The World Is About To Turn: Imagining a New Ecclesiology for Emerging Adults Through Missional Music Ministry

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THE WORLD IS ABOUT TO TURN: IMAGINING A NEW ECCLESIOLOGY FOR EMERGING ADULTS THROUGH MISSIONAL MUSIC MINISTRY

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THE WORLD IS ABOUT TO TURN: IMAGINING A NEW ECCLESIOLOGY
FOR EMERGING ADULTS THROUGH MISSIONAL MUSIC MINISTRY

A Thesis presented to the Faculty of
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in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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by
Kevin A. Turner

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I am grateful for the wisdom and counsel of both Dr. C. Michael Hawn and Dr. O. Wesley Allen. Their assistance has strengthened this paper. I am also grateful to the Staff Parish Relations Committee and members of Davidson UMC, who have encouraged and participated in my obtaining this degree. I am thankful for the fellow members of both the Doctor of Pastoral Music degree and Doctor of Ministry degree cohorts, especially Tommy Shapard and Celia Halfacre. I learned equally as much from their experiences as I did from my own studies. I would like to thank my wife, Cindy, who supported me throughout the process and proofread this work. Finally, I would like to thank the participants of the Schola Cantorum of Davidson UMC, without whom this work would not exist. Their willingness to share themselves has opened my eyes to new way of leading the church in the world.
How can ministry leaders in the twenty-first century provide guidance for those who are at the leading edge of the church’s next generation? How might emerging adults become contributors to congregations where they are given space to offer and plan for themselves rather than passively acquiesce to traditional church structures where a strict, top-down leadership style dominates?

In conversation with author Letty Russell, this paper will describe a more democratic vision of ecclesiology for music ministry and ministries of the larger church. The methodology employed in this thesis involves a case study examining the creation of a choral ensemble focusing on Millennials and Generation Z that became a community of service and song dedicated to egalitarian leadership and a focus on social justice. This work will also give insight into a more egalitarian approach to leadership for a new generation of church leaders.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................... iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS ......................................................................................................... vi

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................... 1
  Statement of Self-Reflection .............................................................................................. 1
  Methodology ..................................................................................................................... 1
  Defining the Issue ............................................................................................................ 3
  Determining a Target Demographic ............................................................................... 6
  Glossary ............................................................................................................................ 13

CHAPTER TWO: CREATING COMMUNITY .......................................................................... 15
  Moral Therapeutic Deism in Emerging Adults ................................................................. 16
  How a Choir Can Address Sociological Needs of Emerging Adults ............................... 19
  Believing, Behaving, Belonging ...................................................................................... 22
  Mixing Up the Church .................................................................................................... 25
  Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 27

CHAPTER THREE: WHAT’S IN A NAME? .......................................................................... 28
  The Power of a Name ....................................................................................................... 28
  The Holistic Power of Music ............................................................................................ 29
  A Participatory Model ...................................................................................................... 31
  Selection of Music ............................................................................................................ 35
  Finding A Name and Identity .......................................................................................... 36
  Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 40

CHAPTER FOUR: WHERE WOULD JESUS BE? STORIES OF SHARING FAITH .............. 42
  Bringing the Insiders Outside .......................................................................................... 42
  Are We Ready to Go? ....................................................................................................... 44
  A Blueprint for Worship ................................................................................................. 45
  Prayers of the People ...................................................................................................... 46
  Disorientation ................................................................................................................... 48
  Affirmation from Outside the Walls ................................................................................. 51
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Statement of Self-Reflection

While I remember what is was like to be a young adult, I must recognize my own biases. I am a middle-aged, white male who has multiple degrees. I belong to the generation known as Generation X. As such, it is important for me to set aside my own beliefs about ecclesiology and approaches to finding truth in my life. I cannot help but approach matters of faith through my evangelical upbringing and the elementary school education I received from a Southern Baptist supported private school. My college and graduate school education, paired with my experience in leading worship in various denominations, has certainly broadened my outlook. I believe my experience in the cultures of both the evangelical and the mainline Protestant church are an asset as I minister to young adults who are struggling with discovering how their God can meet them in this new stage of their lives.

When I arrived in Davidson, North Carolina, I was twenty-four years old and recently out of graduate school. I remember the first August when I was not reviewing syllabi or purchasing back to school supplies. For the first time since I was five, I was not going back to school. It was a disorienting time for me because I had no friends or community.

Methodology

The feeling of disorientation has always been in the back of my mind as I have led twenty years of youth choirs at Davidson United Methodist Church (DUMC). During my tenure as Pastor for Music and Worship, we have experienced many times where our youth choirs have functioned as a de facto youth group because of high turnover among the youth pastors, and
youth music ministry became the source of Christian formation. As time passed, students graduated high school and moved away to college. The economic downturn of 2008 escalated a trend where college graduates moved back in with their parents, and though we saw a surge of former students returning to our area, they have not participated in our worship life.

The work in this paper consisted of creating a choir for those students who had graduated from high school but were not typically involved in the music ministry at Davidson UMC. My attempt in creating this choir was to re-engage these adults into the worship life of our church. My initial desire was to create a worship choir that would extend the youth choir experience, and my hope was that the choir members would feel comfortable engaging with the older adult Chancel Choir. I learned, throughout this process of creating an emerging adult choir, that my own initial desires and assumptions would not be as important as the desires and hopes of the members of the choir. My ecclesiological vision of a worship choir prioritized strong, centralized leadership. I envisioned a model of ecclesial leadership where I would create an identity for the group, and the members would simply sign up. What I learned in ministry with Millennials and Generation Z was their need for the group to reflect their own communal ecclesiology. This group of singers valued a decentralized, multi-valent leadership model. I would need to value community over more traditional markers of success. I would also learn the group would only engage if they could determine their own identity. They chose the locations in which they would sing, and I learned to create space for the participants to determine how they best wanted to establish their own community reflecting their own passions for social justice.

This thesis will demonstrate through first-hand accounts, questionnaires, and post-event debriefings how I was able to employ a democratic process of decisions about identity and model a process for engaging emerging adults in creating an ecclesiology not centered on church
membership but centered on a formation of community that reaches into the world. I believe the lessons learned in our process of beginning an emerging adult choir are not simply anecdotes from a case study on how a church should engage people of this demographic. Rather, I believe what the emerging adults taught me transcends the ministry of music and may provide lessons for the church at large. At the end of this thesis, I will explore the lessons I have learned as well as strategies for reaching future emerging adults who are currently in middle and high school. Throughout the thesis I will be placing the process in dialogue with the ecclesiology of Letty Russell in her book *Church in the Round*.1

**Defining the Issue**

David Kinnaman begins his book *You Lost Me* by defining a problem of “dropouts”—young adults leaving the church following their teen years. He lays out the realities of this new generation: “Teen church engagement remains robust, but many of the enthusiastic teens so common in North American churches are not growing up to be faithful young adult disciples of Christ.”2 We certainly have witnessed this trend at DUMC. Our youth music ministry attendance and participation eclipse those of the youth group in our congregation. We continue to offer many musical opportunities for youth: middle school handbells, middle school choir, senior high handbells, senior high choir, a youth praise band, and, in some years, participation in our compline choir. Despite all the participation in the music ministry during teen years, we have a great disparity in participation in our music ministry by twentysomethings. Kinnaman provides

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us with stark facts in his discovery process: Teens are among the most active religious Americans, but twentysomethings are among the most religiously inactive.³

These sobering facts are confirmed by David Setran and Chris Kiesling in their studies of emerging adulthood who note a rise in deism: “Fewer emerging adult Protestants see God as a ‘personal being involved in the lives of people today’ while a growing number identify God as ‘not personal, something like a cosmic life force.’”⁴ This declining view of God’s involvement in the lives of God’s people is demonstrated not only in mainline Protestants but also among evangelical Christians. In summary, more twentysomethings believe in a disengaged God and, for those who still believe, they are not participating in the life of the church by attending worship or engaging in practices such as devotional prayer. The Pew Research forum released a study in 2010 saying, “Less than half of adults under age 30 say they pray every day (48%), compared with 56% of Americans ages 30-49, 61% of those in their 50s and early 60s, and more than two-thirds of those 65 and older (68%).”⁵

We have wrestled at DUMC with how to help respond to this reality. Over time, we invited these young adults to join our Chancel Choir, which is made up of older adults and younger parents. However, we have not been able to integrate these younger adults into the life of our choir. Many younger adults participate on Christmas Eve, singing as a part of a youth choir alumni contingent. However, they will not sing on a regular Sunday morning service unless it is part of something bigger where they are highlighted in worship, such as an anthem where they function as a separate choir in a larger context.

³ Kinnaman, You Lost Me, 22.
⁴ David P. Setran and Chris A. Kiesling, Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 12.
Initially, I cynically assumed this behavior was the result of a celebrity culture that pervades some of our choristers’ motivations. After all, some of these younger adults had sung in amazing places during their time in youth choirs while on pilgrimages. We traveled to Denmark, Sweden, Canada, New York City, and Washington, D.C. Some of the students were even part of a group that was the service choir for a national convention of the Fellowship of United Methodists Musicians in Music, Worship, and Arts (FUMMWA). Leading worship at the familiar DUMC may have seemed like a letdown to them, I believed. Perhaps what lay at the heart of low twentysomething church participation was simply an ego issue. Maybe these young adults simply needed to feel special.

In 2018, I realized these young adults would never integrate back into the life of the church through our Chancel Choir, a group consisting largely of people who range in age from thirty-five to eighty. At least, they would not integrate in the ways I expected. I realized that other strategies would be needed. So, we created an ad hoc choir of young adults to lead the Good Friday worship service. It was this service choir that was the genesis of our young adult choir. Our first rehearsal began with about fifteen singers, and over half of those had not actually grown up as confirmed members of Davidson. The requirements and expectations were simple: we practiced on Sunday afternoons for about five weeks, and this process culminated with leading Good Friday worship.

The repertoire selected for this endeavor was chosen from a wide variety of musical genres and styles. While I initially selected challenging music in Latin, I learned some participants had never sung in a choir. Therefore, the repertoire was adjusted to reflect the musical capabilities of the ensemble. As we developed this choral fellowship, we found it was not so much a choir as it was becoming a vehicle for re-engaging young adults into the life of the
church. They were not hungering for celebrity, as I had previously thought. It seemed these younger adults were involved in a church music ministry because they were looking for meaning.

**Determining a Target Demographic**

Labels matter, and it seemed at the beginning that we need to clearly identify the audience we were trying to reach. We could not refer to the group as our “youth choir alumni” because the first rehearsal included many young people who were not a part of DUMC during their teenage years. The term “Millennial” seems to carry negative connotations as this term is often used derisively to describe how something has been “ruined” by this age group. The term “young adult” seemed to not fully encapsulate who we were trying to reach, either. For instance, we have a few twentysomethings who are married with young children. They did not consider themselves as “young” or “middle aged.” This age group is portrayed in the news as a monolithic demographic, but we found uniformity was not our reality.

To determine an appropriate term for describing this age group, I turned to the work of Jeffery Jensen Arnett. Arnett’s seminal work entitled, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties*, utilizes the term “emerging adult” when discussing people who are eighteen to twenty-five (or twenty-nine). Emerging adults are tending to put off life events like marriage and starting a family later than their predecessors; this, according to Arnett, may affect their faith development as well. Arnett describes the emerging adult worldview: “Adulthood and its commitments offer security and stability, but also represent a closing of doors—the end of independence, the end of spontaneity, the end of a sense of wide-
open possibility.” Indeed, I witnessed this avoidance of commitment as I began reaching out to potential participants of our group. I would not receive responses to emails, texts, or phone calls. In any other demographic, I would have assumed nobody would have shown up to the first rehearsal because nobody committed to showing up. In what could still reflect a tendency of celebrity culture, we had over fifteen participants at the first rehearsal. When asked why they had not responded to the invitation ahead of time, most participants responded with either “I forgot,” or “I wanted to make sure nothing better came up.”

How do we know a person is an emerging adult and no longer an adolescent? Arnett’s theory of emerging adulthood names five distinguishing features of emerging adulthood: identity explorations, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and possibilities/optimism. What I saw in that first rehearsal was a demonstration of all traits Arnett discusses. *Identity explorations*, according to Arnett, comprise “the most distinctive feature of emerging adulthood.” Identity exploration involves an emerging adult investigating all the options available in life. Indeed, emerging adults have more options available to them than any other age group in history has had before them. This time of their lives usually involves a period where they are not under strict supervision by parents, nor are they answering to a boss or corporate structure. Separation from parents may be good for developing emerging adults, and this separation may allow for spiritual exploration. Setran and Kiesling cite opportunities for emerging adults who are, for the first time, engaging with friends and adults who possess different viewpoints on the nature of truth and religion.

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Instability is evidenced in the life of emerging adults by their frequent changes in jobs, living situations, and relationships. One-year apartment leases, tempting offers of an increase in salary, or change in job locations contribute to a heightened sense of unease in emerging adults. I saw evidence of this instability in the first rehearsal as some participants introduced themselves and declared they did not know if they would still sing for Good Friday because they might have a new job before the service in five weeks.

Concerning self-focus, Arnett maintains that, at this point in emerging adults’ lives, concern for others is at a life-span low point. Arnett says this self-focused attitude is attributed to a lack of parental, spousal, or work commitments. The term “self-focus” is not the same as “selfish.” On the contrary, Arnett says it is a healthy part of development. “The goal of their self-focusing is to learn to stand alone as a self-sufficient person, but they do not see self-sufficiency as a permanent state. Rather, they view it as a necessary step before committing themselves to enduring relationships with others, in love and work.”10 Participants at the first meeting showed a concern for social issues and each other. However, they also verbalized how hard it was to decide to come to the first meeting because they worried about experiencing “FOMO” (fear of missing out). These emerging adults were so worried about the potential of missing something that they almost missed out on what I hoped would be a meaningful experience of Christian community.

Feeling In-Between, Arnett says, is a normal transition from the restraints of adolescence and duties of adulthood. Emerging adults across all geographic, ethnic, and socio-economic groups in the United States experience the same expectations from others such as paying bills

10 Arnett, Emerging Adulthood, 14.
and civic engagement. The challenge with recognizing these expectations is they are usually subtle gradations and not sudden arrival points. I witnessed evidence of this feeling in-between at the first rehearsal when a person talked about needing to move out of her parents’ home because it was time to learn “how to adult.”

_Possibilities/optimism_ addresses a great sense of change and hope that emerging adults possess. Indeed, one of the first emerging adults I spoke with demonstrated this optimism when he said, “I am only here until I can land my dream job in Hong Kong.” This belief in possibilities is one of the most encouraging aspects of working with twentysomethings, and I believe it can be leveraged to do transforming work for the kingdom of God.

It is because Arnett’s work seems to transcend the sacred and secular research that this thesis will draw on the term, “emerging adult,” to describe our new ministry. It will generally refer to the ages of 18-29, however, a few members of our emerging adult community have turned 30 over the course of our journey together. Arnett points out this group defies historical markers of adulthood (e.g., marriage, parenthood). There is a lack of a rites of passage for these emerging adults. When some of these emerging adults graduated high school, our church gave them a Bible. At the end of their final summer choir pilgrimage, seniors each received a “send-off” where they heard words of encouragement from their peers, and they were afforded time to impart their wisdom to those who were younger. While a college graduation can function in this way, not all emerging adults are following the traditional routes to adulthood through a four-year degree. Considering this finding, there is not a distinction in this thesis between those who have attended college and those who have not. Finally, this thesis will draw heavily on research by

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others who have used Arnett as a starting point, but they have also drawn his work into dialogue with the work of the Church.

The Pew Research Center released a study in 2010 that confirmed what most church leaders had expected: young adults attend religious services less often than older Americans today. The Pew study gave grim results regarding the attitudes of young adults towards organized religion. However, there were some encouraging findings as well. Pew Research Center surveys show, for instance, that young adults’ beliefs about life after death and the existence of heaven, hell, and miracles closely resemble the beliefs of older people today. Though emerging adults engage in personal prayer less often than their elders do today, Pew research tells us that the number of young adults who say they pray every day rivals the portion of young people who said the same in prior decades. And though belief in God is lower among emerging adults than among older adults, Millennials say they believe in God with absolute certainty at rates like those seen among Gen Xers a decade ago. This mirrors the experience of the emerging adults at Davidson. Even so, the attitude of defeatism pervades not just the work with emerging adults at DUMC, but also meetings within our Annual Conference as we bemoan the lack of emerging adults among United Methodists. We can read some discouraging news regarding the worship habits of emerging adults from the Pew research. However, the research also shows there is a great potential for Christian formation lying fallow in our younger Christians, and it is in that spirit that this thesis is written.

Author Dan Kimball, reflecting on his own ministry with emerging adults, writes, “I believe we are in a great and wonderful period when emerging generations are open to the

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13 “Religion Among the Millennials.”
teachings of Jesus and even to the church.”\textsuperscript{14} Indeed, the people who make up emerging adults seem to be a popular target for discussion in church leadership. One needs only to review the best-selling books of Christian vendors to see the urgency of this issue manifest in the many strategies to convince emerging adults to come back to church. In these attempts, Denise Janssen observes a lack of sincerity: “It is easy to observe the cause to which congregations attribute young adult absence from their pews—just take one look at congregational behaviors to address this problem and inferences can be drawn about implied causes.”\textsuperscript{15} She points out that church leaders attempt to woo emerging adults under the title of “church development” by providing coffee shops, projected lyrics, or parenting programs.

This thesis will not advocate employing entertainment approaches to entice emerging adults to attend church. My strategy, by contrast, may seem to be countercultural. Kimball writes we should be more attentive to being missional with emerging adults rather than simply evangelizing. Kimball sees churches who are successful with young adults as “doing far more than just putting on concerts or hoping younger people will come to their church by adding candles, couches, and coffee.”\textsuperscript{16} We are seeking to reengage these emerging adults by offering something that may seem outdated – join a choir. The approach I sought out models what Doug Gay says about the church, “among other things, the Christian Church is an ongoing conversation with God and with one another about how to live for, with, and in God in our own places and times.”\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14} Dan Kimball, \textit{They Like Jesus But Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 21.
\textsuperscript{15} Denise Janssen, “Coming Back Home: An Ethnographic Study of Teenagers Active in Church Based Youth Ministries and their Pathways into Active Congregation Life as Emerging and Young Adults,” Order No. 3513210, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, 2012, 6.
\textsuperscript{16} Kimball, \textit{They Like Jesus}, 21.
\textsuperscript{17} Doug Gay, \textit{Remixing the Church: The Five Moves of Emerging Ecclesiology} (Norwich, UK: SCM Press, 2011), location 82.
This group of emerging adults did not have an ability to articulate their sense of “ecclesiology”, and this term was never used as we formed our community. Instead, we wrestled with the question, “why does the church exist?” An anonymous answer from our group said the church is “a way for God’s love to interact with the world, a place for all to be welcome (or at least it should be) and experience grace and love, and a place to meet people where they are and they can feel supported.” As I developed the new ensemble, I realized emerging adults were envisioning a church that is missional in its proclamation of God’s love. Further group discussion revealed that their vision of a church that could “meet people where they are” was reflective of the possibilities of relationships and physical locations outside the walls of the church. David Busic writes that “the first Christians could have turned their upper room into a protective sanctuary and invited people to come to them. Instead, they spilled out into the streets, into all the decay and corruption and darkness and became salt and light. They were distinctive and visible, and God was glorified, and the church grew.”

Through the ministry of music, I found emerging adults are discovering a way to be church for each other and the world. They are encountering an approach to ecclesiology that was different than their teenage church. This new way of being in community needed to match their new life experiences out in the real world. What these emerging adults wanted to experience was an ecclesiology which would be rooted in the walls of the church but would bear fruit into our local community. This thesis will show how the emerging adult community of service and song at Davidson imagined a new ecclesiology through missional music ministry.

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Glossary

The following terms will be utilized in this thesis:

_Ecclesiology_: a theological term dealing with the study of the nature and structure of the Christian church, the relationship of the church with Jesus Christ and with other members

_Emerging adult_: a developmental stage of life between adolescence and adulthood. The term was coined by Jeffery Arnett who proposes the stage lasts from eighteen to around thirty years old.

_FOMO_: an acronym representing “fear of missing out”; FOMO is a state of anxiety that arises when one is worried that others are having fun without them. Social media is a major instigator of FOMO.

_Generation X_: a generational demographic referring to people born between the years 1965 and 1980; the generation born before Millennials and the generation into which this author was born

_Generation Z_: a generational demographic referring to people born between the years 1997 and 2012; the most recent generation that is defined by those who do not remember life without a smart phone or pre-9/11 America

_Hygge_: a Danish and Norwegian concept of warmth and coziness; _hygge_ conveys a sense of intimacy and connection

_Millennial_: generational demographic referring to people born between the years 1981 and 1996; also referred to as Generation-Y
**Missional**: the concept of engaging a community outside the walls of the church. Missional work in our context requires telling the story of the Christian faith in the community.

**Moral therapeutic Deism**: an idea introduced by Christian Smith and Melinda Denton to describe how American youth see God. Moral therapeutic Deism reflects a manner of viewing God as one who created the world, wants us to be good, does not get involved except in times of crisis, and lets good people go to heaven.

**Schola**: a shortened version of *Schola Cantorum*, the name of the emerging adult community of service and song at Davidson UMC. In a broader sense, *Schola Cantorum* denotes a liturgical choir singing the service music of the Roman Catholic mass.
CHAPTER TWO
CREATING COMMUNITY

In the introduction, I named a disconnect in my thinking concerning how to begin a choir that would engage our emerging adults into the church community. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how this effort required an adaptation of my leadership style to accommodate the musical visions of participants and to encourage the group to take an active role in the creation of the choir community. The work of Letty Russell provides a valuable conversational partner in reflecting the process that led to the formation of the choir.

In Church in the Round, a work advocating for a feminist ecclesiology, Letty Russell’s arguments for a non-hierarchical ecclesiology resonated with my experiences in beginning the choir. Russell uses tables as a metaphor, and the first meetings of this choir always either began or concluded with some sort of table fellowship. Russell uses the idea of tables as a way to demonstrate how a vision how the church can be enacted. A round table allows everyone access to the table and encourages a more egalitarian approach to leadership since there is no “head of the table.” As I reflected on the beginnings of our ensemble, Russell’s words echo what the community experienced in setting up a vision of where we would sing and for whom we would pray.

As we gathered for our first rehearsal, everyone had their own ideas and dreams for how the new group would develop. The process of determining the group’s ecclesiology began rather quickly. I was excited to lay out my vision for the group, and it certainly seemed to me as if many wanted to develop a choir that would be similar to their previous experiences of singing: sophisticated music sung at a level of excellence which validated all the time dedicated to rehearsing. It was evident, however, from our first icebreaker activities that we were creating a
community with a different purpose than any of us had experienced before. As we moved through that first cycle of rehearsals and performances, we found the emerging adults were craving something more than musical excellence. They were looking for a community that would provide guidance for applying their developing adult faith to their personal lives.

**Moral Therapeutic Deism in Emerging Adults**

The experience of the first gathering of Schola reflected different perspectives of the meaning of Christian fellowship. That first rehearsal also reflected a theological outlook that many are witnessing in emerging adults that could be described as moralistic, therapeutic Deism. This manner of finding truth is influencing emerging adults not just in our community, but also throughout North America. Moral, therapeutic Deism in emerging adults creates a perspective that the primary aim of spiritual growth is to be a “nice” Christian.20

This perspective echoes a conversation heard at a planning retreat for leaders of Davidson UMC almost eight years ago. A father I knew well announced to his table group, “I try to teach my girls to make good moral decisions. Is it really important for them to have knowledge of the Bible?”21 This inquiry may shock those of us in church leadership, but the questioning of the authority of Christian formation resonates with the research of the Barna Group. David Kinnaman researched the faith of emerging adults, and his conclusion is: “After significant exposure to Christianity as teenagers and children, many young adults, whether raised Catholic or Protestant, are MIA from the pews and from active commitment to Christ during their

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21 Father of youth choir members aged approximately 53 at the time of this meeting.
The research of the Barna group is even more striking considering that their research found that, as of 2011, more than eighty percent of American children spend a portion of their formative years in a Christian congregation. This percentage seems incomprehensible, but the research illuminates the vast numbers of emerging adults who become disengaged from the life of the church but it also demonstrates the possible numbers who can possibly return. The trend is not only with those who identify as Christian. It seems emerging adults are not only abandoning Christianity, but they are also abandoning any sort of external moral framework.

Though the authors of *Lost in Transition* interviewed emerging adults from a non-religious perspective, the interviewers found six out of ten (sixty percent) of subjects possessed a highly individualistic approach to morality. I found this highly individualistic approach to morality as the emerging adult ensemble began rehearsing at Davidson UMC. In one of the earliest meetings, one of the participants said, “I have found as much advice on how to live from the novels of Harry Potter as I have from the Bible.” Heads nodded around the room, and the leaders realized my task was going to be more challenging than I first planned. How would this group reflect the gospel of Jesus Christ when many of them found scripture to be as important as the words of a twentieth-century fantasy novelist? Letty Russell would say this interchange reflected the group “talking back to tradition.” The table talk provided insight into how this nascent community found truth and meaning. Their views on scripture and tradition were less

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22 David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving the Church... and Rethinking the Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 25.
25 Male, aged 29.
exclusive than mine, and I realized that, as the leader, I was the one on the margin. This difference became increasingly apparent as each participant gathered at the table revealed their individual moral compass. Their tone became relaxed and natural—similar to the conversational manner in which we discussed our favorite flavor of ice cream in the icebreaker activity earlier in the meeting. Christian Smith tells us these emerging adults find moral individualism to be attractive because, “it is hard enough, it seems, for one person to figure morality out for themselves. The idea of coming up with a moral system that will apply to everyone feels hopeless.” While it may feel hopeless to Smith, this does not mean all emerging adults are amoral or immoral. Emerging adults, like most people in any demographic, do not want to be stereotyped.

It is in this moral ambiguity that church leaders find a new mission field. How do we present the message of Christ as something distinctive through upon which we may base our entire life? Setran and Kiesling warn church leaders of participating in what Paul David Tripp calls “fruit stapling,” a perspective that emphasizes behavior modification over changing the root issues of lack of spiritual formation. Church leaders, then, must speak to affect a change of heart. It is only through a change of heart that we see a change in fruit.

I wrestled with this idea of “fruit stapling” early in the emerging adult choral fellowship experience. Setran and Kiesling tell us that the allure of fruit stapling is that, “while leaders may be able to see short-term improvements in behavior, these changes will not last because they are externally imposed rather than naturally flowing from a renewed root system.” How, then, do

27 Smith, Lost in Transition, 22.
28 Setran and Kiesling, Spiritual Formation, 31.
29 Setran and Kiesling, Spiritual Formation, 31.
we avoid the allure of short-term improvements and strive for a new life in these emerging adults?

While I appreciate the efforts of Setran and Kiesling, the purpose of forming an emerging adult choral community was not primarily for a conversion experience. Recalling the words from one of our participants, this group would attempt to be a place to “meet people where they are.” Schola needed their church community to be a place where they could be together united in missional artistry—a community of service and song. It was important that the group create a space of acceptance, and that the process of forming this new community would foster a renewed relationship with God. Here I learned to redefine my own ecclesiology not as a place of conversion but as a place of inclusion and renewal which was not exclusive to the location of the church building.

**How a Choir Can Address Sociological Needs of Emerging Adults**

In starting this choral fellowship, I envisioned a group that would last longer than the time period involving this thesis. I sought to develop a community that would help emerging adults navigate this entire transitional period of their lives. In order to do this, we took seriously the advice of Rev. Mike Baughman about leadership. Baughman spoke to our Doctor of Pastoral Music class the day after we observed a worship service at Union Coffee in Dallas. He encouraged us to place in leadership the types of people we wanted to see in our communities, lamenting the methodology of congregations that start contemporary services to draw in young people.³⁰ Rather than drawing their leaders from that age demographic they wish to attract,

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³⁰ Rev. Mike Baughman, founding pastor and community curator at Union Coffee and Tuesday-evening Kuneo worship in remarks to Doctor of Pastoral Music class, January 2018.
many churches engage leaders of music and preachers who are forty-year-old white men dressed like fathers. In starting our emerging adult ensemble, I immediately determined who in the group had leadership potential, and I encouraged them to direct an anthem, lead prayers, or even make plans for the service opportunities. In our midst was a young man who was not using his music degree from East Carolina University. He works, instead, as a talent systems administrator at a local soda bottling company. I invited him to direct an anthem for our first opportunity leading worship. This was an initial instance where I needed to share leadership in order to nurture the group toward determining its own course.

Regardless of generational perspective, we all live in a world where access to information is easier to find. And, like other age demographics, the access to so much information does not lead to certainty or clarity for emerging adults. Rather, instant access to information can lead to more instability and value changes for emerging adults. In the palm of their hands, emerging adults have access to the Internet which opens up an awareness of new job opportunities, different cultures, potential travel destinations. The Internet also facilitates the initiation of all kinds of relationships. In previous generations, all but the most meaningful relationships were unable to be sustained following a separation geographically. Once out of college, people tended to cull their friend groups naturally, and only occasional interactions occurred with peripheral friendships. Now, emerging adults can see who a previous romantic crush is dating, what new employment a colleague from a previous job has found, or where an acquaintance from the second year of college is traveling this week. All these possibilities provide uncertainty in the minds of emerging adults. The ability to view others’ lives on social media can cause a “fear of missing out” (FOMO). In a conversation about Sunday morning worship, one young adult said,
“I would love to sing with you on Sunday morning, but I dread the FOMO.”31 He went on to explain he would dread checking his social media after worship to see which of his friends had a wonderful Sunday brunch. The simple anticipation of missing out made this young man want to miss church on the off chance somebody would invite him to brunch.

This social insecurity of emerging adults is also matched with career instability. In previous generations when people married earlier, younger adults stayed at jobs longer because changing employment exposed their children to a move. For emerging adults who delay marriage or starting a family, they often sort out their vocational goals by changing positions or continuing their education. Dunn and Sundene note that “since the North American college system does not require students to specialize until they have had two years of college, going on for a master’s degree gives them the option to change their focus again if they want to.”32 Delays in settling on a career may cause emerging adults to view their employment as a primary definition of their own self-identification.33 Work is not only a way to earn money to do things they love. Work becomes a pillar upon which emerging adults build their lives.34 Emerging adults, it seems, are not like their parents in viewing career moves as steppingstones to the eventual job of preference. Emerging adults seem to equate employment with their identity at the very outset of their professional careers. I witnessed this view of employment as identity when inviting emerging adults to join our Chancel Choir in Europe. Church members gave scholarship money for emerging adults to participate, and I had enough money to provide scholarships of $1,000 for each emerging adult. I offered the money to twenty participants in our emerging adult choral

31 Male, aged 31.
33 Dunn and Sundene, Shaping the Journey of Emerging Adults, 31.
community, but only eleven took advantage of the opportunity. I found my own biases reflected when I was offended that many of the other nine never responded to the scholarship offer. When I followed up with my offer, the others indicated that they had declined because their work might need them.

Believing, Behaving, Belonging

The work of Diana Butler Bass assisted me as I began the ensemble in defining the issues of identity and instability challenging emerging adults. In her book, *Christianity After Religion*, Bass maintains that belief, behavior, and belonging are three essential components of most religious faiths. Bass observes that churches always emphasize these words in the order: belief, behavior, and belonging. In other words, new people are encouraged to believe according to an established community’s beliefs and behave like the community’s cultural societal norms.

Only after these first two conditions are met can a new person to the faith belong to typical congregations. Bass maintains that Jesus worked these concepts in the reverse order. He invited the disciples to belong which led to a different manner of behaving. Soon after they were assimilated and their behaviors changed, the disciples were believing differently than they did before they met Jesus. From the very beginning of our emerging adult choral fellowship, I wanted our community of service and song to emphasize belonging first. I took seriously these words from Diana Butler Bass who noted the social and professional instabilities emerging adults face are also mirrored in their religious instability. Some young Christians, she writes, “are very comfortable defining themselves as adherents to a way of life modeled by Jesus, rather

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than adherents to a particular doctrine or creed.”

Belief, for many emerging adults, is a term that is wrapped up in doctrinal recitations and litmus tests. Unfortunately, our core beliefs in Christianity have often been papered over with additional requirements. Things like correct beliefs about women in ministry, human sexuality, and political affiliations have overshadowed priorities such as “Love the stranger in your midst.” Is it any wonder that we find a rise in doctrinal boredom and functional atheism?

The first rehearsal of the new ensemble included Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, agnostics, and atheists. In some cases, these categories overlapped as some participants who grew up in a faith tradition now considered themselves agnostic or atheist. In this first rehearsal, no one was asked to sign up to be a Methodist or even a Christian. In fact, I stated that this new ensemble would not require regular Sunday worship attendance. This new ensemble was not created to be a place where emerging adults had to believe. I wanted to establish a place where these emerging adults could simply “belong.”

Here was another moment where my initial thoughts for the group had to be adapted to what the group desired. I learned my primary desire to have the new ensemble be a Sunday morning worship choir was not reflected in the vision of ecclesiology provided by our emerging adults. Dan Kimball encourages leaders to invite “people to participate in the life of the church community and to participate in the activity of God, not merely inviting them to attend our worship services.”

Rather than simply hoping for emerging adult attendance at worship, Kimball says the goal is “to see the Spirit of God transform them into disciples of Jesus whether

or not they are going to your weekly worship gathering.”39 This echoes the experience of beginning Schola which shifted my vision of ecclesiology from the church’s existence as a location of saving to existing everywhere for a transformative experience of renewal and inclusion.

The efforts to bring emerging adults together did not begin with a Sunday morning worship experience. The first time to lead worship was for an evening Good Friday service. Through weekly discussions, meals at the church, and extra-rehearsal gatherings, Schola had taken time to create a community during the rehearsals leading up to the service.40 Setran and Kiesling note emerging adults spend most of their time in places where they choose to be. Church fellowship is important, they say, because it is unchosen. “In the unchosen community of the local church,…they can learn the true meaning of ‘love of neighbor,’ thrust into situations in which they must care for and learn from those who are quite unlike them in age, social status, or personality.”41 At the outset of our endeavor, the emerging adults seemed to be a monolithic group. However, as the group grew together, they learned how different their experiences were. Some were passionate about LGBTQ+ issues while others modeled more historic views on sexuality. Participants who were closer in age to thirty tended to roll their eyes in jest as those who were just beginning college spoke of how busy their lives were. I realized that this emerging adult choral fellowship was not a homogenous group at all, and I determined this diversity could be an asset.

39 Kimball, *They Like Jesus But Not the Church*, 215.
40 Chapter Three will offer further detail of continual efforts to remind our emerging adults of their community in Schola.
41 Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation*, 98.
Mixing Up the Church

Churches typically group people by affinity groups: children’s Sunday school classes segregated by grade, youth handbell choirs segregated by high school or middle school, and even adult Sunday school classes or Bible studies are determined by life stages or theological leanings. If I could return to the beginning of this endeavor, I would heed the advice of Setran and Kiesling. They encourage us to break this stratification in order to assist emerging adults in their faith formation. If we consider our own experiences in the twenty-something area of life, we can recall many friends from college and continuing friendships from high school. Our homogenized friend group is all at once both expanded and contracted as we progressed through our tumultuous twenties, and current emerging adults feel that as well. At the end of our twenties, we realize our connection to high school friends has weakened which seems to indicate a shrinking of the number of our relationships. During that same period, however, an entrance into the workplace thrusts us into professional working relationships with people who are the same age as our parents, thereby also increasing the size of our friend group. This tremendous mixing of age groups can be leveraged in the church to help emerging adults develop their faith.

Richard Dunn and Jana Sundene tell us that emerging adults long for mentors who can help them navigate the delayed transition into traditional adulthood. For those who are tasked with helping to make disciples in this generation, Dunn and Sundene say the most important quality to be a mentor is an ability to simply be present with those in the emerging adult demographic. While I did not previously know the advice of any of these authors, I recognized the mistake in starting a group solely based on age. And so, I asked for help in this endeavor.

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42 Dunn and Sundene, Shaping the Journey of Emerging Adults, 25.
43 Dunn and Sundene, Shaping the Journey of Emerging Adults, 25.
from potential mentors. I asked mothers who are in their forties to assist this group, and I asked our clergy who have emerging adults as children to give guidance. Outside musicians were brought in who, though older, had experienced great tumult in their own lives regarding their faith journey. Sometimes, choristers took their own initiative to walk the road of job changes, parental disputes, and the ends of romantic relationships with each other. I met with just about every person in the group at a coffee shop near the church at least once during the formation of the community. In a world that is uncertain, our emerging adults needed the certainty of relationships to feel connected to the church.

The presence of emerging adults who were approaching thirty had an impact on the younger participants. This mentorship across age differences is crucial, say Setran and Kiesling, for keeping emerging adults engaged in the life of the church. Emerging adults “need to hear the testimonies of those who have seen God’s hand at work in both good and hard times, witnessing to God’s faithfulness over the long haul. ... Emerging adults can, by observation, begin to visualize life trajectories that lead to righteousness and peace and those that lead to quiet desperation.”

The observation Setran and Kiesling refers to occurred for us during limited rehearsals and services. The introduction of older choristers did not occur in a structured way. The involvement of older voices was achieved in an organic way that did not impose any sort of hierarchy. I was intentional in the selection of these people not only in their musical ability, but also in their ability to hear the emerging adults without judgment. I did not want our mentors attempting to assimilate the emerging adults by changing them to fit in with our Chancel Choir

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culture. These mentors were not in every rehearsal. They often showed up only for a performance/service to help. During the moments outside the performance/service, mentoring happened, and we were all able to build these intergenerational faith-based connections. The music brought us together, however it was in the spaces around the music where community was created for our group.

**Conclusion**

Our emerging choral community began with a desire to provide excellence in the performance of music. However, the true needs of the community were revealed to be a need for an ecclesial community where the group’s vision was not determined by me, the director, but by the “table talk” described by Letty Russell. The decision to encourage group contributors to lead helped the emergent ensemble take ownership of the process. In addition, the change to a round table dynamic of inclusive leadership helped me realize my own biases and preference to be in control. Just as participants valued both the Bible and Harry Potter, I realized leadership in the round was not an either/or dialectic. This newly formed choral community did not perform a “coup” to limit my leadership. On the contrary, the group thrived with supporting mentorship from older adults who joined to sing or play instruments to help our group wrestle with their faith. Leadership in the round was, in fact, a both/and proposition. The development of core principles modeled after Jesus’ call of the disciples helped us distinguish our group as one which was Christian at its core but not exclusive in its participants or hierarchical in its structure. The tasks of belonging, behaving, and belief would become central to the mission of this choral fellowship as they looked for ways to engage with the community outside the walls of Davidson UMC.
CHAPTER THREE
WHAT’S IN A NAME?

The Power of a Name

In the previous chapter, I delineated how a non-hierarchical system began to form as I identified who would be a part of our community of service and song. In this next chapter, I will discuss how it was important that our new choral community continued their involvement in creating their ecclesiology to be what Letty Russell calls a community of faith and struggle. Russell reminds us that Jesus, particularly in the Gospel of Matthew, renames those who are left behind by society. In this new inclusion to God’s fellowship, Russell tells us those newly received into God’s naming can learn to “pray, sing, act, and dance out the kerygma of God’s justice and love.” Our fledgling community of singers needed to be involved in selecting their own name.

The concept of naming is a powerful act. I confess unease with using some names for things described in this paper. I have deliberately avoided using the terms “member” and “choir” when describing those involved in our fellowship because the names infer an old system where like-minded individuals come together to surrender the collective will to an authoritative voice, such as a director or board of directors. Considering my discomfort with this term, I have elected to use the name “participant” as much as possible. Naming can be an empowering experience as well. When God informs Jacob his name will be Israel, Jacob’s new life begins and out of his

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46 Russell, Church in the Round, 70.
naming, God promises Israel will be fruitful and multiply. In a similar way, when we select names, identity and purpose can become clearer.

The Holistic Power of Music

I found our choral engagements with emerging adults were yielding solid results, and conversation among staff colleagues regarding an emerging adult community always included the question, “Why a choir?” According to some of my colleagues, the idea of a choir seemed to be contrary to news articles most people read online which laments the loss of emerging adults in church life. However, I believe we had such strong involvement because music carries a deep connection to the primitive human brain, and therefore, music can more easily convey a sense of the divine than words alone. Concepts such as Trinity can be difficult to grasp, but music, Stephen Mithen writes, “plays an active role in maintaining and manipulating ideas about supernatural beings in the human mind.” Karl Barth seemed to sense a connection to the divine in the music of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791). Mozart, in Barth’s opinion, was not known for being a particularly active Christian. However, Barth writes that Mozart understands the doctrine of creation better than others: “He had heard, and causes those who have ears to hear, even today, what we shall not see until the end of time—the whole context of providence.” The emerging adults at Davidson were experiencing a community through music as well as ritual.

47 Genesis 35:10-11.
We use music in both sacred and secular rituals to form community. Tom Driver says, “Ritual marks the boundary at which wilderness, moral desert, or profane life stop.”\textsuperscript{51} At a baseball game, the crowd joins in singing “Take Me out to the Ball Game,” and at funerals, we sing hymns that we share across traditions. When I was finishing graduate school in Atlanta, the famous conductor, Robert Shaw, passed away. My colleagues and I went to the memorial service for Maestro Shaw at Atlanta’s Symphony Hall. The lobby was packed with famous choral conductors, students, and lovers of music. As we waited to enter the hall, a lone voice began singing, “Amazing Grace.” Soon, the entire lobby was singing together. The singing arose organically without any verification of faith. People joined in this song no matter their faith, even if they had no faith. Music made it possible for these people to participate in the ritual, and we needed no choral director to tell us when or how to sing. This experience outside the walls of a church was one where Russell’s “round table leadership” was at work. We experienced what the Bible called \textit{koinonia}, a fellowship and togetherness.\textsuperscript{52} I believe our emerging adults experienced a sense of \textit{koinonia} as we created our identity together.

Daniel Levitin has been a music producer for many famous musicians. Levitin became fascinated with the science of music, and he studied neuroscience at Stanford University. Levitin is fascinated with how the brain engages when exposed to music. Even though Levitin is writing from a secular perspective, I believe we in the church can utilize his findings about how music affects the brain. Levitin describes how music can affect us in our primitive brain. Theologically, we can relate his methodology to an understanding of the \textit{imago Dei} in each of us. Levitin found music engages our primitive brain, the cerebellum. With the advent of functional magnetic

\textsuperscript{51} Tom F. Driver, \textit{Liberating Rites: Understanding the Transformative Power of Ritual} (BookSurge, 2006), 47.
\textsuperscript{52} Philippians 2:1-2.
resonance images, Levitin could see the cerebellum was activated while subjects listened to music. The cerebellum was not activated when a recording of noise was played for the subject. The cerebellum helps us govern breathing, but it also guides movement. Levitin wondered if his findings were in error until he discovered the research of Harvard-based scientist Jeremy Schmahmann. Schmahmann found that the cerebellum did not only control basic motor functions, but it also had strong connections to the emotional centers of the brain. Levitin and his research team were able to determine how melody, rhythm, and harmony affected the cerebellum in real time as their subjects underwent brain scans while listening to music. Levitin noted the cerebellum was activated in his subjects when they listened to music they liked because “the cerebellum contains massive connections to emotional centers of the brain—the amygdala, which is involved in remembering emotional events, and the frontal lobe, the part of the brain involved in planning and impulse control.” I believe this shortcut to the “little brain” gave our community of service and song a quicker way to engage the emerging adult holistically and allowed the group the chance to quickly move from strangers to a community where they could be in leadership together.

A Participatory Model

It is true that many smaller parishes in our area have services that provide worship music in modern styles that echo the music emerging adults might hear in their cars or popular venues.

55 Levitin, This Your Brain on Music, 175.
However, the music in many of those parishes models what Rev. Mike Baughman lamented: a dearth of emerging adults in leadership.\(^{57}\) Worship music in many of these parishes is selected by older leaders who are in the Generation X demographic.

In the ten-mile vicinity of Davidson UMC, one can find at least three mega-churches that follow a multi-campus model. These churches also employ worship leadership in the praise band model. Unlike the mainline churches with services employing praise bands, these multi-site, mega-churches do allow emerging adults to be in leadership. In many of these churches, only the most professional and polished musicians are afforded the opportunity to express themselves as worship leaders. Some of our more affluent local churches who have choral-based music ministries also employ paid singers in their choirs which mirrors the approach of those mega-churches. In short, some large churches around Davidson approach leading music in what can be termed as exclusive rather than a more populist and inclusive approach where everyone can express their God-given creativity.

A selective approach to music ministry, whether in a praise band setting or a more traditional choral-based program, may exclude those who are less capable from the transformative dimension of participating in a community of those praising God. I agree with Brad Harper and Paul Louis Metzger, who maintain the entire community benefits from singers who are not gifted because the entire singing community allows for minimization of mistakes.\(^{58}\) I believe this egalitarian ideal can apply to leadership in worship, whether it is singing in a choir or

\(^{57}\) Rev. Mike Baughman, founding pastor and community curator at Union Coffeehouse/Kuneo worship in remarks to Doctor of Pastoral Music class, January 2018.

a praise team. Our emerging adult community was founded in this model that allows all to participate in music no matter their skill level.

In Jeremiah 18, God reworks a spoiled vessel into something new for God’s glory.\(^{59}\) In this scripture, God encourages us to be reworked. We are to be redeemed from a spoiled creation into something beautiful. Many churches sing about our need to be reworked in a hymn by American hymnwriter Adelaide Pollard (1962-1934):

\begin{verbatim}
Have thine own way, Lord!
Have thine own way!
Thou art the potter,
I am the clay.
Mold me an make me
after thy will,
while I am waiting
yielded and still.\(^{60}\)
\end{verbatim}

I believe God can rework all the imperfections of our voices to make beautiful praise. To be sure, we are not actually vessels of pottery. Likewise, even though our voices are not pottery, the pottery metaphor describes God’s willingness to rework our heart, soul, mind, and yes, even our voices into what God would have us be. In the case of our voices, God reworks our imperfect attempts at praise into beautiful ways to speak of God and God’s relationship to us. We sing *Kyrie eleison*, and we expect God will honor our request no matter whether we deserve it.\(^{61}\)

Davidson UMC has a tradition of reflecting this belief by encouraging not only trained musicians, but also those who have varied levels of musical training and even none at all. Unlike many churches our size, the music ministry at Davidson UMC provides various options for

\(\text{\textsuperscript{59}}\) Jeremiah 18:4.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{60}}\) Hymnary.org, [https://hymnary.org/text/have_thine_own_way_lord](https://hymnary.org/text/have_thine_own_way_lord).

\(\text{\textsuperscript{61}}\) From the Greek: “Lord, have mercy.”
participation with a minimum of professional leaders who are compensated. By extension, it is natural for a music ministry that encourages everyone to participate to provide a place for emerging adults to express their creativity regardless of ability. This type of comprehensive leadership can model Letty Russell’s vision of “partnership paradigm,” where we should imagine a new way to order reality through our relationships and community.62

John Bell sees innate human creativity as a reflection of the imago Dei. “All who are made in the image of God are creative, because God whose image we bear is first revealed in scripture as the great Creator.”63 The choral experience offered to emerging adults can facilitate a primal and holistic human capacity whereby singers participate as co-creators with God the Creator. The participatory choral fellowship shaped a group identity because they experienced a pattern of leadership that valued their own efforts and ideas. Individual participants of the group were united in rehearsing for the worship of God. Our first rehearsal was for a Good Friday service on March 30, 2018.

It may be puzzling that we began this community with a service remembering Christ’s crucifixion. I am reminded again of Rev. Mike Baughman’s practice at the Kuneo worship held at Union Coffeehouse of eliminating many contemporary worship songs because they relied heavily on the theology of the cross. For the worshippers at Union Coffeehouse, he said, this music of the cross was “too much, too soon.” Unlike the worshippers at Union, the participants of our emerging adult group at Davidson did not shrink from the language of the cross. On the contrary, the community seemed to relish the opportunity to sing for such a powerful day in the

62 Russell, Church in the Round, 57.
life of the church. The repertoire acknowledged the cross and reflected the different theories of atonement.

**Selection of Music**

One of the most challenging aspects of beginning an ensemble was the selection of repertoire for the first rehearsal. In this case, we did not have a shared common repertoire, and I did not even know who would show up. Considering all the unknown elements, here is one instance where I leaned on my skills and training to be a top down leader. I curated a repertoire that specifically featured music of the cross from many centuries and styles. The service began with “Kyrie eleison” from the *Messe Solennelle* (1900) by French composer Louis Vierne (1870-1937). We sang “O Vos Omnes,” a Latin motet from the Spanish Renaissance composer Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548-1611), immediately following a scripture. “Trisagion” (2011), a traditional Orthodox prayer with a musical setting by Fernando Ortega (b. 1957) in a contemporary Christian style, functioned as a refrain during the reciting of this ancient litany. “Pietà” (2015), by Joseph Martin (b.1959), followed the sermon and reflected how Christ’s mother may have felt as she witnessed her son’s birth, growth, and death. The service ended with a setting of the words of twelfth-century theologian, Peter Abelard, “Solus ad victimam” (1973), set to music by twentieth-century English composer Kenneth Leighton (1929-1988). At the end of the first rehearsal, I provided participants a compact disc with the repertoire. This CD was to aid learning since we were only having a few rehearsals. One participant told us her two-year-old daughter began asking for this CD every day. Her daughter asked for “the flute one” (“Pietà”)

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64 Email from Female, aged 29.
because she liked the way it sounded. This person, who is not musically trained, was thrilled her
daughter was able to hear this music of the Christian faith from such a young age. The titles of
these pieces listed in a worship bulletin may seem to reflect an ancient and distant faith because
they carried titles in Latin or Greek. However, most of the pieces were sung in English, and a
majority reflected a more current styles of music. These choral selections, while unknown to the
choristers before rehearsals began, became significant because of the meaning of the words
amplified in a variety of different musical settings.

The historical depth of the words in combination with mostly recent musical settings
offered a musical diet for the Good Friday liturgy that resonated deeply with the singers who
were being shaped into a new community. This expression of spirituality is seeking out a practice
based on what seems to be comfortable for those in the community. Could it be that the ancient
words of our Christian ancestors could appeal to the emerging adults as a kind of choral “comfort
food?” The titles of the pieces draw upon ancient prayers and scripture, but the musical settings
of the texts reflect newer expressions of Christian faith. I believe the very name of the
community, “Schola Cantorum,” reflects this idea of a new expression of Christian faith which is
connected to history.

**Finding A Name and Identity**

As I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, choosing a name is an important task in
the beginning of any group. Naming a performing ensemble can be an even more daunting task.
In my experience at Davidson UMC, ensemble names usually designate the ages of the
participants. For instance, the Middle School Choir is for students in sixth-eighth grades. I admit
my own bias against names like “Rainbow Ringers” because, once given, ensemble names are
fixed, and they are hard to change. In the case of Schola Cantorum, the initial rehearsals were only to be a “test case.” This was to be an ad hoc ensemble that met for a short time. When it came time to list a name in the bulletin, the name “Schola Cantorum” was listed as a place holder. I was surprised when the group seized on this identity, and they organically shortened it to “Schola” in conversations.

“Schola Cantorum” means “school of singing.” This term has roots in fifth century Rome. The job of a Schola Cantorum did not originally include singing anthems. Rather, a Schola Cantorum was created to sing the liturgical movements of the mass. In some current day church music ministries, the term Schola Cantorum can convey a scholarly auditioned ensemble from ancient Gregorian chant to the most modern music from the classical genre, conveying a selectivity that the newly formed ensemble did not intend. The music staff, concerned that the name of this new ensemble would convey the message that only the most capable of singers were welcome, discussed the possibility of changing the name at the rehearsal following the first Good Friday service. In what I now recognize to be a reflection of shared leadership, the group determined we were indeed learning to sing as the name implied. However, the community seemed to coalesce around the idea they were learning to sing in a different way. Though the group valued leading worship, they resisted the idea of fulfilling the role of the usual Sunday morning worship choir. This community of service and song was already sensing a movement towards their own identity as a different type of musical experience that was passionate about how their faith could engage those outside the church. To use a more colloquial expression, Schola Cantorum was determining its own “groove.”

I use the term “groove” not in a 1960’s sense of approval. Rather, I speak of “groove” in a musical sense. Daniel Levitin talks about the idea of “groove” as “the quality that moves the song forward, the musical equivalent of a book that you can’t put down. When a song has a good groove, it invites us into a sonic world that we don’t want to leave.”66 The groove of Schola made it difficult for the community to cease rehearsing. After our first Good Friday service, Schola Cantorum clamored to know, “What’s next?” We went on a short hiatus for the summer, and we started in earnest again in September of that year. In that first rehearsal of the fall, the leaders of group wanted to be more proactive in the development of the philosophy and spirit of our ensemble. During a break in singing, Schola split into different groups led by peers. Each leader asked their group to share what singing in a choral ensemble meant to them. In addition, each group shared social or spiritual issues of significance to them. The topics arising from these discussions included advocacy for LGBTQ+ people and for mental health issues, as well as developing their faith.

One small group contained three female schoolteachers who were theologically and politically disparate. When one of these young women shared her fear of school shootings, the other two agreed quickly. The group discussion yielded a shared passion for common sense approaches to gun control. Those who had been youth choir members at Davidson UMC recalled singing a piece dealing with senseless violence in our world. “Prayer of the Children” (1994) was written by Kurt Bestor (b. 1958) during the Yugoslavian wars of the late twentieth century.67 The participants of Schola asked to if we could sing this piece again. It seemed the lyrics—“Angry guns preach a gospel full of hate”—resonated differently with these emerging adults now that

66 Levitin, This is Your Brain on Music, 170.
they were older. Those who requested the piece had matured in life, and their time in the classroom had sharpened their sense of the tragedy of gun violence. Not only were these women different, but so was American society. There have been more school shootings in the first eighteen years of the twenty-first century than all the twentieth century.68 “Prayer of the Children” had become more real to them because they either had their own children or taught children. The wonderful tension and release of the chords and the nuanced use of dynamics were more than musical techniques; they enhanced the text providing a musical analogue to deeply held feelings. The text and the music engaged their cerebellum at a deeper holistic level as Daniel Levitin’s research indicated.

The next week, some of the community heard a segment on Public Radio International. “The World” featured data journalist, Sophie Chou. The segment involved an update from an earlier interview with Chou and her data sonification on mass shootings.69 Data sonification is a process which turns data into sound, and Chou had translated mass shootings during 2017 into a single note. The volume of the note indicated how many people were killed. A louder note meant more people perished. The quick repetitive nature of Chou’s sonification puts the phenomenon of mass shootings in America into perspective.70 The sonification only included shootings in America from 2017 though it has been updated to reflect the years of 2013-2018.

The interview included an updated composition that incorporated data sonification. Composer Joshua Clausen (b.1981) learned of Chou’s project and composed a piece entitled “Requiem” (2018) in which a choir sang the words of the Latin Requiem mass, “Eternal Rest, grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.” After that segment aired, three participants of Schola contacted me to see if we could try to perform this piece. One person even had the idea of performing it alongside the previously discussed “Prayer of the Children.” Unfortunately, the piece is scored for many more voices than Schola currently can provide, but the composer has given us permission to re-voice the piece for a smaller ensemble.71

Conclusion

What we learned in selecting a name for our emerging adult community of service and song is that Schola participants were not just interested in selecting a name. They were determining who they were as an ecclesial community, and it was important for them to claim their own fellowship by organically naming themselves. Returning to the metaphor of “groove,” Schola was determining what was important to them beyond the music.72 Schola Cantorum had the blueprint of printed music and most participants understood that church choirs sing only in the sanctuary on Sunday mornings. However, unlike most church choral groups, they were not content with singing for like-minded people on Sunday mornings. Schola was articulating their own vision and manner of being a church community not just by singing in corporate worship at Davidson UMC on Good Friday. The emerging adults were trying to become a worshipping

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71 See email from the composer in Appendix B.
72 Levitin, This is Your Brain on Music, 171.
ensemble that wanted to leave the walls of the church and engage the community in issues they felt the community cared about. Schola was creating an identity focused on:

- exploring the nexus of faith and social issues
- helping each other navigate the social complexities of their life stage
- allowing music to spark conversations of God’s involvement in their lives
- engaging with each other through table fellowship following rehearsals.
CHAPTER FOUR
WHERE WOULD JESUS BE? STORIES OF SHARING FAITH

After the young adults of Schola determined their name, they were beginning to form a community of faith and struggle that Letty Russell discusses. In this chapter, I will outline how, through group discussions, retreats, and community worship, the Schola community began developing an ecclesiology which they determined should focus on justice. God’s justice, Russell reminds us, is not what is discussed in Western movies from the last century. Rather, justice is “a relational concept that describes the way we relate to God and one another.”73 Without recognizing this concept, the community of Schola became focused on the concept of justice as they moved outside the church walls.

Schola Cantorum led worship for the first time in March 2018. In July 2018, our church experienced a transition in leadership as our third senior pastor in as many years began his ministry. This new senior pastor challenged the staff to increase our efforts outside the church walls, and it seemed that Schola was, among all our music ministry ensembles, the group which was best suited to achieve this goal. Participants of Schola resonated with the challenge, and our group scheduled a Sunday evening prayer service at a local beer bottle shop.74

Bringing the Insiders Outside

A biblical precedent exists for the community leaving the established religious home to participate in ministry. The Gospel of Mark tells of a synagogue leader named Jairus whose

daughter needed healing. Scripture says the man sought Jesus after he disembarked a boat with a throng of people around him. While Jairus may have organized a prayer meeting for his daughter inside the synagogue, he availed himself of all opportunities to find healing for his daughter. Jesus went to the location of Jairus’ daughter to provide comfort and healing.

In addition to this Gospel account, we find a mandate in the Old Testament to leave our comfortable locations to witness God’s handiwork. At the beginning of Jeremiah 18, God tells Jeremiah he must go out to the potter’s house to see the reworking and redemption of the spoiled vessel. Just like Jeremiah, we must search for creation and creators outside our walls. Jeremiah meets the potter not in the temple but in the house where the potter is throwing the clay. The potter’s house was probably dirty, dusty, and smelly. Yet, it is in the potter’s house where God tells Jeremiah that he will hear God’s words. It is in the potter’s house where the potter reveals the unusable nature of the clay to Jeremiah. Many music programs lodged in churches expect broken people to stumble in through the doorways of our churches. Our efforts to develop new relationships and seek new members are limited to announcements in a worship bulletin. And for those of us who are steeped in the life of the church, we like this because it allows us to continue making art in our usual style without the disruption of new creations. Our relational sense of justice is stunted because we are only around people like us. Just as Jeremiah and Jairus needed to go out into the world to find God, Schola Cantorum needed to go outside the church to look for healing, redemption, and justice.

75 Mark 5:2-43.
Are We Ready to Go?

In the first few months of his tenure, our new senior pastor encouraged the staff to work together through a book entitled, *Get Their Name.* In our ministry areas and our full staff meetings, we read this short book, and I found excellent points for us to model as Schola prepared to venture outside the church walls. The authors implore the reader to reach out to the unchurched. However, readers are first encouraged to become comfortable with sharing their faith story inside the church before moving outside the walls. Since many of them did not regularly attend Sunday morning worship anywhere, many in Schola were open to the idea of leaving the church, but they were not as eager to share their faith publicly, either among their peers or in front of strangers at a bottle shop. We had to practice sharing our faith with each other first.

In order to prepare Schola to share their faith outside the walls, our rehearsals became less like a traditional choir rehearsal and more like a Sunday school class or youth fellowship meeting. We divided into smaller groups to allow opportunities for more reserved individuals to feel as if it was a safe space to share. We wrestled with simple questions first: “Why do you come here?” and “What does it mean to sing about God?” After a few cycles of these questions, we moved to more detailed questions such as, “Who or what do you wish the church prayed for?” It was in this cycle of discussion, previously mentioned in Chapter Two, when the issues of mental health, gun violence, and LGBTQ+ acceptance were raised. The final discussion time concluded with the group composing prayers in the form of a litany.

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A Blueprint for Worship

One of the participants of Schola initiated contact with a local bottle shop because it seemed to be an intimate and unexpected setting for worship. For the evening prayer service at Crafty Beer Guys, I selected an order of service with a framework which would allow us to express the group’s passions. To recall a term used in Chapter Two, Schola was establishing its own groove. *Holden Evening Prayer* (1986) was written by Marty Haugen (b.1950) as he was in residence at Holden Village, a Lutheran retreat center in Washington state. The order of service in *Holden Evening Prayer* provides historical texts from established evening prayer services such as the ancient *Phos hilaron* (service of light), Psalm 141, and the “Magnificat.” These older texts of the liturgy are set to music in a quasi-folk style, and for this service, we were accompanied by a friend’s bluegrass-style band (guitar, double bass, mandolin, and violin) while I assisted with keyboard. For this service, we elected to substitute the “Magnificat” written by Marty Haugen with “Canticle of the Turning” (1990) by Rory Cooney (b.1952). Cooney’s musical setting of the Canticle of Mary is based on an Irish folk song, “Star of the County Down,” and I felt our instrumentation of guitar, fiddle/mandolin, and double bass was compatible not only with the tune, but also with the location of the prayer service that evening. One participant even learned to play the penny whistle just for this piece. The text of this piece emphasizes the social justice themes found in the biblical *Magnificat*, and we talked in rehearsals about how Mary was really the first to announce the countercultural message of Jesus:

My heart shall sing of the day you bring,
let the fires of your justice burn,
wipe away all tears for the dawn draws near
and the world is about to turn.79

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We had no idea at the time how important this piece would become for the community of Schola Cantorum, the future participants of Schola, and the congregation of Davidson. Chapter Five will explore this topic further.

Crafty Beer Guys is in a small craftsman-style home from the 1920s. The front door of this establishment opens on to Main Street in what looks like any old mill town in North Carolina. Main Street is also a state highway and functions as a relief route when the neighboring interstate highway is congested. As a result, the road experiences a high volume of traffic. Our service was held outside in the front yard under blue bistro lights on a cool October evening.

I spoke only at the beginning of the service to invite people to join us. After my short introduction, Schola participants led the service. We had not only rehearsed the music, but we also had rehearsed how to engage the strangers in our midst. Before the service, the Schola community greeted patrons and handed out congregational booklets to any patrons who wanted to participate. Schola decided among themselves who would lead liturgy and sing cantor parts. The instrumental musicians, who were all over the age of forty and who had decades of worship leadership experience only accompanied the service.

**Prayers of the People**

A clergy colleague who serves in a setting outside the local parish attended this service. His daughter is part of Schola, and he wanted to let me know of his experience in the service as an older white male clergy with over twenty-five years of pastoral leadership. As he waited in line for a beverage, he began conversing with the patron in front of him. She was not associated with Davidson UMC but had happened to come that evening for drinks. As the service began,
she told my colleague that she had quit going to church because it did not resonate with her life. Her child had struggled with mental illness, and her church had not supported her or her child.

As they came out to join the service, the ensemble was leading the prayers of the people. For the prayers, we used the *Trisagion* setting by Fernando Ortega as the refrain: “Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, Have mercy on us.” The first petition in our sequence was, “For all those who struggle with mental illness, and for their families who struggle to support them.” My clergy colleague said the same woman who had just dropped by for the night turned around with tears in her eyes, and said, “I want to go to a church that prays like this.” The Schola community was offering to this woman an acknowledgment that God did inhabit a world outside the church. By acknowledging her life challenges, Schola was inviting this woman to come from the margins and into the center of ecclesial life. Letty Russell would remind us the church is not the arbiter of salvation, only Christ is. Therefore, this bottle shop was a place of healing and redemption because the community of Schola was a sign of Christ’s salvific work and not a sign of the church.

In offering these self-directed prayers, Schola followed the advice I learned from Rev. Dr. Mark Stamm. Stamm encourages planners of worship to ask the following open-ended question, “Why don’t we pray for…?” He writes that asking a question like this works “at the intersection of liturgy and mission, with liturgical work overflowing into mission.”

Following the service, some of those in attendance spontaneously shouted out hymn requests. With only small stand lights and the blue overhead lights, the gathered assembly sang pieces that were

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80 For more on this composition, see Chapter Two.
81 Male, aged 54 in a conversation October 2018.
82 Russell, *Church in the Round*, 120.
83 Mark Stamm, *Devoting Ourselves to the Prayers: A Baptismal Theology for the Church’s Intercessory Work* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2014), 144.
meaningful to all in attendance. All my careful planning had not anticipated this, and we did not have any word sheets with these songs. To be sure, we stumbled through some of the words, but the desire to sing them arose organically and the singing was heartfelt.

**Disorientation**

Even as I began to publicize the event, I noticed a theme of disorientation. Long-time church members and even staff members made comments that ranged from philosophical, “Why do you have to do it outside?” to logistical, “That place is too small.” Some families of our emerging adults were troubled as well. One mother, who is very involved in church life as a Chancel Choir member, lector, and missions volunteer surprised me with her unease about doing a service outside on Main Street in Huntersville. She changed her mind once she arrived at the bottle shop, “I love my choir processionals, hymns, and organ, but I realized this afternoon that if Jesus were here today, he would be at Crafty Beer Guys meeting strangers.”"84 Without knowing it, this woman was echoing the words of Russell who maintains the whole world is “a place of salvation because Christ promises to be present there.”85 To her credit, this mother not only changed her view of what church could be, she and her husband decided to pay for the beer for anybody who wanted it that night. Her response to a new understanding of ecclesiology was one of generosity.

I do not wish to make light of how others experienced a sense of disorientation. I, myself, experienced a type of worship lab evening. I confess that, while I have been leading worship for a quarter of a century, I have taken many things for granted in leading worship indoors. During

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84 Female, age 57 in a conversation with the author at Crafty Beer Guys, October 2018.
the service, the traffic roared by and tractor-trailer exhaust filled the air. Lighting was less than optimal for me, and the wind seemed as if it wanted me to fail by blowing my music off the stand continuously. Some patrons of the bottle shop did not want to participate in our service, and they talked loudly on the periphery. I longed for a steady source of light, comfortable temperature, and the compliance of trained congregation members. I was deeply troubled immediately following the service. I felt it had been a colossal failure, but, as I began to hear feedback from patrons and even the workers, it was evident I was focused on the wrong things. Clearly, God was at work that night in others, and I was embarrassed not to see it.

I believe that our group began to experience a rite of passage from their previous experience of church to a new vision of what church could be. A rite of passage usually involves disorientation and discomfort which aligns with Victor Turner’s work on liminality. Turner’s work drew on the concept of liminality originally described by Arnold Van Gennep in 1909.\(^{86}\) Van Gennep, and later Turner, described rites of passage as a three-step process: separation, liminality, and a returning assimilation. Liminality is the space between where one no longer identifies with the old ways and does not yet identify with the new manner. Turner writes, “Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.”\(^ {87}\) The work of Schola created a separation as the participants experienced, for the first time, the worship of God outside the bounds of a church sanctuary. Schola and I were in the liminality put forth by Turner and LaShure. We were “in the cracks” of identity. Turner maintains this liminality offers a sense “of


lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship." In these liminal moments like we experienced at Crafty Beer Guys, a sense of *communitas* arises. The lines between sacred and secular dissolved in this holy time. Many Christians are accustomed to experiencing holy moments in a room reserved for such things: a powerful sermon, a moving choir anthem, or people weeping at the altar. Schola was able to witness similar experiences in a place not usually reserved for holy ritual. This new experience of sacred in the seemingly secular seems to align with Turner’s assertion that “Communitas breaks in through the interstices of structure….It is almost everywhere held to be sacred or ‘holy,’ possibly because it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency.” That October evening, Schola experienced a separation and a period of liminality began. We would live in this liminality for some time, and our return to assimilation would come later. I will discuss this further in Chapter Five.

Schola Cantorum had begun to move from being an insular affinity group inside the church towards being a community which shares the love of Christ in the broader community. By leaving the walls of the church to meet people like the woman who felt the church had nothing to offer her anymore, Schola experienced what it was like to share their faith and dream of justice with others. The new experience of sharing faith outside the walls of the church had turned Schola into what Pope Francis calls an evangelizing community.

An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (1 John 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast. Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own

89 Turner chooses “communitas” over “community” to define a modality of social relationship rather than an area of common living in Turner, “Liminality and Communitas,” 76.
90 See Appendix A, Figures 1-5.
experience of the power of the Father’s infinite mercy.92

Following the service, the manager of Crafty Beer Guys appeared at my side to finish our transactions, and she said, “We’ve had a startup church meeting here on Sunday mornings for a couple of years. That group just quit meeting, and we would love for you to come back. People here tonight were really into it.”93 As the smell of beer, cigarettes, and diesel exhaust permeated the air, I remembered Pope Francis’ words that in order to be successful shepherds, we have to “smell like the sheep.”94 Schola may have experienced a first success in sharing their faith outside the walls, but I realized we need to be in the midst of the sheep in order to achieve transformation.

**Affirmation from Outside the Walls**

The Western North Carolina Conference is blessed to have a strong United Methodist Foundation to support the ministries of local churches. One such program our United Methodist Foundation manages is the Reynolds Ministries Fund.95 This fund provides annual grants for ministries that have a simple goal of making disciples of Jesus Christ. Schola applied for a grant from the Reynolds Ministries because the ministry began after the normal cycle of budgeting in our church occurred. Schola was able to utilize the durable assets from Davidson UMC (music, folders, and rehearsal space) as well as administrative resources (email lists, postage, and copiers). However, our need for compensation for guest musicians, secure off-campus retreats,

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93 Female manager of Crafty Beer guys, age unknown.
94 “Evangelizers thus take on the “smell of the sheep” and the sheep are willing to hear their voice. An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be.” *The Joy of the Gospel*, No. 24.
and pay rental space fees would have to be funded through other means. I knew from past proposals that receiving a grant would not be guaranteed simply because emerging adults were involved. The requirements for a grant are considerable. I had to submit a budget, my supervisor had to assert my application was valid, and I had to agree to submit an accounting of our expenditures if we received a grant. The fund requires each ministry to meet the following criteria:

- Proclaim the gospel, seek and welcome and gather persons into the community of the Body of Christ;
- Lead persons to commit their lives to God through baptism and profession of faith in Jesus Christ;
- Nurture persons in Christian living through worship, the sacraments, spiritual disciplines, Christian Education/study and other means of grace;
- Send persons into the world to live lovingly and justly as servants of Christ by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, caring for the stranger, freeing the oppressed, and working to develop social structures that are consistent with the gospel.96

Schola was fortunate to receive a grant for the year 2018, and even though the fund tends to favor proposals from new ministries, Schola was awarded another grant in 2019. These funds provided the resources to take chances for the ministry of Schola Cantorum by allowing us to rent spaces, buy print and social media advertisements, purchase hand warmers and hot

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chocolate mix for our December Hope and Healing service to be held outdoors, and subsidize the winter retreat for Schola held at YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly in Black Mountain, NC.

**On the Road**

Schola participants had already experienced Good Friday worship and a worship service outside the church. The group had also experienced short rehearsals with devotionals and discussions. I remembered how, in the past, youth choirs had grown a sense of community after experiencing a weekend retreat, and I was hopeful a retreat would help Schola further develop their sense of community. We planned a retreat for the end of January 2019. The location for our retreat was in the Blue Ridge mountains about twenty minutes east of Asheville, NC, and it is only two hours from Davidson. The relatively close location was chosen to allow for the possibility of most people to participate. Our musician friends who accompanied us at Crafty Beer Guys came up from Atlanta along with my close friend from college who lives in Asheville.

Dr. Willis D. Weatherford Sr. founded Blue Ridge Assembly in 1906 to challenge the minds of college students. According to the retreat center website, Weatherford “saw the need to engage young people with important issues, to provide direction and leadership skills, and to encourage authentic spirituality.”

97 It seems only fitting then, that the emerging adults of Schola Cantorum would experience their first retreat in this place founded for people like them over one hundred years ago.

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97 “History: The Eureka Story,” [https://blueridgeassembly.org/about/history](https://blueridgeassembly.org/about/history) (accessed February 1, 2020).
In this retreat setting, we sat together at table fellowship, sang together in rehearsal, and talked together about what it means to be in community. 98 Retreats provide time for more in-depth discussions. In rehearsals back in Davidson, our efforts in discussion only lasted for five minutes. Two hours away, in a secluded spot, our discussions were more robust, and participants found they were able to be more vulnerable.

Before the retreat started, leaders placed seven sheets of newsprint around our rehearsal room. Each paper had a prompt written, and we allowed time for people at the beginning of our first rehearsal to walk around and write their answers. The prompts ranged from very easy questions (“One thing you should know about me”) to more thoughtful questions (“Why does the church exist?”). Nobody needed to sign their responses. 99 Our rehearsal breaks were spent in fellowship discussing these topics, and the very first discussion surprised me.

“One thing you should know about me” seemed to be a non-threatening question. I intended the answers to function as conversation starters. Most responses were typical icebreaker answers (e.g., “I have two Siamese cats”), but one answer was written in the center of the paper just below the question. 100 “I am an atheist” stood out not only for the placement on the page, but also for its raw honesty. As we reviewed the answers at the first break, I did not want to reveal the identity of the person who answered. However, the young man self-identified. 101 He had grown up in the youth choirs at Davidson, and he was a student at a college two hours from home. He told us that being in a musical community helped him feel a part of something bigger.

98 See Appendix C, Figure 7, for a short video.
100 See Appendix C, Figure 8.
101 Male, age 19.
This young man was describing something William McNeill described as “boundary loss.” When we join in group activities, our cooperation builds a foundation. Stephen Mithen writes, “Music-making is a cheap and easy form of interaction that can demonstrate a willingness to cooperate and hence may promote future cooperation when there are substantial gains to be made.” This young man impressed me with his vulnerability and conviction, and his story with us continued to develop.

The prompt I was most eager to discuss was “Why does the church exist?” The more compelling answers were:

- so people with similar beliefs can come together to experience and worship God;
- a way for God’s love to interact with the world;
- a place for all to be welcome (or at least it should be) and experience grace and love;
- a place to meet people where they are and can feel supported.

During the discussion of this question, our older guest musicians began to engage with our emerging adults. All four of these musicians were male and over the age of forty. One is of Hispanic descent and the other three are Caucasian and raised in the American South. Three of these men from Atlanta perform regularly in Atlanta mega-churches. One musician stated he was on the board at his Baptist church, and he explained his church was trying to draw in young people like those gathered that weekend. He asked the group what the most important thing was to bring younger adults into the life of the church. This query opened a line of discussion that did

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104 See Appendix D, Figure 15.
not include anything about the style of music offered, coffee bars, or programs. The consensus of our group was that they wanted authenticity from church members and a passion for welcoming all.

Our retreat culminated in singing for two worship services at Biltmore United Methodist Church in Asheville. It is important to note that our time at Biltmore UMC was only a few weeks before the scheduled General Conference on matters of human sexuality. Biltmore UMC resides in an artistic city of North Carolina known for more progressive views. Once again, we sang Rory Cooney’s “Canticle of the Turning.” A new choral piece by Mark A. Miller called “Child of God” became a very powerful moment in both the contemporary and traditional services at Biltmore. “Child of God” (2014) is a powerful anthem that is encouraging to those who feel left out of the church. Schola continued to establish its own groove by singing this piece in their own way. Even though the piece is scored for piano only, we included our guest instrumentalists (guitar, mandolin, double bass, and cajon). We used a solo voice to introduce the tune to the congregations. The young man who said he was an atheist offered to sing these words, “No matter what people say, / say or think about me, / I am a child of God.”105 For many of us in the group, this moment was very powerful. A young man who had spent the weekend with us and shared his struggles of faith was volunteering to be the first in that service to declare “I am a child of God.” I am not able to say what was happening in that man’s heart, but I do know it was a transforming experience for quite a few people in the Schola community and for people in the congregation who did not even know him or his struggles. When the time came for the congregation to join, they did so with heart, and for a moment, we were in the presence of our Maker. John Bell speaks to the particularity of singing in worship: “The chances are that never

again will every one of these people be in exactly the same place singing these particular hymns and songs.”

Here among strangers and friends, the Schola community experienced worship as it would never be again. Many people from Biltmore UMC commented how Schola blessed their worship service. However, I believe Schola received a blessing from being in community with worshipers in an unfamiliar church sharing a common faith.

**Schola Reacts to Denominational Turmoil**

Only a few weeks after our retreat, the United Methodist Church was in the news for the General Conference called to settle disputes over human sexuality. Davidson UMC, like many other local churches, decided to have a special information meeting to allow the congregation to process the news. In planning the meeting, the clergy decided it would be important for us to not simply share information. We needed to worship. Schola learned of this event and asked if their group could come and sing.

This event was held on a weekday evening. Local Schola participants came following work, but the young man who said he was an atheist found a way home from his college two hours away. He wanted to be there, and he asked if we could sing “Child of God.” I honored his request, and those gathered did participate. We introduced the song in the same way we had at Biltmore UMC, and once again, this young man volunteered to introduce the tune to the gathered assembly. What was occurring in that sanctuary was Schola returning from its ventures outside the church walls. The group had learned to share their faith with each other and with strangers. On that evening, they were returning home, changed by their experiences together out in the world. By singing together, Schola participants learned how to lose their boundaries and to foster

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cooperation. When they returned to sing for the assembly at Davidson, they wanted to model what they had experienced.

I am not suggesting the participants of Schola were of one mind about human sexuality. However, even though most were in favor of full inclusion for LGBTQ+ persons, one conservative participant supported the group by coming out even though she knew she was in the minority. She supported the shared goals of the group and its sense of community more than an agenda. Most importantly, the Schola participants wanted to show members of Davidson UMC that they were not going anywhere even if they disagreed with the outcome of the General Conference.

Conclusion

After their first leadership experience on Good Friday, Schola took their first steps towards leaving what Letty Russell calls the comfortable place at the center. They left the center and headed to the margins where they learned to share their own faith and value others’ experiences of faith. Then they returned to the center where they shared their new vision of ecclesiology. Schola was able to:

- engage a community that was not expecting a night of worship at a bottle shop;
- learn about each other’s faith experiences on retreat;
- develop a relationship with another UMC congregation in a different location;
- return to Davidson with a new appreciation of their own faith as well as that of others.
CHAPTER FIVE
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Up to this point, this thesis has traced the development of Schola from its inception, finding a name, and determining its purpose. The participants defined a desire to be a community of faith and service. In the process of creating Schola, I learned about my own biases and predilection to function in an old paradigm of top-down leadership. The development of Schola Cantorum was a challenge for me as a classically trained musician. In the musical world, sometimes results can be valued more than the process. Musicians search for the most perfect performance to offer. We can also often be hyper-critical of colleagues rather than supportive of those who also work in our craft. At the outset of this endeavor, I thought Schola would be singing only the most challenging choral music in the most artistic venues. Throughout this journey of developing Schola, I had to reorient my musical habits to function as a leader and lean into my pastoral identity as a facilitator. Whether it was diesel exhaust and wind at an outdoor service or the challenge of having members commit to singing a service, I struggled to reconcile my expectations, conditioned through years of musical assumptions, with the possibilities for something different. The fruit of Schola’s efforts was so much sweeter, though, when we viewed success through a different lens. Finding an identity and community through singing was what we achieved. I believe this reorientation helped our participants to find a spiritual identity. I believe the work of Schola demonstrated what Don and Emily Saliers wrote: “Perhaps singing is humankind’s most vital and most widely shared spiritual act because it awakens in us a shared solidarity and a resonance with the transcendent.”107 The Saliers remind us that, as our self-

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described atheist said, music can transcend doctrinal distinctions to help create a community. In
the work of Schola, both faithful and faith seekers engaged strangers in our community by
showing hospitality. Turning again to Russell, the Schola participants were engaging in *koinonia*.
Russell tells us that Christian community is set apart by the very nature of having the presence of
Christ at its center. If Christ has not been placed at the center, then the community “will not have
a great deal of generosity and compassion to share with others.” ¹⁰⁸

As we created this ecclesial community focused on singing and social justice, I realized
that the emerging adults were experiencing a shift in their own expectations. Schola participants
experienced a rite of passage from their preconceived notions of what a choir could be to a
community of faith that sings together. Their liminal time together allowed them to value sharing
faith together with Christ at the center. This sharing was both in spoken word and in song as well
as in rehearsal times and in the community.

The third and final step of a rite of passage is re-assimilation into an identified
community. ¹⁰⁹ The work of Schola began in a familiar context: Good Friday worship. Their rite
of passage began in the front yard of Crafty Beer Guys as we experienced a sense of
disorientation and vulnerability. While it is difficult to delineate the edges and depth of liminality
for each participant of a group, I believe Schola’s communal liminal experience lasted over the
course of a year. Our time at Crafty Beer Guys, singing in retreat together, and returning to sing
in response to General Conference were all experiences in liminality. Schola participants still
needed to experience re-assimilation.

¹⁰⁸ Letty Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky:
Though the work of Schola remains open-ended, I set a capstone experience for participants in this initial expression of a community of service and song. A generous donor gave money to provide scholarships of $1,000 for each person of Schola that wanted to join our Chancel Choir pilgrimage to Scandinavia. On this pilgrimage, we would see what the re-assimilation would look like as eleven emerging adults joined older adults on a two-week singing experience of Denmark and Sweden.

The youth choir of Davidson UMC was fortunate to travel to Denmark and Sweden in 2012. In 2016, Danish Methodists from the town of Strandby visited Davidson. Because of this previous relationship, our Chancel Choir was invited to visit in June 2019 and continue our connection with the Danish Methodist Church. During our time in Strandby, the participants of Schola and the entire ensemble would be experiencing a shift in expectations.

Strandby is a small fishing village near the juncture of the North and Baltic Seas. There is one hotel and three restaurants in the village, but this small village contains the largest Methodist church in Denmark. The large size of our group meant that we would have to stay in members’ homes. Many of our older and emerging adults were very anxious about this fact. However, their expectations were soon changed as they received the warmth of Christian hospitality from our Danish friends. I believe the words of one of our emerging adults, Elizabeth, can give us a perspective of a Schola participant:

To start, our host families all went above and beyond to make us comfortable. Despite a delayed, late arrival, every family greeted us on our first night with tea and coffee, homemade cakes and crackers, and other accoutrements. After a long day on the road, we were all re-energized by this first evening with our families. It was the true embodiment of hygge\textsuperscript{10} as we began building connections in the midsummer twilight over steaming hot mugs inside cozy Scandinavian interiors.

\textsuperscript{10} Hygge: a quality of coziness and comfortable conviviality that engenders a feeling of contentment or well-being (regarded as a defining characteristic of Danish culture).
Great food was a consistent theme throughout our time in Strandby. The chatter on the bus our first morning consisted of all the wonderful things we had enjoyed for breakfast: Swedish waffles, homemade jams, smoked salmon and boiled eggs on toast, the creamiest butters we had ever eaten—the list went on and on. Our wonderful breakfasts were later surpassed by a seafood cookout at the church featuring dozens of Norwegian salmon filets and hundreds of tiny “lobsters,” which, upon inspection seem to be more similar to crawdads than lobsters, caught right off the Strandby coast, accompanied by a plethora of fresh salads made by the host families with ingredients straight from the back garden.111

Our time in Strandby would be marked with wonderful hospitality and pleasant surprises. We knew we would be singing for Sunday morning worship in Strandby, but we were excited to learn we would be participating in the midsummer celebration. The tradition at midsummer in Denmark is to light bonfires (and includes a representation of a witch!), sing songs, and have a short reflection.112 In the small village of Strandby, there were three simultaneous events of this nature occurring. Bonfires would be lit all along the oceanfront. The choir of Davidson UMC was to be the entertainment for one of these events that evening. As the designated speaker, I could not get definitive information about what I should say, how long I should speak, or even how many pieces we were to sing. The host, Rev. Mark Lewis, tried to calm my nerves as we walked to the event by assuring me there was no set expectation. Elizabeth writes further about what happened there in the field from her perspective:

But what happened in the field that night was more than a bonfire and music. It was a display of welcoming and community on a level I never fathomed existed. As my roommate and I left the house to head towards the field, we were first surprised by the number of people we saw walking in the same direction as us. What, two hours earlier, had been a quiet town with barely a soul visible seemed reinvigorated with life as households began their short pilgrimage to the festival field armed with blankets, picnic baskets, and thermoses all in tow. There was an excited energy up on the ridge

overlooking the field as friends and family greeted each other and the children eagerly eyed the small fires being prepped for cooking bread and pancakes.\footnote{“Sankt Hans Aften in Denmark,” n.p.} Our choir sang a few pieces, and I attempted to offer a few words comparing the warmth of the bonfire to the warmth of the Christian hospitality of these townspeople. We feebly attempted to sing Danish folk songs along with these strangers, and pancakes with jam were served. The next morning, we left our hosts in Strandby and departed via ferry to Sweden. In a final word from Elizabeth, she wrote:

As the pastor of the Strandby church worded it the next morning, our group brought out the best in his group. I think they also brought out the best in us. In just three days there were bonds forged and memories created that will last a lifetime. I saw a few tearful eyes the next morning as our bus drove away past a line of hosts sending us on our way.\footnote{“Sankt Hans Aften in Denmark,” n.p.}

I believe it is helpful to read Elizabeth’s perspective because she was one of the “de-churched” that joined Schola in the beginning. She came to the group saying she never wanted to be a part of the church. By Christmas Eve of first year of Schola, she was singing with the choir and receiving Communion. The following summer, she was on a pilgrimage with a church choir and making new friends. Her expectations about being in a church community of singing had been changed. In America, our Davidson people were used to being in the center and traveling out to the margins. In Strandby, we were on what Russell would say was the margin. Our Danish friends traveled from their center to show hospitality, and Davidson people experienced anew what it was like to be brought into the center.
How This Experience Can Inspire the Local Church

The work of Schola encourages leaders in the church to ask a different question regarding emerging adults’ engagement in the life of the church. Too often, church leaders try to appeal to emerging adults by proposing ideas for the emerging adults. Instead, the experiences with Schola should exhort leaders to ask what we can do with emerging adults. In starting Schola, I initiated the experience by asking the former question, what could we do for these adults. Indeed, I do believe asking this question was valid. However, my work with emerging adults leads me to believe engaging in work with them will ultimately help re-assimilate these children of God in the church.

Unlike our previous tour of mostly teenagers, this pilgrimage to Scandinavia included members aged in their late teens to those in their mid-seventies. I knew from my academic research that for the church choir of the future, we would need to break the stratification found so often in churches. This choir pilgrimage would allow us to have an applied experience of breaking down the walls. We did see glimpses of what the realm of God might look like: a young woman in her twenties chose to sit with a retired gentleman on the bus for the majority of the pilgrimage, older choir members invited some younger ones to have evening meals, and many of the relationships built survive today as I see them interacting on social media.

I believe this pilgrimage reflects what I wish we would have done differently at the very outset of starting our emerging adult choral ensemble. What I believe these emerging adults, and even the older adults, experienced on our pilgrimage to Scandinavia was an enlarged sense of

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116 See Chapter One, specifically the work of Setran and Kiesling.
koinonia. As Wesleyans, we embrace the idea of small group accountability, and the small group of choir members and friends became more of a small group than a choir. The emerging adults of Schola were engaged in unchosen relationships with older adults from Davidson, to be sure. However, the homestay hosts and Danish congregation were also part of our small group experience as the choir was engaging in the communal life of Strandby. In the context of our small group, even the older adults experienced a reorientation from their previous expectations. Our older adults who were not comfortable staying in homes were encouraged by the younger ones to keep an open mind. In the end, the older and younger members of the group were experiencing something together. The participants of Schola were in partnership with the older adults.

Our efforts to build community across the stratification of age, while not perfect, are exactly what Setran and Kiesling encourage church leaders to do. As I wrote in Chapter One, we tend to like the comfort of our affinity group, but we must take the advice of Setran and Kiesling seriously to commit to the hard work by both sides of the generation gaps to achieve real fellowship. If we were starting Schola again, I would work harder at bridging this generational gap. Older adults would be encouraged to not only listen to the faith stories of our emerging adults, but also work intently to share power earlier in the startup process with those in the younger ages. I would spend time with emerging adults encouraging them to listen to the older adults’ guidance, and I would encourage more faithful interactions with both groups. Mentoring and active listening would be at the heart of Schola.

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These ideas of mentoring and active listening should not be foreign for those in church leadership. We already participate in these activities when we are guiding youth groups for teenagers. The work of Schola indicates we should continue mentoring relationships with emerging adults as they navigate their rites of passage into adulthood.

**What Happens When the Younger Adults Are No Longer Young?**

The process of starting an emerging adult community of service and song developed over two years. As I strategized, picked repertoire, and found singing engagements, those on the higher end of the age spectrum (18-35) were getting married, having babies, or moving away for professional opportunities. In the two years of Schola, we have celebrated the birth of four babies. In addition to the changes on the older end of the spectrum, we also welcomed two years of youth choir alumni from Davidson UMC into our midst. These newer participants, I was reminded, had begun to skew the dynamics of our group because they were from Generation Z. According to the Pew Research Center, anyone born after 1997 is part of this new generation.\(^\text{118}\) The distinguishing fact for the Generation Z demographic is that many of them do not remember 9/11 in America or life without a smartphone. I had no idea the generational differences were so stark until I presented some of this paper to our Davidson Wesley College ministry in the fall of 2019. After I finished my presentation, most of the current college students wanted me to know they did not resonate with some of the generational aspects of the Millennials generation. The sentiment in the room was that Millennials are known for whining and complaining. In fact, I learned a new term regarding Millennials. Someone in the room said Millennials were known for...

“slack-tivism.”¹¹⁹ Slack-tivism is a portmanteau combining “slacker” and “activism” used derisively to describe online rants about social justice or meaningless “clicks” or shares on social media. Some news stories lament these activities as having no effect on society, but other news articles say that real societal change can be attributed to “slacktivism.”¹²⁰ The Davidson College student noted her belief that those of Generation Z sought out “real change” and not just retweets and shares on social media. Real change to this group of students was modeled by people like the Swedish climate change activist, Greta Thunberg.

Reflecting on the start of Schola, I wish I had known to anticipate the generational shift from Millennial to Generation Z. I do not feel the work of Schola was in vain because of a missed shift in generational outlooks. Even the Pew Research Center admits we have only begun to understand this new generation, and church leaders will need to be flexible and adaptive in our leadership in ministry to Generation Z members.¹²¹

The Future of Schola

In the previous section, I reflected on how I would have started Schola differently if I had the chance. However, my ongoing work with teenagers helps me prepare for the new imagination of emerging adults. In fact, we have already applied some lessons from Schola to our current teenagers on pilgrimage in the summer of 2019.

On their pilgrimage to Pittsburgh last year, our youth choirs engaged a local Pittsburgh community in music education, feeding ministry, and fellowship. The feeding ministry, housed

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¹¹⁹ Female, Senior, Davidson College.
in a United Methodist Church that was soon to be sold, was an outreach of the local United Methodist cluster of churches. It provided hot lunches to kids five days a week in a Pittsburgh neighborhood where the grocery store, elementary school, and medical facilities had all closed. Marcus and Marissa, directors of the program, welcomed our youth for four days as we taught basic music concepts through handchimes and boomwhackers. At the end of the music time, we assisted in serving lunch. More importantly, our youth engaged with the children and adults there. Over the course of four days, I saw relationships develop and prosper.

To combat the tendency toward demographic stratification, three Schola participants were chaperones on this pilgrimage. All three of these emerging adults had grown up in the youth choir program, and all three have some experience with the work of Schola. In this new context, our emerging adults had become the mentors to those younger students. Two of the emerging adult chaperones had been among the youngest on the Scandinavia pilgrimage only one month before, and now, they were considered among the oldest by members of the youth choir. Through their involvement in Schola, these participants were teaching the younger students how to share their faith story and how to engage strangers through singing. At the end of our time together, Marcus and Marissa asked us to have a sharing time for any family who wanted to attend. We chose to have the sharing time in the former sanctuary to allow for the large number of people. As we waited to begin, one of our Schola chaperones suggested we teach everyone the refrain to Rory Cooney’s “Canticle of the Turning.”

122 Boomwhackers are tuned percussion tubes. Their low cost and ease of use make them useable for all age groups. https://boomwhackers.com/.
The sounds of lunch being prepared spilled into the sanctuary as the fellowship hall was right next door. Suddenly, the words of Cooney’s anthem were not an abstract concept of social justice. We sang,

…the hungry poor shall weep no more  
for the food they can never earn,  
there are tables spread, every mouth be fed,  
for the world is about to turn.123

Everyone in the room was singing joyfully, and I believe it was another time where lines of division were being erased. Following the sharing time, we processed into the fellowship hall for one last meal and pictures. The district superintendent learned of our presence, and she came to visit with us all. As we were getting on the bus, Marissa, one of the new owners of the church building, pulled me aside. “What was the name of that song you sang? It was so meaningful, and it has been in my head since we sang it.”124 Russell would say our choral community of teenagers and emerging adults, in singing this paraphrase of the Magnificat, had participated in the breaking in of God’s kingdom. God’s redeeming work has reestablished community as those who accept God’s invitation. Russell says the invitation to share in this kingdom “reads like the Beatitudes, but it could just as easily read like the Magnificat.”125 Sharing kitchen table fellowship over the course of a week with the children in Pittsburgh had allowed both Davidson people and Pittsburgh people to see “the world is about to turn.”

124 Female, mid-30s.  
125 Russell, 197.
Assimilation

Schola has now existed for over two years, and their identity as a new ensemble has passed away. As Victor Turner writes, a season of liminality is temporary, and the rite of passage for founding participants of Schola is complete. Whereas liminality initially brings about a dissolving of structure, Turner maintains liminal periods are also the beginning of new structures.¹²⁶ For Schola, this structure is becoming a service ensemble that functions not only inside but also outside the walls of the church. As they have returned from choir pilgrimages both domestic and international, the group has become a community that is sensing an identity connected with the ministry of Davidson UMC. Since the Scandinavia and Pittsburgh pilgrimages, Schola has led three community evening prayer services, one of which was in the upstairs of the town coffee shop. More importantly, the group has continued the desire to be a broad-based liturgical group not focused on any one subject of social justice. Participants of Schola articulated early they did not want to be known as the “pro-LGBTQ+” choir. The worship services were modeled after the United Methodist order of evening prayer, and the order is loosely the same for each service.¹²⁷ The prayers have continued to cover issues important to those in Schola, and time exists during the service for those attending to lift their own concerns. Schola’s desire to lead prayers for all not only helps to dismantle the stratifications of ages found in church, but also allows Schola the chance to be fully present in the life of the larger ecclesial community.

Schola began as a choir that was not part of the usual Sunday morning worship service rotations. Their worship leadership identity was created in special Holy Week services or in external services in the community. In addition to leading these services, Schola’s sense of assimilation has allowed them to join in more Sunday morning worship services. In December of 2019, Schola joined with current youth choir and Chancel Choir members to sing with the professional brass ensemble that performs with us annually. Along with the service music, Schola’s choral offerings offered a glimpse at their new engagement within the music ministry of Davidson UMC.

Leo Nestor (1948-2019) composed his setting of the “Magnificat” (2001) for unison choir, mixed choir, brass, organ, and percussion. In this piece, Schola functioned by augmenting the older Chancel Choir while the current youth choir members functioned in the role of unison choir as they sang the ancient Gregorian chant of the Magnificat. In this way, Schola was part of a bridge between two age demographics. “Hymn to the Virgin” (1929) is the earliest sacred music written by Benjamin Britten (1913-1976). This piece was composed when Britten was only sixteen years old. It is a double choir piece, and Schola participated in a dialogue with the current youth choir in this piece. In this one Advent service, the congregation of Davidson UMC was able to witness a current youth choir, Schola Cantorum, and Chancel Choir members leading worship from around the sanctuary as the youth and Schola ensembles were in the balcony. The communitas of Schola had arisen not solely because of their age but because of their pursuit of Christian community through song.
Conclusion

The work of Schola will never be finished. Each year, seniors in high school graduate. Whether these members of the youth group leave for college, attend trade school, or enter the workforce, the work of Schola remains. Too often, church leaders at Davidson UMC and other churches like Davidson overlook the rite of passage between high school graduation and full adulthood. Leaders have no reservations dedicating time, money, and space to the development of youth while in middle or high school. When a youth mission trip is planned, questions are not raised such as, “Will these people end up attending Sunday morning worship or contribute to the budget?” And yet, those same questions are asked of emerging adults as if the only reason for offering programs for adults in the church is to achieve a return on a financial investment. Too often, church leaders expect an immediate transition from adolescence. In adolescence, adults do the hard work of planning lessons and determining vision. Church leaders consider functional adults to be able to plan Sunday school lessons for their class without much training on how to lead a Sunday school class. The work of Schola underscores a need to assist teenagers as they transit the rite of passage from high school to adulthood in order to help them develop a new sense of communitas. I agree with Robert Wuthnow’s charge to church leaders to continue a support system for emerging adults after high school, “We cannot hope to be a strong society if we invest resources in young people until they are eighteen or twenty and then turn them out to find their way entirely on their own.”128 The efforts to nurture Schola by myself and other mentors were investments in the lives of emerging adults, and I believe this is a model which local churches can apply. Work with emerging adults does not have to take the form of a choir.

Church leaders can continue the efforts to reach emerging adults by keeping a few things in mind. At the conclusion of their article, Mitchell, Poest, and Espinosa list three ways to help re-engage emerging adults into the ecclesial life: hospitality, giving generously, and sharing stories.129 In their liminality, Schola participants experienced the hospitality of Danish hosts, received grants from the United Methodist Foundation and Davidson UMC, and shared stories among themselves and among those of other age groups. I am grateful for all those experiences for our emerging adult choral community, but I know the work is never finished. If we at Davidson UMC are to continue our success with emerging adults, church leaders like myself will need to remember the cycle of rites of passage. We will have to engage with those emerging adults in the liminal state, and we will have to continue to help emerging adults relate to those younger and older than themselves. We cannot replicate another pilgrimage to Denmark. We cannot recreate another first experience at Crafty Beer Guys.130 However, just as “Canticle of the Turning” has become a recurring song in Schola, our new leadership in Schola can create additional shared experiences. Creating communitas is an ongoing process, and those who are “aging out” of Schola (i.e., older than thirty-five) can become mentors to the younger members. The continuing work of Schola will need to involve deliberate movement from the center outward and back again.

130 See Appendix A, Figures 1-5.
CHAPTER SIX
FINAL REFLECTIONS

When I envisioned a new choir for emerging adults at Davidson UMC, I had not considered how I would need to reconsider my own role as a leader. In my naivete, I drew more upon my musical training as conductor-in-charge than on my pastoral identity as facilitator and enabler. My work with the Schola Cantorum of Davidson UMC has taught me a new way of approaching leadership that is more democratic, and it has also taught me a new way of how the church may revision its ecclesiology to include those in the Millennial and Generation Z demographics.

Letty Russell lays out a solid case for an egalitarian ecclesiology using table metaphors, specifically round tables. Round table ecclesiology makes certain that no one is left outside the experience and that leadership is decentralized as all are enabled. Continuing with Russell’s metaphor, I believe Schola started as what Russell terms a “kitchen table.” This type of table has hard corners and involves the hard work of developing patterns of communication that transform a group of musicians into a community. Our first rehearsal began with discussions of favorite foods, and our rehearsals usually concluded with some sort of meal. As the community moved beyond self-interested discussions over meals, Schola also recognized the need to express what Russell calls “kitchen table solidarity,” where our participants, without realizing it, began “sawing off the corners of the table” to be with those on the margins. After some time being together, Schola was able to articulate an identity, develop a communal Christ-centered passion for those on the margins, and imagine a new ecclesiology based on communal leadership. They

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were able to burnish these square corners of the kitchen table into a smooth, circular table of a more inclusive ecclesiology.

As I reflect on the work of Schola in dialogue with Russell, I find her view of a round table ecclesiology in harmony with what I experienced in the creation of Schola. Even before the ensemble left the church to go to the margins, my leadership and sense of vocation were challenged to look for those participants in the group who were not speaking in rehearsals. This ran counter to my training as a musician. In my formation as a musician, previous professors counseled me to act as if, musically speaking, I was “the smartest one in the room.” Inviting discussion about musical matters, I was told, could undermine my authority. Round table leadership, Russell posits, works against this notion that only I have the answers.

I have found the work of Schola is an important reflection of Paul’s words in I Corinthians 12. In this narrative, we see how the church can function in the non-hierarchical way as imagined by Paul and re-imagined by Russell:

On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. These Pauline exhortations in I Corinthians seem to affirm Russell’s admonition to go out to the margins and bring people into the center. While my leadership paradigm shifted as the ensemble developed, some of the participants of Schola experienced a shift in vocational understanding as well.

1 Corinthians 12:21-26, New International Version. I have selected this translation because it uses “part” instead of the word “member.”
At the end of Schola’s creation process, I asked a few participants of the community to answer a short survey. The unscientific survey asked six participants (4 female and 2 male) questions regarding their experience of Schola. The age ranges were from nineteen to thirty-two. One question asked, “Has your experience with Schola changed your relationship with church? If so, how?” One respondent answered:

Schola has changed my view of the church and ministry. It has empowered me and given me hope that we can reach beyond the church walls and truly be in ministry with the world. Schola not only reaches an underserved demographic in the church of young adults, but also goes out into the community to reach those who are intimidated by walking through the church doors. Schola is this eclectic group of people with varying faith backgrounds who seek to reach out in grace and love to the world. It reminded me that God can use anyone and speaks to the importance of being ecumenical. Schola speaks to the human need and desire for community in a time and culture where we are more isolated than we have ever been. Schola has taught me the importance of evangelism (I use this term in an attempt to reclaim its positive attributes while shedding its negative connotations). Being a part of Schola has inspired me and will impact my ministry going forward.

This emerging adult was already discerning a call to ordained ministry before the creation of Schola. However, I believe her words above reflect a newfound perspective of round table leadership we discovered in the community of faith and song known as Schola. The participant quoted above recognized the importance of the church to create spaces of hospitality where we can create community, even if that space of hospitality exists outside the church walls. I believe the experience of Schola has helped this certified candidate for ordained ministry create a vision for democratic leadership in the church that is unlike the church in which she was raised. Like myself, the respondent above has also been trained in a musical background where authority

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133 See Appendix E, Figure 16 for complete responses.
134 Female, aged 26.
rests in the conductor and absolute perfection is the benchmark of success. I think her statement above notes a shift in her paradigm of church leadership.

This emerging adult participant was not alone in her own change in visions of ecclesial leadership. I also asked five mentors to reflect upon their experience with Schola.\textsuperscript{135} The group of mentors was almost equal male to female, and all were in the demographic known as Generation X. In response to the question, “How did your work with the younger members of Schola affect your perception of the future of choirs/Christian community?” one mentor answered:

I am inspired by the young members of Schola and already see them bridging the faith gap between the years after high school and before starting a family. They are role models to my children. I am also heartened that they are reaching people in nontraditional ways and nontraditional venues (i.e. prayer service at Crafty Beer Guys). They go where the people are! I wish a group like Schola had been around when I was younger.\textsuperscript{136}

This mother’s comment reflects a change in her idea of vocation for a choir where a community of faith and song can be a vehicle of “non-traditional” expressions of church that leaves the walls. Furthermore, this Schola mentor sees value in breaking down the traditional age stratification that characterizes many church structures. The Schola community participants have become “role models” to this mentor’s own children. The experience of Schola, for this mother, seems to have broken open the possibilities of what Russell calls “round table partnership.”\textsuperscript{137}

This type of partnership allows all ages a place to be engaged in leadership within the spirit of \textit{koinonia}, the Body of Christ, a quality of non-hierarchical, egalitarian Christian fellowship.

\textsuperscript{135} See Appendix F, Figure 17 for complete responses.
\textsuperscript{136} Female, aged 41.
\textsuperscript{137} Russell, 205.
As I began reading Russell’s book, the words of the gospel tune “Welcome Table” stayed with me.\textsuperscript{138} I was pleased to realize later Russell would include this refrain throughout the book. The idea of a welcome table elicits thoughts of the Eucharistic table, and Schola’s work embodied the words of invitation spoken before the United Methodist service of Holy Communion: “Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another.”\textsuperscript{139} Experiencing Eucharist together is, within the liturgy, where we all acknowledge our equal need for the grace of Jesus Christ which is given in this sacrament of communion. Our invitation to Christ’s table is also a rehearsal for the heavenly banquet where all will be welcomed at the table, and no one will be on the margins at this feast.

One of the often-omitted stanzas of “Welcome Table” reminds us, “I’m gonna tell God how you treat me (Yes), I’m gonna tell God how you treat me one of these days, hallelujah, I’m gonna tell God how your treat me, tell God how you treat me one of these days, one of these days.

One of the often-omitted stanzas of “Welcome Table” reminds us,

I’m gonna tell God how you treat me (Yes),
I’m gonna tell Go how you treat me one of these day, Hallelujah,
I’m gonna tell God how you treat me,
tell God how you treat me one of these days,
one of these days.\textsuperscript{140}

This stanza has a strong connotation of social justice and applies to the work of Schola. In Matthew 25, Jesus tells of the separation of the goats and the sheep:

“I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick

\textsuperscript{138} Hymnary.org suggests that this song has African American origins. https://hymnary.org/text/im_gonna_eat_at_the_welcome_table (accessed March 20, 2020).
\textsuperscript{139} The United Methodist Hymnal (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 7.
or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

Christ reminds us in Matthew’s gospel that what we do to the least of these is what we do to Christ himself. This admonition is not to strike fear in our hearts. Rather, Jesus encourages us to bring those on the margins into koinonia because full inclusion is how God intends the heavenly banquet to function.

We all share in the same Holy Spirit; Colossians 1:19-20 reminds us, “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.” (NRSV) Since Christ reconciles all things to himself, we, as Christians, should be about the business of the reconciliation of all people. Schola began out of a desire to engage emerging adults who were on the margins. The continuing work of Schola will involve the participants themselves seeking out new places to find others in need of reconciliation. This is the ongoing work of the ecclesial community expressed in a way that is authentic to the participants themselves.

In their most recent service at a local coffee shop, Schola arrived early to set up equipment. Two young emerging adult women said, “I’d like to be a part of a church like this.” Another man said, “I wonder what my Baptist preacher father would say to me drinking a beer and singing to God?” Prayers requested from the larger community that evening encompassed both the social justice concerns of the group, and petitions were offered by those new to the experience. The gathered assembly almost exceeded fire code regulations in the upper room that evening as people sat on the floor and on the stairs. Following the service, Schola participants

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141 Matthew 25:35-40.
greeted and laughed with both church members and non-church members. The community had grown comfortable with the uncomfortable. They had learned to live in the liminality that can occur during worship in a new venue beyond the security of the sanctuary.

Jeffery Jensen Arnett’s theory of emerging adulthood, referred to in Chapter One, names five distinguishing features of this life stage: identity explorations, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and possibilities/optimism. Although Arnett is writing from a sociological perspective, the distinguishing marks of emerging adulthood may also apply to the liminal sense of more flexible and egalitarian ecclesiology that Schola experienced as well. In addition to their own lives outside the church, participants in Schola were able to gain a renewed and reimagined sense of how the church can speak to their current adult lives. The work of Schola modeled both the ideas of Turner and Arnett when they did the hard work of living in a liminal space. Even though church leaders often refer to the realm of God where we live in the “already and not yet,” the applied theology of church life indicates that institutions can often value determinable outcomes and benchmarks more than the uncertainty and ambiguity of liminality. In our annual conference, we have “congregational dashboards” to determine vitality. Almost all these markers are quantifiable and are reflective of those already in the center: worship attendance, financial vibrance, diversity statistics. The experience of Schola, and hopefully the work of other church communities, indicates the need for congregations to imagine new markers which reflect the value of individuals at both the center and the margins and are also more difficult to measure. This type of incarnational ministry reflects the work of Jesus Christ meeting marginalized persons where they were.

The administrative structure of church committees with chairpersons would seem to be at odds with the round table of inclusive leadership advocated by Russell. The lessons learned from Schola suggest that church processes will need to engage laity of all ages and make space at the table for their leadership and passions. This can be unsettling for institutions that value strong, centralized leadership. Congregational decision-making procedures will need to embrace consensus-building processes that value the voices of all demographic groups, opening the possibility that God can do a new thing.

My experience with Schola also informs my belief that church leaders have work to do in order to create a space for Millennial and Gen-Z involvement in the church. The same Holy Spirit present at the ordination of clergy speaks through these younger voices as well. It will not be enough to simply listen. Both lay and clergy leaders will have to equip emerging adults with language and skills to speak theologically. Clergy and lay leaders alike will need to guide congregations in developing flexibility and adaptability as they extend the table to include younger voices. The church building may itself become more of a “base camp” of ministry where teams depart to the margins rather than “filling station” of ministry where we expect people to drop in and receive God’s grace. Resources, both financial and personal, will need to flow outward without an expectation of a reverse flow back to the building.

The experience of Schola has taught me to work with current youth to help them anticipate a movement outward to look for those on the margins. In Chapter Five, I reflected on our youth choir’s pilgrimage to Pittsburgh where we participated in a feeding ministry. In applying the experiences of Schola, I encouraged the youth discussion time each evening to be self-determined, and they drew parallels between the experience of steel mill workers in the nineteenth century who lived in extreme poverty and the laborers of the twenty-first century. The
current group of teenagers made their own connections between systemic issues of poverty over a hundred years ago and today. My hope is that, as they begin their own liminal journey towards full adulthood, they will know the church as a community where their insights are valued.

As I continue my work with the youth of our community, I want to stem the attrition found heretofore in the church. Schola has invited those in their junior and senior years in high school to participate in Schola-led events both in a conscious attempt to break down age stratification as well as to display to these youth that church community exists in a post-high school world. Schola participants are chaperoning the youth choir pilgrimages. These Schola participants are singing in community with the youth and not just observing the group as older chaperones have done in the past. On the next choir pilgrimage, both Schola and youth choir participants will lead worship beyond the walls of the church. It is my hope that these efforts will help current youth enlarge their view of what church might become.

Participating in a missional music ministry beyond the walls of the church has made me hopeful for the future of the church. As I wrote in Chapter One, I believe lessons learned in this community of service and song can be extrapolated to other ministry applications. By participating in inclusive leadership, Schola learned as much about themselves as I did about the Millennial and Gen-Z populace. One mentor spoke of his experience with Schola:

Younger Millennials did not seem to be looking for a Christian community to serve them or entertain them. Rather, I saw a group of young people desiring to serve and belong. This is how I will choose to view this generation. Not as entitled but as a generation searching for meaning and purpose and to serve and love others with the love of God in Christ.143

---

143 Male, aged 47.
Despite evidence concerning attrition among emerging adults in congregational life, this study indicates that if churches value inclusive community over traditional markers of membership, and democratic participation over centralized leadership, then emerging adults will participate and contribute. There is hope for the future of the church if it will include Millennials and Generation Z in leadership. I rest in the words of the paraphrase of Luke that have become the theme song of both Schola and current youth choir participants:

You fixed your sight on the servant’s plight
and my weakness you did not spurn,
So from east to west shall my name be blest.
Could the world be about to turn?
My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,
And the world is about to turn.144

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REFERENCES


Baughman, Rev. Mike Baughman, founding pastor and community curator at Union Coffeehouse/Kuneo worship, remarks to Doctor of Pastoral Music class, January 2018.


Hymnary.org. “Have Thine Own Way Lord.”

Janssen, Denise. 2012. “Coming Back Home: An Ethnographic Study of Teenagers Active in Church Based Youth Ministries and their Pathways into Active Congregation Life as Emerging and Young Adults.” Order No. 3513210, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.


Kurt Bestor. “Prayer of the Children: The Story Behind the Song.”


Figure 1 Crafty Beer Guys, October 28, 2018

Crafty Beer Guys Worship Site
Figure 2 Crafty Beer Guys, October 28, 2018

Schola Participant Leading Prayers of the People
Figure 3 Crafty Beer Guys, October 28, 2018

Schola Participant family with daughter
Promotional Material for Crafty Beer Guys Service
Impromptu Hymn Singing following service
APPENDIX B

Figure 6 E-mail from Composer, Joshua Clausen, November 2, 2018

On Nov 2, 2018, at 3:44 PM, Joshua Clausen wrote:

Hi,

Thank you for reaching out. I appreciate your comments about Requiem - I'm glad that it can help make a positive difference for people at Davidson UMC.

I'm very sorry to hear about the shooting in your community. I would love for it to be possible to perform the piece with your group. I don't have a condensed version of the piece at the moment, but I could make the Finale file available to you if you'd like to do your own arrangement. Please let me know if that's something you'd be interested in, and I can send it along.

Best wishes,

Josh
Figure 7 Schola Retreat, January 2019

For a short video on the retreat:

Video of weekend made by Schola Participant
One thing you should know about me...

I'm a pain but I swear I'm nice! (lol)

I'm an atheist

I take Duke basketball REAL seriously, but still love & respect a lot of folks @ Chapel Hill.

I'm really adventurous & love to travel.

I love to travel!

I prefer the mixing up of subject and object pronouns.

I have 2
guinea pigs.
Figure 9 Schola Retreat Discussion Prompt, January 2019

Prayer Requests

- My friends struggling with life right now.
- My dad!
- Victims of hate crimes
- Victims of social injustice
- Those who harbor feelings of hatred and intolerance
Figure 10, Schola Retreat Discussion Prompt, January 2019

My favorite hymn/church song

H Is Well With My Soul
Come, Thou Fount
Be Thou My Vision
Lo How
A Rose 'Et
Blooming E
Christmas

What wondrous love
Is This

It is Well
With My Soul
LEST I have:
Amazing Grace
Figure 11, Schola Retreat Discussion Prompt, January 2019

Why are you here?

To make music w/ people I like.

I love to sing.

To be in community w/ others, to connect people to the church, to sing in a new & fun group & to have a space that’s safe &

To hang w/ fun people & relive HS choir!

fellowship

To make music & be in community with others!

A longing for community and deep conversations with peers my age.

To make music with new people & to appreciate them in a new & different way.

To make music & meet new people.

To be closer to God & gain new friends.
Figure 12, Schola Retreat Discussion Prompt, January 2019

Why does the church exist?

It started as a moral center for society, but eventually became a panacea for many, now returning to its roots in community and fellowship. Fellowship and community are vital for the well-being of people both in and outside the church.

Fellowship with others.

"Festina!" (Latin for "be prompt"

Because humans crave connection to others with similar values, this has caused harmful frictions in addition to positive ones.

To help the people with their struggles and wishes of everyday life:
- Fellowship
- Trust
- Christianity
- Love

So people with similar beliefs can come together to express and support God's plan.

A way for God's love to intersect with the world. A place where love is welcomed and where all are loved.

To judge and exclude all who are "other".

To specifically exist or something which meets the needs of others.

Yes!
Issues that are important to me:

- Mental Health/Mental Illness
- Human sex trafficking
- Environmental protection/Conservation
- Social justice for everyone
- Welcoming all of God's children
- Justice for him/her/them & social justice (victimization)
- Everything everyone else white + positive mentoring systems

Recognition of and rights for marginalized people:

> Equality for all human beings

Unify for the church.
What is your vision for this group?

To build a faith community which takes its faith out into the community — in whatever way that faith manifests itself.

To be a place to be real about life, faith, struggles; connect through music.

To provide a space for young adults who feel like they’re missing the regular church and need a place to belong.

To be a presence for good in the community and bridge back to the church for young adults who need a place to belong.

To build faith/trust in our Lord and grow as a person + grow faith/trust in my God and Lord.
APPENDIX D
Worship at Biltmore UMC

Figure 15 Schola Cantorum following worship Asheville, NC, January 2019
APPENDIX E
SCHOLA SURVEY RESULTS

Figure 16 Survey to Schola members

Q1 Thank you for your time in completing some short questions about your experience in Schola Cantorum at Davidson UMC. Your anonymity will be assured in this survey.

Answered: 1 Skipped: 5

Q2 please list your gender

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0

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<td></td>
<td>6</td>
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**Q3 please list your year of birth**
Answered: 6 Skipped: 0

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<td>2/27/2020 5:05 PM</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>2/26/2020 10:16 PM</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1988</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>2/25/2020 9:33 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2/25/2020 7:44 PM</td>
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**Q4 Did you have a faith affiliation as a child or in high school? If so, what?**
Answered: 6 Skipped: 0

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<td>1</td>
<td>Yes, I grew up in the Disciples of Christ denomination.</td>
<td>2/27/2020 5:05 PM</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Christian specifically United Methodist</td>
<td>2/26/2020 10:16 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>United Methodist</td>
<td>2/26/2020 7:38 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes, United Methodist</td>
<td>2/26/2020 7:52 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes - Methodist</td>
<td>2/25/2020 9:33 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>2/25/2020 7:44 PM</td>
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**Q5 Why did you participate in church as a teenager?**
Answered: 6 Skipped: 0

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mostly because it was expected and it's what my church friends of the same age were doing. Additionally, the youth handbell choir was &quot;THE&quot; music ensemble in our church, so it was a musical outlet.</td>
<td>2/27/2020 5:05 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I participated in church because my faith was important to me and an integral part of my life.</td>
<td>2/26/2020 10:16 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I appreciated the variety of youth programs offered - youth group, bible study, choir, drama, mission trips, retreats, etc. I felt accepted and loved and made lifelong friendships with other teens who shared my values.</td>
<td>2/26/2020 7:38 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Parents, choir at DUMC</td>
<td>2/26/2020 7:52 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Music and youth group; all my friends were church friends</td>
<td>2/25/2020 9:33 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>It was expected of me by my family, but I really enjoyed the music program.</td>
<td>2/25/2020 7:44 PM</td>
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**Q6 Why do you participate now?**
Answered: 6 Skipped: 0

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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Having spent most of my life involved in church music in some fashion, I can't imagine not participating. I once was not regularly affiliated with any church for a year, and it felt like something was missing.</td>
<td>2/27/2020 5:05 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The root of why I participate is still the same, I participate in church because my faith is important to me. It's where I can be in community, worship God, and grow in my faith.</td>
<td>2/26/2020 10:16 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I love the feeling of community, friendship, support, and growing closer to God.</td>
<td>2/26/2020 7:38 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Music activities and community</td>
<td>2/26/2020 7:52 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Many different reasons - musical outlet and community, community for my family, place to worship God and serve in worship, it’s part of my self-identity</td>
<td>2/25/2020 9:33 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I like to sing and hang out with the people in Schola.</td>
<td>2/25/2020 7:44 PM</td>
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</table>
**Q7 What drew you to the community of Schola?**

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0

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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I'm always open to making music in different groups and settings. I also knew some of the other individuals who were participating and thought it might be a good way to expand my social circle and meet new people who were around my age and had similar interests.</td>
<td>2/27/2020 5:05 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I love making music for God and as a 20-something it is difficult to go from the intense community of college to the isolation of the workforce. Schola is an opportunity to be in a community formed by young adults for young adults and I needed that. There is also a daringness about Schola. It is a place where young adults can have their voices heard, we accept the possibility of failure and thus are free to try new things. The possibilities of what Schola could be was exciting and that also drew me to it.</td>
<td>2/26/2020 10:16 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I enjoy singing with other young adults. It’s a great way to get away from the craziness of life and spend time praising God and having fun together. It can be hard to make friends as an adult, and Schola is a great way to connect with other people my age who enjoy music.</td>
<td>2/26/2020 7:38 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Virginia and Kevin, the low commitment, socializing, opportunity to make music</td>
<td>2/26/2020 7:52 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>It is really hard to make adult friends in life I’ve found... when I originally found Schola, I worked in an office where the median age was easily 55+. I sang in other groups around Charlotte about which I wasn’t really passionate but wanted an outlet, but it was great to meet people near(ish) to my age who were into the same things as me and were relaxed and looking for a more casual atmosphere. The first year we had Schola (before it was called that) we went out to dinner afterwards and had the best time - and I didn’t even know half the people there. We made all these plans to see each other again and then anxiously were awaiting the next thing. There’s an electricity about being with people in a similar station to you and connecting over things you’ve chosen to do not just whatever environment you’re required to be in.</td>
<td>2/25/2020 9:33 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The music program at DUMC and the people in charge of it recommended it to me.</td>
<td>2/25/2020 7:44 PM</td>
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</table>
Q8 Has your experience with Schola changed your relationship with church? If so, how?

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<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I wouldn't say that my relationship with the church has changed. I've fortunately always had music as my &quot;niche&quot; within the church, and so I've never really felt like I didn't have a place.</td>
<td>2/27/2020 5:05 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Schola has changed my view of the church and ministry. It has empowered me and given me hope that we can reach beyond the church walls and truly be in ministry with the world. Schola not only reaches an underserved demographic in the church of young adults, but also goes out into the community to reach those who are intimidated by walking through the church doors. Schola is this eclectic group of people with varying faith backgrounds who seek to reach out in grace and love to the world. It reminded me that God can use anyone and speaks to the importance of being ecumenical. Schola speaks to the human need and desire for community in a time and culture where we are more isolated than we have ever been. Schola has taught me the importance of evangelism (I use this term in an attempt to reclaim its positive attributes while shedding its negative connotations). Being a part of Schola has inspired me and will impact my ministry going forward.</td>
<td>2/26/2020 10:16 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>No; I was already active within the church, but mostly within the children’s ministry. Schola is a great way to interact with adults and express myself and my faith through music.</td>
<td>2/26/2020 7:38 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I've always felt like DUMC was a place that people who have minimal or negative church experiences feel welcome and that hasn't changed. I feel like Schola is an extension of that</td>
<td>2/26/2020 7:52 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Well, for me, it’s plugged me in with a lot of new people. In the interest of full disclosure, I am on staff at DUMC, but it has changed my relationship overall with our church. It’s helped me step out of my comfort zone and be part of or create experiences that may feel uncomfortable because they are different than what we’ve always done but every single time prove to be incredibly holy and deeply meaningful. It has allowed me to reach out to young people who I think might be interested in our model and bring them into our fold. It’s allowed me to engage with our community partners and minister in some ways to them too. It’s provided a strong place for young adults to plug in at DUMC and we are able to have a visible presence to show that the vitality of the church doesn’t stop after youth graduate college (we recently did a two choir piece with the youth choir across the balcony of the church and it is a thing people are still talking about). It’s also shaped my professional identity some and allowed me to take on more responsibility and leadership.</td>
<td>2/25/2020 9:33 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>No. It’s always just been about music for me.</td>
<td>2/25/2020 7:44 PM</td>
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Q9 Please name one or two experiences of Schola that you find most meaningful.

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0

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<th>#</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I really enjoyed our retreat at Black Mountain because of the opportunity to just &quot;get away&quot; and connect with others. I also enjoy our community prayer services. I like that it provides an experience for people who feel that church as a physical location can be intimidating.</td>
<td>2/27/2020 5:05 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(Just two?!) 1. The prayer service at Crafty Beer Guys. It pushed us out of our comfort zone, but it was amazing to watch how different members of the group stepped up to participate and lead. The prayers that were written by the group and offered up in that service made an impact on me. The positive reactions of the public and the brewery staff will also stay with me. That event seemed so Wesleyan to me and I loved it. That night the church wasn't constrained by walls. 2. The retreat. It was really cool watching everybody's walls come down and to have space to really get to know everyone. I also love that the group really rallied around &quot;Child of God&quot; by Mark Miller and got pretty emotional watching Sam willingly offer to take a solo. It was so cool watching how everybody interacted and made sure to include everyone. This rag-tag group of misfits found a place where they could belong.</td>
<td>2/26/2020 10:16 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I loved singing at Crafty Beer Guys. I thought the service we hosted there was a great way to bring the church into the community in a way that makes people feel comfortable. I also love singing on Good Friday. That has always been a powerful service, and I enjoy participating in the music surrounding an otherwise dark day.</td>
<td>2/26/2020 7:38 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The retreat last January was fun, and I felt more connected to the members of the group at the end</td>
<td>2/26/2020 7:52 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Crafty Beer Guys will always be probably a top moment for me - we were doing something SO UNHEARD OF in the DUMC community that people intentionally said they were coming to watch us fail. But instead we had church outside with a lot of people there and as a pleasant surprise we also got to drink beer while doing it. The retreat in AVL was really meaningful to me too - it was really transcendent in a lot of ways and being out in the mountains and away was great. The other thing I’d say is that the Hope &amp; Healing services we have done are so incredibly emotional but always so meaningful and I really love that.</td>
<td>2/25/2020 9:33 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The retreat to the mountains meant the most to me.</td>
<td>2/25/2020 7:44 PM</td>
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Figure 17 Survey to Schola Mentors

Q1 Please list your gender
Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

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<td>TOTAL</td>
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Q2 Please enter the year of your birth
Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1979</td>
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Q3 Did you have a faith affiliation as a child or in high school? If so, what?
Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

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<td>Episcopal</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Southern Baptist</td>
<td>2/26/2020 5:56 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes. I was baptized Methodist. My family left the church due to a scandal involving the pastor and the music director. I dabbled in Presbyterian youth groups in high school as a guest, and I went to synagogue with friends.</td>
<td>2/25/2020 10:41 PM</td>
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Q4 How did you come to assist/mentor in the work of Schola? In other words, what made you want to participate?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>My relationship with the director was my entry point to participate and perform at a retreat with Schola. The love the young adults had for music, their desire for authentic community and hunger for an active faith, impacted me and caused me to want to continue working with this group as a musician, accompanist, teacher and mentor.</td>
<td>3/16/2020 2:58 PM</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>I am a longtime friend of Kevin, and now... longtime friend of DUMC. But... just hearing of Schola’s basic mission and purpose really made me happy to participate.</td>
<td>3/2/2020 9:02 AM</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>I sang in a Good Friday service with some young adults a few years ago. That group of young people was the start of the Schola group. I have also traveled with DUMC to Prague, Germany and Denmark / Sweden. Over these three trips, I have developed friendships with many of the Schola members and enjoy singing with them.</td>
<td>2/27/2020 4:22 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kevin invited me to accompany Schola on the upright bass.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>My college years and early adulthood years lacked a connection in faith. I regret that 10-year faith gap. These young adults are already a step ahead, and I wanted to encourage and support their faith journeys so they can avoid the faith gap. They are already global citizens, and it was uplifting and touching to watch them spread the love of God to people in foreign countries.</td>
<td>2/25/2020 10:41 PM</td>
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Q5 How did you perceive the importance of a Christian community in the work of Schola?

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Community seemed to be the essential element each participant of Schola was hoping to find. Sustained participation and growth both in numbers and depth of commitment showed me the members had found that for which they longed.</td>
<td>3/16/2020 2:58 PM</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>It is so important for all of us, regardless of age, to participate in Faith Community; It can be Church, or it may just be a small group of friends who gather once a week for lunch, your gym buddies, or even a choir. How we practice and model being Christians bears spiritual, emotional, and social benefit. Schola is definitely a place to “do in the small” in order to better what we “do in the large.”</td>
<td>3/2/2020 9:02 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I think that a Christian Community is important in the work of Schola not only for the members experience, but also for those that they are able to reach in their age demographic that a normal church would not have access to.</td>
<td>2/27/2020 4:22 PM</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Kevin has fostered a very caring environment for the young people involved in Schola, and they, in turn, are excited about sharing their faith through song in both traditional venues, such as churches, and nontraditional venues, such as bars and restaurants.</td>
<td>2/26/2020 5:56 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Christian community is the center of Schola. The young adults come together to worship and praise God through music and fellowship, and then they engage the community in Christian outreach.</td>
<td>2/25/2020 10:41 PM</td>
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Q6 How did your work with the younger members of Schola affect your perception of the future of choirs/Christian community?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

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<td>1</td>
<td>Primarily, that younger Millennials did not seem to be looking for a Christian community to serve them or entertain them. Rather, I saw a group of young people desiring to serve and belong. This is how I will choose to view this generation. Not as entitled but as a generation searching for meaning and purpose and to sever and love other with the love of God in Christ.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Music provides so many functions in faith community; from preaching the Word, stirring fervor, teaching cooperative study and rehearsal, to providing comfort, and creating a mystical/sacred space for prayer and worship. I love the social enthusiasm the younger members bring the community. Music is a touchstone for them (for us all) to always return to... to still have lives and careers, struggles and successes. Even with my own struggles along my own faith journey, the younger members reminded me of the pure joy of singing and making music that praises God and celebrates our fellowship.</td>
<td>3/2/2020 9:02 AM</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Working with the Schola group and seeing their passion for Christian music and fellowship leads me to believe that as they transition towards family and mid-life, these adults will find choir as a comfortable way to re-engage in the life of the church.</td>
<td>2/27/2020 4:22 PM</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>My work with Schola has redefined what I thought a college ministry/choir could be. These are intelligent and thoughtful young people who enthusiastically embrace traditional music and want to share it with others. In a Christian culture focused on dumbing down church music so young people can perform it, it was refreshing to see a choir performing challenging pieces with sound theology in the texts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I am inspired by the young members of Schola and already see them bridging the faith gap between the years after high school and before starting a family. They are role models to my children. I am also heartened that they are reaching people in nontraditional ways and nontraditional venues (i.e. prayer service at Crafty Beer Guys). They go where the people are! I wish a group like Schola had been around when I was younger.</td>
<td>2/25/2020 10:41 PM</td>
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