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**"I CAN'T BREATHE": TOWARD A PNEUMATOLOGY OF SINGING  
AND MISSIONAL MUSICKING FOR RACIAL JUSTICE  
IN JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA**

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“I CAN’T BREATHE”: TOWARD A PNEUMATOLOGY OF SINGING  
AND MISSIONAL MUSICKING FOR RACIAL JUSTICE  
IN JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty of

Perkins School of Theology

Southern Methodist University

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Pastoral Music

by

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May 28, 2021

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“I Can’t Breathe”: Toward a Pneumatology of Singing  
and Missional Musicking for Racial Justice in Jacksonville, Florida

Advisor: Dr. C. Michael Hawn

Doctor of Pastoral Music conferred August 2021

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ABSTRACT

This thesis develops a philosophy of musicking that intersects with missional ecclesiology and expands the role of music-making beyond the church walls. The central hypothesis assumes that predominantly white congregations in the Free Church tradition located in the southern United States incorporate ways of singing that reinforce, albeit inadvertently, attitudes toward others that buttress white ethnocentricity. Musical practices arising from a Western European heritage can promote cultural exclusivity as well as a perceived—yet false—sense of superiority. Is there an implicit theology of singing in white churches that engenders a culture of complicity and apathy in matters of racial injustice, or are there alternative ways of understanding singing that can encourage white Christians to join the journey for racial justice?

The author employs an interdisciplinary methodology and identifies ways music-making as social activity builds community and reframes relationships across the color line in Jacksonville, Florida. Detailing an ongoing partnership with Ulysses Owens Jr., and Don’t Miss A Beat, Inc., the author offers a first-hand account of exploratory steps in missional musicking and augmenting the music program at Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church. The author prescribes a pneumatology of singing that connects missional musicking to the life-giving breath of the Spirit and the responsibility to form more equitable communities reflective of the earliest Christian community as recorded in Acts 2. After discussing his own missteps, challenges, and increasing awareness, the author shares his thoughts on “white work,” anti-racism, and cross-cultural musicking, particularly how musicians in white churches can join the journey for racial justice.

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## CHAPTER 1:

### INTRODUCTION

On the morning of June 6, 2020, I received text messages from a friend describing a developing scene at Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church (HABC), in Jacksonville, Florida, where I serve as Minister of Music and Worship. A steel-clad S.W.A.T. van, a few armored vehicles, and an estimated fifty police cars were gathering in the church's parking lot that Saturday morning at 7:30 a.m. Multiple units from the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office were preparing for the eighth day of protests against police brutality, racism, and inequality. The protests were part of a nationwide movement sparked by the murder of George Floyd by four policemen in Minneapolis, Minnesota.<sup>1</sup> Evidently the church parking lot had been selected as a staging area because of its proximity to the mayor's house, which was a rumored target.

I left the house at 8:10 a.m. because I was scheduled to be at the church that Saturday by 8:30 a.m. to meet a few musicians. The church staff was scheduled that morning to record in advance the worship services for June 14 and June 21. Due to the restrictions caused by the SARS-COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, Sunday morning services at HABC had moved online beginning March 15. Complicating matters, our interim pastor, Dr. Matt Cook, had already planned to be away for the next two weeks. While driving to the church, I learned that the word

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<sup>1</sup> George Floyd, a Black man, was arrested in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on May 25, 2020, for allegedly using a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill. He was confronted by four police officers. One officer, Derek Chauvin, a white man, put his knee on Floyd's neck for eight minutes and forty-six seconds, killing him. Floyd's murder sparked protests in the United States and around the world against police violence, giving new urgency to the Black Lives Matter movement. See Hill, Evan, et al. "How George Floyd Was Killed in Police Custody," New York Times, May 31, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/us/george-floyd-investigation.html>. Officer Chauvin was found guilty of second-degree murder, third degree murder, and manslaughter on April 20, 2021.

was spreading about the police presence. Staff ministers were receiving text messages from a handful of church members, all ardent social justice advocates concerned about the negative optics of an army of police at a prominent and predominantly white church as a historic week of global protests for the Black Lives Matter movement played out on television and social media.<sup>2</sup> As I drove into the parking lot I observed what seemed to be a brigade of police officers dressed in military-grade gear, casually mingling as they waited for their orders. Helicopters flew overhead. I felt I was entering a Hollywood film set.

Pressed for time and a need to focus, I walked into the sanctuary and conducted a sound check with the musicians. Our Minister of Children and Missions, the Reverend Claire Kermitz Chinn, met one of the congregants in the south parking lot. The two women talked to the commanding officer, inviting the deputies into the church to pray. What began as civil and polite conversation, however, grew more tense as the two women learned that the police did not have permission to be on the property. The church member suggested they could move to a local school or some other city property. The captain bristled, “I guess we’ll have to move, then.” By the time Dr. Cook and I went to check on the situation, the parking lot was empty. The force had left.

Soon after recording the services that morning, the ministerial staff discovered three police officers had posted angry messages on Facebook. The captain of the operation, who was on site earlier in the morning, posted, “Not sure if any of my FB peeps are members of Hendrix (*sic*) Baptist Church but they showed their true colors this [morning]. They do not want the police anywhere around their church!! SAD. . .” Another officer posted,

It’s a sad day when you have a church turn their back on our officers and tell them to

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<sup>2</sup> Black Lives Matter is a movement “founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin’s murderer” and catapulted into the spotlight when the group sought justice for Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. See [www.blacklivesmatter.com](http://www.blacklivesmatter.com).

leave their property! Half of me wants to tell them to not call us for help when they or their congregation need help, but the other half of me knows we have sworn to protect them as well, even if they think they don't need us. Very Sad! I hope they are proud of themselves. [The Fraternal Order of Police] may want to forward this to the troops. Please pray for Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church. They definitely need it.

A third person shared that he “walked out of [the church] 15 years ago and described HABC as “not Christian,” “not biblical,” “a wicked satanic hell hole,” and stated “that a non-believer deputy who protects these lost God-haters is more Christian than them.”<sup>3</sup>

### **The Events of 2020 and my Research**

Over twenty years of work as a church musician in Baptist and United Methodist congregations, I have increasingly sought ways of integrating issues of social justice into the worship liturgies of white, moderate Christians in the southern United States. Most recently, however, my work as the Minister of Music and Worship at Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida, and as the Director of Choral and Vocal Activities at Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ), has moved me in a new direction. Beginning in the Fall of 2017, I started advocating locally for issues of racial justice through inclusive singing and music-making projects. In 2018–2019, through required *practica* courses structured to help focus a doctoral thesis topic, and with guidance from my Congregational Supervisory Committee and Professional Advisory Committee, I began exploring further these initial steps in making music for the sake of advocacy, enlivening group singing for social justice themed concerts, protests, and vigils in Jacksonville, Florida.

During this same time, I had the good fortune of forming a partnership and friendship with Ulysses Owens, Jr., the Artistic Director for Don't Miss A Beat, Inc. (DMAB) and a world

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<sup>3</sup> Based on screenshots of FaceBook posts by Jacksonville City Police Officers (June 6, 2020), since deleted.

class jazz drummer. The mission of DMAB, as printed in their 2019 annual report, states, “The mission of Don’t Miss A Beat is to blend music, art, academic achievement, and civic engagement to inspire and enlighten children and teens in the Riverside, Woodstock, and Brooklyn communities.” The statement continues: “DMAB is different because it is focused on the underserved community of Brooklyn. Through a focus on artistic discovery, DMAB educates, mentors, encourages and disciplines a generation that might otherwise lose their way.”<sup>4</sup>

I am grateful for Ulysses’ openness to meeting with me in August 2017, inviting me into his organization’s work and vision, and trusting me as a genuine partner in the fight for the Black lives of children and teenagers in Jacksonville. Since that initial meeting, we have joined together frequently in order to create opportunities for our students and vocal ensembles to make music with one another, whether in a rehearsal, a concert, or a vigil for victims of violent crimes. The fruits of our labor have resulted in open conversations about racism, diversity in arts education, and dreams of building up our city through making music together.

The world has changed, however, since I first met Ulysses, outlined my research, and participated in the two *practica*. The events of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests, have since had a personally profound effect on me and my research. The global spread of novel coronavirus has killed hundreds of thousands of people all over the world within a matter of months. The uncertainty around the virus caused an economic recession in late February 2020, impacting millions of people and upending the lives of some of the most vulnerable workers in the United States.<sup>5</sup> Our daily habits and routines have been altered for the foreseeable future, including musical activity in faith communities.

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<sup>4</sup> Don’t Miss A Beat, Inc., (2019), *Don’t Miss A Beat 2019 Annual Report*, Jacksonville, Florida: n.p. Web. <http://dontmissabeat.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/DMAB-2019-Annual-Report.pdf> (page 5).

<sup>5</sup> Jeanna Smialek, “The U.S. Entered a Recession in February,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/08/business/economy/us-economy-recession-2020.html> (accessed June 8, 2020).



The murder of George Floyd by four policemen in Minneapolis, Minnesota, May 25, 2020, brought to the surface (once again) the systemic problems of police brutality, racism, and inequality toward Black people in the United States. Protests have erupted throughout the country, and the Black Lives Matter movement has returned to the forefront of the country's collective conscious. A nation already politically, socially, and culturally divided entered a new level of social unrest that reached a dangerous boiling point in a presidential election year. Significant declarations calling for police reform, removal of Confederate statues and symbols, and systemic political change have become more extensive. Long standing institutions and organizations are evaluating long-held practices and positions.

I, too, need to recalibrate. I can no longer look at my own research and work only from a privileged vantage point as a musician trained to serve a predominantly white church music tradition inherently wrought with racism, defined by Joseph Barndt as, “race prejudice plus the power of systems and institutions.”<sup>6</sup> No longer can I pretend to be an evolving expert in my field without acknowledging the racism undergirding the church culture and social system that raised and called me, and the academy that trained me. No longer can I ignore the way things have just always been. I now have no choice but to hold up a mirror that exposes more problems than solutions and ask questions of the tradition that put me in such a place to have the privilege to do so. I now need to yield to Black people who have sung for justice for longer than I have been alive. I now join in that song to be an ally, an accomplice for racial justice, and to serve as a prophetic voice back to my own—my white—tradition. As Barndt argues, “[B]efore the church

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Barndt, *Becoming an Anti-Racism Church: Journeying Toward Wholeness* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 4–5, 87.

can effectively participate in efforts to address racism outside the church it needs to be effective in addressing racism within the church.”<sup>7</sup>

White clergy, church musicians, and congregations should find courage in this hour to confess their own systemic sins and stand in solidarity with Black communities. We must evaluate our church’s music ministries moving forward and rid virulent pathogens from the Body of Christ that snuff out the breath of the Holy Spirit. Churches should examine their program ministries, finances, and missional approaches. Musicians should put into practice philosophies of pastoral and prophetic singing that reorient congregations and communities. Musicians in these congregations should be tasked with rethinking the church’s song in a turbulent socio-cultural environment where Western European culture, traditions, and institutions continue to be deconstructed. Can our ways of music-making provide opportunities for our congregations to listen to other voices, such as those of Black people and other marginalized peoples in the city? Are we equipped with adequate modes of singing that address and challenge the racism that exists in our white churches and communities? If not, how do we change that? How can white congregations join with other people to sing about issues of social justice, action, and change as we move toward being an anti-racist church? Is it possible to sing together with our local community in a way that encourages the fullness of God’s kingdom and the possibilities of what that might look like in our communities?

### **Toward an Inclusive Theology of Singing**

This thesis explores the singing-act at Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church. The primary focus is not lyrical content of songs or a theoretical analysis of keys, forms, melodies, transitions,

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<sup>7</sup> Barndt, *Becoming an Anti-Racism Church*, ix.

and harmonic progressions that encourage robust congregational singing. Rather it focuses on how people sing at HABC, i.e., Who is allowed to sing? For whom do we sing? What valued statements are made about the quality of singing? What happens when singing falls outside the expected norm? Given these parameters, this thesis considers the following: 1) How one local congregation practices the singing-act, 2) How singing is theologically, culturally, and musically bound to that community of faith, and 3) What effect the singing-act has on the way the church addresses issues of racial justice. The central hypothesis assumes that we incorporate ways of singing that reinforce, albeit inadvertently, inhospitable attitudes toward others and buttress white ethnocentricity, if not white supremacy. Musical practices arising from Western European heritage, such as choirs and four-part hymn singing, can promote cultural exclusivity as well as a perceived—yet false—sense of superiority. One might wonder if the ways we frame the act of singing in our white churches are anti-Black, anti-Other, or anti-Gospel. Do we have an implicit theology of singing that allows us to live out our faith in a protective bubble of white culture and safety, or does our understanding of singing challenge us to practice radical social change?

What this study describes are the initial attempts to live into an inclusive theology of singing by infusing principles from the field of community music into my own work in Jacksonville. These initial steps are not perfect. I take risks, and sometimes I fail. But in so doing, I have discovered ways local pastoral musicians can find music-making opportunities and partnerships that provide “a crucible for social transformation, emancipation, empowerment, and cultural capital” for everyone involved.<sup>8</sup> I reevaluate HABC’s musical practices liturgically while also getting outside of the church’s sanctuary, physically moving beyond the chancel and rehearsal space and living into the musical partnerships with people already working toward

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<sup>8</sup> Lee Higgins and Lee Willingham, *Engaging Community Music: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 3.

eradicating racism and inequality. This study champions collaborative music-making that starts with musical conversation and friendship so that churches like Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church will make the eradication of racism integral to the identity of the congregation and begin moving toward a missional approach through music-making that addresses racism and supports the lives of Black people in Jacksonville, Florida.

In order to achieve these objectives, this thesis employs an interdisciplinary methodology. The following pages introduce the primary conversation partners that shape this methodology and how I incorporate their thinking into the transformational process proposed in this thesis. These partners include the following in successive sections: theologians Lesslie Newbigin and Darrell Guder on missional ecclesiology, ethnomusicologist Christopher Small on musicking, church musician and professor Randall Bradley, community music pioneers Lee Higgins and Lee Willingham, and biblical theologian Stephen H. Webb.

### **A Missional Approach**

Lesslie Newbigin's *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Churches* served as a touchstone for the beginning of the modern missional church movement in Great Britain, which inspired further research in the late 1980s.<sup>9</sup> By the turn of the twenty-first century, after the publication of *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending Church in North America* by Darrell L. Guder et al., the missional concept has become a widespread ecclesial practice.<sup>10</sup> Early proponents distinguished the missional church movement, i.e., *missio Dei* (mission of God), from centuries old practices that sought to expand the church of Jesus Christ in the image of

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<sup>9</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983).

<sup>10</sup> Darrell L. Guder et al., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998). In this section, parenthetical page numbers refer to citations from Gruders through page 9.

Western culture throughout the world, what Guder labels “Christendom” (p. 4). Instead, missional scholars like Newbigin and Guder advocate sending forth the church into the world, one that is contextually local, and joins in the work God is already doing “to restore and heal creation” (pp. 4, 11).

Missional ecclesiology encourages congregations to enter into God’s presence in the world, collaborating with both friend and stranger in ways that are congruent with the life, ministry, and transformative power of Jesus Christ. Gruder contends that loving and transforming the world need not be complicated, but rather, missional practices include everyday activities such as “joining and sharing, eating and drinking, listening and caring, testing and deciding, welcoming and befriending” (p. 181). Further, Inagrace Dietterich asserts that missional practices overcome and heal the brokenness of this world, including “social inequality, economic injustice, destructive conflict and alienation, lack of personal dignity and esteem, fear and hostility” (p. 181). Missional practices, then, give “[w]itness to God’s creative intent for all humanity,” and “they model and thus proclaim a different way of life to a watching world” (p. 182).

### **Missional Musicking**

This thesis develops a philosophy of music-making that intersects the missional aspirations identified by Dietterich. More recent scholarship in applied ethnomusicology and community music have also recognized ways in which music-making as a social activity builds community, reframes relationships, and makes a difference in the world.<sup>11</sup> In 1998, Christopher

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<sup>11</sup> Applied ethnomusicology puts the study of people making music (i.e., ethnomusicology) to practical use. More specifically, applied ethnomusicology is a music-centered intervention into a particular community whose purpose is to benefit that community, e.g., a social improvement, a musical benefit, a cultural good, or an economic advantage. It’s music-centered, but above all, the intervention is people-centered, for the understanding that drives it towards

Small, a New Zealand-born ethnomusicologist and music educator, introduced the term

“musicking” in his text *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. He writes,

To music is to take part, in any capacity in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing, or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing. We might even extend its meaning to what the person is doing who takes the tickets at the door or the hefty men who shift the piano and the drums or the roadies who set up the instrument and carry out the sound checks or the cleaners who clean up after everyone else has gone. They, too, are all contributing to the nature of the event that is a musical performance.<sup>12</sup>

According to Small, music is something human beings *do* rather than a thing or object that is held, performed, and consumed (pp. 2, 8, 13). Musicking is something executed, carried out, in connection with other people where it creates meaning and provides insight into another’s worldview (p. 8–9).

Musicking is of social and political importance, forming relationships from within the musical event itself that have the power to create a picture of a world not yet seen. Small explains,

The act of musicking establishes in the place where it is happening a set of relationships, and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies. They are to be found not only between those organized sounds which are conventionally thought of as being the stuff of musical meaning but also between the people who are taking part, in whatever capacity, in the performance; and they model, or stand as metaphor for, ideal relationships as the participants in the performance imagine them to be: relationships between person and person, between individual and society, between humanity and the natural world and even perhaps the supernatural world. These are important matters, perhaps the most important in human life. . . (pg. 13).

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reciprocity is based on collaborative partnerships that arise from ethnomusicological fieldwork. Applied ethnomusicology is guided by ethical values of social responsibility, human rights, and cultural and musical equity and justice. “What is Applied Ethnomusicology & Why Did They Say so Many Terrible Things About it?,” 2015, video, <https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-8477/>.

<sup>12</sup> Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 9. In this section, parenthetical page numbers refer to citations from Small through page 11.

Musical meaning is not only created in pitch, rhythm, meter, tone, and timbre, for example, but also in the relationship of those musicking, the space around them, the time or season of the event, and those listening to—or joining in—the song.

Small also argues that most people have the capacity to participate in musicking because it is of “central importance to our very humanness . . . everyone, every normally endowed human being, is born with the gift of music no less than with the gift of speech” (pg. 8). For Small, the idea of musicking places emphasis on participation over performance. He was uneasy with the social relationships found in concert halls, a “dissonance” that did not “correspond with my ideal of human relationships” (pp. 15–16). He highlights the “falsehood” of performance culture, where “our powers of making music for ourselves have been hijacked and the majority of people robbed of the musicality that is theirs by right of birth while a few stars, and their handlers, grow rich and famous through selling us what we have been led to believe we lack” (pp. 15–16). Small’s insights into the performance-participation dialectic; his perception of musicking as a human right; and, the special emphasis he places on musicking as social event raises questions regarding ways in which church communities utilize specialized music-making for purposes of worship and evangelism, ways in which the church, worship, and ultimately, God are portrayed in such places as the contemporary Christian music (CCM) industry and through social media. Musicking offers a performative avenue for missional action by churches in our towns and cities. In what ways, then, can the concept of musicking be adapted by church musicians to radically move outside the walls of the church building and advocate for racial justice?

### **Missional Musicking: Hospitality or Justice?**

In *From Memory to Imagination: Reforming the Church’s Music*, Randall Bradley re-envisioning congregational worship through a missional lens, and unfolds the ramifications of this

shift for the future of church music. He suggests churches move away from a music ministry that is elitist, non-communal, and based in power. Instead he encourages church musicians to imagine a broader, more inclusive philosophy of worship music that is multi-lingual, intergenerational, and hospitable.<sup>13</sup> The church must imagine a God that continues calling a congregation beyond the era of the worship wars and attractional models rooted in performance, privatization, and spatial confinement (pp. 169–171). Church musicians will need the tools to guide the wilderness brought about by changing cultural values and norms, employing a philosophy of musicking that is diverse in source, accessible, and reflective of Christ’s love and generosity (pp. 110–133, 182–186). Furthermore, according to Bradley, music-making should be ecumenically and theologically broad:

If the church’s music is to move forward, the God of the church’s music must be bigger than those of us who serve God. God must be bigger than the stylistic boxes that our finite musical abilities have constructed. God must be bigger than the limits of our voices, our instrumental abilities, and the surest technique we can muster. God must be bigger than any argument, apologetic, or case study we can construct. In the final analysis, what may be most likely to allow the size of our God to increase is the full release of our imagination. Allowing the size of our God to grow makes us open to others, gives us space to think creatively, and allows us to imagine a world that is yet to be fully realized (p. 227).

Bradley argues for musicians to draw the circle wider in order to broaden the reach of Christian worship, connecting a call to be missional with music that is outward-facing to the world, e.g., music that helps to spread the Gospel message in neighborhood bible clubs; worship song lyrics that encourage the worshipper to be more missional in the world; or, music that breaks down barriers for college students traveling to Kenya for service projects, worship, and concerts (pp. 134–157).

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<sup>13</sup> C. Randall Bradley, *From Memory to Imagination: Reforming the Church’s Music* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 38–47; 171–183. In this section, parenthetical page numbers refer to citations from Bradley through page 13.



Given Bradley's experience in the church and the academy, his vision is helpful for majority culture students and churches in the southern United States in order to diversify experiences and reform music ministries in the free church tradition. Due to the pandemic and BLM, these same church musicians might now have a more urgent sense of reimagining "the way it has always been," what Bradley calls the "multilayered myth that the church and its musicians have served without pausing to question its origins, its contextual truth, or its relevance to the future" (pp. 20–21, 110–133). He contends that the weight of the dying myth produced in a bygone era is difficult to support and maintain, and at some point, the long-held tradition collapses (pp. 20–21, 110–133). He recasts evangelical music and worship using a missional framework and suggests creating a circle that is more inclusive of different kinds of Christian communities (p. 19). Calling for more unity, he asks church musicians to move toward a broader sense of ecumenism and global awareness, proposing new ways to be the singing church in the sanctuary and in the community.

While Bradley's approach of musical hospitality is an important concept for many church musicians to embrace—myself included—it might be more significant in 2020 to add another skill to the music minister's missional toolbox, the skill of prophetic musicking. This kind of music-making extends beyond the Christian community into more unpredictable and uncomfortable territories. This is a radical missional approach where one finds new dimensions in making music with other people in one's hometown, enlivening advocacy and protest, promoting racial justice, and encouraging musicians to engage with community organizers, varying interfaith groups, and civic institutions. The concept of missional musicking for justice, as outlined in this thesis, follows Bradley's lead yet extends beyond his intended reach by asking white congregations to join musical forces with those already seeking social change in their local

neighborhood, school, and city hall. Musicking for racial justice invites others in one's congregation to collaborate with those in other spheres of influence, seeking ways that are impactful and transformative, and engendering long-lasting musical partnerships working for justice and solidarity locally.

## **Community Music**

Community music is a relatively new field. Its core principles resonate closely with Small's concept of musicking as well as thinking in missional ecclesiology. In *Engaging Community Music: An Introduction*, Lee Higgins and Lee Willingham explore the field of community music, an emerging discipline coming out of music education and supported by interdisciplinary research and practices.<sup>14</sup> The field, now over four decades old, continues to grow and develop around the world as people find places for inclusive and participatory musicking as “an expression of cultural democracy” (p. 1). The authors define community music as “an interventionist approach between a music leader or facilitator and those participants who wish to be involved” (p. 3). Community musicians seek to transform people, a neighborhood, and/or a system using a “bottom up” approach that gives identity, worth, and power to the participants (pp. 1–4). In short, musicians work as facilitators who, first and foremost, “musick” to form community and change lives.

While the musicking process varies from context to context, Higgins and Willingham identify some general musicking skills of the musicians forging best practices in the movement. Community musicians work with others through a collaborative process that requires nimble and improvisatory skills that make a musical environment hospitable and open (pp. 68–69).

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<sup>14</sup> Higgins and Willingham, *Engaging Community Music*. In this section, parenthetical page numbers refer to citations from Higgins and Willingham through page 15.

Community musicians must be able to make quick but knowledgeable decisions based on ability, need, and individual personalities. Higgins and Willingham identify this as “culturally responsive leadership” (p. 54). As the music-making in a group progresses, the “target moves,” i.e., the projected result changes and the facilitators have to be “equipped to deal with any encounter that may arise, whether it be a social matter, musical roadblock, emotional challenge or other” (p. 41). Referencing Elliot Eisner, a Stanford University Art and Education professor, the authors identify “flexible purposing” as a kind of necessary method to continually accomplish the task at hand (p. 41).

Community musicians must cultivate sensitive people-skills that demonstrate how to balance complex socio-cultural dynamics. Practitioners have a heart to improve the lives of people, improve the musicality of a community, and make their local context a better place through socio-political activism (p. 96). In fact, as Higgins and Willingham describe, these ethical values are critical to the vocation of a community musicker:

The typical practice of the conservatoire model is to create technically sound and expressive performers and ensemble leaders who efficiently polish their charges into a mistake-free group of musicians for public presentation. However, the act of ‘musicking’ (Small, 1998) embraces the entire context of the composer, performer, listener and all of the attendant players that make music participation possible. This also includes a commitment to social justice awareness—a knowledge that our ecological and societal responsibilities are not disparate components from our artistic endeavours (p. 96).

Community musicians, in their best moments, are able to assess inclusivity and flexibility with standards of beauty and excellence, creating outcomes where people find healing, acceptance, and justice through musicking. These skills and values are not unlike what many church musicians do with ensembles within their congregations. In fact, one researcher referenced by Higgins and Willingham, found that “the key principles that inform the practice of community music are the same as those that sit as central to the ethics of many faith traditions” (p. 31).

## Theological and Biblical Framework

Stephen H. Webb, in *The Divine Voice: Christian Proclamation and the Theology of Sound*, demonstrates “what it might mean to take sound seriously as the most characteristic medium of biblical revelation and Christian mission.”<sup>15</sup> He reminds us that “all sound has its origin in God because God spoke the world into being” (p. 14). Sound, as Webb asserts, is “invisible,” having the power to “penetrate walls and barge unannounced through closed doors” and “seep into our souls in intimate and uncontrollable ways” (p. 13). Webb focuses on vocal sounds, mostly because this is the form of sound most pervasive throughout Scripture (p. 14). He notes that from the beginning, God speaks and so do we; humanity is created in God’s image. This brings the sound of our voices into a sacred realm with Creation—a resonating threshold, perhaps—and gives us a particular way that our voices resound with Holy Sound.

God’s voice is present throughout the biblical narrative, including God’s singing voice. In Zephaniah 3:17, we read that God “rejoices” in gladness and “exults . . . with loud singing” (NRSV). We also hear Jesus sing on the night before his crucifixion, singing a hymn with his disciples before departing from their final meal together in the upper room (Matt 26:30). Throughout Scripture, we find others who sing. Moses, Miriam, and the Israelites sing songs of praise and thanksgiving following their deliverance from the Egyptians (Exod 15:1–21). Deborah and Barak sing a song of victory over Sisera, the unjust and oppressive Canaanite leader (Judg 5:1–31). In 2 Chronicles 20, King Jehoshaphat sends out singers ahead of the warriors to greet the Ammonites, Moabites, and men from Mount Seir prior to their approaching attack on Judah, offering songs of praise that make the three adversarial tribes turn against one another (2Chr 20).

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<sup>15</sup> Stephen H. Webb, *The Divine Voice: Christian Proclamation and the Theology of Sound* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), 14. In this section, parenthetical page numbers refer to citations from Webb through page 16.

The Israelites sing the Songs of Ascent while traveling to Jerusalem and marching up Mount Zion (Ps 120–134). Upon David’s return from killing Goliath, the town’s women celebrate David’s victory with singing, dancing, and playing of instruments (1Sam18:6–9). Mary sings her song after receiving news of her pregnancy from the angel, Gabriel (Luke 1:46–55)—a pregnancy that changes the course of the world. While singing hymns in prison, Paul and Silas experience an earthquake that eventually leads to their release from prison after their ministry to a Roman jailer (Acts 16:16–40).

It is important to note that these moments of singing occur around conflict, oppression, violence, or injustice. Miriam, Jesus, and the other individuals described above sing during significant in-between times, thresholds in life that Victor Turner identifies as liminal time and space.<sup>16</sup> The musicking in each of these biblical stories is likely not polished or worthy of concert performance, but instead is composed of sacred sounds coming out of a need to sing and provide sources of strength, solidarity, and joy. Singing penetrates the human condition and advocates for something else, a *communitas* of sorts, where the norms of social structure break down and people experience something that is “accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency.”<sup>17</sup> Quoting Martin Buber, Turner writes, “[Communitas] is the being no longer side by side (and one might add, above and below) but *with* one another of a multitude of persons.”<sup>18</sup> As people join their voices with one another, *communitas* may develop and new songscapes of Holy Sound and Holy Listening form to help bring about moments for transformation.

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<sup>16</sup> Liminal people (i.e., “threshold people,” as Victor Turner identifies) are in a state of being “neither here or there; they are betwixt and between.” See Victor Turner, “Liminality and Communitas,” in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1969), 359.

<sup>17</sup> Turner, “Liminality and Communitas,” 372.

<sup>18</sup> Turner, “Liminality and Communitas,” 372.

## **A Thesis Overview**

In the remainder of the thesis, I detail the initial steps toward transforming the music ministry at Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church and how that process led to joining the journey for racial justice. Chapter 2, “Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church and the Color Line in Jacksonville, Florida,” traces the geographical and social separation of Black and white populations since Reconstruction. Historical vignettes illustrate the city’s color line, which emerged with the development of the LaVilla community in the late nineteenth century, solidified during the Jim Crow and Civil Rights eras, and reinforced by the practice of red-lining in the latter half of the twentieth century.

The second half of the chapter tells the story of Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church over and against the narrative of slavery and civil rights in Jacksonville, illustrating the congregation’s separation from nearby Black neighborhoods. Given the worship life of a congregation is central to its work in the world, I have long sensed that the church’s complacency in matters of racism and injustice is inherently reinforced through its white, Western, Free Church liturgy, whether intentional or not. As a result, a critical assessment of the music and worship life at HABC provides a look into how certain musical practices can be intrinsically exclusive and inadvertently complacent in regards to racial justice. The chapter concludes with an overview of current cultural shifts affecting music in the church and a series of questions concerning the music-making in congregations that favor art for art’s sake, or art for the glory of God, over an ethical aesthetic that seeks to transform a local community.

Chapter 3, “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” examines the intersection of two significant historical figures in Jacksonville, James Weldon Johnson and Harriet Beecher Stowe, both who sought racial justice through arts advocacy. Their legacies serve as inspiration for the kind of

work against racism that ends the color line and forms partnerships promoting the kind of radical missional musicking that works for justice and systemic change in one's community. The second half of the chapter is a reflection on the author's personal journey out of the church doors to find God and others already bringing about racial justice in an economically and racially divided city. Don't Miss A Beat, Inc. (DMAB), a non-profit organization seeking to change lives in Jacksonville, Florida, through the fine arts, plays a prominent role in this chapter as does the partnership with Ulysses Owens, Jr., his staff, and the Don't Miss A Beat All Stars. I describe this relationship and offer it as one example for those musicians in white churches seeking to partner with people in their local community. I depict the risks, challenges, and outcomes of taking the initial steps in forming a partnership with DMAB and how our collaboration spread to include the University of North Florida (UNF), Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ), and the Florida chapter of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA).

Chapter 3 concludes with a description of the process of revamping the HABC youth choir and how that led toward missional musicking in Jacksonville. This includes how a youth music and mission trip to Shaw, Mississippi, in July 2018, changed the direction of the group and how core values from the field of community music played a key role in transforming the group into the HAB Singers, an intergenerational group of singers that morphed into a vocal ensemble ready to introduce missionally-themed music in worship, sing with HABC homebound members, and lead songs at community vigils, rallies, and call-to-action events.

Chapter 4, "I'm Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing," begins with the development of a pneumatology of singing organized around three terms associated with the actions of the Holy Spirit in scripture: *rûah* (breath), *paráklētos* (advocate), *koinonia* (community). Relying on Philip Butin's scholarship on the Trinity, I explore singing as an inclusive spiritual discipline

sustained by Holy Breath, an essential element connecting human life.<sup>19</sup> By applying John Bell's philosophy of singing, Becca Whitla's liberationist approach to singing, and values ascribed to the field of community music put forth by Lee Higgins and Lee Willingham, I make a case for singing that is robustly inclusive and participatory.<sup>20</sup> Singing serves to connect us with the creative aspects of the Holy Trinity and leads us into a more egalitarian community that exhibits the best qualities of the earliest Christian relationships found in Acts 2.<sup>21</sup> Moving from the theological to the practical, I use the musicking experiences discussed in Chapter 3 as a springboard into exploring the practical implications of musicking more inclusively. I flesh out the responsibilities and skills of the missional musicker in dialogue with Zac Hicks' concept of a worship pastor and employ C. Michael Hawn's work on the role of the enliver in *Gather into One: Praying and Singing Globally*.<sup>22</sup>

At the end of Chapter 4, I propose a restructuring of musicking at HABC into three modules based on function and defined by the Micah 6:6–8 directives based on function: prophetic musicking (do justice), pastoral musicking (love kindness), and sanctuary musicking (walk humbly with God) (NRSV). Identifying new trajectories of musicking and implementing them in a congregation requires exploration and experimentation shaped by an attitude of play. Leaning on other scholars who recognized the importance of play, such as Randall Bradley, Marcell Steuernagel, and J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, who employ Jürgen

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<sup>19</sup> Philip Butin, *The Trinity* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> John L. Bell, *The Singing Thing: A Case for Congregational Singing* (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2000); Becca Whitla, *Liberation, (de)Coloniality, and Liturgical Practices: Flipping the Song Bird* (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 3–4, ProQuest Ebook Central (accessed March 3, 2021); and, Lee Higgins and Lee Willingham, *Engaging Community Music: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>21</sup> Philip Butin, *The Trinity* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> Zac Hicks, *The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016); and, C. Michael Hawn, *Gather into One: Praying and Singing Globally* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003).



Moltmann's *The Theology of Play*, I encourage other musicians to take on a playful approach, to use their imaginations, become vulnerable, and take risks to dream dreams with the Holy Spirit.<sup>23</sup>

Chapter 4 concludes with thoughts on the importance of “white work” and recommended ways musicians in white churches can fight racism in our congregations and communities.<sup>24</sup> These suggestions are informed and shaped by Jemar Tisby's ARC of Racial Justice model (i.e., Awareness, Relationships, Commitment) and are intended as the first steps toward singing justice and joy into the public square.<sup>25</sup> This pathway is long and difficult. Entering it requires accepting the tension and messiness that comes with cross-cultural musicking for social, cultural, and political changes. This most recent part of my journey has come with missteps, challenges, and increasing awareness. Yet, I have gained more courage and gained new perspective on our responsibilities as people baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity.

In Chapter 5, “The Afterward,” the thesis ends with a return to the beginning of 2020. I recount the last time I partnered with Don't Miss A Beat on Sunday, February 16, prior to the start of the SARS-COVID19 pandemic. Through a series of previously written journal excerpts, I share my own dealings with the novel coronavirus after I was unknowingly infected at HABC during my interactions with pre-symptomatic choir members on Wednesday, March 4, and Sunday, March 8, 2020. In a matter of days, I lost the ability to breathe and was given a small chance of surviving by medical personnel. This event put the writing of this thesis on hold for

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<sup>23</sup> Bradley, *From Memory to Imagination*.; Marcell Steuernagel, *Church Music Through the Lens of Performance* (Routledge 2021); and, J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, *Taking It to the Streets: Using the Arts to Transform Your Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003).

<sup>24</sup> Jennifer Harvey, “‘White Work’ in the Journey of Racial Justice,” in *Trouble the Water: A Christian Resource for the Work of Racial Justice* (Macon: Nurturing Faith Inc., 2017).

<sup>25</sup> Jemar Tisby, *How to Fight Racism: Courageous Christianity and the Journey toward Racial Justice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2021).

months after surviving and later recovering from the physical, mental, and emotional setbacks caused by the virus' attack on my body.

In May 2020 when George Floyd cried out, "I can't breathe," I was moved to tears watching the video footage. I understood what it meant to not breathe and fear for your life. I could not comprehend, however, the realities of racism. For the first time in two months following my hospitalization, my creative energies emerged from a righteous anger. I composed a poem, "two viruses," which captures my thinking for recalibrating the finer points of this thesis. I use the final pages to reflect on the continuation of my first steps along the journey for racial justice in the months ahead. In some ways, I have written a Foreword, or more appropriately, an invocation where one might expect to find a benediction, the essence of which is captured best in the words of Delores Dufner:

Trust the goodness of creation;  
Trust the Spirit strong within.  
Dare to dream the vision promised,  
Sprung from seed of what has been.

Let us bring the gifts that differ  
And, in splendid, varied ways,  
Sing a new church into being,  
One in faith and love and praise.<sup>26</sup>

Amen.

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<sup>26</sup> Delores Dufner, OSB, "Sing a New Church," *Sing a New Church* (Portland, OR: OCP Publications, 1991), 96–97.

CHAPTER 2:  
HENDRICKS AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH  
AND THE COLOR LINE IN JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

*“If Jacksonville is to reach a level of greatness,  
men and women of good will must continually attack racism at every level.  
The consequences should not be a consideration.”<sup>1</sup>*

—Rodney L. Hurst Sr.

Trayvon Martin, a seventeen-year-old Black high school student, is killed by a neighborhood watch captain on the evening of February 26, 2012, in Sanford Florida, one hundred and twenty miles south of Jacksonville.<sup>2</sup> Davinian Williams, a 36-year-old Black man, is shot seven times in his back on May 9, 2012, by a Jacksonville police officer during a routine traffic stop.<sup>3</sup> Jordan Davis, a Black 17-year-old high school student is murdered on the night of November 23, 2012, by a white male who was upset over the loud “rap crap” booming from the parked car where Jordan and two friends waited at a Jacksonville gas station. Jamee Johnson, a Black Florida A&M University student is killed on December 14, 2019, after being pulled over for a seat belt violation while visiting Jacksonville. Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-year-old Black man, is followed, entrapped, and shot dead by three white residents in broad daylight on February 23,

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<sup>1</sup> Rodney L. Hurst Sr., *It was never about a hot dog and a Coke!: A personal account of the 1960 sit-in demonstrations in Jacksonville, Florida and Ax Handle Saturday* (Livermore, CA: Wingspan Press, 2008), 168.

<sup>2</sup> Steve Patterson, “Close to 1,000 people march for Trayvon Martin in Jacksonville,” <https://www.jacksonville.com/article/20120324/NEWS/801255898> (accessed November 19, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Ben Conarck, “City of Jacksonville reaches \$1.9 million settlement in fatal shooting of unarmed man during traffic stop,” <https://www.jacksonville.com/news/metro/public-safety/2017-04-13/city-jacksonville-reaches-19-million-settlement-fatal-shooting> (accessed November 19, 2020).

2020, while jogging in his own neighborhood in Brunswick, Georgia, ninety miles north of Jacksonville.

The killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the aftermath of protests throughout the United States in 2020 brought awareness to the issue of police brutality and race-related killings. The heightened tension surrounding the May 2020 protests in Jacksonville was a result of years of frustration, anger, and grief stemming from Black men being killed by white police officers. In 2017, a journalist with the local newspaper reviewed Jacksonville Sheriff Office records involving all police shootings in Duval County and determined that 96 people out of the 124 shot by the Jacksonville police officers between 2007 and 2017 were Black, or 76 percent (according to the Census Bureau's 2019 population estimates, Black people make up 31 percent of the city's population).<sup>4</sup> As a result of the 124 shootings, only two officers were fired and two more resigned.<sup>5</sup> Rodney L. Hurst Sr., a prominent civil rights activist in Jacksonville, writes: "Fighting for civil rights today requires the same diligence as it did in the sixties. Believe me, there is still a war to fight."<sup>6</sup>

The first part of this chapter highlights Jacksonville's color line. The term "color line," coined by social reformer and abolitionist Frederick Douglass in the nineteenth century and further explored, among others, by sociologist and civil rights activist W.E.B. DuBois in the twentieth century, refers to the geographical, social, and public separation of white and Black people.<sup>7</sup> Three snapshots of racial division and inequality reveal the realities and injustices on one side of the color line lived by Black people from 1870 to the present in Northeast Florida.

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<sup>4</sup> The United States Census Bureau Quick Facts: Jacksonville, Florida, United States, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/jacksonvillecityflorida,US/PST045219> (accessed November 18, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Ben Conarck, "No Further Action: Behind Close Doors," <https://www.jacksonville.com/news/2017-01-14/no-further-action-behind-closed-doors> (accessed November 18, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> Rodney L. Hurst Sr., *It was never about a hot dog and a Coke!*, 168.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Cassanello, *To Render Invisible: Jim Crow and Public Life in New South Jacksonville* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013), 1.

These vignettes help define the color line in Jacksonville. When juxtaposed with the analysis of Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church (HABC) in the latter portion of this chapter, the stories of Black lives in Duval County afford a contextual framework of racial history and injustices, poignant to the times in which HABC formed and later grew into a ecclesial force in the second half of the twentieth century.

As in many cities in the South, the color line formed during Reconstruction became more definitive with the implementation of Jim Crow laws in the later nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries.<sup>8</sup> White congregations that seek transformation toward an anti-racist church must step over the color line and begin comprehending the realities of Black lives in their city, both past and present. Wendell Griffen, a Black Baptist pastor and circuit judge in Arkansas, notes that white Baptist churches like HABC, “have seldom addressed these realities as relevant to the gospel of Jesus.” He adds, “[The] history of inequality is the necessary starting point for any honest understanding and discussion about the wealth disparity in the United States between white and black people.”<sup>9</sup> So it is with HABC and Black lives in Jacksonville, where the two sides have not crossed and remain invisible to one another. As Cassanello contends, “Jacksonville, Florida, gives a location where these economic, political, and social transformations [of the color line] are writ large.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Amanda Onion, Missy Sullivan, and Matt Mullen, “Jim Crow Laws,” last modified December 2, 2020, <https://www.history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/jim-crow-laws> (accessed December 30, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Wendell Griffen, “Why Racial Justice Matters,” in *Trouble in the Water: A Christian Resource for the Work of Racial Justice*, ed. Michael-Ray Mathews, Marie Claire Onwubuariri, and Cody J. Sanders (Macon: Nurturing Faith, Inc., 2017), 27–28.

<sup>10</sup> Cassanello, *To Render Invisible*, 6.

## The Early Color Line: LaVilla, 1866

A new Black community named Lavilla formed in Jacksonville following the Civil War on the former campsite for the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, the first all-African American regiment featured in the movie *Glory* (1989).<sup>11</sup> LaVilla was established in 1866 by Francis F. L'Engle and became home to former union soldiers and ex-slaves seeking freedom and a new way of life. Annexed in 1887 by Jacksonville, the new neighborhood on the northwest side of the center of downtown grew to a population of 3,000 in 1887.<sup>12</sup> By 1900, Jacksonville was the largest city in Florida, and 16,236 of the city's 28,429 residents were Black.<sup>13</sup>

LaVilla became a vibrant, self-contained community with housing, commerce, places of worship, health care, entertainment, and education. Individuals like Patrick Chappell and Eartha White were influential figures in the development and emerging reputation of LaVilla across the country. James Weldon Johnson, noted poet, activist, and educator, taught at LaVilla's Stanton High School, and his brother, John Rosamond Johnson, significantly influenced rising African-American artists in Jacksonville and New York City.<sup>14</sup> Notably, the brothers combined efforts to compose "Lift ev'ry voice and sing," a song first performed on February 12, 1900 at Stanton High School by five hundred children and later became known as the Black National Anthem (See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion on the Johnson brothers and "Lift ev'ry voice and sing").

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<sup>11</sup> Adrienne Burk and Ennis Davis, "Here is a plan to revive LaVilla," <https://www.jacksonville.com/jmagazine/20180617/here-is-plan-to-revive-lavilla> (accessed November 19, 2020). See also, "Task Force on Civil Rights History: Final Report June 2018," [http://apps2.coj.net/City\\_Council\\_Public\\_Notices\\_Repository/20180620%20Final%20Report%20TaskForceCivilRightsHist.pdf](http://apps2.coj.net/City_Council_Public_Notices_Repository/20180620%20Final%20Report%20TaskForceCivilRightsHist.pdf) (accessed November 19, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> Burk and Davis, "Here is a plan to revive LaVilla," 15.

<sup>13</sup> Ennis Davis, "LaVilla: The Rise and Fall of a Great Black Neighborhood," <https://www.metrojacksonville.com/article/2014-dec-lavilla-the-rise-fall-of-a-great-black-neighborhood-/page/1> (accessed November 22, 2020).

<sup>14</sup> Burk and Davis, "Here is a plan to revive LaVilla," 22.

Musicians played an important role in LaVilla night life. Residents heard upcoming Black musicians before they became nationally-known entertainers, like Ma Rainey and a young Ferdinand Morton, who spent a few months living and performing in the district before leaving Jacksonville with his new nickname, “Jelly Roll.”<sup>15</sup> Other notable black musicians and entertainers also travelled to LaVilla on tours along the Chitlin’ Circuit, “the colloquial name given a string of cities, usually in the South, with venues where Black celebrities would perform, usually for segregated Black audiences.”<sup>16</sup> Ashley Street became as bright as Beale Street in Memphis and Bourbon Street in New Orleans.<sup>17</sup> Performers like Sam Cooke, Nat King Cole, Cab Calloway, James Brown, Ruth Brown, Ray Charles, and Fats Domino played at places like the Strand, Ritz Theatre, and The Two Spot.<sup>18</sup> Hurst writes, “Carol Alexander, the director of the Ritz Theatre [and] LaVilla Museum has often said that LaVilla and the Ashley Street area were *the* ‘Harlem of the South.’”<sup>19</sup>

Yet, despite LaVilla’s vibrant culture and city life, the factors underlying its formation cannot be ignored. LaVilla citizens experienced oppression for decades under Jim Crow laws and segregation, not without their own resistance, protests, and protective measures. Throughout the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century they experienced increasing racial violence and killings. From 1909 to 1925, six terror lynchings were reported in Jacksonville. White, racist mobs killed Black citizens like Bowman Cook, John Morine, Willie Washington, Eugene Burnham, Edgar Phillips, and an unnamed individual.<sup>20</sup> Joel McEachin, city planner supervisor

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<sup>15</sup> Burk and Davis, “Here is a plan to revive LaVilla,” 23.

<sup>16</sup> Hurst Sr., *It was never about a hot dog and a Coke!*, 16.

<sup>17</sup> Hurst Sr., *It was never about a hot dog and a Coke!*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Hurst Sr., *It was never about a hot dog and a Coke!*, 18.; Also see, Tim Gilmore, “Blind Blake Walking, West Ashley Street,” <https://jaxpsychogeo.com/the-center-of-the-city/lavilla-blind-blake-walking-west-ashley-street/> (accessed November 22, 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Hurst Sr., *It was never about a hot dog and a Coke!*, 15.

<sup>20</sup> Christian Ayers, “Jacksonville’s History With Lynching,” <https://unfspinnaker.com/81853/features/jacksonvilles-history-with-lynching/> (accessed November 28, 2020).

for historic preservation at the City of Jacksonville’s Planning and Development Department, notes in 2019 that “during the last quarter of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th, racial terrorism, particularly lynching, was increasingly used as a stern warning that blacks should not go outside defined boundaries both in behavior and geography.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, the color line was established.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the community of LaVilla succumbed to growing economic and geographic pressures. The underlying racism and hate that led to its isolation from the white Jacksonville population and power structure also led to its deterioration. In 1947, the plans for the Jacksonville Expressway were introduced to the public. The Expressway’s main routes cut directly through portions of LaVilla. In 1958, the construction of the Expressway connected Beaver Street to the Fuller Warren Bridge and to Heckscher Drive in 1960. Black people who could afford to move from LaVilla, relocated further away from downtown. LaVilla had decayed and the newly constructed Interstate Highway 95 provided the final blow, which opened in 1960, passing through the formerly vibrant Black community while new civil rights demonstrations and protests were emerging in Jacksonville at the same time.<sup>22</sup>

### **Solidifying the Color Line: Rodney Hurst Sr., and Ax Handle Saturday, 1960**

Rodney Hurst Sr., is a civil rights icon in Jacksonville. He is a Black historian, activist, and author.<sup>23</sup> His book *It was never about a hot dog and a Coke!* has become the primary source for one of the ugliest events in Jacksonville history, Ax Handle Saturday.<sup>24</sup> In 1959, Hurst was

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<sup>21</sup> Meredith T. Matthews, “A Horrific History: MOSH’s exhibit on racial terror lynchings informs and invites reflections,” <https://arbus.com/a-horrific-history/> (accessed November 28, 2020).

<sup>22</sup> Ennis Davis, “LaVilla: The Rise and Fall of a Great Black Neighborhood,” (accessed November 22, 2020).

<sup>23</sup> “About,” Rodney L. Hurst: The Struggle Continues! <http://www.rodneyhurst.com/about.html> (accessed November 29, 2020).

<sup>24</sup> Hurst Sr., *It never was about a hot dog and a Coke!* In this section, parenthetical page numbers refer to citations from Hurst Sr., through page 31.



elected the president of the Jacksonville Youth Council NAACP and was instrumental in leading the group's sit-in demonstrations. On August 27, 1960, following one of the Youth Council's Saturday morning meetings, members heard eye-witness accounts and received incoming phone calls reporting the presence of white men in downtown Jacksonville dressed in Confederate uniforms and holding Confederate flags taped to ax handles (p. 70). Tensions and concern grew within the group that morning, Hurst notes (p. 71). They knew a physical clash with the Ku Klux Klan was likely. The council took a rare vote that morning to decide whether or not their scheduled sit-in at Woolworth Department Store might be cancelled. Hurst recollects:

After prayer, I took the first of only two votes by Youth Council members on whether or not to demonstrate. Our determined courage overcame our healthy fear. However, instead of sitting in at Woolworth, in front of Hemming Park, we decided to sit in at W. T. Grant Department store, three blocks away from Hemming Park at the corner of Adams Street and Main Street (p. 71).

Thirty-four demonstrators walked through the streets of downtown Jacksonville and entered W. T. Grant Department store. They sat down at the white lunch counter. Those working at the store "summarily closed and turned out the lights—every one of all" (72). Hurst writes:

When we came out of Grant's, and turned west on Adams, we could see in the distance a mob of [two-hundred] whites running toward us. As the mob got closer, it became obvious they were swinging ax handles and baseball bats. In a surreal scene, they swung those ax handles and baseball bats at every Black they saw. . . . Although we would laugh later about trying to be cool while looking at those attacking us with ax handles and baseball bats, surviving the onslaught became our main concern. . . . All of us started running and trying to protect ourselves, but Black downtown shoppers were simply no match for those wielding the baseball bats and ax handles. Some fought as best they could, but most simply tried to run for safety. . . . As for me, I ran to Main Street first, which is away from the mob, and then north on Main Street to wherever I thought I could find safety. We were on our own—we had no police protection. All law enforcement officers [seen earlier] had disappeared (pp. 73–74).

In the immediate chaos members of the Council scrambled for safety wherever they could find an open door into a black church, car, or youth center. Skirmishes between white and black people occurred throughout the remainder of the day, as well. And while the police did not arrive

to protect the Youth Council members getting attacked by white men swinging ax handles, law enforcement officers “seemingly came from everywhere” when Black residents “later made their way to downtown Jacksonville to protect other Blacks and defend themselves where necessary” (p. 79). In total sixty-two people were arrested, of which forty-eight were Black. Fourteen white people were mostly sympathetic to the cause, like one student from Florida State University who received ninety days in jail after telling the judge that “he was a proud member of the NAACP.”<sup>25</sup>

The Jacksonville color line had been sternly drawn. There were consequences for crossing the line in the public square through the court system, regardless of color. Hurst contends that the color line solidified in the 1950s and 1960s has not dissolved to this day, and while it is practically invisible most days, it “does not mean that racism and segregation no longer exist” (p. 168). Countless studies and commissions have identified the line’s markers in Jacksonville, such as racial profiling, poor public education resources, and poor infrastructure in Black neighborhoods (p. 168). The color line continues to shape the city; the findings remain on the shelf and problems have not changed (p. 168).

### **The Present Color Line in Jacksonville, 2020**

In *State Sponsored Segregation: Examining the Contemporary Impact of Redlining*, Howard and Jaffee detail the long-term effects of an old, but now illegal, historical real-estate practice called redlining.<sup>26</sup> Redlining was frequently used by banks and the Federal Housing Authority to deny mortgages in predominantly Black communities. By drawing red lines around

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<sup>25</sup> Ennis Davis, “4 racial protests and riots from Jacksonville’s past,” <https://www.thejaxsonmag.com/article/4-racial-protests-and-riots-from-jacksonvilles-past/> (accessed December 1, 2020).

<sup>26</sup> Caroline Howard, “A State Sponsored Segregation: Examining the Contemporary Impact of Redlining,” Soars 2020: University of North Florida Research Week, <https://unfsoars.domains.unf.edu/a-state-sponsored-system-of-segregation-examining-the-contemporary-impact-of-redlining/> (accessed December 1, 2020).

Black neighborhoods on maps used in offices for private use and consultation, an implicit system developed that positively aided white banks and white neighborhood property values. The authors of the study concluded that Black neighborhoods in Jacksonville to this day “remain significantly racially and economically segregated.”<sup>27</sup>

Redlining shaped the city’s housing, keeping the majority of Jacksonville’s Black community geographically and systemically isolated to zip codes 32209, 32206, 32208, 32202, 32254, and 32204.<sup>28</sup> Some of the highest poverty rates, lowest percentages of high school graduates, and the greatest socio-economic need for good healthcare outcomes in Jacksonville arise from these six zip codes (See Table 2.1).<sup>29</sup> This area has multiple food deserts identified by the United States Department of Agriculture, where people travel ten miles or more to find adequate nutrition.<sup>30</sup> The median household income in the majority of these zip codes (2012–2016), was \$22,288–\$33,932, with median household income in zip codes 32204 and 32219 slightly higher, \$33,924–\$45,558.<sup>31</sup>

For decades, corrupt practices in real estate and financial services have maintained the color line as a geographical barrier in Jacksonville. From the emancipation of slaves to the food

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<sup>27</sup> Caroline Howard, “A State Sponsored Segregation.”

<sup>28</sup> “Percentage of Black (African-Americans) in Jacksonville, FL by Zip Code,” ZiPatlas, <http://zipatlas.com/us/fl/jacksonville/zip-code-comparison/percentage-black-population.htm> (accessed December 1, 2020). For zip code geographical locations in Jacksonville, Florida, “Map of ZIP Codes in Jacksonville, Florida,” ZipDataMaps, <https://www.zipdatamaps.com/zipcodes-jacksonville-fl> (accessed December 1, 2020).

<sup>29</sup> “Percentage of Families Below the Poverty Level in Jacksonville, FL by Zip Code,” ZiPatlas, <http://zipatlas.com/us/fl/jacksonville/zip-code-comparison/families-below-poverty-level.htm> (accessed December 1, 2020); “Percentage of High School Graduates in Jacksonville, FL by Zip Code,” ZipAtlas, <http://zipatlas.com/us/fl/jacksonville/zip-code-comparison/percentage-high-school-graduates.htm> (accessed December 1, 2020); University of Florida Health, (2019), *UF Health Jacksonville: Community Health Needs Assessment*, Jacksonville, Florida: n.p. Web. <https://ufhealthjax.org/community/documents/community-health-needs-assessment-2018.pdf> (pp. 45–46).

<sup>30</sup> “Food Access Research Atlas: Jacksonville, Florida,” USDA Economic Research Service, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas/> (accessed December 1, 2020).

<sup>31</sup> *UF Health Jacksonville: Community Health Needs* (pp. 43, 65).

deserts of Jacksonville’s northeast corridor, Black persons in Jacksonville have been subject to systemic injustices for generations. Basic human needs such as nourishment, good health, and security have been compromised. When speaking out about these issues in the public square,

Table 2.1: The present-day effects of the color line and the practice of red-lining in Duval County, Florida.

Zip Code	% Black Population	Poverty % (rank)	High School Graduate Rate (rank)	*SocioNeeds for Health Care
32209	98%	26% (3/31)	62% (28/31)	Highest Need Rating of 5
32206	82%	35% (1/31)	59% (30/31)	Highest Need Rating of 5
32208	75%	15% (7/31)	70% (26/31)	Highest Need Rating of 5
32202	65%	22% (4/31)	55% (31/31)	Highest Need Rating of 5
32254	53%	19% (5/31)	60% (29/31)	Highest Need Rating of 5
32204	50%	27% (2/31)	70% (27/31)	Highest Need Rating of 5

Statistics from [www.zipatlas.com](http://www.zipatlas.com). \*SocioNeeds from [www.ufhealthjax.org](http://www.ufhealthjax.org)

attempts have been met with intimidation, force, or apathy. Hurst grieves, “I guess the adage still applies—the more things change, the more they remain the same.”<sup>32</sup>

Hurst also writes about white congregations and the civil rights movement in Jacksonville (p. 13). He recalls reading sermon notes published in church advertisements justifying segregation or proclaiming the Adamic race. He also remembers, “Two of Jacksonville’s white churches even allowed the Ku Klux Klan to hold fully robed rallies on their parking lots” (p. 14). Five white ministers representing the Unitarian Universalist, Episcopal, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches demonstrated solidarity towards efforts against racism on a consistent

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<sup>32</sup> Hurst Sr., *It never was about a hot dog and a Coke!*, 167.

basis, according to Hurst. He recounts their presence and vocal support at rallies, and their hospitality hosting conversations between black and white youth (p. 13). There were no white Baptist congregations on his list.

### **Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church**

In 1945 a small group of people met in the Little Theater located on the south bank of the St. John's River on San Marco Square. Not long after forming, the fledgling congregation of forty-eight people was already embroiled in conflict by February 1946.<sup>33</sup> The congregation's first pastor, the Reverend Warren Walker, asked the deacons to sign a statement promising to abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages. Some of the deacons rejected the proposal, refusing to "sign a pledge" of any sort; whether or not they consumed alcohol was another matter. The Reverend Walker was soon forced to resign. Some church members left the young congregation, while others moved the congregation forward, focusing on plans to move the congregation to fourteen-acres of land on the southern outskirts of Jacksonville along State Road 13, also known as Hendricks Avenue. In this same time, the church called Dr. C. M. Coalson as their second pastor on July 3, 1946. Coalson and the congregation finished constructing its sole building on the new property, which doubled as a sanctuary and a gymnasium. On September 22, 1946, the congregation met as Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church for the first time.

The land the church occupied was once part of the four hundred and fifty acres of the Red Bank Plantation along the banks of the St. John's River, which was part of a Spanish land grant in 1793. The property was owned in much of the nineteenth century by three prominent figures

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<sup>33</sup> Paul and Harriet Harral, *A History of Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church: Jacksonville Florida 1946–1986* (Jacksonville: Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church, n.d.), 5–6.

in Jacksonville's history: Isaiah Hart (founder of Jacksonville), Isaac Hendricks (settler in South Jacksonville), and Albert Gallatin Philips (Duval County Sheriff, 1833–1839)<sup>34</sup>:

It was during that century [1800s] that a group of inter-married families, all linked to the family of plantation owner Isaac Hendricks, operated multiple plantations and owned the overwhelming majority of the land that would become San Marco. A house from one of those plantations, built in 1854, still stands as a private residence. After the Civil War, the Hendricks family and its associates sold most of their land for development.<sup>35</sup>

The oak trees that lined a main roadway from the St. John's River to the location of one of the plantation manors can still be seen in a nearby San Marco neighborhood not far from the church.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the congregation transformed into a bustling church under the leadership of the Reverend Dr. Clyde Lipscomb (1953–1979) and the Reverend Dr. Jack Snell (1980–2000). Emphasis was placed on programming, such as youth and children activities, recreation, community ministries, ecumenical and interfaith outreach, Christian education, and music and worship. Dr. Lipscomb recalls, "I developed a more formal worship than the average Baptist church."<sup>36</sup> Lipscomb and Snell both emphasized music and worship that was "a little more formal, a little more dignified."<sup>37</sup> Perception in the city during this time grew to an understanding that still holds true today, that the church's programs are some of the "best" in the city; CEO-types find the church to be a reputable one; and the music ministry performs classic sacred music from the Western European tradition at a high level.

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<sup>34</sup> "Red Bank Plantation, an enduring symbol of the Old South," The Jacksonville Historical Society, [https://www.jaxhistory.org/redbank\\_plantation/](https://www.jaxhistory.org/redbank_plantation/) (accessed December 13, 2020).

<sup>35</sup> "A Brief History of San Marco," The Coastal, <https://thecoastal.com/flashback/a-brief-history-of-san-marco/> (accessed December 13, 2020).

<sup>36</sup> Harral, *A History of Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church*, 10–11.

<sup>37</sup> Harral, *A History of Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church*, 11, 26.

## Worship and Music at HABC

HABC worship is influenced by the Charleston Tradition, a style of Baptist worship that shapes corporate worship more formally with scripted prayers and sermons, robed clergy with stoles that indicate the seasons of the Christian Year, and music typically drawn from the Western European sacred music tradition.<sup>38</sup> The trappings of the 11:00 a.m. liturgy at HABC align more closely with Western mainline worship than with an evangelical, Free Church tradition. A printed order of worship guides the congregation through a four-fold worship pattern of Gathering, Word, Response, and Sending Forth. Worship is primarily structured by the Christian Year and the Revised Common Lectionary.<sup>39</sup> Worshippers sit in wooden-framed pews and are surrounded by stained-glass windows, particularly the church's iconic "Welcoming Christ Window" visible to the public along Hendricks Avenue. Throughout the room are other liturgical décor and furniture, such as paraments, exposed organ pipes, a pulpit, a large wooden table, and a baptistery pool above the sixty-seat choir loft. On either side of the choir loft sits a nine-foot grand piano and the pipe organ console. Over the main area of the chancel, where a large rug covers the floor of the platform where ministers sit in five winged-back chairs, hangs a nine-foot-tall wooden cross.

Yet, fused into worship at HABC are tenets of an evangelical worship heritage birthed in nineteenth-century revivalism where preaching and music play a significant role.<sup>40</sup> Scripture

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<sup>38</sup> Thomas McKibbens Jr., "Our Baptist Heritage in Worship," *Review and Expositor* 80, no. 1 (Winter 1983): 53–69; and, Raymond Bailey, "The Changing Face of Baptist Worship," *Review and Expositor* 95, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 47–58. The Charleston Tradition (or British Tradition) is grounded in study, preparation, and the centrality of Scripture. Worship tended to be orderly and solemn. On the other hand, the Sandy Creek Tradition (or Frontier Tradition) is known more for spontaneity and emotional styles of preaching and singing. Worship focused on a call to Christian conversion, centered more on the worshipper than on actions toward God.

<sup>39</sup> The Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) is a three-year cycle of weekly scripture readings for use in Christian worship, usually an Old Testament reading, Psalm, and Gospel and Epistle lessons. For more on the RCL and the Christian Year, see "The Revised Common Lectionary," <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/faq2.php> (accessed February 17, 2021).

<sup>40</sup> James White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 3d ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 164.

remains central to the worship service, although the Lord's Table is celebrated monthly rather than quarterly. Following the sermon, the senior pastor offers an invitation for worshippers to publicly profess their faith in Jesus Christ, join the church as a member, or discern a call to discipleship as one is sent into the world. Worship explores both the vertical and horizontal aspects of an individual's relationship with God and neighbor. Readings, sermons, and songs deal with the full stretch of the Gospel. Leadership typically includes all ministers, choir, organist, pianist, and a rotation of lay readers and prayers. Leadership in worship is generally reserved for adults who want to assist in various aspects of the liturgy and are also capable of doing this well. At times, children, youth, and others such as people with special needs, are assigned responsibilities and are subsequently prepared to lead. People taking on these roles in worship reflect the general demographic of the church, however. The church does not restrict anyone from reading, praying, or participating.

The "Imagine 2020 Report," a congregational visioning process completed by the congregation in 2017, describes worship as one of the church's strengths. Over a period of three years, the church prescribed ways for the congregation to further embolden worship toward a more ecumenical and unified liturgy around Word, Table, and Water. The church pledged to include diverse worship practices and song; increase intergenerational participation; streamed worship services on the internet; and, vary prayer practices. The congregation seeks to broaden its understanding of the worshipping body, moving toward forming into a more diverse faith community that reflects the congregation's emphasis on building community, transforming lives, and speaking more to issues of social justice in the liturgy. Needless to say, the church did not envision all the challenges that 2020 would offer.



The music heritage of HABC stems from the development and influence of the Southern Baptist Convention Music Department in Nashville, Tennessee, as well as the breadth and depth of knowledge many seminary-trained church musicians carried into local congregations through the southern United States in the mid- to late-twentieth century. Music for worship, music education, performances, and festivals were organized under the auspices of a music ministry (or department). Musical excellence was a goal pursued through the development of graded choral programs, handbell choirs, fine instrumental music, and strong congregational singing supported by pipe organ, piano, and choir.

Beginning in 1949, HABC hired professionally trained church musicians with expertise in all of these areas. The congregation had one of the earliest handbell choirs in the Southeast in the late 1960s. The bell choir toured the United States and was once featured on television as representatives for the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers.<sup>41</sup> The choir performed major choral works, such as Felix Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, where the choir combined with two other churches in 1985 and performed a staged version of the oratorio in the Florida Theater in downtown Jacksonville.<sup>42</sup> The mixture of worship and music traditions described above has been a source of pride and prestige for the congregation in Jacksonville for decades.

Excellence in choral and solo singing are highly valued by the congregation. Polished musical offerings within the flow of the liturgy are expected. Singing is mostly reserved for the specialist(s) or a group of trained musicians (such as a choir or solo singers accompanied by instruments), and performed within a framework that meets a liturgical and artistic aesthetic that one might label as "white," operating within a Western European lineage that is interpreted by congregants as reverent and holy. The style of singing is typically the same as one might find in

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<sup>41</sup> Harral, *A History of Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church*, 19

<sup>42</sup> Harral, *A History of Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church*, 25.

institutions of learning grounded in Western music training and performance practices. The aesthetic focus is on beauty, artistry, musical integrity, and evocation of feelings through appropriately chosen hymns, choral anthems, or a well-played organ prelude. The power and emotion experienced by worshippers is primary. If the quality of the music from the chancel is found technically or emotively deficient, somehow the assembly's worship of God is lessened in the heart of the worshipper. In other words, the ways HABC has sung in worship for years are defined by the perceived sensibilities of Western European culture, more aligned with a performance practice somewhere between Bach and Mark Hayes. These expectations are not inherently racist or inappropriate *per se*; but when crystallized as a kind of metric for worship in a predominantly white congregation, they constitute an ethnocentric standard for Euro-American Christian worship that can approach idolatry and, in some cases, white supremacy.

In the early morning hours of December 23, 2007, the sanctuary (built in 1958 and remodeled twice in 1986 and later in 2001) was gutted by fire.<sup>43</sup> After worshipping in the fellowship hall for two years, the church opened the doors to a newly constructed sanctuary on December 23, 2009. Since moving into the new sanctuary, the liturgical form and action at HABC have adapted an ethos more aligned with the in-the-round nature of the new space. Church staff and lay leaders have worked toward the addition of more inclusive worship practices and texts. This includes a use of more varied types of congregational songs that call for a broader range of instrumentation than organ, piano, or orchestral instruments. An analysis of the range of congregational song types sung at HABC on Sunday mornings between 2017–2019

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<sup>43</sup> Lindsay Bergstrom, "Hendricks Avenue Baptist sanctuary gutted by early-morning fire in Jacksonville," <https://baptistnews.com/article/hendricks-ave-baptist-sanctuary-gutted-by-early-morning-fire-in-jacksonville/#.XeQhS-ZNxg> (accessed December 23, 2020). Also, see "A look back: The fire at Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church," <https://www.jacksonville.com/photogallery/LK/20180326/NEWS/326009988/PH/1> (accessed December 23, 2020).

shows evidence that different congregational song types are included in worship. Michael Hawn's "Seven Streams of Song: An Overview of Congregational Song Since Vatican II" helps identify an emerging diversity that spans varying traditions.<sup>44</sup> Fifty-five percent of the songs used in worship are drawn from Stream Two, "Protestant Contemporary Classical Hymnody," and Stream Five, "Folk Song Influences." Songs from Stream Seven, "Global and Ecumenical Song Forms," were used 20 percent of the time while songs from Stream Four, "Revival/Gospel Songs" were employed 15 percent. Stream Three, "African-American Spirituals," and Stream One, "Roman Catholic Liturgical Renewal Hymnody," made up the remaining 10 percent of congregational songs used at HABC on Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m. Streams Four, Seven, Three, and One are represented, too, in other musical selections, such as choral octavos, solos, or liturgical responses. Since the inauguration of the new worship space in 2010, HABC has had to learn a new hymnal for Sunday morning worship.

Though not fully realized, worship and music practices are changing slowly and beginning to reflect the congregation's vision for openness and desire to reach outside the sanctuary doors. In the area of missions and outreach, the congregation has demonstrated the ability to offer empathy toward people hurt by racial, gender, and religious discrimination in Jacksonville, e.g., accepting Black people into their sporting leagues in the 1960s; supporting ordained Baptist women in ministry beginning in the 1970s; and developing interfaith relationships and dialogue with the local Temple and Mosque in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, the four members of the ministerial staff and certain segments of the congregation actively support human rights. They are working at varying levels for immigrants' welfare, interfaith dialogue, hunger, and public education reform. The church has a reputation of being the "community's

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<sup>44</sup> C. Michael Hawn, "Appendix A," in *New Songs of Celebration Render: Congregational Song in the Twenty-First Century*, comp. and ed. C. Michael Hawn (Chicago: GIA Publications Inc., 2013), 356–357.

church,” and continues to serve as a place of grace and welcome for Northeast Florida. Before the congregation moved to protective protocols due to the Coronavirus-19 pandemic in March 2020, nearly one-thousand people from outside groups and organizations made weekly use of various rooms, buildings, and outside spaces on the HABC campus.

Nevertheless, despite these actions, the congregation is not as diverse as the church’s surrounding neighborhoods, which includes the Pine Forest community located behind the church property (see pages 41–42). Welcoming the stranger is not a problem at HABC but accepting strangers as vital partners in the faith community is. In other words, what the church advocates and how the congregation welcomes people is not congruent with the non-verbal messages communicated by HABC in Sunday morning worship. The worshipping body and its musical offerings best reflect those who attend the church but not the wider demographic surrounding the church campus.

### **HABC in the Twenty-First Century: A Cultural Inventory**

Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church (HABC) is theologically and socially moderate. Politically, one might label the congregation a “purple church” with an even mixture of church members affiliated with the Democrat Party (blue) and the Republican Party (red). HABC is a “big-tent” church, and when at its best, keeps together the diversity of opinions, theologies, political views, generations, and socio-economic statuses under the profession of faith, “Jesus is Lord.” The congregation is not as diverse in other ways: members are mostly white, upper middle class, professionally-minded, and college-educated. HABC is a multi-generational Baptist church no longer associated with the Southern Baptist Convention but instead with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a mainline fellowship of Baptist congregations formed in 1991.

There is an active membership of 350 people, which is down from an average of eight-hundred people in the 1980s and 1990s.

When the congregation built the new sanctuary in 2008–2009, the footprint of the building was relocated to a central position along Hendricks Avenue with the remaining six buildings surrounding it. Built in the 1960s and 1970s when Dr. Lipscomb was pastor, these other wings to the campus contain the church office, a preschool suite, media center, choir room, two education wings, the parlor, chapel, and columbarium. The original gym/sanctuary built in 1946 is now a gym and the location for the offices of the Robert E. Webber Institute of Worship Studies. On the north side of campus are the church baseball fields that are now under the control of the Hendricks Avenue Community Athletic Association (HACAA).

### **San Marco Neighborhood**

The church is located three and a half miles south of downtown Jacksonville on the southern edge of what is known as the San Marco neighborhood, a five-mile corridor of wealth along the St. John's River. Politically and generationally diverse, the area has many retired people who have lived there for decades. Young college graduates live nearer to San Marco Square in loft apartments. Hendricks Avenue Elementary, a coveted elementary school in the Duval County Public Schools, attracts young families to the area as well. Local ecclesial neighbors include St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church, All Saints Episcopal Church, Congregation Ahavath Chesed, Lakewood Presbyterian Church, and Southside United Methodist Church. HABC participates with each one of these congregations at various times in ecumenical/interfaith ministries, worship services, and concerts. Commercial entities such as convenience stores, grocery stores, restaurants, retail stores, and small local businesses housed in old homes are located in close proximity to the church.

Recent census data for the church's zip code location (32207) reveals that 70 percent of the population are white; 20 percent are black/African American; 5 percent are Asian; less than 5 percent are Hispanic/Latino; and less than 1 percent are Native American. Median household income is \$40,784 with 20 percent of the population below the poverty line. The median age is thirty-seven, with 80 percent of the population graduating from high school or higher. In a section of the church's zip code, there are upper class neighborhoods along the St. John's river, west of Hendricks Avenue (which transitions to San Jose Boulevard) and from San Marco Square southward toward The Bolles School (tuition is \$40,000/year), San Jose Country Club, and Epping Forrest Yacht Club.

### **Pine Forest Neighborhood**

On the back side of the church, behind much of the property on the east side of campus stands a fence that divides the church property and the Hendricks Avenue/San Marco corridor from the Pine Forest neighborhood. Pine Forest is a predominantly Black neighborhood that formed in 1866 when people of Gullah Geechee (West African) decent were freed from the Red Bank Plantation. Pine Forest is one of the oldest black neighborhoods in Jacksonville. HABC reached out to Pine Forest School of the Arts Elementary School and the Pine Forest Community Center to form a partnership prior to my arrival on staff in 2008, but no substantial connection was successfully sustained by the church. In 2007, a portion of the fence separating the HABC property and the Pine Forest neighborhood was removed so people living in Pine Forest could walk through the church campus to a bus stop located directly in front of the congregation's sanctuary. Currently, there is no relationship to speak of between the church and the Pine Forest neighborhood.

Unlike the LaVilla community that developed in the urban core of Jacksonville, the Pine Forest community formed outside of the city. The history of the neighborhood is not well documented. A story that is frequently shared and linked to Pine Forest regards an early civil rights activist named Douglas Anderson, who is buried in the old Mount Zion A.M.E cemetery in the Pine Forest neighborhood.<sup>45</sup> In the early twentieth century, Anderson advocated and created the city's first free bussing program and "led the effort to convince the Duval County School Board, at the height of the brutal racism of the Jim Crow Era, to build a school for black children on the Southside of Jacksonville."<sup>46</sup> The Southside Jacksonville Grammar School was formed because of his efforts. The original building, renovated and expanded over the years, is located not too far from the Pine Forest neighborhood. The school now bears his name. The Douglas Anderson School of the Arts is perennially recognized as one of the country's outstanding fine art high schools.

A stark contrast is apparent between the two sides of the fence because of the economic and social disparity between the San Marco corridor and the Pine Forest neighborhood. People with great wealth along Hendricks Avenue live westward toward the riverbank; dilapidated houses, poverty, and crime characterize the area east of the church behind the fence. Congregations in the Pine Forest neighborhood look and sound much different than HABC and its ecclesial neighbors in San Marco. Some of the churches in Pine Forest include the Mount Zion A.M.E Church (1868), St. Michael Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church, Renewed Life Ministries, Mount Olive Baptist Church, and the Southside Church of God in Christ. No partnerships exist between HABC and these congregations.

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<sup>45</sup> Tim Gilmore, "Pine Forest," Jax Psycho Geo, <https://jaxpsychogeo.com/south/pine-forest/> (accessed December 20, 2020).

<sup>46</sup> Tim Gilmore, "Pine Forest."

## **Crossing the Color Line**

The narratives above illustrate the broad disconnect between white and Black communities in Jacksonville, Florida. Other neighborhoods like LaVilla and Pine Forests in Duval County have similar stories. HABC is not the only white congregation in town that is complicit in operating on one side of the color line, the side linked to an era colloquially referred to as Old Florida, the Florida that existed prior to air conditioning, Disney, and Miami Vice. Old Florida is old money, old politics, old attitudes, and old values. Many of the people who are connected to generations of Old Floridians are dying these days, even the remnant in the congregation at HABC. The passing of these generations over time is significant. A gradual evolution is slowly occurring in Jacksonville and the church.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 have only expedited other cultural shifts in congregational life that were already straining budgets, programs, and mission statements. Questions related to the pragmatics of church life like calendaring and programming (e.g., Wednesday night supper, choir rehearsals, Bible studies, etc.) are even more pressing. Newer missional concerns about ways the congregation might enact the Gospel more whole-heartedly regarding issues of social justice and public health have percolated to the surface of conversations among staff and lay leaders. Shifts in generational demographics and power in the congregation are more noticeable as aging powerbrokers in the church become less present and younger people are moving into influential roles. The downward trends in church attendance and Christian affiliation in the United States point toward a leaner, more pointed way of doing ministry that will require a playful reimagining of church work.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace,” Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/> (accessed August 19, 2020).



The traditional departmental models of doing church in order to attract the masses is breaking down, if not already collapsing around us. The fault lines are shifting, and the tremors are now being felt by the common person in the pew. The religious headlines and the surveys of the past several years are finally being realized on the ground at HABC. A fork in the path is greeting us and the sign reads, “Institutional Death or Ecclesial Resurrection.”

The trends affecting the institutional church also impact the structures of a twentieth century music ministry department described earlier in the chapter. The HABC music ministry has felt this pattern shifting over the past two decades. The worship wars, a decline in music education in public schools, and a culture that has commodified and idolized musical performance have all had their effect on musical participation in congregations and more broadly, and the future looks bleak for the multifaceted, volunteer music program in places like HABC if such ministries desire to stay on the same path while holding out hope that perhaps one day the church will recapture its former glory years left behind in the twentieth century.<sup>48</sup>

The changing landscape appears frightening to some and ripe with possibilities to others. Music will continue to play an important role in the worship life of many churches as it has for centuries. The current socio-economic demographics, educational level, and cultural tastes of a community will play a role in determining what kind of music will express theologies in worship and what kind of musician(s) will serve congregations around Word, Table, and Pool. Yet, questions remain. How might evolving changes in worship, ensembles, and rehearsals redirect and reshape the purposes of music ministry, especially in Free Church traditions? What might future music-making look like if coupled with a missional model? In what ways can a church musick in order to cross the color line? What implications does missional musicking have for a

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<sup>48</sup> “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace,” Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life.

congregation like HABC who is culturally caught on one side of the economic spectrum and color line? In what ways can musicians enact not just a vertical relationship to God through worship, but also create broader, deeper relationships with others through singing and working for God on earth as in heaven? Does an emphasis on musical performance and virtuosity in the Western European classical tradition limit community building in a church? Does music elitism, either perceived or in practice, exclude people from the worshipping church based on systemic racial injustice? More boldly, do certain ways of singing correspond with the Gospel of Jesus Christ or do other ways promote a kind of “whiteness” that promulgate an ecclesial racism within a church and city?<sup>49</sup> Can music-making in the white church be more inclusive, anti-racist?

Chapter 3 begins to offer answers to these questions. I share the struggles and celebrations that come with crossing the color line by doing the white work of racial justice, i.e., “to equip and enable white Christians to move forward with and/or to join our brothers and sisters, both in the church and in society as a whole, in meaningful and sustained solidarity practices.”<sup>50</sup> White work is necessary as a faithful follower of Jesus in the southern United States, but the first steps out of the systemic trappings of the color line can be difficult. As Judge Griffen charges, “[We] must resolve to do the hard work of speaking and listening to inconvenient and uncomfortable truth.” He continues, “If Dr. King’s vision of a just and peaceful

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<sup>49</sup> As one approach to support this thesis, I examined six Southern Baptist hymnals published since 1940, looking for missional themes of social justice, reconciliation, human need, and/or advocacy. In the *Broadman Hymnal* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1940), *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: Convention, 1956), and *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: LifeWay Worship, 2008), less than one-percent of hymns in each publication deal solely with these themes. The *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: Convention, 1975) introduced a handful of hymns such as “When the Church of Jesus,” “Because I Have Been Given Much,” and “Teach Me, O Lord, to Care.” *The Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: Convention, 1991) included a few additional missional-minded texts, such as “Stir Your Church, O God, Our Father,” “A Servant of the Least,” and “Let Your Heart Be Broken”—around one percent of the total number of hymns in both publications. *Celebrating Grace* (Macon: Mercer University, 2010) hymnal includes sections titled, “Justice” and “Reconciliation.” There are roughly twenty hymns, or three percent of the total number of hymns/resources, included in the 2010 publication.

<sup>50</sup> Jennifer Harvey, “‘White Work’ in the Journey of Racial Justice,” in *Trouble the Water: A Christian Resource for the Work of Racial Justice* (Macon: Nurturing Faith Inc., 2017), 35.

society for all persons is to come true—a vision inspired by the mission Jesus spoke about in the fourth chapter of Luke’s Gospel—Baptist followers of Jesus must put it to work as agents of radical change.”<sup>51</sup> The narratives in Chapter 3 provide brief case studies of how a church music program can shift toward being agents of radical change and form meaningful partnerships through musicking with others. Before giving attention to these examples, however, I begin by sharing the stories of James Weldon Johnson and Harriet Beecher Stowe, both former Jacksonville residents, and how their intersection became a significant encounter for those engaged in art activism and racial justice in Duval County.

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<sup>51</sup> Wendell Griffen, ““Why Racial Justice Matters,” in *Trouble in the Water: A Christian Resource for the Work of Racial Justice*, ed. Michael-Ray Mathews, Marie Claire Onwubuariri, and Cody J. Sanders (Macon: Nurturing Faith, Inc., 2017), 27–28.

### CHAPTER 3:

#### LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING

In the early morning hours of June 9, 2020, a crew of workers removed the statue of a Confederate soldier from Hemming Park, a public plaza located in the middle of downtown Jacksonville.<sup>1</sup> The memorial was given to the State of Florida in 1898 by Charles C. Hemming who served in the Jacksonville Light Infantry during the Civil War.<sup>2</sup> Similar statues in other cities in the southern United States were also disassembled, relocated, or placed into storage. As Corum notes, “Confederate monuments and images of the Confederacy are reminders of slavery and oppression for many. Calls for their removal have grown again in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.”<sup>3</sup> On August 11, 2020, following the removal of the Confederate statue and several weeks of contentious debate, the Jacksonville City Council voted 16–2 to rename Hemming Park to James Weldon Johnson Park.<sup>4</sup>

The vote on August 11, 2020, rests at the intersection of two major historical figures in Jacksonville history—James Weldon Johnson and Harriet Beecher Stowe—and recent initiatives to bridge Black and white majority communities that have remained divided since Reconstruction. Impelled by my need to retune the understanding of my vocation, I established a

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<sup>1</sup> Michelle Corum, “Hemming Park’s Confederate Statue Comes Down; Mayor Says Others Will Be Removed,” <https://news.wjct.org/post/hemming-parks-confederate-statue-comes-down-mayor-says-others-will-be-removed> (accessed January 6, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Corum, “Hemming Park’s Confederate Statue Comes Down; Mayor Says Others Will Be Removed.” Also see “The History of Hemming Park,” <http://hemmingpark.org/park-history/> (accessed January 6, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Corum, “Hemming Park’s Confederate Statue Comes Down; Mayor Says Others Will Be Removed.”

<sup>4</sup> David Bauerlein and Christopher Hong, “City Council Renames Hemming Park after James Weldon Johnson,” <https://www.jacksonville.com/story/news/local/2020/08/11/jacksonville-council-renames-hemming-park-james-weldon-johnson/3351280001/> (accessed January 6, 2021).

relationship with a leading Black musician in the community, Ulysses Owens, Jr. My partnership with Owens and Don't Miss A Beat, Inc. (DMAB) led to augmenting my music ministry at Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church (HABC) with a missional-oriented component. This chapter outlines that journey and offers a firsthand account of exploratory steps in missional musicking.

### **James Weldon Johnson**

James Weldon Johnson, a remarkable figure in the first half of the twentieth century, is widely known for his role in the Harlem Renaissance as a writer and poet in New York City.<sup>5</sup> Yet, the early foundation for his intellectual, political, and artistic influences began in his native Jacksonville. Johnson was born on June 17, 1871, to James and Helen,<sup>6</sup> who insured he and his brother John Rosamond Johnson received an education grounded in “English literature and the European musical tradition” while growing up in LaVilla.<sup>7</sup> Johnson graduated from Atlanta University, the first graduate school for African Americans in the United States, and returned to Jacksonville in 1894 to serve as the principal of his alma mater, the Stanton School. During his tenure, he developed the tenth and eleventh grades, making Stanton the first Black high school in the state.<sup>8</sup> It is at Stanton where James and Rosamond made history with their composition, “Lift Every Voice and Sing.”<sup>9</sup> James recalls,

A group of young men in Jacksonville, Florida, arranged to celebrate Lincoln's birthday in 1900. My brother, J. Rosamond Johnson, and I decided to write a song to be sung at the exercise. I wrote the words and he wrote the music. Our New York publisher, Edward

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<sup>5</sup> Malik Simba, “James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938),” <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/johnson-james-weldon-1871-1938/> (accessed January 20, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Editors for Biography.com, “James Weldon Johnson Biography,” <https://www.biography.com/writer/james-weldon-johnson> (accessed January 20, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Academy of American Poets, “James Weldon Johnson,” <https://poets.org/poet/james-weldon-johnson> (accessed January 20, 2021).

<sup>8</sup> James Weldon Johnson Foundation, “Chronology,” <https://www.jamesweldonjohnson.org/chronol> (accessed January 21, 2021).

<sup>9</sup> C. Michael Hawn, “History of Hymns: Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing” (February 4, 2014), <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-lift-every-voice-and-sing> (accessed January 23, 2021).

B. Marks, made mimeographed copies for us and the song was taught to and sung by a chorus of five hundred colored school children.<sup>10</sup>

In composing the final stanza, with tears rolling down his face, James found “a sense of serene joy” and “feverish ecstasy” in the writing process for he “knew that in the stanza the American Negro was, historically and spiritually, immanent.”<sup>11</sup> Imani Perry concurs, observing the song is rooted in the early lives of the Johnson brothers, that “the social fabric in which they lived, and the culture to which they belonged (and the many others of which they partook) are essential contexts for understanding how and why their song became the anthem of black America.”<sup>12</sup>

As the post-Reconstruction period transitioned into the era of Jim Crow laws, Johnson began to experience racism more directly in Jacksonville and as he traveled the east coast. In 1901, he was almost lynched by a mob after being seen with a “light-skinned female journalist” in Riverside Park.<sup>13</sup> A year later Johnson resigned as principal of Stanton High School and departed Jacksonville with Rosamond for New York City.<sup>14</sup> The brothers relocated as a result of the racism that became increasingly overt in their hometown and the Great Fire of 1901 that decimated much of the LaVilla community and the original Stanton School building. Just two decades after the end of Reconstruction, James Weldon Johnson lamented that his city was “once known far and wide as a good town for Negroes” but sadly had become “a one-hundred percent

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<sup>10</sup> James Weldon Johnson Foundation, “Lift Every Voice and Sing: Song History,” <https://www.jamesweldonjohnson.org/lift-every-voice-and-sing> (accessed January 21, 2021).

<sup>11</sup> James Weldon Johnson, *Along the Way* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2000), 155.

<sup>12</sup> Imani Perry, *May We Forever Stand: A History of the Black National Anthem* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Bill Delaney, “Writers of the First Coast: James Weldon Johnson,” <https://www.thejaxsonmag.com/article/writers-of-the-first-coast-james-weldon-johnson/> (accessed January 21, 2021); for Johnson’s full description of this event, see James Weldon Johnson, *Along This Way* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2000), 165–170.

<sup>14</sup> Delaney, “Writers of the First Coast: James Weldon Johnson.”

cracker town.”<sup>15</sup>

Johnson flourished in New York City. His accomplishments were many and varied. He studied dramatic literature at Columbia University, writing a number of award-winning books and poems. He and Rosamond wrote 200 Broadway songs and helped create the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) with Irving Berlin, Victor Herbert, and John Philip Sousa. He served as U.S. consul to Venezuela and Nicaragua under President Theodore Roosevelt, worked as the Executive Director for the NAACP, and held professorships at Fisk University and New York University (NYU).<sup>16</sup> Of all of his accomplishments, perhaps the composition of “Lift Every Voice and Sing” remains the most significant and of continuing influence. He writes, “Nothing that I have done has paid me back so fully in satisfaction as being the part creator of this song. I am always thrilled deeply when I hear it sung by Negro children.”<sup>17</sup> He and Rosamond both “marveled” at the success and widespread use of a song that was part of an “incidental effort . . . made under stress and with no intention other than to meet the needs of a particular moment.”<sup>18</sup> Reflecting further, he wrote,

After we had permanently moved away from Jacksonville, both the song and the occasion passed out of our minds. But the schoolchildren of Jacksonville kept singing the song; some of them went off to other schools and kept singing it; some of them became schoolteachers and taught it to their pupils. Within twenty years the song was being sung in schools and churches and on special occasions throughout the South and in some other parts of the country. Within that time the publishers had recopyrighted it and issued it in several arrangements. Later it was adopted by the [NAACP], and is now quite generally used throughout the country as the “Negro National Hymn.”<sup>19</sup>

Johnson was an advocate for civil rights and human rights. He witnessed the brutality of racism in the United States. He was raised in the Methodist Church in Jacksonville, and later worshiped

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<sup>15</sup> Delaney, “Writers of the First Coast: James Weldon Johnson.”

<sup>16</sup> James Weldon Johnson Foundation, “Chronology.”

<sup>17</sup> Johnson, *Along This Way*, 156.

<sup>18</sup> Johnson, *Along This Way*, 156.

<sup>19</sup> Johnson, *Along This Way*, 155.

at Salem Methodist Church in Harlem. Johnson's faith inspired his determination and his action. "Lift Every Voice and Sing" encapsulates his identity as a Black man, shaped during a time of hardships and racial injustices in Jacksonville. His musicking with five hundred school children in 1900 started a national song for justice that spread throughout his native land. Imani Perry writes, "The Negro National Anthem was a tool for transcendence. It was a tool for community-building. It was remembered by [poet Maya] Angelou as reflecting the very spirit of black resilience."<sup>20</sup>

The song remains a significant part of the heritage of the United States as the Black National Anthem. On January 12, 2021, Representative Jim Clyburn from South Carolina stated he plans to introduce a proposal to Congress making "Lift Every Voice and Sing" the official national hymn for the United States of America. Clyburn argues this recognition will give the song "equal standing with the national anthem" and will "bring the country together and heal with a song 'everybody can identify with.'"<sup>21</sup> Michael Hawn notes a similar broader reach beyond the Black community, where people of varying ethnicities living in the United States have found great meaning and power in "Lift Every Voice and Sing."<sup>22</sup> Johnson himself observed similar moments, like the time he visited Bryn Mawr College and witnessed white students "fervently" singing the song. Born from Black experience, "Lift Every Voice and Sing" transcends cultures through its sacred call to solidarity and its promise of hope.

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<sup>20</sup> Perry, *May We Forever Stand*, 109.

<sup>21</sup> Randi Richardson, "Rep. Clyburn wants to make 'Lift Every Voice and Sing' a national hymn," <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/rep-clyburn-wants-make-lift-every-voice-sing-co-national-n1253963> (accessed January 25, 2021).

<sup>22</sup> C. Michael Hawn, "History of Hymns: Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing."



## Harriet Beecher Stowe

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896), also used creative art to advocate for justice throughout her lifetime. She is best known for her anti-slavery book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, published in 1852, which disrupted the social, political, and cultural fabric in the United States as the most prominent and powerful antebellum novel on how enslaved people were perceived. Stowe's novel was an important part of Johnson's library during his time in New York City, as we will see. Stowe and Johnson intersected geographically in Duval County (1871–1884), albeit at two different stages of life. Introducing Stowe in this chapter is important for three reasons: her work in Jacksonville during Reconstruction involves economic justice, politically expressed through her paintings; Johnson's treatment of her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, moves toward musicking for justice in an operatic cantata; and finally, both individuals serve as local historical examples of people inspired by their faith traditions to overcome the systemic sins of slavery and racism in the United States by using the creative arts.

Harriet Beecher Stowe purchased a winter home in 1867, twenty miles south of downtown Jacksonville on the east bank of the St. John's River in an area named Mandarin.<sup>23</sup> At the age of fifty-six, the internationally known abolitionist and author invested the earnings she received from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) into the reconstruction of the South, particularly impoverished Florida.<sup>24</sup> She created opportunities for freed slaves to own land and make a living working newly planted orange groves. For many, including Stowe, the orange grove represented “a more egalitarian atmosphere” for farming and a broader, post-Civil War economy.<sup>25</sup> After

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<sup>23</sup> Mandarin Museum and Historical Society, “Harriet Beecher Stowe,” <https://www.mandarinmuseum.net/mandarin-history/harriet-beecher-stowe> (accessed January 27, 2021).

<sup>24</sup> Mandarin Museum and Historical Society, “Harriet Beecher Stowe,” and, Shana Klein, “Those Golden Balls Down Yonder Tree: Oranges and the Politics of Reconstruction in Harriet Beecher Stowe's Florida,” in *Southern Culture* 23, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 35.

<sup>25</sup> Klein, “Those Golden Balls Down Yonder Tree,” 31, 35.

creating small farm plots in Mandarin, she promoted the Laurel Grove Project, a social and economic ideal advocated in her writings and visual art. She began painting oranges and sending the artwork around the country, which “was not an exercise in polite culture for Stowe, but a strategic device to rehabilitate the South.”<sup>26</sup> The time, money, and work she invested in the orange grove project “[demonstrate] how seemingly ordinary paintings of fruit were more than refined objects; they were political ones meant to advance Reconstruction after the Civil War.”<sup>27</sup> Stowe’s paintings, as were her writings, were art as activism meant for building a better world, or what she termed as a Christian civilization.<sup>28</sup>

### **James Weldon Johnson and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin***

In James Weldon Johnson’s classic confessional novel, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912/1927), the narrator shares with the reader that he read Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* at a young age “with the same feverish intensity with which I had read the old Bible stories.” Stowe’s novel gave him his “first perspective of the life I was entering.”<sup>29</sup> In the next few paragraphs of the story, Johnson’s narrator explains that Stowe’s portrayal of slaves and slave owners had received “unfavorable criticism” at the time, both in the North and in the South, and concludes, “I do not think it is claiming too much to say that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was a fair and truthful panorama of slavery; however that may be, it opened my eyes as to who and what I was and what my country considered me; in fact, it gave me my bearing.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Klein, “Those Golden Balls Down Yonder Tree,” 35.

<sup>27</sup> Klein, “Those Golden Balls Down Yonder Tree,” 37.

<sup>28</sup> Klein, “Those Golden Balls Down Yonder Tree,” 37.

<sup>29</sup> James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 28.

<sup>30</sup> Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, 29.

While the book was a best-selling novel in the nineteenth century (after the Bible), it has been subject to much debate and criticism.<sup>31</sup> African American scholars, such as Charles Nichols and James Baldwin, point out significant concerns regarding the origins of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and its literary merit.<sup>32</sup> Others, such as Spingarn and Jamieson, continue to examine the harmful impact of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on Black people's lives today, especially having a negative effect on Black experience, Black identity, sexuality, and racial ideologies.<sup>33</sup> Even the curators for the official Harriet Beecher Stowe Center write on the website, under the section "Complexities and Contradictions," that Stowe "drew on popular and deeply offensive racial stereotypes when describing some of her characters," and believed "that white people were intellectually, physically, and spiritually superior to black people."<sup>34</sup> Other literary critics, such as Henry Louis Gates Jr., on the other hand, "continue to redefine [their] views of Stowe's profoundly influential novel."<sup>35</sup> Gates has set out to revitalize *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Beecher's original characterization of Uncle Tom for the Black community. He argues the novel rises to literary acclaim, and that Tom is an important persona that critically informs Black identity in America.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> "Why African Americans Loathe 'Uncle Tom,'" <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93059468> (accessed January 30, 2021)

See also "Uncle Tom's Cabin: A Moral Battle Cry for Freedom," <https://www.harrietbeecherstowecenter.org/harriet-beecher-stowe/uncle-toms-cabin/> (accessed January 26, 2021).

<sup>32</sup> James Baldwin, "Everybody's Protest Novel," in *Partisan Review* 16, no. 6 (June 1949): 578–585. Also see James Baldwin, "The Crusade of Indignation," *The Nation* <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/crusade-indignation/> (accessed January 31, 2021); Charles Nichols, "The Origins of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," in *The Phylon Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, 1958): 328–334; and, "Uncle Tom's Cabin: A Moral Battle Cry for Freedom."

<sup>33</sup> Adena Spingarn, *Uncle Tom: From Martyr to Traitor* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018); Erin Jamieson, "Systemic Racism as a Living Text Implications of Uncle Tom's Cabin as a Fictionalized Narrative of Present and Past Black Bodies," in *The Journal of African American Studies* 22 (December 2018): 329–344.

<sup>34</sup> "Uncle Tom's Cabin: A Moral Battle Cry for Freedom."

<sup>35</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Forward," *Uncle Tom: Martyr to Traitor*, x.

<sup>36</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Introduction to *The Annotated Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *The Annotated Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2007). See also "Uncle Tom's Cabin Reconsidered: A Conversation with Henry Louis Gates & Margo Jefferson," Live from the New York Public Library, <https://www.nypl.org/audiovideo/uncle-toms-cabin-reconsidered-conversation-henry-louis-gates-margo-jefferson>

Similar to Gates, James Weldon Johnson also found Beecher's novel meaningful and valuable, discerning that her original depiction of Uncle Tom was noteworthy, rejecting the cartoonish "aunties," "mammies," and "Sambo" references typical of later Jim Crow-era productions that distorted her characters.<sup>37</sup> He criticized these misrepresentations of Beecher's book in an article titled, "Uncle Tom's Cabin and Clansmen." Robin Miskolcze shares,

Johnson observes that the performance [of an interpretation of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*] was retitled "'Old Plantation Days,' [that] the offensive parts [to white people] were expurgated, [that] Simon Legree was transfigured into a sort of benevolent patriarch, [and that] Uncle Tom was made into a happy old darkey who greatly enjoyed being a slave and who ultimately died of too much good treatment." Johnson is clearly troubled by contemporary drama's revision of Stowe's representations of the cruelty of slavery; he goes on in the editorial to lament that such a production "was no doubt a great success and offended nobody's sensibilities."<sup>38</sup>

Adena Spingarn, in her article, "Writing the Old Negro in a New Century: James Weldon Johnson and the Uses of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," reaches similar conclusions Johnson, who helped found the Harlem Renaissance and shaped new identities for Black men and women in the early-twentieth century, believed it was important that pre-Civil War history not be forgotten. He did not reject the "Old Negro created by white fiction;" instead, "Johnson suggested Black writers not ignore this figure; they needed to rewrite him."<sup>39</sup>

And, evidently, this is what Johnson did—almost. Adena Spingarn recently discovered in the James Weldon Johnson Collection at Yale University's Beinecke Library a nine-page sketch remaking *Uncle Tom's Cabin* into an operatic cantata. The synopsis weaves together portions of Stowe's plot and characters inserting spirituals with orchestral accompaniment. Spingarn further

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(accessed January 31, 2021); and, "Gates Takes a New Look at 'Uncle Tom'," NPR: Talk of the Nation, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7488550> (accessed January 31, 2021).

<sup>37</sup> Adena Spingarn, "Writing the Old Negro in a New Century: James Weldon Johnson and the Uses of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," in *American Literature* 89, no. 1 (March 2017): 30.

<sup>38</sup> Robin Miskolcze, "Intertextual Links: Reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*," *College Literature* 40, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 123–124.

<sup>39</sup> Spingarn, "Writing the Old Negro in a New Century," 52.

describes a summary of Johnson's plot, writing, "Drawing a straight line from Simon Legree to twentieth-century lynch mobs, the adaptation emphasizes the historical continuities of both American racial violence and black spiritual strength. In this work, Johnson seriously and sympathetically refashions Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a defiant cry against the racial violence of the Jim Crow era."<sup>40</sup> Johnson knew firsthand the personal terror that comes from a lynch mob. As lynchings became more numerous he reworked *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in order to make a social, political, artistic, and spiritual statement to the world through libretto and music. Using art that harkens back to another systemic sin, Johnson protests the racial violence in the early twentieth century.

The crossroads between Johnson and Stowe are striking, especially given their geographical intersection in Jacksonville. Important is Johnson's handling and treatment of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and the various ways each one directs their artistry toward specific social and political issues. The Johnson and Stowe stories serve not only as further concentrated historical content for this thesis, but also as a local legacy for fighting anti-racism today in Duval County. Their narratives serve as a source of inspiration for both Black and white communities in Jacksonville to "lift every voice and sing, / till earth and heaven ring."

### **Sing a Song: Missional Musicking in Jacksonville**

Borrowing from the field of community cultural development theory, Corbitt and Nix-Early remind the advocate—or the musicker in this case—that building community requires

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<sup>40</sup> Spingarn, "Writing the Old Negro in a New Century," 47. Spingarn notes that it is not clear whether the sketched synopsis was ever scored or performed. If a score is discovered, a performance of Johnson's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* opera cantata must be performed in Duval County. A more interesting endeavor, I suggest, might be to gain permission to use his 1917 sketch in order to compose a musical set in the twenty-first century with an updated plot highlighting Black Lives Matter protests over police shootings and featuring "Lift Every Voice and Sing." Given Johnson's and Stowe's common crossroad in Jacksonville, Duval County makes an ideal setting that might include LaVilla, Mandarin, and James Weldon Johnson Park.

collaboration that protects another person's dignity, addresses social issues, combines both criticism and transformation of a system, and plans action over passivity.<sup>41</sup> As a white choral musician with privileged positions in the church and the academy, these guideposts are critical in moving forward. I have the responsibility to move beyond entry points of working for racial justice, whether it be for the purpose of the church or not. Randall Bradley notes, "[T]he missional church is not focused primarily on the church in a particular location. It sends people into the world to be the presence of Christ and participate in God's work wherever they may find themselves . . . in activities related to family, school, work, and leisure."<sup>42</sup> This understanding of the missional church also applies to those employed by the church, including musicians. Tending to music and worship remains a significant part of a musician's responsibilities. Yet, musicking with the people in our community already doing the life-changing, life-saving work with the vulnerable and marginalized should be a priority for pastoral musicians.

The remaining part of this chapter provides a narrative account of my personal exploration into missional musicking since 2017. Sparked by a confluence of new professional opportunities, doctoral study and research, and recent missional experiences that significantly shapes the story below, the following description details how I followed newly opened paths that opened doors for experimentation with new forums for singing, alternative ensembles, and new repertoire for missional musicking in Jacksonville. Building on a network of singers from various ethnicities, faiths, backgrounds, and institutions, I provide examples of how musicking becomes an agent for collaboration and change by joining people's voices together in order to work toward justice and systemic change. The stories, pictures, and videos in the remainder of

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<sup>41</sup> J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, *Taking It to the Streets: Using the Arts to Transform Your Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 170.

<sup>42</sup> C. Randall Bradley, *From Memory to Imagination: Reforming the Church's Music* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 137.

this chapter illustrate a specific vision for a multi-pronged approach for musicking in Jacksonville. I share this case study not for prescriptive reasons *per se*, but so that others may find reason to discern organically alternative strategies of missional musicking in their own local contexts.

While working on my Masters of Music Performance (Conducting) degree at the University of North Florida (UNF), I had the privilege to develop and propose a Certificate of Sacred Music for the university at the encouragement of my major professor. The certificate was approved in 2016 by the university administration and the State of Florida. In Fall 2017, I began teaching a three-semester cycle of courses in church leadership, worship planning, and congregational song. As is often the case with the teaching profession, my interactions with students in these classes were also instructive for me. One student who took the three classes and received the certificate—an outstanding opera performer who has since graduated from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music—stands out. He frequently shared his experiences as an instructor at a local non-profit in Jacksonville that utilized the arts to help children stay in school and obtain basic needs such as food, clothing, and healthcare. Through this one student in my church music leadership class at UNF, I was introduced to the mission of Don't Miss A Beat, Inc., and the work of Artistic Director, Ulysses Owens, Jr.

### **Ulysses Owens Jr., and Don't Miss A Beat, Inc.**

Ulysses Owens Jr. was born and raised in Jacksonville, Florida. He is an internationally renowned jazz drummer who won two Grammy awards for his collaborative work with Christian McBride's acclaimed Trio and Big Band and with Kurt Elling and Joey Alexander.<sup>43</sup> He began

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<sup>43</sup> Ulysses Owens, Jr., <https://www.usojazzy.com> (accessed January 15, 2021); also see "Ulysses Owens, Jr." <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59701b60f14aa14192c2a05f/t/59702e60d2b85789a7c1e059/1500524128537/Ulysses+Owens+Jr+Long+Bio%21.pdf> (accessed January 15, 2021).

playing drums at the age of three. His family led church music programs over the years in Jacksonville where he played for churches as an older child and teenager. He attended James Weldon Johnson Middle School and graduated from Douglas Anderson School of the Arts before enrolling in the inaugural class for jazz studies at the Juilliard School in New York City in 2006, where he now serves on faculty directing small ensembles. Owens has toured internationally, played in some of the most celebrated jazz clubs throughout the United States, taught in schools in New York City, and even coordinated Jazz Vespers at the historic Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. Despite his prowess as a rising star in the jazz world, Owens' passion is advocacy for young people in Jacksonville, Florida. While touring in other countries after graduating from Juilliard, Owens felt called to give back to his community. "In other cultures, I saw so many arts programs for kids. I thought we really needed something like this back home."<sup>44</sup> Owens dreamed of assisting students suspended from local schools by helping them not "miss a beat."<sup>45</sup> As a result, Ulysses Owens Jr., and his family started Don't Miss A Beat, Inc. (DMAB) in 2008. The organization has since emerged as a force for good in Jacksonville that provides a space for change and a beacon of light for hundreds of "at-hope" children.<sup>46</sup>

The mission of DMAB "is to blend music, art, academic achievement, and civic engagement to inspire and enlighten children and teens in the Riverside, Brooklyn and Woodstock communities."<sup>47</sup> Their website lists the following ways to reach success and their promise to every family that comes into the J.S. Johnson Community Center:

Ways to Reach Success:

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<sup>44</sup> Don't Miss A Beat, "Our History," <http://dontmissabeat.org/about-us/history/> (accessed January 15, 2021).

<sup>45</sup> Don't Miss A Beat, "Our History."

<sup>46</sup> Ulysses Owens, Jr., refers to "at-risk" kids as "at-hope" kids.

<sup>47</sup> Don't Miss A Beat, "About Us," <http://dontmissabeat.org/about-us/> (accessed January 15, 2021).



1. Utilize the performing arts as a tool to facilitate youth development and to cultivate youth talent in the arts
2. Provide tutoring and academic support, thereby enhancing youth educational achievement and graduation rates
3. Conduct civic engagement projects so that youth develop a connection to community and learn how to be responsible, productive citizens
4. Offer workable skills training for adults in the community so that they may become increasingly self-sufficient and therefore better able to provide a safe, healthy environment for their children

**Our Promise:**

Through artistic discovery, we inspire families to bridge the gap for a better life.

Inspiring kids through the experience of art, theater, music and dance.

Engaging kids by enhancing education through interactive participation.

Connecting communities through civic and environmental responsibility.

Nurturing self-reliant families through support and training.

According to the organization's 2018–2019 Annual Report, DMAB enrolled 125 students in their year-round program with an annual revenue listed at \$320,228. Children can receive instruction in the areas of dance, visual art, band (woodwind and brass), strings, chorus, music theory, theater production, and yoga. The non–profit also added a Music and Arts Summer Camp Intensive and a “Creatively Young” Program that targets toddlers. Outside of the arts and education programming, DMAB offers families assistance with food, job training, school supplies, and a special Christmas gift program during the holidays each year.

While many children receive assistance and attention each day of the year, there is a group of young people that have committed to extra time and assumed additional responsibilities at DMAB. This group is the DMAB All Stars, a performance troupe of young people that are required to demonstrate high character, determination, excellent academic work, and the promise of “triple threat” talent. The All Stars serve as ambassadors for the program and travel around the region, state, and country. They perform for civic, academic, and private events. Recently, they performed the national anthem at the Jacksonville Jaguars game and provided virtual half-time entertainment for the local NFL franchise during the 2020 pandemic football season. In April

2017, the ensemble traveled to New York City to record a song, meet dignitaries and artists, visit Harlem, and perform with Back to Bach at The Juilliard School (watch [video 1](#)).<sup>48</sup> Two of the All Stars will graduate high school in June 2021, with one student attending the Berkley College of Music in Boston and the other studying theater at the Juilliard School. The goal of the DMAB team is to provide ways for the children to experience growth, discipline, and excellence, gaining the opportunity to further their education at high levels of achievement.

### **Meeting Ulysses Owens Jr.**

After learning more about DMAB through my work at the University of North Florida, I decided to reach out to Ulysses in June 2018. At the time I did not have an agenda or a plan. I simply sought out time to meet and introduce myself, learn more about DMAB, and begin conversations about how to get appropriately involved in the organization with his guidance. As the issue of racism in the country increasingly surfaced—and I continued having thoughts regarding the white church and social justice—I realized I could not remain silent any longer. I knew I needed to reach out as a Christian, musician, educator, and more importantly, a white person living in Jacksonville, perhaps to simply say, “I care and I want to do something.”

I emailed Ulysses through the DMAB website. On June 4, Ulysses texted me. He asked if I could meet him at BiBi’s in San Marco at 5:00 p.m. to chat over drinks. When I arrived, Ulysses was already sitting at the bar. We greeted one another and proceeded to talk for two hours. Our conversation quickly revealed that we were kindred spirits, both desiring to make Jacksonville a better place through our platforms as musicians and teachers. Admittedly, I was looking for a more staid, comfortable entry into working with him and the Don’t Miss A Beat

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<sup>48</sup> “Don’t Miss A Beat All Stars in New York City (My Destiny)” (April 4, 2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=adCDPgKjl0o> (accessed March 27, 2021).

team. I imagined a kind of long orientation and apprenticeship over weeks, politely keeping my distance. Instead, Ulysses assigned me responsibilities with the All Stars, offering guidance and instruction during my available days and nights beginning in September of 2018. Without showing my trepidation, I said yes.

Jemar Tisby outlines an “entry point” that can serve as a model for such partnerships.<sup>49</sup> In *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church’s Complicity in Racism*, Tisby introduces the ARC model, a never-ending process that includes Awareness, Relationships, and Commitment.<sup>50</sup> He points out that “friendships and conversations are necessary,” but they do not “change the racial status quo.”<sup>51</sup> Instead, he argues, “Christians must also alter how impersonal systems operate so that they might create and extend racial equality.”<sup>52</sup> Ulysses shared the same sentiment with me in our first time meeting each other. He believes conversations alone accomplish very little in the work of racial justice, which is why he did not allow me to ease into a partnership at the privileged pace I sought. No, Ulysses invited me into the work, and I committed myself—despite my anxiety—to the first steps of crossing the color line to fight racism and injustice in Jacksonville. Ulysses and I do continue conversations, however, especially about local issues, racial justice, and future planning for collaboration. In [video 2](#), we discuss his work, our partnership, the influence of churches, and Southern white fragility.<sup>53</sup>

In 2018–2019, I partnered with DMAB in many ways. I coached the All Stars, worked privately with their vocal students, collected Christmas gifts for their holiday program, and

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<sup>49</sup> Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church’s Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2019), 197.

<sup>50</sup> Tisby, *The Color of Compromise*, 194–197.

<sup>51</sup> Tisby, *The Color of Compromise*, 193.

<sup>52</sup> Tisby, *The Color of Compromise*, 193.

<sup>53</sup> “Conversation with U” (February 19, 2021), [https://youtu.be/pePl\\_LiPouw](https://youtu.be/pePl_LiPouw) (accessed March 27, 2021). The term “white fragility” was codified by Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018).

supported the organization by donating personal funds on a regular basis. Because I am fortunate to have platforms in the church and the academy, I am able to dedicate myself, and the tools and resources at my disposal, to expedite musicking between the various groups in partnership with Ulysses, creating points of collaboration between higher education, HABC, and DMAB. I invited the All Stars to join the Florida State College at Jacksonville Choirs and the UNF Men's Chorus for various programs and concerts. We joined forces for a showcase at the Cummer Museum after receiving an invitation of the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra. The program highlighted the museum's new art exhibit dealing with the changing urban/rural landscapes in the twenty-first century. Conversely, the FSCJ Chorale received invitations to from DMAB, such as joining the All Stars for the DMAB holiday concert held at the LaVilla School of the Arts in December 2019. On March 27, 2019, the three choirs presented a concert at Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church (HABC) that highlighted choral music emphasizing themes of community and social justice. In [video 3](#), the DMAB All Stars and the FSCJ Chorale rehearse Joan Szymko's, "It Takes a Village," in preparation for the combined choir concert at HABC.<sup>54</sup> The year ended with the concert, "Please Stay," featuring special guest artist Ken Medema at The Nathan Wilson Center for the Arts at FSCJ, South Campus, the DMAB All Stars, the UNF Men's Chorus, and the FSCJ Choirs (see figure 3.1). This final concert raised awareness for mental health care and the issues confronting students and minority populations.

In Fall 2019, as a board member of Florida ACDA (American Choral Directors Association), in conjunction with President Cara Tasher and some board members, I advocated robustly for the inclusion of the DMAB All Stars on the President's Concert at the fall conference in Orlando, "Fearless in the Choral Art: Cultivating Competencies." After delayed

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<sup>54</sup> "Combined rehearsal with DMAB All Stars and FSCJ Choirs at HAB" (February 19, 2021), <https://youtu.be/DDbWOVZlpqg> (accessed March 27, 2021).

conversations and some skepticism among some other board members, the group was invited. The DMAB All Stars travelled on Friday, October 25, 2019, to Orlando in order to make the 3:00 p.m. call time for a 5:30 p.m. concert.

They were the first non-profit, community group to sing at Florida ACDA. Their set of two songs included “My Destiny,” a song written just for the group, and performed with



Figure 3.1 The DMAB All Stars and the FSCJ Chorale perform.

choreography; and Ken Medema’s “Black Lives Kyrie,” with a powerful poetic monologue by Laura Cook, as recorded in [video 4](#).<sup>55</sup> Some in the audience, who at first were skeptical, gave a standing ovation once the All Stars finished singing, affirming DMAB, their message, mission, and musical contribution that evening. This particular experience was a reminder that missional musicking includes standing up for musicians from minority populations in the face of traditionally, Western European-based art organizations. Resisting systemic racism through

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<sup>55</sup> “DMAB at FL ACDA” (February 19, 2021), [https://youtu.be/Y40R0OC\\_0MA](https://youtu.be/Y40R0OC_0MA) (accessed March 27, 2021).

musicking goes beyond singing spirituals during Black History month in one's choir at school or church.

### **Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church: Be the Change**

The inclusion of any number of social issues in a church's diet of prayer and song can require preparation, hard work, and creativity. Introducing new congregational songs and choral selections related to issues of justice requires forethought and strategic placement in the liturgy. After working in the local church for over twenty years, however, I realized the need to find new ways to connect music to prophetic work in the local community. In 2016, I entered doctoral studies in pastoral music at Southern Methodist University to deepen my knowledge and broaden my toolkit in this area. This was a timely decision, given the reality of my work at Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church (HABC). The changing dynamics in the church, e.g., an aging choir, erratic attendance patterns, and children and youth who lacked solid music education and interest in singing, became more than a nuisance, but a substantive problem that affected the effectiveness of the music ministry as I conceived it at that time. I was already wondering what musicking at HABC might look like in ten years and how that musicking might be more congruent with the church's recent move towards a missional ecclesiology.

For starters, I turned to the youth music ministry, where circumstances and energy organically led to innovation. The youth minister at HABC in 2012 was the Reverend Anne England. Together, we explored the idea of a youth choir tour paired with mission work and/or a spiritual pilgrimage. Numbers in the youth choir and the energy in the church called for rebooting this ministry. So, we did (see figure 3.2). Over the next five summers we took roughly twenty students and five adults each year to New York City, Ashville, Dallas/Fort Worth, Grand Bahama Island (High Rock), Waterbury (Connecticut), and a four-city tour around Florida.

These trips lasted seven to ten days. The youth choir typically performed a 45-minute concert at churches, nursing homes, and various non-profits. Repertoire for the choir generally consisted of 2-part and 3-part octavos supported by piano accompaniment. Some selections were composed by historic Western composers such as Mozart or Handel and others by contemporary, mostly white choral composers. Later, we were able to add our youth handbell choir to the Florida tour.



Figure 3.2 The HABC Youth Choir sings after a music-mission trip.

On the trips, the groups taught Vacation Bible School, worked a summer community program, and completed construction for a non-profit. As the music-mission tours evolved over five years, they became problematic and expensive, however. The turnover in the youth group after five years reduced our numbers and average age. The financial picture at the church forced a review of the cost-benefit of such trips. The cultural shifts in local churches throughout the United States led to a decision to shorten the trip and redirect its goals. For example, scheduling youth choir concerts outside of Sunday morning has almost become an impossibility.



Meanwhile, HABC's ministry philosophy was evolving to also create more missional partnerships in Jacksonville.

These issues were considered in planning the worship-mission trip in July 2018 when the HABC youth travelled to Shaw, Mississippi, to work with Delta Hands for Hope (DHH), an Asset-Based Community Development site for Together for Hope.<sup>56</sup> Located in one of the most impoverished regions in the country, Shaw is a small town with a population of 1,600 people just outside of Cleveland, Mississippi. Ninety-two percent of the people living in Shaw are Black. There is excessive hunger, poverty, and unemployment. Britt Hester (the current youth minister at HABC), Keely Nowlin (a former youth at HABC), and I took seven youth to assist with the



Figure 3.3 A mural painted by DHH on an old building in Shaw, Mississippi.

DHH Day Camp for one week in July. The camp and the DHH offices, are housed in a gutted department store in the dilapidated town square. Abandoned buildings, graffiti-covered store

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<sup>56</sup> "Together for Hope," <https://cbf.net/together-for-hope> (accessed March 27, 2021).



fronts, and piles of bricks make up the once vibrant downtown area (see figure 3.3). Shaw made recent national headlines where COVID-infections and hunger grew to critical proportions.<sup>57</sup>

On Friday, June 29, 2018, the HABC group left Jacksonville and travelled through the Florida panhandle before heading north through southern Alabama. During the drive, I was overcome with anxiety about the trip. Our contact in Shaw was not clear in her communication on how we might proceed in planning for the day camp. Irregular attendance and resources for activities and food are unpredictable each week at DHH, so creating lesson plans, planning rotation schedules, and assigning responsibilities was going to require flexibility and improvisation. I also became increasingly worried about the inadequacy of our group to assist at the DHH center, lead in worship, and work with a large group of children and teenagers living in one of the poorest rural counties in the United States of America. I wondered if our seven youth, all white middle schoolers from a church in the San Marco/Southside area of Jacksonville, could handle the situation appropriately. I was not sure our typical way of being missional on past trips would be helpful, relevant, or even suitable. As Tammerie Day explains, “Coming to awareness of how racism shapes and structures not only our society but us as well can be a painful awakening.” Continuing, she writes, “White people do not see the world as it is, and do not see ourselves as we are. How can we love what we cannot see and cannot know?”<sup>58</sup>

Before arriving in Shaw, we stopped at the Mississippi Civil Rights museum in Jackson on Saturday, June 30, 2018. The time spent at the museum was sacred and created a silence in our group that contained a sadness and anger we later debriefed with our group. The next

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<sup>57</sup> Bracey Harris, “As Covid surges in the Mississippi Delta, food banks and hospitals are stretched thin” (December 31, 2020), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/covid-surges-mississippi-delta-food-banks-hospitals-are-stretched-thin-n1252574> (accessed February 6, 2021).

<sup>58</sup> Tammerie Day, “Bread for the Journey: Spiritual Practices for White People Doing Anti-Racist Work,” in *Trouble the Water: A Christian Resource for the Work of Racial Justice* (Macon: Nurturing Faith, Inc., 2017), 122.

morning, Sunday, July 1, we participated in worship at United Rock of Ages Missionary Baptist Church in Shaw. The small congregation greeted us warmly. Our small ensemble sang four songs, the Caribbean folk song, “Halle, Halle” (with *djembe*), Jim Strathdee’s “What Does the Lord Require,” “Be the Change” from the *Justice Choir Songbook*, and Ken Medema’s “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying.” During each song we invited the church to sing with us. We performed with no piano accompaniment. I made the decision earlier in the spring that we would not take our pianist. Instead, we would experiment singing songs that encouraged brevity, memorization and inclusion of others to sing with us. This choice turned out to be an invaluable one given our experiences in Shaw.

Later that Sunday afternoon, the director for DHH, Lane Riley, gave us an orientation of the town, its history, and the current demographics for poverty and food insecurity in Bolivar County. We toured the town and learned about its history of segregation in education and farming. The combination of the museum visit, worshipping with United Rock of Ages Missionary Church, and the orientation were insightful experiences for our group. We prepared that evening to assist with some typical camp stations, such as crafts, recreation, reading, and music.

Early on Monday morning, July 2, we prepared the camp’s makeshift music room, which was the executive director’s office. Two college interns who grew up in Shaw and two HABC youth managed the station and encouraged participation from the campers. An energetic group of eight to ten-year-old boys walked into the room just after 9:00 a.m. We sat in a circle and introduced ourselves to one another. I proceeded with warm-ups that served as fun ice-breakers, including an upbeat arrangement of “Soon and Very Soon” from the 2018 VBS curriculum published by Group, Inc. As we began playing the video of the song that also featured a

soundtrack and choreography, the students began singing and dancing the dance movements prescribed by the video. Unknown to our group, the same VBS material had been used at the day camp in consecutive weeks by two different church groups earlier in June.

As an alternative, I turned to a group of songs from the [Justice Choir Songbook](#).<sup>59</sup> I was introduced to the songbook in Fall 2017 and had already incorporated a handful of songs in rehearsals and concerts at FSCJ, UNF, and HABC. The HABC youth choir learned “[Another World Is Possible](#),” “[Be the Change](#),” “[Resilience](#),” “[I Lift My Voice](#),” and Mark Miller’s “Draw the Circle.”<sup>60</sup> We used these songs for the camp. They were easily teachable by rote, singable, and reinforced themes of community, justice, and advocacy.

Later during that first morning, a skeptical group of ten to twelve-year-old girls walked slowly into the music room (see figure 3.4). The majority of them did not want to sing, and a few individuals only uttered the words of the songs the entire session. I introduced a couple of the Justice Choir songs, which were met with silence. This group was suspicious of me. They did not



Figure 3.4 Meeting with the group of 10 to 12-year-old girls at DHH.

<sup>59</sup> “Justice Choir Songbook,” <https://www.justicechoir.org/songbook/> (accessed March 27, 2021).

<sup>60</sup> “Another World Is Possible,” <http://songs.justicechoir.org/AnotherWorld> (accessed March 27, 2021); “Be the Change,” <http://songs.justicechoir.org/BeTheChange> (accessed March 27, 2021); “Resilience,” <http://songs.justicechoir.org/Resilience> (accessed March 27, 2021); “I Lift My Voice,” <http://songs.justicechoir.org/ILiftMyVoice> (accessed March 27, 2021).

trust the bearded white man sitting before them teaching songs of justice. I reconsidered my approach. For the remaining days, I invited the two college workers from DHH and the two middle schoolers from HABC to lead the music for this particular group while I participated as a facilitator when needed. This group of girls later sang with all of us at the end of each day and ended up being some of the most enthusiastic of all the children.

The remaining three groups, which included children as young as seven and youth as old as sixteen, engaged with the justice choir songs, especially the Flobot's "Another World Is Possible" ([video 5](#)).<sup>61</sup> The older boys, ages 13–16, added improvised vocal responses and rhythmic accompaniment on the *djembe* throughout the week. "Draw the Circle," "Be the Change," and "Resilience" also became camp favorites. As soon as lunch time ended—or sometimes at the end of the day—some of the children would gather together asking to sing "our new songs," according to one DHH camper (see figures 3.5 and 3.6).



Figure 3.5 Singing "our new songs" after lunch.

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<sup>61</sup> "DHH Music Station: Another World Is Possible" (February 19, 2021), <https://youtu.be/br39Q8um4YQ> (accessed March 27, 2021).



Figure 3.6 Singing prior to dismissal.

Together we shared these songs, added clapping and movements, and discussing the significance of the words for their lives. We listened. Singing songs of justice and inclusion together created solidarity, most importantly. There was no pressure to perform for parents, make a recording, or put together a large-scale production. The music station and the selected songs provided a non-formal environment and common ground. Though learning the songs and strengthening our singing abilities were an important part of the groups' activities each morning, we discovered that this was not the most crucial outcome. We found, instead, singing together empowered the group as a whole to weaken the color line through shared song and community. Musicking created a non-threatening soundscape that allowed for shared vulnerability and truth-



telling. We learned more about one another through our times of singing. We formed friendships, and created new partnerships (see figure 3.7).



Figure 3.7 Breaking bread together at the end of our week together.

On the morning of Sunday, June 7, 2018, as the HABC young people returned home and stood in front of the HABC congregation, they shared the stories of Shaw, Mississippi, and Delta Hands for Hope, in word, images, and song. As pictures from the trip were projected on a screen, the HABC youth sang “our new songs,” providing the start of another possible direction for singing at HABC. On the last night in Shaw, DHH leadership charged our group to seek justice in Jacksonville and speak out against racism and hunger. The group committed to finding ways to expand our missional reach through singing at home.

## **The HAB Singers: Priestly, Pastoral, and Prophetic Musickers**

The experience of singing with children and youth at Delta Hands for Hope accelerated the continued implementation of a multigenerational, multifaceted missional group of singers equipped to musick in a variety of situations: worship, home visitation, and advocacy. The functionality of the HAB Singers is radically different than the standard adult church choir. The group is an expansion of the youth choir and includes parents, siblings, and any member of the congregation that loves to sing with other people. The group prepares to sing in different contexts, often on short notice. The ensemble maintains a fresh repertoire of relatively short, unaccompanied songs that are quickly learned and easily remembered. Rehearsal times are brief (20–30 minutes) and scheduled during the latter half of the youth choir’s hour-long rehearsal on Sunday evenings, 5:00–6:00 p.m. Additional rehearsal times are offered during the week if members cannot gather on Sunday evenings. Recorded parts and virtual rehearsals are also offered in order to include as many people as possible that want to participate at any given moment. Rarely is the full group gathered together, except on a Sunday morning.

Randall Bradley asserts that music can be an agent for the missional church, because singing songs that have a missional focus in worship helps to form a congregation’s beliefs and actions. He observes, “In the same way that music helps to shape us theologically, music will shape us missionally. As songs are written that are more missional in concept and priority, they will impact the church.”<sup>62</sup> The HAB Singers have taken on the responsibility of introducing justice-oriented congregational songs such as Lori True’s setting of Shirley Erena Murray text, “A Place at the Table,” and Mark Miller and Laurie Zelman’s “Welcome,” and Miller’s setting

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<sup>62</sup> C. Randall Bradley, *From Memory to Imagination*, 143–144.

of Carl P. Daw Jr.'s text, "God Has Work for Us to Do."<sup>63</sup> By teaching new songs and inviting the larger congregation to join in song, the multigenerational group of singers provides hospitable musicking. Sometimes from risers (see figure 3.8) or spread throughout the aisles, the HAB Singers have a visual presence and musical energy, and they exude an inclusive spirit through their vocal sound of many timbres (ages), their repertoire (unison, repetitive sections, welcoming texts), and their instrumentation (guitar, piano, cajón, tambourine, clapping, etc.).



Figure 3.8 The HAB Singers.

Not all music sung by the HAB Singers is short and memorized. Occasionally, the group uses hymnals, especially when gathered at the homes of congregation members. Days prior to an in-home visit, I email, text, and message ensemble members informing them that a hymn sing will take place with a church member on an upcoming Sunday. I request that whoever can sing

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<sup>63</sup> Mark Miller, "Welcome" and "God Has Work for Us to Do," in *Roll Down Justice! Sacred Songs and Social Justice* (Dallas: Choristers Guild, 2015), 15, 67.



on that Sunday meet in the choir room at 4:30 p.m. to rehearse the church member's three on that hymns. The rehearsal only lasts 15 minutes. We pack up hymnals and load cars to travel to the person's residence or alternative location (see figure 3.9). After arriving, I have a casual conversation with the church member and ask them about their years at HABC, their involvement, and about their life in Jacksonville. We then sing the three hymns and invite the person to talk about why the hymns are personally meaningful. Rev. Britt Hester, church's youth minister, closes with a word of prayer. Final conversations ensue for a few minutes before leaving. The time together generally lasts about 30 minutes.



Figure 3.9 The HAB Singers sing with a church member.

As early Christians gathered in homes for worship, this particular outlet for missional musicking combines the significant aspect of pastoral care with song and community. Intergenerational connections are counter-cultural in a society that separates people according to age, as Bradley observes: “In order for the church to function at its best, it should be intergenerational.” He later adds, “[Intergenerational worship] does model the true body of Christ, and there is no known substitute for the impact it can offer.”<sup>64</sup> Singing in small groups in homes has proven meaningful for everyone involved (see figure 3.10). One of the church members whose house we visited shared in an email, “Loved the feeling of conquering the age gap and the happy faces. It was an enriching and wonderful experience. The feeling of togetherness was awesome!”<sup>65</sup> One of the older adult singers responded, “The best part was the joy on the faces of those we visited. Every voice was needed and important but perfect singing was not what we expected nor did those we visited. Enthusiasm for singing together was important.”<sup>66</sup>



Figure 3.10 The HAB Singers sing with a church member at home.

<sup>64</sup> Randall Bradley, *From Memory to Imagination*, 175.

<sup>65</sup> Don Williams, email, January 27, 2020.

<sup>66</sup> Joyce Hanson, email, January 25, 2020.

Our church pianist, who went on every home visit, shared that “The kids were much more apt to sing [hymns] in this environment than [in the congregation] during worship because they knew they had a specific responsibility.”<sup>67</sup> Perhaps the most insightful comment came from one of the youth singers, who replied, “Singing hymns together and hearing the stories from the older generation helped me appreciate the presence of Christ’s love in our congregation.”<sup>68</sup> Intergenerational and pastoral musicking provides opportunity to strengthen the bonds of a church community in the context of one’s residence, often while a person’s health is in decline.

On two occasions members of the HAB Singers participated in community events related to current social issues. On June 24, 2018, a few of the HAB Singers joined forces with a handful of choral students from FSCJ and UNF to lead the singing at a Families Belong Together Interfaith Vigil (see figures 3.11 and 3.12). This was the first opportunity for the HAB Singers and UNF and FSCJ students to participate in public advocacy through singing. The gathering, held at the Unitarian Universalist sanctuary, was one of many around the country. The evening was filled with impassioned speeches by clergy, political advocates, and local immigrants. We facilitated musicking at various points during the assembly by singing “Be the Change” ([video 6](#)), “Child of God” ([video 7](#)), and “Another World Is Possible” ([video 8](#)).<sup>69</sup> One singer from HABC was “moved by the hope of the service, singing with people of different faiths and ethnicities as a call to action” against the separation of children from parents along the Mexico-United States border and in support of immigrants and refugees in local communities.<sup>70</sup> The event continues to serve as a reference point as we invite others to musick with us.

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<sup>67</sup> Laraine Humbert, email, January 27, 2020.

<sup>68</sup> Maddie Weise, text message, January 26, 2020.

<sup>69</sup> “Families Together Vigil: Be the Change” (February 19, 2021), <https://youtu.be/Wqvje8oeNV0> (accessed March 27, 2021); “Families Together Vigil: Child of God” (February 19, 2021), <https://youtu.be/ZToQR1iP12E> (accessed March 27, 2021); “Families Together Vigil: Another World Is Possible” (February 19, 2021), <https://youtu.be/CYTikTs9pvY> (accessed March 27, 2021).

<sup>70</sup> Justin Weise, text message, January 28, 2020.



Figure 3.11 Musicking for the Families Belong Together Vigil.



Figure 3.12 Musicking during the candlelight vigil.

The second public vigil occurred on November 18, 2008, at Memorial Park in the Riverside section of Jacksonville—the same location as the attempted lynching of James Weldon Johnson. The Interfaith Vigil for Victims of Gun Violence was attended by a conglomeration of clergy, advocacy groups, city officials, and relatives of those who were killed. After receiving



the invitation to create an ensemble of singers for the vigil, I invited the DMAB All Stars to join the HAB Singers, renaming the combined group the Jacksonville Community Singers for the event. Within the public liturgy of prayer, speeches, and the lighting of candles, The DMAB All Stars sang their arrangement of Marvin Gaye’s “What’s Going On” (see figure 3.13). The Jacksonville Community Singers sang “Be the Change” and Mark Miller’s “I Choose Love,” with the crowd of people singing stanzas 3 and 4 (see figure 3.14).



Figure 3.13 The All Stars sing for the vigil for victims of gun violence.



Figure 3.14 The All Stars and HAB Singers sing at the vigil.

The vigil, which turned into a rally, was emotionally heavy. The combined group of singers, who had never sung together before this evening, were vocally apprehensive while leading the community sing selections. As facilitator, my presence was needed more than I prefer. Due to the late nature of the communication from event organizers requesting singers, there was little time to schedule a rehearsal prior to the event. Regardless, an attendee voluntarily shared after the service ended that the combined singing brought deeper action and symbolism to the vigil because “we usually just have a soloist.” Her point was made. Singing collectively enlivened our voices, proclaiming truth to darkness and supplying reassurance to the grieving.

After the vigil ended that evening, the DMAB All Stars and the HAB Singers went to a pizza restaurant in a nearby neighborhood for dinner and fellowship. Eating, conversing, and filling the restaurant with laughter highlighted the importance of relationship and collaboration. Building community through the arts requires vision and patience; but, perhaps more importantly, connecting with like-hearted people is critical. In retelling the story of the HAB Singers, I am reminded how many connections are made between church, academy, non-profit, and the community organizers that go unnamed in this chapter. Working collaboratively with others is the responsibility we share in God’s creation and as the Body of Christ.

Missional musicking provides an ethical component for pastoral musicians who join the prophetic work to edify the local community and fight injustices. Entering a more inclusive, participatory song outside the church is a breath of fresh air clearing additional ways for God’s work to give new life. In the next chapter, I prescribe a pneumatology of singing that connects missional musicking to the life-giving breath of the Spirit, our relationship with the Trinity through our baptism, and the responsibility to form more equitable communities reflective of the earliest Christian community as recorded in Acts 2. I explore the theological and practical

implications for pastoral musicians and the restructuring the music ministry at HABC based on the musicking experiences recorded in this chapter. I share some closing thoughts on “white work” and anti-racism, particularly as they pertain to cross-cultural musicking. After discussing my own missteps, challenges, and increasing awareness, I conclude the chapter with recommended ways musicians in white church can join the journey for racial justice.

*I began to see the music itself  
as an important organizing tool . . .  
not only to bring them together but also as  
the organizational glue to hold them together.*

*I started to give people the responsibility  
of thinking about a song that they  
want to sing that night.<sup>71</sup>*

*—Sam Block (1939–2000)  
Mississippi Civil Rights leader*

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<sup>71</sup> Sam Block’s quote is displayed at the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum in Jackson, Mississippi. He was from Bolivar County, MS, living near Shaw in Cleveland, MS. Block was beaten on August 13, 1962, for his voter registration efforts.

## CHAPTER 4:

### I'M GONNA SING WHEN THE SPIRIT SAYS SING

*God pours the Holy Spirit on all those who believe,  
on women, men, and children who would God's grace receive.  
That Spirit knows no limit, bestowing life and power.  
The church, formed and reforming, responds in every hour.<sup>1</sup>*

*—Jane Parker Huber,  
from the hymn “On Pentecost They Gathered”*

On October 15, 2016, representatives from Mount Olive Primitive Baptist Church and Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church (HABC) met for a conversation about racism. The event, “Beyond the Back of the Bus,” was held on the HABC campus and sponsored by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida.<sup>2</sup> The four-hour session was planned and facilitated by two New Baptist Covenant employees.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the morning participants engaged in fellowship and dialogue. There were moments of intense discourse, difficult conversations, and personal stories from the panel of local speakers, which included local Black clergy and a representative from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Florida State Conference. They shared experiences and perspectives, which at times created discomfort for some of the white people in the room. Tensions increased as the two facilitators from the New Baptist Covenant continued guiding discussion throughout the morning.

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<sup>1</sup> © 1981 Westminster John Knox Press. Used by permission. From Jane Parker Huber, “On Pentecost They Gathered,” in *Celebrating Grace: Hymnal for Baptist Worship* (Macon: Celebrating Grace, Inc., 2010), 225.

<sup>2</sup> The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida, <https://www.floridacbf.org/> (accessed April 19, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> The New Baptist Covenant was formed in 2007 under the leadership of President Jimmy Carter. He brought together Baptist leaders in the United States representing 30 Baptist organizations and over 20 million people to form a new group of Baptists working towards unity and justice. Covenant of Actions are formed partnerships between two congregations in a local area that work together on pressing social issues. <https://newbaptistcovenant.org/our-calling-new/> (accessed February 21, 2021).



The event concluded with lunch and a worship service. I was tasked with leading music. After witnessing the dynamics from the morning interactions, I skipped lunch in order to reconfigure the final moments of worship. I planned a time of prayer and affirmation around Mark Miller's "Child of God" after hearing powerful words from the NAACP representative. She stated she was not a label, a color of skin, or a stereotype. She proclaimed, "I am a child of God!"

In the final moments of our worship together, when communion ended, I asked everyone to stand and spread out around the room. I began singing the second stanza of "Child of God": "No matter what people say, say or think about you, you are a child, you are a child of God."<sup>4</sup> As I repeated the second stanza, I invited everyone to enter the song, instructing them to stand face-to-face with another person in the room as they continued singing and repeating the second stanza, finding new partners and repeatedly singing the second stanza. After a while, I ended with the final portion of "Child of God" as a solo:

And there is no thing or no one who can separate,  
they can't separate you from the truth that that you're someone,  
you are family, you are meant to be a child of God!  
You are a child of God!<sup>5</sup>

The combination of singing and repositioning our bodies moved us away from earlier tensions and moved us into a more reflective space around our common identity at the Table.

Many in attendance were encouraged by musicking together. The morning ended with hugs, tears, and laughter, but the realities of the tension remained, despite the beauty of the moment. The larger goal envisioned by organizers was never realized. They intended the

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<sup>4</sup> © 2015 Choristers Guild. Used by permission. From Mark Miller, "Child of God," in *Roll Down, Justice! Sacred Songs and Social Justice* (Dallas: Choristers Guild, 2015), 26.

<sup>5</sup> Miller, "Child of God," 26.

morning's conversation to serve as a preamble for a [covenant of action](#), with both congregations agreeing to work on one pressing issue in the city.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, later attempts to reconvene leadership for further dialogue proved unsuccessful due to scheduling conflicts between the two pastors and the congregations.

John Bell, a leader in the renewal of congregational song who serves the Iona Community, observes, “We cannot all speak together, but we can all sing together.”<sup>7</sup> Bell’s statement in his book, *The Singing Thing*, is a pragmatic one. He is referring to the sometimes-unsuccessful coordination of many voices collectively speaking during a public litany or reading.<sup>8</sup> His quote also carries, I believe, a more implicit meaning: singing songs in community brings together diverse voices in ways that conversation cannot. For Bell, “music provides us with a regular pulse or beat, ensuring that we keep in time with each other. And even should we get a note wrong or mispronounce a word, we will soon rejoin the chorus of other people’s voices.”<sup>9</sup> As the HAB Singers experienced with people in Shaw, Mississippi, HABC members in residences, and citizens of Duval County in the public square, singing brings people together—if sometimes just in the moment. Singing in missional contexts creates soundscapes where people transcend social barriers and bridge cultural and generational differences, creating the opportunity to form relationship.

In this final chapter, I explore the theological and practical implications of missional singing. Keeping in mind the musicking experiences in Chapter 3, I provide a pneumatology of singing that is connected to our baptism and “the strong name of the Trinity,” who breathes,

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<sup>6</sup> See the covenant of action at <https://newbaptistcovenant.org/what-is-a-covenant-of-action/>.

<sup>7</sup> John L. Bell, *The Singing Thing: A Case for Congregational Singing* (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2000), 17.

<sup>8</sup> Bell, *The Singing Thing*, 17.

<sup>9</sup> Bell, *The Singing Thing*, 17.

loves, and transforms.<sup>10</sup> According to Philip Butin, “the historic trinitarian faith is precisely where Christians should look for intrinsically Christian ways of encouraging and developing new, more egalitarian and participatory relationships and structures throughout society, especially those concerning gender, race, culture, and class.”<sup>11</sup> I explore three different qualities of the Spirit as presented in the Bible as they directly relate to missional singing. Identifying three terms associated with the Spirit in scripture—*rûah* (breath), *paráklētos* (advocate), *koinonia* (community)—I focus in more detail on what it means to participate in an inclusive style of singing in community. I also prescribe recommendations for the missional musicker and outline strategies for restructuring musicking at HABC to include a social justice element. The work that underlies this thesis is only the first step of a longer journey. First steps are sometimes exciting and wonderful, but they are often short, unstable, and sometimes lead to setbacks or stumbling along the way. At the end of the chapter, I offer some thoughts on joining the racial justice journey. I share stories of my own shortcomings and missteps as a privileged white musician, and highlight the importance of the Spirit’s guidance throughout.

### **Toward a Pneumatology of Singing**

Singers are keenly aware of the importance of breathing. As Alice Parker states, “Breath is to the singer as the floor is to the dancer. There is no way to escape this human necessity. It is woven into the fabric of all song.”<sup>12</sup> Indeed, singing and breathing are intertwined with our humanity. Perhaps at no other time in recent history has the world been reminded of how critical breathing is to human existence—from George Floyd’s cry, “I can’t breathe,” to 2.6 million

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<sup>10</sup> Philip Butin, *The Trinity* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Butin, *The Trinity*, 11–12.

<sup>12</sup> Alice Parker, *The Anatomy of Melody: Exploring the Single Line of Song* (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2006), 67.

COVID-19 deaths worldwide in just over one year.<sup>13</sup> Early on in the pandemic, singers were also made acutely aware of the dangers of COVID-19 when early reports of superspreader events involving choirs made news headlines.<sup>14</sup> Since then, the singing world has largely been on pause. There is hope, however, with the advent and availability of three COVID-19 vaccines in 2021. As the Spirit of God “put new breath” into the valley of dry bones, the Spirit will enliven our songs again and voices will reunite when the Spirit says sing.<sup>15</sup> Come, Holy Spirit, come.

### **Inclusion: *Rûah* and the Spirit of God**

According to the book of Genesis, the spirit of God hovered over creation, ordered chaos, and breathed life into human beings (Gen 1:1–4; 2:7). This first breath serves as the primary source of a pneumatology of singing, just as air supports the singer’s voice. The embodied breath of life is rooted in the Hebrew term *rûah*, which is associated with the spirit of God identified in the Hebrew narrative of the Bible. *Rûah*, while difficult to fully define in English, is traditionally translated as wind, breath, and/or spirit.<sup>16</sup> Alister McGrath states that the term’s usage in scripture demonstrates the various interpretations and actions performed by the spirit of God (e.g., Gen 1:2, 2:7; Exod 14:21; Psalm 104:30; Ps 103:15–18; Isa 40:7; Job 26:12–13, 33:4; Ezek 2:1–2; 37:1–14; Joel 2:28–32). The references to the work of the spirit inform

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<sup>13</sup> First reports included the 8’46” length of time, which became symbolic of the rallying cries of protesters in the Summer of 2020. After further analysis through different investigations, the actual length of time changed. See Evan Hill, et al, “How George Floyd Was Killed in Police Custody,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/us/george-floyd-investigation.html> (accessed March 2, 2021); Also see Meredith Deliso, “Timeline: The impact of George Floyd’s death in Minneapolis and beyond,” <https://abcnews.go.com/US/timeline-impact-george-floyds-death-minneapolis/story?id=70999322> (accessed March 2, 2021).

<sup>14</sup> See “A choir decided to go ahead with rehearsal. Now dozens of members have COVID-19 and two are dead,” <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-03-29/coronavirus-choir-outbreak> (accessed March 11, 2021); and, “Choir practice in Spain infects 30 of 41 members with virus,” <https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-archive-spain-pandemics-644e50389c4290559e7a5486b32d5847> (accessed March 11, 2021).

<sup>15</sup> cf. Ezekiel 37: 1–14; I also reference the spiritual, “I’m Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing.”

<sup>16</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2001), 307.

later interpretations of the Holy Spirit as recorded in the Gospel of John, Acts, and writings of Paul.<sup>17</sup>

In *Liberation, (de)Coloniality, and Liturgical Practices: Flipping the Song Bird*, Becca Whitla incorporates *rûah* as part of her liberating singing praxis that “advocates a participatory embodied spirit-infused practice of congregational singing.”<sup>18</sup> In her opening pages, she summarizes the sacred connection between breath, the spirit of God, and communal singing:

Initiated by drawing or ‘inspiring’ breath—*ruach* in Hebrew or *pneuma* in Greek—into ourselves, we activate our vocal cords by pushing the air back out through our mouths into the world. From this space, the liberating action of the Holy Spirit invites us to be open to the transforming and creative power of our collective action as we re-enact and participate in God’s original and ongoing action of creation. Together the human and the Divine become eschatological co-workers, building and embodying God’s kin-dom through the deepest kind of concrete engagement, simultaneously listening and “speaking” in our sung expressions, feeling, and our breathing together, mutually attentive in the song and its singing. Our personal vocalizations are transformed into a collective action that is one of the primary modes of embodied ritual expression, integrating our whole selves—our bodies, minds, and spirits.<sup>19</sup>

Singing with others is a sacred act, a spiritual discipline that begins with Holy Breath. Judith Kubicki observes that singing together—the collective breath, sound, and movement of our bodies—enables people to move closer to divine action and unity, giving us a performative knowledge “that comes from deep faith and deep emotion that is felt and expressed through one’s very breath and in one’s very bones.”<sup>20</sup> Holy Breath, originating deep in the origins of the body created in the image of God, enlivens our singing by connecting our voices more broadly through our shared humanity and transforms the soul more profoundly in our relationship with the Triune God.

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<sup>17</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 307.

<sup>18</sup> Becca Whitla, *Liberation, (de)Coloniality, and Liturgical Practices: Flipping the Song Bird* (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 3–4, ProQuest Ebook Central (accessed March 3, 2021).

<sup>19</sup> Whitla, *Liberation, (de)Coloniality, and Liturgical Practices*, 4–5.

<sup>20</sup> Judith M. Kubicki, *The Song of the Singing Assembly: A Theology of Christian Hymnody* (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2017), 140–141.

## **Inclusive Musicking: Let All Who Have Life and Breath**

In her liberationist approach to congregational singing, Whitla encourages a robust philosophy of inclusion that “insists that all are welcome to sing; all voices regardless of training or timbre are enjoined to praise God.”<sup>21</sup> Likewise, Higgins and Willingham note the significance of hospitality in the field of community music, where an “open-door policy” welcomes the stranger even while not yet knowing the challenges that may occur in the musicking process. As a result, inclusive singing requires musickers who can make quick but knowledgeable decisions based on ability, need, and individual personalities. As noted in Chapter 1, musicking in these situations evolves because the projected goals may change. Creativity and flexibility are messy but more effective than rigidity. Musickers have to be skilled at “flexible purposing” to handle the musical, cultural, or behavioral difficulty that may develop in order to reach the collaborative goal.<sup>22</sup> Culturally responsive leadership and flexible purposing are critical to missional musicking, as demonstrated in the Chapter 3 case studies.

Inclusive musicking also means forming partnerships like those between Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ), Don’t Miss a Beat (DMAB), the University of North Florida (UNF), and HABC. These organizations represent different visions, cultures, ages, and locations within the city. However, they all have a heart to improve lives, expand people’s musicality, and enrich the community as a whole. Sometimes practicing inclusion means practicing humility and letting down one’s territorial guard. Musicians in congregations already model inclusivity and flexibility while also balancing beauty and excellence inside the church walls. Pastoral musicians can extend the same hospitality when singing with other organizations in a community while

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<sup>21</sup> Whitla, *Liberation, (de)Coloniality, and Liturgical Practices*, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Lee Higgins and Lee Willingham, *Engaging Community Music: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 41.

recognizing that they might be the individual, as I felt on occasion, needing the grace and acceptance as they walk into an unfamiliar musicking context. The collaborative process requires nimble and improvisatory skills for everyone involved so that the musical environment remains hospitable and open for all to participate.<sup>23</sup>

### **Participation: *Paráklētos* and Jesus Christ**

Musickers must not hesitate to participate in the public square by faithfully imitating the wide and accepting, deep and welcoming, strong and everlasting, sacrificial kind of love practiced by Jesus. He loved the tax collector and the widow. He loved those closest to him and those who stood afar. He sought out the Samaritan on the side of the road and the woman at the well. He spoke up for the marginalized and defended the outcast. Missional musicians impacting the local community lean on the remembrance of Jesus' ministry and words in order to work as Jesus worked in the streets, marketplace, and homes. According to the Gospel of John, the Spirit as *Paráklētos* (i.e., paraclete), serves in this capacity, as a kind of Holy Memorious (i.e., John 14:16–17; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7–11; 16:12–15).<sup>24</sup>

The Greek term, *paráklētos*, can be interpreted as “the one who exhorts,” “the one who comforts,” the one who helps,” and “the one who makes appeals on one’s behalf.”<sup>25</sup> English translations of the Bible include “Comforter” (KJV), “Counselor” (NIV), and “Advocate” (NRSV). In John 20:19–23, Jesus appears to his disciples following the resurrection, breathes on them, and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (NRSV). This fulfills his word recorded earlier in John 14:15–17, when he declares: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask

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<sup>23</sup> Higgins and Willingham, *Engaging Community Music*, 68–69.

<sup>24</sup> Gail R. O'Day, “The Gospel of John,” in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, v. IX (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 747, 775.

<sup>25</sup> O'Day, “The Gospel of John,” 747.

the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth.” Later in the chapter, Jesus continues:

I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. (John 14:25–27, NRSV)

Gail R. O’Day contends the paraclete is an extension of Jesus—a way for the ministry of Jesus to be carried forward by his disciples and the early believing community. She highlights the use of the phrase “another Paraclete” in John 14:15, implying that Jesus, too, was a paraclete (Jesus is named advocate/paraclete in 1 John 2:1).<sup>26</sup> The Johannine picture of the Spirit, according to O’Day, is one that “keeps the [Christian] community grounded in Jesus’ revelation of God.”<sup>27</sup> The paraclete serves as a witness and teacher, remembering the words and works of Jesus while also reinterpreting them for the faith community. This allows for “a fresh experience of the Word of God” while also safeguarding the past.<sup>28</sup> In other words, the Advocate continues guiding Christians in what it means to be faithful participants in the work of Jesus, providing wisdom and knowledge and opening up the very nature of the Word.

The Spirit as paraclete guides our study, prayer, and discernment of the Word so we may discover where we are most needed to lift our voice and sing for justice. Taking songs into the public square requires strength and courage, remembering that the peace of Jesus Christ goes before us when we sing across divisive lines and sing down the privileged walls that protect systemic injustices. The Spirit guides us in negotiating the balance of hegemonic forces within the white church and inspires us to sing freely out from the trappings of complacency and

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<sup>26</sup> O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” 747.

<sup>27</sup> Gail R. O’Day, “Excursus: The Paraclete,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, v. IX (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 776–777.

<sup>28</sup> O’Day, “Excursus: The Paraclete,” 774–778.



racism. Musickers are advocating voices that proclaim the Word through their songs, presence, and actions. With the Advocate, missional musickers discern new ways to participate in community in order to turn over tables, weep for the dying, defend the most vulnerable, and invite others to sing for justice, love, and belonging.

## **Participatory Musicking**

Lee Higgins and Lee Willingham's *Engaging Community Music: An Introduction* has served as an informative resource in shaping my work in Jacksonville since 2018. Their work has inspired me to explore other ways to musick that encourage advocacy, social well-being, and personal health for people beyond the church's campus. Their witness to the emerging field of community music played an important role in establishing the beginnings of the HAB Singers, for instance.<sup>29</sup> As the ensemble experienced in various situations, musicking is a critical piece in building relationships and transforming community, perhaps even more significant than mastering an instrument or skill, as Higgins and Willingham argue.<sup>30</sup> Community musicians facilitate music making from a "bottom up" approach that gives identity, worth, and power to participants.<sup>31</sup> Musicking in this way invites involvement through conversation and decision-making. A musicking community is formed where people find purpose, self-worth, and dignity. This kind of musicking community unites those with a voice with the voiceless and organizes those with power with the powerless to create a united force for the common good through word and song.

Researchers in the fields of community music and applied ethnomusicology are

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<sup>29</sup> Higgins and Willingham, *Engaging Community Music*, 48–49, 59, 100–101, 108–109.

<sup>30</sup> Higgins and Willingham, *Engaging Community Music*, 59.

<sup>31</sup> Higgins and Willingham, *Engaging Community Music*, 1–4.

increasingly examining the effect music participation has on local communities, especially economically, socially, and politically.<sup>32</sup> Studies on musicking “in times of trouble,” e.g., war, immigration, climate change, and poverty and conflict, imply that participatory music is a social force with transformative powers.<sup>33</sup> Charles Seeger, one of the influential figures in the development of ethnomusicology, observed, “Music, as any art, is not an end in itself, but is a means for achieving larger ends.”<sup>34</sup> One of the more striking examples of this is the story of the Estonian singing revolution, in which a country’s collective singing led to their peaceful independence and freedom from the Soviet Union in the late 1980s.<sup>35</sup> This kind of large-scale event is an example of musicians and a community coming together to serve as a conduit for social, cultural, and political change.

Participatory musicking encourages involvement in the public square, broadens the conversation, and increases empathy and compassion for those we sing for and with. Ulysses Owens, Jr. and I talk regularly about this and plan to seek ways to involve other musicians. We lament the fact that many musicians in our city, more often than not, operate in competing silos. Instead, we envision partnerships through a consortium of musicians that expands participatory musicking from a small scale toward a macro-level of musicking that connects colleagues across zip codes, organizations, and styles. If we are called to eradicate the color line in Jacksonville, participatory musicking does not end with partnerships between Don’t Miss A Beat and Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church. No, participatory musicking also seeks to bring other

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<sup>32</sup> Higgins and Willingham, *Engaging Community Music*, 22.

<sup>33</sup> Klisala Harrison, “The Second Wave of Applied Ethnomusicology,” *MUSICultures* 41, no. 2 (January 2014), 22.

<sup>34</sup> Alec Wilkinson, “Appendix I: The Purposes of Music by Charles Seeger,” in *The Protest Singer: An Intimate Portrait of Pete Singer* (New York City: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 123–124.

<sup>35</sup> Priit Vesilind with James and Maureen Tu, *The Singing Revolution: How Culture Saved a Nation* (Tallinn, Estonia: Varrak Publishers Ltd., 2008).

musicians in a community together in order to make larger impacts for the common good throughout our city.<sup>36</sup>

### **Communal: *Koinonia*, the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity**

On Sunday morning, June 12, 2016, the world awoke to the news of a mass shooting overnight in Orlando, Florida, at a gay nightclub, Pulse. The LGBTQI communities around Florida were devastated. Church members at HABC expressed shock and sadness as reports of the number of people killed in the shooting continued rising. In the choir room that morning, one of our choristers shed tears. He spoke with the choir that his partner owns a gay nightclub in Jacksonville. He was sobbing. He was hurt, and he was very scared. In one of those moments of sheer coincidence, that can only be explained by the mysterious movement of the Holy Spirit, we had printed in the order of worship to introduce Mark Miller's setting of Lindy Thompson's text "I Choose Love" to the HABC congregation. After the soloist introduced the first stanza and the choir sang the second stanza, the entire congregation joined in singing stanzas three and four. With united voices singing, the congregation experienced an unexpected, powerful moment that moved many people to tears with sorrow for an entire marginalized community. People in attendance that morning were overtaken with the power of the song. The Spirit infused peace and comfort through our singing and instilled a stronger sense of community as we sang these words:

When my world falls down, I will rise.  
When my world falls down, explanations can't be found,  
I will climb to Holy Ground. I will rise.

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<sup>36</sup> See Alec Wilkinson, "Appendix I: The Purposes of Music by Charles Seeger," 123–124; Charles Seeger was an innovative thinker in regards to philosophies of musics and approaches to studying different musics. In music education he pushed for the inclusion of folk music, emphasized participation, and underscored communal music-making. The ten maxims in "The Purposes of Music" illustrate Seeger's understanding of music as a force in the democratic process that gives voice to the common person and brings diverse people together for ethical purposes and goals in a society. "The Purposes of Music," included in Appendix I, played a significant role undergirding the premise of my writing and missional work in Jacksonville.

In the midst of pain, I choose love,  
in the midst of pain, sorrow following down like rain.  
I await the Sun again. I choose love.<sup>37</sup>

For centuries, many scholars have recognized the ability of the Holy Spirit to form community, or *koinonia*, through prayer, worship, and song.<sup>38</sup> *Koinonia* is the Greek term for community, or as Philip Butin writes, “the mutual participation in and sharing of divine life, love, and goodness.”<sup>39</sup> The original example of Holy Spirit-infused *koinonia* is in Acts 2 following the sudden arrival of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. After Peter’s prophetic sermon, a new community forms, “[devoting] themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship (*koinonia*), to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:37–42; NRSV). The new fellowship of both Gentiles and Jews, representing sixteen different countries and languages, is brought to life by the Holy Spirit. They mutually participate in providing food for one another, look out for those in need, and act with “goodwill to all people” (Acts 2:43–47; NRSV).

Butin argues that *koinonia* is the model for Christian relationship, just as “God exists in the eternal *koinonia* of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”<sup>40</sup> The Triune God is a “divine community of love” that exemplifies the importance of relationship, interdependence, and shared responsibility.<sup>41</sup> While Butin acknowledges that the concept of *koinonia* occurs within a Christian community—for we are baptized in the “strong name of the Trinity”—he recognizes that “[our] brief glimpses of *koinonia* in the church point us toward God’s ultimate universal purpose: the participation of *all* creatures in the *koinonia* of God’s own trinitarian life.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> © 2015 Choristers Guild. Used by permission. From Lindy Thompson, “I Choose Love,” in *Roll Down, Justice! Sacred Songs and Social Justice* (Dallas: Choristers Guild, 2015), 65.

<sup>38</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 315.

<sup>39</sup> Butin, *The Trinity*, 42.

<sup>40</sup> Butin, *The Trinity*, 96.

<sup>41</sup> Butin, *The Trinity*, 105–112.

<sup>42</sup> Butin, *The Trinity*, 1–12, 113.

Yet, musicking in the public square calls for expanding the concept of community, a kind of pan-*koinonia* that includes other faith traditions and beliefs within a pneumatological framework of singing. As we have already read, the movement of the Spirit as recorded in the Acts 2 narrative provides one path toward interfaith dialogue and collaboration. Cross-cultural and multilinguistic understanding took place on Pentecost, as Gentile and Jew discerned many languages. As a result, new relationships formed. The power of the Holy Spirit has the ability to join others from different backgrounds into fruitful relationships, as was demonstrated in Chapter 3, when songs from the *Justice Choir Songbook* united people of different cultures, races, and faiths in musicking at the Keep Families Together Interfaith Vigil and Call to Action.

### **Communal Musicking: A Global Perspective**

In *Gather into One: Praying and Singing Globally*, Michael Hawn shares the stories of five influential musicians from various parts of the world who have incorporated singing into shaping their local religious, political, and social communities. In Argentina, Pablo Sosa faced ecumenical challenges growing up as a Methodist. Continued political conflicts and economic disparity influenced Sosa's identity as a pastoral musician, creating and introducing songs from indigenous styles to elevate the needs of the marginalized and the poor.<sup>43</sup> His songs allow for full participation and "are crafted to give shape and structure to ecstatic communal experience" (p. 47). I-to Loh is an Asian Christian ethnomusicologist who has worked for decades to give rise to Asian voices and cultural values in liturgies over and against the hegemonic forces of the colonial sensibilities of Western Christianity (and music). Like Sosa, Loh identified a system of musical inculturation and advocated for congregations moving away from alien cultural

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<sup>43</sup> C. Michael Hawn, *Gather into One: Praying and Singing Globally* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 42. In this section, parenthetical page numbers refer to citations from Hawn through page 99.

influences toward more indigenous expressions of faith (p. 89). Father David Dargie served as a kind of “musical liberator” in the time of apartheid for black South Africans. He performed “the song of the oppressed culture” (p. 113), researching and highlighting the heritage of Xhosa Christians and the foundational figure, Ntsikana. Dargie was an advocate not only for Xhosa music but also for people’s cultural and spiritual freedom, equipping them to sing to God in their own voice and in their own ways. Patrick Matsikenyiri, a Shona United Methodist church musician, advanced ways to promote indigenous African church music in Zimbabwe, incorporating some of the salient features of African music, dance, and drumming, such as its oral/aural-ity, the cyclical structure, and the communal nature of music-making (pp. 164–170). And, finally, John Bell developed new resources for music and worship that seek renewal through congregational singing. Bell and the Iona community value singing that facilitate authentic expression, Biblical insights, communal participation, and enriched meaning through symbols (pp. 221–222).

The stories of these musicians reveal a number of insights about missional musicking through song. Innovative singing and diverse repertoire emerge from the contexts of people’s struggles, identities, and faiths. Full participation from the assembled people, whether inside the church or in the public square, is encouraged. Song choices emphasize inclusivity and invite participation through familiar or accessible tunes that are easily learned by the majority of the people. Texts are relatable to the lives of the community and are particularly connected to local socio-political issues and needs. Singing occurs in community, organically lifting the voices into solidarity with one another. Locally inspired approaches, like the ones mentioned above, call for congregations to expand their ability to musick and move away from philosophies of singing that are exclusionary, hierarchical, and specialized.

Unfortunately, participatory musicking has been stifled by commercialism, a professional performance culture, and an aesthetics that arises from specialized training, sound production, and virtuoso talent. John Bell agrees:

In the West we are going into uncharted territory where music is increasingly seen as something which is the preserve of gifted individuals whom others are expected to listen to and admire. The more this aspect of musical culture prevails, the less will ordinary people perceive that it is their prerogative to sing and participate in communal music-making. Therefore, when the Church invites people to sing hymns, it is doing something profoundly counter-cultural. It is both presuming that all can sing, and providing material specifically written so that the whole community can participate.<sup>44</sup>

The tradition of Western European art music in universities, conservatories, and concert stages—by nature—demands a standard of excellence in stylistic integrity, tone quality, diction, intonation, and professional artistry. The argument that musicians in worship should offer their best efforts within their primary musical background and training remains relevant on a number of levels, but the unintended consequence of measuring singing, or music-making of any sort, by recital-level standards can give the impression that the common singing voice is unwelcome and unworthy before God. This “vocal disenfranchisement,” as named by Bell, is hurtful, irresponsible, and contradicts core values of Jesus’ ministry as recorded in the Gospels. Pastoral musicians, if searching to give value to everyone’s voice, can practice musicking that is inclusive, participatory, and communal.

### **The Missional Musicker**

In *The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams*, Zac Hicks develops a “new (old) model” for the worship pastor by exploring sixteen roles musicians perform in the life of a congregation, including the worship pastor as watchful prophet and

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<sup>44</sup> John Bell, *The Singing Thing*, 118.

missionary.<sup>45</sup> The responsibilities outlined by Hicks in the metaphors prophet and missionary speak to the work of the worship pastor in context of the gathered assembly at church. Given the focus of the book, it is understandable that Hicks does not address the possibility of the worship pastor musicking in the community missionally.

Michael Hawn explores the church musician as enlivener as originally defined by Michael Warren.<sup>46</sup> The enlivener “embodies the traditions of a faith community and attempts to explore its fullness by sharing its faith heritage in poetry, songs, rituals, and artifacts.”<sup>47</sup> Elaborating further, Hawn writes that the enlivener “guides a congregation in praying for the world.”<sup>48</sup> And, even though his focus is on the enlivener’s role within the liturgical context, Hawn brings to the surface a number of observations defining the scope of the enlivener’s musical abilities and pedagogical requirements for singing and praying globally that transfer effectively into missional musicking.<sup>49</sup>

Borrowing from these recommendations, along with my personal study and training with Hawn at the Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, I offer a list of skills for missional musicking. The suggestions below are based on experiences in the field combined with scholarship from community music. My hope is the list provides a starting place for the congregational musician beginning missional musicking through singing. If musicking with people who are differently abled, especially with individuals unable to hear and/or phonate, the missional musicker should include other ways of making music, such as handclapping, rhythm

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<sup>45</sup> Zac Hicks, *The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 17.

<sup>46</sup> Hawn, *Gather into One*, 242.

<sup>47</sup> Hawn, *Gather into One*, 242.

<sup>48</sup> Hawn, *Gather into One*, 242.

<sup>49</sup> Hawn, *Gather into One*, 254–259.



instruments, and movement.<sup>50</sup>

## **So, You Want to Musick Missionally?**

### Community Skills

1. The missional musicker is sensitive to “culturally diverse environments, including race, gender, religion, and socio-economic status.”<sup>51</sup> The missional musicker is there to form relationships, better the wider community, and serve as a loving and empathetic representative from the Christian community.
2. The missional musicker partners and collaborates with other musicians. Networking between institutions and local artists is critical in navigating the social, political, and musical circles that plan for relevant events such as vigils and protests.
3. The missional musicker provides powerful and meaningful musical experiences that promote belonging, participation, and authentic contribution, and encouraging other forms of musicking with people who are differently abled (see paragraph and note above).
4. The missional musicker stays in touch with current events and is well-versed on all sides of an issue.
5. The missional musicker “works behind the scenes,” “calls forth the gifts of others,” and works for transformation.<sup>52</sup>

### Musicking Skills

1. The missional musicker is a prepared, creative musician that serves as a facilitator, thoughtfully guiding people through “live” environments. As a facilitator, the missional musicker has good presence and is equipped to share and teach a song quickly and effectively.
2. The missional musicker possesses social awareness and people skills. In facilitating songs at events and in crowds, the missional musicker must adjust

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<sup>50</sup> Community music encourages musicking with all people regardless of abilities. See focus on Donald Devito in Higgins and Willingham, *Engaging In Community Music*, 56–59. Devito works with students with severe disabilities. Also see “Don Devito,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qn4oXpM1JT4> (accessed April 1, 2021). Other resources that might serve as entry points include Michael Bakan, *Speaking for Ourselves: Conversations on Life, Music, and Autism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Joseph N. Strauss, *Extraordinary Measures: Disability in Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); and, Barbara J. Newman and Betty Grit, *Accessible Gospel, Inclusive Worship* (Scotts Valley, California: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016).

<sup>51</sup> Higgins and Willingham, *Engaging Community Music*, 168.

<sup>52</sup> Hawn, *Gather into One*, 259.

musically and socially in fluid situations.

3. The missional musicker sings, using the voice as “the primary medium for teaching.”<sup>53</sup> This does not require formal vocal training. One needs a singing voice that is clear, confident, and musically proficient to sing unaccompanied. Other ways of musicking besides singing should be included for people who are differently abled (see paragraph and note above).
4. The missional musicker listens, invites, and supports the singing of the ensemble and/or crowd with appropriate gestures and clear cues during teaching and singing. Exercising patience, humility, empathy, and humor are critical.<sup>54</sup>
5. The missional musicker seeks out short, appropriate songs that will fit a variety of contexts and situations. Collecting ideas for repertoire is an ongoing process that requires imagination, time, and energy.

### **Why Not? Dreaming New Dreams at Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church**

The traditional lines that typically define the music and worship of a congregation are blurring. Recent scholarship in church music demonstrates the ambiguity. Randall Bradley describes the Church as “re-forming” in an “ecumenical age” and calls for “re-imagining” the structure of a congregation’s music program.<sup>55</sup> In the area of worship, Sandra Maria Van Opstal explores “approaches, forms and styles of multicultural worship” that prescribe philosophical and practical ideas moving forward.<sup>56</sup> In *Taking It to the Streets: Using Arts to Transform Your Community*, J. Nathan Corbin and Vivian Nix-Early explore a “horizontal arts theology” for community mission and engagement. Their NU JERUZ model incorporates three kinds of community artists—urban prophets, agape artists, and celebrative artists—and illustrate the roles they play in community and social development.

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<sup>53</sup> Hawn, *Gather into One*, 257.

<sup>54</sup> Higgins and Willingham, *Engaging Community Music*, 171.

<sup>55</sup> Randall Bradley, *From Memory to Imagination: Reforming the Church’s Music* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 221–224, 235.

<sup>56</sup> Sandra Maria Van Opstal, *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 16–17.

*Taking It to the Streets* has been formative in developing the musicking model outlined below, assisting greatly in dreaming new ways a congregation can enter into missional musicking with the people already working to improve a community without the ulterior motive of evangelism or church growth.<sup>57</sup> The approach taken by Corbitt and Nix-Early has impacted the spirit in which I have started identifying new possibilities at HABC. They utilize Jürgen Moltman's *Theology of Play* which views the concept of play as a liberating force for individuals and the Church.<sup>58</sup> Moltman's idea of good play is like an antidote, drawn from the joy of God's creation, used to heal the church from an unhealthy work ethic that infiltrated the Body of Christ in the mid- to late-twentieth century.<sup>59</sup> Corbitt and Nix observe that Christians driven to do the work of the church, such as worship, heal, comfort, feed, attract, raise money, and liberate, have forgotten the important matter of joy.<sup>60</sup> They argue that the power of play helps us escape such things as habitual ruts, overthinking, fear of failure, and burnout.

Like Corbitt and Nix-Early, other scholars have also examined the idea of play and the worship arts from other angles. Marcell Silva Steuernagel, in his chapter "Making Special, Play, and Change," delves deeply into the concept of play in relation to performing music in the context of Christian worship and reminds the reader that playing with theology and tradition has always been a serious matter of negotiating truth and identity in church music.<sup>61</sup> In reimagining the use of the arts in a congregation, Michael Bauer calls for Christians to "recover our sense of innocence, of abandonment, and of creative freedom" in order to be more child-like in

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<sup>57</sup> J. Nathan Corbitt and Vivian Nix-Early, *Taking It to the Streets: Using the Arts to Transform Your Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 34.

<sup>58</sup> Corbitt & Nix-Early, *Taking It to the Streets*, 76–78.

<sup>59</sup> Corbitt & Nix-Early, *Taking It to the Streets*, 77.

<sup>60</sup> Corbitt & Nix-Early, *Taking It to the Streets*, 77.

<sup>61</sup> See Marcell Silva Steuernagel, "Making Special, Play, and Change," in *Church Music Through the Lens of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

reimagining art ministry through play.<sup>62</sup> Randall Bradley encourages play in the revisioning of a church's music program, observing that a "playground provides a leveling place" where "we learn to see beyond color, gender, economic status, social standing, cultural capital, and education."<sup>63</sup> These insights stress the importance of play and its place in innovation and artistry. Adopting a playful approach in reviving the liveliness of a congregation and its relevancy in a community is critical. How the spirit of playfulness emerges and is accepted in a local congregation, whether through music-making, administration, or visioning, is a matter of church culture and the personalities of the people. Regardless, the missional musicker encourages-a culture of play in liturgical, musical, and organizational arenas of congregational life. Missional musicking identifies appropriate boundaries and welcomes all into safe spaces for dreaming and innovation, especially when shaping a theology of the congregation's song. Church members and staff should be given permission to make a mess, on occasion, so the creative process can occur more freely within a kind of artistic *koinonia* promoting innovation while also providing grace when implementation of new ideas fail.

The concept of playful dreaming first came to my mind at HABC during casual conversations regarding the long-term future of the congregation's music program. Some of these discussions occurred after choir rehearsal, in the office, or around a dinner table. Other conversations and ideas arose from basic necessity. In recent years, I have tried to be adaptive and experimental in the moment. This is not procrastination but an attempt to keep up with the variable pace and polyrhythms of people's modern lives, which are greatly mismatched with the old weekly-attendance patterns of Wednesday, Sunday, and committee meeting night.

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<sup>62</sup> Michael J. Bauer, *Arts Ministry: Nurturing the Creative Life of God's People* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 2013), 186–187.

<sup>63</sup> Randall Bradley, *From Memory to Imagination*, 235.

On one occasion, the youth choir at HABC was scheduled to sing in Sunday morning worship. Two weeks prior, it became apparent there were not enough youth to form a sufficient ensemble due to family schedules. As I prepared to reschedule, one parent playfully suggested adding other parents, siblings, and a few voices from the Sanctuary Choir to create a one-time ensemble for that particular Sunday. I was grateful for the idea, and while I was also apprehensive I could not help but say, “Sure. Why not?” Out of this scheduling dilemma and informal conversation a new group was created for that one Sunday morning, which included a set of individuals who had not participated in worship in this way. This group eventually evolved into the HAB Singers, and I was reminded that getting out of the way is sometimes more fruitful than controlling a situation. Through conversation, experimentation, and the continued development of an idea, the Spirit supplies fresh air to the Body of Christ.

My goal in reorganizing music-making at HABC is to preserve the best portions of the church’s past while also creating new spaces for innovation moving forward. The project is an attempt to help the congregation navigate society’s decentering of church culture in the southern United States as we have known it, and instead, open an atmosphere encouraging fresh idea and approaches to doing church differently. The approach relies on openness to the creative—and sometimes sudden—movement of the Holy Spirit, as we are reminded in Acts 2. To dream dreams within an aging congregation requires relinquishing control to the Spirit and putting oneself in a vulnerable place—for we do not have all the answers.<sup>64</sup> For pastoral musicians like myself, letting go and living into a place of flexibility and democratic relationship can be difficult and messy.

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<sup>64</sup> cf. Joel 2:28, Acts 2:17.

Below, I present “Strategies for Musicking in Congregation and Communities,” a list of recommendations that comes from an organizational structure based on Micah 6:6–8. It is a model that provides space for flexibility and ingenuity within the DNA of HABC while we continue to see dramatic shifts in twenty-first century church culture in the southern United States. The strategies are a result of the academic *practica* required for this thesis combined with the collective imagination and input from church staff, music and worship committee members, choir members, parents, students, and others in the congregation.

What is presented below are the first steps in reorganizing a traditional music ministry in a white Baptist church in the southern United States. The approach is unique to the HABC context and the stories told in this thesis. It is an expansion of current practices and will serve the congregation in the coming years. The structure is intentionally fluid and developed as an open-ended model that moves away from a graded choir approach or a style-based concept. Instead, the scripture-centric model allows for change, adaptation, and cross-cultural practices in three musicking modules grounded in the Micah 6:6–8 directives: do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God (NRSV). With a particular focus in this thesis on racial injustice, the Micah text is an effective framework: the prophet witnessed corruption in Jerusalem and inequalities among the people, which were being reinforced in the worship practices of the Israelites. What the Lord requires, according to Micah, is not the ritual sacrifices of rams and oils—resources and riches—but rather that the Israelites do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God (NRSV).

## Strategies for Musicking in Congregation and Community

The following paradigm incorporates the missional musicking experiences described in Chapter 3. I have organized strategies within three modules based on the Micah directives that guide the ongoing reorganization of musicking at HABC: Prophetic, Agape, and Sanctuary.

### To Do Justice: Prophetic Musicking (figure 4.1)

*Description:* Musicking is participatory, inclusive, and serves to confront injustices. Examples include protests, rallies, and vigils. Songs are portable, teachable, and repeatable (See [Justice Choir Songbook](#)). Typically, singing is unaccompanied, but the use of a guitar, and drums are sometimes helpful.

*Ensemble:* HAB Singers

*Next Steps:* Continue partnerships with Don't Miss A Beat, FSCJ, and UNF; Seek to partner with other organizations and faith communities; Further develop the local chapter of the Justice Choir, recruiting singers from local high schools, colleges, faith groups, and community choirs in order to create small "on call" groups ready to facilitate musicking in the city.



Figure 4.1 Crowd sings together at the Families Belong Together Vigil.

### Love Kindness: Agape Musicking (figure 4.2)

*Description:* Musicking educates, builds, comforts and empowers. Examples include community music camp, partnering with Don't Miss A Beat, and hymn sings in residences.

*Ensembles:* HAB Singers, Growing in Grace Choir (children), Sanctuary Choir



Figure 4.2 The HABC Community Music Camp.

*Next Steps:* Develop connections with a community of people with special needs; Investigate the possibility of musicking with people in the local prison; Expand the residence-singing with HAB Singers to people in designated memory care facilities.

### Walk Humbly with God: Sanctuary Musicking (figure 4.3)

*Description:* Musicking celebrates, embraces, gives thanks, grieves, performs, and points to the future. Examples include Sunday morning worship, weddings, funerals, concerts, and interfaith gatherings.

*Ensembles:* Sanctuary Choir, Growing in Grace Choir, HAB Singers, 8:45 am Worship Band, Ritz Chamber Players, Jacksonville Children's Chorus, FSCJ Choirs, UNF Choirs, Don't Miss A Beat All Stars.

*Next Steps:* Continue partnerships with outside groups, especially ensembles representing marginalized people and organizations.





Figure 4.3 The HABC congregation in worship.

These three modules emerge from the current picture of musicking at HABC. The scripture-inspired paradigm shifts our thinking at the church away from musical programming that is confined to age, style, and HABC campus-based liturgy. Rather, the Prophetic, Agape, and Sanctuary modes not only provide a description of what is happening on the ground but also gives a that breathes with the life of the church, expanding and contracting based on the pace of congregational activity and the demands of current events in Jacksonville throughout the year. Like the Trinity, the modules serve to balance our preferences toward a particular aesthetic or style with theological guideposts based on scripture and the ministerial roles of prophet, pastor, and priest. These musicking areas in a congregation do not necessarily function in isolation from one another or the overall mission of the congregation. There is crossover and counterpoint, harmonic movement, relationship, and purpose that functions together as one. Musicking is not necessarily divided by age groupings, instrumentation, or repertoire. In fact, ensembles and

groups can function in all three modes. The model is fluid and integrative: prophetic (Prophetic), pastoral (Agape), and priestly (Sanctuary) actions in musicking relate to one another, sometimes simultaneously. For example, the HAB Singers sing songs of justice (prophetic) not only in the community but in the sanctuary, songs of prayer (priestly) not only in the sanctuary but in residences, and songs of need and concern (pastoral) not only in residences but in the community. This paradigm shifts thinking toward expanding the possibilities of musicking and provides for flexibility throughout the ebb and flow in the life of HABC. The congregation's association with musicians becomes more fluid. There is consideration for relationships, use of facilities, and participation in the three aspects of musicking at HABC.

### **Sanctuary Musicking: A Story on the Journey for Racial Justice**

Five days after “Beyond the Back of the Bus,” the racial justice event described at the beginning of this chapter, a new partnership between HABC and a Black musical organization officially began. The Ritz Chamber Players (RCP)—named after the restored, historic theater and museum located in LaVilla—opened their fifteenth year of performing on October 21, 2016, at their new, main stage concert home, the HABC Sanctuary (see figure 4.4). The RCP aims “to



Figure 4.4 The Ritz Chamber Players perform at HABC.

foster the appreciation of chamber music through performances and educational outreach featuring preeminent African-American musicians and composers, with an emphasis on building audiences and arts inclusion that reflects our diverse society”<sup>65</sup> In the summer of 2016, the chamber ensemble was looking for a new performance home. Terrance reached out to HABC through a long-time church member. Without hesitation, we welcomed the partnership.

The evening concert was remarkable, both musically and socially. One man remarked to me afterward that “this is how you change the community.” A Black woman approached me with tears in her eyes and simply embraced me. No words were spoken. After the concert a number of guests gathered in the parlor and reception area. Patterson’s brother catered the reception. People ate together, laughed, and talked to one another about the evening. I was amazed. Between the “Beyond the Back of the Bus” event and the Ritz Chamber Players concert I witnessed the power of musicking and how it can open up and sustain understandings toward *koinonia* more than direct conversations around racism.

### **Anti-Racism and Musicking**

In his latest book, *How to Fight Racism: Courageous Christianity and the Journey toward Racial Justice*, Tisby reminds readers that Christianity has inherent resources for fighting racism and white supremacy, pointing to the faith-born Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, which should give white churches the courage to act.<sup>66</sup> He writes, “Courageous Christianity dares to love through action and to risk everything for the sake of justice.”<sup>67</sup> Fighting racism, he says, “must become habit, practice, and disposition.”<sup>68</sup> In other words, move beyond the

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<sup>65</sup> The Ritz Chamber Players, <https://ritzchamberplayers.org/> (accessed February 22, 2021).

<sup>66</sup> Jemar Tisby, *How to Fight Racism: Courageous Christianity and the Journey toward Racial Justice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2021), 10.

<sup>67</sup> Tisby, *How to Fight Racism*, 10.

<sup>68</sup> Tisby, *How to Fight Racism*, 14.

comforts of being white, and do something, somewhere, for somebody to root out the sin of racism. Reaching out to Ulysses Owens Jr. led to a partnership that inspired opportunities for cross-cultural musicking, singing for protests and vigils, and fighting against racism in the community, church, and college. These actions blurred the color line and involved taking risks and becoming vulnerable for the sake of racial justice. Such partnerships are generally not habit and practice for white Christians, which as a result, likely lead to difficult moments and unintended missteps.

### **A Confession**

In conversations about racism with white people in my circles, I find there is often a desire to speak up or do something. They might even admit they want to be an ally, but they do not know what to do. Others are inhibited by fear they will be shunned by family, friends, and colleagues. Or they are worried their actions will in some way be unintentionally offensive to Black people, choosing to remain in their cross-cultural paralysis. I confess I have made similar comments before. After the past several years, I can no longer excuse my fear, complacency, and inactions. I cannot be negligent. The recent killings of black people, the increasingly open rhetoric of hate speech, and the surge of white supremacy demonstrations have awakened me to the realities of this crisis.

The selected material presented in Chapter 3 presents snapshots, from my experience, of effective moments of missional musicking. As I confessed in the introduction to the thesis, my work is not without cultural missteps and social foibles. I have blind spots, as we all do. Early on, I wanted to be hospitable and eager to show my desire to partner with DMAB. I proposed collaborative musicking events to Ulysses that unintentionally placed burden on the DMAB staff and parents. “Sing with us at the Cummer Museum,” I invited. “Come to HABC,” I said. Blind

to my own privilege, I did not consider parents' multiple jobs or late work schedules. The extra performances created more travel costs for the non-profit across town. My attempts at hospitality were in fact power plays from my majority position. In addition to asking Black people to come into white spaces such as HABC, I did not consider the challenges already present in the system.

One night in the summer of 2019 when I joined Ulysses and a jazz teacher from a local middle school to brainstorm possible collaborative dates for the upcoming year, Ulysses stressed the importance for white allies to travel to a Black community and become familiar with the neighborhood, the organization, the building, and the people in order to gain trust and legitimacy. He taught that this also lessens the organizational strain, emotional stress, and the financial burden on Black organizations, while also demonstrating a faithfulness and solidarity on the part of white allies in the fight against racism.

I also recall another episode that occurred while rehearsing with the DMAB All Stars on "Black Lives Kyrie." I was attempting to shape a simplified, Western choral tone quality on the word "Kyrie." The *a cappella* four-part homophonic, choral setting accompanied the soprano solo and the Black Lives poetry. We were preparing for the American Choral Directors Association state conference in Orlando. That particular day, the All Stars were not committing to my instruction for the sound I was requesting. The cross-cultural tension was real. I could see it on their faces. I gently said, "Listen. I know this portion of the choral piece requires sounds that come from Western European art music, but . . .", and before I could finish the sentence, one of the tenors injected, "You mean white."

I paused for a second. "Yes. Yes, in a sense, white; but, not a Mr. Shapard kind-of-white. The style in this song points back to an old, Europe kind-of-white. It's like Ken [Medema] sampled this part from an old, white European song." I continued wandering, searching, saying,

“I had to go to college to learn how to sing this old, Europe kind-of-white, like Palestrina, Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven. I learned to study their music. I learned how to sing in a way that made their music beautiful.” The All Stars were listening to me, finally. “But, I’ll be honest with you, old, Europe white is foreign to me, too.” I then turned their focus toward ACDA, relying on Ulysses’ expectations of the All Stars. “You have a chance to change people’s minds. There are people there who think you cannot sing this style of music and that you are not worthy to be at their state conference. There will be other people there, however, like me, who think you can and should be there. You *can* do what they can do, but they cannot do what the All Stars do.”

### **Getting Started on the Journey of Racial Justice**

Working for racial justice requires continued participation in a journey that leads to increased “racial equity and justice.”<sup>69</sup> The pathway is long, not clearly marked, and some passages come with inherent dangers and risks. Many of us have different entry points along the way, as Tisby notes, “Black people and people of color have been fighting racism our whole lives,” while “for some white people, this may be a brand-new discussion.”<sup>70</sup> For many white churches, too, the journey has yet to even begin. For some congregations, their first steps include dealing with a heritage enriched in the financial profits of slavery. The systemic sins of slavery and racism in the white church are older roads traveled for far too long. Detours, off ramps, and exits must be discovered by white congregations in order to follow the movement of the Spirit guiding them on a new road toward racial justice.

Embarking on the pathway toward anti-racism and justice is a spiritual one that requires

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<sup>69</sup> Tisby, *How to Fight Racism*, 7; The use of the word “journey” is popularly used in current writings on racial justice. See titles for Jemar Tisby and Jennifer Harvey.

<sup>70</sup> Tisby, *How to Fight Racism*, 8.

discipline, courage, and strength. James Weldon Johnson reminds us in “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” that the long winding path toward racial justice is difficult—“stony the road we trod” (stanza 2).<sup>71</sup> The song is full of travel imagery that speaks to a pilgrim journey through a weary land that leads along a pathway watered with tears and covered with the “blood of the slaughtered” (stanza 2).<sup>72</sup> Johnson turns to the God “who has brought [Black people] thus far” praying to remain “forever in the path” and proclaiming, “Let us march on till victory is won” (stanza 3).<sup>73</sup>

The movement towards racial justice is an eschatological pilgrimage, a daily walk through the “already” while working tirelessly with one another in building the next road toward the “not yet.” We do not have to be wayfaring strangers along the way. We have others walking and working side by side, including the Spirit who awakens us, guides us, and surprises us with new understanding and unexpected relationships, moving us onward toward a *koinonia writ large*.

Jemar Tisby’s ARC of Racial Justice model serves as the organizing tool for the following list that is intended to assist musicians serving white churches begin a local journey toward racial justice.<sup>74</sup> Jennifer Harvey calls “white work,” the important effort aimed “to equip and enable white Christians to move forward with and/or join our brothers and sisters, both in the church and in society as a whole, in meaningful and sustained solidarity practices.”<sup>75</sup> She reminds the reader that “‘white work’ is part of the larger project of *multiracial* efforts to work

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<sup>71</sup> © 1921 Edward B. Marks Music Co. Used by permission. From James Weldon Johnson, “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” in *Celebrating Grace: Hymnal for Baptist Worship* (Macon: Celebrating Grace, 2010), 638.

<sup>72</sup> Johnson, “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” 638.

<sup>73</sup> Johnson, “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” 638.

<sup>74</sup> Tisby, *How to Fight Racism*, 5–6.

<sup>75</sup> Jennifer Harvey, “‘White Work’ in the Journey of Racial Justice,” in *Trouble the Water: A Christian Resource for the Work of Racial Justice* (Macon: Nurturing Faith Inc., 2017), 35.

for justice, peace, and love” (*italics in original*).<sup>76</sup> This list of actions is my recommendation for the first series of steps on the justice journey for HABC.

Awareness (includes obtaining data, knowledge, and information)<sup>77</sup>

1. Create a small group within the music and worship program at the church to read a book on racism written by a Black author; watch a documentary on systemic racism; and, collect demographic data from the United States Census Bureau about the local city as well as the surrounding neighborhoods near the church. Use the Bibliography for this thesis as a starting point.
2. As Tisby suggests, treat racism as a sin. Study scripture and the writings of Black theologians, such as Howard Thurman, James Cone, and Jacquelyn Grant and include more modern thinkers from this [list of twenty-five Black theologians](#) published online by *Christianity Today*.<sup>78</sup>
3. Watch the PBS Documentary, “[The Black Church](#).”<sup>79</sup>

Relationships (developing authentic relationships with people different than you)<sup>80</sup>

1. Introduce yourself to a Black musician in town, within your “existing network of relationships.”<sup>81</sup>
2. Introduce yourself to a Black non-profit and get involved, preferably one focused in the fine arts.
3. Follow on social media well-known Black musicians within your applied area of study (i.e., a choral musician, worship leader, organist).

Commitment (actions taken to fight racial justice)<sup>82</sup>

1. Commit financially as an individual or group to support Black non-profits and Black businesses

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<sup>76</sup> Harvey, “‘White Work’ in the Journey of Racial Justice,” 35.

<sup>77</sup> Tisby, *How to Fight Racism*, 5.

<sup>78</sup> Kate Shellnut, “25 Black Theologians Who Have Grown Our Faith: Scholars and authors reflect on the significance of African-American leaders in the church,” *Christianity Today* (26 February 2020): <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/february-web-only/black-theologians-authors-scholars-list-african-americans.html> (accessed March 15, 2021).

<sup>79</sup> “The Black Church” (February 2021), <https://www.pbs.org/show/black-church/> (accessed April 1, 2021).

<sup>80</sup> Tisby, *How to Fight Racism*, 5.

<sup>81</sup> Tisby, *How to Fight Racism*, 112.

<sup>82</sup> Tisby, *How to Fight Racism*, 146.



2. Contract Black musicians for Sunday morning worship, concerts, and events. Consider, interview, and/or hire Black musicians for the church's music staff.
3. Perform music written by Black composers. Host a choir from a historically Black college or university.
4. Advocate for Black musicians in professional, social, and political circles.

This list is not exhaustive, by any means. For more ways to commit to the journey of racial justice, please visit [103 Things White People Can Do for Racial Justice](#), put together by Corrine Shutack.<sup>83</sup> Also, visit websites for your denomination and professional field for further resources.

The heartbreaking reality, I imagine, is the majority of white church musicians have not joined the journey toward racial justice through musicking in the public square, laying aside their baton and prestige (or guitar and rock-star status) to become a humble advocate walking vulnerably with Jesus across the color line. The Spirit is calling us to lift every voice in the community as another way to live out Jesus' command to love God and love one another. The justice journey is a life-long commitment born from one's baptism to the life-saving work in Jesus Christ that builds up God's kingdom on earth. This work begins by contributing to a long arc of individual and institutional change that seeks to transform the white church in the United States into an entity that stops being silent, denounces white supremacy and nationalism, and begins contributing to efforts supporting the survival of Black lives in America.

We have come this far by faith,  
Leaning on the Lord,  
Trusting in His holy Word,  
He's never failed us—yet.  
Singin' oh, oh, oh, can't turn a-round,

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<sup>83</sup> Corrine Shutack, <https://medium.com/equality-includes-you/what-white-people-can-do-for-racial-justice-f2d18b0e0234> (accessed April 1, 2021).

We've come this far by faith.<sup>84</sup>

## CHAPTER 5:

### AFTERWORD

On Sunday, February 16, 2020, Don't Miss A Beat, Inc. (DMAB), hosted a Black history program around the grand opening of the new DMAB Movement House dance studio.<sup>1</sup> The program was emceed by Dr. Fredara Hadley, Professor of Ethnomusicology at The Juilliard School. R. Jai Gillum, the Director of Foundation Affairs for the Florida Dental Association and wife of former Tallahassee mayor and 2018 Florida gubernatorial candidate, Andrew Gillum, gave the keynote address. The afternoon featured performances by individual students and the DMAB All Stars. Ulysses Owens, Jr., requested one of the Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ) Choirs participate, so I brought the Women's Ensemble, which performed Robert Jones' arrangement of Huddie Ledbetter's (Ledbely) "Bring Me Little Water, Sylvie," with body

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<sup>84</sup> © 1963 Manna Music Inc. Used by permission. From Albert A. Goodson, "We've Come This Far by Faith," in *Songs of Zion* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), 192.

<sup>1</sup> Madilynn Walker, "New nonprofit dance studio in Jacksonville doesn't miss a beat," <https://www.jacksonville.com/story/news/local/2020/02/14/new-nonprofit-dance-studio-in-jacksonville-doesn't-miss-beat/112232768/> (accessed April 12, 2021).

percussion by Moira Smiley.<sup>2</sup> The group also led the audience in singing “[Love is Love is Love](#).”<sup>3</sup>

The afternoon was a beautiful one. The community center was full with DMAB families and participants, local leaders, and partners, some of which received awards. To my surprise, I received a partnership award (Figure 5.1). I was humbled and honored by the recognition. Moreover, I was moved to tears by the gesture. The partnership with DMAB was moving



Figure 5.1 Gwen Owens presents the author with a partnership award.

forward quickly in February 2020, and we were already preparing for performances of Robert Ray’s *Gospel Mass*. Ulysses and I planned to combine the Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church Sanctuary Choir, DMAB All Stars, DMAB rhythm section, and the Florida State College Choirs for three different concerts in April 2020 to be held at DMAB, HABC, and FSCJ.

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Jones, “Bring Me Little Water, Sylvie,” <https://www.jwpepper.com/sheet-music/media-player.jsp?&productID=10873395&type=audio>; Moira Smiley, “Moira Smiley Teaches ‘Bring Me Little Water, Sylvie,’” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTC\\_zb2LriA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTC_zb2LriA).

<sup>3</sup> Abbie Betinis, “Love Is Love Is Love,” <http://songs.justicechoir.org/LoveIs> (accessed April 12, 2021).

These plans stalled in March 2020 as the novel coronavirus emerged in Jacksonville and the growing global pandemic became personal. Below I share three shortened journal reflections that first appeared on my Facebook timeline, March 28—April 1, 2020. The original seven posts recount my COVID-19 infection, hospitalization, and eventual recovery at a time when such things were rare. Unexpectedly, my posts were shared over four hundred times each and read by people all over the world. Media outlets broadcast my story, including CNN, The Tamron Hall Show, and Canadian radio. I took on the role as an advocate for COVID-19 patients and families.

These events disrupted the writing process, which began in September 2019. The initial topic was broadly centered around community singing and issues of social justice. At the time, a Christology of singing served as the possible theoretical framework after completing the *practica* in 2018 and 2019. My encounter with COVID-19 played an important role in creating a new timetable for this thesis. For months, the virus altered my mental and physical capacities and delayed my return to writing. The struggle to breathe and the life-saving measures I received in an intensive care unit (ICU) eventually impacted the direction of my writing, too, as other matters moved to the forefront of my mind, such as the fragility of life, the critical need for oxygen, and a raised awareness of humanity's reliance on community and God.

### **My COVID-19 Journey**

These edited reflections give a glimpse into my fight for life at the beginning of the pandemic. I was infected at HABC through interactions with the choir on Wednesday, March 4, 2020, and/or Sunday, March 8, 2020. I was part of a 24-person outbreak at the church that began in late February, which was later confirmed through antibody testing in early June.

***Journal Reflection 1, March 28, 2020:*** I have a story to tell that needs to be heard and the tale is not brief. Tonight, I share the first installment of my frightening encounter with COVID-19. This is not what most people experience, but people do and will. My story is

no different. It is a story of death or breath, and people need to understand it. My first symptoms appeared on Friday, March 13. Over the next couple of days, my health deteriorated. I developed a harsh, dry cough. While infrequent, it was brutal. My throat and esophagus took on a cold, cutting sensation whenever I took a breath. I had no fever, but I developed aches and a creeping pain across my scalp. It was like I had an electrical current turning on and off. It was simply awful. I also developed shortness of breath that manifest itself with quick gasps for air that physically made me moan and made me feel like I was suffocating. As a singer, I leaned on breathing techniques to quiet the spasms. Regardless, when they occurred, I feared for my life.

On Friday, March 20, I returned to my primary doctor took a chest x-ray again. After consulting with another physician in the practice, he sent me to a local emergency room with all signs pointing to pneumonia. There I pleaded my case to be seen. I was reluctantly allowed into triage. My time spent with the emergency room doctor was frustrating, however. I was quickly dismissed, because I did not have a fever. The chest x-ray confirmed I had “mild” pneumonia, but I did not qualify for COVID-19 testing, despite worsening symptoms and antibiotics that did not improve my health. I could not physically walk without shortness of breath. Yet, the doctor sent me home with cough medicine and a decongestant. I was told to rest and hydrate.

The breathing issues became more intense on March 25. A local nurse practitioner convinced me to go to the emergency room following a tele-health visit. She told me that she would call ahead and let them know to admit me. I was skeptical after my last attempt. The nurse practitioner was my advocate, and her compassion was life-saving. After signing off with her, I drove myself to the emergency room and arrived around 8:00 p.m. My walk from the parking lot to the COVID-19 checkpoint exacerbated the breathing spasms. This is one of the truly evil symptoms of the virus. I felt like I was drowning, and I could hardly move. I was swiftly taken to the makeshift COVID-19 wing, which looked like something from a science fiction movie. My oxygen level was 85-percent, and it was apparent I was in bad shape. What transpired from this point onward, though, was frightening, surreal, and frankly, miraculous. Little did I understand what I was about to go through, and after leaving the house that evening for the hospital, I maybe saw my family for the last time, ever.

***Journal Reflection 2, March 29, 2020:*** Nurses and technicians entered the triage room. They took new chest x-rays, and they continued taking my vitals. I was physically and emotionally content for the first time in about 12 days. While I closed my eyes to rest, I overheard one nurse mention moving me upstairs. The only other words I could decipher were “to intubate.” While cause for concern, I knew that some people with COVID-19 had to be intubated for a ventilator, so I speculated they were putting me in a room to prepare for just about anything. After all, these rooms are isolated rooms dedicated to COVID-19 patients. Eventually, I was transported upstairs to a second room using a secure elevator. The room appeared to be an emergency surgical room. I asked one of the technicians, “Is this my room?” He didn’t respond. My shortness of breath increased, as well as my fear. Instinctively, I knew something was different. I immediately became uncomfortable and anxious. The nurse switched me to a high-flow cannula. The air flow was warm and swift. I was at 50-percent supply. In the next few hours, I was scanned,

tested, prodded, and interviewed by medical personnel. By 4:30 a.m., an emergency room physician entered the room. She looked at me directly and said, “Mr. Shapard, your lung disease is bad. You have COVID lungs—no doubt—and they are the worst I’ve seen. Your lungs are almost completely white on the X-Ray. Your numbers continue to increase and we will not have the capacity to give you oxygen any longer. You need to get your business in order. Call your wife. She needs to bring your kids. You will likely be on a ventilator in two hours.” I asked, “How long will I be on the ventilator?” The doctor replied, “Possibly several weeks.”

Not able to speak, the doctor asked me if she needed to call my wife on my behalf. I nodded. She left the room to make the phone call. I was in shock. I was scared, shaken, and paralyzed. I was alone. There was silence. I understood the reality of my odds to survive (4 out of 5 COVID-19 patients die on a ventilator). As hospital personnel returned, I came out of my shock and began asking questions, “How long do you think I’ll be on the ventilator? Each person answered differently, “One week,” “Two weeks,” “We really just don’t know.” I asked, “Why do I have to go on the ventilator?” They replied, “Your body needs to be suspended, letting the machine breathe for you while we fight the virus.” “What’s the likelihood I will live,” I inquired. Silence. Everyone simply stared at me and uttered, “We just don’t know.”

By 5:00 am, panic set in. No word from my wife, Rachel. I started calling her on my cell phone. I called my oldest son, Drew. No answer. I understood. Everyone was asleep. It dawned on me that by the time family and friends woke up across the country on Thursday morning, March 26, I might be on a ventilator and never heard from again. So, I began making short videos for family and friends that quickly explained the situation, expressed my sincere love, gratitude, and friendship, and asked everyone to take care of Rachel and the children and to take care of one another (Editorial note: I sent one to Ulysses, which he forwarded to the DMAB staff. His mother, Gwen Owens, began fasting and praying. She created a prayer chain with her contacts around the country). Dozens of unthinkable images passed through my head. I began to cry. I thought of so many things in a matter of minutes. By 6:30 am, two technicians entered the room and rolled my bed to another secure, COVID-19 elevator. “Mr. Shapard, let’s get you in one of our comfortable beds. We’re going to the eighth floor and an awesome team is there waiting for you to make you better today.”

“Thank you,” I replied.

***Journal Reflection 3, March 30, 2020:*** As the small crew rolled me into the COVID-19 ICU, I was greeted by a team of nurses, doctors, and technicians, a group that seemed to number twenty people. Standing in the shape of a “U,” the group appeared to me as a representation of God’s arms, ready to embrace me and take me to the other side, whether that be death or renewed life. This team had their individual responsibilities. It was like I had my own pit crew. The collective swarm and movements were intentional, professional, and confident. They were some kind of dream team with great expertise and grace. They smiled and spoke to me with encouraging words. They said “Hi, Tommy. We’re ready for you.” They looked me in the eye and said, “Relax. We are here for you.” They talked to each other clearly and intently. Their work, their smiles, and their love for helping humans get better chased away the gloom of the past several hours, if not days. They shifted me from the gurney onto a bed that was cocoon-like and held me gently

with reassurance. The medical professionals' actions and words went into my mental background for a moment. I remembered that I was still on the high-flow nasal cannula. I turned my head to the right, and I saw the ventilator. The screen's message read, "On Standby."

"Mr. Shapard, we are going to start administering medicine. Your job is to lay there and relax." I replied, "Okay. Thank you." What happened over the next several hours remains blurry to me. I really do not remember much except that the team that surrounded me earlier dispersed over a matter of hours. I fell asleep often. Things were quiet. I asked a nurse, "What are the next steps?" She replied, "We are just continuing to give you medicine and monitor your progress." Again, silence. And I seemed to feel good and at peace. My body was quiet, too.

In and out of sleep, I could see nurses through the window of my room, dressed in protective gear, headwear, and masks. Occasionally they would catch me looking at them. They signaled thumbs up with a smile, every time. Throughout the evening, I continued in and out of a state of confusion. I kept asking the same question, "What's next?" The nurse would reply, "We're just watching your progress. Your body is responding well to the medicine."

Overnight, I woke up and found I was now using the basic nasal cannula. At another point in the night, a nurse removed it. I panicked, but they reassured me I was improving. I went back to sleep. As I woke up early Friday morning, I discovered the team was able to reduce my oxygen supply to a reasonable level, and my body was holding strong. Throughout the previous day, I had received blood thinner, fluids, and an incredible dosage of two antibiotics plus the hydroxychloroquine-plus-zinc cocktail. I was not aware that I received this treatment until Friday morning. By mid-morning on Friday, they removed the unused ventilator from my room. I was amazed and grateful. The pulmonologist signed off on me in ICU. I was now under the care of a hospitalist. I was moved onto the COVID-19 isolation floor into my own room. I was content. I was relieved. And, while I was still sick, I was safe.

In the days following my discharge on April 1, 2020, I had the opportunity to stay in touch with the doctors that cared for me at the hospital. The emergency room doctor that initially diagnosed my grave condition and who tried calling my family, reached out through Facebook Messenger on April 9, 2020. She reflected on my turnaround:

I hope you don't mind me writing you, but I couldn't help but reach out. I am the emergency physician who saw you [at the hospital] and admitted you for COVID-19. I cannot tell you how much your case has affected me and those I love. Since the day I saw you, all of us have been praying for you, and I rejoiced when I saw you had recovered!! I was shocked when I came back to the hospital to find you had not been intubated and were getting weaned off the oxygen. You are an absolute miracle case, and I feel so fortunate to have had any hand in your treatment.

Indeed, she played a significant role in my treatment along with others in that same medical community. There were also groups of people praying for me and caring for my immediate family who was quarantined at the house. I was so thankful for this village of health providers, pray-ers, and gift givers of time and resources. I was grateful for God who remained present with me in the valley of the shadow of death.

For weeks, I continued healing from the virus, which ravaged many parts of my body. The trauma, both physically and mentally, remained with me. It took months for the entire respiratory system to fully heal. I remained in bed, often, for the fatigue and brain fog lasted for months. I used breathing exercises, walking, and swimming as part of my COVID-19 rehabilitation. I found new appreciation for air and the involuntary way our bodies breathe.

### **“I Can’t Breathe”: The Work Continues**

While recovering, the death of George Floyd made national news, as I have referenced in Chapters 1 and 4. Hearing his cries, “I can’t breathe,” on video hurt deep within me after literally having my own breath taken away by a microscopic virus. The unlawful use of police force used on Mr. Floyd angered me in new ways. The complete disregard for a person pleading for air strengthened my resolve further to join the journey for racial justice in my local community, to address it more specifically in my thesis, and to speak out against it more publicly. I pivoted to think more critically about racism and where it has systemically choked the work of the Spirit out of the church and how it has systemically prevented certain parts of a congregation’s missional influence in a community to change the effects of the color line.

The United States reached the grim marker of 100,000 COVID-19 deaths on May 27, two days after the death of George Floyd. I directed my grief and anger into a poem, “two viruses,” which was featured months later in the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual JaxbyJax Literary Arts Festival on October 18,



2020.<sup>4</sup> The poem encapsulates my thoughts from late May 2020 and marks the point I refined the focus of this thesis. The words capture the confluence of COVID-19 and racism, and reminds us that the journey continues:

“two viruses”

virulent storms create chaos in US,  
dis-ease breaking the Heart,  
disorienting the Mind,  
numbing the Soul,  
angering the Body.

two viruses, at times, dormant,  
activated cells  
—cloaked and waiting—  
inflamm an already compromised  
system.

both 19s,  
one, six months young,  
requires distancing and masking.  
another, a four-thousand, eight-  
hundred-and-fifteen-months old infection,  
needs eliminating (for good),  
—a hate-filled contagion spreading from generation to generation to generation to generation.

both kill unjustly,  
100,000 breathless souls,  
isolated,  
alone,  
dismissed as old and frail.  
Countless Others...murdered.  
Victims of Hate, Saints of Glory,  
Lynched, Dragged, Shot, Choked,  
no more alive because of the color of their skin.

both surround US,  
asymptomatically apathetic,  
ignored for too long—  
tensions building, now erupting.  
vaccine needed, voices rising.  
virulent storms in US.

I am determined to continue the work discussed in these pages as we come out of the pandemic. I want to continue the partnership with DMAB, begin the white work at HABC, and

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<sup>4</sup> JaxbyJax Literary Arts Festival, “Day 2: JaxbyJax VII,” <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=700879380540755> (accessed April 15, 2021).

invite white musicians to join the journey for racial justice. Gwen Owens, when we saw each other for the first time after my hospitalization, proclaimed, “God is not finished with you, and your work is not over!” She is right. We have just begun.

## APPENDIX I

### CHARLES SEEGER'S "THE PURPOSES OF MUSIC"<sup>1</sup>

1. Music, as any art, is not an end in itself, but is a means for achieving larger ends.
2. To make music is the essential thing—to listen to it is accessory.
3. Music as a group activity is more important than music as an individual accomplishment.
4. Every person is musical; music can be associated with most human activity, to the advantage of both parties to the association.
5. The musical culture of the nation is, then, to be estimated upon the extent of participation of the whole population rather than upon the extent of the virtuosity of a fraction of it.
6. The basis for musical culture is the vernacular of the broad mass of the people—its traditional (often called “folk”) idiom; popular music and professional music are elaborate superstructures built upon the common base.
7. There is no ground for the quarrel between the various idioms and styles, provided proper relationship between them is maintained—pop need not be scorned nor professional music artificially stimulated, nor folk music stamped out or sentimentalized.
8. The point of departure for any worker new to a community should be the tastes and capacities actually existent in the group; and the direction of the activities introduced should be more toward the development of local leadership than toward dependence upon outside help.
9. The main question, then, should be not “is it good music?” but “what is the music good for?”; and if it bids fair to aid in the welding of the people into more independent, capable and democratic action, it must be approved.
10. With these larger ends ever in view, musicians frequently find themselves engaged in other kinds of activity, among them the other arts; this, however, promotes a well-rounded social function for them and ensures opportunity to make music serve a well-rounded function in the community.

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<sup>1</sup> Alec Wilkinson, “Appendix I: The Purposes of Music by Charles Seeger,” in *The Protest Singer: An Intimate Portrait of Pete Singer* (New York City: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 123–124.

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