric)
- Forms of negotiated understanding are of critical significance in social life, as they are integrally connected with many other activities in which people engage. (Gergen 1985, 266–269)

This approach to Social Constructionism emphasises the way that action by individuals creates the overarching discursive structures of society in the process of reification (Berger and Luckman 1967 [1966]). The reifications invert the dynamic by which those discursive structures ‘interpellate’ the individual. In the way that a flow would not exist if there were no molecules in it, so too the structure of society would not exist if people did not act in accordance with it. Molecules are jostled by the flow, so they move with it, and so too people are subject to the macro structure of society. In this way, it is a micro-to-macro perspective, while many of the other approaches I have borrowed from in this thesis are macro-to-micro. As such, it works intriguingly with the anthropological bent of this thesis.

However, it was within the final group, which focussed on behaviour techniques for establishing identity, that I particularly found material of interest. Among the material was Max Weber, particularly his ‘vocation’ lectures (Weber 2004 [1918]). Weber had the idea that contexts require a person to exist in particular roles. These contextual roles are created by the ideas and understandings of the environment, which create an ‘enchantment’; thus, his ideas take a far

more determinative form than those of Ruth Benedict (2006 [1934]), which restrict the behaviour of individuals within a setting. However, there is a problem with using Weber as a theorist within this thesis. If the great theorists tell us one thing, it is that thinkers are as much a production of their setting as anyone else. Just as Durkheim and Marx were of Jewish extraction, Weber is of Protestant extraction: while he seems to be culturally Lutheran,¹¹ his mother was Huguenot.¹² However, the Huguenots were a persecuted religious minority within France; therefore, Huguenots were very aware of their religious identity and also influenced by Reformed Godliness (P. Benedict 2002, 519)¹³. The ‘enchantment’ experienced by Huguenot groups was thus a consciously sustained one. Weber, in his analysis of capitalism, therefore, is theorising and generalising an experience that occurs within his background. That Weber is using a personal understanding shows through when he uses the Savoy Declaration (Weber 1992 [1905], 85). There are two problems with using the Savoy Declaration (The Meeting of Elders and Messengers of Congregational Churches in England 1990 [1658]): firstly, over 90% of the text is identical with the older Westminster Confession (1990 [1646]); and secondly, it is a ‘declaration’ and not a ‘confession’. The difference between a confession and a declaration is a matter of the status such statements hold in the tradition; declarations are less authoritative. I suspect that the reason why Weber used the Savoy Declaration and not the Westminster Confession is that those writing the Savoy Declaration had a lineage that can be connected more easily with the Pilgrim Fathers. However, the authors of the Savoy Declaration and the Pilgrim Fathers both had separatist connections but that does not make the connection sound. Firstly, Presbyterianism

¹¹ *Evangelische-soziale Kongress*, which Weber belonged to (Kim 2007), is Lutheran; though ‘*Evangelische*’ is normally translated as “Evangelical”, in Germany it is frequently used to distinguish Lutherans from Reformed (‘*Reformierter*’).

¹² It is more accurate to say John Calvin was a Huguenot rather than Huguenots are Reformed.

¹³ Philip Benedict’s whole book explores (P. Benedict 2002) whether Weber’s ideas can be used on the Reformed Tradition and he comes to no final conclusion.

started to thrive in America as early as the 18th Century (Ahlstrom 2004 [1972]), long before American capitalism. Secondly, those who know the congregational history would be cautious of connecting this statement with the Pilgrim Fathers due to separatism's tendency towards having many disparate theologies. To that, Weber adds a Lutheran idea of vocation (Weber 1992 [1905], 33). It seems likely that Weber is choosing his sources to make a case for something he knows from personal experience about the tradition. It does not mean that his theories are wrong, but using Weber's theory might lead to circularity within this thesis, as he is too close to the tradition to which the congregations belong. However, Weber is not the only theorist who works in this manner.

Marcel Mauss noted during the First World War that when English soldiers replaced French soldiers in the trenches they had to bring their spades as the English could not use French spades nor the French use English (Mauss 1973 [1935], 71). This illustration showed how mundane things can be done in different ways within close cultural contexts. From this observation, he deduced that most behaviour was learnt from the social context. His concentration on practices removes it from the verbal level of semiotics and brings it to the anthropological level, where learnt practices are often so typical within the context that people within it do not realise there are other ways of doing it (Wagner 1981). Indeed, Mauss sees it precisely because he is a Frenchman observing English troops.

Among the theorists in this section was also Michel Foucault. Foucault is not a thinker who developed in a coherent manner; indeed such a proposal would have horrified him (Mills 2003, 22). Instead, he worked and reworked around themes that interested him. He states that his work 'ought to be taken as "propositions" "game openings", where those who are interested are invited to join in; they are not dogmatic assertions that have to be taken or left en bloc' (Foucault

1991 [1980], 74). The use of Foucault in this thesis is not necessarily consistent; he has, however, been a thinker I have thought against most often while working. Foucault's thought can be divided into early and late, but such a division is not maintained in this thesis; instead, while the majority of the references are to his later works, when required use has been made of his earlier work.

For a thesis on how congregations create identities, Foucault's idea of 'technologies' (Foucault 1987 [1984]; Foucault 1988 [1982]; Foucault 1993; Rose 1996, 132) seemed appropriate. Foucault defines four separate 'technologies': 'technologies of production', 'technologies of signs', 'technologies of power' and 'technologies of the self' (Foucault 1988 [1982]; Foucault 1993). It is useful to note that Foucault distinguishes *'technologie'* from *'techné'*. He describes *technés* of identity as those 'techniques and practices [which] form the Western concept of the subject, giving it its characteristic split of truth and error, freedom and constraint' (Foucault 1993, 223–224)¹⁴.

Of relevance here is 'the technology of self'. Foucault defines this technology as follows: 'I am referring to what might be called 'arts of existence'. What I mean by the phrase are those intentional and voluntary actions by which men set themselves rules of conduct but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular beings and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria' (Foucault 1987 [1984], 2:10–11). He links this firmly with the technology of power (Foucault 1983 [1982], 250). The questions that Foucault explores with his technologies of the self are 'what is it that is the motivating concern in this technology?' and following Weber, 'what has to be renounced to be considered a rational being?' (Foucault 1988 [1982], 7)

While focusing on these questions, he is able to discern that there were different answers in

¹⁴ I explore the idea of technology further in the Belonging Chapter, Section 4.

different historical periods (Foucault 1987 [1984]; Foucault 1988 [1982]). However he does not provide space for the differences within an environment. This attempt to try to characterise a single answer for a period is part of Foucault's tendency to develop overarching schemes (Foucault 1991, 59). For Foucault, there is one technological system operating at a time. This single technological model is acceptable if your view of society is of a largely unified structure. Change is then more likely to be relatively uniform, mono-directional and inevitable. However, other philosophers have thought differently. Amélie Rorty has argued that the Western concept of a subject is not a coherent set of ideas (Rorty 2006). Rather, she sees it made up from a variety of notions that vary according to context and the tradition that activates them. In Rorty's analysis, there would at least be 'ghost drivers' from previous formulations active within the current environment. These issues lead to a technology that is an amalgam of different '*technés*' created at different times. The answers are no longer singular and the technology becomes the shared practices used within society.

In partial institutions there will always be an exchange of practices between contexts. However, we are constricted by the tools we have and our skill in using them; it is hard to remove a nail with a spanner. Congregations are partial institutions;¹⁵ thus everyone in the congregation interacts with its boundaries. The change of scale does make a difference to the way technologies work. I would not expect a full 'technology of self' to be active within the situation, but a loose collection of '*technés*'. These would be more limited discourses that would interact with other '*technologies of self*' used in different contexts. Perhaps it is better to think of the '*technologies*' as toolkits built up by a joiner. These are not the tidy toolkits you can buy from a retailer, but a

¹⁵ The nearest incidents of total institutions in the Reformed tradition are the City of Geneva towards the end of Calvin's time as senior minister and Puritan New England. Both of these had multiple congregations and the totality was never perfect.

collection of tools that have been collected over the years and found to be useful.

Another factor is that for Foucault power flows in a variety of directions, rather than being entirely located within the central authority. However, Foucault with his concern with truth draws attention to the way that power is used to establish what is true. If power is not solely centrally controlled, then it can establish the truth that is not solely in the control of the élite. Thus we start to approach Weber's idea of enchantment, although still allowing for the interplay of power systems. However, along with rejecting his singular solution we perhaps need to think in terms of a '*good enough*'¹⁶ truth.

The 'meaning' approach to identity looked at the way institutions, and other societal structures, made situations for people and how, in adopting those situations, a person limits their possibilities. The 'emotional' approach drew out the need to differentiate from those around, plus the fact that people have an emotional investment in institutions. It also made us aware of the way institutions are shaped by people. The 'practices' draw our attention to mundane activities and how they are learnt, suggesting that these fabricated technologies are used in particular contexts.

The partial nature of congregations means that, unlike Foucault, I needed to think about the role of boundaries. Congregations compete not only with other congregations but with other subjectivities within which members participate, such as work or family. I needed ideas about the edges of institutions and how they interact.

Organisational Studies deals with more limited settings. However, these were inappropriate because the organisations examined often had their boundaries determined by the legal code; the

¹⁶ Taken by analogy from Winnicott's "good enough parent".

boundaries were clearly defined and closed, for example in the case of a business or public service. It simplifies the model, but it does so at the expense of its relationship to reality. Those studies that did have a wider perspective tended to look at organisations as entities with fixed boundaries within a larger closed system. Often these assume that the boundaries are so far away as to be ignorable. Thus, they cannot actually affect the behaviour within the current circumstances. There is remarkably little theorisation about the way institutions deal with open boundaries.

Eventually, I found theorists of identity whose interest was in much larger-scale phenomena such as ethnic identity. There were two groups of such theorists: post-colonial thinkers who explored the overlapping of different discursive systems and anthropologists of ethnicity who were interested in how, in multi-ethnic settings, people established themselves as belonging to a particular ethnic group.

Post-colonialism was useful because of the way it theorised how those outside the group interacted with it. Much of the analysis depended on a discussion of the 'other'. However, this was not uniform. Said, in his study of Orientalism, used 'other' to refer to those cultures that were not Western (Said 2003 [1978]) and thus not part of the dominant world culture. 'Other' thus becomes that which is normative within those excluded from the dominant group. This highlights the fact that the group is defined as much by those who are excluded as by those included. However, Homi Bhabha (Bhabha 2004a [1994]) drew my attention to the way that the interactions between two different systems did not make something that was a clone of either. Thus, Bhabha focuses on what is produced by the interaction of coloniser and colonised. He points out that there was always something lost at the boundary. Thus, his idea of 'other' is far more closely linked to that of Lacan (Lacan 2006 [1953]). The suggestion is that at the boundary

there is a porosity in the situation that leads to tension and struggle. At a closed boundary there is both a smoothing but also a loss of energy. Thus, post-colonial theorists, in looking at the boundaries where different ethnic groups interact, produced approaches analogous to those working with the emotional approach to identity.

However, the anthropologists of multi-ethnicity were equally attractive. Gerd Bauman looked at the ways that social activities attempt to negotiate with societal discourses (G. Baumann 1996) and the activity involved there. He looked at the way that people chose different discourses according to their setting. In analysing these discourses, he reflects the ideas of social constructivists, in that people are choosing which discourse to perform within a context. There is still a single dominant discourse; communities have their own contained culture. On the other hand, the work of Fredrik Barth (1998 [1969]) looked at the way that individuals creatively renegotiated the boundaries to create fresh discourses that brought tensions into a new relationship. He points out that people can change ethnicity. Both of these theorists stop seeing boundaries as neatly fixed ideas and question the neat, tidy boundaries that are dominant in Western thought (F. Barth 2000; G. Baumann 1996). Thus, boundaries are more fluid, but when we look at institutional identities, we need to see how people attempt to define and negotiate the boundaries. That is not to say the way these boundaries are interpreted will be coherent within the group. Anthony Cohen, in his ethnography of Whalsay, showed that if an activity has significance for the community they belonged to, then people will perform the expected role even though different people might have different interpretations of an event. Whalsay fishermen tie up for the funeral of a fellow fisherman, regardless of how close they were to the one who had died (A. P. Cohen 1987). These mechanisms are manifest at the level of the individual. So it is possible to explore them within the congregational setting.

Given this range of thinkers, there is no effective way to explore all that has been written about identity within the confines of this thesis. There are two ways of dealing with this potential approach. The first approach would be to select theorists and work with their ideas, hoping that this would enable me to understand congregational identity better. This approach would make the theorising of the thesis a predominantly deductive approach, in which I would see how far these theories could be adapted to the question and where they failed. The second is to use an inductive process. I would start with what happened and then look for theorists who might help me to interpret it.

As I came to the thesis having done quite a bit of reading around identity, but not committed to a particular theorist, my approach was more inductive. As I started to look deeper, I returned to theorists who seemed to provide explanatory theory, and investigated them further. At times, this extended to exploring new theorists who seemed relevant. The result is a much broader base of theorists. Sometimes I am using theorists because they are appropriate to that setting, others are there because they had produced insights elsewhere. This section has given a broad outline of my understanding of how the differing disciplines around identity interact and has started building some idea of how I conceptualise identity.

5. Technologies of Religiosity: Believing, Belonging and Behaving

The focus of this thesis is a religious setting: United Reformed congregations. From the earlier discussion of Congregational Studies, it should be clear that how religion is understood within this context is critical to how the thesis progresses. Particularly, how do the commonly talked about aspects of religiosity – believing and belonging – impinge on this setting? However, before

that can be done there needs to be an understanding of the difficulties of using terms such as ‘believing’ and ‘belonging’.

Grace Davie’s exploration of the sociological state of religion in Britain in the late 1980s (Davie 1994) characterises two dimensions of religiosity, what she calls ‘belief and practice’. However, she subtitles the book *Believing and Belonging*. This alliteration of the subtitle has set up a controversy of how these aspects relate to each other. There are people who argue that there are instances that can be characterised as *belonging without believing* elsewhere in Europe (Marchisio and Pisati 1999) and within American Liberal Judaism (S. M. Cohen and Blitzer 2008). Others argue that this state is better characterised as *neither belonging nor believing* (Voas and Crockett 2005), or that there is an entirely different relationship between the aspects such as *believing in belonging* (Day 2011; Day 2010). Some even take this as far as *belonging without belonging* (Lewis and De Bernardo 2010). This last title should indicate we are dealing with concepts that are not straightforward. Rather there is a complex relationship between the concepts of ‘believing’ and ‘belonging’ (Day and Coleman 2010).

Davie uses the European Values Studies to explore the definition of religiosity (Davie 1994, 11–13). She, while commending it for having five dimensions, then goes on to characterise two meta-dimensions. These she characterises as ‘those concerned with feeling, experience and the more numinous religious belief’ (Davie 1994, 12) and ‘religious orthodoxy, ritual participation and institutional attachment’ (Davie 1994, 12)¹⁷. The separation of ‘belief’ and ‘orthodoxy’ between the two meta-dimensions should cause concern. Orthodoxy is within Christianity by origin, and

¹⁷ If I am honest this does not surprise me: it is a product of the statistical techniques used. The naming of exploratory factors is an art. Anyone carrying out this process has to balance the need for the title to be succinct and the need for it to have content validity. In this case the desire for it to be succinct has triumphed over content validity.

by definition concerned with belief. Indeed for normative behaviour there is the alternative term of ‘orthopraxy’. When Davie goes on broadly to specify belonging as being about church membership, self-identification and attendance, she says nothing about the orthodoxy of the individual. What is more, in belief one deals with both a weak form of orthodox belief and a more emotional aspect (Davie 1994, 79). The apparent sleight-of-hand performed by Davie demonstrates how slippery the terminology is. Both believing and belonging are polysemous in ordinary usage.

Belief can be understood both in an intellectual form, as the acceptance of propositional statements and in an emotional form as allegiance. This dilogical¹⁸ nature of belief has been acknowledged in Christian theology at least as far back as Thomas Aquinas¹⁹. John Bishop notes that Thomas Aquinas both makes statements about ‘belief that’ and ‘belief in’ (Aquinas 1974 [1265-1273], 2a2ae q1–7:11 & 157; Bishop 2010). The difference noted within sociology between propositional belief and performative belief (Day 2010) has been known in theological circles for centuries.

H H Price, in the 1959-60 Gifford lectures, maintained that in English we have two meanings of ‘believe in’, the performative form of belief, which he calls ‘*factual*’ and ‘*evaluative*’ (Price 1960, 426–454). The ‘factual’ can easily be reduced to ‘believe that’, but the ‘*evaluative*’ can only be done so with a double value statement. So the statement “I believe in my GP” equates to something approximating “I believe that my GP is good at treating illness and that that is a good thing”. The

¹⁸ Having two meanings not dialogical.

¹⁹ Although Aquinas would be seen as Roman Catholic, he is pre-Reformation and the Reformed understanding of faith tends to take a mirror to the Roman Catholic one. I have heard endless sermons on faith that stress that it is closer to confidence/allegiance/trust. In Calvin this aspect of belief is covered in the difference between formed and unformed faith (Calvin 1960 [1529], 553): unformed faith being that which is solely propositional belief or “belief that”.

'*factual*' 'belief in' is a half-way statement and blurs the distinction between the 'belief that', propositional belief, and the '*evaluative*' – 'belief in'. Price goes on to look at the evaluative statements and states that they can either be self-interested or self-disinterested. Thus there are at least four different uses of the word "belief" within English

Further, Needham in his exploration of belief (1972, 14–31) describes the difficulty of finding a word that translates belief in non-western cultures as '*No words exist in Hebrew, Arabic or Pali, which can be translated into the English word belief*' (Dein 2013). Faced with a selection of words with different origins that can be translated as 'belief' in English, anthropologists struggle to discover to find what people they are studying believe. This complex structure of 'belief' is not replicated within non-Western cultures and can create misunderstanding in ethnography.

Pouillon (1982, 1–2) analysed the way in which the verb 'to believe' is used in French demonstrating three forms. Two of these forms can be translated as 'believe in' ('*croire à*' and '*croire en*'). The other form 'is translated as 'believe that' ('*croire que*'). Pouillon notes that the '*factual*' form is a hesitant 'know' statement, and therefore entertains doubt, while the doubts are not present in the '*evaluative*'; nobody doubts that his or her GP exists. These thinkers examine the complexity of meaning of 'belief'; however, all of them assume that the factual content may be verifiable in some ways. Martin Stringer goes further in his development of 'situational belief' (Stringer 1996), in suggesting that the belief in factual material may be unverifiable rather than true. So an individual acts 'as if' it is true.

Another model for 'belief' that comes from the field of public health is the Transtheoretical Model (Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross 1992). The model is primarily concerned with behavioural change, initially focusing on addictive behaviour, but is now widely used in public health intervention. It is another form of the Learning Cycles model, with belief interventions

only being useful in the 'pre-contemplation' stage, which looks very much like the 'explore' stage of the Pastoral Cycle (Green 1992 [1989]). What is interesting is that the 'evaluative' belief is dominant in the 'action' or 'maintenance' stage: as such, that statement is 'performative' rather than 'factual'. However in the 'pre-contemplative' and 'contemplative' stages, the 'factual' mode of belief is operative. What the model of belief suggests is that the two forms of 'belief in' might be connected through process.

The way 'belief' is used in English is complex. There is a variety of different understandings of 'belief' that slither over and under each other in use. These have relationships to each other but change aspect due to context, state or process, including their relationship with the truth of any factual element. The problems of translating it into other cultures add to this complexity. It has been argued that 'belief' should not be used in anthropological work (Dein 2013).

However, we also need to look at the way 'belonging' is constructed. Two indications from the literature would suggest that it is complex. Voas and Day note that 'Objective measures of religious affiliation (e.g. baptism) now tend to be less important than self-identification' (Voas and Day 2010). Their paper goes on to split belonging into two separate components, 'identification' and 'affiliation'. Lewis and De Bernardo (2010) find that while belonging to an evangelical congregation is one mark of an evangelical, there are people who do not belong to an evangelical congregation yet who self-identify as evangelical. Such a model would be coherent with the European Social Survey, which looks at three aspects of faith according to Voas (2008). One of them is 'affiliation', described as 'current or past identification with a religion' (Voas 2008, 156). 'Affiliation' is distinguished from 'practice: frequency of attendance at public worship, frequency of prayer', and 'belief', which is seen as the importance ascribed to faith in an

individual's life.²⁰ To add complexity it has been known that there are different measures of membership between denominations and churches (Argyle 1958, 3; C. G. Brown 2001, 162; Brierley 2015, 1) which means that what is required to affiliate differs between denominations.

While the past two sections have questioned the unidimensionality of believing and belonging, there has been another critique against the pairing: that religiosity is more than believing and belonging. The most popular extra dimension is 'behaving' (Voas 2007, 147). Again, close examination of texts shows that different authors interpret 'behaving' differently: there are those who concentrate on behaving as a performance of ritual (Olson and Warber 2008) and to those who focus on it as accepting an ethical code (Saroglou 2011). Furthermore, Saroglou argues for four dimensions, the final one being 'bonding'. However, by this stage the requirement for 'B' words is making the connection very tenuous. I prefer the following labels: 'beliefs' (believing), 'practices' (behaving), 'emotion' (bonding), and 'affiliation' (belonging) which also appear in the Saroglou article (2011, 1328). However, even then the definitions are somewhat stretched; participation in ritual is associated with emotions (Saroglou 2011, 1322). While ritual often engages the emotions, it need not, indeed might deliberately not do so.²¹

Exploring the debate around 'believing and belonging' has shown the complexity of every term and shifting relationships between them. It is beyond the scope of any single thesis to sort out exactly how these words should be understood; in the end, the fact that they are used and reused, and the manner of such use, leads to their validity and meaning in ethnographic studies.

²⁰ It looks to me like 3+ dimensional space which has a tendency to be close to spherical. The problem with sphericity is that the positioning of the dimensions tends to be pretty random. If you have a tri-axial ellipsoid where the dimensions are distinctly different, it is easy to determine where one would put the dimensions. This is not the same as correlation. The exception being the structure of "belief" which suggests a collapsed dimension within Western culture.

²¹ The monastic ritual of prayer seven times a day is in part intended to make worship the context of everything else.

However, I need to explore the implications for this thesis.

There is one level at which this is tangential to the research in this thesis. The focus of the thesis is on how congregations negotiate what their identity is and, as a congregational study, it looks at behaviour within a particular setting. The focus, therefore, is on the local institution, that is, the congregation and not on the religion, that is, Christianity. The focus means that both 'believing' and 'belonging' are constrained by the situation. When 'belonging' occurs in the thesis, the primary focus is on how members understand it in the congregation. Equally, when 'believing' occurs in the thesis, then the primary focus is the role that believing performs in these congregations. There are some key elements of the technology of belonging to a local URC congregation which do not apply to belonging to Christianity. Each congregation within the URC maintains a roll of people who are in formal membership; thus, affiliation refers not just to those who attend and those who identify, but also to those whom the congregation identifies as members. To complicate how belonging is performed in a local congregation, there is a category called 'adherent'. Adherents are people who are active in congregational life, but who have not come into formal membership. As an ethnographer, I need to be aware of the way that this complexity is negotiated within the setting.

I am wary of approaching 'belief' directly, especially propositional belief. Firstly the formal statements of belief are part of the ritual of Baptism, Church Membership and Ordination.²² It therefore becomes a marker of belonging, but one that is highly ritualised. Secondly, the interpretation of confessions has a history of causing division within Reformed churches. The direct questioning about belief propositions can be seen as wanting to establish whether someone

²² I am fully aware that communion is not in that list. A formal recitation of a creed may be part of a communion service within the URC, but it is optional.

is a ‘true’²³ Christian. By mentioning belief, I risked doing two things: firstly bringing it far more centre stage than it actually was within the congregations, and secondly alienating my informants. Therefore, I left it up to other people to raise within the setting.

Without a doubt, ‘belief’ and ‘belonging’ play a role within any religious setting. However, care needs to be taken when dealing with local congregations. ‘Belief’ and ‘belonging’ can function differently within the context of a local congregation than they do when taking a broader view. Attending a local congregation can be an indicator of the desire to be affiliated to a specific religion, but it need not be; Heelas et al. in their study list five reasons given for attending a congregation that were not spiritual in their opinion (Heelas et al. 2005, 47); the list is not exhaustive. Rather, as I am interested in congregational identity, I focus on belonging to the local congregation: and the roles that both having Christian credentials and believing play within the setting in establishing that.

6. Research Question

There was therefore, the following research question involved during the preparation of this thesis.

What is the identity work that the congregations do?

7. Why United Reformed Churches?

My ecumenical interactions have persuaded me that there were significant differences between traditions that would affect the thesis. In particular, I became aware that power structures differed between traditions. Power dynamics are different when a cleric is appointed by the

²³ Scare quotes intended. I do not think such a distinction is possible within the current order.

congregation, compared with when the cleric is appointed by an external body.²⁴ I concluded that, if I explored congregations and ignored the tradition, then I was likely to mistake differences that were due to the structure of the tradition for those which were individual to the congregation. The result was that I had to work within a particular tradition. Denomination culture is even less studied than that of individual congregations (Richter 2004), and thus it needed to be one I knew. The only tradition I knew well enough to be able to distinguish what was due to the denomination from the local, was my own.

The focus is on how congregations create their identity, but in order to answer that question, I needed to look at the way they interact with their tradition. It would be wrong to attribute a difference due to the tradition to the congregation. This is not easy. English Reformed Dissent is a complex tradition. Its power structures tend to be weighted towards the local congregation, and as a merged church, there is a tension between the precise lineage of the congregation and the wider one of the denomination. The congregations share not just power structures but also quite a lot of other cultural practices.

8. Structure

This chapter has included a literature review covering the background to this thesis and the context in which it operates. The rest of the thesis is structured as follows.

The **Methodology Chapter** addresses choice of method, the hermeneutical approach within the method, study design and the analytic method. An account is included of the role of participant observation and interviews. There is an extended section on ethics, because the placements were started before there was a requirement for formal ethical approval.

²⁴ Not just patrons and bishops, but when it is by Conference or by the senior pastor for a group of churches.

The **Tradition Chapter** starts with a discussion of the nature of tradition within Sociology. Then it goes on to explore different themes that have run through Reformed churches through the centuries, including the tension between communal and personal faith, and the role of the family.

The next three chapters are data chapters, where I explore specific aspects of the contexts as they occur within the congregations and how these are handled in the wider literature.

The Location Chapter starts out with an exploration of the understanding of space in sociology. Then I go on to explore how space was negotiated within the congregations. The chapter attempts to situate the two congregations: St Andrew's, Edgerton and Ulverstone. This includes the ways in which they situate themselves. The chapter demonstrates that there is turbulence around the boundaries both without and within the congregation.

The **Community Chapter** deals with the congregations as communities. It looks at the literature of a congregation both as an emotional system and as a voluntary organisation. By working in more detail with the boundary between smooth flow and turbulence, it explores the tensions between the communities, the way that boundaries are negotiated, the importance of family and the way that setting limits can be about inclusiveness.

In the **Worship Chapter**, I start by arguing that of the variety of approaches to studying worship, the ethnographic approach is particularly appropriate within the Reformed tradition. I then turn my attention to viscosity, which prevents turbulence. Therefore in this chapter I look at the bonds made between people and congregational identity, exploring the tension between the worshipper as they are and the worshipper as present within worship.

The next chapter, **Belonging**, is where the main argument of the thesis is conducted. In order to do this, I explain why belonging is such an important concept when looking at a congregation's

identity. The next step is to explore further Foucault's ideas of technologies of power, self and sign. Then I explore the way the congregations experienced belonging as a technology that engaged with power, self and sign. Finally, I ask how belonging acts within this setting as one of the drivers of congregational identity.

Finally, the **Epilogue** considers what the analysis might contribute to wider debates. It looks at the debate around the changes in civic society, the need to integrate worship and institutional approaches to understanding congregations and the implications for the future of the United Reformed Church.

Methodology

1. Choosing a Methodological Framework

When I was doing a Masters in Medical Statistics²⁵ around twenty years ago, the head of the department was a committed Christian and had been successfully involved in planting a church. One day in the staff common room, the conversation got on to theology, and he, for some reason, mentioned that he happened to be a Predestinarian Determinist.²⁶ He went on to explain that though he thought everything was determined, he also believed that it was impossible for humans to know everything accurately enough to predict. Therefore, probability was required to cover the things that humanity could not know. Thus, there was an illusion of indeterminacy that meant it was prudent to use statistics in the real world. He was, after all, a Reformed Christian.

There are several things I have taken from this incident:

- 1) One cannot accurately determine an individual's philosophical stance from their research methodology
- 2) Contradiction can signify a complex understanding of reality
- 3) Statisticians can hold sophisticated philosophical understandings about what they are doing, which may or may not fit with a naive realist position.

This section is going to attempt to explain why a statistician has chosen to use a discursive ethnographic approach, a decision that can be seen as blatantly contrary.

²⁵ Technically in Biometry, which is statistics applied to the biological sciences including medicine, agriculture and ecology. The majority of students went onto be medical statisticians.

²⁶ In my experience of being a Reformed Christian, I have come across non-determinist predestinarians, who believe that, apart from final salvation, people have free will. They will tend to stress the irresistibility of Grace for those who are saved. There is a far wider range of "solutions" among Reformed Christians than those outside the tradition suspect. I therefore had assumed that he had taken one of the less traditional stances.

One of the problems is the prevailing belief that the choice of methodology reflects the paradigm/worldview of the researcher more than anything else. Also, statistical techniques are used primarily by people who are positivist or post-positivist who hold to a single reality, and go with deductive reasoning, verifiable observation and the need to test the theory. This caricature of methodological approaches has a number of difficulties. Statistics can be employed by theorists who are not positivist; for instance, Pierre Bourdieu says, '*Statistical enquiry is indispensable in order to establish beyond dispute the social conditions of possibility*' (Bourdieu 2010, 32). He worked extensively with statistics in his ethnography, although he favoured Multiple Correspondence Analysis²⁷ rather than modelling techniques (Lebaron 2009). Also, the education psychologist Lee Cronbach (1956), developed sophisticated statistical models that underlie much of measurement theory, an extremely interpretative part of statistics.

More important was that many of the assumptions about using statistics were against my everyday experience of working as a consulting statistician. The first task at the start of a consultation was to discover how the researcher interpreted and understood the data. Statistics is used in research disciplines from biochemistry to archaeology, and researchers' interpretations of their data are as varied as their disciplines. Equally, there is often difficult interpretative work in reporting statistical results, as the results can demonstrate that the initial interpretation is inadequate. Finally, statisticians must adjust their approach, taking into consideration the research culture of the researcher.²⁸ There is, therefore, a huge amount of interpretative work done in quantitative statistics, and even controlled experiments require both the statistician and the clinical researcher to engage with the interpretative framework. This mismatch between what is

²⁷ Multiple Correspondence is a descriptive technique rather than a model building or hypothesis testing approach.

²⁸ For instance dentistry always measures things multiple times, some medical disciplines struggle to get samples into double figures while linguists can think a sample of several thousand is inadequate.

supposed to happen and experience may occur because, as Alan Bryman states, it is qualitative researchers who have characterised the quantitative (Bryman, 1984). Experience as a statistician leads me to believe that statistics may be used within several research paradigms. In the end statistics is only a tool to be used when appropriate.

Within social research, there are, at present, three broad methodological schools. In the literature, the schools are referred to as Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods²⁹ (Bryman 2012, 35–38). Quantitative researchers prefer to use experiments and survey; Qualitative researchers prefer to use in-depth interviews and participant observation; Mixed Methods researchers tend to use both. In this discussion, I shall distinguish between Mixed Methods and Action Research, which deliberately sets out to engage a community with a social issue and to effect change in the situation. In the tools used, it often appears similar to mixed methods, but the intent to cause change makes an intervention essential (Wiśniewska 2011).

A purely quantitative approach did not seem appropriate for this analysis. The problem is the fact that experimental and survey research relies on having an interpretative basis. The motivation for studying congregations was that there was little material in existence about what happened in ordinary congregational life. Although there were plenty of materials that either looked at the exceptional or concentrated on providing solutions, there was a lack of literature that dealt with typical congregations. It is from the understanding of the typical that the interpretative scaffold is built to create a survey or experiment. That left Mixed Methods, Action Research and a purely Qualitative approach. Of these, I considered three different approaches: a Mixed Methods approach using interviews and survey, an Action Research approach based on Appreciative

²⁹ I have chosen to retain capitalisation, as they are habitual titles of traditions rather than description. I know of Quantitative Methodology that has been used to explore things such as quality of life and I am aware of cases where an Ethnographic approach has been used to quantify behaviours.

Enquiry and a purely Qualitative Approach using Ethnography.

Mixed Methods

John Cresswell and Vicki Plano Clark define these as follows:

In Mixed Methods the researcher:

- Collects and analyses persuasively and rigorously both qualitative and quantitative data (based on research questions);
- Mixes (or integrates or links) the two forms of data concurrently by combining them (or merging them), sequentially by having one build on another or embedding one within the other;
- Gives priority to one or both forms of data (in terms of research emphases);
- Uses these features in a single study or in multi-phases of a program of study;
- Frames these views within philosophical world views and theoretical lenses; and
- Combines the research procedures into specific research designs that direct the plan for conducting the study. (Creswell and Plano Clark 2010, 281-284).

As a methodology, it is often associated with pragmatism (Brannen 2010; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004). However, Creswell argues that it is entirely possible to conduct Mixed Methods research using different paradigms for the Qualitative and Quantitative (Creswell and Plano Clark 2010, 377). There is, therefore, no single paradigm associated with Mixed Methods research, but researchers should expect to produce a coherent explanation of what paradigms they are using.

Another important aspect of Mixed Methods Research is the claim that the two forms of data collection merge together to create a fuller or deeper picture. In the early days of Mixed Methods,

this was often associated with the use of triangulation, where similarities between the findings from the two data analyses legitimise both analyses. However, Brannen (2010) argues that there are at least four other purposes for triangulation: elaboration; initiation; complementarity (the closest to validation); and contradiction. This shows the broad range of interactions between qualitative and quantitative data that triangulation can facilitate.

In early thoughts about the research, I was attracted to a Mixed Methods approach, the idea being that the interviews with people in congregations would allow me to develop an identity. I would then use surveys to try and see how widely such ideas were spread through their congregation. The survey techniques would have to be carefully designed so as to pick up the differences within and between congregations. This would use my expertise as a trained statistician as well as giving insight into the congregations' identities and how widely held they were.

First, there was a practical problem that pushed this thesis towards a more interpretative approach. The problem was how to determine the identity of the congregation. Options I considered included interviewing the minister, the church secretary or even a small group of members. They all seemed inadequate. Ministers often have a distinctive perception of their congregation's identity. The church secretary was probably better, but that would be only one view in what was a community. If a small number of members was desired, then the selection process was likely to depend on either the minister or church secretary. The difficulties of accurately discerning a congregation's identity would be beyond the time constraints of a Mixed Methods approach.

Secondly, such a survey was capable of giving me an understanding of how consistently a tidy formulation of the congregation's identity, such as a vision statement, was held. Thus, maybe, I

could examine the effectiveness of vision statements in creating an identity. However, I had begun to doubt that the congregation's identity was something that could be tidily formulated for use in a survey. Thus, while the survey would give me an idea to what extent a congregation's members agreed with a statement, it would not give me access to the actual mechanism used corporately to achieve this agreement. Equally, it would not show how important such statements were within the identity. The only way to get access to the way a congregational identity was actually created was to spend time with the congregations.

Action Research – Appreciative Inquiry

For a time, I considered using Action Research in the form of Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI is a methodology taken from Organisational Development. It is not directly a research instrument, although it has developed on the Action Research model of Lewin (1997 [1946]). It started its development in the 1980s when David Cooperrider got permission to look at the positive stories that doctors told (Reed 2007, 22). AI seems to have become strongly linked with Social Constructionism (Gergen 1999, 176–179). It has become clearly formulated and set out, having five guiding principles (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 49–53):

- The **Constructionist Principle**. Human knowledge and organisations are interwoven. We are involved in understanding and making sense of the world around us.
- The **Simultaneity Principle**. Inquiry and change are not isolated moments but are simultaneous.
- The **Poetic Principle**. A human organisation is more like a collaborative collage than a machine. Thus, an organisation's narratives are constantly being co-produced by its participants.
- The **Anticipatory Principle**. The way we think about an organisation influences what its

future will be. That is, positive ideas of the future lead to positive action by people while negative ideas to negative action.

- The **Positive Principle**. Building and sustaining momentum for change require large amounts of social energy, often requiring the energy to go around a seemingly intransigent blockage by reframing.³⁰

The principle is applied to the organisation through what is called a 4D cycle. The four stages of the cycle are Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny: it is similar to a number of other learning cycles (see Figure 1). The formulation suggests connections with the Kolb Learning Cycle, Gadamer's take on the Hermeneutic Cycle (Gadamer 2013 [1975], 302–318) and the Ignatian pedagogical Paradigm (Duminuco 1993). AI has already been used in Congregational Studies in North America (Branson 2004).

There were, however, problems with this. Firstly, while it has worked well as a method for congregations to develop their mission (Branson 2004), it lacks the reflective framework that is required in most academic research (Reed 2007, 189–194). AI involves the congregation in research with respect to their mission. Thus, the use of AI research tends to focus on evaluating the effectiveness of the AI. Using AI would be a return to the approach that I had used previously with my congregation with the study day, the failure of which had initiated this whole thesis. I wanted to have some idea of the processes that were causing an Action Research approach to fail, and I felt that they were embodied far more within the congregational culture.

Secondly, while a lot is learnt from systems by changing them and observing, the researcher needs the ability to change them. However, the placement congregations would have to be ready to use AI. This would require a whole change in dynamic, as the congregations would need to be

³⁰ This is more fully explored by Kurt Lewin (1997 [1942]).

interested in proactively developing their mission. Thus, it would be outside the normal functioning of the congregation.

Thirdly, I did not feel able to offer this programme to the congregations as an outsider. It seemed that to do it with integrity, I had to be committed to the outcome. There is a difference between someone who travels with a congregation as an ethnographer and someone who comes in with the intention of changing the congregation.

Selecting Interpretative Native Ethnography

Congregational identity formation is a discursive cultural practice. Ethnography is well-established as a methodology in Congregational Studies (Moschella 2008, 10), and is a methodology that allows for the study of groups within social settings. Among predominant aspects of it are:

- 1) A concern with the culture of those being studied;
- 2) An emphasis on participant observation as the preferred method of data collection³¹;
- 3) The act of writing is intrinsic to the research process.

That is, an Ethnography of congregations would be interested in the manner by which the congregation understood themselves and interacted with their setting. The idea of culture came from Ethnography's close relationship to Anthropology.⁽³²⁾ Identity, to me, seemed to be bound up with this notion of culture; that it was something that congregations created through their culture, and each congregation had its own way of doing it.

Participant observation³³ is the research approach that is synecdochal in Ethnography for data

³¹Ethnographers will use a variety of means of data collection, including interviews, surveys, photographs, collecting artefacts and reading reports.

³² See Introduction Chapter, Section 3.

³³ See Section 2 in this chapter.

collection and as such is seen as one of the defining elements of ethnographic research (Atkinson et al. 2007 [2001], 4). That is not to say that other methods are not used; many different techniques are used including interviews, collecting artefacts and statistical surveys. However, it functions as the preferred method for data collection. There is some controversy (Mason 2002, 55–56) both on this as the sole method of data generation and the fact that researchers from other traditions also use it. As a technique, participant observation is a method that takes the different experiences of individuals within the congregation seriously and does not focus solely on those in powerful positions such as ministers. It is also a technique that does not have an external observer, but relies on being close enough to attempt an understanding of the nuances of the culture.

Writing is part of the process, and much energy has been spent over the years on the process of writing in Ethnography; books have been published (J. Clifford and Marcus) and websites developed (Department of Anthropology - University of Durham 2015). The result of this interest has been the adoption of a wide range of writing styles including fiction, journalism and poetry.

Two experiences directed me towards choosing an interpretative approach. Firstly the Open University course on Identity,³⁴ which, although concentrating on individual identity, did look at discursive practices of identity that gave me a preliminary theoretical framework for thinking about congregational identity and led me to a more interpretative approach to congregational identity than I had held previously. Secondly, the experience of interviewing two church members as they recreated a memory and later saw that memory appearing in the church magazine as fact.³⁵ The desire was to understand how a culture-sharing group worked, and for

³⁴ See Introduction Section 4.

³⁵ Given the evidence they cited, their “memory” was the best solution to what had actually happened. However, they did not actually recall it but information around it.

that the appropriate method was Ethnography (Creswell and Plano Clark 2010, 317). In this case, Trow's dictum (Bryman 1984) that research questions tend to influence the methodology has held, rather than the methodology being shaped entirely by the research paradigm. It was clear to me that symbolic activity was involved in creating a congregation's identity and symbolic reason only works when there is interpretation going on. Thus there exists an interaction between the symbolic activities and the interpretative activities.

As for the 'native', part of that was my knowledge of the tradition³⁶ but it also had wider implications. I remember, fairly early on in supervision, worrying about how I came to know a congregation as Reformed. Firstly that my ability to detect a congregation or person as having a Reformed heritage was something I could do prior to starting my thesis: it is as if there is a subtle code that runs through the use of language and behaviour that those who have been shaped by it 'get',³⁷ and the challenge was thus to understand how I 'get' this. So one of the leverage questions was: 'How do I, as a Reformed Christian, pick up clues to identity within congregations?' This question was only usable because I was a Reformed Christian.

However, perhaps because I am Reformed, and the notion of election is strong within the tradition, it feels at times as if ethnography selected me. I started writing, predominantly diary writing,³⁸ several years before starting this thesis and before I knew that Ethnography was so concerned with writing. Equally along with many ethnographers my identity can be fairly liminal.

³⁶ See Tradition, section 3.

³⁷ For instance, I came across Eugene Petersen through a Christianity magazine (*'Premier Christianity'* 2015), a general Evangelical magazine published in the UK. He was an author who clicked for me, but it was years before I found out he was a Presbyterian minister.

³⁸ Almost compulsively: at one stage I was writing three diaries daily. I still do a lot of personal writing, though very little is as disciplined as it was before my thesis. I will, however, keep a diary during a holiday.

I am a child of the manse,³⁹ and am used to that ambivalent position; from a fairly young age I was conscious of the politics that are part of congregational life, in a way that is unusual. Equally I have a dual cultural identity. I probably have dual nationality, being born in South Africa to an English mother and father. My mother had taken English nationality after marrying my father, and her family traces its lineage back to 1820 settlers ("Welcome to the South African Settlers Resource site" *South African Settlers* 2010).

2. Practice

This section deals with the process in practice. Although presented in this thesis as a carefully thought-out process, the design, as with all ethnographic studies, was a combination of planning, circumstance and serendipity. To some extent, that is due to the illusion created by the fact that writing about the process occurs after the actual events. In reality, things were far more cyclical, particularly as my analytic approach requires a continual movement between the observed and the theorists. It is only when this set of ever-decreasing circles spirals to a stop that something new is produced. A fuller description can be found in section 3 of this chapter.

As I explore that actual practice, I have divided it into four subsections: selection of congregations; participant observation in each congregation; interviews and reporting back. These are not in strict chronological order; most of them are overlapping (Figure 2). However, this roughly follows my progression through the thesis, as can be seen in the diagram.

³⁹ That is, the child of a minister, so having neither a formal role within the congregation nor being a normal member.

Figure 2

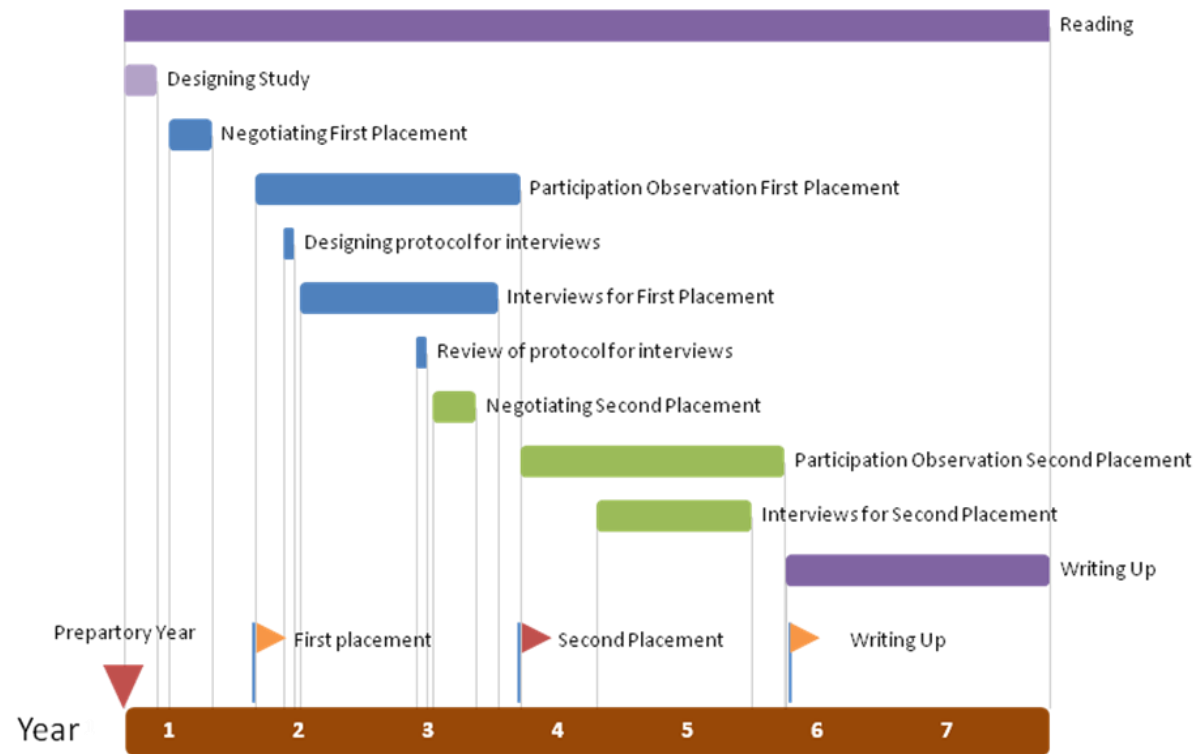
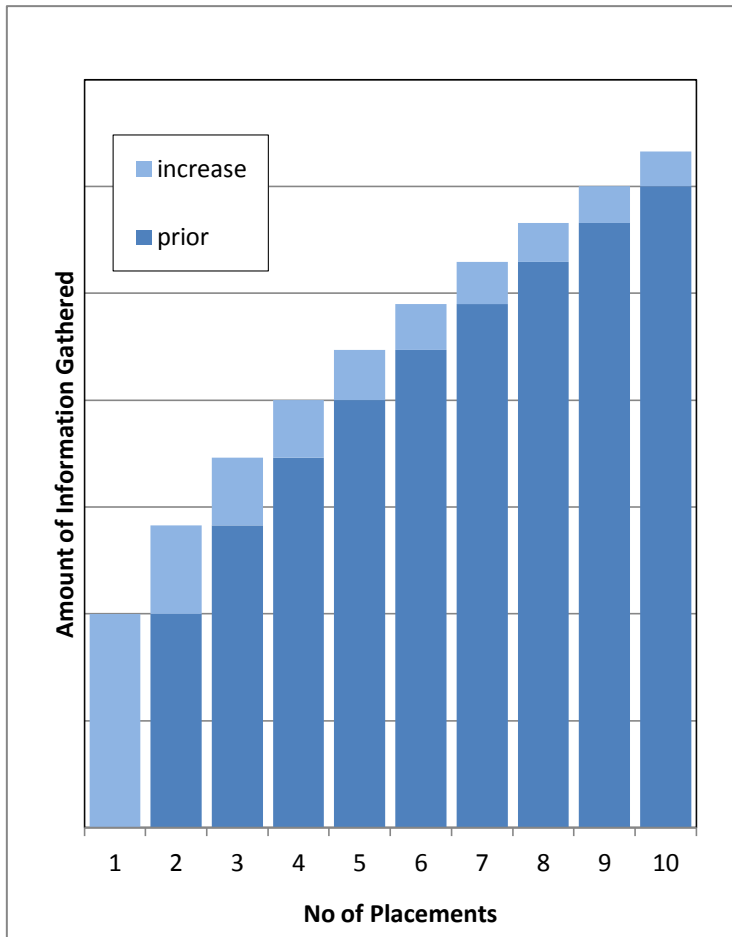


Chart showing the ongoing process throughout my doctoral study

Selection and Setting Up of Placement Congregations

This section deals with three aspects of the design: the number of congregations, criteria for choosing which congregations and the process of setting up a placement. Most ethnographic work is done either in a single setting or a small number of sites (three to six); at two, this work falls neatly between these options. The choice of two congregations was a matter of compromise. In order to gain an understanding of the congregations and how they perform, I needed to spend a considerable amount of time with them; impressions gained from association with various congregations suggested that around two years was needed.

Figure 3



Graph showing the effect of square root and information gathered as number of placements increases

Given the intention of spending at least two years with each congregation, the time limit on the thesis came into play, and this meant that there could only be one or two congregations. There is a long tradition in Ethnography of spending all the time in a single setting, and there is valuable work done in doing so. The real question was whether there was going to be more information gathered by studying two congregations or spending longer with one congregation. In statistics,

there is something called the Fisher Information, which relates to the variability of data.⁴⁰ The information gained increases only as the square-root of n where n is the number of cases (see Figure 3). It therefore looked likely that spending time with two congregations was going to be more valuable than spending longer with just one.

The next stage was to choose the congregations. Three motives drove the selection criteria: distance, size and not in a definite state of flux. The distance criterion was mainly about convenience; the congregation should not be more than twenty miles from where I was living, as travel into the field would become prohibitive beyond that point. However, a congregation could also be too close: my home congregation is barely five minutes' walk away, but I was highly involved in the dynamics of that congregation.

With size criteria, a key consideration was that the congregations were not too small. Dynamics within small congregations⁴¹ are often marked, complex and idiosyncratic. Also, the selection of people to interview would become problematic, as it would be a matter of choosing whom not to interview.

Finally, with respect to the congregation's state of flux, as the study was of ordinary congregational life it was necessary that I put some limits on 'ordinary'. In this regard, I chose the criterion that it was not obviously in a state of change regarding pastoral oversight. That is, that the congregation:

- was not in vacancy and expecting to call a minister,
- had not had the current minister for less than two years,

⁴⁰More on the Fisher Information can be found in statistical and mathematical texts. A full discussion on measures of information is available in *Information Measures: Information and Its Description in Science and Engineering* (Arndt 2004, 265).

⁴¹ Fewer than 20 members.

- was not in negotiations over a merger or grouping either with other UR congregations or ecumenically.

There was a high number of congregations who were ruled out because they did not satisfy these criteria. It would appear that change in pastoral oversight is pretty frequent within the URC at present, perhaps involving half of all congregations. I originally decided that they had to have established ministerial oversight; but this was reduced to the conditions above when selecting the second congregation, due to my awareness of the situation. However, the only congregation meeting the criteria had established ministerial oversight.

The URC is a denomination formed by the merger of four different denominations.⁴² It seemed appropriate to include two of the traditions represented by these denominations. The above criteria provided two congregations from different merging congregations. Thus, the criteria produced the selection of two congregations which are pseudonymously referred to in this thesis as St Andrew's Edgerton and Ulverstone. If either of the congregations had not been willing to have me on placement, I would have had to change the criteria and indeed I had given this some thought.

Participant Observation

The primary method of data collection was participant observation. It took up a significant amount of time, not simply in attendance at meetings but in the writing and analysing of notes. The minimum level of participation in any month was attendance at morning worship twice: in both congregations, morning worship was the principal act of congregational life. I usually attended morning worship more often and attended evening worship, usually once a month, in

⁴² The Congregational Church in England and Wales, The Presbyterian Church of England, the Re-formed Association of the Churches of Christ and the Congregational Union of Scotland.

addition to this. At St Andrew's Edgerton, within the first six months I might attend up to six acts of worship. I never achieved over four times a month at Ulverstone. Towards the end of my time with both congregations, this was reduced to two or three times a month.

Outside of worship, my participation fell into three broad areas: decision-making meetings such as Church Meeting; a Bible study group as a method of getting to know people; and general social activities including fund-raising. This participation fell into a pattern. With both congregations, I needed time to get to know them before I started doing extra activities. These probably peaked around a year into my placement. The attendance at Bible study was key: it gave me a small subset of the congregation whom I could get to know, and it also provided a space where people's stories might be told. I expected that social groups might also function in a similar matter, but when I attempted this at Ulverstone it failed.

Yet another area was when I was invited into people's homes. At St Andrew's, Edgerton, the minister, Daniel, realised early on that I was stopping off to eat at a Little Chef, and he asked the congregation if they would have me for dinner after morning worship. This meant that a number of members invited me to their homes very early in the placement. At Ulverstone, the pattern was almost the opposite. It took a while for them to get used to me, and I was aware of a level of socialising going on, but I was not invited. Towards the end of my time there, I started getting invitations to these events. A high proportion of the conversation at these visits concerned congregational life, for instance the best example of joining narrative was told to me during a Sunday lunch. However, apart from my memory and the notes I made later, I have no record of it.

There were two reasons for this level of attendance. One was obvious: to observe, engage and listen to what was happening in the congregation. However, a relatively high level of attendance

was necessary in order to gain acceptance within the setting. Research demands meant that I participated less than I had done in my home congregation; on the other hand, it was at a level sustained by many other members of the congregation. To both congregations, I was an outsider although both knew I was a URC member. To use Goffman's analogy (1990 [1951]), congregational life has a backstage as well as onstage repertoires. While backstage behaviour is as central to congregational life as onstage, it is only available to the researcher when she has been accepted by the congregation. It is not a matter of gaining permission, but of building trust with members.

I kept a diary of events, although how I kept it varied. The ideal would have been to write a diary immediately on getting home. Quite often, this was simply not possible, although I did try to write notes up within a week of an event occurring. At times, I resorted to keeping an audio diary rather than a written one and notes tended to get briefer the longer I was in the field. I supplemented these notes with photographs and video recordings, various artefacts and also both congregations had service sheets and magazines.

With both congregations, contact was facilitated by the internet. I kept in touch with both ministers by email and had several email correspondences with other members of the congregations. Websites exist for both congregations at present. While St Andrew's Edgerton did not use social media, at Ulverstone there was a sizeable group of members who regularly used Facebook.

However, two years is a pretty short time in a congregation's life and most members' connection with the congregation is much longer. I was dependent on the narratives told me by members of the congregation to obtain an idea of where they had come from. Also, the narratives they chose to tell were often part of the interpretative work done around the congregation's identity. Gergen

has shown how, within a single culture, life story narratives for an age group quite often follow a single form (Gergen 1994 [1994], 200). Equally, Hopewell suggested that congregations had narrative forms they used to tell their stories (Hopewell 1988 [1987], 46). The times that narrative came up within the congregation naturally were few, and it was hard to capture them. It was not unusual for someone to start telling a story at a side table in the hall at a noisy congregational party. To try and capture this sort of discourse more systematically, I decided to carry out interviews. This both enabled me to create a space where it was easier to talk at length about the congregation and also gave me the ability to record them.

Interviews

Thus, to supplement and help contextualise this information, a series of interviews was conducted in the two congregations. These interviews allowed a small number of people to describe at length what they saw as the way they related to the congregation. It concentrated on what they saw as significant from their experience of the congregation, thus giving access to their personal interpretations of what was going on in the congregation. The interviews, therefore, were conducted as a structured conversation using open-ended questions that invited people to draw on their experience of the church. A general interview guide was prepared in advance and was used as a structure around which to build a conversation. This structure enabled the interviews to remain focused on the interviewee's relationship with the congregation, as well as providing a prompt for me.

The structure was originally designed while on holiday over Christmas in the first year with St Andrew's Edgerton, using a variety of texts on qualitative interviewing (Rubin and Rubin 2005; Weiss 1994; Wengraf 2001). Following Wengraf (2001, 72–152), I worked down from research questions to the actual questions used. Major interests were reflected in the broader questions,

and suggestive probe questions were there to elicit detail that had been missed in the initial response to the broad question. Although the structure was a prompt, I did not stick rigidly to it. I made clear to interviewees that they were free to raise issues and to take the conversation in directions I had not planned. Equally, if interviewees had already answered a question, or I felt a question was inappropriate, the question was missed out. Therefore the interviews were not standardised.

A review was carried out after a year, when it was noted that there were a few areas where respondents seemed to struggle with the ideas that the questions were addressing, or the questions were not producing answers. In response to this, a new question was added to replace one which was better tackled by a subsidiary question to another.⁴³ Two questions were changed in the series of follow-up questions, taking interviewees from the very specific to broader concepts. When I moved to the second congregation, I did not change the general interview guide. Although the second congregation was decidedly different, there was nothing I felt that I had to cover which was not already contained in the general interview guide.

The next stage was to decide how many, and which, people to interview. It was not possible to interview the whole membership as it was simply too large (around 70 members at St Andrew's, Edgerton and 120 at Ulverstone). Given the time constraints, I could handle between 12 and 15 household interviews (more individuals were interviewed, as I interviewed on the basis of household). Allowing for not being able to contact people, or individuals not wanting to be interviewed, it seemed sensible to make an interview list of about 21 names. The list was split three ways:

- 1) I selected seven households who I thought had a genuine insight into the congregation's

⁴³ See Appendix B.

identity. These seven always included the minister and the church secretary.

- 2) I asked the Elders' Meeting to choose another seven members who they thought would have a valuable insight into the congregation's identity.
- 3) Seven members were selected at random in the hope that I might pick up anyone whose perceptions of church identity were marginalised.

This planned selection process did not work in practice. At St Andrew's, Edgerton, I selected seven, and the Elders selected nine, so I selected another five randomly. Of the random people, I managed to contact two, both of whom were usually present at worship and active members. I did not manage to contact the other three. Although, as expected, both congregations had church rolls which were up to date, this was not the actual list I was working from. Both congregations also kept a church directory which was more widely circulated. The directory had an advantage in that it included adherents who were regular attendees and children of members, as well as members.⁴⁴ I had the most recent copy of this, but in both cases it was a few years out of date. When I had to contact non-active members, the information was often out of date. With Ulverstone, I went through the same process, but they supplied ten names. At this point I decided against drawing just four names at random, but instead towards the end, I looked to see if there was any particular view or element of the congregation that had been overlooked. I did not notice any, but if I had, I would have sought these people out. However, in both congregations I ended up interviewing someone who expressed a discordant version of the church identity. These people were from the lists that the Elders had provided and showed the care they took in choosing people with a broad range of perspectives. I ended up conducting 14

⁴⁴ Members are those who have gone through the formal process of coming into membership and who are still in good standing. This is not the same as the people who are at worship on any given Sunday, nor the same as those who are regularly at worship. There is significant overlap but the boundaries of these sets of people are not coterminous.

interviews at each congregation.⁴⁵

Interviews were conducted at a venue of the interviewee's choice. The majority were at interviewees' homes, with four at buildings belonging to the congregation and one at a pub. Before the interviews, I gave the participants an information pack that contained: a cover letter, copies of the consent form⁴⁶ and the main questions I was interested in asking during the interview. I found that handing out the sheets made for a relaxed feel to the interview and that the interviewees appreciated the opportunity to prepare. One was not recorded at the request of the interviewee, and at another I inadvertently turned the recording off early in the interview. I made notes after each interview; these captured information that was not recorded as they included conversations held informally after the interview. The recorded interviews were transcribed and I recreated from memory the two that were not.⁴⁷

With time commitments both to the ethnography and outside the PhD, attempting to carry out this number of interviews, and the idea of treating the interviews as a separate data source, was unrealistic. The choice would have been to do fewer interviews or to make primary use of the notes and the recordings. Having to reduce the number of interviews drastically would have limited the range of people interviewed and the study would have focused far more on how individuals saw the congregation's identity. In particular, it would probably have meant that I did not get the discordant interviews, both of which were suggested by Elders. By conducting this number of interviews and focusing on participant observation, I did not subject the interviews to a separate analysis but treated them as an integrated part of the participant observation.

⁴⁵ See Appendix A.

⁴⁶ See Appendix C

⁴⁷ I used the process adopted in the training of pastoral counsellors, in that I immediately tried to type out in full as much as I could recall from the interviews. These notes look fairly similar to transcripts.

Reporting Back to the Congregation

In both placements, I went through the process of reporting back to the congregation. This process involved both a longer report to the Elders and a shorter report to the Church Meeting, which I presented as I was finishing my placement. The reports served two purposes: the main one was that the congregations should have some tangible feedback from the study that I was doing. Therefore, the reports concentrated on how I perceived the mission of the congregation to be functioning. The second was to see if I could reflect back to the congregation a picture of themselves that they recognised. It has been suggested that researchers should report their findings to the participants, a process called correspondent validation (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 [1983], 227–228). It can be an important check: Stringer found when he reported back to his first congregation, a Baptist Church, that, though the results were based on interviews, his conclusions were rejected (Stringer 1999, 89–91). However, there can be problems with this. It works if the congregation is engaged with the research at a level where corroboration is possible, although it then only shows that you are able to relay what they say is happening. If there is a discrepancy between what ‘they say happens’ and what ‘actually happens’, then this corroboration is going to run into difficulties. However, it was quite unlikely that the congregations would be interested in the theoretical research aspect of the analysis. The choice of giving a mission review was to make the reports relevant to the congregations. This meant that the review was written for the congregation and aimed to reflect back in a useful way to them my understanding of who they were and the challenges they faced.

My review was never intended as a validation, but rather, it was a further step in the exploration of the congregation’s character and a method of checking that my interpretation of that was acceptable to the congregation. Both congregations felt that I had captured at least something of

their character, and that my insights were helpful. The feedback on the portrayal was that they did recognise themselves in it.

3. Analysis

The journey from experience and the final account was convoluted. The **representational crisis**: ‘To what degree can ethnographic accounts legitimately claim to represent an independent social reality?’ (Hammersley 1992, 2) was thus in play.

Ethnography values the intangibles, not just the easy-to-record detail such as the colour of the cushions, the chairs, the words of hymns that are sung or the greeting at the church door. Rather, there is an attempt to capture the intangible elements of what it is to participate in the situation. In part, as Malinowski put it: ‘It is good for the Ethnographer sometimes to put aside camera, notebook and pencil and to join in what is going on’ (Malinowski 1922, 21).

The problem is trying to capture information that is recorded more in the body than in the field notes. Even so, what is grasped is the experience of a participant observer and not a total participant. There is, in the end, a need for the ethnographer to make an empathic-imaginative leap, using the resources available to them to try and concoct an understanding of what the participants are experiencing. Further, the human mind is summarising all the time as it is attempting to pick out what is relevant.

The problem was to find a way from the experience of the congregation to the final thesis. The process I developed and used came out of the research programme and my natural working style. Therefore, it reflects the way I create poems. It is a three-stage process that only really creates something new when it is completed, but in doing this it draws on elements of both inductive

and deductive reasoning.

The first phase is observation. This needs to be careful and detailed. The aim is to observe as closely as possible what is going on. There is no attempt to build on the observation at this stage but rather to capture the phenomena as accurately as possible. In the second stage I turned to the theorists that the observation suggested and explored them further, trying to see what they said. In the final stage I melded the theory and observation together to make a whole. In all these, writing was essential.

Writing as Analysis

Writing, in this case, does not refer only to the eventual thesis, but started almost immediately on leaving the field at any point during the placement. I wrote up field notes, made notes on interviews, wrote reports for congregations, made notes on the books I read and wrote 'think papers' for my supervisor. Writing became not just a form of recording and reporting, but the process of understanding the material.

The field notes of any event were a summary of the summary that my brain stored in its memory. I did not usually include where most people sat, the pattern of sunlight on the walls or what banners were up each week. Similarly, although I audio-recorded the interviews, the only clues I had as to people's expression when they said something is their tone of voice. You cannot see the cat that decided to play with my toes or pictures of grandchildren.

Recreations

The next stage was creative re-creations that allowed me to inhabit these spaces imaginatively. I would choose a person, a particular situation or a common one, as I struggled to recreate a cogent depiction of what I had chosen. In doing this, I faced a number of choices. As I addressed these options, I began to acquire insights into what might have been happening, which deepened

my understanding of the situation as I worked out why things would happen in a particular way. For instance, it was not until I had to describe the process in preparing after-worship coffee at St Andrew's, Edgerton that I realised they had it only on the first Sunday in the month because of the rigmarole required to serve coffee in the main meeting room. While I was there, I was primarily aware of coffee being available that Sunday and not others: it was re-creation that showed me the effort involved. I also needed to reduce the number of people who were portrayed. To portray each individual who was significantly involved in the life of placement congregations would have required around 80 different characters in the thesis and would be confusing to the reader. Also, experience has shown me that members of the congregation do not like having attention explicitly given to them. I needed, therefore, to a certain extent, both to reduce the number of people portrayed and to anonymise those whom I was referencing. Thus, I have often created amalgams of several people within the congregation, or borrowed characteristics from other individuals which fitted within the persona. The quotes, when used, are ascribed to the relevant person within the described congregation, as are the snippets.

However, to change someone's characteristics in this way is to alter the situation, and there was always a task of working out what were the implications. Changing gender in particular can be tricky. I did consider whether to change the gender of one person, in order to deflect attention from her. However, I realised that as her influence was considerably clearer amongst the women of the congregation, this would require further changes during the portrayal. Male-male relationships are not the same as female-female relationships, so changing all the men to women and vice versa was not a simple solution. The details I changed had to be a reasonable fit with the other characteristics of the person.

This means that some individuals will be recognisable. In particular, the ministers are difficult to

deal with; they are known personally by a broad range of people within the URC. It cannot be hidden from the congregations who exactly the minister is; I have changed their names, and changed details to some degree so as to eliminate identification by those outside the congregation; but, as the minister's character is influential in how the congregation sees itself, I have tried to leave their role mainly as I perceived it.

However, as Zizek demonstrates in his analysis of *Vertigo* by Alfred Hitchcock (Zizek 1991, 79-87), there is always a gap between the real, the remembered reality and the re-creation. There is always the other that eludes the re-creation and the re-creation becomes its own reality. In creating the scenes portrayed here, as in all Ethnography,⁴⁸ this happens; the portrayal must deviate from the reality. In this sense, the congregations I have portrayed actually are 'St Andrew's, Edgerton' and 'Ulverstane' and not the congregations where I had the placements.

Some of the recreations are included in the final thesis, but not all. This allows the reader to engage imaginatively with the text; the reader, therefore, brings personal experience to what they read. I am inviting the reader to experience St Andrew's, Edgerton and Ulverstane for themselves. If I succeed in portraying them, I will have captured 'that amount of depth, detail, emotionality, nuance and coherence that will permit a critical consciousness to be formed by the reader' (Denzin 1997, 283). The information passed on by narrative is different from the information conveyed by more academic styles of writing, and knowing through narrative is another type of knowing (Worth 2005).

Analytic Descriptions and Use of Interviews

I was also writing analytic descriptions from my field notes and interviews. Most of these started out as mainly descriptive. They included factual information, some statistical analysis and also

⁴⁸ I would probably go further and suggest in all research.

illustrative incidents. At times, I quoted statements from people using the ‘real words spoken’ (Denzin 1997, 283). Quotes placed out of context can be misleading. When I have quoted words within the text or re-creations, care was taken to situate them within context and to attribute the quote to an appropriate character. However most of the quotes are in snippets, boxes containing sections from the interviews separate from the text. The convention for transcription is that described by Riessman (1993, 30:33-35), although I do not include stanza titles and do indicate speaker when more than one person is speaking in a section. The transcriptions are identified by interviewees’ names, with a letter added when the interview was split over several recordings. Finally, the number is the lines within the interview transcript. There are differences between the transcript and the quote with respect to lines; these are presentational: the splitting of lines so as to fit tidily on the page and the removal of interjections such as ‘hmm’. In just one case, a long tangent was removed.⁴⁹

There are reasons for using these extended quotes, which are in boxes beside the text. I accept that the theoretical description is a representation and not a reproduction of the event (Hammersley 1992, 41). Although I am more cautious of accepting reality as separate from interpretation, there seems to me to be an interpretative activity in all our understandings of reality. However, in the interviews I have deliberately sampled the interviewees in this interpretative act of creating reality. Their presentation of the situation is part of the reality. There should thus be some connection between the presentation of reality in the interviews and my representation. The use of snippets has allowed me to provide a limited amount of context from the interview around the quote.

Gubruim and Holstein’s observation on narrative environments holds good for interviews: they

⁴⁹ About a professor at St Andrew’s University.

are not 'discrete domains, separate and distinct from one another, if they have characteristic stories, they can overlap and merge with those of other environments' (Gubrium and Holstein 2009, 185). The result is that the ethnographer experiences interviews as existing in a discursive ecology. The interview snippets are thus used in a number of ways. There are occasions when interviewees did say things that were pertinent to the argument; these do provide evidence, and then the use of snippets of interviews allows for longer quotations of what people said and, therefore, more context. However, sometimes the evidence is not solely within one interview and the combination of a number of snippets from different interviews is used to gain insight into how the congregation presented itself to others. Equally, I have included comments that illustrate perceptions I have queried in the thesis and also occasions where events were interpreted differently between interviews. These are selected for relevance to the text, and I would not claim them as representative of the entire content of the interviews, let alone the ethnography. Rather, this tangential approach to quotes gives some insight into the interpretative work which I have conducted in synthesising the ethnographic experience.

In the text, I have tried to incorporate a journalistic approach to Ethnography, as argued for by Denzin (1997). The use of re-creation and snippets draws on the suggestions of others who have sought to take a playful approach. This is characterised by a change in the way that the text is presented, with the voice of the author presented alongside sections from the voices of the subjects (Gergen and Gergen 2002), or the presentation of text in other forms such as poetry or drama (Ellis and Bochner 1996). The aim of the playful approach is to create a multi-voiced text and allow the voices of the investigated to come through independently of the main text.

Theoretical Writings and Integrating Writing

However, alongside all this descriptive work, I was also working on the theoretical approach, to

see what understanding I gathered from working with the material. In looking at this I returned to the theorists, trying to grasp what they were actually saying, rather than what I wanted them to say. So initially the writing was kept separate, but the moving between the theoretical topic and the descriptive material created a relationship that slowly changed as answers to questions from one were sought in the other. This worked in both directions. I could find phenomena in the description and then seek an understanding of them in the theoretical work, or I would find something in the theoretical framework that I was developing, and then I would have to ask 'Was this what I saw in the descriptive?' At this phase in the analysis, although the theory and description are in the text they are often in very awkward juxtaposition.

The final stage was to bring the theoretical writing into closer conjunction with the descriptive writing to create an analytical description. To draw an image, theory has to put on the glove of observation: only then does it become something that enables us to handle the reality that is within the congregations. It was the process of actually integrating the theory with the observation that was crucial. It was only then I created the fresh understanding of what was going on.

Thus, a complex process of writing created an analytical process for the analysis during this thesis. The way it is written here it seems pretty linear. In many ways, it was in fact a spiralling, as I would go back and forth between the various approaches to writing described above, but there was a progressive direction, which I have portrayed.

The Use of Flow as an Analytic Metaphor

The model we choose to use to understand something determines what we find. If it is the case that our understanding is an effect of the metaphors we choose, it is also true that it is a cause: Our understanding itself guides the choice of metaphor by which we


understand it. (McGilchrist 2010 [2009], 97).

Iain McGilchrist is not a postmodern theorist but a neuroscientist, yet he quite clearly perceives that there is a link between the way we understand something and what we experience. To turn to a writing analogy, the metaphor used in a written piece will influence the ideas that are expressed within the text. Thus, the decision to use a metaphor in research shapes the researcher's understanding of what they are exploring. Here I want to explore the use of 'flow' as an analytic metaphor in the Social Sciences and then say how I have used it.

The idea that culture flows is one that is frequently used in the Social Sciences. Doreen Massey argues for understanding space as interconnected with time; things are not static but in motion (Massey 2005). Arjun Appadurai maps five different sets of currents: 'Ethnoscape', 'Mediascape', 'Technoscape', 'Financescape' and 'Ideoscape', but talks of the way that these interacting currents create disjunctures within society (Appadurai 2001, 33). James Clifford argues that Ethnography needs to pay attention, not only to the abode of people, but also to the way people travel or flow around the world (J. Clifford 1997). More relevant to this thesis is that flows are one of the strong metaphors that Thomas A. Tweed uses in his book on the definition of religion (Tweed 2006, 54) along with 'dwelling'. In using 'flow', these authors want to make two statements: that things are not static and that things get dispersed. Tweed (2006) talks of the ways that the exiled Cuban community in the United States brought their culture with them and created a shrine that reflects their national identity. Indeed, he talks of theory as a map (Tweed 2006, 10). These theorists seek to map currents much like an oceanographer (such as in Figure 4) or meteorologist. Mapping currents is not mapping stasis but mapping dynamics. Cultural artefacts do not stay neatly within a particular cultural setting.

Figure 4



Karte vom Grossen Ocean, (Mare Pacifico). Berghaus, Heinrich, 1837  © 2000 by Cartography Associates. Images may be reproduced or transmitted, but not for commercial use. For commercial use or commercial republication, contact carto@luna-img.com. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons License

Tweed tries to go further with his use of the concept of the ‘hydraulics model’. However, he seems to be mistaken in this nomenclature. Hydraulics is ‘The branch of science and technology concerned with the conveyance of liquids through pipes and channels, especially as a source of mechanical force or control’ (Oxford Dictionary (British & World English) 2015). As such, its focus is on engineering with water; it is the science behind building dams, water turbines and sewerage systems. A study which looked at the ‘hydraulic model’ would be concerned with not just the fact of flow and where flow happens, but how the flow is controlled. In other words, it is a study of power. However, Tweed is making a similar point to Arjun Appurda; that religion can

translocate geographically and develop symbolism that mixes organic and cultural flows. Tweed even coins the word '*sacroscape*' (Tweed 2006, 61). He is still trying to be an oceanographer or meteorologist. Equally his separation of cultural and organic flows seems to me to propose two separate realities when there is one reality and two ways to look at it. This is similar to the two ways of mapping airflow on weather maps: one is to map the vectors of the flow; the other is to map the isobars (lines of equal air pressure). The problem with maps is that they are, in Geertz's terminology, '*models of*' (Geertz 2000a [1973]), that is they seek to replicate reality.

However, there are other ways of understanding flow. For example, Fluid Mechanics is the province of experimental physicists. In this discipline, the flow itself becomes an object to be modelled, together with the forces on it and how these effects change the direction and shape of the flow. A variety of perspectives are taken in Fluid Dynamics. One perspective is that of a fixed external observer of the flow; like a man on a river bank, they see the current passing by and thus are aware of how a flow at a fixed point is acted upon by external forces. This is an approach that has some similarities with large-scale social research, which tends to look at changes at the societal level, that is, to monitor changes in the average rather than see changes by particular individuals. This is often highly successful as a means of characterising overall effects.

This approach is used to a certain extent by Zygmunt Baumann in his book *Liquid Modernity* (Z. Baumann 2012 [2002]). He suggests that, at present, there is an undirected pliability about modern society: it behaves as a fluid and changes shape to adapt to the present; forces on society have overcome its inertia to produce this fluid society. This he contrasts with how society was previously, when it had a more formal structure that meant that it behaved like a solid. In the solid phase, modernity had form and there were ideals to which it could be reformed as it responded predictably. However, the fluid condition is marked by its lack of coherent direction as

much as the fact that it changes; although the ability to choose is there for the individual, the power to direct towards a desired goal is lost. Pete Ward develops this with respect to the church (Ward 2002). There are problems with the metaphor: a stationary fluid with no forces acting internally or externally is as static as a solid. Water flows downhill because of gravity and gas fills a void because of the forces acting internally within it. Equally, fluid flow is in many incidences predictable; if it were not, planes would not fly. The difference between a solid and liquid is a phase change that means that bonds are loosened so that force is not uniformly transmitted through the whole substance. The change is due to the liquid having more energy than the solid. He seems to be saying the behaviour we see today is more like a fluid than a solid, but the metaphor asks questions about the nature of society that are deeper than just noticing its changing nature. There needs to be some further understanding of what has changed and why society is flowing.

On other occasions, however, physicists will take a perspective that is internal to a flow where individual particles' motion is modelled. Nobody would try to model a whole ocean this way, as the computing power required to model just the flow through a narrow pipe is very high. However, modern advances in computing have made it possible, on a small scale, to look at the way molecules behave in a particular situation. This perspective focuses on extremely small-scale effects. This is similar to small-scale social research, where what is explored is the behaviour of particular individuals. By looking at the small and the concrete, the scientist is able to build up a model that mirrors the behaviour of large-scale systems. It is often felt that the small is too insignificant to alter the large. It is this metaphor that I draw on in this thesis. However, having chosen this approach, I needed to think more carefully about what I saw as 'flowing'.

At the entrance to the cathedral in Santiago de Compostela, there is a marble column

with the deep impression of fingers, an emotional expressionistic claw created by millions of hands, including my own. But it is already a distortion to say ‘including my own’ for in grasping that pillar I never felt the same emotion that comes from walking for more than a year to arrive (Nootboom 1997 [1992], 2).

Small, repeated actions accumulate to make a substantive difference to a pillar at the entrance of the Cathedral of St James in Santiago de Compostela. Belief, or maybe just curiosity, has caused millions of people to make that journey and touch that pillar. Each touch is like a small droplet of water, leaving an imperceptible difference so that a counter-relief of a hand is visible on the pillar. There is no way of knowing whether each person shared the same belief or even was carrying out the same action, but the placing of hands has created an unfinished sculpture as more people put their hand on the pillar every day, continuing the process. We do not know where the molecules rubbed off by each hand landed, or to whom the hands belonged, yet the handprint is there. In many ways, this is what I think about congregational life. A flow is experienced from the inside as tiny actions creating a much larger pattern..

Within the flow, the sense is of the individual. The route of one molecule is not the same as the route taken by the next molecule and patterns can be very different in other flows. Yet it is by coming to understand the interactions of the individual molecules that scientists gain greater understanding of behaviour on a larger scale, especially how quite a high level of complexity can arise from a simple small-scale process. By using the metaphor of flow when writing, I have been able to look at the extent that congregations show aspects of fluid behaviour within their setting. Quite often, this will go down to the molecular level. My hope was that, if this gives insight into the behaviour of these congregations, then the ideas might have a wider application. The congregations I am studying are not external to the flow. They experience elements that are analogous to features of fluid dynamics, because they are systems that behave in some aspects

similarly to those of fluids.

4. Ethics

This doctorate works with human subjects, and it would be usual for it to obtain ethical approval. As a statistician who has collaborated with medical researchers, I assumed at the start of the research that I would have to go before an ethics committee. For the last twenty years I have regularly been involved in the submission of studies to ethics committees; the reviews by the committees, on the whole, have been a positive experience. It is a useful process in research design and, handled well, can help avoid unnecessary risks both to the researcher and the researched.

However, ethical review of studies started within medical faculties and only spread slowly to others. When setting up the study in 2006, I asked whether I should prepare for an ethics review before or after looking for a placement. I was told to find a placement, as there was no ethics committee to review the study. By 2008, there was an ethics committee, but as the study was already started, I was not required to seek ethical review. It may have been assumed that in studies such as mine the need for ethical review would arise within the time of the study. However, none arose that required me to do this.

Meanwhile, the culture was changing and today both the University of Birmingham and ESRC require projects to have some form of ethical review. It should be noted that the ESRC Ethical Review Framework (FRE) was first created in 2010, and the current version is 2012 (ESRC Framework for Research Ethics (FRE) 2012). My second placement finished in September 2011. The checklist in the FRE (ESRC Framework for Research Ethics (FRE) 2012, 34) has a clear bias towards social research that is collaborative with medical research. While much space is

given to how to handle interventions, little space is given to how consent can be handled at public events. As most acts of worship are public events, the only way to know that you had the consent of everyone who turned up would be to get everyone to sign a consent form for every service. This would have had a much more marked effect on the congregation than the research would otherwise have done, and would have been seen as highly intrusive. Similar concerns about ethical approval for the ethnographic method are raised by the Association of Social Anthropologists in the preamble to their ethical guidelines (ASA) (ASA Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice 2011).

It was only in 2013 that I was made aware that the legislation of the University had changed, and all studies were required to go before an ethics committee. At this point, I had been out of the field for twenty-seven months and had even sent draft copies of the thesis chapters to the congregations for their approval. I could have prepared for an ethics committee, but at that stage it would have been an act of window dressing. However, that means that the research for this thesis has been conducted under the previous regime, which required an ongoing engagement with the ethical considerations within the thesis, using various guidelines.

Formal Process

The first step in the procedure was always to gain access to the congregations. It would technically have been possible to attend worship and other church events without this formal agreement, as they are open meetings. The only meetings I attended that were not open were: Elders' meetings and task group meetings, events at members' homes to which I was personally invited and the interviews conducted as part of this research. These all required separate negotiation after the acceptance from the congregation. However, for reasons of goodwill and research integrity, I felt it was essential that the congregations were asked.

The process used was a mixture of standard ethical practice and pragmatism. I first made an informal approach to the minister. If ministers had indicated that they were unwilling for me to have a placement with the congregation, then I would have looked for another congregation. I felt that doing a placement with the congregation where the minister had been overruled about my presence would leave me in an invidious situation.

Then I sought formal consent from the Elders' and Church Meetings. My preferred method would have been to have written to the church secretary, and left the minister to decide whether they declared that I had made prior contact. However, when checking with ministers as to whom to write to, both ministers said that they wanted to take it to these committees, including Elders' Meeting.⁵⁰ I was cautious about this, because there was then no formal method for communicating back to me; I relied on the minister to inform me of the decision, or to make sure someone else did. It also placed me under the minister's patronage.

At the request of the minister at St Andrew's, Edgerton, I set up a reference group to which members could go if they became worried about what I was doing but did not want either to talk to me directly or to take formal action. For both congregations, after they had decided to accept me on placement, I was asked to write to introduce myself for the congregation's church magazine. At Ulverstone, I also gave a brief introduction one Sunday, but a situation where I comfortably could do this at St Andrew's, Edgerton did not arise. I had evidently been talked about before I turned up at St Andrew's, Edgerton; indeed I am pretty sure there were background checks done.

⁵⁰ The Elders' Meeting is the governing committee of the congregation and made up of the minister and elected representatives from the congregation. This is a simplification, but all Elders including the minister will have at least once been subject to an appointing vote of Church Meeting. All members on the Church Roll can attend and vote at Church Meeting. This is thus gate-keeping by elected representatives.

This seeking of consent is in line with the procedure suggested by the ASA (ASA Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice 2011, 2). I agree with them that it is only one level of seeking consent. Importantly, as noted by the ASA 'Many of those participating in public events observed by the anthropologist will not be known to him or her. This is particularly the case for strangers visiting the community' (ASA Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice 2011, 2). Events such as the Christmas Fairs, when many from the wider community came, or events where the congregation joined with others, included many people who would not have known of my status. These had to be handled by the negotiated relationships dealt with in the next section.

Consent for the interviews was handled separately from that for the church and followed normal consent procedures. I would approach a person and ask if they were willing to be interviewed in person, and if they were, I would then set a date and give them an information pack. At the start of the interview, both the interviewee and I signed a formal consent form: consent to interview without recording could be given by not ticking a box on the form. One couple refused to be interviewed, and one person did not consent to be recorded. Some others voiced their dislike of being recorded but had already decided that they would allow me to do it. I did not try to persuade anyone to be recorded. I made it clear at the start of the interview that if they wanted me to suspend the interview or switch off the tape at any time, they were free to do so. One person did this, and I switched it off a couple of times myself, due to people taking phone calls, but at no point did anyone halt the interview.

The interviewees are the authors of the words they speak in an interview. Therefore, I felt it was incumbent on me to send them a copy of the recording and to ask permission to use it. However, rather than have to chase the interviewees for a form, as I suspected that people were feeling there were far too many forms, I gave a date and said that if the form was not back by this date I

would assume that I had permission to use the recording. They could also, on the form, request me to remove sections of the interview that they did not want to be transcribed. When asking permission to use interviews, the usual restriction was that other people should not know when the interviewee had talked about them explicitly.

Both congregations made it clear to me that they wanted children to be included among the informants. A separate procedure was not used for children, but I did put in place extra safeguards. I did not attend any junior church event at St Andrew's Edgerton, either on a Sunday or at other times. I attended one Senior Youth Group event and the Junior Church class for the same age group the following Sunday at Ulverstone. Two youth leaders at least were present the whole time apart from me, and I suspect that the majority of young people present were over 16.⁵¹ Interviews with young people only occurred with parents present. All children gave their permission, as well as parents, for the interviews and no child younger than ten years old was interviewed. I could not help out as a youth leader or Junior Church leader, as in order to be CRB checked I needed to belong to the congregations for two years, and there was no process to get the CRB done by the University of Birmingham. I have since been CRB checked by my employer for a volunteer role.⁵² However, both congregations specifically named young people for interviews.

Permission was therefore sought both for access to the congregation and also for the handling of interviews that were analysed. These followed formal procedures.

⁵¹ This was a peculiarity of the group at the time. I am not sure what I would have done if it had been a year later, when the group was much younger.

⁵² University of Sheffield, URC Religious Advisor.

Negotiating Relationships

Along with the formal procedures that are the norm, there was a whole area of negotiations that went on throughout my time with the congregations. The reality was that, as an active participant, I shared responsibility for the situations that arose within the congregation (McNamee, Gergen, and Associates 1999).

Going to worship Sunday by Sunday is the core activity of congregational life, but as a place to get to know people I found it difficult. Therefore, I deliberately chose, with both congregations, to attend events that were likely to be attended by subsets of the congregation. In the end, with both congregations, I attended mid-week Bible study. These were open events to which anyone could come.

Equally important, though less frequent, was attendance at fund-raising and social events. For both congregations, being prepared to be part of general church life was essential. At St Andrew's, Edgerton, you genuinely were not part of the congregation until you had a job at the Church Fair, and they gave jobs to everyone they could.

However, just as I was obliged to get to know the congregations, the congregations needed to know me. The article in the church magazine and willingness to talk about it helped. St Andrew's, Edgerton had done background checks through the URC denominational grapevine but still spent quite a bit of time asking questions in settings such as Bible Study. I found in the early days at Ulverstone that if I wore a University of Birmingham sweatshirt to events, people seemed to relax; it came to be a bit of a uniform. When anyone asked who I was, I included in my reply that I was a researcher and would explain what my research was about.

As I was a participant, the congregation also had claims on my skills and talents. Relatively early

on in both congregations, I started helping with moving furniture for events. In my experience, there are primarily two low levels of service that mark one out as belonging: one is moving furniture and the other is serving coffee and washing up. Of the two, being ready to move furniture is often the easier barrier to navigate, as it is less formally constructed: with serving coffee you usually need to sign up in advance to do it and need someone to show you how.

However, I made use of more specialist skills, both personal skills. Firstly, my ability to take photographs and handle sound equipment, but also my skills as a researcher: analysis of membership figures and helping with a research project including interviewing people. The last of these did, for a while, take me into behaviour that was close to Action Research but in a limited sphere and as a support person. Another grey area arose in that I acted as photographer for St Andrew's, Edgerton at their Fairs. I openly took pictures, visibly carrying a camera, and people could have asked for them to be deleted if they wanted to. Copies of all photos were given to the church and displayed for weeks after the Fair. No photographs are included in the thesis due to the need to maintain the anonymity of members of the congregation.

Therefore, there was a whole process of the congregations and me getting to know each other and finding out how we fitted together. I was always open that I was there as a researcher, but being around more than just for Sunday worship allowed the relationship with the congregation to develop. Consent in ethnographic study is not one-off; the obtaining of consent was an ongoing act in which all of these factors played a part. That, of course, laid on me the necessity of treating these aspects with propriety.

Part of this I took from Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 11-14): the need to have a positive focus for the research. There is a tendency among URCs to look at the downside of situations. If I had gone in deliberately seeking to find out what was wrong with a

congregation, there would have been plenty of information forthcoming. I felt quite clearly that if I deliberately looked for the positive aspects, people would still tell me the negative, but the other way around was not guaranteed.

However, and perhaps more productive for me, was that I did not go in with the intention of staying neutral to the processes going on in the congregation. I was there to participate in the community, and for me you can only genuinely participate with the congregation if you open yourself up to caring for the community and individuals in it. There are arguments that this will blind a researcher. I found that this emotional knowledge became a prompt for research as I moved across the boundary between being sympathetic and being empathic. It influenced my judgement on what the congregation saw as crucial. It allowed me to contextualise an individual's utterance within the context of the wider congregation.

Therefore, my attitude was deliberate in two ways: first that I was interested in what the congregations did well and what they achieved; second that I was open about my care and desire for the well-being of the congregation. I was an interested, rather than a disinterested, participant. In return for this I received a great deal of friendship, support and the opportunity to be in another congregation apart from my own, where they did things differently. It is a privilege to get to know congregations in the way that ethnographic research allows.

Confidentiality, Portrayal and Control

Confidentiality is generally tackled within Ethnography by ensuring anonymity (ASA Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice 2011, 5). It is too easy to assume that if personal names

are not used that this gives anonymity, but a person's identity is related to many other aspects.⁵³ This thesis is on United Reformed congregations in the UK. People within the congregations studied will have knowledge of those portrayed in this thesis. The United Reformed Church is a relatively small denomination in this country. There will also be other people in the URC who, from the description, can make reasonable guesses both about which the congregations were, despite both names being changed, and who leading members are, including ministers.

These concerns I tackled in a number of ways:

- 1) I hope that my attitude to the congregations while I was with them opened me to the positive aspects of the congregation and did not finish when I finished my placement.
- 2) The method of writing has produced a partial obscuring of who said what, and I have not used the actual congregations' names within the thesis. A single person portrayed in the thesis may well be an amalgam of several people in real life.
- 3) The congregations were each sent early drafts of the descriptive chapters in the thesis and asked to give feedback.

St Andrew's, Edgerton did; Ulverstone did not. On the whole, the comments were useful. One clearly demonstrated the ability to miss a particular topic within congregational life entirely, no matter how closely you attend.⁵⁴ The feedback was largely factual; one indicated quite clearly that I had not communicated what I was saying precisely, as the comment did not relate to what I intended to communicate. As the organisation of the thesis changed substantially between the draft sent and the final version, making these alterations was not complicated. There was no

⁵³ I came across an incident where a researcher assumed that anonymity was created by the use of pseudonyms on bulletin boards. Unfortunately, quite often users use the same pseudonym on different boards. This was particularly true of users in the early days of the Internet. These are as personal as an individual's name. One pseudonym he quoted was only three letters long but was regularly used by one person. I know that person by that name in a different context.

⁵⁴ I failed to pick up one issue with buildings, despite my picking up other building issues quite clearly.

requested alteration that would substantively change the argument in this thesis.

5. Reflexivity and Researcher Position

When it comes to Ethnography, a broad range of approaches is included. From the research approach perspective, there seem to be two clouds of words that weigh heavily on the ends of a single dimension. At one end, closest to pure observation, these words are ‘neutral’, ‘outsider’, ‘etic description’, ‘stranger’ and ‘realist’, amongst others. At the end closest to participation, the terms are: ‘insider’, ‘emic description’, ‘native’ and ‘reflexive’, amongst others. It is not that the dimensions these dyads represent are identical; however the degree of correspondence between dimensions is such that if each pair was investigated separately, then there would be a lot of repetition. Therefore, the discussion here is themed around the insider/outsider dimension. In Ethnography there is no perfect place from which to position yourself; what is necessary is that you are aware of how that positioning affects your research.

This study is an insider study, so will tend to be based more on participation, be more emic in description, is closer to the perspective of those studied and is, therefore, likely to draw far more on reflexive research experience. This is not extreme; total immersion would have been impossible and others who have tried it have found it detrimental to actually recording what is happening (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 [1983], 107). It is rather that it was done by me, and another observer might well have experienced it differently. I cannot describe everything about myself and how every characteristic worked out in practice. What I am going to do is pick up five different aspects of myself that it seems incumbent on me to consider reflexively. Those are as a

Native Ethnographer, a Reformed Christian, non-clergy,⁵⁵ a woman and a statistician.

As a Native Ethnographer

Native Ethnography is one of a variety of types of Ethnography clustered around Autoethnography or Ethnography that uses personal writing (Ellis 2004, 46). It is slightly unusual in this case: whereas most of these studies are by people who ‘share a history of colonialism or economic subjugation’ (Ellis 2004), so that the Ethnography is still of the subjugated, this study is of a minority, white middle class. There can be arguments as to how mainstream English Non-Conformity is, but it exists in an area where there is no obvious subjugation at present. Equally, the distance from academic discourse is not the same; many members of the congregations have a university qualification; some may well have had research degrees.⁵⁶ However, the challenge remains the same; the research is about a topic that interacts with the researcher’s own identity. Therefore, the experience of the researcher is part of the data collected.

It is not unusual for researchers to study something that is part of their identity. Kay Redfield Jamison, a leading authority on manic depression, reveals in her memoir that she also suffers herself (Jamison 2011 [1995]): Temple Grandin’s research is focused on autistic spectrum disorder (‘Welcome to Temple Grandin’s Official Autism Website’ 2015), a disorder from which she suffers. It is, however, unusual for researchers to allow the subjectivity of themselves to be part of the research experience. The preferred tone in much research writing is that of the objective observer: Anthropology ‘has historically existed to “give voice” to the other, there is no

⁵⁵ I am struggling with terminology here. Much of the Reformed tradition, including the URC, ordains Elders for life and they are recognised throughout the denomination, but Elders are local people appointed by the local congregation; activities taken on are voluntary and there are no paid Elders and normally they do not preside at the sacraments. So the normal dichotomy between members and clerics is blurred. I have adopted “non-clergy” as I am an Elder.

⁵⁶ I can think of only one person I knew for certain who had a PhD, but there were others with Master’s degrees. Oddly, these were all at Ulverstone.

greater taboo than self-revelation' (Behar 1996, 26). There is, however, a growing trend since the 1980s of ethnographers who are using the personal in their research (Reed-Danahay 2001). As this change occurs there is no 'taken-for-granted consensus over the appropriate amount of self-revelation' (Coffey 1999, 18). My research fits almost classically into the description by Denzin: 'a practice that begins with the biography of the writer and moves outward to culture, discourse, history, and ideology'. There are aspects that are different for someone who is a Native Ethnographer, and I want to highlight two of them that are interconnected. The first is the role of friendship in the study and the second is the way that emotions were connected.

There are two aspects to friendship. Firstly, in a wider denominational sense I have friends from many different places. That at times got me access that would have otherwise been denied, but it also meant that the field work was not distant from the rest of my life. I was never truly outside the field. Secondly, I also formed friendships within the congregations. I made friends in the field who were not interviewed and informants who were acquaintances. Occasionally the dual identity as 'friend' and 'researcher' led to the sharing of confidences. On the other hand, the friendships were invaluable for picking up tacit knowledge. It was the people who befriended me who taught me what the congregation was about and how to fit in. They provided the orientation for my perspective on the congregation. My perspective is not the only one of the congregation, for insider views are multiple (Wolcott 1999, 137): my interest was just as much in how I formed that perspective. It is hardly surprising that they are the people I missed the most when I left.

Congregations are the product of human interaction. Humans have emotions which are active in human interaction. I am a human being; emotions were engaged in my interaction with the congregations. I deliberately went in with the intention of acting as far as possible for the well-being of the congregation, within my researcher's role; my emotions were engaged and had to be.

Firstly, to have acted without emotion would have been seen as suspicious: the nature of these congregations is that they rely on the affections that members have for each other. That is not to say that the environment was emotional; it was all ‘civilised British’. Secondly, because of this reliance quite a lot of the identity is carried through the emotions. The emotions were also part of the process of getting to know the congregation. Judith Okely talks of how she gained a great deal of knowledge in her research on gypsies through ways that were missing from the formal field notes (Okely 2008) and many of these are obviously emotionally charged situations. Similarly, there was information in all these interactions that gave me tacit knowledge of the congregation which was rarely captured in notes.

Another marked difference in this tradition is the use of the emotions as part of the tools for analysis. This is not the same as an emotionally-driven analysis where I would allow the emotions to direct my analysis. Emotional data, just like visual, aural or textual data can be analysed. Part of that analysis is the naming of emotions. When, as far as possible, emotions experienced by the researcher are understood, they become part of the situation to be explored.

I did take certain precautions with emotions. Firstly, I made sure I sustained the pastoral relations from my home congregation and did not rely on anyone in the studied congregations for pastoral support. Secondly, I deliberately tried to limit interaction with the congregation in the first year after finishing my placement with it. I needed to signal both to myself and the congregation that the placement was over. Thirdly, I deliberately, early on in the research, found a counsellor who was willing to explore the emotions that the research produced within me.

As a Reformed Christian

Judith Butler (2011 [1993], 108–109) argues that, at birth, a child comes into an already created discourse so that the declaring of a child as a ‘boy’ or a ‘girl’ is performative. However, the

assignment of gender is not the only thing that is generally given close to birth; the child also receives its name. When, as in my case, that child shares a first name with one of the subjects of her father's doctorate, a connection is already created. When the father's thesis topic is also a key figure in the tradition of the Christianity in which the child is raised by the family, the relationship between that child and the tradition is necessarily involved as the tradition is transcribed and re-transcribed onto the child's identity. The child is forced to take a position with respect to the tradition: she can accept, reject or studiously remain neutral, but cannot ignore it.

A child raised this way will know the tradition in a vastly different way from those who embrace the tradition by conviction. The decision to adopt a tradition by conviction often means that you have read about it, thought it through and made an active decision to belong. You tend to know the well-known statements on important topics, the dates and names of theologians and other thinkers and the critical issues within the tradition. Someone raised in close proximity to the tradition does not collect the information in a 'normal' way. The information is learnt through listening, copying and interacting with others in the tradition. For such a child, theologians are people her parents talk about and history is the stories they tell her. It is the difference between learning a language as a young child and learning it as an adult. The adult learns vocabulary, studies the grammar and is acutely aware of the structure; the child learns from its surroundings, by listening, copying others and interacting. Those who learn a language as a child tend to use it instinctively, but are not aware of what specific structures they are using; an adult learner may speak more haltingly, but is intensely aware of how the sentences fit together. To be able to talk of the tradition and explain it to others, a child has to sit down and learn grammar and so on.

In Ethnography, the process of getting to know a culture, that is, the process of acclimatisation to the culture which you are investigating, is sometimes referred to as 'going native'

(Powdermaker 2007 [1967]). It is true that while researchers may be ‘going native’, they never become native; a researcher’s identity as an ethnographer almost certainly curtails over-association with the culture investigated. However, I am a native with respect to the Reformed tradition. Jo Pearson (2002) refers to her experience of being a Wiccan initiate and then starting to investigate the phenomenon as ‘going native in reverse’. For me, it goes deeper: being a Reformed Christian was an essential part of my identity and to question that was unnerving. It was a process that was decidedly at times about making ‘the familiar strange’⁵⁷ and often questioning assumptions I held.

Equally, I purposely went to congregations other than my own. At St Andrew’s, Edgerton, it was known before I arrived who I was. As the minister was both a former student of my father’s and had belonged to the same group of churches as my parents, this could not have been hidden. At Ulverstone, I did not mention it until toward the end and then only to the minister. The combination of me doing a PhD and having this sort of knowledge was maybe why some people thought I was training for the ministry. In both congregations, at times, I was asked theological questions, and I was treated as someone who knew the tradition. Whether this was because I was studying for a PhD, my Biblical knowledge, or just how I presented myself, I cannot determine.

As Non-Clergy

Congregational Studies are typically carried out by clergy, even in Ethnography: as in Mary Moschella’s book (2008, 32–41), it is assumed that the ethnographer is the pastor. The congregation relates to them as to a minister; particularly from the Reformed perspective, the position of the minister as a ‘teaching Elder’ is responsible for the orthodoxy of the teaching

⁵⁷ “To make the familiar strange and the strange familiar” is an oft-used phrase, apparently originally attributable to the German poet Novalis (1772-1801) according to Robert Myers (2011).

received in the congregation. There are, therefore, power differences involved with this status. I may be more theologically educated than the average member, but what I said could be queried without questioning my status.

There is also a second difference between a minister and the congregation's minister. The congregation expects their minister to provide leadership in some form. The exact manner of this is a negotiation between the congregation and their minister. However, it does mean that the congregation's minister is usually more able to implement change than any other person. This differential creates a barrier.

I would not claim to be a typical member. I am an Elder and I am well versed in scripture. This is unusual but not exceptional for members. There are basically two ways to become well-versed in scripture: the first is to do the formal training, possibly leading to lay preaching, and the second is through an extended reading of scriptures. I have done a combination of both methods. I started both Bible reading and reading more widely around Christianity as a teenager, and that continues to the present day. I also have at various times taken formal training courses. To be recognised as one who has this sort of knowledge does give one status within the congregation. I would usually guess about 10% of any URC congregation has this status. If someone is an Elder, it implies they have been elected to that role. However, most congregations have around twelve Elders. Both congregations knew that I was the sort of person to have this status.

People in both congregations assumed that I was a candidate for the ministry or a minister. I take it as essential that the willingness to lead worship is part of the role of being a minister. I only ever reluctantly lead worship, although I am happy to participate in organising worship with others. When asked what my thesis was leading to, I had to give a non-committal response, normally along the lines that I hoped God knew because I did not.

As a lay person, my view differed: I was there, sitting in the pew, helping out and wondering what was going on and how to contribute. Although my theological understanding was higher than that of most members of the congregation, but not exceptionally so, the role I had within the congregation tended towards that of a member rather than that of a cleric.

As a Woman

This is not a feminist thesis, in that it is not concerned overtly with any power issues that affected women within the two congregations. When power issues that relate to gender disparity have come up, I have dealt with them, but I have not deliberately sought them out. Nor is it feminist in the sense of arguing for a feminist agenda. There are reasons for this. The first female Congregational minister in England was ordained in 1917 (Thorpe 2008). I grew up in congregations which accepted women as ministers (although only one female minister was amongst those), where women, including my mother, were Elders and where there was no role a man could fulfil that a woman was not allowed to do. In my home congregation, over half the Eldership is female, as is the minister and church secretary (senior Elder). In the two congregations studied, one had a male minister and a female church secretary; the other congregation had a female minister and a male church secretary. It is hard to argue that there was gender inequality within the congregations.

However, being a woman did affect my relationships. It was easier for me within the congregation to have and maintain relationships with the women than the men. This, undoubtedly, has given a different perspective of the congregation than if I were a man. There may have been occasions when I picked up things that are of more interest to women than to men because of this, but that is not to argue that being a woman gave me a privileged insight (it just gave me a different but equally valid one). If anything, I felt the need to listen more carefully

to what I heard from men, to make sure that their experience was not under-represented.

As a Statistician

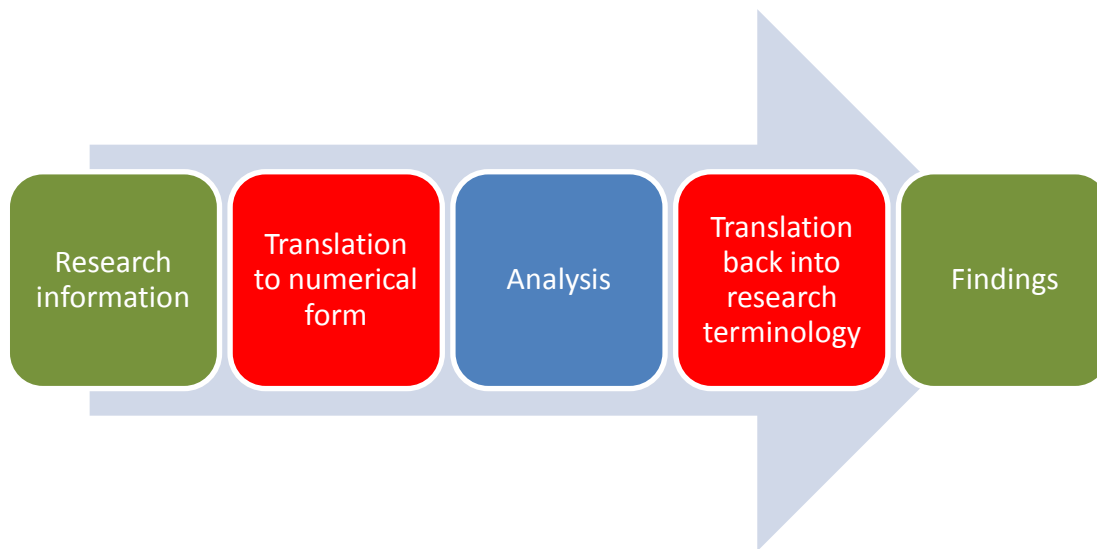
Given that recently I have talked with two other mature statisticians who are of an interpretative bent, my impression is the link between statistician and positivist is dubious. One of the famous quotes in statistics is ‘All models are wrong’ which occurs twice in G.E.P. Box’s paper on the work of R.A. Fisher (Box 1976). The abstract for that paper is useful in seeing how statisticians understand themselves:

Aspects of scientific method are discussed: in particular, its representation as a motivated iteration in which, in succession, practice confronts theory, and theory, practice. Rapid progress requires sufficient flexibility to profit from such confrontations, and the ability to devise parsimonious but effective models, to worry selectively about model inadequacies and to employ mathematics skilfully but appropriately.

As a consulting statistician,⁵⁸ I am aware of how much interpretative work is involved in the movement from practice to theory and theory to practice. Equally I am aware of the flexibility required to do a good analysis, which is in stark contrast to the mechanical interpretation of scientific method by social scientists. Analysis is an iterative process; the outcome from one procedure leads to a new set of questions which requires other procedures. **Figure 5** shows the process of carrying out one round of statistical analysis for someone. The two hard parts, in red, are the parts regularly missed out in sociological portrayals of quantitative research. My subjective approach is not something that is necessarily at odds with my being a statistician. Part of my reason for adopting this approach was the lack of a theoretical framework that looked at what I wanted to study. This lack of structure made a statistical approach difficult.

⁵⁸I have no doubt there are positivist statisticians, but the majority I have dealt with are interpretative at some level.

Figure 5



One cycle of statistical analysis from consultation to findings

There is, however, a sense in which I became infatuated with Ethnography as an approach. I do not love statistics; with statistics, the analyst needs to keep their feet anchored outside the statistical technique. It is easy to use complex statistical techniques without any insight into what the implications of them are. With Ethnography, especially the part that tends towards Auto-ethnography, it is different. Here, my heart was involved; what I had to learn was to listen to it. If the use of statistics in research methodology is a method of the mind rather than the heart, then the same can be said of the Reformed tradition among Christian traditions. The use of the heart was not just a revelation to me as a statistician, but also as a Reformed Christian. I have a mind that is adept at being logical, working and worshipping in settings which emphasise that way. To have to ask how I knew something, and realise that the knowing was of the emotions, and yet find useful information from such a practice, was revelatory. The rational setting I came from meant that using visceral intelligence was something I delighted in experiencing. I suspect it was

similar to the reason why many Protestant converts to Buddhism tend to choose the ceremonial traditions; while many Catholic converts tend to select the Zen form with its austere approach.

On the other hand, I suspect that the statistician showed in a number of ways that were not directly to do with statistics. The research programme was planned early and mostly adhered to throughout the thesis. I suspect that with people who come from a more qualitative background, the tendency is to see the programme as more provisional. Equally, I kept returning over and over to the research questions even though they were not formally written down. Thus, the approach was focused on the research questions. Oddly, the convoluted analysis approach would be familiar to those who consult me as a statistician.

6. Reflecting

On the whole, the study design worked pretty well. The extended time with two congregations did indeed mean that the congregations came to establish levels of trust with me that I would not have developed in a much shorter time. I think the added generality which going to two congregations gave me was worthwhile. This generality meant, for example, that I was faced with the fact that the debate over access to sacraments was not peculiar to one congregation. As a compromise, I am broadly happy with it.

A majority of URC congregations in the area were too small to be considered in this study, so in some sense this thesis looks at large congregations that are privileged to have a minister mostly to themselves. Small congregations do function differently. Having two congregations that were similar to that extent was perhaps useful, yet the exclusion of the small congregations must limit its applicability.

If there was anything about the placements that I would have changed, it is that I would have carried them out for 21 months rather than 24, so as to be able to give myself a gap between them. In the first few months at Ulverstone, I had to deal with my grief at leaving St Andrew's, Edgerton. In other words, I underestimated the time that I needed to deal with my emotions. As a result, during those crucial few months with Ulverstone I was not there as much as I would have liked.

Tradition

If the metaphor determines the way you think, the entry point into the puzzle sets the direction in which you go. The question that came to exercise me was ‘How did these two congregations maintain their identity as United Reformed Churches?’ This was not to question whether they were United Reformed Churches; it was possible to enumerate many indicators that they were: the role of Church Meeting, the use of blue in the decor, selling orange marmalade, having walking groups and the insistence that they were not typical, etc. Rather, it was the way these commonalities existed without central authority engaging them that troubled me. However to use this to explore the congregational identity further, I first need to talk about the tradition. To do this I will give a brief synopsis stating what I understand the tradition to be. Then I will look at the sociological ideas that helped me explore the nature of the tradition further, before moving into three sections handling elements of the tradition.

1. What Tradition? Definition of terms

If I were to name the tradition which the URC participates in, I would call it English Reformed Dissent, with each term having a specific meaning. Firstly, ‘Dissent’: this means that it traces its origin through the Act of Uniformity in 1662 (Raithby 1819 [1662]) and those who were not Roman Catholic who refused to sign the Act. These were made up of many groups with a diverse range of Christian beliefs, including some who had never been part of the Church of England. It might be useful to think of them as similar to the alliances that are created during revolutions, where the common element is what they are not, rather than what they are. However, amongst this alliance the largest single faction was the ‘Reformed’. This term signifies those who drew their inspiration from the Reformers in the continental city-states of Zurich, Strasbourg, Basel

and Geneva and who were particularly influenced by the thought of John Calvin. This means that this faction was heavily influenced by the Magisterial Reformation. The Magisterial form of it is reinforced by the fact that the Church of Scotland is strongly Reformed in character, yet being within a dissenting tradition meant that elements of strong commitment that reflected the Radical Reformation were also part of the character. It is 'English' and not Scots or European. As a minority tradition, it seemed to have boundaries that were particularly porous, not only to the Scottish influence but also to Continental thought and, with the Pilgrim Fathers coming from its ranks, also America. However the context is England, and it has not been immune from the changes in the wider English Church, whether Unitarianism and Evangelicalism in the early 18th Century, industrialisation in the 19th Century or the decline and ecumenism of the last century.

Thus, its trajectory through history is as complex as any river marsh with channels splitting and joining again. I am not, therefore, marking what is central to the tradition, but rather declaring the porous boundaries within which I will discuss the tradition. Sometimes I will have to look wider in the English Church and sometimes I will have to look at Reformed Churches on the continent to explain certain elements.

2 . Thinking Sociologically Around Tradition

In the study of religion, there is one work that specifically looks at the role of tradition within religious communities; that of Danielle Hervieu-Léger (2000 [1993]), which explores the way communities, in her case communes, develop their tradition. She explores the way that they tend to associate their tradition with a larger-scale tradition in order to create a narrative of who they are in the present situation. She goes on to argue that one of the distinctive features of religion is the requirement to establish such a link from the local community to a religious tradition. Thus,

for her, the connection is made through the creation of narrative explanation of who the community is with respect to the other parts of the tradition. This needs to be compared with Martin Southwold's assertion that it is not the theological meaning of the tradition that is a sign of belonging, but the participation in the norms of conduct of that tradition (Southwold 1983). This creates the sense of tradition as a set of practices, where the value depends as much upon the current context as upon the past. These two then separate out an understanding of religion that stretches between meaning of the tradition (doxy) and the practice of the tradition (praxis). Given this divergence, I first need to explore ideas that overlap with tradition and see if I can come up with a mapping of the possible terrain.

One approach that would fit well with Hervieu-Léger would be to look at communal memory. Often, memory is seen as something internal to an individual. The seminal work in the area is by Maurice Halbwachs who argues that we can only remember as social creatures, and the acts of remembering are performed in relationship to others (Halbwachs 1992 [1952], 41–42). Memory cannot be freed from the structure of society, so memory is not just the free recall of facts but the remembrance of facts that are contained within the collective memory. Before him, collective memory had existed (Russell 2006): much of it had been of the sort of 'Let us now sing the praises of famous men, our ancestors in their generations', (Sirach 44:1). Halbwachs changes memory to being a shared framework, rather than concerned primarily with the doings of the famous. Thus, collective memory stopped being transcendental but became the artefact of a particular group.

Halbwachs goes on to look at three settings for technologies of memory: the family, religion and social class. He suggests that family provides the most basic setting for memory and people's experience within it forms the core of knowledge that they take for granted. He also suggests that

religious truth 'is at the same time a traditional remembrance and a general notion' (Halbwachs 1992 [1952], 106). That is, that which is in origin temporal is, through repeated recall and effort put into maintaining it against alternative versions, turned into something which appears transcendentally true. Finally, he contends that the memory associated with social class has much to do with maintaining divisions and boundaries. The problem for me is the way these are mapped onto three different spheres of life, as the English Reformed Dissent tradition process is a very fluid tradition.. Although the Bible is accepted as central to that process, yet it is acknowledged that fresh readings of it may occur. If religious memory is, by definition, in a state of flux, can it become the permanent overarching memory that Halbwachs is suggesting is the indication of a religious memory? Halbwachs does distinguish between early and late Christianity, conceding that early Christianity did not have this structured memory and applying the transcendent permanence to the creation of a priestly caste. He even suggests that, in the absence of such a caste, as in the Quakers, that an overarching religious narrative may not exist (Halbwachs 1992 [1952], 100). Equally, Halbwachs does not see the tradition functioning in a univocal way if the tradition involves a high level of commitment to belonging. However, within the Reformed tradition we have both state denominations, which cater for the whole population, and also minority denominations which require a high allegiance of everyone. Willingness to rethink the tradition is not confined within the minority form.

James Wertsch argues there are ways that communities structure the process of remembering so that, even though someone belonging to that the community has not experienced the event, they recall it in a way that is consistent with the views held by other members of the community (Wertsch 2002, 23). Thus, it was quite possible for children in Soviet Russia in the 1970s to produce a different account of the Second World War from that of their counterparts in the UK

or America. He distinguishes himself from those who hold a strong form of collective memory; that is, that there is actually an entity which is the collective memory or mind (Wertsch 2002, 21). Rather, he theorises a distribution of memory across the group, which shares common features. In doing, so he draws on the idea found in the work of Lev Vygotsky, that children learn to internalise thinking patterns that they practise with adults (Vygotsky 1978 [1930-1934], 38–51) . However, he also draws on Bakhtin’s idea of polyphony (Bakhtin 1994 [1963]), that is there are many voices in any utterance when it is spoken. Thus, for Wertsch, collective memory has the possibility of producing not only harmonisation but also cacophony. This development takes tradition away from a cohesive single account into a much more complex pattern. However, Wertsch, like many theorists in this field, concentrates on the linguistic part of memory, although giving space for the technologies of preserving a memory, such as books or websites.

Paul Connerton (1989) argues that societal memory is a matter of habitual memory. This is often the case with tradition; it is in practising the tradition, consuming it, that the tradition is produced or reproduced. If nobody is practising a tradition then it is no longer a living tradition. This idea was prefigured in Marcel Mauss, where he argues that various practices are culturally ingrained (Mauss 1973 [1935]). Thus, there are forms of cultural memory that are more receptive to the interpretation given by Southwold.

A different approach, which emphasises what happens, can be taken through accounts of what makes an individual. Louis Althusser, in his essay on *Ideology and the State Apparatus* (Althusser 2006 [1970]) discusses the state apparatus that ‘interpellates’ an individual and creates ideology in the self-recognition that it creates. It would be helpful if we could see ‘tradition’ as part of ‘ideology’. However, Althusser’s notion seems to depend on the ideology being a unified interpellation, in that it has a coherency to produce the persons that society needs. It is therefore

unlikely to cover the polyphony of Wertsch's version above.

Weber argues that the Protestant tradition created specific selves, roles or ways of being that are distinct from other religious traditions (Weber 1992 [1905]).⁵⁹ His writing on vocation, both in science and in politics (Weber 2004 [1918]), draws attention to the ways a situation creates people who display the characteristics valued by that society. Thus, Weber's approach involves more praxis than Althusser's; however, his stance still seems to support the monolithic nature of tradition and is ahistorical.

Bourdieu's idea of 'habitus' seems a natural progression of these ideas. His understanding of 'habitus' is based on Bayes' Theorem (McGrayne 2011, 249).⁶⁰ That is, a person in a situation has a model with notions of likelihood attached to a certain outcome. Bourdieu calls these probabilities '*a priori*' and '*a posteriori*' (Bourdieu 1977 [1972], 77), which matches the language of Bayes' Theorem. The *a priori* model, when applied to a situation, produces the customary behaviour or the 'habitus' in which the individual works. As the result of experience, the individual then alters their 'habitus' to make it fit with their experience. Bourdieu implies that they do this in accordance with the logical rules of Bayes' Theorem. Therefore, the 'habitus' is not the exact situation of the person, but the imagined⁶¹ social setting of a person. It can seem to involve rules and customary procedures, but for Bourdieu these are secondary outcomes of the *a priori* models. He contrasts this with Game Theory's (Levine 2013) or Rational Choice Theory's (Scott 1999) approach to customary behaviour, which suggests that the probabilities are determined extrinsically and that people are behaving in accordance with these rules. Bourdieu's

⁵⁹ The follow-on argument around capitalism is not sustainable in my opinion and the sleights of hand in his description of the tradition are also problematic.

⁶⁰ An intriguing use of statistics, but despite my background I am not a Bayesian.

⁶¹ Terminology failing me, "imagined", "believed" or "projected".

model allows the likelihood-beliefs to be determined intrinsically, although it is still deterministic. The result of the cyclic approach is that the models are always evolving. This approach has two things that need to be noticed. However much information is gathered, with Bayes' Theorem, absolute values are never obtained; all models approach reality. This becomes more problematic as Bayes' Theorem assumes the idea that the observer is independent of the situation; that is, observing does not affect the system or there is no feedback in the system. However, because a person is a social actor, the individual is altering the system they are observing. In other words, what Bourdieu is proposing is likely to be a chaotic system and, though we can trace lines that do occur, we know nothing of those that were possible but did not occur.

An alternative is to look at what Foucault means by a discourse. He means the set of practices that create the circumstances by which social phenomena are created, e.g. sexuality, mental illness or social control (Foucault 1983 [1982]; Foucault 1988 [1982]; S. Hall 1997). These are not seen by Foucault as permanent structures, but the production of a historical process that has changed with time. His process of *genealogy* is a method of working out how related social 'problematizations' (the way he describes the interplay of discourse that creates the issue that people seek to solve (Foucault 1987 [1984], 2:14–24; Rose 1996, 131)) at different historical times, are constructed by society. Foucault intends the term 'problematization' to draw attention to the unresolved nature of such phenomena which, therefore, have inherent movement within them (Foucault 1983 [1982]); but as he looks at different times rather than the entire process he creates the impression of mostly static phenomena. For Foucault, discourses do not consist just of language but also of practices and artefacts. So, although his approach initially looks as though it involves just doxy, it also involves praxis. Thus, discourses are ways of creating social objects using practices, as well as words.

At first glance, Foucault's ideas give a potentially fruitful framework for looking at a tradition. It has a historical aspect, and it is not just about words. However, there is a twofold problem. Firstly, despite his dealing with the past in much of his work, Foucault has a tendency, when looking at a 'problematization', to treat it as ahistorical. He is prepared to say that 'problematizations' differ with time but does not recognise the source of today's 'problematization' in yesterday's 'problematization'. Foucault can jump from the ancient Roman family to the current one, with only the sketchiest details of how their conceptualisation has changed (Foucault 1983 [1982]). This method of slicing time into neat sections does not work well with a tradition where the historical narrative has a modern currency. The second is the perfect overarching of an area of study that such an approach creates. Traditions are part of a wider environment; they interact with other societal discourses within the environment and changes in the wider context impact how the tradition is understood. This means that any problematization works only within a given context.

The theorists here can be seen to discuss three dimensions. At one level is the dimension that stretches from doxy, such as Hervieu-Léger or Halbwachs, to praxis-based ideas such as Southwold or Mauss. There is, equally, a second dimension that goes from monovocal (e.g. Althusser) to polyvocal (e.g. Wertsch). The third dimension is whether traditions are viewed as transcendent or historical in focus. In this, the theorists of communal memory generally have more interest in the historical perspective than do the social theorists. Finally, is a tradition static or changing? Halbwachs clearly has it as something static, while Foucault and Bourdieu propose ideas that foreground the process of change; Bourdieu with his iterative changes to 'habitus' and Foucault with 'problematization'. Whereas Bourdieu actually brings us down to individual experience and the tracing of particular outcomes, Foucault looks at issues that are tackled and

solved differently in different ages.

3. Ways of Exploring the Tradition

There is a number of ways that I could explore the tradition, and in many respects the approach I take alters what I mean by the tradition. Therefore, I need to explain what I intend to do. There are three broad approaches that I could take:

- 1) A historical narrative of the tradition which might either be concerned with ‘what happened when’, or perhaps a history shaped by a sociological question
- 2) An account that explores the themes and understandings of the tradition either as spiritual or as theological or as a combined spiritual and theological tradition
- 3) An attempt to produce at least a partial Foucauldian ‘genealogy’ of the tradition that would explore what it means to be a member of the tradition of the URC.

There are histories of the Reformed tradition. A recent one that takes a wide perspective is that by D.G. Hart, which is scholarly but from the conservative Calvinist perspective (Hart 2013). There is the older history written by John T. McNeill (McNeill 1967 [1954]), the modern translator of Calvin’s *Institutes*. Graeme Murdock has written a cultural history of the European Reformed Church (Murdock 2004). There is also one that deals with the traditions that make up the URC (Cornick 1998) or general ones on Dissent (Routley 1960). Since Weber wrote his treatise on the Protestant Ethic, there has been a second strong strand of histories, particularly concerned with Weber’s ideas. The latest of these is by Philip Benedict (P. Benedict 2002).

However, I am not an academic ecclesiastical or social historian, and as such I am not going to be able to produce a satisfactory history. Much of what would be covered in such a history is simply irrelevant to a thesis which concentrates on the character of current United Reformed

congregations. Having a feel for it is beneficial to understanding certain characteristics, but a detailed understanding of events is not. Indeed, if anything, the struggle is to grasp pan-historic patterns.

A second approach would be that of writing a spiritual or theological account of the tradition. In this area, too, there are two legitimate responses. Benedict describes the members as historically having ‘their first awakening to consideration of more serious spiritual matters ... when either a book they read or a sermon they heard convinced them that living an upright life was insufficient for salvation unless they could find clear evidence of saving faith within themselves’ (P. Benedict 2002, 519). This resulted in a great deal of documentation of this experience, both in manuals and testimonies. However, the modern approach of having a spirituality rather than a piety has wrong-footed the writers of the Reformed tradition. ‘There is a particularly deeply embedded resistance to spirituality among those within the denominational tradition called Reformed’ (Rice 1991, 9). The focus of spirituality particularly on devotional practices that explore a person’s experience of the divine feels at odds with a tradition that seeks outcomes of saving faith in the life of believers (Cornick 2008, 17). The Reformed tradition is strongly rational in approach and tends to be utilitarian towards spirituality. That is, its prime concern when dealing with a spiritual practice is: ‘Does it produce a more godly behaviour by the practitioner?’ This attitude leads to scepticism over much that is labelled spirituality. Faced with this impasse, two different routes have been taken. Some have produced modern versions of piety (Ramey Jr. and Johnson 1992). Others, more scholarly, have instead tried to produce theological spirituality (Cornick 1998; Rice 1991; Beeke 2006 [2004]). Theology, being a rational exercise, is a place where the Reformed feel they are safe.

This, then, leads to the second option, which is to produce theological accounts of the tradition,

such as the recent one by Michael Allen (2010). Indeed, there is no shortage of material to write a theological account but the exact opposite, too much, and to such an extent that when I have tried to engage with it as a whole it has totally upset the balance of the study. In the 20th century, the Presbyterian Church of England, one strand coming into the URC, produced both John Hick (Obituary: Professor John Hick 2012) and Leslie Newbigin (Beeby 1998).⁶² To give a satisfactory account of Reformed theology would take several years' study; more relevantly, the direct engagement with formal Reformed theology was small within the studied congregations and not widely discussed. I suspect that such an engagement, while interesting in itself, would not actually lead to any greater understanding of what was happening in the congregations.

I therefore needed to find an approach to the tradition that worked within the setting of this thesis. In describing his work on spirituality, David Cornick describes what he is doing as a 'habitus' (Cornick 2008, 18), thus picking up the ideas of Bourdieu in the same way as Bourdieu picks up the language of Bayesian statistics. However, 'habitués' are not static; they are by their nature evolving. With the 'habitus' evolving as generations happen, it should be possible to trace patterns that keep recurring in generation after generation. In this way, I began to create something approaching a Reformed 'genealogy' in the style of Michel Foucault.

As a child of the tradition, I needed to familiarise myself with the aspects of tradition that I took for granted. To do this, I went back to the books that were often read about the tradition in my adolescence. Some of these I read at the time, others just echoed my understanding. There was John McNeill writing on 'the character' of Calvinism (McNeill 1967 [1954]). There was also John Leith who, while acknowledging that the Reformed tradition cannot be clearly defined (Leith 1991, 70), goes on to identify nine motifs that he feels describe its core. These are: the majesty

⁶² Both trained at Westminster College, Cambridge.

and praise of God; the polemic against idolatry; the working out of the divine purpose in history; ethics; a life of holiness; the life of the mind as the service of God; preaching; the organised church and pastoral care; a disciplined life and simplicity (Leith 1991 [1977], 77–80). This creates a thematic structure that is recognisable to a Reformed person, but which draws heavily on theology. It also creates the illusion of a uniform whole. The Reformed tradition is always more diverse than this. It should be noted that many of the themes picked up are those of ‘governmentality’ (Foucault 1991).

There are, however, two ways of describing a tradition; one is to look at what distinguishes it from other things; the other way is to describe things that are typical of it. It is not wrong to describe a cat as a furry animal even though a dog is also a furry animal.

Therefore, I am first going to spend some considerable time looking at the way that ‘governmentality’ and ‘discipline’ have been handled within the Reformed tradition, exploring how they change as technologies with time, while remaining central to the tradition. Then I will explore the relationship that the Reformed Church finds very difficult, that is its relationship to society. This is not exhaustive, but such issues demonstrate the different ways that these work. Finally, I will explore the ways that the tradition keeps everyone in step.

4. ‘Governmentality’ Within the Reformed Tradition

Reformed tradition has often been associated with high standards of personal piety, and associated with these standards comes the accusation of hypocrisy in those who participate. Another reason why many dissenters left the Church of England in 1662 was they did not believe that the Act of Uniformity gave enough scope for clerics to exercise discipline over their members. The need to have a ‘technology’ of control, therefore, has been a particular focus

within the Reformed tradition and within English Reformed Dissent in particular. This section will explore the techniques that have been used to create behavioural compliance.

John Calvin did not make church discipline a mark of the Church, but when reforming the Church after his return to Geneva, he set up the Consistory, a church court. This was a place where church discipline might be enacted. The Consistory was part of the institutional structure of Geneva and as such it had power over all citizens. When it was set up, the city governors also ensured that it was staffed by lay members of the opposition to John Calvin (Naphy 2003 [1994], 77). It functioned much as a modern court does,⁶³ dealing with spiritual misdemeanours (such as naming children after Saints), ministerial grievances and sexual immorality (Naphy 2003 [1994], 53–75). It could not impose a civil penalty; cases that warranted such had to be referred to the magistrates. Its ultimate sanction was excommunication, although it could also require people to make restitution. Indeed much of the claim that Geneva was a theocracy is based on its existence.

However, this model of control is challenged by the Dutch experience in the late 16th century. Holland's struggle for independence from Habsburg overlords and to have a Reformed church had the highest death toll of any Reformation struggle in a European country (P. Benedict 2002, 177). This created a strong linkage between being Reformed and being Dutch. However, when Holland gained independence the Reformed Church wanted high standards of conformity with piety and also had national status where many did not think piety was necessary. In the end, it created a system by which communion was available only to the people who conformed to church discipline, while anyone was welcome to come to the Sunday service of the Word. Excommunication had become the province of the Church and church discipline was now only for those who accepted it.

⁶³ Including keeping detailed court records.

The mixture of a Reformed strand and other strands within English Reformed Dissent meant that the formal judicial approach does not seem to have been widely used in England. There were, rather, two approaches; on one hand, there was Richard Baxter's approach, which involved an intense form of pastoral care discipline whereby the minister catechised whole households (Baxter 2010 [1673]). On the other hand, there was the belief in 'the responsibility to answer for themselves and for their neighbours' (Leith 1991 [1977], 169), which led to approaches that involved discipline by the whole congregation. The way this democratic form of discipline was implemented is little explored in academic literature except with respect to New England Puritanism.⁶⁴ However, in literary works there are portrayals within the wider tradition. One such depiction (in Scotland) happens in *The Maiden's Bequest*, where Annie's uncle is demonstrated to be at fault in front of the devout members of an independent congregation⁶⁵ and then never worships with that congregation again, though this seems due to embarrassment rather than excommunication (G. MacDonald 1988 [1865], 220–224). This shows an approach to discipline where clergy took a pedagogical approach and the whole community determined sanctions if required.

However, not all of the Reformed persuasion originated from the Church of England. Those who remained created a large number of manuals that instruct people on piety (Baxter 1974 [1656]; Henry 1847; Ryle 2010 [1877]). 'While all the Reformed churches encouraged a devotional life of regular prayer, family exercises and Bible reading, the English practical divines of the generation of Greenham, Rogers and Perkins evolved a style of piety that urged upon pious believers a far more complete blueprint for daily working' (P. Benedict 2002, 518). Thus, they

⁶⁴ I assume because this is seen as one of the major influences on the Constitution of the USA.

⁶⁵ Probably Congregational, as George Macdonald was a Congregational Minister although in later years unable to find a congregation due to his liberal views.

created a form of discipline which is primarily located in the individual. This spilled out into English Reformed Dissent.

Meanwhile, in America, the Congregationalists in Massachusetts had made full membership available only to people who could testify to a conversion experience⁶⁶ (Winship 2001, 128). The colonists influenced by Puritanism, however, experimented with systems which meant that full civic participation was available only to those who accepted church discipline, so church discipline was once again linked to civic institutions. This led to similar tensions as those experienced in Holland. Various solutions were tried, including a halfway covenant that allowed such people to have their children baptised but did not allow access to communion (D. D. Hall 2008) and pastoral approaches that gave extra emphasis to the responsibility of women for the religious state of the household (Gerbner 2012).

Jonathan Edwards inherited this struggle when he succeeded his grandfather as the minister to a Northampton Massachusetts Congregation in 1729 (The Jonathan Edwards Centre at Yale University 2012). His response was to develop a style of preaching that was aimed at generating a response within the individual.⁶⁷ His preaching was at the core of the Great Awakening. Those influenced by Jonathan Edwards included George Whitefield. The melding of conversion preaching and the individualised piety of Anglican Puritanism created the conversion experience of Evangelicalism. The system of discipline had become internalised to the individual Christian belonging as a matter of a personal experience and piety.

⁶⁶ Other places referred to “regeneracy”. I suspect, given what follows, this is not a modern conversion experience but the attempt to establish that a person is experiencing sanctification, that is, the struggle towards holiness (Ferguson 1988).

⁶⁷ Although histrionics and volume became the hallmarks of hellfire sermons, Edwards’ only performance was far closer to “The Man in Black” on Radio 4 Extra (Mahoney 2014), in that he had a well-modulated voice, the building was dark and the reliance was almost totally on the words he used to create the atmosphere.

Throughout the centuries, the disciplinary techniques required by the standards of piety that are part of the Reformed tradition, have moved that tradition from one that was based within the community to one located within the individual. This is a simplified account, and the process has not moved so smoothly from one to the other. Rather, in all expressions of the Reformed faith today, there is a tension between the internalised locus of the individual and the communal one. Different parts of the tradition will have a different relationship between these two loci, but they are aware of the tensions between the two.

There is, however, a second tension running through this. This tension is between the boundaries of the church community and its connection with the wider civic institutions. The relationship where the civic and ecclesial institutions have close bonds, such as in 16th century Geneva, contrasts with those situations such as English dissent where there is a clear division between the two. However, in Holland, Puritan Anglicanism and New England Puritans, there is a clear tension between the Church and the surrounding cultural institutions. The result in all these cases is to adapt a form of discipline so as to maintain standards but adapt in other ways. The next section will explore this tension more specifically.

5. Negotiating the Relationship with Society

In the Social Sciences, when things are paired, it is often because they are opposites. So female is seen as the opposite of male or not male. Black is the opposite of white or not white. This is often analysed in depth and theories of ‘otherness’ are formed. What I am going to do here is different. There are tensions within the Reformed tradition that are best described by two themes that exert an antagonistic pull on each other. These tensions are not polar opposites, but quite often they are contrasts in the conceptual domain. However, when there is dispute involving one

of the pairs, the other is also involved. One such tension is experienced in worship between the form Calvin took in Geneva, and the one Zwingli took in Zurich, which is explored by Cornick (Cornick 2012). On one hand, worship is centred on preaching, and on the other there is a reformer of worship who thinks the Eucharist should be celebrated weekly. Equally, Belden Lane explores the nature spirituality that is part of the Reformed tradition, which is surprising given that the Reformed tradition's industrial tendency has led to the exploitation of nature (Lane 2011). However, one tension runs through most discourses within the Reformed tradition, and that is the tension between the Congregation and wider society.

The debate was best characterised in 1951 by H Richard Niebuhr, a minister in the Reformed Church of America, in his book *Christ and Culture*, where he attempts to create a typology of Christian ethical approaches, according to how they connect with the divine, represented by Christ and the world, and represented by Culture. At one extreme he places the 'Christ against Culture', where the Church is seen as having a separate, divinely-ordained morality which stands opposed to the world. This would equate with the sovereignty of the divine on one extreme within theology (Niebuhr 2001 [1951], xliii). At the other extreme he has 'Christ through Culture', which is seen as something that the church relates to, that Christ is to be sought as part of society (Niebuhr 2001 [1951], xlv). If this tension was in parts of the tradition that, like the United Reformed Church, have a heritage which includes some Anabaptist inheritance, it might be thought to be a Reformed-Anabaptist tendency. However, this tension has been a major player in the Reformed tradition in America during the 20th century. In the 1920s and 30s the Presbyterian Church in America split over it; the leader, J. Gresham Machen, was concerned with the increasing liberalism that was being taught at Princeton Seminary (Hart and Muether 2002, 25) and talked of the separateness of Church and the world. This led eventually to the formation of

the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

In a congregation that took the ‘Christ against Culture’ approach, a congregation would prefer to adopt forms that see Culture as fallen and the Church as an alternative community. It would tend to be quite pietistic but, oddly enough, there exists a radical liberal form where the alternative lifestyle would include practices frowned upon by the surrounding society, such as pacifism and vegetarianism. Theologically there is the extremely strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God. Thus, there are theologians like Karl Barth who emphasise the limited nature of humanity; that we are saved by God’s grace and not through our own action. The doctrine of total depravity speaks to this. Leith chooses as his first motif ‘The majesty and praise of God’ (Leith 1991 [1977], 70–73). It has an effect on other spheres, too. A congregation with these emphases will tend to stick to singing the psalms and often have a strong emphasis on preaching. There are no Seeker-Friendly churches in congregations that favour this idea of the church, as integrating of popular music into worship would be to compromise with the surrounding culture. It may well also tend to have closed communion. More recently, it would be seen in the work of Leslie Newbigin (Bevans 2002 [1992], 117–118; Newbigin 1991). The social outreach practices would tend to be towards addressing the individual need and maybe focused on the community or limited to other Christians. Likewise they often have a very high standard of personal conduct expected of members. This strand tends to be stronger when the Reformed tradition is in its dissenting form, where the role of the Church is commonly understood to be prophetic.

A congregation that took the ‘Christ through Culture’ approach would tend to emphasise the action of God in the world working for the salvation for all. There tends to be far more emphasis on engagement with the wider community and with other political and social institutions. Liturgically the emphasis is on the fulfilment of humanity through worship with the adoption of

cultural forms of worship. This would accord with the idea that humans were created to worship God (Westminster Shorter Catechism 1647), but is equally the theme of Schleiermacher's theology, where the enlightened modern person is not just knowledgeable about the arts and sciences but is also a religious person (Schleiermacher 2010 [1893]): the focus of the religious experience is changed to that of humanity. Equally, a concern about how moral conduct should be taught within modern society is part of this goal. The emphasis turns as much towards working through the social organisation of society as towards a better society. This view is strongest when the Reformed Church is dominant within society and sees the Church's role as priestly.

It should be noted that neither stance falls neatly into what, in other traditions, are called 'liberal' or 'conservative' positions, although it is probably pretty accurate to present this dynamic that is used to characterise those positions within the Reformed tradition. Most Reformed congregations have elements of both types of congregation outlined above. Richard Niebuhr himself favoured a middle type of ethical system between these two extreme ones, (which he called that of paradox (Niebuhr 2001 [1951], li). However, these require the ability to balance the two focuses of the tension, a skill that few amongst the Reformed have. Most Reformed groups tend to favour one of the two pairs while accepting elements of the other. That is, individually, as a congregation, denomination or the whole tradition, there is always a preference towards one emphasis or the other.

However, within any group it is quite easy to find subgroups or individuals who are drawn towards the other emphasis. As both emphases are valid in themselves, what tends to happen is that an alternative clique forms that resists the direction in which the group as a whole is travelling. If the group ignores the resistance of the clique, then quite often a split occurs, with

part of the group becoming more strongly in favour of the favoured option while the clique moves towards the other emphasis. Fraser MacDonald, in his research on the Conservative Presbyterians in the Outer Hebrides (F. MacDonald 2002), observed such a split where the conservative members left and only after that occurred, the practice of having coffee after church started. However, quite often the actual tensions between the sub-group and the main group survive for years without splitting the congregation. The result is that each congregation feels it has its own subculture. No URC congregation I have ever known has thought of itself as central to the tradition, they all maintain they are exceptional.

Thus, we have a tension that runs through the whole of the tradition and manifests itself in many parts of congregational life; not just theology, but also ethics and worship. Congregations tend to choose to concentrate on one focus, but every so often a switch can happen, such as the adoption of more culturally normative styles of music within worship among more conservative congregations, as described by Hart and Muether (2002, 25–26). The tension between the two and the fact that congregations rarely manage to stay solely within one camp has resulted in turbulence within the tradition. Given that the tradition also has a high level of individualism, the question is not why do congregations differ, but how do they keep in step.

6. Keeping in Step

There are three aspects that work to create a coordinated flow through the tradition despite there being no central authority. The first two are methods that allow the spread and incorporation of ideas into the tradition. These are the educated ministry and the use of written text as media for both apologetics and devotional work. The final aspect is the way congregations build relationships with other congregations.

Firstly, there is the obvious one: the Reformed tradition has always valued an educated ministry (P. Benedict 2002, 436–451). This has meant that there have always been methods of training ministers. Even in times of persecution in England, when the Church could not support colleges, senior ministers ran dissenting academies, which for a fee trained men for the ministry. Typical of people who did this was Philip Doddridge, who was described as an educator and minister (A. Clifford 2001). Thus, when toleration came, there sprung up many dissenting academies. In order to support ministerial students, these quite often also took lay students, providing higher education for the sons of nonconformists who did not have access to Oxford and Cambridge (Mercer 2001, 41). These eventually amalgamated to become training colleges and/or participated in universities, particularly those of rational dissent.⁶⁸ This drew ministers, in their training, into contact with other ministers of the tradition. Thus, contact with the tradition for the minister of any congregation is in part from their training in college and also from interaction with fellow ministers.

Secondly, the Reformed is a tradition of the printed text. The Reformation is often closely linked with writing and publishing. Sometimes, Gutenberg's development of the printing press is held as one of the instigators for the Reformation, as it allowed people to own Bibles in the vernacular. However, the Reformed tradition has never been solely about the Bible. John Calvin wrote his *Institutes of Christian Religion* to enable people to read the Bible with an understanding of its setting. It was written in Latin, but almost immediately he produced a French translation. Equally, Calvin wrote a phenomenal number of letters, seeing it as part of his pastoral responsibility (McKee 2001, 33–34). The Puritans spread their teaching as much through writing and printing as through lectures (P. Benedict 2002, 521). Devotional texts have existed within the tradition since

⁶⁸ Harris Manchester College is the direct descendent of at least one of these academies (Harris Manchester College 2013).

early days (McKee 2001, 86). The printing of sermons, so that people who were not there could read them, was a common practice. The Scots do seem to have taught children to read far earlier than the English; intriguingly, they taught them to read and not to write (P. Benedict 2002, 515). Mary Jones, who inspired the founding of the Bible Society, was a Welsh Congregationalist. Ministers traditionally collected the writings of other divines. There was a library in Northern College (URC and Congregational), in the days when it was on College Road in Whalley Range, containing the books of one of the founders, Thomas Raffles, (Hartwell, Hyde, and Pevsner 2004, Lancashire:483); the walls were lined from floor to ceiling with bookcases containing numerous large, heavy volumes. The use of the printed word, rather than the spoken, allowed the movement of ideas to flow easily within the tradition.

Thirdly, congregations also almost always had other congregations they were close to. Some of these would be in neighbouring churches. Quite often, these would be nearby Nonconformists as well as the neighbouring URC, especially for those from a Congregational background. Until recently, there was more caution around associating with Anglicans or Roman Catholics. However, it would also include churches with what we might call family connections, that is, connections with those congregations which either they planted or which planted them. Equally, this would include congregations that shared a distinctive characteristic: former Presbyterian churches related to other former Presbyterian churches and evangelical churches to other evangelical churches, etc. This network provides a way for congregations to position themselves, and they tend to be influenced by changes that are happening in other congregations. It is a little as if the congregations within the tradition are a massive flock of birds. Each congregation seeks to maintain its place in relation to the congregations around it, so its moves seem coordinated, even though there is no central guidance.

7. Reviewing the Tradition in the Light of Theory

This is not a complete account of the tradition, rather, a couple of features relevant to this thesis are described. These features do not necessarily even sit tidily together, and I have given only a brief outline of each. This reflects the nature of the tradition in its multi-stranded complexity.

In considering the tradition, I am writing about the dimension of doxy and praxis. Firstly, the way I have defined the tradition means that I am in some ways favouring praxis over the doxy; many of the other explorations of the Reformed tradition have concentrated on the doxy. To this extent, I am talking about a tradition in a manner that portrays it as close to Southwold's understanding of instrumentalism (Southwold 1983, 181–213). I could not write an account of the tradition without looking at the 'doxy' part, but it is there as part of the tradition, not as the whole tradition. This is deliberate; there are accounts that focus solely on the doxy part, but they have limited use for this study. So in many ways, this tends more towards Connerton's understanding of collective memory (1989) than those of Halbwachs (1992 [1952]) and Wertsch (2002). Equally, Mauss (1973 [1935]) and Foucault (1987 [1984], 2:14–24; Rose 1996, 131) are closer in this dimension than Althusser (2006 [1970]) or Weber (2004 [1918]) in their theorising. This is my decision.

Max Weber's work on the Protestant work ethic deals with the tradition within which this thesis is based. It would not be surprising if his theorising worked for this tradition. However, when Peter Benedict explores whether there is such a thing as a clearly Reformed person created by the Reformed tradition (P. Benedict 2002), he comes to the conclusion that though there are some areas that seem to be initially indicative, yet nothing can, in the end, be unequivocally attributed to the tradition. Given my exploration above, this hardly seems surprising. Perhaps Weber and Benedict are looking for too much, certainly within Reformed Dissent: the surprise is how much

is shared rather than that congregations differ.

The tradition is strongly polyvocal; it has several interwoven strands and is always reassessing itself. Within Reformed Dissent, there is never a single discourse in action; it is always working, responding to other discourses (the title uses both ‘Reformed’ and ‘Dissent’ which are reactive adjectives). In this manner, it is an ‘open’ tradition, as Leith puts it (Leith 1991 [1977], 28–31). Also, the tradition normally has turbulence at some level, partly due to the tension between congregation and society and the way this creates oscillation. Thus, eternal verities are provisional within the tradition. The Reformed tradition, with its oft-quoted motto *‘ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei,’*⁶⁹ is not going to sit easily within any larger framework. Participation in English Reformed Dissent does tend to inculcate certain characteristics within individuals. What is not sure is that there is a cohesive enough entity for this to be genuinely called an ‘idea’, and it is not clear that it functions as an ‘idea’ in creating action that is compliant with the ‘ideology’. This would lead to the adoption of approaches more akin to that of Werstch; that individuals are not ‘interpellated’ by the tradition, but that the tradition never speaks with a single voice. My portrayal gives a number of motifs, strands or currents within the tradition that interweave to create a cloth, but no pattern is ever repeated exactly.

Even worse would be to suggest, via Althusser, that it reflects a discourse more overarching than the tradition. In dissenting tradition, it is a huge leap to suggest it ‘interpellates’ people consistently with an external ideological stance. The tradition struggles with its relationship with the surrounding culture. So it sits uneasily within it, providing a twist on the ideological stance of society.

⁶⁹ When translated, this becomes something like ‘The church reformed and always being reformed by the word of God’.

Finally, let us consider the axis from the ahistoric to the historic tradition. All traditions should be historical to some extent: what is a surprise is the extent to which this historicism is not conscious but subconscious. The history can be told, indeed at times I have done this, but for the most part it is largely confined to scholarly works. However, patterns do seem to repeat themselves multiple times; thus there are oscillating themes that seem to drive the tradition forward. These, paired with the methods of creating conformity, act to reproduce the disputes and controversies again and again in the history of the tradition. At any point, an individual may well experience the tradition almost ahistorically; maybe as Weber describes it (2004 [1918]). However, there is a genealogy of ways in which individuals have dealt with the repeating themes within the tradition.

The tradition is restless and tangled; it has the binary pairs that twist it first one way and then another. I also recognise that, while I have concentrated on English Reformed Dissent, I have at times had to include information from related traditions; this is due to the nature of the tradition and the fact that, in many ways, it is an open tradition. There are techniques that create a cohesive form to the tradition; these include methods of self-discipline and communication between congregations. As such, the Reformed tradition should be recognised as one current flowing among others. This, therefore, is an incomplete *bricolage* of the tradition that may provide some perspective in the chapters that follow. Given this limited description, the tradition probably has a higher emphasis on doxy than many other religious traditions, but it still involves a praxis. Also, the tradition is highly polyvocal with many often discordant strands, but its historical nature is a system of ideas and practices that seem to reproduce themselves down the generations rather than a systematic historical continuation of the tradition.

In this chapter, I have provided a description of the Reformed tradition that will enable me to

explore how it is enacted within the local congregations. Given the nature of tradition, the practices that I will be looking at will not be those that concentrate on a core that makes them Reformed. Rather, it is how the local congregations negotiate the boundaries that are required by the nature of Reformed governmentality and any of the various couplings that are in play.

Location

8. Introduction

Both congregations had buildings, and around the buildings was where I most often observed the members behaving as belonging to the congregations. That is not to say they did not belong at other times and places, but that this was the place where the belonging was most evident. Therefore, considering the environment around the congregation seems a natural place to start this exploration.

Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]) argues for a model that is a little like a knot: there are two different aspects of space like pieces of string. There is the 'representation of space', which is the dominant conceptual framework by which those in power conceive space. These include published maps, planning laws and the architect's plan: legally backed items that establish constraining structure and thus provide an ideological understanding of space (Lefebvre 1991 [1974], 38). Then there are the 'representational spaces' which are the immanent expression within the space, the colonisation of the space by the people who pass through it (Lefebvre 1991 [1974], 39). These two pieces of string reflect the ethnographic distinction between what people say should happen and what does happen. However, two pieces of string do not constitute a knot; it still has to be tied. The tying of the knot is what Lefebvre calls 'spatial practices' that are 'dialectical interaction' (Lefebvre 1991 [1974], 38). The 'spatial practices' negotiate the balance between the 'representations of space' and the 'representational spaces' to create a whole. However, Lefebvre seemingly imagines that there is one 'representation of space' that is unique.. The manifestation of these discourses does not support a singular dominant discourse. Rather,

the various forms of ‘representations of space’ tend to differ from each other; there are disparate discourses competing for dominance, just as there are within the ‘spatial representation’ and ‘spatial practices’.

This chapter explores the ‘spatial practices’ that are part of how the congregations interact in the spatial area where they are. To talk about those ‘spatial practices’, one has to use indirectly both the frameworks and the ways spaces are re-presented. These factors construct the settings in which the practices take place, but it is the interaction, the lived experience of place, and how the congregations attempt to control it, that is of interest. They are there, almost like the pervading ‘*habitués*’ as described by Bourdieu (1977 [1972], 72–95), and restrict what happens.

Time and space are interconnected. When Saussure decided that language could be viewed as stationary if one looked for a short enough time, he was at odds with the work of Francesco Bonaventura de Cavalieri, Pierre de Fermat, James Gregory and Isaac Newton. The development of calculus had shown that, regardless of how short the time interval of focus, moving objects were still moving (Merzbach and Boyer 2011 [1968], 303, 332-3, 354, 363-364). Thus, though space-time may be a formalised system of Descartes, science never separated space from time. Science has, for a long time, seen statics as a special case; that is, what happens when objects have the same velocity within the same space. This is because the measurement of velocity is always relative.⁷⁰ As Doreen Massey points out, time and places tend to drift; we might see a place as an occurrence of a conjunction of trajectories (Massey 2005, 139); this conjunction arises out of previous conjunctions and is itself the precursor of others. Congregations in such a model are like eddies in a stream; each created by the flow of culture and people in the space. Hence, the

⁷⁰ Relative velocity dates back at least to Galileo Galilei (Fowler 2009). It is always measured with respect to something else which is arbitrarily set as still (usually the observer).

existence of a congregation depends on their finding an ecological niche that they can exploit in which to survive (Eisland 2000) and equally, in filling the niche the congregation participates in the creation of the social context through 'spatial practices'. This continual interaction between the setting and the congregation is part of the forces that shape the place where the congregation exists. However, in the Methodology I mentioned that I was using fluid dynamics as a metaphor, so I need first to explore that further.

9. Signs of Flow

I might say that congregations are flowing, but what are the implications of that? A flow is a dynamic system that changes with respect to time and is not in a constant state (Ricklefs, Harte and Shiell 2007). Mapping things over time and showing how they moved is a clear way to show that flow is a reasonable metaphor for what is going on. However, looking at two particular contexts for a short period of time, while some change does happen, the ability to draw diagrams and velocity will require conjecture from sources outside the situation. Therefore, to a certain extent I need to look at other properties for signs of flow.

If we are standing at the edge of flows, we can distinguish two types of flow. A smooth or laminar flow is one moving in a direction in an orderly manner. A turbulent flow has whirlpools and eddies; thus the path of a single particle may not be in the bearing of the overall flow. At the molecular level, a smooth flow is where the relationships between the particles in the flow are stronger than the connections to the surroundings. Thus, the momentum of the flow dominates the direction of flow of the particles. Turbulence is a result of particles in the flow being influenced by particles in other flows which have different velocities. So, within a congregation, while we would expect things to be smooth, at some level there will instead be places of

turbulence.

Also, fluid dynamics, the analysis of flow, is one area that exhibits what scientists call chaotic behaviour. The simplest of approaches in mathematics to fluid dynamics produces linear systems, but it makes unwarranted assumptions (Acheson 1997, 119). Chaotic behaviour is dealt with by non-linear systems; in these, there is often feedback which takes small discrepancies and magnifies them. Chaotic systems are thus not random; they are still deterministic, but they are not predictable. This means that they have specific properties. Among those properties is that complexity is self-similarity. That is, it looks similar at different scales (Rickles, Hawe and Shiell 2007, 934). The result is something like a Russian doll, where the closer we look the more detail we see.

Therefore in looking at the location of the congregations, I should be able to see evidence of laminar and turbulent flows that happen on a number of different scales. Thus, I will start by exploring the site of the church building and work inwards.

10. Getting to the Church

I am out and on the main road to Edgerton again, over northern moors, with the heather starting to shoot after the frosts of winter. I make the slow descent to Edgerton, along the road with the early flowering broom brightening the edges and the blue haze of the town ahead.

At the Little Chef roundabout, I turn right into the housing estate and my pace slows as I make my way through the traffic of parents dropping their kids at the rugby

ground. While waiting for a car to come down the road, I check my watch and see I am still early. As I pull free of the crush, I see a house with a banner saying 'Welcome home from Helmand, Dave!', bold Union Jack balloons on its gate, and beer bottles in the gutter. The road widens and the houses step back as I reach the Marlsett Road. There I turn right and people are everywhere. A tall, upright lady helps a bowed gentleman from a car; another couple of ladies cross the road arm in arm. A couple of cars turn right into an opening that leads to the church car park. A car pulls out of a space, and I park.

As I cross the road diagonally towards the main entrance to the church grounds, I see a loose gaggle of men with a couple of young lads in scout uniform chatting. Quite a few of the men are smoking cigarettes. I reach the blue, wrought-iron gate intending to walk down the path to the doors when Carol, the church secretary, wearing a patchwork jacket made of Indian fabrics in rich reds and browns, approaches from the other direction and waves. So I stop and wait. She says:

"David's coming later with Timothy. Sue heard yesterday his dad was coming home from Afghanistan for Easter and Timothy would not settle last night."

In the entrance below the rainbow-coloured welcome sign, Esther hands out service sheets. Her hair is pale gold as it catches the early spring sunlight. She and

Donald, her husband, are talking with tall Angus, a retired Scottish Baptist minister and his petite wife Sylvia, but they make their way into the main meeting-hall⁷¹ before we get there.

Carol stops to chat with Esther about a children's competition that Synod are putting on. I go through the main meeting-hall doors. Diane is moving one of the blue comfy seats so that her mum can sit on it rather than the wooden chairs. Daniel, the minister, is fussing with the projector trying to sort out the cables. He moves the lectern slightly more to the right of the dais, so he can move the projection trolley further away from the pale blue wall to get a bigger image.

Finally, as Diane has her mother settled, I slip into the row in front, carefully leaving seats for Heather and her friend to sit. As I settle down, Pauline, Daniel's wife, comes through from the corridor that leads to the kitchen carrying a tea urn. This is

Andrew: We had a bigger congregation than we have ever had since and more activities
We had a great many people who came into Edgerton quite a number of doctors but we had a lot of people in the mining industry who'd gone into it in Scotland and then it was promotion to come to Edgerton but that was only one stage in the promotions they were to get and moved on again and seemed to be in Edgerton where they were having their children

Isabel: Ah yes, middle management for the mines and when they got to upper management they moved out again.

*Andrew and Isabel (St Andrew's Edgerton
2b:127-143,)*

convenient, as there will be refreshments after worship, and my mouth is already feeling

⁷¹ I am using a historical term for the room where the main act of worship in the week is created. This is not a term the members would have used. It was normally referred to as 'the church' but that could be ambiguous in this thesis.

dry.

That account is typical of a journey to St Andrew's, Edgerton on a Sunday morning during the two years I worshipped there. It characterises where the church buildings are. Both the congregations were a decent half an hour's drive from where I lived. St Andrew's, Edgerton and Ulverstane are in the middle of

I was made redundant again in 1985
I think it was.
Which was a bit of a shock,
but it so happened
God works in mysterious ways-
and it worked out well
because from then on,
Margaret was becoming more
and more incapacitated.
Just before I was made redundant,
I was having to get her some sandwiches
at dinnertime before I went out
because she lost the use of her hands pretty well.

Joseph (Ulverstane 6a:623-632)

England. They are in towns, so not rural, but they equally are not in cities. They are built in the post-war suburbs. St Andrew's, Edgerton has its origin some eighty years ago (interwar), while Ulverstane's is about fifty years ago (post-war). They were built near to roundabouts. However, from there on, the differences between the locations seem to be clearer than the similarities. Edgerton is post-industrial and always had a wider economic base, as originally it had been a market town. Edgerton's industry included a manufacturer of hygiene products, potteries and tailors as well as heavy industry. Thus, de-industrialisation hit it in stages and, having recreated itself from market town to industrial town, it is now doing it again, as a dormitory town for the surrounding cities.

For Hartlethorpe, the town in which Ulverstane is situated, de-industrialisation happened as a single blow. It had a few large employers that all worked in a single industry; the collapse of that industry in the late 1970s and early 1980s had had a devastating effect on the local economy. The statistics for the local area still show high levels of disability benefit in the housing around Ulverstane, which was middle class, as well as high rates of unemployment. Views rooted in

Hartlethorpe's industrial past, could still be occasionally heard in congregational life. Roger, a lay preacher and study group leader, often expressed the view that many young adults would be better off gaining an apprenticeship rather than going to university.

The roundabouts contrasted in the opposite direction. The one by St Andrew's, Edgerton was small but did have a pub beside it. The local shop-garage was derelict, with For Sale notices up during all the time I attended there. The minister, Daniel, commented about not having a local

You see we are not in a community
You see we have got this bit of the estate
and then you have the council houses on Stirling Rd
and part of Rosewood Ave and Derwent View
all that area
so you have two lots of different people
and it just does not work
the church is in the wrong place
but I suppose this was a good place when it was first built
cause Stirling Rd and and Rosewood Ave
were not built
well it was just built
Yes they were when that church was built in '55
they would have been built then
after the war houses.
Derwent View and up that way
were before the way.

Doreen (St Andrews Edgerton, 12:417-432)

community when talking about his ministry. The roundabout near Ulverstane was large; it had several shops including banks, takeaways and a chemist. The only real omission was that there was no supermarket. There was a pub next to the church building and on the corner opposite was a health centre. Thus, the congregational buildings had both similarities and differences.

Both congregations had a variety of other buildings as well as the main meeting-hall, spread out over a considerable amount of land which included a good-sized car-park. Both main meeting-halls were built after the war. St Andrew's, Edgerton in the 1950s and Ulverstane's main meeting-hall dated from the 1970s. However, both congregations had since then built extra halls and a manse within the grounds owned by the congregation.

Newtonian space is often stated to be 'value-neutral';⁷² that is, there is within the model of Newtonian spatial dimensions no reason to prefer one point over another. However, to most people, space is not of such constant value. The location of the congregations

Ulverstone Church,
started as a Sunday school,
then until the parents
somebody said,
"We want a service."
And got the services,
"We want to become a church."
Joseph (Ulverstone 6a:888-892)

has implications for the way the congregations understand themselves. The position of the buildings is, in the conceptual workings of Mike Crang (1998, 108–119), both a space and a place; that is, the buildings have values and relationships that are not entirely spatially defined. Thus, space is made up of a patchwork of places with different characters. Each of these places has its own boundaries, and we recognise various types of patches. The place where the buildings were built mattered to the congregations. Though the churches on the surface looked as if located in similar areas, yet the subtle configuration of the site reflected the congregation's identity.

If this is the case, then the place has value systems. Some of this is straightforward: being situated in suburbia, they were both middle class. That a considerable amount of both their sites was given over to parking and that they are both situated close

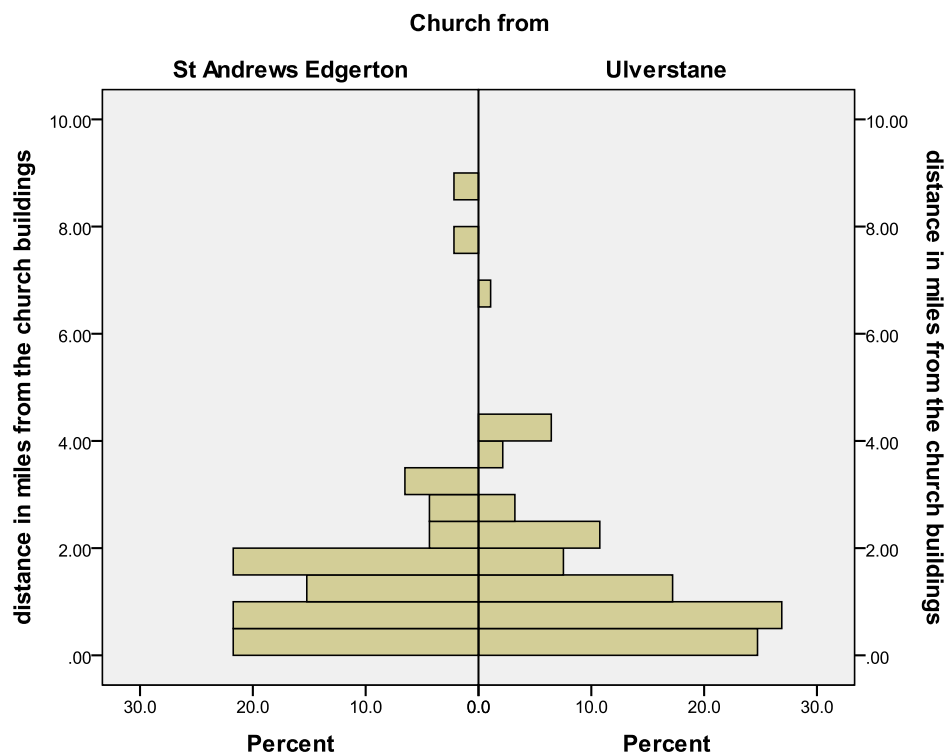
We are only URC by name
When I first started there was a lot of Scottish members
There were at least eight or nine Doctors
whereas a dozen teachers at central Methodist
The doctors were all Scottish
Except Dr Black, Dr Martin and Dr McLean
who were Irish.
It was the Presbyterian connection.
The only difference now is
they have changed the hymn book
because the other hymn book was lovely.
There are a few of the hymns
from the Presbyterian Hymnal.
Grace (St Andrew's Edgerton 11:161-170)

to a roundabout increased the accessibility of the buildings by car. Thus, when choosing the site, car travel must have played a role. Ulverstone was planted initially as a Sunday School shortly

⁷² It depends what you mean by neutral. If you mean distances do not change depending whether they are associated with social value, then that is true. If you mean all space is equal then the statement is not true. The whole point of Newtonian space is that you can map these values onto it. For instance, the mappings of electromagnetic force fields.

after the war, when two established Congregational churches noted the development of a young community in Southedge with many young families. St Andrew's, Edgerton was formed as a place where Presbyterian worship was provided for Scots around Edgerton and other locals interested in this form of Christianity. The idea was to provide somewhere closer to Edgerton than the nearby city, so enabling people to attend worship more regularly. Thus, whereas St Andrew's, Edgerton was planted so that people interested in its style of worship could come from the wider area, Ulverstone was planted for people around its buildings. However the planting church members were travelling to the buildings, and they would need parking particularly on a Sunday.

Figure 6



Population Pyramid Graph Comparing the Distance Members Lived from the Church Buildings within the Two Congregations

This showed in the different stories I heard in the congregation; there were people attracted to

Ulverstane by the visible gathering of people at the church buildings. St Andrew's, Edgerton maintained that its members travelled further to get to worship than in other URCs, which did not have the Presbyterian heritage. To back this up, they would typically cite Angus and Sylvia, who lived about seven miles away. That the church secretary, Carol, and her husband David, travelled in further (almost nine miles) was largely overlooked by the congregation. On the other hand, members at Ulverstane would often say they attended because it was a local church. It seemed, therefore, quite possible that St Andrew's, Edgerton members were travelling further.

Both congregations had directories of members with postcodes; and as Ordnance Survey publishes Northings and Eastings for all postcodes (Ordnance Survey 2011), it was possible to work out approximate distances travelled (See Figure 6). The estimated difference in average distance between the two congregations was 0.058⁷³ miles, and the distribution of distances was not significantly different

It is also our nearest URC.
 We tried going to church locally
 Hazelton had a URC
 but it was on its last legs
 the building was appalling
 There was no future in the place.
 It packed up more or less as we came here
 very shortly afterwards.
 The Methodist is in the village here
 and that really is not much doing
 We went to the Parish church which here is Martinbrook
 and it is in no village.
 What was Old Martinbrook
 which is pretty much up and gone
 There was a very nice vicar there Eric somebody,
 can't remember what his name was.
 Eric.
 Very down to earth
 good sermon
 very welcoming
 communion no problem
 and we were happy there.
 We also tried Whittingford parish church
 and found that was a bit like the Methodist church
 and then the Bishop decided to haul this vicar out of here
 and plonk him somewhere else much against his will.

David (St Andrew's Edgerton 9:40-65)

(Kolomogorov-Smirnoff=0.622, p=0.833).⁷⁴ The majority of members lived fewer than two miles from the congregational buildings (79% St Andrew's, Edgerton and 77% Ulverstane). Clearly the

⁷³ 95% confidence interval is from -0.268 to 0.388 miles.

⁷⁴ I removed two distant addresses from Ulverstane. One was someone who lived too far away to be an active member and the other was a couple who were ministers in a church elsewhere. These would have made Ulverstane's average distance greater.

narrative around about travelling to church did not match reality.

However, stories can also be indicative of how a congregation understands its identity. James Hopewell talks of the stories people tell about their congregation's life

I have wondered whether we have the foresight that those who founded our church back in 1930s who saw there was going to be a church. It was twenty odd years later before a church was there but the foundations had been put in place. I have sort of said that. A third of the church lives beyond the Old Taddington Roundabout. There's sort of getting on to double figures coming from Rodwell. There is a little group that come from Westcarr. There is Tinkerthorp . I went to the directory and looked where the address were; I got about sixty people who live West of Grindsett Oak.

Norman (Ulverstone 9:752-763)

(Hopewell 1988 [1987]) and seeks a definitive one. While there are stories in congregational life, I have not found a single story, but the story about travelling to worship at St Andrew's Edgerton reflected the way the congregation felt about the buildings and the way they understood the buildings. At St Andrew's, Edgerton, the premises were a place like an inn or caravanserai; that is, a place where it is safe to stay for a time in your journey, a place to meet other travellers. The Church was still, even though the people flowed around it as they progressed along their journey. Churches were created at set points, and one journeyed to one's chosen one. If there were many people who had to travel long distances to attend, then a new church was formed in the gap. With Ulverstone, the image was that of the central meeting tent of a moving community, maybe a tabernacle, even though it was built in bricks and mortar. The existing buildings were just the site which was convenient at present, just as the one at the city centre had been. There was talk while I was there as to whether they needed to think of planting another congregation further out.

The differences, though clearly working on a shared understanding of being a travelling people, had different emphases. While St Andrew's saw members as travelling in to get to St Andrew's and the buildings as a place where they met by mutual agreement, Ulverstone saw the congregation as living around the buildings and coming to a central place in the midst of their

dwellings. The Congregation had chosen its site to be convenient for members, and if it proved that another site was better in the future, it would move to that site.

Although the physical place is perhaps the most concrete of contexts for the congregation, yet the spatial context was understood through the narrative held by the congregations. Both congregations had developed consistent ways of thinking themselves as on the move with a building in a fixed location. However, while for Ulverstane the buildings moved with the membership, at St Andrew's the buildings were nearby places of refuge at this time in members' lives. Though the church buildings are in particular contexts, the congregations' use of narrative changes the way they understand that position. Thus, two fairly similar locations were understood in very different ways by the congregations.

11 . Crossing the Boundaries

Although both congregations had large car parks, there was little similarity between them. While at St Andrew's, Edgerton the car park is tucked behind the building, Ulverstane's car park is in front of the main meeting-hall and visible from the road. So when one attends the church, the first thing one sees is the car park

On a crisp spring morning, I pick up the Fiesta to go to Ulverstane. Unfortunately, there are road works at the motorway roundabout causing queues, but as I am running early, I am unworried.

However, as I start to turn off the Raven Arms roundabout to Ulverstane, I notice that there seem to be several cars going into the car park. As I drive past the front of

the car park I also realise it is pretty full, so, instead of turning in at the entrance to the car park, I turn right into the tree-shaded car park at the health centre. A white Corsa follows my Fiesta into the car park, and we take two of the eight empty spaces. As I get out of my car, Sam appears from the Corsa.

“Took a hint from you when I saw you turn in here.”

I notice as we cross over the road and walk across to the church entrance; it is clear that people are still trying to find parking in the car park. Also despite the spring chill, there is a group of people who congregate around the flowering cherry tree, rather than going into the buildings. They are smartly dressed, but I do not recognise any of them. Sam says,

“I know I should be glad that the church is full but, when we never see the christening party again, I can’t help being somewhat miffed.”

I nod in agreement, knowing there had been occasions when I would have wanted a parking space closer to the buildings.

People seem to like boundaries, the ability to say this is ‘x’ and that is ‘not x’; to know when a situation applies and when it does not seem to be inherent in human thinking. We tend to see boundaries as fixed and determined. However, Fredrik Barth (1998 [1969]) argues quite strongly that groups of people spend a lot of energy sustaining the boundaries that determine who they are. Thus, boundaries are the characteristic marks of who belongs and who does not. The

boundary at St Andrew's was clearly marked and acknowledged with high walls and fences. Thus, the Scouts' fathers gathered outside the church property in the previous story. At Ulverstone, as the car-park functioned as overflow parking for the local health centre, almost everyone in the area used it at one time or another. Thus, the wall was not acknowledged; they already had security monitoring to prevent local young people gathering in the car park late in the evening. Rather, the boundary was the buildings' entrance; local people were happier to gather on the grass than inside the buildings.

The use of the car-park by local people was accepted by the congregation until the doctors decided to expand their premises at the expense of their car-park. This caused additional demand on the church car-park and led to complaints to Church Meeting⁷⁵. This prompted two responses. Firstly, the church spent an inordinate amount of time trying to sort out the problem. The congregation drew the process out and, instead of concentrating on how to make sure there was parking for people hiring the church buildings, they framed it as a dispute over territory. This led to them installing meters in the car park. This happened despite the idea originally being unpalatable, and unfortunately it did not sort the original complaint. The meters were symbolic, as the charges were minimal. To this extent, the behaviour is in line with Barth's ideas and quite clearly the congregation perceived a need to demonstrate its ownership of the car park against what they saw as an incursion by others.

Some of the church meetings recently have been like the whole thing with the car park. Whatever you think about it or not they have dominated and they should not have dominated. It also gives a martyr complex: they are frightened about the church but instead of digging deeper we have looked elsewhere.

Samuel (Ulverstone 12:790-797)

Secondly, the congregation framed the debate as 'them' (Health Centre) and 'us' (Congregation).

⁷⁵ See Appendix D

The intriguing thing was that the ‘them’ was not the local community, who almost certainly were the people parking their cars in the car park, but the medical centre. A survey they carried out made it clear that the medical centre visitors were a significant portion of those using the car park and the initial solution was to ask the medical centre to pay a rent for their use of the car park, but the medical centre refused. Members recalled a previous occasion when collaboration with a local GP had gone sour, which intensified the perceived threat from the medical centre. Finally, when they implemented the metering, the complaints from the local residents were only accepted if they came through the appropriate channels. However, there was no way for an outsider to find out about those channels. Thus, the congregation avoided hearing messages that did not fit with its discourse.

When defining something, although marking the boundary is critical, it is also necessary to understand what is ‘not x’. The prime concept, therefore, is the relationship between self and other that has attracted theorists at least as far back as Freud. Part of Freud’s theory of the self depends on the child’s realisation of her separateness from the mother. There is no simple negotiation of this boundary; the child slowly, through the experience of anxiety, comes to know itself as separate from the parent (Klein 1997 [1932], 116). This process has been theorised in many ways. Perhaps it is too strong to suggest that the medical centre became a transitional object (Winnicott 2005 [1971], 1–34), but it does act as a synecdoche for the people who used the car park. Thus, the congregation focuses on its separation from the health centre which, similar to the congregation, is an institution and has established boundaries. The focus on another institution enables the congregation to overlook the more nebulous relationship with local residents who have come to see the car park as freely available.

The problem is that the division of a boundary into ‘x’ and ‘not x’ is a simplification of what can

be a hugely complex interaction. Lacan (Lacan 2006 [1949]; Lacan 2006 [1953]) points out that, in creating such a division, some of the essential is lost from the reality. This he also terms 'other' and yet, in some aspects, it is clearly distinct from the other that is outside of the boundary. This sense of 'other space' as a problematic space against which you define your own space is also picked up by Homi Bhabha (Bhabha 2004a [1994], 57–93)(Bhabha 2004a [1994], 57–93)(Bhabha 2004a [1994], 57–93), who sees the colonialism of Western culture as creating a third space by the interaction of the discourses of 'East' and 'West'; that is it is neither one nor the other but a space significantly different from either. This differs from the 'Third Space' as defined by Oldenburg (Oldenburg 1999 [1997], 16) whose use is explored in the next section. The boundaries are in a state of flux as different perspectives struggle over where they are drawn; thus they evolve and develop as conflicts of interest arise. This constant renegotiating means that boundaries are often unstable, and there is regular turbulence.

However, the story at the start of these sections draws on an entirely different concept of who the antagonists were. The congregation see the adversary as the baptismal party who were at the worship that Sunday. It was, as was often the case at Ulverstone, an extended family from Upper Ulverstone. Ulverstone URC was actually in the suburb of Southedge. Upper Ulverstone was north towards the town centre; a couple of miles up the Raven Arms Road and a much more deprived area. Upper Ulverstone was the other space that Ulverstone URC defined itself against. It was not just the fact that families from Upper Ulverstone tended to approach the church when they wanted children baptised but, when Ulverstone thought of doing social outreach, the congregation almost automatically started to wonder about doing it in Upper Ulverstone. In the congregation's mind, Upper Ulverstone created an unresolved tension with their identity.

St Andrew's, Edgerton had a similar 'other space': Marlsett, an industrial hamlet just over a mile

down the road. The centre of Edgerton is a mile and a half in the other direction. This relationship could be seen in the difficulties the congregation had over deciding which Churches Together to belong to. There was a Churches Together in Marlsett and a Churches Together in Edgerton.

Andrew, a retired medical doctor, when interviewed, was quite clear that St Andrew's, Edgerton was not in Marlsett, it was in Edgerton. St Andrew's was for everyone in Edgerton who was interested in Presbyterian worship. The other view was that of Heather, who lived in Marlsett. She could not understand why St Andrew's was so standoffish; she wanted to get on with being a Christian with her neighbours whom she had known for years and that, for her, included being involved in Churches Together in Marlsett. One thing they both agreed on was that Daniel, the minister, was the leader of the faction that they opposed.

This became even more intriguing when a town-wide mission, called 'Hope Edgerton',⁷⁶ was held, and the churches were grouped into sets to host different mission teams. St Andrew's ended up with all the churches in Churches Together in Marlsett, although I do not think they were members at the time. These churches were managing to belong to both organisations without seeing the conflict that St Andrew's did. Therefore, the argument was not about affiliating to Churches Together; the Churches Together question had become a metonym for the debate around whether they related primarily to Marlsett or Edgerton. Equally, to avoid having to acknowledge this dispute within the congregation, it was safer to take Daniel as the person leading the other campaign rather than some other member.

In claiming their identity, the congregations used the sense of 'other' as something defined

⁷⁶ This was part of Hope 2008, an evangelistic campaign that crossed many church boundaries and continues with 'Hope Together' ('Hope Together' 2014).

against. With Ulverstone, the association was often through the name. With St Andrew's, Edgerton it was a combination of factors, but the fact that there were numbers of members living in Marlsett and these were their neighbours was part of the identification. Thus, both congregations defined a group of people who did not belong, yet had a nebulous claim on the congregation by the nature of where they lived. This claim was felt as a tension within congregational life.

The congregations did indeed spend quite an amount of energy maintaining borders and marking them in the way that Barth describes. It should be noted that, though outsiders generally

Jean: While William has said Churches Together

Issy: I didn't put that in because there is hardly anyone from our church that belongs to it. Angus goes and I don't think he goes with anyone else. The Marlsett one I now think that one is defunct And we have gone into the Edgerton Churches Together supposedly we don't seem to be in.

Issy (St Andrew's Edgerton 4:945-954)

acknowledged these territories, when outsiders contested them, as over the car park at Ulverstone, the congregation could put considerable effort into maintaining the boundaries. Both of these constitute 'spatial practices' which the congregations carry out as part of defining their identity. There were thus many discursive activities which meant that boundaries were not as clear-cut, but fluid and subject to representation as circumstances changed.

12 . Using the Buildings

At times, when dealing with the tradition, one can be fooled into thinking that buildings are just buildings. Both congregations made use of the main meeting-hall during the fundraising fairs. At Ulverstone, the main activity of the Christmas Fair was held in the main meeting-hall; at St Andrew's, Edgerton, it was used as the refreshment hall. Thus the main meeting-hall was used

for profane activity. However, just as with the location, the congregation has different relationships with various parts of the building, making the individual spaces into places with their own character (Crang 1998, 108–119). Equally as they are all owned by the congregations, it might be assumed that there were no boundary issues within the premises. All the church buildings were only differentiated by the activities that took place in them.

As I drive down the side of the main church hall at St Andrew's, Edgerton in the early evening light, I see Carol and David getting out of David's Austin Taxi (that he has restored); Isabel is standing in the open door by the Hall and Daniel is coming down the path from the manse. As we enter, Grace comes out of the Hall in her badminton whites.

"Hello, everything ok?"

"We are just arriving for Elders' in the Martin Room," says Isabel.

Daniel goes along the corridor and unlocks the glass door that has a St Andrew's cross engraved on it.

As we get into the Martin Room, Daniel and David start setting up tables, Carol goes to switch on the heater, and the rest of us put out chairs. While we are doing so, Ruth comes in with Harold, who is still in his Scout's uniform.

"Shall I make a cup of tea?" Ruth asks. "Heather sends her apologies. Her

grandchildren have arrived unexpectedly for dinner as it is half-term."

"Grandchildren always take priority," says Carol.

Daniel takes a seat at one corner of the table, and Carol sits down next to him.

Once they are seated, the rest of us spread out around the table and sort through our papers, checking we have the right agenda.

Sylvia comes in and takes a seat.

"You OK for taking devotions tonight?" Carol says.

"Yes," says Sylvia, "I have something prepared."

"Sorry I'm late", says Valerie coming in, "I could not find anyone to mind Megan, so I have had to bring her with me. I also need to leave at 9:00 as Megan has to go to bed as it is school tomorrow."

Daniel calls us all to order, and then hands over to Sylvia, who reads from 'The Road Less Travelled' by M. Scott Peck and then says a prayer for the meeting.

Daniel then says, "Are the minutes of the last meeting correct?"

We all hastily hunt for our copies of the minutes. On not hearing anyone mentioning any problems, Carol passes him the minute book, and he signs them.

Ruth says, "David, have you made any progress with the green roof for The Hall?"

And we are onto the business of the meeting.

The relaxed interaction, the preparing of tea, the making themselves at home in the Martin Room are relatively normal activities that take place around and within congregational events, even at formal meetings such as the Elders' meeting. It is as if the whole building is what Ray Oldenburg (Oldenburg 1999 [1997], 16) calls in his three-category classification of spaces, a third space. The first place is the private space, the home; the second space is that associated with employment, and finally there is the third space, which is a place where people gather outside the first and second spaces. Such spaces include cafes, pubs and public parks. This is not an exhaustive list of spaces. A customer in the supermarket is not experiencing any of these spaces, nor would a family on a trip to an adventure park. For the congregations, the buildings fell within the third space by Oldenburg's definition, at least some of the time. Indeed, Alice's description of Ulverstone – a place where one did not need to be lonely because there is always something to come to – catches acutely much of this sense of a third space. However, the congregations also encouraged the use of their buildings by other organisations to provide a third space for other people. They also had social groups that were open to those who were outside of the congregation and had youth organisations. In both cases, there were more people using the congregational buildings for other purposes than coming to worship in any given week.

However, there are indications of a more detailed sense of place even in the short extract above. Indeed, the fact that meetings were held in the Martin Room is a sign, to adapt George Orwell, that some spaces are more equal than others. Buildings within the complex had different roles within discourses of congregational life. The roles were not fixed just by the purposes they were put to, but rather by how they were cast in discussions of congregational life. Two different sorts of space within the buildings often occurred during conversation. There are those spaces that the congregation particularly prefers and those that it tends to repudiate. The scene above neatly links

the preferred space with the repudiated at St Andrew's, Edgerton. The Martin Room, where the elders are meeting, is the preferred space, and The Hall is the repudiated space.

The repudiated space in both congregations had been the recipient of ambivalent feelings in both congregations, right from the extremely early days. In this way, although part of buildings owned by the congregation, it is an 'other space' as in Said (2003 [1978], 5). In Ulverstone, where the repudiated space was the Scout Hut, the feelings went right back to the

But the scouts hold the church to ransom
because that facilities centre was built by an ex-Scouter
or he was the initiator.
Funny I have only had a conversation
with somebody today about this
but yeah they don't know how far back I go
because Geoff who is now in Africa
who was the initiator and got people together
the body of the church did it
lots of people had input into it
if a Scouts father was a joiner
they got him roped in and so forth
my husband who is now deceased
worked near Geoff
and we were Scouters in Rodwell
then they came under a different area
but he knew him
I remember him saying "O they need so and so "
It was part of the ceiling.
Sid got it through his site.

Lilian (Ulverstone 1a:701-719)

1970s when it was built. The minister at the time had been highly involved with the Scout Troop and thought that a building for the Scouts and Guides would serve the congregation's mission. He was so passionate about it that there were feelings that he had driven it through Church Meeting. In order to keep costs down, quite a bit of the work had been done by church members themselves. Lilian, whose former husband was in the building trade, remembers that although they attended Hartlethorpe URC at the time, they had been approached about whether they could help provide items at trade price for Ulverstone.

Well, the other thing
perhaps is all of the back
which we had long discussions on,
and one of our members,
Geoff who now lives in South Africa,
he did--
what we could say persistent
and persist,
it was really through him.
And a lot of work that he did on it,
that we got an extension,

Arthur (Ulverstone 8:157-166)

With St Andrew's and its hall, the situation was slightly different. Grace, who is a retired nurse, remembers the buzz around building the hall and how she saved so as to be able to make a contribution towards the cost. However, Esther remembers that it was built shortly after the new town library in Edgerton, an attractive modern brick building in a warm red. They had been told

We hoped it would be a big even
when the Hall was opened
which I think was the 1970s
and the new library had been build
and it was rustic brick inside
and it looked really nice
we thought that was what we were getting
you can see what we got
It's horrendous really
we were really disappointed
that it turned out like that.
There was some very keen badminton players
who wanted a hall that was suitable for
badminton you see
so that is why it's a big barn of a place

Esther (St Andrew's Edgerton 10:469-482)

that the hall would be in rustic brick and thought it would look similar in appearance, but instead it had turned out to be in a much paler brick and, according to Esther's husband Donald, 'just a sports hall'. The congregation desired something that was warmer in appearance and the light, the openness with the high ceiling, and the light-coloured brick felt cold although this was not mentioned at the time. Thus, there was misgiving around these spaces ever since they had been built.

The congregations' repudiations showed in a number of ways. First, the congregations made little use of these rooms. The hall at St Andrew's, Edgerton was frequently hired out to local people or used by the Scouts for their meetings, but the congregation held only the fairs and an occasional congregation-wide social there. At Ulverstane, the Scout Hut was almost exclusively used by the Scout Troop and Guide Company.

Second, both spaces had considerable structural problems that originated in the initial building stages, but the congregations were reluctant to confront them. At Ulverstane the self-build approach to the Scout Hut had left faults that would require quite a lot of money to fix. At St Andrew's, Edgerton, the problem was the roof. It was high and was coming to the end of its

official life. Neither congregation was finding the energy to tackle these large building issues. Ulverstone had just had a task group at the time, to

Its more now that you know what is going on
but I mean I once doing the collection in the Martin Room
and they were going through because the tea was in the Hall
"Oh is that what you do".
I don't know what they thought you did with the collection:
you know they were surprised that you counted it and whatever
so a lot of the congregation does not really know what is happening.
They are quite happy

Doreen (St Andrew's, Edgerton 12: 514-521)

look at the Scout Hut, which decided that before it could tackle the outstanding issues there, it needed to develop its community involvement so as to be able to secure external funding. At St Andrew's, Edgerton, though David raised it at the first Elders' Meeting I attended, nothing was resolved all the time I was there; indeed it was mostly off the agenda. Thus, just as there were places where the congregation 'was not', so there were also spaces within the buildings that were not owned.

The preferred rooms were at the other end of the dynamic. At St Andrew's, Edgerton, that room was the Martin Room. This might surprise a stranger; as it was a room that also served as a corridor⁷⁷. The only indication that there was anything unusual about the space was a small plaque on the wall which said that Dr

Heard about Dr Martin,
Elder and high up, a GP.
Used to come visit her patients
when in hospital.
Chatted one day on the ward,
very sweet,
second Mum to me.
Invited to stay for the weekend.
Home to home.

Grace (St Andrew's, Edgerton 11:9-13)

Martin, a much-loved member, had donated the money for the room. It was frequently used by the congregation for small-scale worship and socials, for Elders' Meeting, for Church Meeting when a modest attendance was expected, and for junior church on a Sunday. It was relatively small and easy to heat; also it felt sheltered by the other, much bigger buildings around. The

⁷⁷ After my time there, St Andrews Edgerton did build a separate corridor from the Martin Room and this had been a matter of contention while I was there although I was unaware of it.

room only had small high windows and thus the only view out was via a door into an enclosed patch of garden which heightened the sense of being secluded.

The preferred space at Ulverstone was an area that people passed through to get to the main meeting-hall. It had high-seated, comfortable chairs and in its default configuration looked most like an old people's home lounge. It had been intended that this could act as an extension to the main meeting-hall, but that would require reordering the latter. Only Arthur, who had been with the congregation since the start, remembered this.⁷⁸ This was the comfortable, relatively large room that everyone wanted to use. It was used for Bible study, the women's meeting, prayer fellowship and coffee after church every week. A lot of church life, therefore, happened in and around this room.

The desire to use this room led to tensions within the congregation. The question was raised about who had the right to be in the lounge. Most of the church youth and children's work took place in the Stead Hall, a hall at the other end of the main meeting-hall. However, the Youth Group was so successful that it was outgrowing that space. The only larger room was the lounge. However, on one youth night a month, the lounge was hired out to a group that provided a social space for people with learning disabilities. This was not an activity run by the congregation, but one supported by Joyce, a long-time member. The question was, therefore, who had the priority claim on the lounge. In the end, the argument was sidestepped with the redevelopment of the Stead Hall so as to incorporate another small room. This proved attractive to a number of groups, not just the Youth Group, and it may have taken the place of the lounge as the preferred space.

⁷⁸ Actually it was one of the few bits of information I knew about Ulverstone before I went there on placement.

The aim may be to make a third space, in Oldenburg's terms, a place for the meeting of friends. However, even within the buildings, there is a difference between repudiated and preferred places. The preferred space tends to attract congregational activity. The ability to command the preferred space by a group is a way to signify that they are important to the congregation. The repudiated spaces are places that seem to have an unresolved energy that nobody wants to confront, and which are therefore ignored. This binary situation reflects Said's description of the East as 'other' (Said 2003 [1978], 5): however it is defined in relationship to the preferred, and renegotiation can happen. The way that spaces can be altered by an intervention, such as the changes to the Stead Hall, shows that these definitions are not fixed but subject to flux. However, even within the church grounds there was negotiation over which spaces are 'our' spaces and which are 'theirs'. The debates about boundaries continue inwards to the demarcation of sacred space.

13. Entering the Holy

Despite the fact that I have talked about the buildings, I have not spent any time on the main meeting-hall except to say that it is used for secular events, as well as worship. Sacred space is a deprecated concept within the Reformed tradition. There are those who deny its existence except as a matter of

When first I went
as I said I had been brought up as Anglican
and had never sort of questioned
anything about the Anglican way of worship:
there were things about it that I did not understand
but I still didn't question it.
But then when I went to the Presbyterian
everything seemed so simple
and there was no ritual
and I could understand it.
The people made me welcome
and I felt at home

Esther, (St Andrew's Edgerton 10:108-119)

superstition (Walsh 1980). John Calvin's locking of the church doors of Geneva, in order for people to find the sacred in their everyday life, has led to a tradition that is often uncomfortable with the ideas of sacred space. Even the more ecumenically aware tend to avoid talking about this

in relationship to the tradition: writing on sacred space, Belden C Lane (2013) tells of his experience at the Vietnam War Memorial, a Roman Catholic shrine and a Native American Medicine wheel. However, despite being a Reformed Christian, he does not mention congregational worship. There is one exploration of sacred space within the Reformed tradition by Fraser MacDonald (F. MacDonald 2002); he also notes the rejection of sacredness as a value within the Reformed tradition. He goes on to explore the way members of the congregation construct space during worship; in his congregation the main meeting-hall was typically only used for worship; any socialising that did occur happened in the car park.

The Reformed tradition is contradictory when handling the sacred. A tradition that can insist that Christmas is not celebrated because no day is any more special than any other, yet maintains strictures on Sabbath-breaking, making clear that Sunday was sacred, is clearly muddled.⁷⁹ Quite often, there is what appears to be the deliberate profaning of sacred space. The drawing of the raffle from the communion table at the first Christmas Fair⁸⁰ is perhaps an awkward, extreme form of this. MacDonald does note in his congregation an inversion of the established social hierarchy within the space (F. MacDonald 2002, 70), although the sacred is not intentionally profaned.

However, there are tensions in the conceptualisation of the sacred outside the tradition. At first the crucial aspect seems to be to separate the profane from the sacred and to maintain a separation, creating a clear boundary. However, when we try to define sacred space, then

⁷⁹ The Scots celebration of New Year rather than Christmas is in part due to it to being outlawed in 1640: though reinstated in 1712 it was not a holiday until 1958. In similar vein, the fact that in the US many congregations do not have services on Christmas Day can be traced to Puritan tradition. Also in the 1920s Congregationalists in Lancashire held sales of work on Christmas Day to raise funds for a new church.

⁸⁰ This was actually uncomfortable to both traditions. The Scottish tend to see the communion table as set apart; the lower English tradition does see the table as just a table but they would be aghast at a raffle being held in a congregation's buildings.

contradiction always appears. Eliade has placed the sacred as both at the limits (mountain tops, edges) (Eliade 1959 [1957], 37–41) and also at the centre (Eliade 1959 [1957], 42–47). Kim Knott, in her exploration of the crossing of the sacred/profane within an environment, talks initially of ‘right-handed’ faith that approaches the divine by separating out purification rites and so on from the everyday (Knott 2005, 133–148). This is in some ways what is expected: a divide where the maintenance of the boundary is clear to all. Knott then goes on to discuss what she terms the ‘left-handed’; the way to the divine through the deliberately profane (Knott 2005, 146–169). She implies that it is an either/or situation, but my experience suggests that these are held in tension in many congregations. The congregations seemed simultaneously to both hold to Knott’s left and right-hand paths without seeing any contradiction. They could both maintain the ‘left hand’ argument that the communion table was just a table, but also make sure it was made of oak. Tweed looks at the way that religious spaces both flow (Tweed, 2006, 123–163) and construct dwellings (Tweed 2006, 80–122). Thus for Tweed a sacred place is both a fixed place and a place that contains dynamics from elsewhere. Congregations sensed on entering a space that it was different and connected with other spaces in complex ways. It all seems contradictory and reflects the state of flux of Bhabha’s third space (Bhabha 2004a [1994], 57–93) with its interaction of two things, yet these are not a colonising power and colonised, but stationary and dynamic.

It is 10:35 a.m. and I am sat in my usual seat about a third of the way back from the front. There are quite a few younger members of the congregation filling the five rows in front of me. Samuel is playing the piano, and people are chatting to friends in the hall. My eye catches a movement by the choir, and I glance up at the projector

screen to see "Please stand for the Bible". Hastily I get to my feet as Douglas, an Elder, is bringing the Bible in, followed by Judith, the minister, and Joyce, another elder.

As they reach the front, Judith and Joyce wait while Donald continues on and places the Bible on the lectern. Then Donald goes and sits down in the congregation while Judith goes into the pulpit, and Joyce goes and stands behind the lectern. Joyce then gives the notices, which include the reminder of the church social to celebrate "Christmas in June", notice of the death of Anne, a long-term member – and would anyone willing to make soup for the soup wagon next Sunday, please see her after the service. She then gives the fire drill reminder. Finally, she says, "We will now have a few minutes' silence to prepare to worship God", and then sits down on a chair behind the lectern.

About half a minute later Judith gets up and says: "Welcome to Ulverstone on this sunny morning: let us worship God."

"This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

It is good to give thanks to the Lord for his mercy endures forever.

Let us sing 'Great is thy faithfulness', the words will come up on the projector or can be found at number 147 in Songs of Fellowship."

This opening would be familiar to any person who has worshipped with several United Reformed

Congregations. It is referred to as ‘The Call to Worship’ and marks the beginning of the main worship service each week. The point at which the border into worship is crossed is quite clearly marked, as when Judith says, “This is the day the Lord has made”. At that point, the congregation has gathered, the symbols of the sacraments, table and font, are present, and the Bible has been carried into the hall. It is as she begins to speak the Word, here symbolised by verses from the Bible, that worship starts. The experience is a bit like brushing one’s teeth: we do not, as Reformed Christians, usually pay much attention to this border-crossing. It is done because that is how things are done. We cross the line between being a group of people met together and a group of people worshipping God, with the casual disregard of those who are over-familiar with it.

However, the ritual is more precise than people expect; it involves the gathering of the people, the presence of the Bible (bringing in is not always necessary, but public display is), a table⁸¹ and the minister speaking (technically, the congregation

I think worship and the Bible
were uhm,
more important
in the Presbyterian church
than it seems to be now
But maybe
from congregation to congregation
it varies.
The preaching was more biblical based.
Esther, (St Andrew's, Edgerton 10:693-701)

hearing what they speak). The setting has a remarkable conformity across many countries – the seated congregation in a plain hall with much light. Within the Reformed tradition there is little written about the character of sacred space. However, there are two reasons why a tradition may be silent; one is that the issue does not exist within it; the other is that there is common agreement and no dispute. Usually, it is assumed to be the former, but what little there is here is in total agreement, using a formulation of a threefold conjunction: first, believers have to be

⁸¹ Technically also the font should be present. However, as at Ulverstone where the font was a simple bowl, this is often ignored.

gathered, secondly the Word is heard and finally the sacraments administered.⁸² It can sometimes be traced as a subtext in a passage addressing another issue, such as in Karl Barth's statement that 'because this call is sounded and men able to hear, the Church exists' (K. Barth 1964 [1961], 74), when focusing on the connection of preaching to sacraments. What makes this specifically about sacred space, rather than just the existence of the church, is the reference to 'call' and 'hearing': the difference is in the action. The statement is not unique to Karl Barth. He is echoing John Calvin's statement on the nature of Church: 'Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's body, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists' (Calvin 1960 [1529], 1023). Note that the Church is where the Word is not just preached but heard: the people's hearing is essential. The tradition says that the Church is present as a worshipping community only when people are gathered around the Word with the symbols of Eucharist and Baptism present. The opening act of worship involves the symbolic conjunction of these elements.

Theorists, when they speak of sacred space, need to have a tension within the language to categorise the space. Foucault in his writing on 'other' spaces (Foucault 1986) creates a dyad between utopias, imagined spaces that are to some extent real (spatial or social constructs) and against these heterotopias, real spaces that are superscribed with meaning so that they enter into the conceptual framework. The complexity of Sacred Space has led people to relate to the idea of heterotopias (Shackley 2002), but caution should be employed. Firstly, Foucault himself does not identify the idea of heterotopias with sacred space; he uses the binary sacred and profane as part of the medieval system of 'emplacement' (Foucault 1986, 22). He does allow some sacred spaces

⁸² There is a difference between theory and practice. All the theorists in the Reformed tradition I have come across say that Communion should happen every week, including John Calvin and John Knox. As far as I can gather, the fact that people have been unwilling to do so has meant that this has almost never happened. It is why the symbolic presence of a Communion table is often a central focus of the Reformed tradition.

to be heterotopias, in particular heterotopias of crisis (Foucault 1986, 24), but nowhere does he describe sacred space as by definition heterotopic. Thus, it would not contradict him to consider that both heterotopias and utopias both have a role in religious experience. Secondly, he gives six principles for heterotopias:

- 1) That all societies have heterotopias; at least those of crisis (liminal heterotopias that cover the areas of transition of status within a society), but many societies have other forms
- 2) Heterotopias can operate differently in different parts of a society's history
- 3) The heterotopias are capable, within a single place, of juxtaposing a variety of locations that in reality are incompatible
- 4) Heterotopias are often connected temporally in ways that do not fit within the traditional timeline.
- 5) Access to heterotopias is such that, at the same time as an individual gains access to the heterotopia, they are also isolated from the immediate context in which the heterotopias exist.
- 6) Heterotopias connect with the external context in such a way as to renegotiate our perception of it. (Foucault 1986, 24–27)

These principles create an idea of space that fits with the Reformed understanding of sacred space. Our sacred space does not exist outside the boundaries of worship, but is constituted in worship.⁸³ There remains something in the Reformed tradition that is 'left-handed' about faith (Knott 2005, 133–148). The emphasis on the profane use of sacred space is deliberately to remind people that it is no different from everyday life.

One word has occurred again and again in this chapter and that word is 'other'. For me, as a

⁸³ There is something complex going on here, in particular there is a link with Calvin's Eucharistic theology which is simultaneously a fellowship meal of the faithful and also a participation in the heavenly banquet.

Reformed Christian, it has been uncomfortable using it throughout this chapter, as 'other' is, in the tradition, one of the attributes of God. At times it is used to focus on the splendour and glory of God, the Holy, the set-aside: a very 'right-hand' concept. Yet I, in the sociological tradition, reflected the concept as 'left-handed'; the choice of the same word is not entirely accidental. There is a notion of God, who unsettles our order. Thus the Reformed stress both that the worship space is still closer to the profane than the sacred despite our actions, and that God embraces the profane so it should not be shut out from the sacred space. The sacred thus seems to be a space in Reformed understanding where there is a rupture, both of the sacred and of the profane. Therefore, sacred space must be heterotypic within the Reformed tradition.

However by using a conjunction of items to create sacred space we have a space that can be dissolved. When the conjunction is not present the space is held to be profane. This ability to institute holy space works well with a tradition that focuses on itself as moving. Elements of this approach are seen in MacDonald's work where, even though the sacred space is clearly separated from the profane, the rules that mark its separation are deliberately against the normal order. Thus, a church may not be marked with a cross and the norms of the surrounding society are deliberately contravened (F. MacDonald 2002).

However, it also makes boundaries that are moving and debated. There is much debate about what is acceptable within worship, and there were people who felt that particular music should not be used in worship, sermons should come from the pulpit and that it was not acceptable to draw the raffle from the communion table. Hence both the boundary and the elements within the sacred space were in flux.

14. Conclusion

Both congregations owned buildings. The setting of the buildings was a compromise between what the congregations desired and what was available. Over the years, from the initial purchase of the buildings, discourses around the location of the congregation had developed. As part of this, the congregations put a lot of effort into maintaining boundaries; yet, in keeping with the tradition, both congregations have understandings of themselves as communities that move. These differ, as shown by how they view travelling to worship; St Andrew Edgerton had a caravanserai's approach, almost boasting of the long distances, while for Ulverstone what mattered was proximity to the building. Equally the congregations stressed their identity against an 'other space'. However, the discursive practices of the congregation about the location of the buildings set up connections that partially shaped their experience as congregations. In both congregations there are preferred and repudiated rooms within the complex, but none of these was the main meeting-hall. Both congregations used the main meeting-hall for profane uses. However, on Sunday, when the right elements were brought into conjunction, it became a place of encounter with the sacred. This was done through the creation of a heterotopia or space where 'the other' is encountered. Both the fact that this sacred space was non-permanent and that it involved encounters with 'the other' were drawing on elements from within the tradition.

These techniques created tension, as statuses and boundaries were renegotiated during time and thus created continual turbulence amongst the generally smooth flow of congregational life. Discursively speaking, it was possible to observe a Russian doll effect, with patterns repeating within different spatial organisational levels. Looking smaller, whether it is to other congregations, their use of buildings or their negotiation of the sacred space, does not lead to a simplification of the setting. In some ways looking at boundaries is easy when dealing with spatial

aspects such as location, as a boundary is a spatial metaphor. However, boundaries also occur in relationship to group membership. Can the ideas of flow be used to explore the negotiation of boundaries within the community? To understand how these ideas work, the next chapter focuses on the role of boundaries within the community.

Community

I have dealt in the previous chapter with the way the congregations related to their physical location. However, a congregation is more than an occupier of space; there are relationships, customary ways of doing things and the general messiness of people working together. In this chapter, I want to look at the places where the turbulent and smooth parts of congregation interact, and what makes this congregation more than a random group of people meeting on a Sunday. To do this, I am going to concentrate on an extraordinary church meeting that happened at St Andrew's, Edgerton, which was part of an ongoing dispute within the congregation while I was there.⁸⁴ However, first I need to consider the nature of the congregation.

1. What is a Congregation?

Every Sunday, members meet for worship; some are local, and some have travelled several miles. Many will have passed other churches, even other United Reformed churches.

On entering St Andrew's, Edgerton, I pick up a service sheet and then pass through inner doors to the meeting-hall. It is empty apart from Harold and Andrew, who are on the dais at the front. As I make my way to my usual place, Ruth, Harold's wife, comes through carrying irises in a brass vase, which she puts down on a stand at the back of the Communion Table and makes her way to the entrance. As Ruth opens the doors to leave, Valerie comes in pushing her grandson.

⁸⁴ See Appendix E

“Megan not coming today?” asks Ruth.

“No, she is with her dad this week, but Nick is staying with me.”

Valerie makes her way to the far right of the front row where she gets Nick out of his pushchair and then passes him a copy of ‘We’re Going On a Bear Hunt’. Nick toddles over to where Andrew and Harold are chatting. As he gets to the dais, he puts the book down on it and uses his hands to get up. He then picks up the book and continues towards Harold. Harold, aware of his approach, takes the book Nick holds towards him.

“Good book,” says Harold, flicking through the pages.

Nick immediately sits down on the front of the dais. Harold moves towards him and hands the book back. Nick returns it and then pats the space beside him and looks expectantly at Harold. Harold sits down beside him. This leaves Andrew awkwardly alone, standing. He pauses for a while, leaning on his stick. Then, when Nick and Harold do not start reading, he steps down to the floor and then slowly lowers himself on the other side of Nick, putting his stick down beside him. Harold starts reading: “We’re going on a bear hunt” and for a while, the three enjoy the book.

However, Harold gets only as far as crossing the river when there is an influx of people for the service. Valerie goes to fetch Nick so as to settle him before worship.

Harold gets up. Andrew starts to rise but is down too low to use his stick. Harold goes

forward and offers an arm but still Andrew is struggling. Valerie dumps Nick in his pushchair and goes over to help. Together, they get Andrew back onto his feet.

As Valerie passes my seat she comments, “Andrew really should not be getting down for Nick any longer.”

This is a story that brings together the youngest and oldest worshippers at St Andrew’s, Edgerton in a social interaction before gathering for worship. In the story, we meet the congregation as a multi-generational community, like an extended family: we meet them carrying out the

Yeah think that's perhaps
how they come across to me as well
I know we got this warm welcome
the first Sunday
that we went in there
but I can remember looking around
and I thought goodness me I thought
they are all elderly people
I mean probably our age
but thats how they came across -
that there were no young people there.
I don't think there were any children there

Sylvie, (St Andrew's, Edgerton 1:115-124)

activities that make up their corporate life and we even get a glimpse into the emotional life of the community. The first question is, ‘Who meets?’

The members are drawn, in both congregations, from a particular section of society. The age spread, as in many other URC congregations, tended towards the older age range in both congregations, and they would identify themselves as middle class. Also, both congregations had an unusually high proportion of people who were connected to the caring professions: doctors, nurses, teachers, social workers and community workers, and both were mostly white, although both had exceptions. In the interviews with both congregations, the dominant view of the members was that the congregation provided an extended family. With St Andrews, this focused on the idea that they treated all who came with friendly interest, including the ability of the

congregation to ask after family and an interest in what was going on in the lives of members. St Andrew's, Edgerton had a membership of around 80. Although there were up to a dozen children involved in congregational life, on a Sunday there were rarely above six. However, the number of children in the congregation was bolstered by a small number of families such as Valerie's⁸⁵ who had joined in recent years.

In the years preceding the Second World War, Scots who travelled to a nearby city to worship decided to establish a congregation in Edgerton. However, the group would not have been sufficient on its own, so it had

Esther: You have more Scots
There is Glynnis, Amos, and Alistair and Lorna
And Angus and Sylvie well Sylvie is not Scottish.
Donald: I think it were more Scots at one time
And anyhow weren't there.
Esther: Oh Yeah.
Well You had eighteen doctors at one time
You daren't feel faint in the congregation then
Esther and Donald, (St Andrew's Edgerton 10:557-564)

reached out to local people. The result was that the congregation was always an amalgam. Some of the older members recalled a distinction between managers and workers within the congregation; the managers being the Scots, highly educated – often doctors or middle managers – while the workers were local people either in teaching or other skilled jobs. Most of the Scottish managers had got promotion and moved elsewhere; thus leaving the doctors. With neither managers nor doctors still coming down from Scotland, the Scots were a shrinking group, and the gap had largely disappeared. In recent years, a number of people with Nonconformist experience had retired to the area and joined the congregation.

These new members told a story about joining that was distinctive. Like the stories found by James Hopewell (Hopewell 1988 [1987], 113–139) this story had remarkable similarities to a

⁸⁵ Valerie's family was three generations, in that Valerie had an eleven-year-old daughter, Megan, and she also had an older son who was Nick's father.

classic tale, in this case, the *Ugly Duckling* by Hans Christian Anderson. However, unlike Hopewell's case studies, these were stories of joining the congregation. Moira's story is just one example of stories constructed in this form; it has been selected from those in the interviews. However, the classic example of this was told by Paul and Lynne when I had lunch with them once after church. The story would start with their move to Edgerton, and it would tell of their trying other churches; sometimes this was a single visit, sometimes this would be over months or years. Then they would feel excluded by that congregation or have other difficulty settling in, for example, the lack of a hearing-aid loop system made their participation in worship difficult. Often then they would not go to church for a while until a trigger would happen in their lives such as bereavement or adopting a child, and they would want to go back to church. Then they would try St Andrew's and find the warmth of the welcome and the concern for them by the congregation agreeable. In talking of St Andrew's Edgerton they often invoke images of it as an extended family and a place of shelter. The tales were solely told by newer members; others in the congregation told a wider variety of stories.

Elliot Jaques (1955) made the connection between the organisation and the emotional defence mechanism against psychotic anxiety.

Moira: Well we had a uhm
 Been to another church
 We weren't entirely happy
 with the happy clappy atmosphere
 Really
 It was a very large congregation
 And it
 We seemed to be swamped
 And there didn't seem to be the connections
 with other people.
 So we lapsed.
 And when we knew that Erica was going to
 hoping to adopt
 We both realised that we did want
 still to have religion in our lives
 so it was an ideal opportunity.
 Erica's
 One of Erica's friends
 her mother attends St Andrews
 and we felt at that point
 that it was a small friendly church
 and it would suit
 Best suit
 our interest really.
 And we wanted Ailsa to be brought up
 within a Sunday School regime
 like I was and like my children were.
 So that was mainly the reason
 we came to St Andrews

Jean: So it was about
 A friendly congregation

Moira: It was
 And the fact that it was smaller
 And the integration would have been better
 More family

Moira, (St Andrews, Edgerton 13:29-64)

His ideas were further developed in Menzies-Lyth (Menzies-Lyth 1988 [1959,1961,(1961b), 1970]; Menzies-Lyth 1989 [1986]) and used by the Tavistock Institute. In a recent publication, *Working below the Surface: The Emotional Life of Organisations*, which reviews the development of these ideas, David Armstrong states: 'Every organisation is an emotional place. It is an emotional place because it is a human invention, serving human purposes and dependent on people to function' (Armstrong 2004, 24). He goes on to argue that one cannot know how organisations function unless one also understands the way that emotions work within them. Part of the attraction of St Andrew's to members was its acceptance of them as individuals: this worked as a defence against anxiety caused by previous experience. However, in voluntary organisations, where goodwill is an indispensable part of getting things done, the emotional system is not just a way of handling emotions but also necessary for the performance of the organisation. The development of relationships between members is crucial for the life of the congregation.

Attractive as it is to treat a congregation as a family, congregations behave differently from families. As James Hopewell says, 'the congregation identifies its own membership, initiating its own catechumens' (Hopewell 1988 [1987], 13). His definition of a congregation is 'a group that possess a special name and recognise members who assemble regularly to celebrate a more widely practised worship but who communicate with each other sufficiently to develop intrinsic patterns of conduct, outlook and story' (Hopewell 1988 [1987], 12–13). The 'conduct, outlook and story' is, as Nancy Ammerman (1998, 78) points out, to say that congregations have their own subculture. She goes on to suggest that congregations meld their culture from the tradition, the wider cultural setting, and the normative form of voluntary organisations (Ammerman 1998, 72–82). Thus, a congregation's emotional system is part of its culture. If we go back to what is flowing, when we are looking at congregations as an emotional system then we are treating

people as flowing; when we are treating congregations as cultural systems then we are looking at the flow of ideas and practice as well. The emotional flow is a subsystem of the cultural flows.

The idea of a congregation as a voluntary association has been picked up by people in Organisational Studies (Harris 1998). This seems to trace its origins back to the work of Benson and Dorsett, which is essentially an elaboration of Church-Sect theory originating with Weber and Troelstch⁸⁶ (Swatos 1976); they put forward four dimensions: Professionalisation, Bureaucratisation, Secularisation and Integration (Benson and Dorsett 1971, 139–140). The ‘secularisation’ and ‘integration’ are taken from Church-Sect theory. However, the terms ‘professionalisation’ and ‘bureaucratisation’ are taken from the study of organisations. There is thus the combining of a wider theological and sociological perspective with that of Organisational Studies. Margaret Harris takes these dimensions and looks at churches as a subgroup within voluntary associations (Harris 1998). She finds that congregations have many of the features of voluntary associations, but ministers have a more charismatic role and members have limited ability to alter high-end goals (Harris 1998, 615). It should be noted that no Baptist, Congregational or URC congregation was included in the sample, which may have led to a different consideration of the ability to limit high-end goals.

Helen Cameron takes this further, summarising ten properties of voluntary associations (Cameron 2004, 142). Two criteria, in particular, stand out: membership is by fulfilling set criteria and decisions are made democratically. The first of these criteria echoes Hopewell’s stance on identifying membership. Intriguingly, one aspect in which all the five churches that Cameron looks at differ from the model is around the role of the minister (Cameron 2004, 145): she picks

⁸⁶ I am aware of the complexities here. It should be noted that the theory is heavily influenced by the Christ/Culture debate within the Reformed tradition: see the Tradition chapter Section 5.

up the difference earlier noted by Margaret Harris.

However, Organisational Studies is related to Institutional Studies. All organisations have institutions, but all institutions are not organisations. Jack Knight defines institutions as sets ‘of rules that structure social relationships in particular ways’, based on knowledge ‘shared by members of the relevant community or society’ (Knight 1992, 2). In the case of congregations, then, the decision-making process, the admission of membership, the role of the minister and the offering of worship would all be part of this set of rules. However, the importance of community in Knight’s definition links it back with the emotional system. Thus, we can treat organisational aspects as a subset of congregational culture.

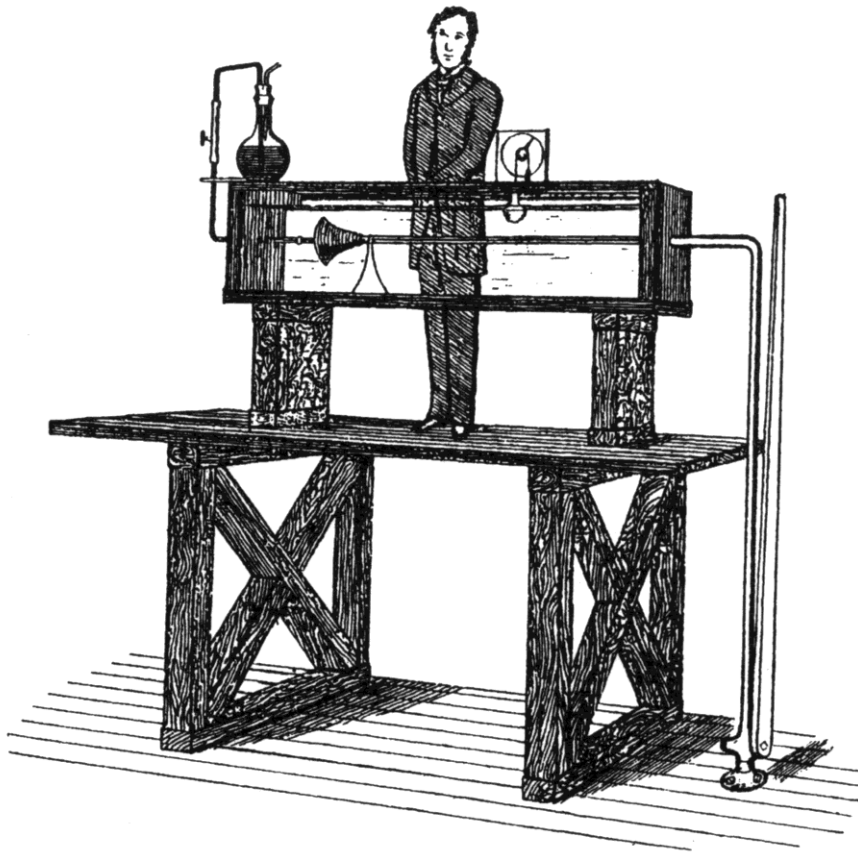
I have distinguished two very different strands in the literature that are relevant to congregations. That is, exploring congregations as emotional systems and as institutions. When focusing on congregations as institutions the research tends to concentrate on function and process; when dealing with emotions, then narrative and imagery is the focus. Most literature takes a perspective that favours one of these strands. However, these interrelate in such a complex pattern that, when looking at the congregation, it is misleading to examine either strand on its own.

2. Diving Deeper into the Metaphor of Flow

We saw in the Location chapter that with respect to space there is evidence of congregations behaving in manners coherent with chaotic systems modelled by fluid dynamics. Fluid systems switch between turbulence and structure, and can therefore be described as chaotic (Gleick 1998 [1987], 121–153). Flows seem to be particularly susceptible to chaotic behaviour. In 1833, Osborne Reynolds (Acheson 1997, 133–151) demonstrated just how difficult it was to create a fast flow that was laminar (smooth) when his experiment, which aimed to remove as much of the

causes of turbulence as possible, still broke up into a turbulence when the rate of flow exceeded a particular value (see Figure 7). Mathematics suggest that however large the tank and however shielded from outside vibrations, the experiment would still have a point at which the rate of flow through the tank caused turbulence rather than laminar flow. What I want to do here is explore further the ways that turbulent parts of a fluid system interact with the laminar parts.

Figure 7



Apparatus used by Osborne Reynolds in his attempt to create a laminar flow that was sustained in another fluid. This figure is in the public domain

It is often assumed that chaotic situations are situations without structure. However, circumstances truly without structure are well understood; they are random and thus available for

statistical analysis. The difference with chaotic systems is they can switch between structured and unstructured parts that do not lead to natural mathematical conclusions. Thus, the switching nature of chaotic systems is critical to identifying them.

Importantly, with fluid systems that turbulence happens more easily when a flow needs to change direction. This may be due to contact with an obstacle, with another current or a different force on it. Fluid systems do not automatically become turbulent in these circumstances. Firstly, when a flow meets something that causes it to change direction, then what will occur is that the flow will often absorb the change by deforming internal bonds that hold the particles in place. However, when a flow adapts, its internal structure gets tighter, which creates a resistance to further deformation. Thus, a rigidity occurs before the turbulence. Turbulence occurs when the external forces overwhelm the internal structure. It is the loss of structure that appears as turbulence.

Secondly, the change is not gradual from laminar to turbulent with flow becoming more and more turbulent. A laminar flow, if anything, becomes more laminar as it adjusts to the pressures on it. Thus there is a rapid state-shift as the fluid goes from laminar to turbulent flow, the point at which couplings can no longer deform and begin to break.

Thirdly, the critical value is dependent on both external and internal forces. The environment changes the critical value (M. Potter and Wiggert 2008, 46), so that in some settings a flow moving at a specified rate will be turbulent, but in others it might be laminar even though it is flowing at the same speed. When there is a sudden change in the circumstances of the flow, such as an unexpected obstacle, then turbulence can occur very rapidly.

Thus, there are two states, laminar and turbulent, in which flows can occur: the transition

between these two states is a definite point and the point is dependent on the situation through which the flow travels. If a social situation is laminar, we would expect that there would be an orderliness about it and that things would stay where they were. As it comes under pressure the orderliness would increase. However, when the pressure is too strong then turbulence will occur as the order breaks down. Finally, we would expect that the surrounding social situation will alter the point at which the change from laminar to turbulence occurs.

The difference between laminar and turbulent normally starts in the boundary layer. In fluid dynamics, the central core of the flow is primarily laminar. However, surrounding it is an outer layer, called the boundary layer, where it interacts with other flows. A flow cannot slide along a boundary (Acherson 2008 [2006], 124). Instead, the boundary layer is where the behaviour of the liquid is significantly different from the central flow as the molecules are in a state of transition between the flows. That is, molecules in the boundary layer are in a state of transition between the flow in the core and the currents that surround it. It should be noted that some currents from outside that enter the flow will be in a similar orientation to the internal direction of the flow. Equally, some are going in a direction significantly different to it. Those that move in a similar direction are easily assimilated into the flow. When those whose trajectory is across the direction to the flow enter the boundary layer, they cause more disruption and thus there is often turbulence in the boundary layer.

The boundary layers also come in two forms. There are those boundary levels that are smooth, where the turbulence caused by the surrounding currents is not transmitted to the core flow of the fluid. Also, there are rough boundary layers where the turbulence at the edge is not absorbed within the boundary layer, and the changes are transmitted to the core flow. Therefore such areas tend to be more turbulent than the central flow as the molecules are subject to forces that drive

both the flow and also the surrounding currents. Therefore, in fluid dynamics, boundaries are significant areas of transition.

In respect to culture, there has been attention given to the work involved to maintain boundaries, particularly by Fredrik Barth (1998 [1969]; 2000). His ideas were explored in the last chapter with respect to physical boundaries and identity. Barth's interest is primarily in ethnic boundaries, which are social rather than physical. Often, these boundaries are conceived as maintaining the distinction between those inside and those outside. Barth demonstrates that they are negotiated within society, and therefore are often turbulent. Boundaries in fluid dynamics are not barriers keeping particles out but interfaces allowing the transition from one stream to another. Thus, like Barth's boundaries, they are subject to negotiation as well as turbulence.

The church meeting concerns what has been a major change within the Reformed tradition throughout the 20th century in the UK: who is welcome at Communion. Generally the movement has been towards more open communion, with the focus in the last forty years on children being welcome. Thus it is an area where there is change in direction occurring in the denomination. It therefore becomes a point where the wider environment makes turbulence likely. However attendance at communion is also a marker of who belongs. The meeting I am exploring in this chapter is one point at which the smooth internal nature of congregational life became turbulent.

3. Convening the Meeting

Church Meeting is part of the organisational structure of the URC, and it was at a Church Meeting that the incident explored in this chapter happened. Thus, I will in this section explore it as an organisational practice.

I am running late for this extra Church Meeting as the traffic was heavy when leaving home; so it is a relief to see Angus' tall figure unfolding itself from the small car he and Sylvia own as I walk through the car park.

He greets me with a cheery, "Hello you."

He and Sylvia head towards the main meeting hall and I follow. Sylvia struggles for a while with the heavy side door, but it eventually opens, and we go into the main meeting hall. There are perhaps half a dozen people there; the front row of chairs is in a semi-circle slightly to the left-hand side of the room. On the left front of this is a folding table, Carol stands behind it, her jacket over one of the chairs, and is sorting through papers while Daniel is adjusting the projector which is towards the right side of the semi-circle, ready for his talk. Pauline, Daniel's wife, is moving the last of the chairs into the semi-circle.

Angus and Sylvia go and sit with Esther; I note her husband Donald isn't with her.

As they greet each other Esther comments:

"Heather's operation was a success, but with just getting out of hospital today, she is not up to making it and sends her apologies."

Ruth and Harold are sitting on the opposite side with Andrew and Isabel. I go to

sit in the row in front of them. Ina comes in and joins Esther's row. By this stage, Daniel has gone and sat in the other chair behind the folding table next to Carol. Valerie comes in with her friend Jackie; they sit in the row, in front of me, and to my right, this separates them slightly apart from the others. A restlessness settles on the people there; Daniel looks at his watch, Carol shuffles the papers again, and Ina looks at the door as if she is expecting someone. Just as Daniel gets up, Alistair and his wife Lorna arrive.

Daniel says, "Anyone else expected?"

Everyone in the room falls silent.

"In that case, welcome to this special Church Meeting. There is one item on

tonight's agenda, and that is

whether children may take

Communion when they are present

at our celebration. Shall we pray?"

You have your own little group that you are fond of
You stick to this group
You do not have time to talk
Like Church Meeting because it gives chance to talk
That is how I feel
Time together is what is missing
Grace, (St Andrew's, Edgerton 11:81-86)

Church meeting is the council through which the congregation experiences direct democracy.⁸⁷

The government of the local church in the Reformed tradition has always involved the rights of the laity back to Calvin's Geneva;⁸⁸ Elders and Church Meetings are just the way the URC continues this tradition. However, the actual process in both bodies is understood as an act of discernment rather than being about government by the members. Unlike the religious

⁸⁷ The second council of the local congregation, Elders' Meeting, is an example of representative democracy

⁸⁸ See Tradition Chapter Section 4

congregations explored by Margaret Harris (1998, 614-615) the responsibilities of Church Meeting include:

- 1) furthering the Church's mission in the locality (The United Reformed Church 2013, para. 2.(1).(i)),
- 2) calling a minister or Church-Related Community Worker (The United Reformed Church 2013, para. 2.(1).(iv)),
- 3) electing elders and officers (The United Reformed Church 2013, para. 2.(1).(viii)),
- 4) adopting financial reports (The United Reformed Church 2013, para. 2.(1).(xi)).

There are few voluntary associations where an ordinary member has more say in the direction the association takes.

It is also the one meeting that is legislated to meet at a minimum frequency within the URC; for as the manual says 'In the Church Meeting which shall meet at least once a quarter and at which the minister or one of the ministers shall normally preside, the members have opportunity through discussion, responsible decision and care for one another, to strengthen

Alistair: I do not see him as a minister on a pedestal but a lot of the congregation do.

"He's the minister, you cannot say that to a minister." Yes you can.

I think it goes back to the dilution of the role of the Elder. If the Elders are not understanding if Elders had a more prominent role and their role was better understood the role of the minister would be understood.

It is all structural it is not hierarchical but there is a structure to it.

Jean: Eldership and Teaching Elder.

Alistair: That is in the Reformed tradition.

Alistair, (St Andrew's, Edgerton 8:426-438)

each other's faith and to foster the life, work and mission of the Church.' (The United Reformed Church 2013, para. 2.(1).(i)). Therefore, structurally the Church Meeting is an important part of the institutional structure of the congregation.

Central to the Reformed tradition is the involvement of people in the decision-making process of

the Church who are not ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacraments; it seems to be more widely adopted than the doctrine of Predestination. It stems from Calvin's Geneva, where the Consistory was set up at his behest, as described in the Tradition chapter. Presbyterianism has had Elders elected by the congregation from early days with the First Book of Discipline citing methods for their election (Knox 2005 [1621], 174–179). However, Congregationalism, following the communal discipline route outlined in the Tradition chapter, developed the Church Meeting as a method of government that involved all members of the congregation. The Savoy Declaration states:

These particular churches thus appointed by the authority of Christ and entrusted with power from him for the ends before expressed, are each of them as unto those ends, the seat of that power which he is pleased to communicate to his saints or subjects in this world so that as such they receive it immediately from himself.' (The Meeting of Elders and Messengers of Congregational Churches in England 1990 [1658], 112))

This does not prescribe Church Meeting, but sets the power within the local church which naturally leads to Church Meeting as would be indicated by the use of 'officers and members' elsewhere in the document. In the end, the Congregational Church gave up some of the autonomy of local congregations but retained the existence of Church Meeting as necessary.

We still do some things
the Presbyterian way.
The Elders will come to a decision
and present that as decided
to the church meeting.
I feel that is wrong,
even though I am an Elder.
I am used to the church meeting
discussing everything
and feel we all should be making the decision

Heather, (St Andrew's Edgerton 5:142-148)

Thus, tradition created the Church Meeting, and it is the merger of the Congregational and Presbyterian traditions that created the two councils of the local church: Church Meeting and Elders' Meeting. The Church Meeting in its present form is heavily influenced by the

Congregational tradition. What I want to move on to next is the way Church Meeting was experienced at St Andrew's, Edgerton.

The Church Meeting is a business meeting. It is usually poorly attended; the exception being those, such as the one above, which are called for a particular reason. Indeed at St Andrew's, Edgerton, one group, which consisted of older people who firmly adhered to the Presbyterian heritage of the congregation, adamantly refused to participate in Church Meeting. This was not just non-attendance; they attempted to lobby senior Elders and the minister to influence decisions. This included the annual Gift Day which was an

Going back to my childhood church
we had a church that was very dominated
by one or two families:
there were very few sort of teenage young people
there were people,
there were a lot up to fifteen sixteen
Sunday school
but they did not go beyond that stage,
they disappeared,
and there were about six of us
who were over eighteen.
A couple of them
we would like to start something:
would you be willing to come to an initial meeting?
I thought yes
we thought we would have these six people
and we had thirty
where the others came from
and it grew into a group of about seventy
and we did all sorts of interesting things.
It wasn't thirty
but it brought people to the church
and they came to the evening service
And we decided that we were going to break
the stranglehold of the two families
and the way to do that was to get a deacon elected from
this age group.
We could not do that, as things stood.
We persuaded thirty or forty
to become church members
flooded the church meeting
and overthrew the regime.

David, (St Andrew's, Edgerton 9:616-719)

opportunity for members to talk directly to the minister. However, part of the theology of Church Meeting as discernment means that the only way to get views registered at Church Meeting is to attend. Thus, their adherence to the older form led to their being effectively disenfranchised. This contrasted with some staunch Congregationalists who joined Ulverstone while I was there. On hearing the minister speaking of how valuable Church Meeting was, at a meal for new members, they banged on the table and cheered.

Despite the usually poor attendance, Church Meeting fulfils a significant symbolic role within

congregational life. On two occasions, it was clear that Church Meeting had influenced the thinking of members. At Ulverstone, Helen, the wife of Raymond who had a Pentecostal background, commented on the fact that everyone is listened to at Ulverstone. She was picking up the process of Church Meeting where all members may speak, even though she rarely attended because most were held after service, and she had a friend coming round for dinner. The second was that Alistair, at the above meeting, held strongly Presbyterian views, but unlike the older more Scottish members, he saw Church Meeting as the council that decides things and thus he attended the meeting.

Church Meeting 'shall consist of those persons who have been admitted to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of the United Reformed Church and whose names are included on the membership roll of such local church' and although other people may attend they may not vote (The United Reformed Church 2013, para. 2.(1)). The 'full privileges and responsibilities' entail the rights to: vote at Church Meeting, including when it issues a call to a minister; be elected as an Elder or officer and receive Communion. Most Communion services are open, but a church member takes Communion as part of the hosting community while others take Communion as a guest. As the church, meeting is the assembly of those with a right to take Communion: access to Communion is also something to be debated within Church Meeting.

Poor attendance is people choosing to exercise their freedom. Amartya Sen (2001 [1999]) argues that there are several stages of freedom, beginning with the freedom to partake, through having a say in how something governs, up to the right to opt out. The highest and the lowest forms look like mirror images. People distinguish opting out from being excluded and, even when opting out, are influenced by the existence of Church Meeting. Although they may not take advantage of the systems that are set up to consult them, they still appreciate the attitude that they represent.

There are, however, associated with every congregation categories of people who are not members. There are adherents, who are people who regularly attend but have not yet come into membership or have chosen not to enter into membership. There are also the children of the congregation who usually do not formally come into membership until in their late teens although they are very much seen as part of the community. Finally, there are the families of members who may belong elsewhere but when visiting the members attend worship at the church. So, although it looks like a direct democracy, there can be a substantial number at any Sunday service who are not members. This group forms a substantive layer around the central membership of the congregation.

However, the dispute is also about who can have communion and who cannot. It therefore also deals with a boundary. As seen in the Location chapter, Fredrik Barth (1998 [1969]) argues that groups need to spend time maintaining boundaries. Communal boundaries are easily disputed; the boundary is not permanently fixed but continually altered in the practice of life. The Church meeting in practice formally sets these boundaries and, thus is the place within the organisational structure where turbulence over membership and who can have access to Communion occurs.

The meeting portrayed here is well attended, about double average attendance. This high attendance is because it is an Extraordinary Church Meeting called to deal with a long-term conflict at St Andrew's, Edgerton over children's admission to Communion which had come to a head.⁸⁹ Turbulence is to be expected in this meeting.

4 . Opening the Debate

Daniel proceeds to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our deliberations and

⁸⁹ See Appendix E

that we may have the patience to listen to others' views. Then he starts an introductory talk which goes into some depth about the history of Communion. He gives not just the Memorialist stance, but he feels it is necessary to include John Calvin's position⁹⁰ and a description of consubstantiation. He then outlines the basis for excluding children, which is due to the Sunday School movement which separated the children from the worshipping community. At this point, it is clear that Daniel is starting to run out of wind.

"I have something I prepared earlier, may I read it?" says Alistair.

"Please do," says Daniel. "I'm finding it difficult to get the balance right as I clearly have strong opinions on this."

Alistair then gets up and reads a speech. Its focal point was that to him, and others, the taking of Communion by children belittles it, and to them it is a serious act of devotion. It is not something to be taken lightly, and that consideration should be exercised that it is made properly. In this Alistair cites the scripture reference "Let a man examine himself and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself."⁹¹

⁹⁰ Calvin was not a simple memorialist. His formulation uses signification in a manner that prefigures postmodernism; that is the symbolic action in the earthly church is performative of an actual participation in the heavenly Eucharistic meal.

⁹¹ 1 Corinthians 11:28-29.

After this, there is a stretch of silence.

Daniel gets to speak first. He is the minister and responds as the teaching Elder within the congregation. To do so is to connect with the chain that Daniele Hervieux-Leger (2000, 96) sees as so distinctive in the tradition. His introduction however gets carried away with detail that is not directly relevant. Daniel is torn between two different roles. His role as a teaching Elder means that he sees it has his duty to explain as fully as he can the understandings of Communion that may be active within the congregation. To this extent, he is seeking

Harold: Then again
when I was a hell of a side younger than I am now
you used to see ministers walking around

Ruth: it's true too

Harold: It's very rare that you see a minister
walking around
the odd one
the only one of many clergy
these days is wearing a dog collar
and I always remember saying that they wear them
so as people can tell who they are
and go and speak to them
and is that right

Ruth: Can I just say
did you ever see Jesus in a dog collar

Harold: Not at school
he didn't wear a uniform either

Ruth: So what is the significance
it's what you get from the person
not the dog collar
you just have got a bit of a hang up about this
Having said that
when the real need arises for Daniel
to be known as a minister
when it is outside of the church
he is going to visit in Hospital
He always wears his dog collar
he wears it for weddings and funerals

Harold: Does he?

Ruth: Oh yes

Ruth and Harold (St Andrew's, Edgerton 3:1664-1701)

to reveal the diversity that is within the congregation. However, he is, as everyone there knows, very strongly in favour of children receiving Communion. Thus, he is struggling to remain balanced in his explanation while at the same time making clear where he stands. His relief, when Alistair asks to talk, is palpable.

Oddly, Daniel does not note perhaps the one significant point of all Reformed Eucharistic theology, and that is the centrality of the theme of the Eucharist as a communal meal. This holds whether the theologian takes a Zwinglian stance, where the Eucharist is a memorial of the Last Supper, whether they adopt a Calvinist stance where it is a participation in the heavenly banquet,

or even the understanding of it as a covenantal meal. That is not to say that the alternative used in other traditions of a sacrifice is not present (Howard 2012), but that is definitely a minor theme. Among the ways this is demonstrated in the service is that it is always celebrated from a table and not an altar; this is the case even when the table is so designed that it looks like an altar.

The emphasis of it as a meal also links

with the congregation's social eating habits. Meals are not just times at which we get nourishment. Meals in human society are normally social activities, with people often eating less if alone (Nestle et al. 1998, S51). The social status of an individual can be marked by eating certain foods: even in the Western culture the eating of meat is in part related to social structural factors (Gossard and York 2003). Finally, commensality, or whom we eat with, is a clue to those people with whom we have a connection. Mary Douglas notes that in her family those with whom the family share food are a subset of those with whom they will drink (Douglas 1997, 66–67). Thus excluding children of the congregation from the meal says something of the nature of the meal. There are meals where children are excluded, such as romantic dining or where a lot of alcohol will be consumed, but in modern culture it is normative for children to eat with the family.

Food played a significant role in congregational life in much the same way as noted by Webster

Valerie: We didn't go to the meal
you might have noticed
We went to one
about three years ago
Megan was younger
a lot younger
but we didn't go this time
because
I just felt
for the older people
and Megan would have had to sit

Jean: *and be quiet*

Valerie: yeah
that there would be nothing for her

Jean: *they'd have need to*

Valerie: If there had been a children's table
but I don't think any of the other children were going

Jean: *Yes I mean you needed
if there were two or three children
then you'd have had to think of things to do
while*

Valerie: So maybe that was our fault
we surely should have got together
and discussed on going or not

Valerie (St Andrews, Edgerton 7:505-528)

(Webster 2013, 82–83) and congregational social events tended to focus on food. At Ulverstone, coffee was always served after the main worship service, although St Andrew’s Edgerton only did it once a month due to the distance between the kitchen and the main meeting room.⁹² St Andrew’s, Edgerton preferred at socials to all sit around a single table. In the quote above, Valerie is talking about a congregational meal at a local restaurant, similar to a meal they had had during a recent anniversary year. The only complaint I heard was not the absence of children, but that they were sat at a number of tables during the meal and thus were not able to talk with everyone at the lunch.

Alistair, in taking the stand, actually does three things: first he makes a connection with the tradition which to a certain extent queries some of Daniel’s assertions, second in doing so he references the particular aspect of tradition that St Andrew’s sees as its own and finally he connects to the Bible. Now Alistair himself has become a spokesperson for the more traditional within the congregation. He connects

There is one change.
Alistair stood on his conscience and he retired
I know bits of that
A lot of us felt the same about.
Membership is a thing you do
when you know what you are up to:
on the other hand Esther had quite a reason
for not standing in its way.
It was a very difficult situation
very unusual.
I am glad to see Alistair back at Church.
He was missing quite a few Sundays.
It is nice to see him back
but he had to make a point,
moreover taking part in the church meeting last week.
He was very prominent prior:
he was church secretary.
He has now come back into the group:
all is well it seems.
I know quite a lot of people chatted
about the situation.
I think most of the elderly ones
felt that it was not on.
On the other hand if you lose a child over it,
it is not good

Alice, (St Andrew’s, Edgerton 14:224-243)

with the tradition by citing the historical practice of restricting admittance to Communion. This can be traced back to Calvin’s controversy with the Libertines in 1553 (Reformation Art 2014; 'John Calvin' 2011) when he stopped Libertines from coming to the table. Further, the inability of

⁹² After I left, St Andrews installed a small kitchenette at the back of the church and since then have coffee after worship every week.

children to carry out self-examination was seen, by John Calvin, to be a reason to refuse Communion (Calvin 1960 [1529], 1353).

The liturgy of Reformed churches for communion in the English-speaking world seems to have had only one standard requirement, the reading of the warrant (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) but which was frequently extended to include verses 27-29 (D. M. Thompson 2012, 103), the passage quoted by Alistair in the piece above. The effect of this passage is to put the onus on an individual to take communion 'worthily'. Calvin uses the strictures of 'faith' and 'love' (Calvin 1960 [1529], 1420). However, with the final discipline of the Church being excommunication, there has always been a tendency of congregations to try and discern whether participants were worthy. Thus, congregations imposed strictures on themselves. As with the Libertines, these strictures have tended to focus on moral and often sexual behaviour.

English Congregationalism seems to have circumvented this by strict admission into membership, meaning that there were large groups of adherents to the congregation who did not take communion and so could not be excommunicated. The congregation hoped only those who were very pious

We used to take a card out to all
everyone you dealt with at that time.
When we became United Reformed
that fell by the wayside.
These tickets that you sent out
- and they used to count the tickets -
they used to bring the tickets to the church and put
them down.
You knew who'd been.
We don't have these
which I think is a backward move really.
If you didn't actually see them in church
or catch them in church
but that's gone by the wayside.

Harold, (St Andrew's, Edgerton 3:155-168)

would accept the strictures, and so it would never need to seek the excommunication of any member. Presbyterianism seems to have been far stricter. Communion tokens, while seeming to originate in France, were most widely used in Scotland and churches with Scottish connections (Powell 2012). These were a token given by an Elder to a member when he had satisfied the member that they had properly done an examination of conscience. Not satisfied with this, the

fencing of the table reached levels that led to parodies such as the Cameronian Cat (Hogg 1819, I:209).⁹³ Preparation could also be rigorous; David Murray's relatively recent account of Communion makes the season last five days with services morning and evening (Murray 2014). This is contrary to Thompson's account that dates the last of this style of communion as in the 1970s (D. M. Thompson 2012, 101). Communion cards had been phased out within memory at St Andrew's, Edgerton. In referencing this tradition, although he does not say it, Alistair is making quite clear that the practice of children not receiving Communion goes back further than the Sunday School movement. He has, however, done this without directly challenging Daniel.

By doing this, he particularly emphasises the Presbyterian part of the tradition. St Andrew's is very conscious of coming from this part of the tradition; members referenced it saying, "When we were Presbyterians". They would also discuss the loss of identity they experienced since joining the URC. That is not to suggest that Presbyterianism was understood in the same way or meant the same thing to everyone within the congregation. Rather, there were associations, some shared and some not, which would invoke for many members a sense of tradition. Thus, these associations were creating a sense of shared experience, even though in actual fact there were differences within that experience (R. Jenkins 2008 [1996], 136; A. P. Cohen 1987, 201). It therefore stood for a coherent past that differed from the lack of focus in the present. Thus, they, to a degree, function much as the Walsay Spree did (A. P. Cohen 1985, 94–96; A. P. Cohen 1987, 73–78), in providing reference points that created the impression of communality while allowing a great deal of room for personal interpretation.

⁹³ When finding this quote I had assumed the use of J.R. Hogg on the webpage was to distinguish the author from the famous Scottish novelist James Hogg. It turns out to be the same person. Given James Hogg's perspicacious portrayal of the dark side of the Reformed psyche in the *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, this is an intriguing reference.

However, he has cited a Bible verse, and in doing so, he has also drawn attention to the fact that Daniel has not referenced the Bible. Within the Reformed tradition, the Bible is held to be the Primary Standard of the faith. The 17th century Westminster Confession states,

The Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture. (Westminster Assembly of Divines 1990 [1646], 13).

The United Reformed Church states as part of its Basis of Union, 'It acknowledges the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as the supreme authority for faith and conduct of all God's people' (General Assembly of the United Reformed Church 1990 [1981], 251). Therefore, there is always a struggle between the primacy of the Bible and other appeals to the tradition or doctrine. Perhaps this is why many ministers connect with the work of people like Ian Fraser (2005 [1998]) and Laurie Green (1992 [1989]): the emphasis on Bible study rather than tradition sits more happily within the Reformed tradition.

The Bible featured in several ways in the life of St Andrew's, Edgerton. It was used in worship, including the bringing in of a big Bible at the start of worship, as well as having several readings from it. Equally, the evening café service, which was held on one night a month, often had a Biblical theme, and there were several Bible Studies within the congregation.

All the groups at St Andrew's, Edgerton had started under Daniel. The most active group was called 'Talk Faith' and met twice a month. Angus, a former Scottish minister from the Congregational tradition, who had moved to Edgerton on his retirement, led the sessions. Daniel, the minister, led another group called 'Talking Along the Way'. This was an evening group, and he designed it

I like that we stand up
when the Bible is brought in
like they do in Scotland.

We did not bring the Bible
in at West Wickham
or at Mornington.

That is quite significant
and I like that.

And the other thing -
and I was quite shaken -
we did not stand for the offering
we just sit there
which is funny. Little things like that
you work out whether
you like it or not.

Alice, (St Andrew's Edgerton 14:120-154)

specifically to attract people who were not likely to come to the 'Talk Faith' group. Thus, a variety of opportunities existed for people at St Andrew's, Edgerton.

Attendance at Bible Study was symbolic in many ways, in much the same way as attending Church Meeting. Ruth, although a stalwart of the congregation, commented to me at one point that although she was ready to do practical activities, such as catering for socials, she did not feel that Bible Study was something she did. Therefore she did not go to the sessions, although I think she appreciated that Bible Study was part of congregational life. Equally, those who attended quite often were going for the fellowship, or because they felt it was something they should do, rather than to learn about the Bible. Angus led the 'Talk Faith' group at a level which was below the ability of many members who had attended Bible study for years. Thus, the Bible is a way of connecting with the issue of Communion, not only in the tradition but because it is also prominent in church life.

At this point, Alistair has managed to connect with a great deal of the tradition and the way the congregation functions so that the debate is going against having children at Communion. This is a discussion at two levels about belonging. On the surface level, it is a discussion about whether

children of the congregation are welcome at the religious symbolic meal or not and thus to what extent they are part of the community. However, it is also a debate which asks to what extent is the congregation 'Presbyterian' and connecting with that tradition. Alistair is connecting with the historical tradition by the use of the Bible. Those who connect with Presbyterianism are thus affirmed in their membership if the tradition is upheld.

5. Connecting with the Congregation

Then Ruth gets up and says "I think that Communion should be open - after all, Jesus said, 'Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me'."

Then Ina says, "I don't think I am capable as Junior Church leader of preparing the children to receive Communion."

"I am prepared to," says Esther. "I think of Communion as a family meal. The children should be included."

"I am happy to take some preparation sessions", says Daniel.

Again the meeting falls into silence.

Ruth's response to Alistair is to quote a different text from the Bible, in favour of having children at Communion. However, it is certainly not the quick exchanges that are often associated with proof-texting; the silence, before she speaks, lasts several minutes. The verses are not equivalent; while the earlier verse is associated with the teaching on Communion, there is a cross-stitch embroidery done by Doreen with this text hanging in the main meeting hall. It is one among of a

set which also includes 'The Lord's my Shepherd'. Alistair is using a text to situate the debate within the tradition; Ruth is using one from the popular piety of the congregation. What is more, Ruth is speaking as the grandmother of two girls who are regularly in worship. Part of the debate is how her grandsons are able to participate in worship.

But we have got
one member of the congregation
who I very much admire
because she is never any different.
You never hear her get cross,
you never hear her
and she will do anything.
Harold you know who I mean now don't
you
and I look up to her
because I think she is a very, very big
influence on St Andrews
or she has on me anyway.
I could name her but I am not sure she'd
like me to:
and it is Esther.
She is an amazing lady

Ruth, (St Andrew's Edgerton 3:323-335)

Ina picks on preparing the children for Communion.

She is Scots, and, therefore, I assume,⁹⁴ of Presbyterian heritage, and has been attending for years and is an Elder. Yet, she feels inadequate for preparing children to take Communion. 'Inadequacy' is one of the reasons people do not attend Bible Study, that is they believe their knowledge is insufficient to attend. It may be a fear of appearing ignorant before others, especially the minister. If it is so, a concept that gave Daniel the ability to speak first is now playing against the inclusion of children at Communion. Daniel does not get to control the way his authority as the minister plays within the congregation.

In response to this, Esther gets up to speak.

Esther is not a Scot, but born and raised in Edgerton. As a teenager, she chose to attend St Andrew's, Edgerton despite the rest of the family being high church Anglicans. She found the congregation gave her the right mix of

I feel Ruth
for the amount of energy
and love
that emits from her.
And Esther
because of her quiet faith
and when she is reading from the pulpit
it comes over.
So those are two who really stand out for me
as role models
as it were.

Moirra, (St Andrew's, Edgerton 13:450-458)

⁹⁴ I never actually checked this with Ina and am aware of Scots choosing to attend Presbyterian-style churches even when they do not have a Presbyterian heritage.

challenge and support to build her confidence. The congregation has maintained a strong connection with Esther; appointing her a Guide captain while she was away training as a midwife. In my interviews, all the other women interviewed named Esther as being the person they admired and tried to emulate in the congregation. Equally she still received extra attention; I was requested to take photographs of Esther's garden stall at the fête and she was often talked about. This relationship has continued for more than forty years.⁹⁵

So when Esther speaks saying, "I think as Communion is a family meal. The children should be included", there is now a strong case for the congregation including children at Communion. However, it is more than that; the emphasis in this statement is on including people. This is typical of Esther's theological stance and indeed

Well I think I have always been involved
and you have always been involved
but when I went
I have got a letter now
that when I went to college
I would only be eighteen then
thanking me for my services to the Sunday School
because I had trained them for the scripture exam
you see
before I went to college.
And sort of
hoping that I would come back after college
and whilst I was at college the Guide Leader left
and they persuaded somebody to take them on
until I got back home
so they did
and they sort of kept me there
because there was always a job for me.

Esther, (St Andrew's Edgerton 10:254-273)

has permeated through St Andrew's, Edgerton in many ways. These included the story of Maggie, who suffered from alcoholism, but for whom the congregation created a place within the fellowship that supported her and enabled her to be in control of her addiction. Equally when Daniel tried to create two teams for a quiz during worship, they actively refused to cooperate until everyone was on the same side. Ina once raised at Elders' Meeting on similar grounds the splitting of the mid-week Bible Study into two. Thus, Esther is also invoking an understanding of the church that was held quite strongly.

⁹⁵ Unusual but not exceptional, I can think of another congregation where someone of Esther's age has this sort of symbiotic relationship with the congregation.

This draws together the two ways of looking at flow, both as an emotional system and as a discursive network of ideas. People have positions within the networks that are around ideas, but belief networks also connect with people. Alistair spoke previously for the

Jean: *You Megan
What things do you remember
from your early memories of church
particularly?*

Megan: I remember that we always did Nativity plays and they always tried to include everybody and like try things on like think what would they want to do so if a child was not there every Sunday.

Jean: so they're big a lot of work on including people bringing people in?

Megan: Yes.

Megan (St Andrew's Edgerton 7:50-62)

tradition and was the spokesperson for it in the Church Meeting. However, the three different women who address the meeting each play a role where their emotional connection with ideas is salient. Ruth has spoken as a grandmother. Ina's response discloses ambivalence towards the tradition; although upholding the tradition, she doubts her ability to teach it to others. Significantly, Esther has spoken; although she would strongly deny this, her relationship with the congregation means that Alistair's intervention is fully balanced. The tension now is a choice between the congregation's inclusive practice and the tradition.

These are both strong parts of the congregation's character. While more recent members tell the *Ugly Duckling* story about their joining St Andrew's, the question of children being welcome at Communion triggers worries about their own acceptance. Opening up Communion to children would be a rejection of Presbyterianism.

6. The Place of Children

The family is a strong element of the Reformed tradition. In the Tradition chapter, I have already mentioned the fact that early on, the home was used as a site for developing compliance with pastoral care and the way personal piety led to individual care. The one thing that has not been

present is how the congregation's children feel about this debate.

"I did not feel I could take Communion", says Jackie "When Aurora was not allowed to, she was terribly excited about taking it. At that age, taking Communion is special; it is children like Aurora who honestly believe. I felt hurt when she could not receive Communion."

"Megan and Myah picked up the upset," says Valerie. "At that age they know when something is wrong, and think it is them."

"They should not think that," says Ina.

"It is not matter of what should or should not happen, they hear the tutting and suspect it is directed at them."

"I think we should offer apologies to Megan and Myah", says Carol. "We did not mean this to be hurtful to them."

Again the meeting lapses into silence.

The Reformed tradition has long struggled with passing the faith from one generation to another, the ideal form being that the children of members become members of the next

It disappoints me
that there are so many things on Sundays
aimed at children.
That
even our own children
if it's orchestra
if they have to choose between music and church
they go to the orchestra.
When we were younger
well there wouldn't be such things
on a Sunday anyway:
music or football or things like that

Esther, (St Andrew's Edgerton 10: 521-531)

generation. Within paedobaptising⁹⁶ Dissenters and Puritans, the transmission of faith was primarily situated within the family, rather than the wider society. Thus, to John Calvin, the father is seen as setting the spiritual tone of the whole family (Calvin 1960 [1529], 385–388). Richard Baxter initiated a practice of catechism that was family-centred (Baxter 1974 [1656]). The practical divinity books, which were part of the ‘governmentality’ described in the chapter on Tradition, frequently focused on the family (Baxter 2010 [1673]; Henry 1847).

Also, the Sunday School movement started (Larsen 2008). This was originally a social action by the churches, involving as much the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic as it did religious education, and primarily aimed at children from non-church

Not enough children.
We went to St Stephen's, Paleford
and stayed there until
they were old enough
to do their own thing
then we moved to St Andrew's
because the service suited us more.
More comfortable

Lorna, (St Andrew's Edgerton 8a:15-19)

families. Parents who were members were expected to be responsible for bringing their children to the faith. In the middle of the last century, the Family Church Movement (Hamilton 1963 [1941]) encouraged Sunday School to happen at the same time as morning worship in the hope that the parents of Sunday School attendees would come. Toward the end of the century the focus switched to All-Age worship, with the recognition that children were not getting involved with the worshipping community while separately at Sunday School (Harkness 1998). More recent initiatives have included the Child-Friendly Church (Cutler 2013) which originated in the Diocese of Liverpool (The Diocese of Liverpool, The Church of England 2008). There has, therefore, been a move from the family raising their children in the faith to the congregation doing this. The adoption of All Age worship brought the opening of Communion to the fore, although the clearest recent material is by the National Youth and Children's Work Committee

⁹⁶ Simply because I feel it is wrong for me to assume that this is the case for credo-baptising Dissenters; it may have been, but it may not have been.

(Williams 2011) which is obviously for the inclusion of children at Communion. Despite the changes that have occurred over the years, there is still a strong connection between the children of the congregation and the continuation of the tradition.

The trend in Christianity in the UK over the last forty years⁹⁷ has been that of decline - church attendance has halved since 1980 (Ashworth et al. 2007). The URC has not been immune to the trend. It is at least reasonable for an individual to feel some concern over the continuation of the denomination, which would include the local congregation.

It would be a dream rather than vision
that we would have some younger people
with some energy
but
with the way things are going
perhaps not.
Therefore the vision would be
that we were all five years older
and less energy.
It sounds very negative
but you get to the stage in life
when sometimes you want to pass things over
to other people to do:
you have retired from doing things like
Elders or Sunday School whatever
just hoping that somebody else will take up your
baton
and if there is not somebody to do that
you are inclined to think quite negatively.

Isabel, (St Andrew's Edgerton, 2b 21-38)

The Junior Church at St Andrews, Edgerton is small, which leads to anxiety over its continuation and, therefore, that of the congregation. Members acknowledge that most children will not be members when adults, but still associate a good sized Junior Church with a secure future. When members at St Andrew's, Edgerton, talked about children it echoed Breen's words on the departure of the refugee wagons from Minas Tirith: 'And there were always too few children in this city' (Tolkien 2011 [1955], 764).

What is more, the idea that it is the family which transmits the faith is causing a tension due to the dual definition of congregational families; not only those families who attended but the wider family of members including grandchildren were often seen as part of the fellowship. The members knew that there was no way that their children or grandchildren would keep St Andrew's, Edgerton going, but also that the children who came week by week were unlikely to

⁹⁷ This is the extent of my knowledge, not a measure of the start or finish of this decline.

remain with the congregation.

I return to the scene. It is quite clear that there are emotions involved in the speeches. Jackie, in bringing up the emotion she felt over Communion when it was denied to her daughter, draws the congregation's attention to the fact that it is not just a matter of sorting out doctrine:

Jean: *Your sons do they live locally?*

Ruth: No
We have one son who lives twenty,
thirty minutes away
He is married with two children
who were actually the two children
who were baptised in the church
up until a couple of years ago
were quite regular attenders.

Harold: Yeah.

Ruth: But they have moved away
from the area.

Ruth and Harold (St Andrew's Edgerton 3:729-739)

there are people involved, and they react emotionally as well as intellectually. Valerie notes that the older girls who did receive are conscious of the talk within the congregation. Ina's response is almost automatic and may appear to deny that, but I suspect that was because Ina was genuinely struggling herself. The tradition gives continuity with the past, an appearance of permanence in a setting which is changeable, and can allow a distance from unsettling emotions over security. That is to say, the tradition itself can act as a defence against anxiety. Valerie's intervention has shown the frailty of the defence. Carol's admission that they were hurt and were owed an apology by the congregation does begin to address the hurt, particularly as Carol speaks as church secretary, a position that permits her to take the floor on behalf of the congregation.⁹⁸

Jackie is more emotional than Valerie. She has a strong emotional connection herself, as her younger daughter Aurora is not given Communion. Jackie was raised in the congregation, and had been through a membership class as a teenager. However, when she asked about

⁹⁸ If a minister symbolically acts as representing the church catholic, then the church secretary symbolically represents the local church.

membership as an adult, it was found that not only was her name not on the current roll,⁹⁹ but there was no evidence that it ever had been. Thus, Jackie has experienced a denial of her status as member of the congregation. Her daughter not receiving communion activates this hurt, but there is no way to deal with this at this meeting.

The congregation has defence mechanisms against unwanted thoughts and suggestions.

The lack of children is seen as a threat to the ongoing existence of the congregation when many churches are in decline. Part of the strategy is to use the tradition to create a sense of continuity. Just like the teaching hospitals

You have to celebrate
how well our children do as well.
You have to do that with children.
I think some of them think Megan
Myah and Megan play well:
they not just got into any old orchestra,
they have got into the city orchestra.
Two of the girls
out of the 36 that got in.
We do have to celebrate
their talents and there skills
and it

Valerie (St Andrew's Edgerton 7a:455-466)

that Menzies-Lyth worked in, the mechanisms for coping did not allow a method of processing pain, but rather avoidance (Menzies-Lyth 1988 [1959,1961,(1961b), 1970]; Menzies-Lyth 1989 [1986]). The emotions come through sharply when there are questions of inclusion. The mothers' hurt at the exclusion of their children, and the desire for the inclusion of their grandchildren by many members, are both driven by wanting the assurance of their own belonging. If their family belongs then they belong. There needs to be a resolution, and yet even if there is a resolution there are still issues that need to be faced. The whole turbulence is centring on belonging and what it means to be included. A debate which initially started off looking at younger children and

⁹⁹ It may be that St Andrew's, Edgerton was one of the congregations to try having junior membership. This was a method of giving young people admittance to Communion and probably voting rights at Church Meeting but not entering them on the roll. The reason for not wanting to enter them on the roll was that many children went away for training at 18 and then settled elsewhere in the country. They therefore did not expect the teenagers to be long-term members of the church. Added to this was the fact that the URC has, for many years, calculated its contribution to central coffers as dependent on the number of people on the roll, so keeping these numbers low was an advantage to the congregation. Young people below working age make only a limited financial contribution to the income of the congregation.

communion has already spread to the children's mothers. Everyone is feeling insecure in their membership.

7. Restoring Community

Eventually, Andrew gets slowly to his feet.

“Last summer while we were on holiday in Scotland, we attended communion at the local church and the minister invited ‘all who love the Lord Jesus’ to participate.

That is the standard for people to come to Communion that we should set.”

There is again a silence.

Shortly afterwards Daniel says: “Has anyone anything more to say? In which case, shall we bring it to a vote? I propose that we keep an open table to which all are welcome.”

Andrew raises his hand. “May that be amended to ‘all those who love the Lord Jesus?’”

There is a murmur of assent from most people there. This is then put, and most members raise their hands to indicate support. The vote is carried with one against and two abstentions.

We then say the Grace to each other. Pauline goes out and returns with the trolley loaded with coffee-making equipment.

I watch people perform a figure-of-eight dance. They embrace Valerie and Jackie; then they go to Alistair and assure him of their affection. This goes on for about half an hour while coffee is being drunk. I am not sure how much coffee is drunk.

Daniel, Pauline and I put the church straight, ready for worship on Sunday, while the dance continues. As we get the last seat into place, people are finishing and leaving. As I leave with Daniel at the end, Pauline has gone to wash up the cups, and we joke about needing a whisky after tonight's meeting.

Just as Esther is a significant person in the congregation's identity, so is Andrew, but his role is different. Andrew, in many ways, stands for the founding tradition; he is a Scot and also a doctor. He has served as an Elder for many years and is recognised by members as having a deep faith. However, he manages to do more than that. He works with a variety of pieces from the tradition, in particular he is picking out a piece of the liturgy, the Invitation to Communion, which is almost standard in Communion within the URC, yet rarely appears in service books.

The invitation seems to have had its origins in Scottish Congregationalism, in the work by John Hunter (Hunter 1903; Davies 1962, 232). If this is the case, then John Hunter's invitation is a deliberate diversion from the barring statements made by Presbyterians at Communion seen earlier in this chapter: he does this by focusing on who is welcome rather than who is excluded. However, the fact that Andrew, who is a solid member of the congregation, is listening carefully for the invitation in a sister church, which also practises open communion, suggests that welcome at Communion is not guaranteed even for him.

The standard that Andrew takes from the invitation, “all who love the Lord Jesus”, reflects strongly on the ‘belief in’ rather than the ‘belief that’ perspective of faith. He thus draws on both sides of the debate and melds it into a single understanding. To take unworthily is no longer about doctrinal understanding but is based on allegiance to the Lord Jesus. The table is thus both open to the children and by analogy to all those who were feeling excluded by the doctrinal emphasis on ‘eating worthily’, but there is still a standard. His second intervention makes this clear.

Megan: Yes I am happy now
that everyone can take Communion
but it's kind of changed the rules a bit
and I thought the rules were
that you always had to be confirmed
to take it

Valerie: Megan's got a very

Megan: So it's kind of strange
because I could have been taking it
since I was like
aged three or something.
And it's just the rules have come in
and it's a bit different to me now
because I have taken my Communion
my confirmation
I was not allowed to take Communion before then
And now that
and now that people
don't have to take
don't to have confirmation
to take their bread and wine
or we can just take it already
so I know we don't need to be confirmed.
That is what I find a bit strange

Valerie and Megan (St Andrew's, Edgerton 7b:449-472)

However, it should be noted that the ambiguity of the word ‘love’ is part of the reason it works. The use of the word ‘love’ has become a device that is as polysemous as faith and this allows the crossing of the bridge. Andrew’s own intention is close to Jonathan Edwards’ religious affections, that is, an act of the will, yet a strong emotional response is also there. It is likely that many in the congregation would understand it more in terms of a child’s love for a parent. As such, it allows the Church Meeting to adopt a policy where the two sides are integrated.

However, the congregation has to rebuild its sense of itself as a place where all are as welcome as they are, hence the complex dance that takes place during the coffee after the meeting has closed.

The aim is to rebuild the affiliative networks of relationships that keep the congregation together. Andrew has managed to establish connections between the tradition and inclusion so that they are no longer antagonistic, but there is still emotional work to be done. It is only those relatively on the fringe who tidy up the room. This is exceptional: in both congregations the rule was that one cleared up before one socialised after an event.

8. Conclusion

Following this Church Meeting has allowed me to explore the ways that congregations function as institutions, discursive domains and emotional systems. The full picture depends on the interaction of the three. The tradition runs through all the debate at the Church Meeting but not always as openly as here.

It is intriguing to reflect on the nature of the anxiety that works within the setting. At its core is the desire to belong. The tradition acts as a way of defining what one needs to do in order to belong. The preparation for Communion is part of this. It seems to say ‘complete this, and you will belong’. Yet it is clear that even Andrew comes to Communion asking whether he is welcome. This acts, therefore, to focus on the inclusion of children within the community. The tradition itself tends to favour transmission down the family line. Thus, the more generations of your family that are part of the congregation, the more you belong. Equally, children in the congregation is seen as a sign of congregational health. The scenario means that there are two threats to belonging. The first is that they or their family may be excluded, and the second that the congregation might cease to exist.

Congregations clearly do have boundaries and having them is crucial to their identity as it helps to define where they are heading. However, boundary layers are also notable because they are the

areas in which the congregation interacts with the surrounding flows. There is a need to keep the boundary layer as smooth as possible so as to maintain laminar flow within the core and maintain the momentum within the congregation. A clear boundary is seen as promoting this but this is not feasible; a flow cannot just slip past other objects. Circumstances outside the congregation will always interact with the boundary in inconsistent ways. If a flow is defined by its continuity of flow, then it can only do that in relation to other flows. Thus, boundary layers and the handling of them are critical for the existence and identity of the congregation.

In this church meeting, the congregation managed to renegotiate the marking line in a way that connected two decidedly different flows. In doing this, they demonstrated that the boundaries are negotiated, just as Fredrik Barth acknowledged happened amongst ethnic groups (F. Barth 1998 [1969]). This renegotiation of the boundary included a re-interpretation of the tradition that allowed continuity to remain, yet for there to be decisive changes in how it was understood. It should be noted that appealing to tradition did not work as a method of solving the dispute. Both sides used different parts of the tradition to validate their perspective. More significantly, they achieved this renegotiation through creating new bonds. These included both the bond that links communion with 'Loving the Lord Jesus' and also the dance at the end where they assured both sides of their concern. In this way, there were bonds built between ideas and between people. In the next chapter, therefore, I want to explore how these bonds interplay with the provision of worship.

Worship

1 . Introduction

The last chapter concentrated on a Church Meeting at St Andrew's, Edgerton, to explore the nature of community and the technology of identity around it. That chapter explored an outbreak of turbulence within the usually laminar sphere of congregational life. This chapter uses a baptismal service at Ulverstane to examine the role that worship has within the creation and sustenance of identity within the congregations. My focus is on a different phenomenon from flow: that of viscosity.

While I was at Ulverstane, there were regular rumblings over baptism. There were several distinct approaches to baptism within the congregation. At least a sizeable minority¹⁰⁰ of the congregation were not in favour of the open baptismal policy as practised by the minister. There was thus opportunity for turbulence to break out over baptism. However, there was never a Church Meeting where a similar level of turbulence was felt as in the previous chapter; it was raised as an issue, but never seemed a threat to the fellowship.¹⁰¹ The question, therefore, is why the level of turbulence was less. The service I am describing here is a baptismal service. I will explore the relationship between the congregation and worship; both how the congregation seeks to shape its worship to reflect its identity and how worship seeks to shape the identity of the congregation.

There are problems with dealing with worship in the Reformed tradition, as it is a tradition that places a strong emphasis on rationality. As Rice and Huffstutler say:

¹⁰⁰ It might be better expressed as two sizeable minorities, as there were definitely two different views of alternatives, which together almost certainly outnumbered those in favour of the minister's stand, but they never cooperated.

¹⁰¹ See Appendix F.

each of these three elements — festival, mystery and rationality — belong in worship. The three great families within Christendom are each often said to emphasize one of these three features over another: Orthodoxy emphasize the festive; Roman Catholicism the mystery and Protestantism the rational. Within Protestantism itself, Pentecostalism seems to emphasize the festive, Anglicanism the mystical and the Reformed tradition the rational.’ (Rice and Huffstutler 2001, 196).

Now, what Rice is talking about here is not the whole of the tradition, but the main emphasis in worship, the ideal-form. A superb Roman Catholic theologian can be extremely rational indeed; equally, the best Reformed theologians have a mystical tendency within them. However, this is not what people think of when they are attracted to the Reformed tradition. The Reformed tradition has always put a strong emphasis on ministerial education, and the learned exposition of scripture is one of the hallmarks of Reformed worship. It seeks to capture the mind, often ignoring the body of the worshipper. This approach can lead to a denial of both the mystical and ritual elements of the faith in worship.

The emphasis has led the Reformed tradition to stress the importance of the interpretation of Scripture. Thus, although the Reformed would never wish to deny that a congregation is a Eucharistic community, the relationship between word and sacrament is such that the local congregation is a hermeneutical community. This has resulted in the emphasis of the content being determined by the interaction between context and scripture. Thus, there is a strong emphasis on the control of the act of worship being within the context of the worshipping community and under the control of those leading it. What external written texts exist are not prescriptive, but rather templates to be used for the creation of worship.

Martin Stringer, in his exploration of worship within congregations, looks at three ways that worship has been described: as Ritual, Liturgy and Rite, associating each with a particular

approach (Stringer 1999, 21–41). For Ritual, he looks at the sociological description often used in comparative religious studies where ritual is associated with magical ceremony. This created an antipathy in many who practised Reformed Christian worship, where the emphasis on rationality seeks to free worship from superstitious elements. It is not the focus on ritual that is problematic but the characterisation of ritual as superstitious. Within the more liturgical Reformed tradition, the presence of ritual is not denied¹⁰² but is treated with a hermeneutic of suspicion; that is, ritual must have a rationale that makes it subservient to other aspects of worship. Thus, ritual plays a different role: it is like a crystal goblet (Warde 1955) in that it is a vessel in full view, and yet its role is not to come between the worshipper and the performance of worship. This rational approach to ritual strips it of its superstitious properties and often makes it a matter of the practical requirements of the act of worship. The tradition has worked out the rationale for the order of worship over the centuries; the effort to change it requires that there must be reasons to do so. Therefore, there is an inherently conservative approach to innovation in worship which leads to a high level of similarity between acts of worship.

Secondly, a historical analysis of Liturgy relies on there being a historical record. However, freedom in worship has made the actual material used in worship ephemeral. Within the Reformed tradition, even when material has been written down, there is a reasonable chance that it was burnt on the fire after Sunday lunch. What we do have are: some early manuscripts,¹⁰³ an oral tradition and modern templates from the last two hundred years (which may or may not have been used in practice). This transient nature of the tradition is perhaps why, despite producing leading liturgical scholars such as Horton Davies and John Witvliet in the last century,

¹⁰² Among more conservative forms, however, there are those who see the Reformed tradition as being without ritual. In the case of the Reformed tradition, the adoption of liturgical practices is innovative.

¹⁰³ For example Knox's *Book of Common Order* and also the Westminster Directory.

the books on Reformed worship are limited. The two items that survive are hymns and sermons, as they can be used for private devotion as well as public worship.

Finally, the study of Rite is problematic for an odd reason. The Reformed tradition is not averse to the analysis of semiotics, indeed John Calvin's understanding of the Eucharist rests acutely carefully on the relationship between sign and reality (Calvin 1960 [1529], 1359–1360). It could be argued that semiotics is at the heart of another trait of the Reformed tradition, the polemic against idolatry. The power of idols is primarily associated with the sign. Thus, they are not simply associated with the worship of others, but something a Reformed Christian should be vigilant against in their own life. The result is that there is considerable debate over the relationship between sign and symbol and there is continual discourse around determining this relationship within a congregation. Thus the use of sign and meaning relationships are often idiosyncratic to a congregation.

There are positive reasons to favour Stringer's approach within the Reformed tradition. It is the one approach that takes seriously the local context and how it is understood by the congregation. There is the Reformed insistence on the re-statement of faith within the current location and time, which means that we expect worship to differ in context. Also, the weekly worship of the local congregation is the most concrete expression of worship within the tradition. It should be noted that this has already been hinted at in the chapter on location: the idea that the church exists where people gather to hear the word (K. Barth 1964 [1961], 70; Calvin 1960 [1529], 1023). As the congregation is an interpretative community (a group of people who share enough of a common interpretative framework) when they meet for worship, they assume that they are sharing an event. It is beneficial to note that within this shared interpretative framework there is a complex echo of Anthony Cohen's idea that communal identity is created by sharing the same

communal activity (A.P. Cohen 1985, 108-9; A.P. Cohen 1986). However, Cohen sees communal symbolic behaviour as masking a wide range of differing takes on that activity. It is not just the use of symbols, but the way in which they are put together, and there is debate around the appropriateness of their use. There are thus undoubtedly differences in understanding, and yet in a tradition so deliberate about its use of symbolism, an interpretation of commonality seems essential. The whole congregation had a shared interest in creating enough commonality that they were able to hold a discussion about what was going on.

In this chapter, I will follow the start of worship and act of baptism. In doing so, I will look first at the way the community functions as it gathers for worship, then move onto the normative structure of worship, exploring the role of hymns and the process of selecting hymns. Then I will investigate the minister's role as the leader of worship. Then I will pull these threads together to show that they create a technology that produces movement.

2. Gathering for Worship

Despite its just being after ten o'clock, the July air is warm as I lock the car before going into Ulverstone. As I approach, Matt is pushing an elderly lady in a wheelchair up the ramp. I pause briefly at the steps and let them go in first.

Joyce, who as usual is outside welcoming people, shakes both the lady's hand and Matt's before opening the door for them.

"Lovely weather", I say as I shake Joyce's bony hand.

As I enter the main meeting hall, I see there is a crowd already. Robert, Matt's

brother, is sitting a couple of rows in front of me, along with his wife Stephanie and son Reuben. There are several people sitting in the surrounding rows whom I do not recognise, as well as Matt's wife and daughter who are sat in the row directly in front of me. I notice that the drum set is out at the front and that a stand with Stephanie's guitar is out, but only Samuel is playing on the piano at present.

As I settle in, Doug comes down, takes a chair away from the row in front, and Matt brings the wheelchair down with the lady into the vacant space. However, the lady starts quickly to get out of the wheelchair and into the seat next to it, so Matt assists her.

Robert turns around and seeing what is going on says, "You OK, Mum?"

"Yes, yourselves?"

Robert leans over and gives her
a hug.

The scene needs unpicking. Joyce's role is solely to welcome people. She does not hand out anything or deal with other church business while on the door. This is one of the ways in which Ulverstone

Evelyn: Well, I think I will say Sid.
Although he wasn't there when I first went,
because Mabel is another one.
But Sid was always there on the dot,
he always had a smile on his face,
plucky old chap,
he really was.
And he made everybody welcome

Joseph: This, by the way,
is why Joyce is on the door every morning,
every Sunday morning.
She just took it on.
There was somebody else in between.

Evelyn: I can't remember who was in between

Joseph: Joyce was on it for years.
She was getting on a bit
I was saying to her face,
she's getting a little bit old
for being out in all weathers.

Evelyn and Joseph, (Ulverstone 6a:963-881)

seeks to embody being a 'welcoming' congregation. For as long as I can remember, people in positions of authority in the URC have been talking about the need for congregations to be welcoming. On the whole, most congregations have got the idea. There is even external evidence for the level of welcome given by congregations being noticed by the Ship of Fools Mystery Worshipper. A recent one says

'What happened when you hung around after the service looking lost?'

'Not much chance. The aforementioned elder came to our pew for a chat. Then Kathy, the church secretary, spoke to us at length during coffee afterwards. She told us a little about the church and their regular minister, and sent us away with a copy of the church magazine.' (Charles 2011).

Comments on the warm welcome when reviewing URC are common. The range seems to be from the ecstatic to the neutral. My conclusion is that, at least by the standards of current practice, most URC congregations are initially welcoming. Ulverstone was unusual, in that it was nearly always Joyce who welcomed people and that was her role. A far more frequent model is that of St Andrew's, Edgerton, where most of the congregation took

Lillian: Generally people receive you well. Really you should not get through the doors without two people speaking to you well at least one person speaking to you and a person passing you a piece of paper and there should be an Elder there but often the Elders are there but we get this bottle neck of people and they don't get to say their good mornings and you know whatever because of a bottle neck for their talking but generally you shouldn't get by without somebody speaking to you.

Jean: *Its quite hard to walk past Joyce*

Lillian: Yes She tries her best. She is out all weathers.

Lillian, (Ulverstone 1b:2-12)

turns in welcoming people to worship and hand out service sheets. While the quick movement through this welcome portrayed at Ulverstone was normal, there would be brief contact with two or three other people before one got to one's seat. The first would hand one a service sheet, but quite often another (usually the minister, Judith) would greet one when one entered the main meeting hall. However, those who had families or long-established friends appeared to spend

time before the service meeting with them.

However, Ulverstane did not rely solely on the welcome on arrival. They also encouraged people to come to other congregational events. The service sheet listed them in full, and they were also projected onto the screen. However, if there was an exceptional event happening, then there would be members encouraging people to attend. Thus welcome meant as much being invited to these activities as the greeting at the door. Anne, an elderly member, said, "It's a very friendly church. There is no need to feel lonely; there is always something you can go to at the church."

A third part of the welcome is going on; pre-worship is used for catching up with family and friends. At Ulverstane, this happens in the lounge which is off the entrance hall, and there is usually a crowd in there before the service. However, at least as many are catching up inside the main meeting hall. Robert is not unusual in

It was a good choice
Yeah.
We just went there for something new
somewhere else to meet new people.
We enjoyed it didn't we.
The first time
the minute we walked in the door
we were made to feel welcome
and when we first went
Samuel and Rachel had just started coming as well
so we instantly made like a friendship there
and we just thought we would stay.
It was really nice:
their daughter was Lauren's age
and they instantly hit it off.
Lauren made friends straight away

Louise, (Ulverstane 2:20-34)

leaning over to greet his mother. Though the social events during the week tend to distinguish by age and gender, the actual seating on at a non-parade service is mixed. This is intentional; Ulverstane has rejected the idea of having different styles of worship services so that people could go to the one that suited them. However, there is a monthly pattern of services which vary in style. The result is that the congregational makeup varies week to week as people tend to stay away when the service style does not suit them. So although on any Sunday the congregation contains a variety of age groups, the proportions of each age group vary week to week. As the service portrayed here is All-Age worship, some of the older members would be absent. On the

second Sunday of the month, when Communion is held, then there are more senior members present.

As people are gathering for worship, there is a deliberate set of practices that are to strengthen the affiliative network of the congregation taking place before worship. The next section looks at the role that bonds play in the flow.

3. Viscosity – the Knots that Bind

The property of fluids that determines when they become turbulent is called ‘viscosity’. All substances that flow have viscosity, which is a fundamental resistance to flowing. It is caused by the structure that transmits pressures tangentially through the flow. The primary determinant of viscosity is how much contact there is between molecules within the liquid (whether due to closeness or bonds).¹⁰⁴ Basically, the higher the viscosity the harder a fluid is to get flowing and the longer it takes to become turbulent.

There is a variety of ways of measuring viscosity within fluid mechanics. Scientists can indeed measure the absolute viscosity, which is the resistance of a liquid to an applied force or a fluid's internal resistance to flow. Glass would have a high viscosity and a gas a small one. However for many problems the absolute viscosity is too specific. Thus, they use relative viscosity, which is often represented in a situation by the Reynolds number. The Reynolds number, which is dimensionless, can be expressed by the following equation.

$$\frac{\textit{Acceleration terms}}{\textit{Viscose terms (resistance)}} = \textit{Reynolds number}$$

(Acheson 1997, 124)

¹⁰⁴ Such as Van der Waal forces.

The above ratio might be turned around so that:

$$\text{Viscosity} = \frac{\text{forces acting upon the movement}}{\text{structural forces within the flow}}$$

Thus, there are two sets of forces active in the ratio that is viscosity. One type is the connections with the surroundings and how they interact with the flow; the other kind is a product of the connections internal to the flow. Intriguingly, while the external forces are outside the flow when they overwhelm the internal forces, then the turbulence is spread through the internal structure.

A fluid with many bonds is also likely to have a higher viscosity than a fluid with few bonds. Therefore, the number of bonds also acts to change the viscosity. However, a liquid is more viscous than a gas; in a liquid molecules are close enough together that their proximity is part of the viscosity, while in a gas molecules are very much spaced out and only have occasional interactions. The more bonds in a fluid, the stronger the internal structure so the external forces have to be greater to cause turbulence.

In his analysis of current modernity, Zygmunt Baumann distinguishes solids from liquids (Z. Baumann 2012 [2002], 1) and uses the difference between the solid state and the fluid state as a way of discussing the difference between different stages of modernity. He understands the current form of modernity as fluid. The difference between a solid and fluid is not as simple as he makes out: for instance, glass can be seen as an unusually viscous fluid (Gibbs 1997), as indeed can all solids. All fluids have a viscosity, that is, resistance to changing flow. Fluids will keep flowing at a constant speed in the same direction unless they encounter some obstacle or force that acts against their flow. Equally, stationary fluids will not suddenly start flowing in the absence of force. Indeed without a force acting on them fluids will tend to experience laminar flow. This goes against the assumption made in Gibbs' analyses of modernity that there is no

resistance. Rather, if we work correctly with fluid dynamics, what has changed in modernity is the viscosity; we have moved from a time when modernity had a high viscosity to one which is lower. Thus, Baumann is looking at is the difference between high viscosity and low viscosity, or rather a state where the Reynolds number has been exceeded, and society is changing to absorb this new situation.

However, consideration needs to be given to what sort of bonds might exist. On one level, the ending of the chapter on community gave one way of applying the analogy to the way people went about establishing fellowship on both sides with the figure-of-eight dance. However, just as Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene* (2006 [1976]) manages to switch evolution from something happening to creatures to something happening to genes, there is a similar switch that can be done here. In the approach above, artefacts, ideas and other cultural items are the flotsam and jetsam of a sea of people. However, it is possible to see the artefacts, ideas and cultural items as the molecules and the bonds as the semiotic linkages that are made between them by people.

It matters what is perceived as flowing – people or ideas. For people, this is not only the friendships that arise within the congregation; it involves the events that make connections. Some of these bonds are formed by people meeting, whether that is the weekly gathering for worship, a mid-week social meeting, a visit from, or to, a fellow member, a phone call or email. There are, however, other bonds as well, those of family, those of friendship, shared interest or even those with whom you have shared significant life events. These all build together to establish relationships.

However, concepts and practices are also linked. There is the weekly ritual of worship, but other themes will be deliberately placed together within worship so as to build connections. There are common assumptions within the group about how to behave. There is much repetition in

congregational life, where people will re-assert these connections. Thus, there are many concepts and practices that are linked into networks, just as people are. These are transformed slightly with every use that happens within the congregation. Thus, a congregation also has a set of connections between ideas.

When a force acts on the flow, then these bonds transmit the effect through the flow causing it to adjust until it settles back into a new relationship. Thus, external forces disturb the elements within the flow, but, because these elements are connected, these often cause reverberations. The structure is shown in the way these couplings tend to repeatedly reverberate as if there was no adequate way to settle down. Thus, internal structure is unstable and sensitive to external forces in complex ways even when turbulence is not experienced. As ideas and people from outside the congregation come into the congregation's life, so also the congregation adapts its behaviour to them. Perhaps one of the most visible ones is the effort modern congregations put into child protection compared with fifty years ago.

With this change there is a risk of turbulence and congregations do not enjoy turbulence. Therefore, they quite deliberately set out to preserve the bonds that maintain the congregation's life in a smooth state with everyone in step with everyone else. Congregations, like most institutions, work extremely hard to keep these connections. Congregations have a desire to be viscous institutions.

4. Creating Space for Worship - the Structural Form within Worship

Judith comes in with a silver bowl and a towel and places these on the

Communion table. Doug comes in with his wife Valerie and sits in the same row as Robert and his family.

The projector switches from the notices to "Please stand for the Bible". We stand as Judith, the minister, comes in with Bernard, the church secretary, carrying the Bible. Bernard, having placed the Bible on the lectern and waited while Judith goes to the pulpit, briefly gives the notices.

The hush has barely settled when Judith gets up and says, "Welcome to morning worship at Ulverstone URC. In particular, welcome to the family and friends of Reuben, who is going to be baptised today."

She pauses.

"O come let us sing to the Lord and shout with joy to the rock of our salvation.

That really makes me wonder sometimes
and we get rather het up
about Baptism parties.
They come
and they quite often they don't really know
what they're doing in the actual service.
Particularly the godparents.
They don't know they're supposed to be saying
yes and a no, or a I do, or what.
We bore them
And they get very confused.
And then you get those huge Baptism parties
happening
and the child's baptised
and they go out and you don't see them again.
That's it.
They've had their child done
and then they move on.
Now, is that right?
I just don't know.
I hope Judith meets up with the parents
when she explains what they're supposed
to be agreeing to,
but I'm not quite sure
how many of them want to.
From where we sit,
we've got a view.
We can see their faces
[chuckles].
I suppose we shouldn't be looking
but they really don't look
as though they're really meaning
what they're saying.

Evelyn (Ulverstone 6a:1728-1751)

*Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving,
sing joyful songs of praise.”*

This action which creates the space in which worship occurs as described in the chapter on Location. Even though the process is the same, small details indicate that today is slightly different. The bringing of the silver bowl marks this as a baptismal service. That Doug and Valerie are sitting in the front rows, rather than their regular spot, indicates that things are not quite normal. However, the act of creating sacred space stays intact.

In English Non-Conformity and Scottish Presbyterianism, much has been made of the freedom of worship (B. D. Spinks 2003). The imposition of set form was one of the reasons for the refusal to sign the Act of Conformity (B. D. Spinks 2003, 79–80). However, the normal form is a service of the Word. Although many in the Reformed tradition think that Word and Eucharistic sacrament always should be linked (Cornick 2012, 42), that is not the weekly experience of congregations. John Calvin's connecting the Word with Eucharist (Calvin 1960 [1529], 1416) has always been seen to only imply that one cannot have Eucharist without the service of the Word. Below I outline an order of service:¹⁰⁵ it is my attempt to create an average service. It is therefore neither that of any particular congregation, nor an exemplar. Most congregations have an order of service that they use to advise lay preachers. This should be fairly close to those, however they are congregationally specific. If I go to a URC service, I know it will not follow this format exactly, but it will be close enough that I can recognise where the service diverges from this form.

Bible is brought in: - Normally carried by an Elder, the minister may follow.

¹⁰⁵ There is one at the start of the denominational hymn book *Rejoice and Sing* (The United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom, 1991) as well as in the current service book (Doctrine Prayer and Worship Committee, 2003).

Scripture Sentences: – Taken from the Bible, such as: ‘This is the day that the Lord has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it. It is good to give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever.’ (The United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom 1991, 4).

First Hymn: - Often a well-known one of praise and adoration, but may pick up the theme of the service.

Prayers: - Usually of adoration and confession.

Assurance of pardon: - A commonly used assurance is: ‘In repentance and in faith, receive the promise of grace and the assurance of pardon. Here are words you can trust, words that merit full acceptance, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”. To all who turn to him he says, “Your sins are forgiven.” He also says, “Follow me.” ’ (The United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom 1991, 6).

Key Bible Reading: - Either the main one for the service or the one that relates best to the children’s address.

Children’s address/introduction of the theme: - Generally a short piece lasting no more than ten minutes aimed to capture the congregation’s, especially younger members’, attention.

Offertory: - Taken up by members of the congregation, presented to the minister who usually says a prayer.

Second Hymn: - Often chosen as being particularly suitable for children.

Children will then leave for what is often called Junior Church.

Other Bible readings: - There will normally be at least two bible readings in the service. Some

congregations will have Old Testament, Gospel and Epistle.

Sermon: - These last around fifteen minutes

Third hymn: - frequently the hymn most closely matched to the ministry of the Word (i.e. readings and sermon).

Prayer: - Usually of thanksgiving and intercession. These are in the tradition referred to by the name of, 'prayers of people' or even the 'long prayer' due to the amount of time they take up.

Lord's Prayer: - Nearly always the traditional form.

Final Hymn: - Often a popular one with a brisk pace that focuses towards the week to come

Blessing: - Given by the minister

Grace: - Not essential but seems to be becoming more popular

There is one action missing, the notices. These are a movable part of the liturgy. There are three places where they appear: right at the start, before the children leave and before the final hymn. If they come at the start as they did in my placement congregations, then they are outside

Right. I think it's like a mixture
of all the other churches really,
not too strict and not too formal.
To me,
I quite like the free-for-all of the Pentecostal,
but they tend to go on a bit too long,
the services.
So I feel it's got a good balance
of everything, really,
a good mix.

Linda (Ulverstone 10: 234-243)

the official time of worship. When placed as part of the liturgy, then the notices are seen as part of worship and a way of bringing the ongoing life of the community into worship.

Also missing from this order is the idiosyncratic bit of ritual which every congregation has, such as singing the Lord's Prayer, or announcing birthdays. Although this is usual when there is a

baptism, the order will be somewhat changed.

Most worship in United Reformed Churches happens without set words apart from the Lord's Prayer.¹⁰⁶ There are two exceptions; during baptism, the actual act of baptism needs to be in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and during Communion the words of the Institution must be said. It should be noted that at Baptism there is an invocation of the

There is,
in my view,
whereas I'm happy with URC order of service.
As I've said to many a minister,
"If you want to change the order of service,
change it.
Don't worry about what the congregation say,
you want to suit you."
But I must confess,
I've get a lot of,
perhaps even more input,
occasionally by going to a different denomination.
An Anglican church,
or we go visit Evelyn's daughter's,
the Methodist church.
You've got to think about it
if it's not something you're used to.

Joseph (Ulverstone 6a:1287-1303)

Trinity, which might be due to ecumenical considerations and but equally be due to the Unitarian Debacle.¹⁰⁷ The reading of the Institution is clearly from the tradition. In accounts from the early part of the twentieth century, communion was a simple service following the service of the Word and refreshments, which consisted of just the reading of the Institution and the sharing of bread and wine. Although I have here used the term 'Institution', sometimes it is referred to as a 'Warrant' which dates back to Calvin's order of worship in Geneva (Butterick 2001, 141) along with the fencing of the table as talked about in the Community chapter.

Even with the prevalence of this structure, those leading worship have a great deal of freedom to shape it. Some of this dates back to the Consensus Tigurinus, which merged Calvin's understanding of the sacraments with that of the Zurich Church, which was primarily developed by Huldrych Zwingli, although the tension between these two stances is not resolved (Cornick

¹⁰⁶ I would say liturgy but the structure is part of the liturgy and that is pretty solid.

¹⁰⁷ Many English Presbyterian congregations became Unitarian in the 18th Century: those ejected from those congregations for wishing to be clearly Trinitarian often ended up Congregational. This is referred to as the Unitarian Debacle.

2012, 42). It is relatively easy to detect from the liturgy used at Communion what stance the originator has. If the desire for the descent of the Holy Spirit is included in the prayers during the Communion part of the service, then the originator is more likely to take Calvin's line rather than Zwingli's. In both congregations, these prayers were decidedly compact and of a Zwinglian tone despite the fact the churches were from distinct parts of the tradition.

It should be noted that Communions and Baptisms were the times that both ministers visibly used a service book, although they both used the older *The Service Book* (The United Reformed Church 1989) rather than *Worship from the United Reformed Church* (Doctrine Prayer and Worship Committee 2003) which has a tendency towards the approach of John Calvin and is more influenced by the Ecumenical Movement. Thus, even within the Sacrament where the most control over wording is present, freedom to express theological nuance was still present within the services.

However, there is a change going on in the United Reformed Church. When most congregations had their own minister, the ministers were dominant in the shaping of the liturgy. Today, smaller congregations and the resulting shared ministries mean that many congregations rely on visiting preachers. Many congregations have their own orders of worship which they distribute to visiting preachers. While a preacher remains free to amend the order, the desire to provide the congregation with what they are familiar leads to a tendency to conform to order. Thus, the congregation is more influential in the order of worship. Where difference happens this is often sustained by a group of members of the congregation, such as the Junior Church leaders at Ulverstone, who regularly included drama within the All-Age worship. The result was that generally on a normal Sunday, the service in both congregations followed the one outlined.

There was thus, despite the much vaunted 'freedom in worship', a high level of conformity in the

actual structure of worship in both congregations. If one knows about the structure it tells one broadly what to expect, but not the content. The leader of worship is always free to change the form, but with the increased practice of relying on lay preaching this is becoming rare. This is not the result of rubrics but depends far more on the familiar experience of both congregation and minister. However, contained within this structure is a freedom with the content. Not only does the sermon have to be written and hymns selected but also the prayers and Bible passages. Thus, the form acts as a structure in which content is placed. The next stage is to explore the way congregations shape the content of worship, and to do that I will take one of the most controversial aspects of worship.

5. Hymns, Hymnody and the Negotiated Nature of Worship

“Let us sing ‘Light of the world, you stepped down into our darkness’. The words may be found on the projector, and it is number 1419 in Songs of Fellowship.”

Miriam, Samuel’s daughter, goes up to the drum set and Stephanie goes to her guitar. Samuel starts the introduction on the piano and the congregation stand.

After the hymn, Miriam goes back and sits with the rest of the youth group. Stephanie puts down her guitar, and Robert, Reuben, Doug and Claire come out from the row to join her. Also, Judith comes down from the pulpit.

Hymns play a significant role in the worship of the United Reformed Church. In the absence of a written liturgy, they offer a repeated pattern of themes and ideas that extend over several different acts of worship. Thus, hymns often attract a lot of emotional tensions. During the Reformation the Reformers

I mean I like some of the traditional ones.
I think that came out in the study that they did 'who am I'
They put that different spell,
people wrote about themselves
and their favourite hymns and everything like that.
I love the old ones,
they remind me of my grandparents
and weddings past.
I do not want them every day
I want inspirational things
and I think some of the old ones are a bit of a hard slog
and they do not exactly inspire.
That is what the youth.
I think we do quite well though
because one week they will do a couple of older ones
to please the older people.
Louise, (Ulverstone 3:586-601)

sought to increase the congregation's participation in worship. Zwingli did this by using responsorial psalms (McKee 2003, 12). Calvin instead developed the singing of unaccompanied psalms for public worship (Calvin 2001 [1543], 95). This developed into the singing of psalms and hymns being the main active participation of the congregation in the act of worship. There also has been a long history of using hymns devotionally in private. It was still in evidence in the 20th century when Bernard Lord Manning wrote *The Hymns of Wesley and Watts* (Manning 1942) and Erik Routley produced *Hymns and the Faith*, devotional readings on 49 hymns (Routley 1955). Nathaniel Micklem included the words of hymns in part of his daily devotions (Micklem 1954 [1941]). *Hymns for Today* by Brian Wren could easily be seen as a continuation of this publishing tradition (Wren 2009) with its organisation around themes. There are also numerous CDs of hymns and worship songs available for private use. Hymns quite often become quite intensely personal; an indication of who we are. Thus, hymns are both an important part of worship and also part of personal identity. What is explored here is the way that hymns were chosen and how the congregation made known its preferences.

However, the focus on hymns in public worship is often on the theology that they contain. The reference to theology can be used to consolidate conservative practice by arguing that theology is the major determinant of good worship (Hart and Muether 2002, 20–22) or to diversify practice by adaptations to other ritual traditions (Howard 2012, 128; Marvin 2005, 9–14). However, the theology of the hymns used at Ulverstone was different from that at St Andrew’s Edgerton.¹⁰⁸ The majority of hymns at Ulverstone came from the Revival or Charismatic grouping, which has a more evangelical background than those hymns from Hymnody and Modern. Further, among those hymns sung three times or

Joseph: Well, when we had about three different hymnbooks at one time.

There was Cheshire..

Evelyn: Congregational Hymnary.

That’s one that we had when I started.

Jean: *Congregational Praise.*

Joseph: Congregational Praise.

The hymnaries was my parents’ generation.

And also Mission Praise, and we also had one we used to call the Yellow Supplement,

where hymns were extracted numerically.

But then when the URC brought in its new--

Evelyn: Rejoice and Sing.

Joseph: Rejoice and Sing, Judith got a hold of one or two copies and studied it herself.

She said, "I'm not sure about this."

So, she gave it to one or two people, who don't think much of this.

Anyway,

there were some discussions, and one thing led to another and eventually, the church meeting decided that the hymn book would be, what is it?

Jean: *Songs of Fellowship.*

Joseph: Songs of Fellowship and BBC, the two.

It covers all the spectrum.

Evelyn: The only problem would be from my perspective is that I miss some of the very Congregational hymns that would be in the tradition and some of the Presbyterian quite as many psalms.

Joseph and Evelyn (Ulverstone 6a:1184-1219)

more the dominant pronoun is ‘I’ and there are more hymns that link salvation with the cross. There are thus fewer hymns sung as ‘we’ and the ordinary Christian life in the present.¹⁰⁹ However, this does not tell us what role the hymns were playing in worship.

Clifford Geertz, in his essay on Religion as a Cultural System (Geertz 2000a [1973]), argues that religion is a way of dealing with the chaotic within society by providing a model by which the

¹⁰⁸ See Appendix G.

¹⁰⁹ See Appendix G

chaotic can be contained. He goes on to suggest that there exist two types of modelling: ‘models for’, which model a pattern of behaviour for those involved, and ‘models of’, which are systems by which the

I think I was first aware
there was this sort of problem was
when Stu and Debs became members
and they played a couple of tracks from Delirious
the row behind us were "hrrrrh"
grumble, grumble, grumble
they did not want that music
that is awful.

Rachel (Ulverstone, 12:306-312)

situation can be comprehended. The contrast is between a recipe to be followed and a system to be adjusted. Geertz, however, admits that most religious systems fit into the both/and category. If the hymns are singing the theology, then the selection is a ‘model for’, although the congregational repertoire meant that people had a wide range to choose from.¹¹⁰ The fact that these are repeated parts of worship means that they are important parts of how the congregation comes to understand itself and people come to see themselves.

The fact that the worship leader is responsible for the hymns and also the discourse around the choice of hymns, emphasises the ‘models for’ approach. There was a significant minority of members of the congregation involved in this discourse, including: ministers, lay preachers and members of the congregation who have gifts that are recognised as useful in worship, such as the leaders of Junior Church at Ulverstone. On one occasion, I was included in a discussion of whether *Jesus says I am the bread of life* (The United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom 1991, 198) was suitable for All-Age worship. However, as these conversations are focused on actual services, an outside observer, such as Stringer in the Baptist church (Stringer 1999, 88) would not be included. Two themes regularly appear within this conversation: why one should not just always choose one’s favourite hymn and what are the salient issues to consider when choosing

¹¹⁰ The indication was that both congregations had an active repertoire of somewhere around 400 hymns (see Appendix G).

hymns.¹¹¹ Thus, the aim is to lead to the more careful choice of hymns and thus reflects the idea that hymns work as ‘models for’.

However, members treated hymns as a ‘model of’, trying to manipulate the choice to their preferences at Ulverstone. They did this in two ways. The first, indirect way consisted of connecting a hymn with events in congregational life. This was done explicitly with the choosing of hymns by candidates after Baptism. However, there were other incidences when the request was not explicit. Judith, the minister, also paid attention to what hymns people chose or talked about during the rest of congregational life.

The second direct way was that people lobbied for a genre of music rather than for particular hymns. At Ulverstone, when it came to Back to Church Sunday,¹¹² people who had once been to church would like the music they were familiar with. Equally Rachel, who was the senior church leader, expressed the view that the traditional hymns put off younger people

An area that we thought could be developed for a long time is the music side of things. Seeing as there is a constant thing, people moan that they don't like keyboard, well if I was Steve I would have given up by now. In church life one develops a certain resilience and I am sure that is a good thing. Someone once suggested there ought to be a twelfth no thirteenth commandment: thou shalt not there ought to be a fourteenth thou shall not moan. We took the step of including the keyboard after many years of just having one instrument. The size of the congregation certainly warranted it from volume alone but there have been many many negative comments about it I have... You have to have in church sometimes one blind eye and one deaf ear does you good. It is that kind of thing.

Robert, (Ulverstone 7:275-288)

as they were unfamiliar with that style of music. At times, this lobbying would be overt. The church magazine in one issue had a poem favouring older hymns. In the next issue, there was a reply that favoured the use of modern worship songs.

Given that I have already suggested that hymns were seen as ‘models of’ and reflecting the

¹¹¹ Opinions differed on this and it was often controversial.

¹¹² This scheme seems to have now been replaced by a season of invitation (Back to Church Sunday 2014).

theology of the congregation, then this might appear to be an argument over what theology was appropriate.

However, at a Whit Sing,¹¹³ held on the lawn outside the church, Joseph, a more traditional member, chose a hymn *Jesus, What a Friend of Sinners*. This is a Revival hymn, so was presenting an older form of the same theology as the Charismatic ones. When I looked more carefully at the hymns, the indications were that the older hymns that were sung contained a large number of Revivalist ones. The differences between traditional and charismatic did not seem directly connected to theology.

However, within the Reformed debate over worship, the relationship between worship and culture is ever-present. Hart and Muenther (2002, 25-35) start their book with a discussion on the relationship of worship to culture. Witvliet has spent time looking at developing a typology of the ways worship relates to

When I notice is when we are away from home
worshipping in another church
that has a more traditional...
I must say that I find the actual worship
side
more meaningful.
Its just
basically I like classical music:
if we sing six words to four notes
I tend to snub my nose at it

Norman (Ulverstone 9:386-393)

culture, doing this (Witvliet 2003) using both Niebuhr's typology and those from Contextual theology. One form this debate takes is how appropriate the use of contemporary music in worship is (Brink and Witvliet 2003; Miller 2001, 103–109). The big difference between the Revival and Charismatic is the style. Given that the division also seems to split on age lines, with those under fifty falling mainly into the Charismatic group and those over seventy in the Revival group, it starts to look as if it is about their own culture. If this is the case, then the lobbying is treating hymns as 'models of' while acknowledging their role as 'models for'. They are seeking to change the 'model for' the community so it reflects their culture. Then, even as in the previous

¹¹³ An ecumenical gathering of churches to sing hymns, in the style of *Songs of Praise*, held at Whitsun.

chapter, the question is about belonging.

Let me return to the hymn choice at Ulverstone.¹¹⁴ There are four hymns that were recorded six times during worship:

- *All over the world the spirit is moving*
- *Amazing grace! How sweet the sound*
- *Come, now is the time*
- *When I was lost, you came and rescued me*

Now it is worth looking at these.

All over the world the spirit is moving
and *Come, now is the time* are examples of a small number of hymns and songs that are often used for settling the congregation into worship. *Amazing grace! How sweet the sound* is the hymn that I

Last time Rev Fran came for example she picked these songs. Judith was "They are all a bit modern aren't they?" but actually the youngest one of them was written in 70 something. Well that is not modern. I did not say that to Judith but I thought we are on a losing battle if Judith considers songs from the seventies modern I think it is the age-old question that many churches have had to face that of course the elderly part of the congregation have to be served: they have entirely right to have provision made for them but also more than ever in today's which we live the fact that we want the church to be populated in the future and I am sure that is God's will that we have got have an eye as well to what is coming behind.

Stephanie, (Ulverstone 7:297-311)

associate most strongly with Ulverstone's theological stance, but it was also popular in a modern form with the younger members. The last one is undeniably a 'model of'. Four of the occurrences happened in October and November during my second year with the congregation. In late September, the Youth Group went away for a weekend, and this hymn was the favourite with a group of teenage girls. It was used in the weeks that followed, in the hope that it would encourage the girls to participate more in worship.

Although hymns are treated as 'models for' when discussed in relationship to the preparation of

¹¹⁴See Appendix G

worship, there are strong indications in the lobbying by the congregation that they are being used as ‘models of’; that is, they are seeking for the worship to reflect back at them the culture that they associated with. This would suggest that they are looking for affirmation of their belonging to the congregation by the reflection of their culture within the worship of the congregation.

The choice of hymns, therefore, not only reflects the theology of the congregation but also is seen as reflecting back at members their own cultural situation. People within the congregation desire the hymns to reflect their musical experiences, both from earlier experiences of worship and also wider listening. Thus, there connections are made between the congregation’s culture and that of the members.

6. Sacraments, Sermons and Ministerial Control

“Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ,” Judith says. “ “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.’ ”

She pauses briefly.

“Baptism marks our lives as Christians and as members of the Church; in baptism we are called to take up the Cross and follow Christ in the company of all God’s people. There is nothing magical in baptism; it is effective in the life of Christians who live their lives in relationship with Christ.”

Doug goes over to where the microphone for Stephanie's guitar is, picks it up and passes it to Robert.

Judith says, "Stephanie and Robert, do you confess your faith in Christ, do you believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, maker of heaven and earth, giver of life, redeemer of the world?"

"We do," they reply and pass the microphone to Reuben.

Judith says to Reuben, "Do you believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, maker of heaven and earth, giver of life, the redeemer of the world?"

Reuben says, "I do."

"Do you repent of your sins, turn away from evil and turn to Christ?"

"By God's grace, I do."

"Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord?"

"I do." Reuben pauses, looks at Judith who nods, "I decided that it was time for me to be baptised as it says in the Bible that those who believe in the Lord Jesus and want to follow him should be. As I wanted to follow Jesus, I decided that I should be baptised."

Doug takes the microphone from Reuben and returns it to the stand while Judith picks up the silver bowl and, cupping the water from it, she says, "Reuben, I baptise you

in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” She then makes the sign of the cross on Reuben’s forehead. She puts down the bowl and passes Reuben the towel.

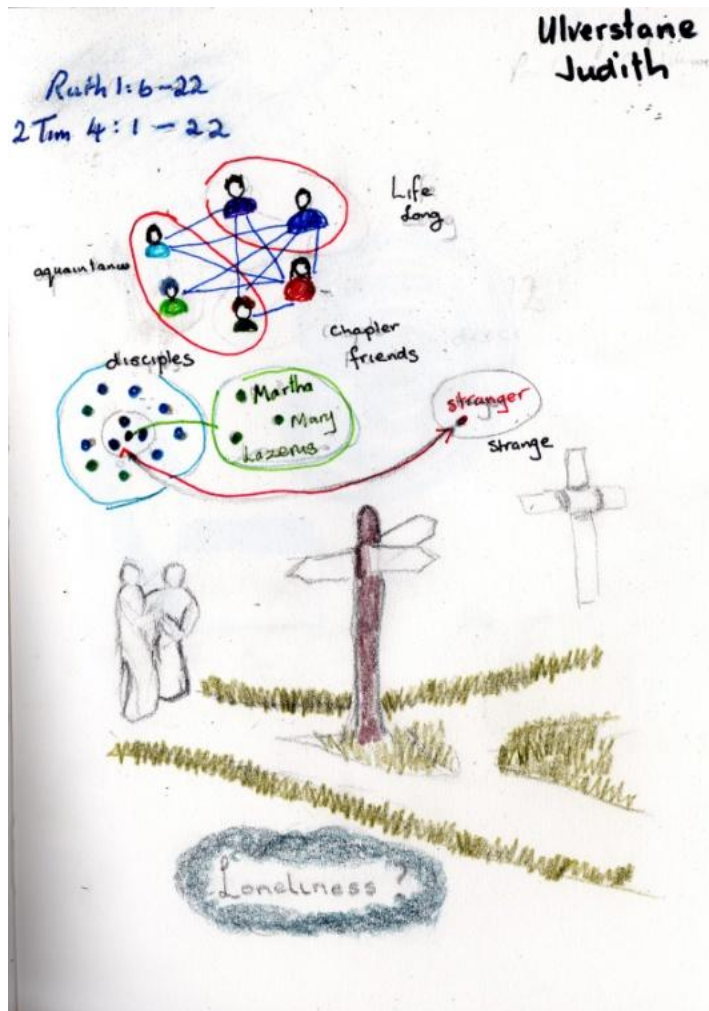
This is a complex action within the service. At one level, it seems a straightforward Baptismal service. Judith follows the rubrics for Baptism; thus, Reuben is baptised in the name of ‘Father, Son and Holy Spirit’. It looks remarkably much as if it is a ‘model for’ (Geertz 2000a [1973]). However, it should be noted that both Reuben and his parents affirm their faith. There is no published Baptismal service where both the parties affirm faith – either the believer affirms or their parents¹¹⁵ do. Thus, Judith has shaped the service for this circumstance. What is happening is neither credo- nor paedobaptism but an intermediate service; the melding creates a third which reflects back to the congregation their own situation over Baptism. It, therefore, echoes Bhabha’s third space (Bhabha 2004a [1994], 57–93) as seen in the Location chapter. It would, therefore, be a ‘model for’ but it is not a mere replication of this, rather it moves it forward.

Don Handelman in his book on public events (Handelman 1998 [1990], 49–62) gives a second division. His ‘models’ are more closely related to Geertz’s ‘models of’ and mirror would-be ‘models for’ (Geertz 2000a [1973]). However, he splits ‘mirrors’, so they can either ‘present’ society as it is, or they can ‘represent’ society so as to create a fresh understanding. This gives the ‘model for’ an instrumentality lacking within Geertz. Therefore, it is useful to think ‘models for’ and ‘models of’ as the two ingredients within actual models and it being normal for models to have a mixture of both. However, it may be better to look at the baptismal rite with respect to the difference between presentation and representation, which might be thought of in this case as

¹¹⁵ Although godparents do exist, they are seen as secondary to parents and an affirmation of faith from them is not required. This goes back to the home being primarily the base for the inculcation of the faith.

the tension between reality and the ideal.

Figure 8



My Pictorial Sermon Notes from the First Sunday I Attended Ulverstone

Thus, Judith through the way she is shaping the service is blending two things together that had formerly been kept separate. In this, she is 'representing' the congregation. Intriguingly, she seems to be doing this in

a situation where she is using methods that come from largely from 'models of'.

Another area where the person leading worship has this role of shaping ideas and understanding is in the sermon. My notes on sermons are not written notes but pictorial and on reviewing the pictures it was clear that I was using a symbolic approach. I had repeatedly used a single

representation for a particular theme. Figure 8 has a tidied version of the first drawing I ever did of a sermon at Ulverstane.¹¹⁶

Typical of the picture is that it has several sub-elements. The top two are network based: the first portraying relationships and the second the inclusion of the stranger. The idea of a road or journey regularly occurs in my drawings both at St Andrew's, Edgerton, and Ulverstane. It connects both with the passage and the concept of being a travelling people from the tradition, but it also is a useful narrative device. What makes it related to Ulverstane is that I have a

I did not think I would get much out of it
but I actually enjoyed services.
It brought a different dimension to me at..
It let me look at myself for a while
when Lauren went out to Sunday School
I would actually get left behind
and it sort of..
I started to read the Bible again
I started to look at me again
and not feel as uncomfortable as I was with myself.
After the divorce I felt very lonely and on my own.
There had been some tough decisions
that had to be made regarding Lauren
and I felt that I was not on my own anymore
and I had seen me sat in church
through the service and all the sermon.
Pauline always seemed to pick the right one
time management
whether it would be lost sheep
or just various other ones
that she used to bring
it just felt that she was talking to me directly at that
time
because I was in a lonely place.

Louise, (Ulverstane 3:111-134)

junction with a signpost. The idea of a choice is a typical theme of Evangelical preaching aimed at getting people to make a commitment.¹¹⁷ However, at no point do I indicate a right option; one drawing has 'mountain road' and 'forest road' on the sign posts. Scales also appear in drawings from Ulverstane, which seems actively to represent being asked to weigh the evidence. This fitted well with Judith's style of preaching which was undoubtedly influenced by the intellectual Evangelical preaching used by Nicky Gumbel. However, the picture is remarkable for other details. These are that it shows a couple walking together and the word 'loneliness'. Tackling 'loneliness' was a theme that came up in several ways while I was there. Sermons spoke about how belonging to the church tackled 'loneliness'. Also, it was identified as an important topic for community outreach, which led to the congregation setting up a friendship cafe. There was thus a

¹¹⁶ Because of the nature of sermons as of a fixed time I often had to leave the pictures unfinished. Basically I have finished this one.

¹¹⁷ Actually goes back to the Old Testament, see Deuteronomy 30:15-19

net of connections worked into that picture of the sermon that came up in other sermons and elements of church life. Judith here is bringing loneliness into conjunction with the story of Ruth and the idea of a choice. Thus, rather than present what is happening, she is trying to point forward, to take things to a new point. In doing this, Judith is treating worship as an act of prophecy; that is, it seeks to bring the congregation from its present context and reach out in a direction that she sees as congruent with the Gospel. This idea that worship is an act of prophecy goes back to the Puritans (Old 2002, 4:260).

Another picture that predominantly occurred while I was at Ulverstone is that of a bowl. There is an empty bowl held in hands, a bowl on a potter's wheel, the bowl with a towel and the bowl with bread in it. It obviously does not mean the same thing in each

I think that was something that appealed to me when I came to Ulverstone. Although it is very different and not necessarily my tradition Judith clearly always prepared sermons they were not flung together or appear to be on the spur of the moment and there was intercessory prayer for the world again not necessarily at a deep level but there was always intercessory prayer for the world and it was those two things I think we struggled with before.

Samuel, (Ulverstone 12:36-45)

setting. Yet it seems that the bowl appears when there is a theme of 'service' within the sermon. This is the symbolism I have chosen; I am well aware that the bowl and towel are symbols of Christian Service.¹¹⁸ Never did anyone get up and speak specifically on Christian service, but over a couple of years many aspects of Christian service were addressed during sermons. These include: that we are called to serve, that God decides what that service is, that we need to receive from him before we can give and that having received we are duty bound to share. It builds to quite a sophisticated understanding over the weeks. Although Judith was quite capable of creating patterns, the sustained development of the themes over the two years I was with the congregation makes me think that it reflected a developing strand in her own thinking during that

¹¹⁸ I am most keenly aware of this with respect to the diaconal office which this often used to represent (Wyman 2001).

time. Thus, Judith restates the Gospel within the worship, but the way it works is through an iterative process. The themes that Judith puts into the worship are also reflected in quite a short time in actions by the congregation. Thus, Judith represents a portrayal of the future to the congregation that they tend to enact.

The sacraments and sermons are mainly under the control of the person leading worship. They are structured as ‘models of’; elements combine to create a unique event and yet the elements and the ways they combine are drawn from discourses active within the congregation. Thus, Judith, in combining the rites for credo- and paedobaptism while also keeping the required parts of the ceremony, creates a new form. In the same way, themes recur within sermons during the year, yet the themes combine differently. The aim here is not stasis but to control the direction of flow in the congregation life. In part, this is the creation of connections. So Judith is using the sermon to create connections for the congregation. However, in the baptismal service she is also moving from the idea network to those of the personal network. The two networks interact to create a new set of relationships that are explored next.

7. Building into the Community

Judith says, “Reuben, do you commit to this life?”

“I do, with God’s help.”

“Do you accept the gift and cost of following Christ?”

“I do, with God’s help.”

“With the whole Church will you proclaim by word and action the Good News of God in Christ?”

“I will, with God’s help.”

“Do you, Stephanie and Robert promise to continue to teach Reuben the love of God and bring him up in the life and worship of the church?”

Stephanie and Robert reply, “We do, with God’s help.”

Judith says, “Reuben has specifically asked Doug and Clare to be his Godparents, to support him in the Christian life. Do you, Doug and Clare, promise to pray for Reuben and his family, to help them as you are able to minister Christ’s love?”

Doug and Clare together say, “We do, with God’s help.”

Judith says, “Will those who are able, please stand.” There is a shuffling noise of a congregation rising to their feet when it has been sitting for rather longer than usual. The projector screen has the words of the congregation’s promise come up on it so we can read it.

She continues, “As a community of faith, representing the whole church, do you welcome Reuben and promise to share with him what you have received, the gift of God’s love revealed in Christ?”

We say, “We do, with God’s help”.

There is a pause as the baptismal party sorts itself out.

Then Judith says, “Reuben chose the next hymn; it is one that the young people

are familiar with from the local youth services. Please follow the words on the screen or on page 1702 in *Songs of Fellowship*. 'Amazing Grace'. The tune is new, and the words are not always in the traditional order."

In this episode, there is a careful balance conducted by Judith working with Reuben and his parents. Stephanie and Robert belong to the younger age group of adults at Ulverstone, Stephanie alone amongst the group has a strong URC background. This shows in that this is the main morning service, as was the norm within URC. The baptism is done by sprinkling, echoing infant baptism. Finally, Reuben's choice is significant: it is the hymn that I came to associate most closely with the congregation's theological position, but it is a modern version of it. This is an exceptionally careful acknowledgement of the identity of the congregation that balances tensions.

Matthew: Doug and Claire stand out:
I would possibly say Doug even before anyone else.

I used to come to Liverpool with Robert
I adopted him a little bit beforehand
but he is...

Doug has been great:
he is just like a really normal person
he is just fantastic.

I think he is really funny
and he is very dry.

He has a good way of persuading people to do things.

I like him.

He is a gentleman,
a really nice guy
but he is really sharp as well.

So am I

I think on the wayside

Jean: *what makes them stand out?*

Matthew: I think there are a lot of things.
I think Debra would be uncomfortable in a church environment he wasn't,

so Doug and Claire given so
like the people she meets elsewhere
it makes it a lot easier for her to come to
to find people she can relate to
that aren't pious religious types
that she might have anticipated finding in places
like this

so very down to earth or normal people.

Matthew, (Ulverstone 4:96-102)

Further, Reuben's own request for Doug and Claire to be his godparents manages to tie this more firmly into the congregation. Doug and Claire are people who manage to move between both groups in the congregation and are popular. Also Doug and Claire carry part of the identity

of the congregation, much as Esther does in the chapter on Community. These strands have been woven together to create new connections within the congregation, balancing many factions.

There is a complex process going on within Worship. Elements such as the order, the service book and the tradition all work together to create a 'model for'. They are mutable and can carry different meanings within the service. The sacrament portrayed here picks up local events

A couple years after my mother died I thought knowing that my husband had been to church before I suggested that we go church to see what it was like. I know he experienced it and I hadn't. This is where his brother came to church. After Christmas three years ago, so we started coming then. We came more often.

Debra, (Ulverstone 5:11-20)

and presents them back to the congregation. It is the drawing in of different elements of congregational discourse which present a 'model for' that 'represents' the congregation to itself in worship. In doing, so it creates a space where the congregation feels acknowledged. It is clear that the theology of the hymns chosen and quite a bit of Judith's style of preaching fit within the identity of the congregation.

Thus people experience worship as a model of what they could potentially be. In this, they are asking 'Is this role me?' or 'Do I belong here?' This questioning manifests itself in the lobbying over the choice of hymns. Indeed, worship leaders

My wife Debra and I had been to this church numerous times because my elder brother Robert and Stephanie... We initially came for the thanksgiving service not baptism, thanksgiving for Reuben: we came at Christmas, we came at Easter, and bit by bit from coming once in a blue moon it came just occasionally for the odd service. I had been brought up in a Church family but I had not been for a long time and Debra had never been to church other than deaths, funerals, marriages and births. She was interested by our family how happy they all seemed to be and I was getting the call back as well. Our Robert did his well Christmas time he did at talk at Christmas and he made it a little bit too much it was not intended to be an evangelical message but it was in the end. I remember him sitting down and being told off by his wife Stephanie as he sat down but his point had registered with me I thought "yeah we are going to come more regularly".

Matthew, (Ulverstone 4:2-28)

do take into consideration the preferences of the congregation in the choosing of the hymns.

There is a third element: the presentation of the congregation is not merely a presentation of what is happening, rather it contains elements of representing. Thus, the baptismal service is not either paedo- or credo-baptism, but a hybrid form bringing together tensions within the congregation. Equally though, there is an element of the preaching that aims to move the congregation forward from where it is, which links back to the idea of preaching as prophecy.

As such, the act of worship is a 'technology of signs' (Foucault 1987 [1984]; Rose 1996, 132; Foucault 1993; Foucault 1988 [1982]). That is, as described in the Introduction, a set of practices that use symbolic and rhetorical devices which seek to move the congregation forward in a specific direction. It does not ensure conformity but builds pressure in a direction.

Thus in the performance of worship there is a coupling between the congregation as presented and represented. This tension inevitably means that there are times of turbulence around worship. Perhaps what is most surprising is the direction of the flow that it seeks to create. Much study assumes ritual and symbolism are about bringing the past into the present (A. P. Cohen 1985, 98–102), yet it is clear that here there is a movement towards the future. This future orientation of worship seems to go right back to the early Puritan writers. What is being presented in worship is a representation of the congregation.

In the three data chapters, I have looked at Location, Community and Worship. In the Location chapter, I discovered that boundaries in congregations are not fixed but in a continual state of renegotiation. In carrying out this renegotiation members seek ways to confirm their membership and in doing this they seek to create bonds with other members. The congregation has a space that it inhabits that has many social codes as well. The space is thus inscribed with meanings

owned by the congregation. These matter because the ability to determine what is the territory and how it is understood is a sign of power, and with that power a sign that you belong.

In the Community chapter I explored the nature of the community through a church meeting. The dispute was around whether children may take Communion in that congregation. The dispute interplayed with various parts of the tradition including the role of the family and use of the bible but also the way members sought to establish themselves as belonging to the community.

Finally, in this chapter I have focused on the role of worship through the admission by Baptism of Reuben. In doing so, I found that people used complex lobbying techniques to try and shape worship with an avoidance set up in the tradition of direct personal preference. Also that through worship the congregation were invited to imagine themselves in new ways and fresh bonds of identity were created.

Belonging

1. From Identity to Belonging

This investigation was always into Congregational Identity. The focus was on the way congregations sought to sustain and change their identity. As such, its emphasis was on the work done by the people. In the last three chapters, I have described what I saw as going on while looking through this lens.

The critical point occurs when Andrew intervenes in the debate in the chapter on Community. Andrew is a significant member of the congregation, in many ways holding the tradition. He is a non-serving Elder and honoured for his deep faith. His intervention uses a particular part of the liturgy, 'the invitation'. It is the only piece of liturgy specifically mentioned in these debates. To listen for an invitation implies you are unsure if you are welcome. Andrew, who has more qualification than most, is still waiting to be invited. To be invited, to be welcome, to participate are all signs of belonging.

Access to the sacraments is the clearest marker of the boundary of a congregation's community. Worship in England for most congregations is public worship, in that anyone can come and join with the congregation. Historically both Congregationalist and Presbyterian have been quite particular about who has access to them, although they took different routes with the development of a technology to guard the boundary. The Presbyterians' techniques are described in the tradition chapter. The Congregationalists restricted Communion to those in formal membership who accepted a very strict code of church discipline. The result of this was that there was a great deal of preparation for Communion within Presbyterianism including extra

services and the handing out of Communion tokens, while in English Congregationalism Communion became low-key, an almost secret adjunct to the main Sunday act of worship.

Within the tradition, participation in the sacraments of Baptism and Communion is a sign of belonging. The debates portrayed are thus members seeking to determine the boundaries of the community. What is going on here is complex, more than just people seeking to be members. Amartya Sen in his book *Development as Freedom*, argues for an idea of freedom that looks at the capacities individuals have to live the life of their choice. In describing this he makes it clear that in relationship to institutions, though the denial of the right to participate is about non-freedom, so are the abilities: to influence, to participate in decision-making and to choose institutions. This can be seen as levels of belonging. Those who can participate in the decision-making process belong more than those who can only influence, who in turn belong more than those who can only access the institution. Though these capabilities are ordered in that way, the final one perhaps works in a way that is somewhat different to the others. This last has reversed the relationship of power between the institution and the individual. It is no longer that the individual needs access to the institution, but the institution needs the individual. Thus belonging is not a simple binary 'in' or 'out' but one where members have different levels of power within the institution. Therefore in the struggle over who has access to communion and baptism there is also a power struggle within the congregation, with all trying to assert their belonging by affecting the decision.

Thus, identity and belonging are very closely-related concepts. So much so that I began to see that a lot of the work I had set out to explore around identity was driven by the question of how well an individual belonged to the congregation. Thus, 'belonging' became to me a useful way of thinking of how the members of the congregation sought to handle the identity of the

congregation.

However, before I can get onto the actual way belonging' functioned in the congregations I need to spend time looking at that to which they belonged.

2. Two Pen Portraits

In this section, I want to consider two women, Lillian and Alma, and how they belonged to Ulverstane URC. Lillian, a retired Elder, was often a minority voice. Today in her seventies, she still catches the bus each Sunday to get to Ulverstane from Rodwell. Raised in Rodwell Congregational Church, she remained a committed member until family commitments took over. Even then her mother kept her in touch and she still contributed financially until Rodwell URC closed.

But we were always aware of Ulverstane because they used to come and preach because we did not have a minister and then I came on my own through divorce and I got know different people and this friend says "If I knew a church I'd go to it". So I said "If you come and pick me up on Sunday I will take you" and she did. At that time I was warden so I was on duty really so I used to have to switch onto RotherCare and go and come back and I have gone ever since. She stopped coming and I have introduced two or three people through the same thing and unfortunately they have dropped by the wayside. One of them does a big work at a church in Palethorpe so she was new to it. In her house I found Bibles that were torn up and things like that because she had had a bad life but it has given her a life through coming to us and then moving on. So that is how I came to Ulverstane and I have gone ever since. I used to sit on the back row and I used to be out as soon as the service ended because I had to be back to work and I never became a member for a long time I don't know how long actually but because being an old church member I was aware that if you became a member you were supposed to go to church meetings and my job would not allow it and so I would not become a church member because I could not commit to do what you are supposed to do. Pity a lot of others don't think the same because as much as they are told it does not seem to sink in. I am sure you will find it in all churches. I was very aware because it was drummed in: if you are a member you are committed and you do things. Being an ex member eventually I became a church member and decided that if I were not allowed out to a church meeting occasionally they could have the job so I became a church member so after that.

Lillian, (Ulverstane 1a:26-65)

Years later, when a friend wanted to attend church she started going with her to Ulverstone. Her friend did not stay but she did. However, she did not become a formal member because she felt that she could not attend church meetings due to work commitments. Thus, though regularly meeting for worship with the congregation, and a believer, she did not come into full membership. She only formally came into membership years later and only took up the Eldership when she retired. Thus, she only took membership and further roles in the congregation when she felt that she could make the time commitment.

Rachel and Samuel brought Alma, a former librarian, to church every Sunday. After worship, I would see Alma slowly walk up and down every row of chairs checking the hymnbooks, as she kept the hymnbooks in meticulous state of repair; bookbinding was one of her hobbies. However the first time I really paid attention to her was at a special evening service to support the local battered women's hostel. After coffee, a group gathered around Alma, including Judith the minister and Samuel and Rachel. Curious, I joined.

“Alma, why are you giving this woman money?” said Judith.

“Well her grandson's rent was due, and his benefits had not come through,” said Alma.

As Judith probed it emerged that Alma had repeatedly given money to her former cleaner whose grandson was a drug addict. The total to date amounted to several thousand pounds. The reason the group had gathered was to try and persuade Alma to stop giving money. It was, therefore, a surprise to me to hear Roger puzzling over how Alma could not be a Christian. If it had just been Roger, I would have assumed that he had had some argument with her and, therefore, concluded that she was not a Christian. However, I heard it several more times from other people in the congregation including Rachel and Samuel. I do know that she is not alone in being in this

position. Within many URC congregations there are people who are regular attendees at worship and participants in the wider life of the congregation who would not self-identify as Christian.¹¹⁹ It seems important to such people that they are identified as non-Christian, often being quite deliberate about it. Therefore, Alma was not a formal member, although she was otherwise a full participant in congregational life, even attending Church Meeting.

I have looked at these two women because in many ways they highlight the different ways belonging can be configured within a congregation. I want to distinguish three different ways that belonging can be used within this setting. There is belonging as being a Christian. There is much debate about what it precisely means to belong to a faith group¹²⁰. There is also the formal roll of members which lists members who can vote at church meeting. To be on the roll you need to make a public confession of faith; the suggested form being:

I confess my faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, taking the Father to be my Father, the Son to be my saviour and Lord, the Spirit to be my helper and guide.

I promise, in dependence on God's grace, to be faithful in private and public worship, to live in the fellowship of the Church and to share in its work, and to give and serve, as God enables me, for the advancement of his kingdom throughout the world.

I promise, by that same grace, to follow Christ and to seek to do and to bear his will all the days of my life. And I trust in his mercy alone to bring me into the fullness of the life of the world to come. (*The United Reformed Church 2015*)

It makes three basic commitments: the first is minimalist confession of faith, followed by a commitment to worship and finally a behavioural commitment.¹²¹ The roll is kept by the local

¹¹⁹ This is awkward phrasing is because in my experience as far as I can attain they may well identify as non-believers rather than atheists or agnostics.

¹²⁰ See Introduction Section 5.

¹²¹ At least acceptance of a fairly broad ethical practices which can be seen as following Christ.

congregation and the removal from the roll is normally due to “cease to meet”¹²² and is done at Church meeting. Members who are on the roll legally belong to the congregation. However, both the women (Lillian temporarily while she felt her circumstances did not permit it and Alma was at the time of my placement) had both been attending worship and participants in congregational life while not being formal members. Figure 10 shows a Venn diagram of possible configurations of belonging.¹²³

Figure 9

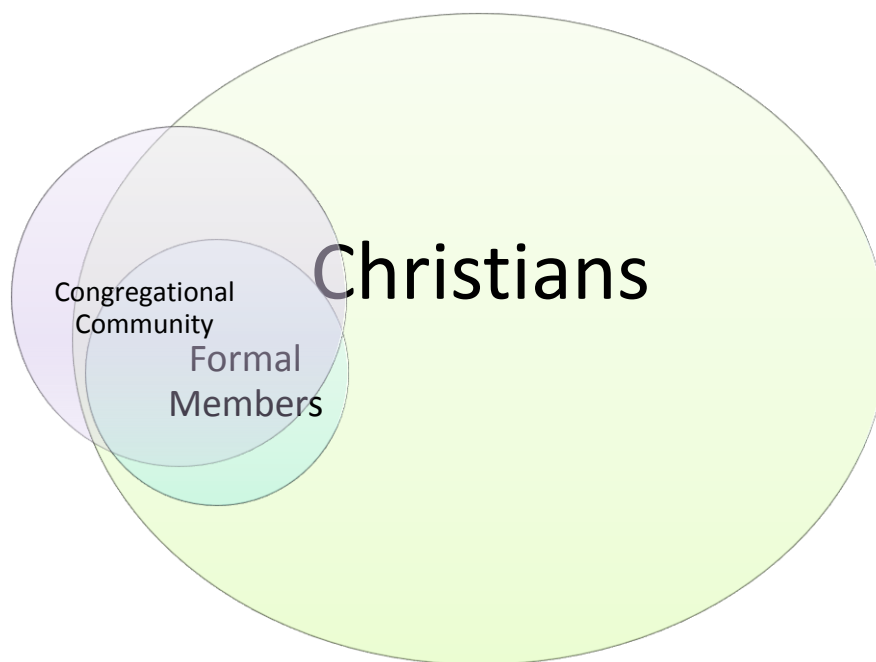


Diagram showing a possible way that the groups “Self identifying Christians”, “Formal Members” i.e those on the roll and the ‘Congregational Community’ may overlap.

What should be clear is that the three classes of belonging (community, formal and faith) are not synonymous. What I am looking at in this chapter is belonging to the congregational community.

¹²² In other words the usual commitment failure is faithfulness in public worship.

¹²³ The diagram is wrong. Though a willingness to confess the faith is part of coming into membership, there is no guarantee that once joined members will continue in the faith.

Being a confessing Christian did help to sustain your identity as belonging to the congregational community but it was neither necessary nor sufficient. Institutional identity was more complex. It should be that anyone with institutional membership was a member of the congregation but institutional identity is always historic. At St Andrew's Edgerton, Sylvie managed to track down a member: the person had moved to a care home in one of the nearby cities some years before and died the week before Sylvie made contact. In doing this, belonging to the institution and being Christian are techniques that help people to establish themselves as a member of the community but they are not essential, as can be seen from Alma who is very definitely a part of the community but does not hold either.

This matters because 'belonging' differs according to what one belongs to.¹²⁴ Though the work on 'belonging' to religion rests quite a lot on self identification (Voas and Day 2010, 5), I want to suggest that belonging to a congregation is not as simple, indeed that when it comes to belonging to a congregation the context means that it is more in line with work on the voluntary sector by Putnam (2000) or the small group (Wuthnow 1994). This is a belonging that is fairly small scale, localised and relatively concrete with a fairly clear institution involved.

3. Technology

In the Introduction (section 4), I dealt with a variety of ways in which identity could be imagined theoretically. At this point I want to come back to one of those in particular and that is Foucault's idea of technology. Foucault, in his use of technologies, proposed that there are four

¹²⁴ When I was eight I went to visit my Grandparents in South Africa with my Mum and Dad. While we were there my Grandfather offered to draw for me a South African flag. He drew the Union Jack. My grandfather had Parkinson's disease, but was born a subject of the British Empire, acted as a scout during the Boer War for the British Army, served in the First World War and both his older sons fought in the Second World War. Although some might have been Parkinson's related dementia, I have little doubt that he identified himself as British. Despite that, I as an eight year old knew it was not the case.

types of technology (Foucault 1993, 203; Foucault 1988 [1982]) of which three: ‘signs’, ‘power’ and ‘self’ play within the situation. I want to explore these more fully here.

The technology of signs is Foucault’s recognition of the work of structuralist and post-structuralist thinkers. Foucault both acknowledges these thinkers and also distinguishes himself from them; he uses a sign to distinguish himself from those who see signs as primary. However, congregations are religious institutions and thus perform religious ceremonies. In particular the sacraments have been a cause of dispute in both congregations. St Augustine says:

‘On the subject of the sacrament, indeed, which he receives, it is first to be well impressed upon his notice that the signs of divine things are, it is true, things visible, but that the invisible things themselves are also honoured in them, and that that species which is then sanctified by the blessing, is therefore not to be regarded merely in the way in which it is regarded in any common use.’ (St Augustine 1887 [403], xxvi.50).¹²⁵

Sacraments have been understood as signs within Christian theology for a long time. This understanding predates the development of ritual studies which also the focus of the role of signs within religious ceremonies.

A congregation must find ways to bring the members into a commonality of behaviour that establishes the congregation as existing; it needs a ‘technology of power’. Foucault’s understanding of power is different from other thinkers as he rejects ‘ideology’ as the primary focus in exploring power. He sees ‘ideology’ as defined against the truth and by repression, thus invoking a negative concept of power. Rather, power not only restrains but also ‘it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge and produces discourse’ (Foucault 1994,

¹²⁵ This is one of the most widely-accepted statements about the sacraments within the Western Church. It is cited by Calvin within his *Christian Institutes* (Calvin 1960 [1529], 1277) as a standard definition, as well as widely quoted within Roman Catholic circles.

120). Equally there is no truth for Foucault against which ‘ideology’ can be compared, as his ‘technologies of power’ are inextricably linked to the ability to establish the truth (Foucault 1994, 131). His use of ‘power’ here might be thought of as an analysis of power differentials rather than absolute power, as such power is an all-encompassing flow that carries everyone with it. This singular character of the flow is not really sustainable in modern society. The work of theorists such as Bhabha (2004b [1994]) shows that when cultures interact, the monomorphic power flow is not sustained. However, institutions do need a ‘technology of power’ to keep people acting in ways that sustain them. That is, a collection of evolving practices designed to create compliance. Although these differ between institutions, there are often commonalities between institutions within the wider culture. So whereas Foucault in *Crime and Punishment* is primarily looking at the technologies of power that are part of the institution of the state (Foucault 1991 [1975]), yet it is not surprising that similar patterns are mirrored within the Church. Parallels can be made with the visual technology where people are held up as examples, whether this is notorious events such as witch trials or the depictions in novels such as *The Scarlet Letter* (Hawthorne 1999 [1850]).

While technologies of power reflect Foucault’s early work, ‘technologies of self’ are largely drawn from later work. In the introduction to the second volume of *History of Human Sexuality*, he explores what he calls the ‘ethical substance’ (Foucault 1987 [1984], 2:26), by which he means that which the ethical system aims at controlling. To this extent, he traces the succession of problematisation from the world of Ancient Greece and Rome to Modern Christianity (Foucault 1983 [1982]). In ancient times, he sees the central purpose of ethical codes as being a ‘care of oneself’ (Foucault 1983 [1982], 243), while the Christian one is based on the removal of desire (Foucault 1983 [1982], 249). In dealing with technologies of self, he again surveys a wide breadth of history but concentrates on the focus of self-examination, identifying three ‘attentionalities’:

reality, law and motive (Foucault 1988 [1982], 46). Thus ‘technology of self’ is strongly related to idea of a person as a moral agent (Foucault 1987 [1984], 2:26): but perhaps most telling is Foucault’s citing of Weber as posing the question: ‘If one wants to behave rationally and regulate one’s action according to true principles, what part of one’s self should one renounce?’ (Foucault 1988 [1982], 26). The concept of ‘self’ invoked is that of a being who is culpable. The technologies are thus a set of practices that a person uses to establish themselves as a member of society. Equally a member of any group has to perform certain practices in order to belong.

In dealing with these different types of technologies, Foucault did not see them as separate (Foucault 1988 [1982], 18). In particular ‘technologies of self’ have a repercussive relationship with ‘technologies of power’ in that changes in the approach to the ‘technologies of power’ instigate changes in ‘technologies of self’. Further, Foucault can describe his theoretical framework very differently. In *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Foucault describes three domains where a genealogy was possible: truth, power and ethical. There is no simple mapping between technologies and domains. Therefore it is essential to construct a ‘technology’ that draws on aspects of all these technologies.

None of the three technologies alone are sufficient as analogies for what is going on around belonging and identity within the congregation. Rather, it is analogous to spatial practices in Lefebvre where they are produced by the interaction of representational spaces and representations of space;¹²⁶ so too belonging is a matter of interactions of local technologies of sign, domination and self. The technology of ‘belonging’ is actually a braid created from weaving together elements of technologies of sign, power and self in such a way as to create something new. The reciprocal nature means that while belonging is a collection of behaviours or techniques

¹²⁶ See Location, Section 1.

that are used to sustain a person as belonging, yet the behaviour so created is influential in determining the congregation's identity.

4. But Who Makes the Technology?

With Foucault the idea of technology seems to be that it is self-sustaining and people fit into it. This seems odd. The one technology I have not talked about is the archetypal technology, that of production. However it is anything but self-sustaining; the endeavour of humans is essential to it. Thus humans adapt the technology of production to their setting. If this is true of the technology of production it may well be true of other technologies. My observation of the technology of belonging to a congregation suggests that the techniques are invented by people as they try to establish themselves as belonging to a particular congregation. If this is the case then it is necessary to draw on a very different approach: that of Social Constructionism which focuses on the way people create culture.¹²⁷

As Social Constructionism arises from Social Psychology, it has a tendency to focus on a smaller scale than many sociologists and work often focuses on the way individuals understand social reality. For instance in their book, Jonathon Potter and Margaret Wetherell (1987) explored the way that individuals interpret the questions in a questionnaire. These researchers were as interested in the way language or symbolic order is used within a situation as they were in the way that language creates a situation. They draw on the work of thinkers like Austin and Wittgenstein, using the idea that the symbolic order does not just describe what is happening, but is used to carry out tasks. Thus, the way people behave in a situation can be driven by what they want to achieve.

¹²⁷ See Introduction section 4.

It needs to be borne in mind that the symbolism need not be pure symbolism; it can involve actions that have a clear purpose in their own right – such as making a cup of tea – yet which bear additional symbolic meaning (welcome, comfort etc.). Also, Social Constructionism does not hold the view that a person's identity is entirely within the control of the individual, but rather that interactions create the individual's identity within social settings. Modern theorists such as Kenneth Gergen, will look at such things as the way narratives about ourselves follow accepted social norms for the society that we live in (Gergen 1994 [1994], 185–209). This means that a member of a congregation has the social norms around which to shape themselves as belonging. So Social Constructionism is a useful approach for looking at how an individual establishes their belonging.

However, the focus is on how individuals go about creating meaning, rather than looking at the collaborative ways that the group does this. This is problematic, as a congregation is a communal creation; it is the collective behaviour of its members that creates its existence, rather than exactly how the members understand the congregation. Anthony Cohen, in his analysis of the Whalsay Spree, allows for the expression of individuals' connections within the communal identity (A. P. Cohen 1985, 94–96; A. P. Cohen 1987, 73–78). So, a congregation can operate even if there are quite a number of subgroups within it, provided that there is a large enough area of agreement on what happens. However, he is clear that communal identity is not simply the average identity of individuals, but that individuals have a concept of it which they seek to harmonise with their own identity. The unanimity about behavioural norms in some ways equates to what Irving Goffman sees as a public performance, while the differing interpretations of it would be the backstage reality (Goffman 1990 [1951], 114). However, there must be a level of congruity between two differing meanings within a single performance. To go back to the metaphor of flow, while a

member's direction may differ from the direction of the community, yet it needs to be enough with the flow for the flow to exist. There is thus a need to balance this individual approach with a collective structural approach.

A framework that seeks to understand belonging in a voluntary organisation has to deal with both of these. On the one hand, there is the action the individual takes in order to belong. On the other hand, there are the ways that the organisation seeks to control both what a person does and how they see themselves.

5 . Belonging as a Technology of Power

I will start by looking at how the Church has used belonging as a technology of power to create compliance from members. Belonging to the Church has long been associated with obtaining Salvation. This at least dates back to Cyprian of Carthage, who says, 'He can no longer have God for a father, who has not the church for his mother' (Cyprian of Carthage 2013 [c.250], 22). His opponents also made this connection; an anonymous writer, thought to be writing in response to him, said in the *Treatise on Re-Baptism*, 'Because outside the Church, there is no Holy Spirit, sound faith moreover cannot exist, not alone among heretics' (Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol V: A Treatise on Re-Baptism by an Anonymous Writer. | St-Takla.org 2014). Thus, from early days there has been a tendency for the Church to set the boundaries of salvation as being the same as its own boundaries.¹²⁸

This posed problems for the Reformers in the 16th century. On one hand, they wanted to affirm

¹²⁸ The Roman Catholic Church developed this into a more nuanced sentiment, which in the latest catechism is stated as, 'All salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body'(John Paul II 1992, para. 846). However, my interest is not in Roman Catholicism, but in how the connection between belonging to the Church and Salvation has been enacted within the Reformed tradition.

the connection, for John Calvin says ‘God’s fatherly favour and the especial witness of the spiritual life are limited to his flock so that it is always disastrous to leave the Church,’ (Calvin 1960 [1529], 1016). Thus, he echoes Cyprian in referring to the Church as the mother of believers. However, it needed to adapt because of the division within the Western Church. Firstly, in these passages he is clearly talking of the Church as the Communion of Saints which constitutes the elect; this is crucial as Calvin distinguishes the Visible from the Invisible Church (Calvin 1960 [1529], 1021). His marks of the Visible Church are the ‘Word of God purely preached and heard and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution’ (Calvin 1960 [1529], 1023). However, this does not set the boundaries of the True Church as that of the Reformed tradition, rather, Calvin himself allows that there are examples of True churches among Roman Catholics (Calvin 1960 [1529], 1052). Thus, there exists a complex formulation wherein, although belonging to the Church is crucial, the Church is not identical with the whole Visible Church: the formulation also removes the identification of the Church with a single organisation. Belonging to the Church still remains vital and remains a crucial part of Church discipline. Indeed, although Calvin uses excommunication for the final and most severe penalty of church discipline, it is not only a forbidding of participation in the sacraments, but also of being deemed to be outside the fellowship of the Church (Calvin 1960 [1529], 1231). The strong relationship between being Dutch or Scottish and Reformed¹²⁹ led to a situation where, for many Reformed Christians, belonging to the Reformed Church was not solely a matter of salvation but also one of national identity: equally so in the Puritan societies of Early America where to have full membership status of civil society you also had to be a member of a congregation.¹³⁰

The one debate in URC congregations which is always highly emotional is the removal of people

¹²⁹ See Tradition Section 5.

¹³⁰ See Tradition Section 4.

from the membership roll. This is despite there being almost no disagreement. There is considerable reluctance to remove anyone and nearly always the reason is 'ceased to meet'. At Ulverstone, Judith had to reassure people that the housebound would not be removed from the roll even though they did not attend worship. I cannot be sure that the connection with salvation still holds within people's thinking, but I do know that belonging is a highly emotive topic and one which carries more weight than I would expect. The corollary of this is that there exists a number of practices followed by congregations that are aimed to assure people of their continued membership within the community. These act to connect individuals to the community and keep them connected, so reducing turbulence among these factors: formal membership, wider social norms and personal performance.

There is a great deal of well-defined technology around formal membership, including maintaining a membership roll, and the rules ensuring that members are meeting the standard required to receive Communion. It is this standard that is altered in the Community chapter, but crucially it is altered, not abolished. This seems to go back to early times, at least as far as Calvin's dispute with the Libertines. This practice was strengthened by the development of Covenant Theology which, though initially associated with Baptism (Riggs 2002, 968:34), was later extended to Church Membership (The Puritan Idea of the Covenant 2013).

However, although the roll defines the official community, it has a number of drawbacks. It is always historical: the people on it are there because at some time in the past they have made the commitment and they have neither been removed for a reason by the congregation, nor requested to be removed. Secondly it will only consist of people who fulfil a certain criterion, i.e. they took an opportunity to formally come into membership. As can be seen from Alma and Lillian's stories, there may be reasons why people do not wish to do that formally while still being

highly involved.

Thus, we come to the second set of techniques around the connection with the wider community. In Geneva, there was a close link between the authorities and the Church. Geneva sent a legation for Calvin's return in 1540 (Jean Calvin: First and Second Stay in Geneva 2009), and thus his return was at the request of civil authorities in Geneva. There were negatives to this arrangement, as the strong linking of town authority with the Reformed church led to infrequent communion even though Calvin wanted weekly (Joo 2011). There is a difference in how this is actualised. For Reformed minorities such as the Huguenots in France and Separatists in England, the adoption of the Reformed stance was the creation of a distinct identity (P. Benedict 2002, 546–527), which was outside the mainstream; a community within a community. Where it was a dominant it became an identity, much as explored by Abby Day in her work on reactions to the high positive response to the religious question in the census in 2001 (Day 2011; P. Benedict 2002, 527). Yet it should be noted that often, when it was dominant, it had a strong connection with national identity, particularly in Scotland where being Presbyterian marked people as 'not English' (Oliver 2010 [2009], 247–287) and in Holland where it distinguished them from the Spanish (P. Benedict 2002, 173–201). Therefore even when the Reformed Church is dominant locally it is defined against another identity.

It needs to be noted that there was a difference in the way that the two congregations situated themselves with respect to the tradition. St Andrew's, Edgerton held fond memories of its Presbyterian origins, as explored in the chapter on Community, and used 'Presbyterian' to describe it. At Ulverstone, I never heard a mention of Congregationalism. However, they would use the pronoun 'we' without naming the tradition in circumstances which clearly indicated Congregationalism. This happened, for instance, with Norman, who commented that when the

URC came into being, “The Presbyterians thought that we would function as they did, but they had to learn how **we** did things”. The result is intriguing, as St Andrew’s Edgerton tended to be far more disengaged from the URC structures than did Ulverstone. Ulverstone used the ‘we’ discourse at times to distinguish themselves from the URC and at other times to suggest continuity. At St Andrew’s Edgerton the URC administrative connection was left in the hands of Carol the Church Secretary, although attendance at synod events was far higher by St Andrew’s Edgerton than by Ulverstone. In St Andrews the ‘Presbyterian’ tradition acted as primarily a technology of belonging for the Scots and Irish members. With the ‘we’ tradition of Ulverstone, it acted for both long-term members but also those who had wider URC connections, including family.

There were a number of wider links that also aided in belonging to the congregations. In St Andrew’s, Edgerton there were close links maintained between the congregation and the Caledonian Society as well as weaker connections to a specific medical practice.¹³¹ The way that Ulverstone defined itself against the local health centre is intriguing; it seems to have acted as a scapegoat for the practical difficulties of being situated where they were. They prided themselves on connecting with the local community but built defences around receiving criticism from the community. They also had a developing relationship with the local pub. They thus both linked to other local institutions.

However, as the Reformed tradition puts emphasis on the family as the core unit of religious practice, the household was seen as a second place of devotion (P. Benedict 2002, 509). Also, the catechising of children was seen as indispensable. The Synod of Dort specified that it should happen at three places: home, school and church (P. Benedict 2002, 509). The outcome of this in

¹³¹ This was now through former GPs who had retired.

England was to create a network of families who were closely interlinked through association with a particular congregation. This was a sub-community that became part of an individual's identity when they belonged to the congregation. To be put out of the congregation was also to break ties of friendship and family. However, the strength of association decreased over the generations (P. Benedict 2002, 527) which led, in New England, to the development of the Half-Way Covenant (Gerbner 2012). The problem was that, no matter how well they brought up the children in the faith, there was a decent chance that they would go to university outside Hartlethorpe and Edgerton, and then follow employment elsewhere in the country. The effect was the bringing up of children in the faith, though still seen as beneficial, was no longer the way to secure the long-term survival of the congregation. Thus, the pattern from the tradition where the families carried the core life of the congregation down generations was fading. To counteract this, the congregation had developed approaches to welcoming, which aimed to build affiliative connections between members of the congregation and other people who might be interested in joining.

However, the need to reach out to others had meant that both congregations had developed their own style of being welcoming. This was a method of including people into the community without their first needing to go through a formal membership process. At St Andrew's, Edgerton they were interested in anyone who walked through the front door for Sunday worship. This involved welcoming the person as an individual. It meant that they had managed to include a lady called Maggie who had been addicted to alcohol; they found ways to help her without feeling any need to go into ministry to other alcoholics. Equally, some of the Scouts who were regularly at parade were also crossing the line. At Ulverstone, they had regular events aimed at different demographics within the congregation to which outsiders could be invited. It was hoped

that these would foster friendship and also enable people to feel more connected with the congregation. Thus, bonds of friendship were replacing bonds of family as ways of defining the wider community.

However some considerable effort was spent on creating communal bonds with members of the congregation. Most congregations provide some pastoral oversight for those it recognises as being part of the community and not just for members. My Elder while I was at Ulverstone was Bernard¹³² the church secretary, and I would guess Alma had an Elder too. Both congregations also had pastoral teams who were there to help with visiting people within the community who were in pastoral need.¹³³ There was also a strong sense in both congregations of connections built between members that supported them in belonging. This network in Ulverstone was sustained through social groups such as the Men's Breakfast or the Ladies' Night, although informal social events also happened all the time. At St Andrew's Edgerton it was often through pastoral care. The accounts of the visiting of members when in hospital were quite a feature of congregational life.

Finally, there seems to be a third sense of belonging that is activated, and that is the requirement of performance by the individual. One possible route would be for the congregation to make roles that people can realise. This is similar to Althusser's idea of being 'interpellated' by the state (Althusser 2006 [1970]), where an individual is addressed, can be stretched, so that they can be addressed by things other than the state. Franz Fanon (2008 [1952]) applies this to racial identity where a boy¹³⁴ calls attention to the fact Franz Fanon is black, causing him to experience being

¹³² This is a totally separate person from the person who is my Elder in my home congregation.

¹³³ Pastoral need is loosely defined as the housebound elderly, the sick, the bereaved and people going through other life crises.

¹³⁴ The child in the original is a boy; it is Bhabha who states that it is a girl.

seen as a black person for the first time. This would suggest that the space for the subject is created in the way a person is addressed by society. For Althusser, the address is overarching, but for cases such as Fanon's, the interpellation is not the same overarching concept. The individual is to be seen as being 'interpellated' by the congregation: the congregation is not some overarching schema but competes with other institutions.

However, interpellation alone does not work as a technology: it creates ways of learning what is expected, it does not in itself provide the desire to comply. Another aspect is the effort and support people get in maintaining behaviours while belonging to a group. During and immediately after the Second World War, Social Psychology looked at the ways that people would tend to comply with something. There were studies into whether compliance could be brought about by working as a group rather than by theoretical argument (Lewin 1999 [1948]) and also investigations into how a person's behaviour altered when in a minority amongst a group (Asch 1956). The pressure to belong creates a desire to comply with a group's norms.

One way to understand this would be to take how Foucault looked at the different ways that punishment has been understood, from the role that the visual has played in the role of punishment from the scaffold to incarceration (Foucault 1991 [1975]). He drew attention to the fact that the disciplinary gaze had changed from external to internal and people were instead self-disciplining. Foucault suggests that the final state is created by a sense of being watched, using Bentham's Panopticon as a model (Foucault 1991 [1975], 195–230). However, there is little formal academic work on the development of control since Foucault (Lianos 2003) and much of that has concentrated on the process of data collection. The fact of the matter is that congregation and the members are not two separate groups but one and the same. Thus the desire for conforming and that to which they conform are both internalised by the congregation.

What is happening is a dual introjection where the reified congregation that is produced by members is introjected as the observer as well as the source of behavioural code. What I would suggest is that people are observing what is going on around them and learning their identity from this.

Personal piety has long been important within the Reformed tradition. In Calvin's Institutes, this was linked as a sign of the perseverance of the saints (Calvin 1960 [1529], 973–974) rather than participation in the sacraments (Calvin 1960 [1529], 1290). Later, English Congregationalists required that a person gave testimony to the action of the Holy Spirit in a person's life (P. Benedict 2002, 501). This may have led to accounts of conversion, although they were, historically, wider than this. This move may have been the desire to shift away from an intellectually-based form of faith and to put more emphasis on experience and emotions. Indeed, many Puritan writers did write of the emotion of faith and saw it as an essential part of piety (Lane 2011, 134–158). Perhaps the most magisterial work on this is Jonathan Edwards' work on the Religious Affections (Smith 2009 [1959], 13) in which Edwards gives twelve signs for discerning genuine affections. Importantly, the affections were not understood to have been engaged unless they led to changes in the individual's manner of living. There thus developed a number of practices that are distinctive within the Reformed tradition. There is therefore a technology that centres on the individual, which involves intellectual, emotional, experiential and behavioural practices to create an individual who is recognised as being a member of the congregation.

Although the testimony to faith is still visible in the order of baptism in the Worship chapter and formally coming into membership still requires an agreement to a set of beliefs,¹³⁵ yet for the

¹³⁵ See Section 2 in this chapter.

most part the overt stating of formal belief positions is not part of congregational life. There are two ways, however, that a person picks up what it means to be a member: through worship and congregational life.

One of the ways that a member learns the norms of the congregation is through worship. In Reformed worship, the congregation are never just the audience; they are expected to be active participants in worship. The clearest way is through the singing of hymns and psalms, although they are also expected to pray along with the prayers. People are not just being ‘interpellated’, but are acting a role within worship. That role is reinforced by its being part of the chorus, so that the people around one are also acting that part. This produces the impression that the people around one agree with the sentiments expressed in the song. It thus produces a mild form of groupthink (Turner and Pratkanis 1998), which is when the maintenance of social identity produces different results to that which would happen if one considered people as a group of individuals. However this works in other ways as well with the way the preachers represented the congregation during the sermon.¹³⁶

In congregational life, two occasions were specifically designed to indicate the nature of a good member: Church Meeting and Bible Study. Their very existence indicated something about the congregation. Church Meeting, as a decision-making body, played a vital role in sustaining the congregations’ identity. It had authority from the way it was conducted and also indicated that everyone was heard. I suspect Alistair’s willingness to accept the decision of the Extraordinary Church Meeting described in the Community chapter was that he felt his views were listened to at the meeting. The existence of Bible Study communicated that centrality of the Bible, even if people did not attend. Intriguingly, not attending a purely social event because of other

¹³⁶ See Worship Section 6.

commitments and not attending these two were always explained differently. Church Meeting was nearly always down to a matter of principles such as “it should not be held after worship” while Bible Study was often the meeting they felt they should attend but could not.

Over and beyond this the congregations both took regular attendance at events seriously. The only reason that people were removed from the roll was ‘ceased to meet’. However, ‘regular attendance’ was configured differently in the two congregations. With Ulverstone, the emphasis was put on meeting regularly and frequently. The minister clearly quoted Hebrews 10:24-25 ‘And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near’. ‘Regularly’ meant weekly on Sunday plus weekday activities. I heard grumbles about people who did not make this level of commitment. Thus, to belong was to be actively participating in congregational activities. St Andrew’s, Edgerton accepted a lower level of meeting and it was acceptable to miss an event because family had come to visit. The connections between people relied rather on knowing the person.

In this section I have explored the way that tradition has created a technology around belonging. This technology clearly draws on the way ‘governmentality’ has been enacted within the Reformed tradition, as seen in the Tradition chapter.. There are three different perspectives to looking at it: there is the formal roll of the membership; the relational, which involves connecting with the community and sustaining that membership; and finally the practices that go to establish an individual as belonging to the community. These strands flow together forming a complex pattern of currents within congregational life.

6. Belonging as a Technology of Self

There are two rather simple approaches to the technology of self. The first is to assume that the formal technology of membership is sufficient. As indicated earlier it is maintained by the congregations but it is rather a legacy technology. In the 20th century, nearly all United Reformed Churches moved towards Communion that is fairly open (the discussion over children at Communion is still live, as can be seen from the chapter on Community). This means that the membership roll transformed from being a list of those who could partake at Communion, to an electoral roll for the Church Meeting. The result is that it has lost significance, with formal membership really only conveying the right to vote at Church Meeting and the right to hold leadership roles i.e. Elders.

The alternative is that the technology of self was to conform to the mould created by the technology of power. This is often what is assumed. However it is more complex than that. There is not something that is a cohesive monolingual discourse; rather people discern the discourse from a selection of social settings including church meeting, worship and Bible Study. We thus need a theory of discourse that allows people to be making judgments between the different discourses that are present in the situation. Social Constructivists such as Gergen (1999, 81–82) have often used Bakhtin's concepts as a tool for understanding these relationships. Bakhtin suggests that there are two discourses that can be used for any reality (Bakhtin 1981 [1935]) and that each discourse comes from its own set of symbolic relationships. Therefore, using one symbol rather than another alters the ways symbols relate to each other. There are, for Bakhtin, both centripetal and centrifugal elements. Centripetal elements function similarly to Althusser's ideological state apparatus. Centrifugal ones act in the opposite direction and Bakhtin associates these strongly with folk culture. The problem with Bakhtin's understanding is twofold.

Firstly he assumes that there are ways of discerning a dominant discourse that are independent of making it the dominant discourse. However, the act of discerning it as dominant is part of the actions that make it dominant. Also he has only a binary understanding of discourses. Gerd Baumann, in his study of ethnic identity in Southall (G. Baumann 1996), showed that people were more sophisticated in using the range of discourses around identity, selecting which discourse to use within a context. However, Baumann still assumes that a dominant discourse can still easily be discerned. The relationship within the congregational context was still more complex.

Firstly two important identity-carrying communal events (Church Meeting and Bible Study) are deliberately dialogical and not monological. Bible studies were symbolically important in indicating the importance of the Bible to the congregation but they were places where resistance to a message could occur. At one of the Bible Studies at St Andrew's Edgerton, Angus the leader decided to focus on the polemic against idolatry (one of Leith's motifs of the Reformed tradition).¹³⁷ This could be seen as reinforcing the tradition and therefore strongly centripetal. However, it was not accepted particularly well by the group, as it came across as loaded rhetoric that left them in an awkward place. Thus participants refused to answer the questions by maintaining a silence. This was in contrast to the acceptance of this rhetoric within sermons when nobody could respond. However the fact that the expression of views was seen as part of what Bible Study was about could be used to direct people into deliberately discussing particular issues. On one occasion at Ulverstone Judith set the Bible Study up to discuss Baptism. This allowed her to test the waters with the views of a group in the congregation without having to bring it formally to Church Meeting. Equally the authority and message of Church Meeting was

¹³⁷ See Tradition Section 3.

intimately connected with the idea that everyone's opinion was listened to. This meant that it was understood as deliberately acting as a consultative process and that opinions were valued.

A participant in the congregational community was not a passive conformist, but there were places where they were asked to shape the discussion and could openly challenge what was going on. Further, people actively sought to bring the community into line with their understanding of who they were. Thus the debate over hymns in the Worship chapter did not reflect a simple theological understanding of worship but was largely along lines that separated a break within popular culture. The question was as much over whether worship would reflect the culture of the older generation or that of the younger generation. Equally the division over which Churches Together the congregation should belong to was just as much a debate about who belonged to the congregation; the Scots who predominantly associated the congregation with Edgerton or the locals who saw it as closer to Marlsett and not in the centre.

Thus the whole technology of belonging as carried out by an individual did not just involve fulfilling the criteria but both discerning and influencing the criteria by which people were judged to belong to the congregation. The net result is that individuals such as Andrew are left wanting confirmation that they belonged. There thus became a number of acts that signified that they belonged.

7. Belonging as a Technology of Signs

The fact that the technology of self was actually in a process of continual reformulation and could not be clearly stated led to the use of a technology of signs that acted to confirm to an individual that they were succeeding in being a member of the congregation. It is worth remembering Amartya Sen's reasoning that institutions denied people's freedom when they were

denied rights within that situation. A sign of belonging confirms a person's capacity to act within the institution.

As Cohen has noted, the ability to participate in a communal action is symbolic of belonging to the community (A. P. Cohen 1985), thus the ability to participate in the sacraments is a key sign that a person belonged to the community. However, the congregations were struggling over who had the right to participate in this ritual. The debate at St Andrew's, Edgerton focused on whether children who were regular attendees at worship might participate in the communion service. The debate was fuelled with the fact that some of the mothers had been denied membership and saw their daughters not being allowed to participate in communion as a denial of their own status within the congregation. This conflicted with the more conservative strand in the congregation, which worried about whether this was a lowering of worship standards. At Ulverstone the concern was over Baptism and the debate was whether those who were from Upper Ulverstone should be allowed to bring their children for Baptism. The debate brought into focus the division between the more recent members from a Pentecostal background (with baptism happening after a confession of faith) and the traditional members who only really accepted baptism of the children of members. The problem with the reluctance to draw boundaries at those in formal membership, is that the test became that of the parents' belief, a standard nobody was really happy to implement.

Thus in both congregations the boundaries that marked who could access sacraments were being reconstructed. This nature of construction has not gone unnoticed. Fredrik Barth's work on boundaries focused to a great extent on the way they are socially constructed and maintained (F. Barth 1998 [1969]). He argued for attention in social anthropology to be given to the interactions within societies (F. Barth 1981) and a fuller theorising of them. In his article 'Boundaries and

Connections' he contends that boundaries are strongly part of the way Westerners think and are part of our conceptual tools (F. Barth 2000, 22–23). However this boundary is also very close to the most basic demand of the institution according to Amartya Sen: to participate in it. Exclusion from sacraments is really to be excluded from membership.

Intriguingly the congregations seemed to use Cohen's idea that a unity might be obtained which allowed for personalised reinterpretation (A. P. Cohen 1985, 94-96; A. P. Cohen 1987, 73-78). At St Andrew's Edgerton Andrew achieved this through 'those who love the Lord Jesus': this allows the children to receive while at the same time redefining 'unworthily' so precaution is still taken against a completely free table. Part of this is facilitated by the different interpretations that individuals can put on 'all who love the Lord Jesus'. It is a term that hides a variety of interpretations. At Ulverstone the service of baptism described in the Worship chapter is one which reflects back onto the congregation a sense of who they are. However it also, by combining a variety of elements taken from both groups within the congregation, allows each to see their identity acknowledged within the ceremony. The result is that the congregation has a sense of unity without necessarily agreeing about what has happened.

However, members were not petitioning to be included, although the desire for clear boundaries might well have been in part due to wanting to be sure that they were able to participate in the sacraments. Everyone at the Church Meeting in the Community chapter would have been welcome to take Communion when it was celebrated at St Andrew's Edgerton, whatever the outcome, by virtue of being an adult. Rather, they were through these debates trying to establish how much influence they had within the institution. According to Amartya Sen, this is a further level of participation. To some extent this is symbolised in the nature of Church Meeting and yet the behaviour that seeks to influence what happens around sacraments and boundaries is not

solely contained within Church Meeting. This is not only true at St Andrew's Edgerton when a group within the congregation disengaged from Church Meeting, but could also be seen in the grumbling about "baptismal parties" at Ulverstone. People used whatever techniques were available to seek to influence where the boundary was drawn.

The capacity to influence where boundaries are drawn also means that the individual has a good deal of control over their own belonging. If they get to choose who is in or out then they can make sure that they are in. Thus the congregations often marked the boundaries in other ways, for example the habit of grumbling over baptismal parties at Ulverstone or the rooms that they chose to have events in.¹³⁸

Against this was the attempt to shape things so it fitted around the person. At Ulverstone this drove much of the debate about hymns on both sides,¹³⁹ where it was as much style of music as anything that was the cause of debate. At St Andrew's, Edgerton, it was rather the inclusion of members' families. In the Community chapter this is seen in mothers' desire that their children might partake in Communion, but it also was part of the welcome given by people at St Andrew's which included learning about family, and the sentiment uttered by Carol in the Location chapter that "grandchildren always take priority."

In this section I have looked at the ways, particularly with respect to the sacraments, that people have to confirm that they belong to the congregation. This shows that the drawing of boundaries and the ability to determine who can or cannot receive is itself an act that demonstrates one's membership of the congregation. The importance of worship as a system of signification within the congregation means that members are particularly concerned with the way that practice of it

¹³⁸ See Location Section 5.

¹³⁹ See Worship Section 5.

reflects their belonging to the congregation.

8 . **Belonging as the Driver of Congregational Identity**

So far, I have looked at what people do as members of the congregation, how there are methods that encourage people to align themselves with the congregation and also at the way that people negotiate and renegotiate the identity of the church and the ways in which it is changing. This negotiation and renegotiation create the overall flow within the congregational identity.

Members put a considerable effort into belonging to the congregation; as well as attending worship, they maintain boundaries, both physical and communal, adjust their actions to fit with what is expected in the congregation, and they also adopt a range of personal and social stances that fit. There is a variety of ways in which they are encouraged to carry out these tasks but perhaps most influential is the question of whether they do belong, which seems to haunt members. The question is how this interacts with congregational identity.

The technology of belonging acts to sustain identity. People who are members are looking for things that say that they are part of the congregation. They have been part of the congregation. If things stay the same then there is no reason to worry about being excluded from the congregation in the future. The way things have been done is comfortable for them and gives them a sense of security. Thus in many ways the default option with members is for things to stay the same. Therefore they are happy with the congregation staying where it is, because that is where they have belonged.

The technology of belonging also to a certain extent drives change. People will want the congregation to change in ways that reflect them not just adapt to its ways. Thus they may well

try to change the behaviour of the congregations in ways that are compatible with their preferences, for example, the type of music enjoyed. However it is also the case that the congregational identity will change as society changes and the members are changed as part of that. For instance both congregations were accepting of families which had undergone divorce and wine was consumed in members' homes if not at church socials.

The belonging technology is not the sole driver of congregational identity; there are places for leadership, vision and conviction. What I would say is that belonging as technology is emotional in character. I note David Armstrong's statement 'Every organisation is an emotional place. It is an emotional place because it is a human invention, serving human purposes and dependent on people to function,' (Armstrong 2004, 24). The difference from my position is that the technology of power which works on whether a person 'belongs' or not is the obvious driver of the anxiety.

Thus I have found that within these congregations the necessity of establishing oneself as belonging to the congregation has created a technology that has both aspects of technology of power (their desire to belong to the congregation provides incentive to act according to congregational norms) but also technologies of self (for the individual's own identity to be recognised by the congregation as part of it, which led to participation in debates and lobbying within the congregation). Further, this technology of belonging also interplays within worship as part of a technology of sign (particularly in the sacraments where participation is seen as sign of belonging). Thus my theorisation of belonging in these congregations is that it is a provisional negotiation which by its very inconclusive nature engages people with the congregational identity. In doing this I open up the concept of belonging to look at the way that it interplays with other concepts. As members' engagement with the congregational identity is partially driven through

this technology of belonging there is a high emotional component to the congregational identity which is often overlooked in the more straightforward institutional literature.

Epilogue

In this chapter I intend to explore the wider implications of the argument made in this thesis with respect to the sociological understanding of belonging, discuss the implications for Congregational Studies and congregations within the tradition, and reflect on what it implies about the original issue that initiated the whole quest.

1. Identity and Belonging Sociologically

Perhaps strangely, the first step is to say what this study cannot answer. It cannot provide any indication of what it means to be a Christian today in the UK. Without a doubt the majority of people belonging to the two congregations would have described themselves as Christian, thus fulfilling the criteria of self-identification which are more important than objective methods in determining a person's religion today (Voas 2007, 147). However it is not the case that all people belonging to the congregational community self-identified as neither Christian, nor that self-identification as Christian was the dominant technique for belonging to the Congregational Identity. Unless stated otherwise, as in the case of Alma, the identification was largely assumed and only performed when required as in the sacramental liturgy.

Rather I have found that within these congregations there is a close relationship of the technology of belonging with the technology of self, and the technology of power means that as an institution there is a high degree of mutuality. The idea of belonging to a group is supported by a common idea; and friendship with democratic government is widely part of society. The democratic government is important in communicating that everyone's opinion is valid and as such builds a democratic tendency within participants. Political activity is largely lobbying rather

than participation in the formal structures, but the decision of Church Meeting is recognised as authoritative. Thus there is little division between those who rule and those who worship, although not all have equal standing. In other words, these congregations were not experiencing a democratic deficit: people felt that, through participating in the community and with access to a decision-making body, they were listened to. They behaved and understood themselves as political agents within a congregational context.

The way the congregations function is neither the practice in all religious institutions nor is it solely a feature of religious institutions. The activities of local branches of many trades unions would look similar, as would many cultural societies when events are for the benefit of members. That is they happen to be a religious form of an institutional structure that can be found elsewhere in society. The structure in this thesis comes from 16th century debates about Ecclesiology. In other situations its form comes out of political ideologies or, as many of the societies were founded in the late 19th century, the structures used widely elsewhere in society.

However, today we are facing a reshaping in the institutional ecology of the country. Memberships of organisations such as political parties (Seyd and Whiteley 2004), trades unions (Office For National Statistics 2014) and civic participation (Seddon 2011, 41:2) are all decreasing. This seems a similar argument to that made in the book *Bowling Alone* (Putnam 2000). Putnam does not argue for a straightforward decrease in civic engagement, rather he talks about a restructuring with it moving away from these societies towards, for example, big campaign groups.¹⁴⁰ There is less voluntary time being spent on keeping organisational aspects of institutions running. This is not to argue that religion is stronger than secularisation theorists would maintain. Rather, what we see is an outcome of institutional decline, as does Grace Davie

(2013 [2001]): the decline of this type of congregation is a contributor to the institutional decline.¹⁴¹ Peter Hall (P. A. Hall 2002) finds no indication of a drop in social capital in the UK, but he never splits the two sorts of associations the way Putnam does and his work only covers up to the 1980s. On the other hand, I suspect that there is a growth in the small group such as that described by Wuthnow (Wuthnow 1994), but the tendency is to organise as interest groups such as dance classes, writers' circles or therapy groups. These groups tend to be either a small self-organising group or to adopt a commercial model rather than be based around a mutual institution.¹⁴² There has also been the development of the Internet, which has permitted much more frequent contact with people who are not neighbours. Community is possible on the Internet but at present there are few websites where the institutional nature of the community is anything more than embryonic and what institutional structure there is, is largely commercial.

Christianity in England is being reshaped, in ways broadly similar to trends noted within UK Christianity as a whole, with Cathedrals having increased attendance at worship (Barley 2012). There is also a surprisingly large number of 'New Churches'¹⁴³ as David Goodhew found, with 27 formed in York over the past 30 years (Goodhew 2012).¹⁴⁴ I also have noticed trends within the URC towards a greater division between the paid clergy and the membership, with more power going to the denominational centre, and the ordained being seen as representative of the church. There are also congregations going the opposite direction with a tendency to withdraw from

¹⁴¹ I am reversing the causation implied by the correlation noted by both myself and Davie.

¹⁴² Also less Church-orientated than in the US.

¹⁴³ In quotations because I cannot justify classifying Orthodox churches as belonging to the New Church group as happens in the paper.

¹⁴⁴ I suspect he underestimates them, as the list would only include surviving ones and lack ones with very small congregations meeting in people's homes. I am speaking from personal experience, but about a decade ago in Sheffield there was a plethora of such groups that almost changed week to week.

denominational structures and to do their own thing.¹⁴⁵

Equally society is changing with increased personal mobility. The lady at Ulverstone who said her family had been worshipping there for two hundred years does not have grandchildren worshipping in the congregation. That mobility has a secondary effect, in that society is becoming more and more organised into generational groups. The congregations remain one of the few places where cross-generational relationships are expected outside the immediate family and even that is getting weaker.

The stress that these changes are putting on the congregations can be seen. St Andrew's accepted that people would attend less than monthly. As seen in the section on gathering for worship at Ulverstone in the Worship chapter, the monthly pattern was allowing people to choose which services they came to. To counteract this, Ulverstone put a lot of emphasis on the need to meet frequently and expected people to be involved in mid-week groups as well. St Andrew's relied quite heavily on a few people doing pastoral care and the warmth of fellowship when a person was there. St Andrew's, Edgerton perhaps had less urgency in its need to change, given the fact that it was an area common for people to retire to and it was finding it regularly recruited such people who had experience of other congregations. Ulverstone had managed to maintain its numbers partly through circumstance¹⁴⁶ and partly by participating in evangelical activity. Both were therefore static in membership numbers. This is not the case for many other URC congregations. The system which is already showing signs of stress is going to get more stressed in the years to come and this will result in there being fewer URC congregations.

The question from Putnam is not really whether the nature of institutional organisation is

¹⁴⁵ I know of former Presbyterian congregations who have done this. This is often when a congregation becomes most inward looking.

¹⁴⁶ Changes at local Pentecostal Congregations had led to the arrival of a number of new members.

changing, but what impact this has on civic society. To understand this we need to look at the type of institution that is decreasing and what they excelled at. First, the close relationship between involvement and being able to influence meant that members did not experience a democratic deficit. These are institutions that are not just accountable to their membership but where the membership knew that it had significant ability to influence outcome.

Second, the technology that they used to create belonging had mutuality between the institution and the membership, so that the membership shaped the institution but also the institution shaped the membership. The situation enabled members to gain experience in operating in a formal political environment. These groups therefore enabled people from a wider social background to participate in wider political society. This is not to say that they were superb at this engagement. Participation in such groups historically is largely a middle-class or upper-working-class activity but certainly within congregations there has always been a space for people who were outside these groups. A decrease in experience of such institutions could be expected to reduce people's ability to engage with the political process in wider society, and also lead them to fail to appreciate the complex nature of political debate on a wider scale.

Also its demise means that new large-scale institutions will depend far more strongly on the social entrepreneur or small social entrepreneurial group. Indeed this is the model of many of the new voluntary sector websites that have been set up. They are owned by a private individual or individuals who created the website which enables the activity to take place. They do not have the same mutuality that even large organisations founded as mutual institutions, such as the RSPB, have.

A minor factor is this thesis use flows as a metaphor for the processes within congregational life. The exploring of the metaphor through working at fluid dynamics has allowed me to work out

the implications of something as flowing in a number of novel ways. I have not exhausted the metaphor. A careful attention to what scientists say about phenomena used as metaphors by social scientists will help social scientists use the metaphors adroitly. The choice of a good metaphor should enable a social scientist to see further than where they are. In this case it enabled me to focus on the role connections played in maintaining a smooth feel to congregational life as well as pointing out that turbulence was likely to occur around boundaries.

2. Congregational Studies

There are several things that come out of my work in this study which contribute to Congregational Studies. Firstly, congregations will have their own technologies of belonging. Those within Congregational Studies who want to know how to think about congregational identity, vision or ability to change need to understand the nature of that technology. We need to be aware far more of the involvement of these members.

Secondly, in my Introduction, I drew a distinction between those studies that concentrated on worship and those that concentrated on community. This study started out focusing on the community; however, as it progressed it became clear that both congregations' identity work included worship. In this thesis there are chapters both on community and worship and I could not tackle the issues without them. The division of the congregational studies that treat worship as something separate from institutional identity is clearly shown to be an artificial divide. Important aspects of institutional behaviour occur within worship. If we are to analyse how congregations behave, we need to look at both worship practices and institutional practices as these are overlapping categories. Studies in future need to look at both.

Thirdly, quite often, as in Matthew Guest (2008), theology is seen as central to identity. There is

within the Reformed tradition a theological discussion about what belief one needs to hold to gain access to the sacraments. In this thesis I have found a tension between a belonging that is based on performance of faith and one that is based on relationships within the community. However, as members sought to indicate their belonging to the community by seeking to influence who may or may not have access to the sacraments, they used theology as a tool towards an end. It is not enough within congregational studies to get theology right; we need to be aware of the use to which theology is put within the context.

Fourthly, the connection between belonging and identity means that for ordinary members in these congregations the character of the congregation is not solely a rational concept. Rather it is something that they relate to personally. They actively seek to establish their status as belonging to the congregation. Work on congregations, when it has considered emotional aspects of the congregation, has focused on the leadership. Here I have shown that ordinary members have a strong emotional attachment to the congregation. Future studies of congregations need to consider not just the emotions within the leadership but those of the congregants.

3. The United Reformed Church

The use of belonging and affiliative connection as the major attractor to belonging will lead to a decline in denominational identification by doctrine. That is the idea that denominational affiliation¹⁴⁷ is determined by a person's doctrinal stance. There will still be cultural factors that appear to focus on doctrine, such as worship preference or cultural loyalty,¹⁴⁸ which still play a

¹⁴⁷ I am really unsure this has ever been the case since the Reformation. The distinction between the three main Protestant groups in the Civil war was in institutional government, hence the names Episcopalian, Presbyterian and Congregationalist.

¹⁴⁸ I expect Scots and Irish Protestants still to prefer congregations where there are already Scots and Irish Protestants.

role in choosing a congregation. Doctrinal agreement is weak as an attractor in both congregations. Ulverstane pays more attention to doctrinal agreement than St Andrew's, Edgerton, but in both congregations there were people with a variety of beliefs. For instance, I am well aware that there were people who were for same-sex marriages at Ulverstane, just as there were people who were against it. To a large extent there was, with respect to doctrine, an acceptance of a wide range of views, provided that there were no direct challenges. This may reflect the findings in the study of Kendal; a more individualised component called spirituality was seen as growing while the social component, structural religion, was in decline (Heelas et al. 2005) although the researchers were exploring the difference between setting, not changes within congregations. However, perhaps more importantly, a strong theme in both congregations was the affiliative emphasis on belonging. This broadly came under the theme of being a 'Welcoming Congregation' although both congregations interpreted it differently. Abby Day's exploration of what non-Christians believed in highlights the relationship with others (Day 2011, 47-74). It may be that this form of believing will become far more associated with belonging than it has previously. Choice of congregation is likely to be based on what friendships you have and what friendships you find when looking for a congregation.

The theological understanding of the United Reformed Church has been very broad. English Congregationalism was an alliance of unlikely bedfellows since the 18th Century, basically covering all groups, including many English Presbyterians, who were Trinitarian Paedo-baptists and not happy in the Church of England. The Presbyterian Church of England was able within a single congregation to cover a broader theological spectrum than the Church of England;¹⁴⁹ the

¹⁴⁹ When I first joined my home congregation it covered a theological range that stretched from that of Scottish conservative Presbyterians to those who identified as Humanist. The reason for joining was being culturally Scots, not theological agreement.

unifying factor being shared cultural norms rather than theology. Denominationalism based on theological identity is not really our natural *modus operandi* and it might well be that the merger in 1972 was the high water mark for our institutional denominationalism.

If Nancy Ammerman is right and the survival of the congregation depends on the ability to adapt to changes within society (Ammerman 2001 [1997], 321-324), then the way members validate their belonging alters the ways in which a congregation can adapt. Adaptations that undermine members' sense of belonging are likely to be strongly resisted, as they involve a change to the identity of the members. In some ways, a strongly affiliative manner of belonging is quite dangerous as, if it becomes about sustaining the relationships that are there, it becomes difficult for any change to happen, as new people become a threat to those relationships that already exist. The relationships will not fail, but the incorporating of new people into a community means a change within relationships. In other words, survival for a congregation becomes a negotiation between changing for survival and sustaining a sense of belonging.

We are going to need to change our mode of operation from seeking to be part of the social fabric of society back towards being a collection of 'congregations' each seeking to find ways to journey successfully where we are. If, as seems to be the choice of most congregations at present, they down-scale and develop a style of belonging that draws far more on that of friendship groups, then we are going to have to look at a different model of congregation as the style limits the congregations' size. Are members going to be highly committed to each other, forming a dispersed religious community, perhaps with a rule of life and willing to give sacrificially so as to have a minister who acts as a spiritual leader for their congregation? Are congregations going to be closer to an adult education class, maybe meeting on varied days of the week and sharing a minister who acts a bit like the tutor but leading worship instead of teaching a subject? Will

congregations form family groups which share ministry? Might the 'URC' group be a ginger group within a more ecumenical congregation or even those who belong to a Reformed Community: one that functions separately to actual worshipping congregations but seeks to foster a Reformed ethos within other denominations? Will there be congregations who meet in life only for quarterly communion, but keep in almost constant contact through modern technology? Will congregations change to meeting where the Lord raises up a minister? Will the few congregations who want to go to the bigger model become 'resources' supporting other smaller congregations or will they become independent identities? How will we develop our mutuality in creating these new structures? How will we sustain para-congregational needs such as training? The problem is not the absence of options but that our connection with an institutional model developed in the 19th Century has left us unable to act strategically in the present.

What I can say is that I do not expect the United Reformed Church to exist in its current institutional form in a decade's time. If it does, it will be down to failure to grasp the future, not a sign of our success. What I do expect is there still to be congregations and other institutions who have a United Reformed heritage and are expressing that in the new environment in ways that at present we barely glimpsing. This is not a denial of the heritage or to give up on it, it is to behave in a way that fits with how our predecessors have behaved, willing to re-form the church in order to encapsulate the gospel. Oddly I find myself reminded of the Reformed motto '*ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei*'¹⁵⁰. I would picture this as portraying the church as the carrier of the Ark of the Covenant. We might need to change the way the procession is formed but we

¹⁵⁰ Translates as: 'The Church reformed and always being reformed by the Word of God'. In this form it is likely to have been coined in the late 20th Century but there is evidence that forms of it possibly originated in 16th Century in Scotland among the Covenanters (Denlinger 2014).

are not free to stop carrying our witness into the current age.

That said, we are not free to forget the way our members' own identity is tied into the functioning of the local congregation. The closure of a local congregation is a real grief to its members; it is a partial loss of who they are. Equally, carrying on until congregations are frail shadows of themselves just drags out the grieving process. Are there perhaps ways to deal with it creatively, not just through closure services but maybe through ways that look forward and support the grieving?

4. Home Congregation

Looking back now I feel that I underestimated the link that people made between their own identity and that of the congregation. The congregation had invested quite strongly in being one of the institutions of the diaspora of Scots who worked in the city. With the decline in immigration from Scotland and Northern Ireland they were faced with two options. The one I espoused was that they could choose an alternative understanding of who made up their wider community. Theirs was the choice not to assimilate and to maintain the Scottish identity that they were secure in. This meant that there was a high likelihood that the congregation would not survive. The 'depressed' discourse that said they would be dead in ten years allowed them to bypass this debate because it removed from them the need to find ways to survive and thus to change. There is a massive theological variation between individuals. However, because they are able to keep the impression of the congregation as being for diasporic Scots and Northern Irish, they do not need to debate doctrine. Any change would mean renegotiating their identity and thus might cause problems of wide disparity in understanding. However, today listening to the congregation I can hear an underlying insecurity. The concentration on maintaining the Scots

identity has not made members secure in their membership. Such a concentration means that when something upsets part of being members then members feel threatened. A healthy congregation is one that has a variety of *'techné'* for belonging and the concentration on any single one to the exclusion of others is dangerous.

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Appendix A: List of Interviews Conducted

The next two pages contain a listing of the interviews conducted. The columns in the table represent

Pseudonym	The name by which interviewee is identified in this thesis
No.	Interview number
S.	Recorded sections of the interview if more than one
Age	Estimate of participants age
Sex	Male or female
Relational status	A combination of marital status and relationship to other interviewees
Ethnicity	Ethnicity (ascribed by researcher)
How long	Estimate of how long they have been a member of this congregation
Origin	Whether interviewees have always lived locally or at some stage moved to the town
Description	Further information on the interviewees relevant to their role within the congregation

5. St Andrews, Edgerton Interviews

Pseudonym	no	s.	Age	Sex	Relational status	Ethnicity	How long	Origin	Description
Angus and Sylvie	1		65-75	M&F	married (second)	white	0-5 years	Immigrant	Retired Minister and wife who have been with the congregation a couple of years at most, wife is an elder.
Andrew and Isabel	2	a,b	75-80	M&F	married	white	40 years	Immigrant	Retired GP and teacher, both elders although only she was serving at the date of interview. They joined St A as this is what you did in the practice Andrew belonged to!
Ruth and Harold	3		70-80	M&F	married	white	30 years	Local	Retired hospital technician and nurse, both members of rotary, both elders
Issy and William	4		80-90	M&F	married (second)	white	40 plus	Local	Retired, both served on management committee
Heather	5		65-75	F	widow	white	30 plus	Local	Retired school teacher, elder, from a Congregational background, lives in Marlsett
Daniel and Pauline	6		50-60	M&F	married	white	10 years	Immigrant	Minister and his wife (who works in learning support)
Valerie and Megan	7	a,b	45-55 & 11	F&F	Mother (divorced) and Daughter	white	10 years	Immigrant	Valerie is a peripatetic music teacher in schools, Megan is a gifted musician

Pseudonym	no	s.	Age	Sex	Relational status	Ethnicity	How long	Origin	Description
Alistair and Lorna	8		60-70	M&F	Married	white	5 years	Immigrant	Civil servants who took early retirement while I was there, Alistair was a non-serving Elder
Carol and David	9		65-75	M&F	Married	white	10-15 years	Immigrant	David is a retired minister; Carol is a development officer approaching retirement. Carol is church secretary, David is treasurer
Esther and Donald	10		70-80	M&F	Married	white	Esther: over 60, Donald: over 20	Local	Esther is a retired midwife who started attending as a Child. Donald and Esther married late, and Donald joined during their courtship
Grace	11		70-80	F	Single	British Carribean?	40 years	Immigrant	A retired nurse, Seventh Day Adventist background but brought to the church by Dr Martin
Doreen	12		70-80	F	Widow	white	30 years	Local	Retired, a widow whose husband, a former headmaster had died recently.
Moira	13		65-70	F	Widow	white	0-5 years	Immigrant	Retired Community Nurse with a very mixed church background in the process of joining
Alice and Howerd	14		70-80	M&F	Married	white	0-5 years	Immigrant	Long term URC members who moved to Edgerton years when they retired and settled at St Andrews

6. Ulverstone Interviews

Pseudonym	no	s.	Age	Sex	Relational status	Ethnic identity	How long	Origin	Description
Lilian	1	a,b,c	75-85	F	Divorced	white	20-30 years	Local	Lilian was a recently Retired nursing home matron who had lived at Rodwell her entire life. She originally belonged Rodwell Congregational Church and was a serving Elder when I arrived but had stood down by the time I left.
Nathaneal	2		30-40	M	Single	white	5-10 years	Immigrant	Nathaneal, known as Nat is a youth worker with the church and is doing an MA. at St John's Nottingham. Nathaneal works in local schools to support himself
Louise and Lauren	3		40-50	F & F	Divorced	white	15-20 years	Local	Louise was a divorced mother who joined the congregation so that her daughter may have cross-generational friendships outside the family
Matthew	4		35-45	M	Married to Debra	white	5-15 years	Immigrant	Matthew, known as Matt, was brought into the church by his brother. He has recently adopted a young girl
Debra	5		45-55	F	Married to Matthew	British Mixed	5-15 years	Immigrant	Originally from Leeds moved to Hartlethorpe and now works as a nurse. She has recently adopted a young girl

Pseudonym	no	s.	Age	Sex	Relational status	Ethnic identity	How long	Origin	Description
Evelyn and Joseph	6	a,b	70-80	M & F	Married	White	30-40 years	Immigrant	Joseph is a retired engineer. Both are non-serving elders with Joseph a former Church Secretary. Both were widowed over a decade ago, so their family is extensive.
Stephanie, Robert and Reuben	7		40-50	M, F & M	Married couple and son	white	5-15 years	Local	Robert is a school teacher, and Stephanie is a specialist nurse. Both are elders within the congregation
Arthur	8		90-100	M	Widowed	white	Over 50	Local	Retired engineer formerly belonged to Hartlethorpe Congregational and was one of the early members of the congregation. Non-serving elder and former church secretary
Norman & Elizabeth	9		70-80	M & F	Married	white	40 to 50 years	Immigrant	Both are now retired. However still involved with St John's Ambulance. He is a non-serving elder
Linda	10		40-50	F	Divorced	white	5 -15 years	local	Stay at home mum with young children, recently divorced
Bernard and Helen	11		70-80	M & F	Married	white	5-15 years	local	Bernard and Helen come from a Pentecostal background. Both are retired Bernard was an engineering and has built his own house while Helen was a Nurse. Bernard is Church Secretary

Pseudonym	no	s.	Age	Sex	Relational status	Ethnic identity	How long	Origin	Description
Samuel and Rachel	12		45-55	M & F	Married	white	5-15 years	immigrant	Samuel is a teacher and Rachel is a GP; they are former missionaries and Oxbridge educated
Douglas	13		55-65	M	married	white	15-25 years	local	Works as a management consultant, but is approaching retirement and is a serving elder. Wife not interviewed.
Judith	14		60-65	F	married	white	10-20 years	immigrant	Minister, brought up in the North of England, started Anglican and ended up URC minister approaching retirement. H only pastorate. Husband not interviewed

Appendix B: Protocol for Interviews

1. Research Purpose

(Not to be asked - in for completeness)

To investigate the way individuals see themselves as belonging to this congregation and construct the identity of the congregation.

2. Theory Questions

(Not to be asked - in for completeness)

- 1) What meta-narratives are routinely invoked when talking about the congregation and about themselves?
- 2) What are the practices of self that attracts them to this congregation and what puts them off?
- 3) What specific ideas do they project onto the congregation?
- 4) What are the practices of self that they understand as indicative of belonging to the congregation and what is important about these practices for the congregation?
- 5) What understanding do they have of the congregation's relationship to the wider community?
- 6) How do they individuate themselves and their family from the congregation?
- 7) What images or tropes do they use for the congregation e.g. extended family?
- 8) What tensions do members regularly refer to either encountering within the congregation?

3. Interview Questions

The six main questions in bold are the definite questions. The points underneath are hints of

details or avenues I might want to follow-up in response to the answer to the main question.

Please, would you tell me about what brought you to this congregation?

- Clarify life story: are they local or have they come from elsewhere? Partner? Parents alive? Children? How spread is their family? Have they lived elsewhere? Social background? How does your family now relate?
- Clarify family church background, were their parents Christians, members of the URC? Do they have any children? Do those children belong to any church? Is it URC? Other connections? Have they belonged to other congregations?
- Clarify what actually attracted them? Why St. Andrew's [REDACTED] Ulverstone and not another URC or local church? Did they shop around? Did they come in through friendship? Is there a particular experience that stands out as making you feel that St Andrew's, Edgerton/Ulverstone was for you?
- If they have been members for a while, clarify why they stay with this congregation? What are the important events that have held you to the congregation? What are any attachments that have kept them coming?

Thinking of you time at St Andrew's Edgerton/Ulverstone, what have been the times or events where you have felt most involved?

- Try and get hold of details. Who was involved? When did this happen? What was your role?
- Try and find out why it was special. What particularly makes this event stand out in your mind? Why do you think it was so special to you?
- See if this can connect on. What does this event say about St Andrew's, Edgerton/Ulverstone? How does this affect your present-day involvement with St Andrew's, Edgerton/Ulverstone?

Character of other members ladder

- 1) Is there anybody in the congregation who stands out for you?
- 2) What about them makes them stand out for you?
- 3) How do these characteristics relate to the congregation as a whole? Not at all? Somewhat? Fully? Why?
- 4) How would you complete the sentence “St Andrew’s is like”?
- 5) What makes St Andrew’s, Edgerton/Ulverstane like this?
- 6) Can you think of any event or thing about St Andrew’s, Edgerton/Ulverstane that particularly reflects this?

What has changed while you have been at St Andrew’s, Edgerton/Ulverstane?

- When?
- Do you think it was a change for the good? Why?
- Can you think of anything positive from these changes? (I am expecting largely to get negative ones, but if they give all positives I will see if they can think of anything negative)

Ladder on wider community

1. What other organisation apart from St Andrew’s do you go to or belong to?
2. Do you ever meet up with any St Andrew’s, Edgerton’s/Ulverstane’s members at these organisations? If so how and when do you meet up?
3. Can you think of anything that the organisations you go to (particularly those other members attend) and St Andrew’s, Edgerton/Ulverstane share?
4. What wider church bodies do you see St Andrew’s, Edgerton/Ulverstane as part of and how do you think these influence St Andrew’s, Edgerton/Ulverstane?

5. How would you characterise St Andrew's Edgerton's/Ulverstane's relationship with other local URC congregations?
6. What effect does the URC have on St. Andrew's, Edgerton/Ulverstane
7. What sort of relationship does St Andrew's, Edgerton/Ulverstane have with local churches of other traditions?
8. Which ecumenical bodies do you think St Andrew's, Edgerton/Ulverstane should belong to and why?

If you could see five years into the future what would you hope to see happening at St Andrew's, Edgerton/Ulverstane

- Try to get people to be specific. What size of income should the church have? How many members? What kind of outreach? Are there people they would like to see coming? What style of worship?
- What challenges would you see as facing the congregation in achieving this?
- To what extent do you think this picture is shared by the rest of the congregation?

Anything else you see as important in St Andrew's, Edgerton/Ulverstane identity that is not included above?

Appendix C: Consent forms

These are reproductions of the words and general layout of the forms, but size is adjusted to take into consideration the requirements of the thesis. There are two separate consent forms.

1. Consent to Participate in Interview

How do United Reformed Churches retain, sustain and change a congregational identity.

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jean Russell from Department of Theology and Religion at the University of Birmingham. The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between personal and congregational identity. The results of this study will be included in Jean Russell's Doctoral Thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have connections with St. Andrew's URC, Edgerton/Ulverstone. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

- This interview is voluntary. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time or for any reason. I expect that the interview will take about an hour
- You will not be compensated for this interview.
- Unless you give me permission to use your name, title, and / or quote you in any publications that may result from this research, the information you tell us will be confidential.
- I would like to record this interview on a digital voice recorder so that I can use it for reference while proceeding with this study. I will not record this interview without your permission. If you do grant permission for this conversation to be recorded on audio voice recorder, you have the right to revoke recording permission and/or end the interview at any time. The interview may take place without recording if you so wish. In which case written notes will be used

This project will be completed by September 2014. All interview recordings will be stored in a secure work space until (2 year) after that date. All my copies of the recordings will then be destroyed.

(Please check all that apply)

- I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.
- I am happy to participate in this interview for this purpose
- I give permission for this interview to be recorded on digital voice recorder

Name of Subject _____

Signature of Subject _____ Date _____

Signature of Investigator _____ Date _____

Please contact with any questions or concerns.



Further information on the research can be obtained from the Website _____ including how to contact my reference group at _____. An electronic version of this form is available on the website.

If you feel you have been treated unfairly, or you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact Prof Martin Stringer, Dept of Theology and Religion, Department of Theology & Religion, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, United Kingdom (phone _____)

2. Consent to use Transcription

Name of Interviewee:

Address:

Telephone number:

Email Address:

Thursday, 03 April 2014

Dear

I have finally managed to transcribe the interview with you of:

Date:

Time:

Place:

Lasting:

Topics covered:

I therefore enclose a copy of the recording and a copy of the transcript (both on disk and paper). I would be grateful if you would mind reading through the transcript and indicating any alterations you would like made. If you wish whole section to be removed please just place a line through it. If you would like a second paper copy of the transcript please ask.

When you are happy that the transcript is a presentation of the interview that you are happy with then:

Please complete the enclosed consent form and return it with the amended transcript in the envelope provided

Yours faithfully

Jean Russell

Consent Form: For use of transcript

Have you read the transcription of the interview provided? Yes no

Is there anything that you want to change? yes no

Please if you would like any changes please indicate on the transcript.

Given any changes that you desire are made, I would like to use the transcript as part of the data for my doctoral research.

Have I your permission to use it for this and for any publication arising from this? yes no

I may wish to quote from the transcript either in the PhD or in publications arising from this. I intend if possible to check with you any such quotation before publication but in general:

Do I have permission to use your words? Yes no

I will need to identify somehow people, who I quote, and will adopt the common practice of just using first names within the publication, what do wish?

* To have your first name used in the publication?

* To have another name, chosen for you, used in the publication?

Although I am likely to not directly identify the congregation that I have worked with, people within the congregation are likely to recognise who is speaking if they read the thesis or publication.

You understand that this level of disclosure is inevitable? Yes no

If at any time after this you change your mind about this decision you are free to do so and just need to contact me.

You understand that you can withdraw permission at any time? Yes no

You know how to contact me to withdraw permission? Yes no

Your contact details on the covering letter for this are correct? Yes no

Please sign if you are happy with all the above.



Signature of Subject _____ Date _____

Signature of Investigator _____ Date _____

If you feel you have been treated unfairly, or you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact Prof Martin Stringer, Dept of Theology and Religion, Department of Theology & Religion, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, United Kingdom (phone XXXXXXXXXX)

Appendix D: Ownership of the Car park at Ulverstone

1. Background

Ulverstone car park is the first thing you encounter on coming to the buildings; in some ways it is similar to going to a supermarket, the car park provides a buffer between the world in general and the building in particular. The car park is large for a church car park; the magnitude of what you would expect at a small supermarket; it will certainly take twenty to thirty cars. Also, if visiting the church one must cross the car park even if you do not have a car. The congregation has an agreement with the local health centre, where during working hours visitors to the local health centre may use the car park, in return for which outside of these hours the church may use the health centre car park for overflow. The health centre car park takes less than a dozen cars.

2. Timeline

Date	Description	Commentary
Oct 2009	At a funeral people attending had not been able to find parking. As funerals were not frequent events, it was arranged, at least as an interim measure, that on days when there was a funeral, part of the car park would be reserved for mourners although this meant someone being at the buildings for 8:00 a.m. in the morning to set out the barriers. The second issue was trickier to solve than the first. A Rotary group that had a regular booking for the use of the lounge complained that people attending were not able to find parking.	
Nov 2009	These issues were brought to Church meeting. There was some worry that if they could not resolve the parking that the	Elders had already discussed this as was evident from the way

Date	Description	Commentary
	<p>Rotary group would leave. Doug, a respected and recently retired elder came and took the microphone, he went through the situation, and then opened the process to the floor. There was some discussion about why people were using the car-park, including excessive use by visitors to the surgery, parking at Ulverstone then taking the bus into town so as to go to work without paying the high town centre parking fees, and so on. There were also suggestions on how to move ahead, including the installation of gates, the possibility of making it a metered car-park during working hours and also whether a donation from the health centre might not help with certain aspect. It should be noted that there was no enthusiasm for metering at this meeting, but it was suggested. Doug brought them back to the fact that they did not actually know who was using the car park so the first stage was to ascertain that, he proposed, and it was accepted by church meeting that they would be a survey. He then appealed for volunteers.</p>	<p>Doug came to the front and handled it. This Church meeting mandated the survey to be carried out.</p>
Jan 2010	<p>The survey was conducted one cold week in January by a small group of volunteers chief among them Doug and his wife, Clare. The survey was a visual survey only. At least one observer was in a car parked in the car park for a day noting where people went when they left the car park. There were three basic directions people could take:</p> <p>To the church buildings, either the lounge, the Stead Hall or the Scout Hut around the back.</p> <p>To cross the road directly from the main entrance to the car-park, which would imply that they were going to the health centre</p> <p>To walk out by the foot entrance and turn right to head towards the Raven Arms roundabout. This meant either they were getting a bus into town or visiting some other business that was on the roundabout including the Raven Arms Inn.</p>	
Feb 2010	<p>The figures were brought back to the church meeting. The numbers showed that the majority of users were in fact</p>	

Date	Description	Commentary
	<p>attending the health centre. It was acknowledged that with the building work going on and the agreement to permit extra parking while it was in use that there was not much that could be done at present. The building work was due to finish in May, and there was added concern that even when the builders' cabin was removed from the health centre car park the parking there would be considerably reduced. They had found out that the Council would provide meters and monitor the parking if asked to do so. However, the barrier ideas still were going to cause problems. Thus there started to be a preferred approach which was that the health centre should make a donation to cover the extra car-parking that they required of the church. This would not solve the overcrowding problem but would to some extent allow the church to pay more easily for keeping the car park up to scratch including resurfacing. It might also buffer the church slightly against loss of income due to the overcrowding and being unable to let.</p>	
May 2010	<p>At the May church meeting, which was also the AGM, two items relating to the car parking were on the agenda. The first one was that the Church Secretary had received a letter from the Council informing the church of plans to change the traffic control on the Raven Arms Roundabout. The main changes were installing pedestrian crossings on the entrances to the roundabout. The church had no problem with these, but there was also a crossing to be installed from the church car park to the health centre. This had led to the elders investigating and finding out that the health centre had been citing the informal agreement with the congregation as meaning that they had full permission for visitors to park in the church car park. This had been part of their proposals for the development of the Health Centre. The elders therefore felt they had to issue an objection on the grounds that this was taking an interpretation of the agreement that the congregation at the church did not agree with and that the present level of parking was causing problems and the congregation did not wish to have this</p>	<p>Elders propose an objection to the plans for the introduction of a crossing from the Church carpark to the health centre.</p>

Date	Description	Commentary
	encouraged further. The second item was the request for a volunteer to redo the survey in June, to see whether the numbers using the car park in order to visit the health centre had dropped substantially.	
Jun 2010	The survey is repeated with similar results	
Sep 2010	Decision time at church meeting: The working group on the car park had been investigating thoroughly. They had found that having barriers was going to be problematic. The thing was that it meant that someone had to be able to open the gates for people attending events at the time the first person for the event would arrive. This would be doable for congregational events, but the high number of external events just made it unfeasible. Also, it would be an expense with no income. Second was the metering and actually on this they had found that the Council was willing to install meters for no fee and run parking inspections. The way the funding worked was that the church took the parking fees, but any enforcement money (i.e. for not paying and such) went to the Council. It was thought that this might bring in £3-4,000 per annum if the current level of parking were taken into consideration. However, this too would be complex to administer. The final option was to approach the health centre and ask for a donation of around £1,500, which was about half the amount the metering would bring in, but would be a lot less hassle. The decision was made to approach the Health Centre for a contribution. Some member voted for this hoping that it would happen while others did so because they felt it must be tried before meters were put in, but they fully expected the health centre to turn them down.	
Nov 2010	It was reported that the health centre had turned it down. It was now a unanimous vote to move ahead with metering. The meters were installed early in the New Year. Then parking permits were issued for members' cars around March, and the metering went live on 1 st April.	This was one year after the initial raising at Church Meeting

Date	Description	Commentary
Mar 2011	Parking permits were distributed to church members and meters were installed.	
May 2011	<p>At Church meeting, some changes were already being noted. Two groups had decided to cancel their booking due to the metering. One of these groups was the Rotary Group that had helped to start the whole process off. It was interesting that this time the letter did not raise the same sort of debate it had done the first time. The other booking raised more; it was for an art class that had met weekly for years on the premises. There was regret at the loss of this group. What was clear was that rentals were up for renegotiation and the congregation were willing to consider offsetting the parking fees against the rental if this was causing problems. Other accommodations would also be considered, for instance, parents who brought their kids to Sunshine Kids were exempted the fee for dropping off and picking up their children provided it was during the known start and finish time of the Sunshine Kids.</p>	<p>Indeed, there had always been an art class meeting in the church buildings at least once a week since it opened. This had actually been a succession of classes, either because the person taking them had changed or because of change of groups sponsoring the classes. Previous classes had been led by church members. However, it had become something that happened at the church, and, therefore, there was a feeling that with this class departing and there being no replacement something was missing.</p>
Sep 2011	<p>There were also some complaints coming in from the local community. On the whole these were not getting heard. It was very clear that a complaint that was written down and sent to the church secretary would have been brought to Elders' Meeting. However, the community did not know this. The majority of complaints from local people were made verbally to the minister. The congregation's approach to such complaints, when raised informally, was to make light of them and advise the minister to shrug them off. One local person had even bothered to do a lot of research and managed to contact Central Offices at Tavistock Place in London. All central office did was to ring Judith, and it was dismissed in the same manner as the other complaints.</p>	

Appendix E: Welcoming children at communion at St Andrew's Edgerton

1. Background

Since the late 1890s, both Congregational and Presbyterian denominations have been opening their communion tables to more and more people. The more conservative a congregation was, the stricter they were about having a closed table. The argument, over whether an open table includes children belonging to the congregation, has been in play throughout my lifetime (over forty years). The general direction is towards inclusion, but each congregation is making its own decision in its own time. The processes vary; on no account would I take this as standard, my home congregation for example accepted children taking communion by default when they started to call the junior church back into the main meeting room for communion. In other congregations, it has been considered by Church and Elders Meetings.

2. Timeline

Date	What occurred	Commentary
May 2007	I receive an email from Alistair, the church secretary at St Andrew's Edgerton saying that elders were happy for me to do my placement there	
Sep 2007	Carol, the church secretary, introduces herself to me when I visit there in the September before starting to attend regularly in October.	Changes in church secretary do occur from time to time. I, therefore, did not assume anything odd about this.
Early Oct 2007	I started attending the church. There are a number of children: Carol's grandson Timothy, about half a dozen	

Date	What occurred	Commentary
	<p>primary aged girls, Megan, who is top juniors and at least one older girl.</p> <p>Communion is monthly, but the children are out at junior church during it and do not participate.</p>	
Late Oct 2007	<p>During the children's address, Megan is asked to nominate someone from the congregation she totally trusts, and she chooses Esther. Megan is then blindfolded and is guided by Esther giving her instructions to walk to the front of the meeting hall.</p>	<p>Esther has run Megan's confirmation class the summer before.</p>
Nov 2007	<p>I attend the Cafe service, and Jackie's younger daughter is there because she insisted on coming despite having a nasty cold. When the cold starts playing up, and she starts crying her dad picks her up and starts carrying her out. She is heard to say "I want to stay at church".</p>	<p>Observation suggests that the children actively desired to go to church.</p>
Feb 2008	<p>I have Sunday lunch and spend the afternoon with Carol and David, their daughter Sue and grandson Timothy are staying with them while Timothy's father is working in Iraq. Timothy is young enough to have an afternoon nap and while he is sleeping Sue goes out to do some shopping.</p> <p>While she is out, Carol decides to tell me about how she came to be the Church secretary.</p> <p>Megan attends a Roman Catholic school, and many of her friends were going through preparation for either first communion or confirmation. Anyway, Megan is feeling left out and wants to make a commitment to the church. Valerie her mum talks with Daniel and it is proposed to have a first communion service. Esther runs the preparation classes and as a result of which Megan feels she is able to cope without the counselling that she has had over the break-up of her parents' marriage.</p> <p>However before this can take place, it must go to elders, and it came before elders one evening when Daniel is not present and Alistair the church secretary makes it clear that he very</p>	<p>I am well aware of the problem with this terminology; I am using it because that is how I remember the congregation consistently describing it. There exists no such ritual officially within the URC. However church membership (or confirmation) would also mean listing on the role and voting rights at Church Meeting.</p>

Date	What occurred	Commentary
	<p>clearly objects.</p> <p>This upsets Valerie Megan's mother who leaves the meeting. Fortunately, she goes up to the manse and Daniel came down. There is quite a vehement discussion at elders at the end of which Alistair resigned, but the first communion happens.</p>	
Mar 2008	<p>Mission week as part of Hope Edgerton in which a team of two people led seminars and other training event aimed at encouraging the congregation in mission activity. As part of this, there arises an awareness of how skilled these two people are as children workers.</p>	
Early Apr 2008	<p>The recommendation is made that the congregation might want to employ a youth leader as part of the follow-up to the mission.</p>	
Late Apr 2008	<p>The Children and Youth Worker for the synod is present at Church Meeting. He leads a session on the child-friendly church award. Section 5 of it says, "There are opportunities for children and young adults to be included in child-friendly church services". We have time to go through parts of it in small groups but feel as if the discussion is moving around the elephant in the room. The decision is made to go for the Child Friendly Church Award and Alistair volunteers to sit on the group, as does Pauline, Daniel's wife and it is suggested that Valerie also should be on the group.</p> <p>At the end, the discussion turns to children at communion. Alistair says that he sees communion as both an act of love, but also as an act of judgement, and therefore he feels that no child should partake until they are of an age of reasonable responsibility, and that is around fourteen. Also that a member should be in harmony with the congregation thus was why he though attending had not been taking himself.</p>	<p>I guess there is a twofold reason for this visit and the reason why he does not focus directly on children at Communion. Child Friendly Church Awards initial form can be found at:</p> <p>http://scotland.urch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/Child-Friendly-Church-award-URC.pdf</p>
Jun 2008	<p>I approach Valerie for an interview</p>	<p>This keeps being put off.</p>

Date	What occurred	Commentary
Sep 2008	Interview with Ina, in talking about elders, where she felt that elders were not pulling their weight with respect to presence, they did not visit, and they did not attend church social and ecumenical events as much as she would like. She commented on Valerie's appointment as an elder, feeling that, with Valerie's time commitments, Valerie had the ability to do the job of an elder. She also commented that Megan should not have been made a member because she, aged nine, still had all her teenage years to go through, and she might well end up wanting to do other things instead	
Dec 2008	End up talking with Valerie on the way into the church. She points out that Megan is playing with the nearby city's youth orchestra in a Christmas concert; this means that she often needs to be in the city on a Sunday for rehearsal. Therefore, they have not made it to church often lately. Also, one Sunday a month Megan stays with her father; this also makes her attendance irregular. She ends by stating that, with having such talented youngsters, we should be supporting them, not grumbling about them not attending.	I am not sure what prompted this comment, but I guess that both Valerie and Ina were stating a general grumble in the congregation.
Early Mar 2009	Interview with Alistair and Lorna They comment early on, on the way Daniel conducted their son's wedding, how he made it truly personal to their son, the same way that Daniel conducts a funeral. Alistair also makes clear that his resignation from being church secretary and an elder was because he felt that he was in a minority of one. He felt strongly that children should not partake of communion until they were older enough to understand the implications. However, the other elders, on the whole, were in support of children partaking in communion. He did not think he could stay as a serving Elder when this was the case.	The stance by Alistair and Lorna is perhaps slightly different from that of most of the congregation even those who agreed. I sensed that, with them, the issue was always about the principle and never about the individuals.
Late Mar 2009	Megan's attendance at Communion is brought up at Elders. The issue is that at present Megan goes to Junior Church and	

Date	What occurred	Commentary
	returns for communion, but Isabel feels that Megan should stay in for the full service when it is Communion.	
Apr 2009	It is reported at Church Meeting that Alistair and Lorna were not happy that Children at Communion had not been addressed.	
May2009	At the Communion service for some reason, the children are not out at Junior church. One of the elders on duty is David, a retired minister, and he automatically goes to serve the children, Heather stops her granddaughter and friend from partaking.	Was this a response to the request that Megan should be in worship when Communion happens? I do not know, but it created the crisis. David's actions would have been that of many URC ministers or elders who were used to having children at communion
Early June 2009	Elders calls an extra church meeting for mid-July	
Late June 2009	I see one of the older members of the congregation waiting to talk to Daniel at the end of the summer fair. As she is leaving, I hear her say that she had expressed her opinion to him. Also that she did not believe that children as young as that should be at Communion.	Lobbying is how members influence decisions under Presbyterianism; however procedures at Church Meeting make lobbying virtually futile as only what is said within the meeting can be considered. Unless you turn up to Church Meeting, there is no reason to think your opinion will be represented.
Early July 2009	<p>Extra ordinary Church Meeting to discuss children at Communion. This is a long drawn out meeting with plenty of time for listening.</p> <p>Daniel initially presents the debate including the discussion of the theologies of communion and also some analysis of the approaches to including children at communion. Alistair has prepared a speech and is given time to speak. There is also time for Valerie and Jackie to express their experience of pain. Some of this is focussed on discerning the body of</p>	A fuller depiction of what occurred is in the thesis.

Date	What occurred	Commentary
	opinion within the congregation.	
Mid July 2009	I finally get to interview Valerie and Megan. They are well aware of the tensions in the congregation. However, Valerie tells me Jackie's story as well. Jackie had grown up in the congregation and had come into church membership/been confirmed as a young person, however when she had applied to be reinstated after going away to college, the congregation had said that she had never been a member. They, therefore, insisted that she went through membership classes again to become a member. At least one other person in the congregation was in a similar position but was refusing to take the classes on the grounds that she had been through them already.	I am not sure what is behind this story; it may be that St Andrew's Edgerton had Youth Membership under one of its ministers. Such a member was not added to the role so as not to pay a charge to Synod for them and that this has been forgotten. However what concerns me is that if they are not careful they can end up repeating this with Megan.
Late July 2009	It is commented at Elders that Daniel handled the situation particularly well but that it had taken two years to sort, and arguments must not be allowed to go on so long. Daniel announces that he is resigning his pastorate, having accepted a call to another congregation. He has waited several months while this was dealt with before announcing this.	
Aug 2009	At the communion service, we have a visiting family. Alistair and Lorna both take communion. Jackie takes all the children out, so they are not present during communion. Carole comments that both sides behaved admirably	Jackie is not a Junior Church teacher and, therefore, the fact she did this suggests that she did it to avoid offence.
Sep 2009	There was a complaint brought to Elders that the decision was made when certain members were not present. The answer was that the meeting had been held with due process. There was, therefore, no reason to doubt its decision. The Junior church leaders and elders are working to prepare the children for communion; this includes finding material and also running session I suppose during junior church.	I reckon this is not the end, but there will be future problems stemming from this.

Appendix F: Baptismal Policy at Ulverstane

1. Background

Baptism is a hot topic within the United Reformed Church. The merger with the Churches of Christ in 1981 this became a critical issue. The Churches of Christ practiced only credo-baptism, and there was an argument about whether someone could receive both paedo and credo-baptism. The Churches of Christ strongly maintained that Baptism was a sacrament which is why the merger happened between the URC and them rather than the Baptist Union. The upshot of this is a complicated situation. All congregations must offer both Paedo and Credo baptism. However, ministers may choose not to perform paedo-baptisms. No minister can conduct the Credo baptism of someone who is paedo-baptised, although conditional baptism may occur where there is uncertainty.

This is all further complicated by the fact that among Congregationalists many although paedo-baptising had a doctrinal understanding that was much closer to the Baptists and saw it as only effective if followed up by raising the child within the Church. It is the upbringing within the fellowship that is essential not ceremony. Thus, you could become a member without being baptized although this was discouraged. Today the opting out of paedo-baptism by ministers or members is often a sign of evangelical tendencies rather than being from the Churches of Christ strand.

There was a fierce debate which threatened to split the URC the late nineteen seventies. It has left its marks on the denomination and is possibly the only issue where I minister might be publicly disciplined.

2. Timeline

Date	Description	Commentary
22 nd November 2009	Baptism of Courtney, a member of Junior Church was held today. Her mum and her mum's partner were there for her baptism as is her younger sister. Both she and her parents make promises	Courtney is a child on the fringe; she has been brought into children's club and now her grandmother regularly brings her to church. If it was not for Courtney desire to attend church, then, I suspect, her Grandmother would not come to church. Cheryl and her family often have Courtney round. There are comments on how her conduct has changed although this is associated with the stability brought to the family by her mother's current partner.
7 th February 2010	Baptism conducted for a family who are not part of the congregation. This service also included communion and the induction of elders.	This is the induction of elders; ordination only happens the first time an Elder is appointed. This meant three "by the book" parts in worship which would lengthen worship beyond the hour.
February 2010	I am approached by Rachel, who ask about the arguments for the baptism of children. Having been raised as a Baptist, she feels quite strongly that Baptism should be only believers. I offer to get information for her from my father. I also acknowledge that there is no clear place where children are baptised in the Bible, but also point out that it is not clear when households are baptised whether that included the children or not.	This is tricky; I would argue with the increased emphasis on the individual rather than the family as the position of religion, and then the logical move towards having baptism as believers only.
14 th March 2010	Baptism during morning worship, family were not known to the congregation	
30 th May 2010	Double Baptism during morning worship, families were not known to the congregation	I suspect that this is the baptism that starts the furore; it is felt that the baptismal parties do not respect the

Date	Description	Commentary
		church environment. The displeasure centres on smoking, drinking and language used on church premises.
29 th June 2010	<p>House Group: A discussion on Baptism. Roger states the position that Baptism should be believers for believers only; he also suggests that Judith would perform a baptism on an adult if they requested it even if they were baptised as an infant.</p> <p>He manages to imply that Joyce, someone who had been with the church from childhood should get baptised.</p>	I am now pretty sure Judith would not have made such categorical assertion. What is more likely is what she said in her interview with me that she would work through this with an individual if they so desired. The URC policy is firm on this, and there cannot be baptism as an infant and a believer. There are ways around it; indeed many churches are experimenting with ceremonies that reflect baptism, such as the renewal of baptismal vows.
18 th July 2010	Two Baptismal parties in the church, Judith refers to the baptisms as creating order out of chaos. Notice the number of times children from the Baptismal parties and adults move between junior church and the main meeting.	
August 2010	<p>Appearing in the service sheet:</p> <p>“From September 2010, non-church baptisms will be conducted in a separate service at 12 noon; all church families will continue to be conducted within the morning service.”</p>	This is announced but never implemented. The congregation is distinguishing between church and non-church baptisms.
29 th August 2010	Two baptisms. Roger is preaching, but Judith conducts the baptisms. Baptismal party not un-churched, but it is the grandmothers and fathers who went to Sunday School. The daughter asks questions of her father about what is going on. He escapes as soon as he can to smoke a cigarette. After the service, the Baptismal parties went outside to have photographs taken while church members stayed behind and had coffee.	There is a relatively open policy on Infant baptism practiced.

Date	Description	Commentary
14 th September 2010	<p>Church Meeting: Judith, the minister brought to church meeting the decision of elders that baptisms should normally happen at a service separate from the main service on a Sunday. She brought it because on consideration she was not happy with the decision.</p> <p>Church meeting is not happy, they want Baptisms to happen during the main meeting.</p> <p>A major concern was the number of baptisms that were taking place where the church had little or no contact with the family.</p> <p>There was some discussion on the preparation of the families for baptism. It became apparent that there was a variety of views on baptism within the congregation including a high sacramental one.</p> <p>There was a discussion on the follow up as well.</p> <p>After church meeting as things are being cleared away, Judith tells the story of one of the recent families who were baptised. They had been all set to go to one of the Anglican churches. The Vicar there had insisted that people attended for six weeks beforehand including Godparents. This family had had one Godparent, who worked shifts so, could not make every Sunday. He had come when he could, but at a few weeks notice the vicar had said that he could not be a Godparent. The family had come to Judith very upset and because everything was booked desperately looking for somewhere else to have their child baptised.</p>	<p>The traditional URC practice would be for the Baptism of members' children only with adult baptism for converts who had not been baptised elsewhere.</p> <p>There are two dimensions to the range of beliefs on Baptism. There is the level of action from God involved, and there is also the question of what constitutes faith. The question then is how these two are connected.</p> <p>From the conversations I overhear it is clear that the previous ministers (a husband and wife team) had the policy of believers only. This means there is also a mix of reactions as there would have been the refusal to baptise children of the congregation at one time.</p> <p>The story is put in as I think it really is a form of Midrash that Judith often engaged in. Stories around themes that made were aimed to set up the theological reflection.</p>
26 th September 2010	<p>Today is Back to Church Sunday. The congregation has made a considerable effort, following the church meeting, to encourage</p>	

Date	Description	Commentary
	families who have had their children baptised recently to attend. The party held afterwards is planned to encourage the families to attend.	
10 th October 2010	The Baptism of a baby was held with a blessing for his mother. The mother is not known to the congregation. Samuel comments on not being able to park in the carpark.	
24 th October 2010	A double baptism was performed during morning worship; the families were not known to the congregation	
27 th March 2011	Baptism of a child during morning worship, the family is not known to the congregation	
15 th April 2011	Turn up to a women's night slightly early, Judith the minister is meeting with a couple in the lounge to talk about a Baptism of their child	This is not the only time this happens, maybe three or four times while I am attending.
15 th May 2011	Discussion at the AGM reviews policy on follow-up for children who were baptised. The children are prayed for once a year, sent cards on the anniversary of their baptism, invited to Junior Church and Children's club and families invited to Back to Church Sunday and other low key congregational events.	The Congregation clearly struggles with this. They always seem to be asking whether they have kept their part of the promises.
22 nd May 2011	A Child is baptised during worship; the family is not known to the congregation	
29 th May	Following announcement appears in the service sheet: "Some of our young people who were dedicated and blessed as infants are to be baptised by full immersion thus making their own commitment to the faith in Jesus Christ; this will take place on Sunday 26th June at 6 pm . If there is any adult who has never been baptised and who feels he/she is ready to do so please have a	I have quoted in full the text, to show just how carefully worded this announcement is. It clearly states the young adults were not baptised as children and invited other none baptised individuals to come forward. However, the young people invite you to what is their service. This indicates personalisation of Baptism.

Date	Description	Commentary
	word with Rev. Judith . The young people would like to invite ALL who would like to do so to come along and witness them taking this important step of faith.”	
26 th June 2011	<p>Baptism by immersion, four young people from the congregation. A fifth had been attending for a while beforehand because of his friendship with Samuel’s son. His father was known to the congregation. Service was held at 6 pm; the congregation was a mix between those who come in the morning and friends and relatives of the baptised.</p> <p>The baptistery is a hired portable one and is set up after morning worship. Fortunately, the day is a warm one as this is too late to heat the water properly.</p> <p>The Synod Moderator preaches at the service. The hymns are chosen by the young people themselves. They are on the whole settings/music that is unfamiliar to the congregation. However two of the hymns used are not new, but new versions of tow of the classics evangelical hymns such as Graham Kendrick’s version of “Rock of Ages” or Chris Tomlin’s version of “Amazing Grace. “. The band for the occasion consists of some church members, quite a few of those being baptised and friends.</p> <p>There is food afterwards.</p>	<p>Setting up the baptistery after morning worship is too late and does not allow the sufficient water time to warm up before the baptisms happen. Where baptism by immersion is the norm, then heating is often put on the night before.</p> <p>I assume the friends are other young people involved in an Ecumenical Youth Service, that meets once a month in Hartlethorpe. Nat, the congregation’s youth and children’s worker was instrumental in setting it up.</p>
10 th July 2011	Today was the Baptism of three children; none of them were known to the congregation. The name of the children appears on the service sheets.	
17 th July 2011	Baptism of Reuben is held during morning	Reuben almost certainly have done his

Date	Description	Commentary
	<p>worship. This service is an amalgam between the baptism conducted in the main meeting and believers baptism conducted 26th June. The actual ceremony is using a font and making the sign of the cross, and Reuben chose to have sponsors. However, the hymn just after the baptism is one of the hymns selected by the young people at the service.</p>	<p>preparation for Baptism along with the young people who were baptised on 26th June. That Reuben chose to have his baptism as part of the Sunday morning service is significant. Standard practice in the URC is to have baptism as part of the main worship service of the congregation. Rueben comes from a long term URC family. Thus, there was the desire for the family to have it as part of the main meeting. The family comes, and Reuben chooses to have sponsors from the congregation.</p> <p>It is clear that Judith has kept this baptismal service clear from the one the week before.</p>
31 st July 2011	<p>During the interview with Samuel and Rachel, Samuel starts to wonder about how effective as a policy is the contact the congregation keeps with the family that have their children baptised. He knows of no family that has started attending worship because of this.</p>	
21 st August 2011	<p>Baptism of a child during morning worship the family were not known to the congregation.</p>	
28 th August 2011	<p>Another Baptism is held during morning worship. The family is from outside the congregation.</p>	<p>Ulverstone had a baptism on both August Bank holidays. Congregations on a Bank Holiday are typically smaller. I am not sure if these two facts are connected.</p>
8 th September 2011	<p>During the interview with Judith, she talks about the way people have handled the baptism. Apparently Sophie, Cheryl's eldest daughter had been thinking about being baptised but someone in the congregation had said she could</p>	

Date	Description	Commentary
	not be because she had been baptised as a child. Therefore, Judith was now exploring the possibility of a service of Confirmation for her.	
11 th September 2011	A Baptism which has a large attendance from people outside the church. When I arrive there are already a considerable number of people, whom I have not seen in the church prior to today. Then a bus turns up at the church, and another thirty to forty people get off. Children from Junior Church, which now meets from the start of worship, come in for the Baptism.	
13 th September 2011	Church meeting: In the discussion on Radical Welcome, reference is made by Doreen to the baptism where people went straight out after the service to smoke and drink beer on the grass outside. How this had made members of the congregation uncomfortable, and they had not felt able to welcome them.	Baptisms, where the family is unknown to the congregation, are stressful as well because the social mismatch between the families and the congregation. Would they be happy with the baptisms if they were from respectable middle-class families? At least the congregation would feel it was able to make them welcome

Appendix G: Analysis of Hymns

1. Number, range and repetition of hymns used by both congregations

Both congregations used two hymnbooks and also projected hymns. At St Andrew's Edgerton, they used the denominational hymn book Rejoice and Sing(R&S), with what I presume from content was actually a hymnbook aimed at schools called "Come and Praise". The projector was used only when Daniel was there as he was also the technician who worked it. At Ulverstone, the hymnbooks were Songs of Fellowship (volumes I II & III combined) and BBC Hymnbook. The projector was used every Sunday with a regular rota of projectionists who saw that the right hymn was up.

During my placements at St Andrew's Edgerton and Ulverstone United Reformed Churches, I managed to keep a note of the hymns used. There were in both congregations four or more hymns per service. I had a record of 230 times when hymns were sung at St Andrew's Edgerton, covering over fifty services and 261 times when hymns were sung at Ulverstone covering. In both cases, these must have covered around 50 services which are about half the number occurring over the two-year placement. The method of collection differed. At St Andrew's Edgerton, the service sheet normally had the hymns on it. It was thus just a matter of keeping the service sheet. This tended to favour service led by the minister although when the service was led by a member of the congregation they quite often got the hymns onto the service sheet as well. Some hymns were not recorded, either as the words were on the service sheet and I could not trace them elsewhere or because they were in the second hymnbook Come and Sing (which was rarely used) that is out of print. From Ulverstone after the first few weeks I noted in my personal copies of

the hymnbook which hymns were sung before the service. This meant that hymns that were not in either Songs of Fellowship (volumes I II III & IV combined) or in BBC hymnbook were not recorded.

The hymns used at St Andrews, Edgerton were:

	Hymn	how often repeated
1	Father, we love you, we worship and adore you	4
2	Lead us heavenly father, lead us	4
3	All my hope on God is founded	3
4	Colours of day dawn into the mind	3
5	Forth in thy name O Lord I go	3
6	God is love, his the care	3
7	He's got the whole world in his hands	3
8	I lift my eyes to the quiet hills	3
9	Jesus' hands were kind hands doing good to all	3
10	Lord for the years your love has kept and guided	3
11	Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us	3
12	Lord, thy church on earth is seeking	3
13	O Jesus I have promised	3
14	Thanks be to God, whose Church on earth	3
15	The Church is wherever God's people are praising	3
16	Thy ceaseless unexhausted love	3
17	What a friend we have in Jesus	3
18	All things bright and beautiful	2
19	Be thou my vision, O lord of my heart	2
20	Day by day, dear Lord	2

	Hymn	how often repeated
21	For ourselves no longer living	2
22	For the beauty of the earth	2
23	Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father	2
24	Have faith in God my heart	2
25	Jesus, good above all others	2
26	Jesus, lover of my soul	2
27	Love divine, all loves excelling	2
28	Make me a channel of your peace	2
29	Make way, make way for Christ the King	2
30	Now thank we all our God	2
31	O God of mercy, God of might	2
32	One more step along the world I go	2
33	Praise ye the Lord, it's good to raise	2
34	Rejoice, the Lord is King	2
35	Seek ye first the kingdom of God	2
36	Stand up and bless the Lord	2
37	Think of a world without any flowers	2
38	Ye servants of God	2
39	Your words to me are life and health	2
40	A new commandment	1
41	A touching place	1
42	All glory, laud and honour	1
43	And art thou come with us to dwell	1
44	Angel voices ever singing	1

	Hymn	how often repeated
45	As we are gathered, Jesus is here	1
46	Ascribe greatness	1
47	Awake, awake to love and work	1
48	Away in a manger	1
49	Be known to us in breaking bread	1
50	Be still and know that I am God	1
51	Be still for the presence of the Lord	1
52	Born in the night, Mary's child	1
53	Breathe on me, breath of God	1
54	Brother, Sister, let me serve you	1
55	Christ is alive! Let Christians sing	1
56	Christ is the King! O Friends rejoice	1
57	Christ the Lord is risen today	1
58	Come down, O Love divine	1
59	Come thou long-expected Jesus	1
60	Come, living God, when least expected	1
61	Come, ye thankful people, come	1
62	Dear Lord and Father of mankind	1
63	Eternal God	1
64	Father, hear the prayer we offer	1
65	Fight the good fight with all thy might	1
66	For all the saints who from their labours rest	1
67	Forth in the peace of Christ we go	1
68	From heaven you came, helpless babe	1

	Hymn	how often repeated
69	Give me joy in my heart	1
70	Give to our God immortal praise	1
71	Glory to God, glory to God, glory	1
72	Go forth and tell	1
73	God and Father, we adore thee	1
74	God is Love: let heaven adore him	1
75	God with humanity made one	1
76	God, you meet us in our weakness	1
77	God! When human bonds are broken	1
78	Good Christians all, rejoice and sing	1
79	Hail to the Lord's anointed	1
80	Hark the glad sound	1
81	Hark! The herald angels sing	1
82	He comes to us as one unknown	1
83	He gave me eyes so I could see	1
84	Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty	1
85	How firm a foundation you saints of the Lord	1
86	How good, Lord, to be here	1
87	Hushed was the evening hymn	1
88	I am a new creation	1
89	I come with joy to meet my Lord	1
90	I sing the almighty power of God	1
91	I'll of salvation take the cup	1
92	Immortal love for ever full	1

	Hymn	how often repeated
93	In my life, Lord, be glorified	1
94	In the bleak mid-winter	1
95	Infant Holy	1
96	It came upon a midnight clear	1
97	It is a thing most wonderful	1
98	It was on a starry night	1
99	Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it	1
100	Jesus shall reign where'er the sun	1
101	Jesus stand among us	1
102	Jesus went to worship	1
103	Let all mortal flesh keep silence	1
104	Let there be love shared among us	1
105	Let there be peace on Earth	1
106	Living God, your joyful spirit	1
107	Lord Jesus, once a little child	1
108	Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy	1
109	Lord of our highest love	1
110	Lord of the dance	1
111	Lord, thy word abideth	1
112	Meekness and Majesty	1
113	Morning glory, starlit sky	1
114	Morning has broken	1
115	My God, how wonderful thou art	1
116	My song is Love unknown	1

	Hymn	how often repeated
117	New every morning is the love	1
118	Now let us from this table rise	1
119	O come all ye faithful	1
120	O God be gracious and bless us	1
121	O God in whom we live and move	1
122	O God, our help in ages past	1
123	O Jesus, grow thou in me	1
124	O little town of Bethlehem	1
125	O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder	1
126	O worship the King	1
127	Of the father's love begotten	1
128	On Jordan banks the Baptist's cry	1
129	Once in Royal David's city	1
130	Peace perfect peace	1
131	Praise and thanksgiving	1
132	Praise the Lord, his glories show	1
133	Praise the Lord, ye heavens adore him	1
134	Praise to the Living God	1
135	Praise to the Lord, the almighty	1
136	Rock of ages cleft for me	1
137	Seek and ye shall find	1
138	Shepherd came their praises bringing	1
139	Shine Jesus Shine	1
140	Silent Night	1

	Hymn	how often repeated
141	Sing one and all a song of celebration	1
142	Spirit of God, as strong as the wind	1
143	Surprised by joy no song can tell	1
144	Take my life, and let it be	1
145	Tell me the old, old, story	1
146	Tell out, my soul the greatness of the Lord	1
147	Thanks to God whose Word was spoken	1
148	The Church of Christ in every age	1
149	The church's one foundation	1
150	The day thou gavest, Lord is ended	1
151	The king of love my shepherd is	1
152	The kingdom of God is justice and joy	1
153	The Lord is King! Lift up your voice	1
154	The son of God proclaim	1
155	The wise man built his house upon the rock	1
156	There's a quiet understanding	1
157	There's a spirit in the air	1
158	Thine be the glory	1
159	This is the day, this is the day that the Lord has made	1
160	This joyful Eastertide	1
161	This we can do for justice and for peace	1
162	Through all the changing scenes of life	1
163	Thy hand, O God, has guided	1
164	To God be the glory, great things he has done	1

	Hymn	how often repeated
165	We are marching in the light of God	1
166	We cannot measure how you heal	1
167	We plough the fields and scatter	1
168	Wide, wide as the ocean	1
169	With grateful hearts our faith professing	1
170	Ye gates lift up you heads on high	1
171	Ye holy angels bright	1
172	You are the King of Glory	1
Total		230

With Ulverstane, the following hymns were sung:

	Hymn	how often repeated
1	All over the world the spirit is moving	6
2	Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound	6
3	Come, now is the time	6
4	When I was lost, you came and rescued me	6
5	Be still for the presence of the Lord	5
6	In Christ alone my hope is found	5
7	Father, I place into your hands	4
8	Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty	4
9	I hear the sound of rustling	4
10	Lead us, Heavenly father lead us	4
11	Tell out, my soul the greatness of the Lord	4

	Hymn	how often repeated
12	Thank you, Jesus,	4
13	These are the days of Elijah	4
14	To God be the glory, great things he has done	4
15	As we are gathered, Jesus is here	3
16	Breathe on me, breath of God	3
17	Brother, Sister, let me serve you	3
18	I know not why God's wondrous grace	3
19	Light of the world	3
20	Lord for the years your love has kept and guided	3
21	The Lord's my shepherd	3
22	You are the vine	3
23	You shall go out with joy	3
24	Abba father, let me be	2
25	Above all powers	2
26	All hail King Jesus	2
27	All people that on earth do dwell	2
28	At the name of Jesus	2
29	Be thou my vision, O lord of my heart	2
30	Beautiful Lord, wonderful saviour	2
31	Break thou the bread of life	2
32	Dear Lord and Father of mankind	2
33	From heaven you came, helpless babe	2
34	Guide me, O thou great Jehovah	2
35	Holy Spirit we welcome you	2

	Hymn	how often repeated
36	How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him	2
37	I want to walk with Jesus Christ	2
38	It is a thing most wonderful	2
39	Jesus is King, and I will extol him	2
40	Jesus the name high over all	2
41	Jesus, name above all names	2
42	Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy	2
43	Make me a channel of your peace	2
44	My song is Love unknown	2
45	Onward Christian soldiers	2
46	Praise him, praise him! Jesus our redeemer	2
47	Restore O Lord	2
48	Such love, pure as the whitest snow	2
49	Teach me to dance	2
50	The king of love my shepherd is	2
51	The Lord is King! Lift up your voice	2
52	Thine be the glory	2
53	We bring the sacrifice of praise	2
54	We rest on thee, our shield and our defender	2
55	What to say, Lord?	2
56	While Shepherd watched	2
57	All glory, laud and honour	1
58	All my hope on God is founded	1
59	All to Jesus I surrender	1

	Hymn	how often repeated
60	And can it be that I should gain	1
61	Ascribe greatness	1
62	At this table we remember	1
63	Away in a manger	1
64	Beauty for brokenness	1
65	Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine	1
66	Change my heart O God	1
67	Christ is the world's light	1
68	Christ the Lord is risen today	1
69	Come and join the celebration	1
70	Come and see, come and see	1
71	Come Bless the Lord	1
72	Come down, O Love divine	1
73	Come on and celebrate	1
74	Come ye thankful people come	1
75	Do something new Lord	1
76	Faithful God	1
77	Father God I wonder	1
78	Father, we adore you	1
79	Fear not, rejoice and be glad	1
80	Filled with compassion	1
81	For I am building a people of power	1
82	Forty days and forty nights	1
83	Give thanks with a grateful heart	1

	Hymn	how often repeated
84	Glory to God, glory to God, glory	1
85	Go forth and tell	1
86	God save our gracious Queen	1
87	God, as silent hearts we bring to mind	1
88	Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise	1
89	Hallelujah sing to Jesus	1
90	Hark the glad sound	1
91	Have thine own way, Lord	1
92	Here I am, wholly available	1
93	Here I stand at the door and knock and knock	1
94	Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord	1
95	How deep the father's love for us	1
96	I am a new creation	1
97	I the Lord of sea and sky	1
98	I want to serve the purpose of God	1
99	I will build my church	1
100	I will enter his gates with thanksgiving in my heart	1
101	I'll go in the strength of the Lord	1
102	I'm accepted, I'm forgiven	1
103	Immanuel	1
104	It came upon a midnight clear	1
105	Jesus Christ is risen today	1
106	Jesus stand among us	1
107	Jesus, you are changing me	1

	Hymn	how often repeated
108	Joy to the world	1
109	Jubilate, everybody	1
110	Just as I am, without one plea	1
111	Led like a lamb to the slaughter	1
112	Lift up your heads to the coming king	1
113	Lord of the dance	1
114	Lord, the light of your love is shining	1
115	Make way, make way for Christ the King	1
116	Meekness and Majesty	1
117	Morning has broken	1
118	My Lord what love is this	1
119	New every morning is the love	1
120	O breath of life come sweeping through us	1
121	O Changeless Christ, forever new	1
122	O come all ye faithful	1
123	O Come, O come, Emmanuel	1
124	O God, our help in ages past	1
125	O happy day that fixed my choice	1
126	O let the son of God enfold you	1
127	O little town of Bethlehem	1
128	O love that wilt not let me go	1
129	O worship the King	1
130	Once in Royal David's city	1
131	One more step along the world I go	1

	Hymn	how often repeated
132	Open our eyes Lord	1
133	Open the eyes of my heart	1
134	Praise my soul the king of heaven	1
135	Praise to the holiest in the heights	1
136	Put peace into each other's hands	1
137	Ride on, ride on in majesty	1
138	River wash over me	1
139	See what a morning gloriously bright	1
140	See, amid the winter's snow	1
141	Soldiers of Christ arise	1
142	Spirit of God, as strong as the wind	1
143	Stand up! Stand up for Jesus	1
144	Take my life and let it be	1
145	Take up thy cross the saviour said	1
146	The day of resurrection	1
147	The earth belongs to God	1
148	The first nowell the angels did say	1
149	We extol you	1
150	We plough the fields and scatter	1
151	Were you there when they crucified my Lord	1
152	What a friend we have in Jesus	1
153	When I survey the wondrous cross	1
154	When the spirit of the Lord	1
155	When we walk with the Lord	1

	Hymn	how often repeated
156	Will you come and follow me	1
157	Will your anchor hold in the storms of life	1
158	You laid aside your majesty	1
Total		261

If because these were recorded over a similar length of time expect them to cover a similar number of hymns then there is no evidence of a difference between either the overall sample size¹⁵¹ or the number of different hymns sung¹⁵².

I noted towards the end of my collection at Ulverstane that I had already about half the hymns already marked as sung on any given Sunday. This suggests that both congregations had a range of hymns in their repertoire of about 300¹⁵³ while I was there. To sing them all of the hymns in the repertoire once in a given year, the congregation would need to sing an average of around six per service. There is also indications that members of the congregation knew hymns that were not in the repertoire as these cropped up in conversations. There is evidence that Ulverstane repeated hymns more frequently than St Andrew's Edgerton¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Binomial test, p=.176

¹⁵² Binomial Test p=.474

¹⁵³ The number of new hymns in a sample gives the ability to estimate the total population using capture-recapture methodology (Muskopf 2013)

¹⁵⁴ Mann-Whitney Test u=11,780.5 p=.009

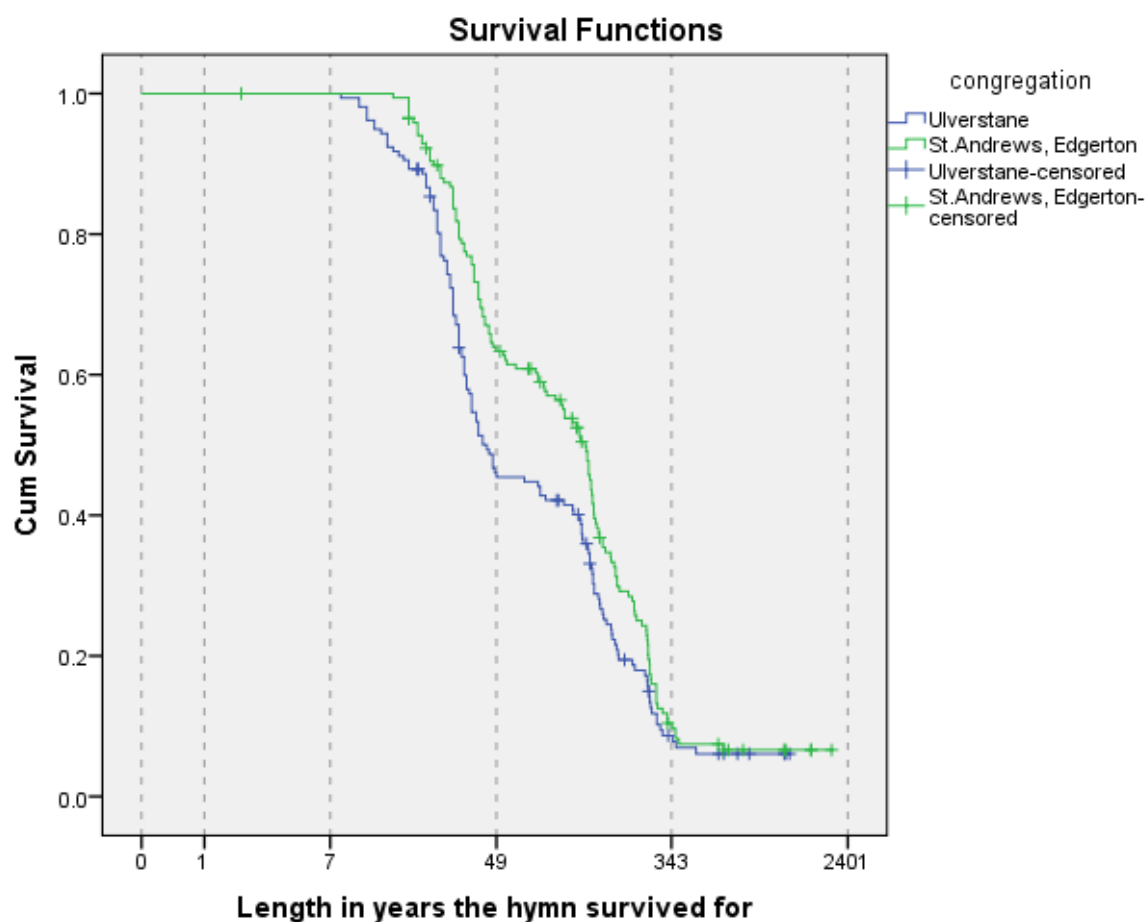
No of repeats	Congregation			
	Herringthorpe		St.Andrews	
	Frequency	Cumulative Percent	Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1	102	64.6	133	77.3
2	33	85.4	22	90.1
3	9	91.1	15	98.8
4	8	96.2	2	100.0
5	2	97.5	0	100.0
6	4	100.0	0	100.0

However, it should be noted that the vast majority of hymns were sung once only in the two years I was there. The pattern of repeating hymns is complex. Perhaps what is most noticeable is that Ulverstone has four hymns that were repeated six times.

This shows that both congregations sang a broad range of hymns with a relatively small number of repeats. The rate of repeating was slightly higher at Ulverstone than at St Andrew's Edgerton, but that was due in large part to the repetition of a small number of hymns

2. Age and Style of hymns

It is not possible to date all hymns exactly, some hymns we have a first publication date; for others we know the date it was before. This means that analysis has to be treated as survival analysis, rather than just as straightforward analysis of age of hymns. This is unusual in that all are surviving to the present. One hymn from St Andrew's Edgerton was removed because I could not find an initial date.



It should be noted that the major difference seems to be within the last 100 years with Ulverstane having a lot more hymns that are between ten and fifty years old. St Andrews then sings a lot more between 50 and 150 years old and after 150 the lines are much the same again¹⁵⁵. This is reflected in the Median age of hymns:

	Estimate	Std. Error
Ulverstane	44	10.01
St. Andrew's, Edgerton	132	13.15

¹⁵⁵ These curves are significantly different Logrank=4.978 p=0.026
 ~ 359 ~

Ulverstone median is within the last fifty years while St Andrew's Edgerton's is over a century.

However to get some feel of style of hymns I divided the hymns into four categories:

To get some feel for the general style of hymns I developed a simple four part classification.

- 1) **Classical** - this is a general section for hymns written before 1840. It includes hymns written by Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley with metrical psalms and translations of early hymns.
- 2) **Hymnody** - there were a lot of hymns written in Victorian times particularly from High Anglicans. However, this is the default category for this time period I have extended the time point until 1960 which marks the start of the next big wave
- 3) **Revival** - these are the hymns associated with Revivalism particularly in the 19th Century. There are only 22 hymns in this category it is, therefore, hard to detect any difference.
- 4) **Modern** – this is a wide grouping, it perhaps has its origin in the work of Erik Routley but extends across all denominations including Roman Catholic, not all pieces are traditional style hymns but they have largely been intended for mainstream style worship whether that is a mass, a school assembly or morning service in a non-conformist chapel.
- 5) **Charismatic** – these are hymns, songs and choruses that have come out of the Worship Leaders/Songwriters of the charismatic movement. This is an extremely prolific group and widely used far beyond its initial confines. They tend to be designed to be led by a worship group involving guitar rather than for piano or just voices.

The following spread came out in the two congregations:

	Ulverstane	St.Andrews, Edgerton	Total
Classical	33 _a	49 _a	82
	40%	60%	100.0%
Hymnody	22 _a	44 _b	66
	33%	67%	100.0%
Revival	13 _a	9 _a	22
	59%	41%	100.0%
Modern	19 _a	53 _b	72
	26%	74%	100.0%
Charismatic	71 _a	16 _b	87
	82%	18%	100.0%
Total	158	171	329
	48.0%	52.0%	100.0%

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of congregation categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the .05 level.

It is clear that apart from Classical and Revival that all the hymn types are chosen more often by one congregation than another. While Ulverstane chooses more Charismatic hymns (82%) and more Revival (59%), St Andrews chose more Modern (74%) and Hymnody (67%) ones and classics (60%). There is thus a bias towards choosing hymns of a particular lineage within the two congregations.

The typical hymn at Ulverstane was younger than that at St Andrews by about 15 (6,30) year. However, this was not spread equally through the range. The high number of Charismatic & Revival ones sung at Ulverstane led to a consequent drop in those in Classical, Hymnody and

Modern than were sung at St Andrews Edgerton.

3. Detailed Analysis of frequently used hymns

However, let us look closer at what they were singing. What I am going to do is to concentrate on the hymns that were sung three or more times. This gave me the following list of 23 hymns came from Ulverstone:

	Hymn	Typology	how often repeated
1	Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound	classical	6
2	All over the world the spirit is moving	charismatic	6
3	Come, now is the time	charismatic	6
4	When I was lost, you came and rescued me	charismatic	6
5	Be still for the presence of the Lord	charismatic	5
6	In Christ alone my hope is found	charismatic	5
7	Lead us, Heavenly father lead us	classical	4
8	Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty	hymnody	4
9	To God be the glory, great things he has done	hymnody	4
10	Tell out, my soul the greatness of the Lord	modern	4
11	Father, I place into your hands	charismatic	4
12	I hear the sound of rustling	charismatic	4
13	Thank you, Jesus,	charismatic	4
14	These are the days of Elijah	charismatic	4
15	The Lord's my shepherd	classical	3

	Hymn	Typology	how often repeated
16	Breathe on me, breath of God	hymnody	3
17	I know not why God's wondrous grace	hymnody	3
18	Brother, Sister, let me serve you	modern	3
19	Lord for the years your love has kept and guided	modern	3
20	As we are gathered, Jesus is here	charismatic	3
21	Light of the world	charismatic	3
22	You are the vine	charismatic	3
23	You shall go out with joy	charismatic	3

Two things should be noted. Amazing Grace would have counted as two hymns as it was used in two different versions, the classical one and a more recent one by Chris Tomlin which adds the chorus:

“My chains are gone
I’ve been set free,
My God, my Saviour, has ransomed me
and like a flood his mercy reigns
Unending love, amazing Grace.”

(Songs of Fellowship: Volumes One, Two, Three and Four, 2007, no 1702)

However the otherwise similarity of the text meant that I felt it was better to treat it as a single hymn rather than two separate hymns. The other thing is the hymn “When I was lost, you came and rescued me” which also appears six times. It came to prominence after the Youth Club went

away for the weekend. On returning, Samuel reported that this had been a surprising favourite of several to the girls who were fairly marginal to the congregation's community but had gone. It was thus used quite deliberately by Judith for a while; both as an affirmation of the youth work but also of those girls although they were rarely in services¹⁵⁶.

If we now turn to St Andrew's Edgerton, we get the following seventeen hymns:

	Hymn	typology	how often repeated
1	Lead us heavenly father, lead us	hymnody	4
2	Father, we love you, we worship and adore you	charismatic	4
3	All my hope on God is founded	classical	3
4	Forth in thy name O Lord I go	classical	3
5	Thy ceaseless unexhausted love	classical	3
6	God is love, his the care	hymnody	3
7	He's got the whole world in his hands	hymnody	3
8	O Jesus I have promised	hymnody	3
9	What a friend we have in Jesus	hymnody	3
10	Colours of day dawn into the mind	modern	3
11	I lift my eyes to the quiet hills	modern	3
12	Jesus' hands were kind hands doing good to all	modern	3
13	Lord for the years your love has kept and guided	modern	3
14	Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us	modern	3
15	Lord, thy church on earth is seeking	modern	3

¹⁵⁶ Some of the using of it was attempts to get them to attend the Sunday main meeting, these were unsuccessful on the whole.

	Hymn	typology	how
			often
			repeated
16	Thanks be to God, whose Church on earth	modern	3
17	The Church is wherever God's people are praising	modern	3

The most popular hymn at St Andrew's Edgerton also appears in the list for Ulverstone. There is another similarity, in that among the top used hymns are hymns that are chosen to change the tone of worship. So for instance "Father, we love you, we worship and adore you" (The United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom, 1991, no 30) is a hymn that is often used to introduce a time of prayer, while "Come, now is the time" (*Songs of Fellowship: Volumes One, Two, Three and Four*, 2007, no 1205) is one used to introduce a note of praise and thanksgiving into the service.

Worship has at its core a relationship between the worshipper and the divine. The way that relationship is conceived may be. Hymns give to the congregation a voice within the act of worship. In the hymns repeated in both congregation, the actor (normally the subject of a verb but with passives the object) within a phrase were about equally split between the divine and that which included the participants in worship. Thus, the hymns have as a base this relationship. The hymns often seemed to contain a "discourse" about the relationship between the description of the divine and the portrayal of the worshipper. Consider opening verse of Lead us Heavenly Father lead us, the only hymn to be used more than three times in both congregations. The hymn starts with a request to God "Lead us Heavenly father lead us" yet changes by the end of the verse to consider the singers as "possessing every blessing". This switch between God and the singers can happen many times within a hymn, and there is no balance in it. Thus looking at the hymns sung frequently might give some idea of how the congregations understand themselves.

One of the things that stand out was how much difference there is in the use of first person pronouns when looking at the text of these hymns. When I tabulated the use in the two sets I got the following table:

		pronoun		Total
		singular	plural	
Ulverstane	N	105	76	181
	%	58%	42%	
St Andrews	N	37	74	111
	%	33%	67%	
Total	N	142	150	292
	%	49%	51%	

Although there is an almost even distribution of singular and plural pronouns in the full listing yet at St Andrews two-thirds of them used in the list are plural while almost sixty percent of them are singular on the Ulverstane ($\chi^2(1)=16.77$, $p<.001$) . It would, therefore, be reasonable to suppose that St Andrew's Edgerton it was a common experience to sing hymns with a collective voice, while at Ulverstane the hymns sung focuses on the individual singer.

If we consider the way, the congregations treat the past, present and future we get another set of contrasts. When we look at the differences between the two congregations is the number of times the past is referred to in the hymns used by Ulverstane ($\chi(2)=4.69$, $p=.031$)¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Using Exact Statistical methods

		past	present	future	Total
St Andrews	N	42	132	96	270
	%	15.6%	48.9%	35.6%	
Ulverstone	N	93	193	133	149
	%	22.2%	46.1%	31.7%	
Overall	N	135	325	229	689
	%	19.6%	47.2%	33.2%	

If we look at when the past is actually used then it is normal for the centre of focus to be on God's saving acts:

So, from St Andrew's you might get the verse:

“Jesus came, lived and died
for our sake, crucified,
rose again, glorified;”

(The United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom, 1991, no 274)

While from Herringthorpe they might sing:

“So loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life-gate that all may go in.”

(Songs of Fellowship: Volumes One, Two, Three and Four, 2007, no 259)

The central story is the same in the two congregations. However, both have a secondary way of talking of the past. At St Andrew's it might deal with other parts of Jesus' life:

“Jesus' hands were kind hands,

doing good to all,
healing pain and sickness,
blessing children small,”

(The United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom 1991, 197)

Or church history:

“... from east to west the message went;
on Greek and Roman dawned the day.”

(The United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom 1991, 582)

At Ulverstone, it is the personal experience of salvation in one's life that comes out as the secondary theme:

When I was lost,
You came and rescued me;
Reached down into the pit and lifted me.

(*Songs of Fellowship: Volumes One, Two, Three and Four* 2007, 1607)

Or more traditionally:

I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

(*Songs of Fellowship: Volumes One, Two, Three and Four* 2007, 19)

Therefore, there is a difference not only in the frequency with which the past is sung about but

what is sung about in the past. In particular Ulverstane puts more emphasis on the act of salvation in the life of the individual believer. This seems to fit with the use of the pronouns at the start. A person who is singing about God's personal act of salvation in their own life has a strong emphasis on themselves as an individual despite the fact that they are singing as part of a congregation. A person who, however, sings of salvation as part of God's ongoing work and concentrates on the implications for the group is naturally going to use "we" more often in worship.

The difference noted in style continues through into the actual hymns themselves. Its most obvious signs are the different proportion of first person pronouns between singular and plural and the tenses used. These in turn reflect into the theology of the hymns. St Andrews, Edgerton is very much concerned with how things affect us as the people of God within worship. They tend therefore to use the present tense and plural. Ulverstane placed far more emphasis on the personal salvation and, therefore, concentrate on both the past and the future with the "I" pronoun.