LIVING IN A WORLD OF ‘RIOTOUS DIFFERENCE’: Canadian Multiculturalism and Christian Hospitality within the Presbyterian Church in Toronto (Tkaronto)

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Anthropology
University of Toronto

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Abstract

With the secularization of Canadian public institutions, mainline protestant churches in urban centers are witnessing a steady decline in membership in recent decades. Church members are not participating in church activities as they once did, which has motivated some congregations to discuss the influence of immigration and multiculturalism within the church. This dissertation is an ethnographic study of the interethnic relationships and the value of multiculturalism in Presbyterian congregations in the multicultural and multiracial city of Toronto (Tkaronto), Ontario, and more broadly, within the national denomination of the Presbyterian Church of Canada. In recounting the crisis of church precarity, this dissertation considers the contours of church governance that structure racializing practices within congregations. Additionally, this study examines the virtue of hospitality, a central theme among Presbyterian congregations that attends to denominational identity, church-run social programmes, and inclusion of minorities within congregational polity.

Based on 25 months of ethnographic research among three congregations, this dissertation focuses on the personal experiences and Christian understandings of racialized and white congregants who are working to develop a meaningful church community, which is fraught with ideological and affective friction. This thesis makes two key arguments. First, the inclusion of
different (non-white) bodies is needed to sustain and grow the church, both economically and spiritually, yet different bodies and their subjectivities (vis-à-vis class, racialization, and age) are challenging to congregational unity in terms of Anglo-centric denominational identity. Second, to welcome its racially, ethnically and economically diverse participants, church members express a virtue of openness in welcoming guests and strangers. Christian hospitality, which is distinct from charity, mediates and at times blurs the boundaries between stranger, guest and host, as well as the cleavages arising from modes of inclusion and exclusion. The friction in 'welcoming the stranger', a ubiquitous phrase indexing Christian hospitality, is a theological, ideological and practical conundrum. The friction is revealed in the narratives of congregants and the mundane acts of in/hospitality that highlight the affective, temporal, and spatial ambiguities that arise from the politics and ethics of integration. Throughout, this thesis investigates the linkages and ruptures between Christian hospitality and Canadian state multiculturalism.
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Dedication

In loving memory of my father,

Charles Kennie Davidson (1940-2017)
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Chapter 1 Introduction

The crescendo of the music within the congregation was flowing with exuberance today as churchgoers sung these phrases repeatedly to the rhythm of a beating drum: “God is good!” and “You are welcome in this place!” The white woman standing in the pulpit with long brown hair, wearing a white tunic, black vest with sutured floral print, and a flowing cinnamon-hued ankle-length skirt, introduced herself as a friend of the pastor. She is a graduate student studying Divinity Studies at the University of Toronto who was invited to share in Toronto East Community Presbyterian Church’s (TECPC)\(^1\) \(136^{\text{th}}\) anniversary celebration sermon. She tells the congregation that she chose that particular song because “it reflects this place, an open community that welcomes the stranger in our midst”. She steps down and walks among the congregants and asks churchgoers to repeat the song again, this time for us to sing to our neighbours: the person sitting beside us, behind us, and in front of us. She asks us to change the lyrics from ‘you are welcome in this place’ to ‘you are welcomed in this place’ so that “we also welcome the Holy Spirit to come and be with us this morning”.

Congregants went beyond her call to sing to neighbours. They sung and walked around the sanctuary, hugging and clasping the hand of churchgoers. Black, Asian, white, middle-aged, elderly, impoverished and middle-class were, for a moment, linked in song and touch. When the song ended, congregants returned to their seats on the hard wooden pews, energized by the music. The woman returned to the pulpit, she pulled out her guitar from behind the altar, and sang a song in a language that I have never heard. As she strummed her last chord, she looked at the congregants and enunciated these words which were repeated several times in the verse she just sang, “Mungu ni Mwema”, she says, “means ‘God is good’ in Swahili. That song comes from the Congo”. She goes on, “What happens when we sing?” The atmosphere was filled with an enthusiasm that was laced with uncertainty. Congregants were quiet for a moment, then a white woman seated in the front pew calls out, “Uplifting!” a Korean woman seated behind me raises

\(^1\) For informants and interview participants who expressed their preference for anonymity, the names of individuals, churches, and places appear as pseudonyms. Also, some identifying details are altered for the sake of anonymity.
her voice, “Angels’ rejoice!”, an elderly white man seated near the front says, “Increases the endorphins!” to which congregants let out laughter and applaud. Another church goer then bellows “Arguing in harmony!” followed by another congregant, “Unity!” and “Makes us want to dance!”

The woman tells the congregation that songs are a way for people from around the world to find unity and solidarity in the belief that God is good. Her congregational message is that singing is a means of opening the heart, of becoming vulnerable to God and each other. She says that it is within vulnerability that we express, forget and reshape who we are. “Unity”, she exhorts, “is to respect diversity and this is a beautifully diverse congregation, something to celebrate”. Today’s message is one of many teachings to congregants at TECPC on hospitality, multiculturalism and welcome.

* * *

When I entered the field, I intended to study whether Presbyterian multiethnic and multiracial churches allowed for the emergence of alternative strands of multicultural understandings that challenged and/or broadened the state definition of multiculturalism, thereby challenging its presumed secular nature (Das Gupta 1999, Hawkins 1988, Légaré 1995, Mitchell 2005, Moodley 1983, Nagata 1987, Ng 2008, Pal 1993, Thobani 2007). While the term was known to ministers and members of the Canadian Churches' Forum (an ecumenical think tank on intercultural ministry), I soon discovered that the term 'multiculturalism' did not resonate with church lay people. For them, multiculturalism was a social fact. It was observable within the congregation as congregants pointed out racialized church goers, it was audible by the different languages that people spoke, and outside the church, it was sensorial by the smells of different foods that linger on people’s clothing (see Ameeriar 2017). My prodding on multiculturalism, however, brought to the forefront concerns over congregational and institutional struggles with mainline church precarity, as well as the move toward hospitality among racially, ethnically and economically

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2 Mainline churches are a group of protestant denominations that are commonly characterized as more traditional and/or conservative forms of Anglo-oriented Protestantism because of their focus on the gospel and scripture. I have found, however, that this prevalent description fails to capture the plurality and nuances of mainline protestant identities and their desire to change without becoming a different denomination. I find it more useful to think of mainline churches in terms of temporality. This takes into account their past support of Canadian colonial history in facilitating the settlement of Anglo-Europeans which helps in deciphering present-day denominational variations.
diverse participants of faith. This was a strategy to grow the church in terms of population, finances and spirituality. Based on 25 months of ethnographic research from December 2012 to January 2015, my study focuses on the multicultural experiences and the Christian understandings of racialized and white congregants who are working in developing a meaningful church community, an area that is best characterized as fraught with ideological and affective friction. In recounting the crisis of church precarity, my study also offers insight into church governance, specifically the modes\(^3\), structures, and reports that influence the ideological and theological perspectives that shape racialized and class-based disparities within congregations.

This dissertation makes two key arguments. First, the inclusion of different bodies is needed to sustain and grow the church, both economically and spiritually, yet different bodies and their subjectivities are a challenge to a prevalent understanding of church unity. Unity and identity coalesce and divorce in unexpected and uncertain ways and at different times. Unity and belonging are known by how one feels, an affective state that is motivated by experiences and stories of acceptance (or not). There is a tense interplay between unity and conformity when unity foregrounds Anglocentric denominational history, stylistic traditions, and culture. As such, the inclusion of racialized bodies and stories is generating a 'crisis of whiteness' for Anglo Presbyterians. This leads me to my second argument. To welcome its racially, ethnically, and economically diverse participants, church members strive for a virtue of openness to difference while maintaining an identity of sameness. A sense of shared core values on humanity offers a mode of bridging differences. The question of 'what makes us human' was a recurring quandary for members at TECPC and Christian religiosity provided principles for experiencing, living and becoming “human”.

The question then is: how to welcome those who are different? What makes for an ethical and Christian welcome? The friction in 'welcoming the stranger', an ubiquitous phrase indexing and divergences as well as current congregational concerns over their future presence. See Chapter Two for further elaboration on Canadian Presbyterianism as a mainline denomination.

\(^3\) Bialecki (2017) explains that modes are an heuristic for understanding the variability, transformations and diversity of Christianities (5). For example, there are multiple forms of expressing Christianity within Presbyterianism, however, modes of Presbyterian Christianity are not a simplified representation to a Presbyterian institution or typology. “Those institutions and classifications help locate and sustain modes, but modes of Christianity are not reducible to them” (Bialecki 2017:5)
Christian hospitality, is a theological, ideological and practical conundrum because there are modes of hospitalities. There is no singular ethical way of conducting hospitality. It weaves together the political and ethical by mediating categories of stranger, guest and host, without simplifying hospitality to such classification schemes. As such, hospitalities are at once affective yet temporally and spatially ambiguous. Welcome is not a singular event for new participants, but an ongoing process of welcoming and of being welcomed for both recent and established church members. In effect, expressions, moments, and concerns of hospitality are inclusionary and exclusionary, in spite of ethical desires to suture human cleavages to be open to God’s grace. The variability, friction, and ambiguity situated in hospitalities are revealed in the narratives of congregants and mundane acts of in/hospitality.

**Uniting a Nation: Multiculturalism**

Located in Don Valley Village⁴, a gentrifying neighbourhood on the East side of Toronto, TECPC was established in the late 1870s in a working-class neighbourhood in East York, an area of Toronto east of the Don Valley. The simplicity of the 140-year old, brick laid church of TECPC is a historical residual of the church's conservative and austere presence in a working-class past. Large aged trees line the sidewalks surrounding the church, which is enclosed by a weathered fence showing need of realignment and a fresh coat of paint. Small wooden placards are nailed to the brick walls of the church and to the wooden fence marking the perimeter of church property. These placards communicate that dance clubs, toddler enrichment programmes, African congregation meetings, and Vietnamese congregation meetings⁵ occur within the space of the church at varying times of the week. These programs, however, are not affiliated with TECPC but are organizations that rent church space. The only markers that suggest to outsiders that the congregation is culturally or ethnically diverse is a white weathered sign posted beside the church

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⁴ The name of the neighbourhood, church, research participants and congregants are all pseudonyms.

⁵ These congregations are not Presbyterian.
walkway. On a black letter board, lop-sided one-inch letters spell "Abraham Villanueva, pastor", "Sermons Sunday at 11am", large enough only for pedestrians to see.

Figure 1 Toronto East Community Presbyterian Church, circa 1908

In the preliminary stages of my fieldwork in late 2012, a google search of ‘multicultural churches in Toronto’ displayed the names of three Christian churches in Toronto that identified as multicultural, of which TECPC was one of them. When I clicked on the link taking me to TECPC's website, I was met with a conventional image of multiculturalism and diversity in Canada, that is, racialized and white individuals all standing in close proximity with broad beaming smiles. The image is an icon of camaraderie, conveying harmonious relationships, even perhaps, the promise of close friendships. By using the term 'multicultural' as a marker of church identity, the minister of the congregation confided many years later that he chose the term as a method to intervene in popular public perceptions of the Presbyterian church as an exclusively white and Anglocentric denomination.

On my first visit, I entered the arch doorway that led into a red carpeted receiving area in which I was greeted by two white men, one older than the other. The thin yet sturdy man with long scraggly

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6 Photo from the TECPC library. In the 1960s, TECPC lost much of the congregation’s archives in a fire. Only two shelves from a filing cabinet behind the sanctuary contains historical documents. Members of the church remarked that I was the first person in decades to access these sources and they were unsure what kinds of documents were located within the files nor were they certain of the condition of the archives.
grey-white hair who handed me a bible and a hymn book appeared to be his late 70s, and the other, who looked to be his mid 50s with a receding hairline and squoval-shaped glasses passed me a program of today’s worship service. They both welcomed me to TECPC and guided me into the sanctuary. My initial impression of the sanctuary, the room of worship, was that it was quite unremarkable. Two words describe it best: simple and functional, especially when compared to other Presbyterian churches. There was little decoration except for the stained-glass windows depicting the events from the life of Jesus and a scene from Moses and the burning bush that were commissioned by various families in memory of loved ones. The burning bush is a dominant congregational and denominational symbol. It represents a miracle: God speaking from a bush that is burning, but neither the shrubs nor the branches are consumed by the flames. When Moses notices the bush, God speaks to him. This is an image that reminds congregants of the miracle of God, a God who speaks when one is open to his presence. The unadorned pulpit is at the front of the sanctuary and the red carpet throughout this room was fraying in areas that were well treaded, exposing the wooden floor board.

As I scanned the mahogany pews, I counted 33 individuals who were white, South Asian, Black and Asian, led by a Filipino pastor standing in the pulpit. There were more than a dozen empty pews and no more than four people sat alongside each other on a pew. To my right, an elderly black woman sat with her middle-aged son. The woman was dressed in a bright yellow dress with a matching hat that had a bright yellow flower on top and a small decorative yellow veil covering a portion of her face and the man, who may have been in his late twenties, was dressed in brown corduroy slacks, a white dress shirt and black wool vest. I learned that they recently arrived from South Africa. They were fairly new to TECPC, having attended for only three weeks. They came to this specific church because they were invited by the minister from TECPC whom they met at a Christian organization that provided support to newcomers and refugees. This family was ‘church shopping’ and they told me that they found the service very different than Sunday worship in their country. At home, they told me, people would worship all day long with lots of singing and food. They explained that although they found people in the congregation nice, they were going to visit an African Church that was up the road next week. I did not see them again.

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7 I describe the Presbyterian churches in Chapter Two.
In the pew behind me, I met a middle-aged French-Canadian named Guy, who was accepted into an undergraduate program at the University of Toronto. This was an enormous accomplishment for him because he was also a recovering drug addict. The church community and God were a life support, a way to keep himself grounded in moving forward to a better life. Guy was not the only recovering congregant, there were several underclass church goers, white and racialized, who came to the church when they could. They were not always present for Sunday worship because the 11am start time was “too early”, but they tried to participate in church life through different activities, either through the monthly community dinners or annual seasonal church events such as the church garage sale held in May.

A few pews in front of me to my left sat a lanky white man with long brown hair, heavily tattooed arms, wearing a red rumpled t-shirt, leather biker jacket and ripped jeans. He was leaning back in the pew with his arms stretched along the top of the smooth ledge of the deep brown pew. A woman with an olive complexion, almond shaped eyes, and shoulder-length black hair, sat beside him, nestled on his chest. Her eyes were downcast as she listened to the sermon. Highlighting her chiseled facial features were striated black tattoo marks. Trevor and Kim are long time members of the church for over ten years. After several conversations with Kim, she divulged her heritage to me at a time during which she became upset with the minister for assuming that she was Native when she is in fact Romani.

The congregational diversity at TECPC comprised of racialized congregants outnumbering white congregants, elderly congregants eclipsing young members, and the number of underprivileged church goers exceeding economically well-off members, which presents a set of challenges to a church that is experiencing church decline. A method on how to unite a congregation that contains a plethora of differences, attitudes, experiences, hopes and ambitions is what motivated the minister to label TECPC a multicultural church. Multiculturalism to congregants allows for an ideology of unity, in forging common ground between white and racialized congregants and between congregants of various class and intergenerational statuses. In practice, the term does not smooth over congregational differences, it does not ease uncomfortable interactions between long term members and “new” members, and it does not address standards of church decorum that exclude certain groups from participating in the dominant white church culture- its governing structures and congregational activities. The hope was that the identifying marker of multiculturalism would relieve initial anxieties of potential congregants in joining church activities.
in an era when many mainline congregations are experiencing spiritual, financial and population decline. In Canada, multiculturalism as an ideology of benevolence, tolerance and equality that advances celebrations to demonstrate recognition of cultures and cultural difference, has its roots in a state policy that attempts to efface racial inequalities, exclusions and occlusions and a history of displacement and settler colonialism.

**Canadian State-Centered Multiculturalism**

With the secularization of Canadian public institutions, mainline protestant churches are witnessing a steady decline of their white membership. Where mainline Christian denominations were predominantly identified by the membership and participation of European ethnic groups, such as the Presbyterians with Scots, Anglican with English, Lutherans with Germans, and Irish, Italians and Canadian Francophones with Roman Catholicism, more recently, the affiliation is less concrete (Bramadat and Seljak 2008b: 416). It is now common to see denominations that identify with ‘new’ racialized religious groups: Filipino Baptists, Vietnamese Roman Catholics; Korean Presbyterians; African Anglicans etc. (Bramadat and Seljak 2008b:423). These emerging ethnoracial congregations destabilize prevalent beliefs and attitudes of mainline denominations as uniquely European in character and in history and makes visible the racialized targets of Christian missions who are now situated with settler and colonial spaces.

Bramadat and Seljak (2008) describe the formation of inter-racial and inter-ethnic congregations as the “de-Europeanization” of Canadian churches. The influx of racialized immigrants into Euro-Canadian congregations was created by changes made to Canadian immigration policies in the 1960s and 1970s. Prior to World War II, Canada had a “Keep Canada White” policy through exclusionary immigration policies in which preferred countries included the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, Ireland and the United States. Racialized British subjects from South Africa, Asia and the Caribbean were less desirable and were typically denied migration into Canada (Thobani 2007, Haque 2012) In the 1960s however, the Canadian government was motivated to liberalize state borders because of three interrelated factors: firstly, the flow of British immigrants dropped significantly while secondly, Canada’s economy was flourishing in multiple sectors, and thirdly, Canada was experiencing international pressures to retain its reputation as a generous and humane nation-state (Thobani 2007, Haque 2012, Mackey 1999).
The ensuing ‘national crisis’ of civil unrest in Québec and the changing demographics of the 1960s provided the conditions for the formation and ratification of state Multiculturalism in 1971. The demands made by French nationalist movements in the late 1960s are one way in which a crisis of national unity took shape. Since the early 1900s, French-speaking Canadians opposed their economic and political marginalization as second-class Canadians when compared to the socio-economic privileges of English speakers. French-speaking Canadians felt displaced, colonized even, as English speakers gained more control over major social institutions, occupational spheres and economic industries. According to Haque (2012), this translated into a wage disparity between French and English-speaking Canadians as English-speakers were situated in managerial positions. By propagating that Quebec had claims to independent nationhood due to its history as one of Canada’s founding nations, French nationals gained national attention as they escalated demands for Quebec autonomy and separatism from Canada. Following Quebec nationalists, some racialized groups articulated claims for recognition regarding their history and participation in Canadian nation-building (Légaré 1995:349). These groups, however, were predominantly white ethnic groups who migrated from Poland, Ukraine and other non-Anglo European areas. The internal crisis of national unity was coupled with perceived external threats of Americanization that “would make Canadians indistinguishable from the citizens of the United States” (Légaré 1995:349, Mitchell 2005:228). In response, policy makers under the Trudeau government introduced a bicultural and bilingual nation-building policy, a precursor to the Multicultural policy, to manage the crisis of whiteness and safeguard national unity.

The shift from biculturalism to multiculturalism was brought about by the lobbying efforts of white ethnics, particularly Canadians of Ukrainian ancestry, for “their inclusion into the settler category alongside the ‘founding nations’” (Haque 2012: 40). The term ‘ethnic’ came to signify racialized minorities as their visibility prevented their folding into the unmarked category of white settlers. As such, multiculturalism is used to acknowledge the contributions of other ethnic groups in Canadian nation-making (Thobani 2007, Das Gupta 1999). More so, the policy allows for a representation of Canada as a 'cultural mosaic', recognizing the cultural contributions of racial and ethnic group, in opposition to American 'melting pot' assimilationist techniques (Légaré 1995:351, Mackey 1997: 106). As a governmental strategy for uniting a Canadian nation, state multiculturalism created a hierarchy of national belonging. Anglo-Canadians and Franco-Canadiens are simply inferred as 'Canadian', while non-white groups are marked by the hyphen
(McElhinny et al. 2012; Thobani 2007, Mackey 1999, 1997). The presence and claims of First Nations as a unique and founding group were effectively erased from nation-building narratives, again reifying white constructs of Canadian identity, and the prominence of the British and the French (Légaré 1995:355, Thobani 2007:144-145). Representation and inclusion are based on the visibility of ethnicity, that is, the biologization of culture into racialized identity, because “who gets included is most often determined by skin color” (Garcia 1999: 302, Urciuoli 2009, Segal and Handler 1995). The formation and ratification of the Multicultural policy in 1971 recognized the French and English as co-founding nations, thereby confirming the equity and tolerance of French culture and language.

Occurring alongside the crisis of Quebec sovereignty and Canadian unity, Canada was experiencing a booming economy and strived towards international repute in diplomatic areas such as the Commonwealth and United Nations, the Canadian government amended and liberalized immigration policies with a non-discriminatory rationale for managing the country’s labour shortage (Kelly 2006: 5, McGowan 2008: 61, Siemiatycki et al 2001: 25, Thobani 2007:97). In the years following World War II, Canada was lethargic in taking action to re-evaluate the country’s immigration policies that favoured admittance of immigrants from British origins. Indeed, it was not until the 1960s that the Canadian government scrutinized state policies that inferred racial discrimination and/or racial superiority (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010: 17). Then in the 1960s, when countries such as Britain were curtailing the flow of immigrants, Canada reevaluated its immigration policies and implemented the 1962 Immigration Act which removed preference of immigrants from the U.S. and Europe. Entry was determined on merit rather than race, colour and national origins. As a result, the racial demographics of Canadian society shifted as populations from the Caribbean, China, Philippines, Asia and Latin America immigrated to Canada due to economic and political upheavals in their country of origin (Kelly 2006:5, Stasiulis and Bakan 2005:55, Siemiatcyki et al 2001:20, Guenther 2009: 378, McLellan 2009).

Reformulated in 1967, the Immigration Act put into motion the institutionalization of a ‘race-blind’ point system that prioritized education, skills, knowledge of English or French, and the occupation of prospective migrants (Kelly 2006:5, Siemiatcyki et al. 2001:20). Canada’s immigration policies were even more liberal in the 1970s, allowing for an increased number of refugees seeking sanctuary. At the international level, liberal immigration policies and Canadian multiracialism made Canada a reputable and prominent country among a consortium of developed
countries, an image promoted by the United Nations (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010: 18). Thobani (2007) remarks that the liberalization of Canadian immigration policies became “the source of national pride [and] have come to sustain contemporary exaltations of Canadian nationality as the most generous and humane in the world” (2009:97). As the first country to adopt an official multicultural policy, a Canadian formulation on multiculturalism is looked upon as a model for governing relations between the state and immigrant and racialized groups (Kymlicka 2007:107).

On a national level, Canadian Multiculturalism enabled a distinct national identity that “grants a place to all Canadians, recognizing their ‘cultural’ contributions’ to the nation” (Légaré 1995:351). State tactics to support racialized groups integrating into Canadian society have included programs that support newcomers in acquiring Canada’s national languages, English and French; improve race relations, and disseminate Multiculturalism in education (Das Gupta 1999). However, it is important to note that multiculturalism and liberalized immigration policies impacted Canadian First Nations quite disparately. For Canadian First Nations, multiculturalism and immigration policies restricted their socio-economic development and limited their claims to self-determination as the state turned to, and later recognized, racialized migrant labour (Thobani 2007:174).

The liberalization of Canadian immigration policies of the 1960s “brought about shifts in the organization of processes of racialization” (Thobani 2007:96). The value and visibility of racialized immigrant in growing Canadian prosperity developed into a crisis of national identity for Anglo-Canadians and Franco-Canadiens. Thobani (2007) describes this emergence as a ‘crisis of whiteness’. The uniqueness, and more specifically, the whiteness of Canadian national identity was jeopardized: professional immigrants were increasingly situated in racial and class proximity to white Canadian nationals. “These new forms of intimate contact”, writes Thobani, “undoubtedly gave rise to new sets of anxieties among the nationals who considered themselves inherently superior” (2007:152).

Multiculturalism and Religion

There is a propensity in current research to reify a secular standpoint and domain from which multiculturalism is generated and constituted. Ethnographic analyses on multiculturalism prioritize secular domains for research locations, such as governmental, educational, corporate and
civil institutions (Urciuoli 2009, Mitchell 2005, Povinelli 2002, Das Gupta 1999, Légaré 1995, Pal 1993). State multiculturalism works alongside neoliberal policies where ethnicity, culture and language are marked out as a source of social capital. Government funds distributed to non-governmental organizations and ethnoracial organizations have increased competition between and within ethnoracial communities, sustaining a structure of dependency of these communities on the will of the state (James 2013). Unlike immigrant communities, many Indigenous nations refuse multicultural recognition to reject the inherent structures of inequality and dependency that grow out of the neoliberal rationales for state support. From the perspective of Indigenous scholars, this would derail efforts for Indigenous sovereignty (Simpson 2014, Coulthard 2011).

Ethnoracial organizations who successfully acquire government funds are expected to use the resources to improve the market participation of racialized minorities (Ameeriar 2017, Allan 2016, James 2013). Mitchell (2005), for example, argues that corporations frame programs using a multicultural rubric to receive government sponsorship for programs that maintain the immigration of wealthy Asian investors from Hong Kong to Canada. Das Gupta (1999) and Pal (1993) focus on the interconnected roles of government, advocacy and service organizations in developing multiculturalism. Urciuoli (2009) and Garcia (1999) consider the institutionalization of multiculturalism in academic settings, critiquing the processes of equal recognition in relation to ‘minority’ recruitment and of the discursive practices of inclusion, respect and ‘minority’ advancement, all of which categorizes race in terms of culture. These studies situated within differing secular contexts have made way for a more nuanced understanding on the linkages between multiculturalism and nationalism. However, such methodologies have an effect of (re)producing prevalent assumptions that multiculturalism is only a political and secular concern.

When Canadian multiculturalism is located within the domain of religion, discussions usually center on religious pluralism. Religiosity practiced by racialized and immigrant others is most often socially unwelcome and perceived as contrary to Canadian values of ‘tolerance’ and ‘equity’. This is made most evident in media discourses vilifying Muslim identity and the spatial regulation of Muslim places of worship (Jiwani 2017, Engin and Siemiaticki 2002). When proposals for the development of racialized places of worship are circulated in the public domain, they are usually faced with public outcry. The foreign look of racialized religious buildings brings into focus what is and what is not considered tolerable and acceptable within a Canadian social landscape (Engin
Religious discrimination is also rather confusing given that public funding for Catholic schools in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), particularly in the North York region, is not met with similar social protest or disdain. To date, there are currently over 87 Catholic elementary schools and 16 Catholic secondary schools that receive full provincial funding. In 1999, the United Nations human rights committee announced that the funding of Roman Catholic schools by the Ontario government is discriminatory because the government refuses to provide financial support for other religious schools. In 2007, the Ontario government held a referendum for voters to decide whether the government ought to provide funding to Evangelical Protestant and Muslim schools, which was rejected by the public. What this demonstrates is that religious diversity does not translate into civic tolerance.

At TECPC, church goers are aware of civic intolerance of religious expression. Some congregants tended to set boundaries for overt expression of their identity as Christians, keeping their love of God confidential within the boundaries of the church building. One white elder, who was born in Canada and works as a successful accountant for an international company, explained to me that he is highly uncomfortable in revealing his Christian belief to people beyond the church community and his immediate family. For him, he perceives that people would automatically assume that he is proselytizing, or will be, if he were to disclose his Christian identity. Another elder, a white woman who is a retired high school teacher, emphasized her anger and resentment of contemporary liberal social views that disdain the practice of Christians to say “Merry Christmas” to non-Christians. It is more socially acceptable to say “Happy Holidays”. The inconsistency, for her, is that Presbyterian Christians are expected to be open and accepting of other religious followers who may say, “Happy Hanukkah” and “Happy Diwali”. For many white

8 According the York Catholic District School Board, the goal is for their students to “become creative and critical thinker who integrate Catholic Values into their daily lives, as socially responsible global citizens”
http://www.ycdsb.ca/about/ (accessed May 9, 2018).


10 https://www.cbc.ca/news/opinion/catholic-schools-1.4680200
church goers, religious expression is both complicated and challenging because they embrace the principles of liberal Protestantism for inclusiveness, but they increasingly feel that they are a marginalized group because of the social stigma attached to expressing their Christian beliefs (See Klassen 2011: xix).

**Multiculturalism in the Church**

Politically and economically, the idea of multiculturalism weighs heavily on discussions on congregational development among teaching ministers involved in various levels of the court system of the Presbyterian Church\(^\text{11}\) of Canada. Yet, it is important to note that the Presbyterian Church is not alone in assessing the influence of immigration and the changing demographics of congregations across mainline denominations. Many congregations across mainline denominations are becoming less white due to increasing numbers of racialized Canadians and newly arrived immigrants who are entering church doors. In 2010 World Vision, Canada’s largest Christian development and advocacy agency, published a national study focusing on mainline Christian churches and their strategies to integrate the influx of immigrants into the church. Canadian diversity, in terms of multiraciality and multiethnicity, are major concerns for mainline denominations, particularly those located in major Canadian cities.\(^\text{12}\) A common perception among personnel involved in church governance is that Christian churches, particularly those founded on Anglo-based traditions, are still ill-prepared to cope with the challenges and opportunities arising from the participation of a diversified population within urban denominations (World Vision 2010: 13). From current discussions by church leaders and ministers, mainline churches as an institution are understood as (a) being well-behind in institutionalizing diversity policies, (b) trailing in developing cultural awareness training for laity leaders, and (c) lethargic in establishing structural support for integrating immigrants into the church (World Vision 2010: 25). The assumption then, is that multiculturalism and racial and ethnic diversity is recent and unique,

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\(^{11}\) I distinguish between Church as an institution and church as a congregation and I discuss the court structure in Chapter Two.

\(^{12}\) Research participants from the study came from various Christian denominations from Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg, Montreal and Hamilton.
which in turn, acts to occlude the long history of the church in managing and governing immigrants and non-Anglo groups at home in Canada and through their missionary practices abroad.

When we look to a historical view on multiraciality, multiethnicity and Christianity in Canada, we see an early development of ‘ethnic’ and ‘multiethnic’ churches. Canadian Christian churches in the early part of the twentieth century had divergent tactics for ethnic congregations that were racially and nationally marked— on one hand, churches provided a place for preserving European ‘character’, language and cultural moral values through Christian practices; on the other hand, church members were tasked with the role of salvaging the ‘stranger’, such as racialized immigrants, specifically non-Anglo groups.

Well before the Canadian government adopted a multicultural policy, European immigrant groups made use of the church in preserving their culture. McGowan (2008), for example, details the centrality of the Catholic Church as a place for national and ethnic preservation for immigrating Irish Catholics in the 1880s and for Italian, Scottish, German and Hungarian Catholics in the 1900s. The establishment of European ‘national’ churches was a means for localizing an international religion, by which newly arrived immigrants could “maintain their ethnicity by constructing their own distinctive church communities as the hub of resettled communities” (McGowan 2008:51, see MacDonald 2008 on Hungarian, Italian and Ukrainian Presbyterian churches). The congregations of ‘national’ European churches took shape as church services were held in national languages, influencing public perceptions of Canadian multiraciality and multiethnicity in terms of European diversity. Moreover, ethnic church institutions established their Canadian affiliation through the services of immigrant and settled European women carrying out volunteer-oriented social services to lower-class and racialized groups. For example, Mawani (2009) describes the voluntary humanitarian efforts by members of the Methodist Women’s Missionary Society active in ‘saving’ Chinese migrant women in British Columbia from assumed ‘slavery’ and prostitution-- the ultimate goal being to salvage races vis-à-vis ‘the right kind’ of

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13 The Catholic Church has had its own theory of inculturation in accommodating cultural diversity, “claiming that local forms of approaching God may all be acceptable, and even necessary, as long as the presence of a transcendent deity presiding over all is acknowledged” (Cannell 2007:26).

14 This is elaborated in Chapter 2.
Christian conversion (Mawani 2009:118). European Christians were positioned as moral experts, particularly those of Anglo-Saxon origin, in debating the conduct of racial groups and the manner for inculcating Christian programmes in the name of welcoming strangers.

The migration of Eastern Europeans and the influx of racialized groups into Canada during the early 20th century coincided with early Canadian nation-building efforts and concerns to preserve the ‘character’ of British, Scottish, Danish and German immigrants. ‘Pure’ Anglo immigrants were thought to be corrupted upon arrival in Canadian cities by such polluting factors associated with the consumption of liquor and contact with ‘environmental’ conditions of Chinese labour migrants and Canada's First Nations (Mawani 2009, Valverde 2008). Indeed, eugenically inclined physicians publicly argued that “Canada had become the ‘garbage pail of England, Ireland and Scotland’” (McLaren 2008:192). In Chapter Two, I briefly discuss the colonial history of the Presbyterian Church and the settler colonial interventions implemented by the denomination. One example is the establishment of the ‘Department of the Stranger’ to govern the arrival of immigrants and single Scottish women into local Presbyterian congregations.

From Multiculturalism to Hospitality

Throughout my time at TECPC, it was not unusual to have guest ministers preach to the congregation on hospitality and welcome. This was the case on the first day that I visited TECPC. Dressed in a traditional black suit, white dress shirt and grey tie, a middle-aged white man with comb-backed hair stood in front of the congregation with a microphone in hand. In a firm authoritative voice, he preached to the small number of church goers that the congregation has two minutes to make an impression for newcomers to return. “God” he said, “led them to the front doors, the Holy Spirit guided them inside these walls, but it is up to each of you to make sure that they return. Two minutes is all it takes for people to decide if they want to come back”. He emphasized to congregants that they must keep the church clean and pleasing to the eye because “nobody wants to come to a dirty place, they won’t return if they see holes in the carpet”. He reminded them to greet and say hello to people who are new so that they feel welcome and to help newcomers become familiar with the church culture.
As I sat and listened to the sermons, I did not know at the time that hospitality would become the focus of my research. At the end of the sermons, as I was rising from the pew, a tall older Filipino man dressed in a black shirt and jeans sat down beside me. He introduced himself as Abraham, the minister of the church and he was curious to know what brought me into the church today. I explained that I was in the preliminary stages of my doctoral research on multiculturalism and inter-ethnic relationships within the church. He paused in thought, then said, “Ah! You were guided here to us by the Holy Spirit”. At the time, I was dubious of Abraham’s belief but over the years, I have come to understand the meaning of his words. To congregants at TECPC, my journey to their church was a small piece in God’s larger plan for the church and a hope for a Christian future in a society that they see as an increasingly Godless domain. How was it that a secular academic, who is not versed in the bible or a practicing Christian, came to their specific church at this particular time when the congregation is trying to develop spiritually and financially? This for them was an oddity. My journey to the church was indeed a wayward one and has its roots in my previous research in Kampuchea. There, I met a Filipino woman who was working as a manager of a guesthouse and was one of many migrant professionals from the Philippines (and other countries) who brought their skills and expertise to Kampuchea, a country that is undergoing rapid development from international organizations. She invited me to accompany her to her church which was a Baptist church in a bamboo dwelling on stilts. To my surprise, the congregation was multicultural and multiracial with people who migrated from Africa, Korea, Japan, North America, Europe, and the Philippines. This led me to question the significance of the church as a place where migrants from all over the world converge and the kinds of interactions that unfold within the church community. This initial experience (as well as many others), when framed in terms of congregants’ understanding of God’s plan, was a nudge from the Holy Spirit. This is not to say that congregants’ know or make assumptions about God’s intentions, but they do believe that every aspect of our experience, especially those that feel like mundane coincidences, are examples of God’s presence. They believe that each person who walks through the church doors was guided there by the Holy Spirit and the task of congregants is to welcome and to be welcomed.

The people who now come to the doors, however, are no longer uniform, they are rarely white, and they are increasingly from underprivileged socio-economic backgrounds. The racialized and class-based demographics of the congregational community has been changing since the 1980s,
which coincides with the changes in Canadian immigration policies and gentrification within the neighbourhood. The Don Valley Village, the area in which TECPC is located, was previously a low-income working-class enclave\textsuperscript{15}, however, today the neighbourhood is an eclectic mix of social housing, low-income Canadians and immigrants, young professionals, and affluent families. Older Presbyterians expressed to me that hospitality is now hard work. Previously, the dominant perception was that all that had to be done was build a church and people would inherently gravitate together. Church members are faced with the work of doing a plurality of hospitalities because of the ubiquity and salience of cultural, racial and class differences, which is now even more problematic both experientially and affectively because who is considered a stranger, guest and host is not clear cut.

**Hospitalities that Welcome**

The ubiquitous phrase, ‘welcoming the stranger’, is an utterance widely used in church to describe a statement and process for transforming and stabilizing social relationships between members of TECPC. Within Presbyterian congregations, a stranger from biblical scriptures is understood to be a person who is different because they come from a different geographic, cultural or linguistic region, or they are a person who needs saving spiritually, socially, politically and/or economically. Saving, though, is through compassion. The stranger is an ambiguous figure who has the potential and potency of the sacred as God is described to be the subjectivity and visage of a stranger, which I discuss in Chapter 7. Relationally, being open and hospitable to a stranger, or someone who is perceived as an Other, carries the potential to encourage ethical transformations in how one understands themselves and others with dignity and most importantly, with compassion. In one sermon in late July, Abraham explained the biblical text as told by Mark (6:30-34) of Jesus’ compassion. In this story, Jesus’s apostles had not had an opportunity to eat or rest after having worked so long preaching and healing to the masses. Jesus tells them they will go to a quiet place to rest, however, people seeking healing found out where Jesus and the apostles were going and met them there. Even when tired and hungry, “Jesus had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd” (Mark 6:34) and gave them food. Abraham explained to the congregation that deep compassion for Jesus felt like having “his guts being ripped apart when he

\textsuperscript{15} I discuss the socio-economic changes within the neighbourhood in Chapter 4.
saw the crowds; this is the meaning of the original Greek word [for compassion]”. Compassion speaks to a tension of ‘letting go’, to feel with others, by relinquishing boundaries between self and other. In doing so, compassion is interpreted in the New Testament as a healing and restorative force by making one whole. Compassion, as explained by Abraham, is similar to Levinas’ perspective on subjectivity. Levinas sees that the self does not begin from the individual, but is constituted interrelationally. Strhan (2015) points out that Levinas’ philosophy attends to an understanding of subject formation that is founded on the experiential and affective qualities that emerge from how one interacts with Others. For Levinas, how one responds to difference is intertwined with how one thinks about others (Strhan 2015: 78). This is not a dyadic relationship but one that is founded on multiplicity and contradiction.

Selywn (2000) details various scriptures throughout the bible where acts of hospitality are notably voluntary and altruistic in that a relationship is not only established but undergoes a process of transformation. For Selwyn, hospitality invokes a process of conversion where strangers are made familiar, enemies become friends, and friends are turned into better friends (2000:35). Where Selwyn sees hospitality as conversion, Shaw (2011) suggests that Christian hospitality is an act of reconciliation with the self and between others. For him, hospitality is a form of affective learning by engaging the heart and mind for mediating relationships. Affective learning is what some of my informants called the 'heart's mind', a way of knowing through a total surrender that collapses mind-body Cartesian dualism and the prioritization of the rational mind. Learning to attune oneself to their feelings and senses allows for a deeper understanding of welcoming the Holy Spirit through one’s body. Acquiring hospitality necessitates a reversal in learning to gain new perspectives of oneself and of those who are ‘other’ to enable a process for reconciliation in finding a common humanity that is united with God, which Shaw substantiates within biblical scriptures. In the story of Genesis, all living creatures and worldly things are established in a preobjective relationship with each other and with God through God's will (Shaw 2011: 9). Creation is the precondition in which all things and individuals are related and interdependent and today, people are continually bridging differences with those whom they perceive as strange, both human and non-human. For Shaw, hospitality is a form of pedagogy towards reconciliation as explained by the story of Jesus which instructs how the practice of welcome is through acts of sharing with those who are different, for developing meaningful relationships (2011:16).
Hospitality, as noted earlier, is hard work. On many occasions, I observed awkward greetings and interactions between new arrivals to the church and church members who were unsure how to welcome guests. Indeed, Derrida’s work on hospitality sparks questions among scholars on the potentials and pitfalls of hospitality, specifically the possibility of hospitality to fold into the domain of hostility (Ahmed 2012, Haque 2012). All congregants at the church arrived with protestant upbringings from the Anglican church, United church or Presbyterian church, and all had the ability to speak English fluently, albeit some had accents from their nation of origin. New arrivals were not only racialized people but also low-income mobile white people, some with mental health dilemmas. How each person was welcomed depended on who was doing the welcoming. White newcomers tended to gravitate toward white members, while Black newcomers affiliated more with Black members and Asian newcomers were welcomed equally between white and Black members. This form of racialized clustering was most noticeable during the post-sermon friendship tea. After the conclusion of Sunday worship, congregants moved from the sanctuary to the banquet hall where they could sit down and converse with one another while consuming cookies, tea and coffee. The tables were organized banquet style with two rows. In one row, white congregants tended to sit together while in the other row, racialized congregants converged. There was very little intermixing. On occasion, one elderly Scottish woman would ‘crossover’ and mingle with a few women from Guyana, who sat on the other row, for a few minutes then returned to the table where white congregants convened. Among racialized women at the congregation, they did not feel welcome within the inner circles of white congregants. Rarely were their advice or perspectives sought by white church elders during congregational meetings. Racialized elders, moreover, felt that they had to seek and gain support from their white peers to propose congregational programs, such as setting up a choir (a short-lived project) to insure that their proposals and suggestions were not rejected outright with claims to tradition and statements of ‘that is not the way it is done’. These were the moments when long term racialized congregation members felt like strangers within their own home. Black members of the church, despite decades of participating in church activities, were not treated as equal to white members. Despite the missionary work of disseminating Presbyterian traditions to colonized peoples, members of these communities are still governed as guests of Christian generosity as they are excluded from the same responsibilities and obligations as white members. Many white members unintentionally assumed that their way of doing church life, such as organizing choir, bible study and charity work, was ‘better’ than the methods, suggestions and knowledge of racialized members.
The multiplicity and contradictions within simultaneously occurring hospitalities is a key focus in this dissertation. How do openness and welcome take on differing meanings among members of the same congregation? How does church space bring into focus the tensions, ambiguities, and transformations between hosts and guests, especially when such categorical distinctions are no longer clear?

Temporality and scale are crucial to a more nuanced understanding of hospitality, particularly within a multicultural society where the process of hospitality is a long chain of micro events. By focusing attention on the micro-level and mundane workings of hospitality, its ambiguities, shifts, temporalities, and spatiality, an ethnographic understanding helps demystify broad and simplistic structural principles on hospitality and complicates abstract categories of the stranger, guest and host that typify philosophical readings on hospitality. As noted by Candea (2012) and Shryock (2008), hospitality is subject to shifting scalar properties, from individuals to communities and to much larger groups such as cultural and national groups. For Candea (2012), he suggests that a scalar analysis of hospitality provides a clearer understanding on social solidarities through attention to the circulation and changes in actions, debates and materiality that are ‘scaled up’ or ‘scaled down’ (Candea 2012: S44). Alternatively, mundane and everyday experiences of hospitality, such as walking in the street, passing through a threshold of a community center, or entering a restaurant, may challenge macro level structures and principles of hospitality (Candea 2012, Shyrock 2008).

**Christian Hospitality as Radical Ethics?**

Christian hospitality is about ways of being together as diverse people united in a common faith. The ideas, key words and actions that may appear as emergent to multiculturalism, such as welcome and inclusion are values associated with Christian hospitality. Openness and welcome go hand-in-hand with faithfulness and belief: it is a way for knowing God’s earthly presence. Moments of exaltation and 'good' feelings accompany acts of welcome as a host, but also as a guest, through expressions of gratitude. These affective moments crystallize the presence of God and the feeling that the Holy Spirit is guiding members of faith in their acts of hospitality, as guests and hosts. Hospitality, in this way, drives affective impulses impelling a system of reciprocity, where services and materials may be offered without calculation of a return (Pitt Rivers 1992).
Woven throughout biblical scriptures, narratives that speak to compassion, forgiveness, grace, and love come together to produce and structure a visceral and flexible domain of Christian hospitality, that is, the experience of openness and welcome.

More radically, hospitality is looked to as a practice with the potential for social justice and community work. Letty Russell, a feminist Presbyterian theologian, considers mutuality as a key component to hospitality. The notion of mutuality is integral here, as this attribute foregrounds how Christians, with whom I spoke, understand and makes sense of a Christian infused sense of multiculturalism. Mutuality is about respecting differences by having conversations and relationships with others without assimilation. Assimilation, for some Presbyterians, is a transgression of God’s love and gift of diversity. Russell describes hospitality as a disposition that goes beyond the post-sermon offering of tea and cake. She writes:

Hospitality is the practice of God's welcome by reaching across difference to participate in God's actions bringing justice and healing to our world in crisis.... hospitality can be understood as solidarity with strangers, a mutual relationship of care and trust in which we share in the struggle for empowerment, dignity and fullness of life (2009: 19, 20).

Christian hospitality, accordingly, can be understood as inseparable from political action that requires individuals to reflect on whether they are 'of' this world or 'in' this world (Russell 2009). Being "of" this world or community is, on one hand, required because it entail tactics of social and subjective reflection of injustices, yet self-reflection alone is inhospitable because it fails to include actions for just and peaceful relations. Hospitality then, must be constantly cultivated and rethought to allow individuals and communities to shape how they flourish in extending the work of peace and justice, which characterizes being 'in the world' (Russell 2009:15)¹⁶. This is a different framing of the prevalent Christian theme of “in, but not of” where Christians are ‘of’ the kingdom of God and are ‘in’ the world to cultivate religious faithfulness (see Elisha 2011: 193).

¹⁶ Russell draws upon the biblical passage of 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 where Paul reminds the Corinthians “to participate in the ongoing life of their communities, [and] they are to live as if the New Creation were already at hand” (Russell 2009:15).
Being in this world is what makes hospitality a difficult ethical endeavour. Congregants understand the biblical rationale and ethics of hospitality of being open and welcoming, but to put it into practice in this worldly domain is to be influenced by everyday hostilities, arguments, restlessness, fears, and insecurities. Speaking to the tension and ambiguity of living in contemporary society while following the ways of Jesus, Abraham consistently reminded churchgoers that “God is calling us to be compassionate”. To model oneself after the image of a compassionate God is a mode to become a vessel of love and grace. For congregants, to be “in this world”, is to follow Jesus in using the streets and valleys as a space to show what compassion is in both word and action. The act of welcoming means the host must venture outside church walls, to go out into the street and interact with members of the community. Engaging in conversation transcends the visibility of difference, of otherness, and allows for a rapport beyond the containment of church walls. Hospitality then, is not confined to one momentous act or place, but is a process consisting of a series of small, mundane micro acts that establish and transform social relations (Shryock 2012, Selywn 2000).

Russell's understanding of Christian hospitality intersects with Shaw’s idea of hospitality as reconciliation. For Russell, Christian hospitality is about welcoming and advocating for those who are marginalized, which cannot occur until privileged Christians decolonize their minds (Russell 2009: 82). Forging relationships with (racialized) strangers necessitates white Christians to recognize their privilege and power. Russell emphasizes that an ethical Christian hospitality is not about saving, dominating or controlling diversity, particularly strangers from colonized populations; rather, hospitality is about loving differences. As told to me by Presbyterian congregants, God created diversity and difference throughout the natural world. Rather than meeting the strangeness of God's creations with ambivalence and fear, a Christian virtue is to meet difference with love. This is especially difficult in a multicultural city such as Toronto where people are situated in so much difference, that the search for similarity and commonality appeals, a ‘safe space’ that affirms one’s sense of self while providing understanding and affiliation.

Russell, as with the ministers with whom I spoke, is keenly aware that the Church has failed in many aspects with hospitality to racialized communities, especially Indigenous communities. In her perspective, good can emerge from these failings if privileged Christians willfully open themselves to the experiences of those on the margins of Christian and Canadian belonging. At TECPC, Abraham preaches to the congregation that “if we think God is a violent God, then we
will support war and that it is done ‘in the name of God’. On the other hand, if our image of God is one of peace, then we will work hard to be that peace to everyone we meet”. Hospitality has the potential for partnerships and building an open, welcome and neighbourly community and to challenge biblical passages used to justify colonization and forced conversion of racialized and Indigenous groups. Hospitality does not impose uniformity as this would defy and ignore God's intent for diversity, as seen through His creation.

Christian hospitality as justice and reconciliation, necessitates a reversal or an exchange of roles between 'hosts' and 'guests'. While dominant perceptions of hospitality propose that a 'good guest' is expected to conform and assimilate into the host society to sustain harmonious relations, a radical sense of Christian hospitality challenges this expectation. In striving towards mutual partnership, hosts and guests are both liable in integrating within each other's communities, united through a willful openness to experience mis/understandings, hostilities and benevolence. Openness and welcome is also a sacred experience, invoking a reciprocal relationship with God for his love, blessings and guidance. Experienced as faithfulness, hospitality is impelled by an affective dimension, where experiences in transcending difference are affective moments where hospitality is both exaltation and submission to God's love and will.

Acts of goodwill and kindness are an experience of "humanness", a core shared value that many congregants experienced and looked to as concrete moments of belonging. The need and desire to experience and know 'what makes us human', parallels the Catholic 'humanitas', the nature of human person. According to Napolitano (2016), debates over Catholic interpretations over humanitas have a long history, dating back to the Renaissance, yet the idea of a shared human essence, of a sameness, is both inclusive and exclusive (2016:8). Many individuals with whom I interviewed spoke to me about the value of Christianity in their lives. Religion offers a conceptual tool to better understand a shared human essence. Most notably, people reflect on these questions: how is there sameness and unity in all of God's diversity? How can we learn to relate with people who look, think, and behave so strangely and so differently?

The assemblage of narratives, observations, and perspectives that emerges in this ethnography of three Presbyterian churches in Toronto (Tkaronto) captures a partial reality of church life, a partial knowledge due to my positionality as a youthful woman of colour. Indeed, the ambiguity of my racialized appearance and spiritual identity framed the kinds of conversations that I had with
individuals. I identify as a Canadian Filipino; my mother, who is Filipina, was one of the first wave of Filipino nurses in Canada arriving in the mid 1960s and raised me Canadian rather than Filipino, telling me years later that she did not think that I would need to learn Tagalog or Pangasinan, or even the nuances of Filipino culture because we were in Canada. It was not until I visited the Philippines for a period of time with my aunts in my late teens that I learned of my mother’s family and culture. The tension of being yet not really becoming Filipino is an ongoing struggle. Alternatively, I am not perceived as ‘just’ Canadian by others. As such, I feel most comfortable straddling both racialized worlds, without firmly planting my feet on one side because in doing so, it eventually affirms my non-belonging.

I came to this research as a secular academic with latent theological knowledge. I am not Presbyterian but was raised to be somewhat Catholic by my Filipina mother, which was at best an uneven process due to the beliefs and science-based mindset of my atheist Canadian (white) father. As a young girl, I participated in a protestant church choir for several years at St. Andrew’s-Wesley United Church in the downtown core of Vancouver, British Columbia, because the choir master was known in the music community for his efforts in cultivating the aural and oral skills of young musicians (during this time, I was a budding concert pianist). As a member of the choir, I experienced protestant church life in a high tradition church, and I recall that I was asked to read biblical passages to a large-sized congregation (at least from the purview of a 12-year old girl) during mass held on Christmas evenings. Prior to my field research in Toronto, this was the last time I participated in church life.

**Overview of Chapters**

In the following chapters, I offer an ethnographic exploration into Christian hospitality, detailing the phenomenology, virtue, desire, process and limitations in crossing the murky boundaries between stranger, guest and host. The Presbyterian Church provides a rich understanding into the affect, ambiguity, and temporality of congregants’ shifting categories of inclusion and exclusion, some remaining within the aporia of strangers, guests and hosts, particularly as Canadian mainline protestant churches are undergoing racial and ethnic diversification.
Chapter Two provides an overview of the three congregations where I stayed during my research: Toronto East Community Presbyterian Church (TECPC), Queensview Presbyterian, and Toronto Central Presbyterian Church (TCPC). Here I describe two kinds of church traditions: high and low, and I explain the racialized, generational, socio-economic class composition of the congregational members. I also discuss the organizational structure of the denomination to better understand how decisions are made within the church. Finally, I consider how the church has historically engaged with immigrants and racialized populations through settler colonial and civilizing endeavors through warfare, residential schools, and the Department of the Stranger.

Chapter Three details reports commissioned by the Presbyterian Church of Canada since the mid 1960s to identify causes of church decline and to provide directions for reviving a meaningful Presbyterian tradition for contemporary Canadian social life. This chapter discusses the ambivalence of faith and identity by considering how church documents oscillate between secular and Christian rationalities on church decline. Alarmist accounts of decline intersect with a ‘crisis of whiteness’ as the paucity of white bodies have shape, and continue to shape, perceptions of a national religious identity in crisis. In turn, certain populations, specifically the non-white, non-British bodies are unaccounted for and occluded as members of a Canadian Presbyterian tradition. Overall, this chapter considers how reports on the crisis of church decline offer a lens into the decentralized regime of the PCC in managing white identity and privilege within the church.

Chapter Four focuses on the spatial and temporal importance of the church building to the congregation. The congregation was told by the Presbytery (a regional court body in the governmental hierarchy of the Presbyterian Church) that the church would slated for closure unless the congregation developed a plan to grow the church both spiritually and economically. In this chapter, I describe the problem of decline from the perspective of the congregation, which is the lack of children and families within the church. I then discuss a series of proposed strategies in becoming more than a Sunday church, put forth by members of the congregation. The proposed strategies and their implications draw attention to the cleavages within the congregation as some wanted to retain a sense of tradition, while others saw this as opportunity to emerge more radically as a congregation. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of congregational critiques of 'big' and 'successful' churches.
Chapter Five discusses what it means to ‘be church’ and how ethnoracial and white congregants experience multiculturalism and make sense of belonging in the Church and in Canadian society. More specifically, I look at how diverse migrants and naturalized Canadians make sense of welcome and inclusion—ideals that are espoused in Canadian Multiculturalism. I discuss two modalities of what I call "ministering multiculturalism" by comparing the ideologies and practices between two ministers, a white minister from Toronto Central Presbyterian, a high tradition church, and a Hispanic-Filipino minister from Toronto East Community Presbyterian Church, a low tradition church. I then look at the ways in which two elders, one who migrated from Scotland and the other from Guyana, compare diversity, tolerance and belonging between their place of origin and home in Canada. This chapter thus considers the experiences of whiteness, the subjectivity of the model minority and the refusal of Canadian benevolence.

Chapter Six considers hospitality through commensality. I discuss how a small group of women from Guyana and Korea negotiate dignity and notions of the good life through their subjection to shifting boundaries of guest and host, stranger and neighbour, despite their long-term membership within the church. The sharing of food and memories is a mode of conviviality and dignity for dinner guests, many whom are white and living on social assistance programs, and for Christian racialized hosts. I then examine the relationship between the senses and racialization, as women who prepare meals with 'strange' taste and 'foreign' smells are unwelcome to the sensibilities of white bodies. I conclude with a discussion on ‘white help’, as white congregants provide time and money-saving initiatives as a method to support the community dinner, which overtime, unintentionally coopts and disenfranchises racialized women from church service. This marks a transgression in hospitality and dignity that reproduces white privilege, sameness and uniformity.

Chapter Seven is about the labour of overcoming ‘stranger danger’ and of conducting an ethic of openness that realizes values of openness, mutuality and welcome. First, I begin this chapter by considering who are strangers within the church from the perspective of white and racialized elderly women, which cuts across racial divides but also through the intersectionality of mental health and class structures. White underprivileged and transient persons who are struggling with dementia and depression are a category of strangers that are excluded from multicultural formulations of hospitality. Hospitality is an ethic of neighbourliness, which cultivates one’s capacity for being open and recognizing love and compassion within the stranger, which in some instances, is no easy task. Indeed, as white strangers desire and need the experience of love and
compassion, the hesitation to welcome by some church members points to a hypocrisy of hospitality: willful openness requires willful vulnerability to the unknown. Second, I consider hospitality as conversion. I do this by discussing the experience of one church elder in welcoming the Holy Spirit; this is a moment of conversion in which he opens himself to welcome God's presence. Openness to God and the Holy Spirit is an act of surrender to the ultimate stranger. This form of sacred hospitality is a transformation of self by welcoming the stranger within one’s essence, heart, and mind. This chapter considers how church members cross boundaries, both spatial and spiritual, to break open structures of separation.

In Chapter Eight, I conclude with a discussion on the theoretical implications of hospitality in terms of ‘hospitalities’. I begin with the scholarly focus on Derrida’s understanding of hospitality which emerged from multicultural and immigration debates in France. I then turn to scholarly critiques of Derrida noting that the temporal, spacial, categorical and relational qualities of hospitality are rather ambiguous. I then discuss the implications and possibilities offered by Christian alternatives to the hierarchal structures of inequality within Derrida’s hospitality and by extension, to Canadian multiculturalism. Finally, I conclude with future considerations of hospitality, most notably in terms of reconciliation and Indigeneity.
The Presbyterian Church of Canada follows a reformed tradition\textsuperscript{17}, inspired by John Calvin and John Knox, where God is central and one’s access to God is through prayer (Hayes 1978: 4). I was told that a traditional Presbyterian church is simple, conservative, preferably unadorned with few material extravagances, such as the display of a cross. Ideologically, the denominational belief follows that one’s relationship with God is direct and that excessive material displays of wealth in the church disrupts that relationship (see Luhrmann 2012: 174). At the level of the congregation, however, the actual practice and style of worship varied from congregation to congregation. Throughout my fieldwork, I stayed with three Presbyterian congregations that followed two ‘traditions’ of worship: high tradition and low tradition. These ‘traditions’ mark out the ornateness of the church, which for some ministers, relate to the denomination’s roots in Calvinist conventions. A low tradition church is a congregation that is stripped of sacred, decorative and ornamental material to experience a pure relationship with God, an interaction that some Presbyterians believe ought to be free from material distractions (see also Harding 2000). Alongside this Calvinist influence, is the belief that a minister does not mediate God’s forgiveness; Presbyterians believe they receive forgiveness directly from God, which is known through their habitual and careful study of the bible (Hayes 1978:4). Throughout my stay at various Presbyterian churches, I did not encounter the practice of confessions between ministers and the laity and I took note of the absence of confessionals within these churches. A high tradition church, however, is a highly and decorative ornate church building. When I spoke to ministers at high tradition churches, they explained the ornateness of the material displays as commemorations of Presbyterian Canadian history and the church’s formative role in settling Canada.

While the ornateness of the churches speaks to the different ways for expressing the denomination’s Calvinist roots, the displays of wealth and history parallel the socio-economic

\textsuperscript{17} According to Stephen Hayes (1978), Reformed and Presbyterianism are synonymous and can be used interchangeably. The term ‘Reformed’ is commonly used in Europe, while Presbyterian is used in Britain, Canada and the United States.
status of church goers. I was told that most congregants were high-income professionals in high tradition churches. These churches tended to have a generationally diverse congregation, a mixture of young and old participants, including families, most who dressed in their Sunday best apparel, marking their affluence and that of the church. Over time, I learned that high tradition churches had the economic clout to support multicultural and charity-based programmes with paid workers. These programmes were devoted to cultural (Canadian) and language (English) classes for newcomers to Canada and soup-kitchen activities for underprivileged and homeless people. Low tradition churches, which is where I carried out most of my research, usually cater to church goers who come from a spread of socio-economic backgrounds, usually but not always skewed toward low-income church goers. Programmes in low tradition church do not have the financial capability as high tradition churches and most activities were developed and led by a group of volunteers. The idea of multiculturalism in church congregations thus did not always infer racialized congregants, but also differences marked by class and age. Most of the congregants to whom I spoke were elderly, racialized (having immigrated from Guyana, Korea, Africa and the Philippines), white, and economically disadvantaged. Concerns over the overlap and intersectionality of racial and class-based inequalities within the congregation are elaborated in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

The racialized attributes of the denomination, however, remains an undertheorized concern. In recent church reports and documents, ministers and denominational experts speak about the ethnocultural changes occurring within congregations and the lack of support (political and economic) by the national church towards racialized congregations. This has led to talk of potential denominational schisms, which is further discussed in Chapter 3.

**Chapter Overview**

This chapter offers an in-depth overview of the Presbyterian Church of Canada (PCC). First, I begin with a discussion of my fieldsites in Toronto (Tkaronto), describing three kinds of Presbyterian churches to elucidate the distinctions between low tradition and high tradition congregations. Second, I describe the echelons of church polity which offers clearer insights into the structure of church governance. Third, I explain the history of the PCC and the history of Presbyterian social evangelism in shaping political and social domains of Canadian society.
Following this, I elaborate on the long history of the church in managing Canadian ethno-racial diversity. From populations to immigrant groups, I demonstrate that the idea of multiracialism and multiculturalism as a contemporary problem is in fact grounded in the history of the church in governing the movement and belonging of diverse ethnoracial groups since the late 19th century.

**Fieldsites: Presbyterian Congregations**

Throughout my field work, I carried out research at three urban Presbyterian churches in Toronto: Toronto East Community Presbyterian Church (TECPC), Queensview Presbyterian Church, and Toronto Central Presbyterian Church (TCPC). From 2012 to 2015, I carried out most my research with TECPC, participating in church-run activities including church bazaars, clean-up days, bible study sessions, choir practices, and community dinners. Some activities such as the church bazaar and clean-up days were seasonal activities, usually occurring in May while other undertakings, such as bible study sessions, were intermittent, and other activities which started near the end of my stay, such as choir, ceased after a few weeks because of low participation. Community dinners, however, were monthly activities with strong support from the congregation and persisted throughout my stay. I participated at Queensview Presbyterian church for a few weeks during my first year of fieldwork, however, I discontinued as church activities at Queensview and TECPC occurred on similar days and times. My time at Toronto Central Presbyterian occurred near the end of my fieldwork, mostly because one Presbyterian elder from Ottawa suggested that I see a 'real' Presbyterian church. Unlike TECPC, Queensview Presbyterian and Toronto Central Presbyterian were high tradition churches. The liturgical style was much more formal as ministers donned their clerical robes and worship was reverent and solemn. Both high tradition churches had established classical choirs leading the congregation in singing the assigned hymns. While Queensview Presbyterian has a pianist and a stunning grand piano centered in front of the pulpit and a well-rehearsed choir, Toronto Central has an organist who plays from a formidable ornate organ that is situated on a balcony overlooking the congregation below. The music from the organ is aurally demanding, invoking an affective sense of Anglo-European history to congregants. On special occasions, a small orchestra involving string and wind instruments may gather around the organist, endowing the music with a deeper sense of veneration of church space.
At the heart of my research is TECPC, a small congregation with a congregational membership of approximately 150 individuals in total but averaged around 25-35 people for Sunday sermons. The congregation is multiracial and multiethnic. Just over half the congregation are naturalized Canadians, having migrated to Canada in the 1960s and 1980s from Guyana, Swaziland, Rwanda, the Philippines, Korea, Scotland, and a few congregants are also racialized Canadians, such as Black Canadians and Asian Canadians. The rest identify as white Canadians, from Anglo or Francophone backgrounds. From my observations from weekly Sunday sermons, nearly all the congregants are over the age of fifty, less than five congregants were between the ages of 30 and 49 years old. Children were an uncommon sight at TECPC. Henry, a muscled Black Canadian in his mid 30s, would bring his two daughters to Sunday sermon from time to time, because, he would tell me months later, it was important for his daughters to have Jesus in their lives. His partner, a tall lean white woman, rarely attended church with them. Joan, an elder at TECPC who migrated from Scotland in the 1960s, would also bring her two granddaughters with her when she was tasked with the occasional caregiving. When children were present at Sunday sermons, either Joan or Emma, the minister’s wife, would facilitate Sunday school activities, such as the narration and drawing of biblical passages, in the adjoining sanctum.

The congregation is a socio-economic combination of professionals, working class retirees, low-income people, and those without income who depend on government subsidies. Identifying professionals is quite difficult as they may arrive dressed in shorts, t-shirts and runners, and working class and low-income individuals were, at times, attired in their Sunday’s best: some men would wear suits or business attire and women adorned themselves in vibrant colourful sundresses and wide brim organza hats. The minister, who identifies as a Hispanic-Filipino, would change his attire from week to week. One Sunday, he would wear a Filipino barong, an embroidered light weight long sleeve shirt worn over a white undershirt. On another Sunday, he would wear a black hooded sweatshirt and frayed jeans, and on other Sundays, he would sport a Hawaiian-style t-shirt. Only on special occasions would Abraham wear his clerical robes, shirt and tab collar insert, marking the importance of the Sacrament of communion, Maundy Thursday, Christmas Eve mass and Easter Sunday. When I questioned Abraham about his attire, he laughed and asked me if I liked it. He followed up with a more serious tone, explaining to me that was his attempt in intervening in overt class distinctions within the church. By dressing in a variety of clothing styles,
the aim of his appearance was to make Sunday sermons more accessible to all individuals, but especially to those who could not afford the formal wear of 'Sunday's best'. By wearing rumpled t-shirt and sweatpants, he expressed that his own attire would diminish the stigma and insensitivities associated with congregational socio-economic disparities.

When I spoke with Presbyterian elders and ministers from other rural and urban churches in Ontario, they were aware of Abraham’s stylistic difference in ministration at TECPC. I soon came to learn that Presbyterians external to the TECPC congregation viewed TECPC as an inauthentic Presbyterian Church. One teaching elder from another church explained that TECPC is a low tradition church. Indeed, the church space is not ornate: there is no cross, nor paintings of past ministers, few stained glass windows and there are no visible material items representing the church's long history in the neighbourhood. I was told that this is typical of churches following a Calvinist and protestant tradition, which is distinguished from a Catholic tradition where the symbol of a cross is believed to be too ornate. One minister explained to me that churches following Calvinist conventions believe that a cross is lavish, saying that people are in church to worship God and not the cross. Additionally, Sunday service at TECPC does not follow a rigidly structured liturgical style. Sermons may be delivered in many languages, such as Spanish, Tagalog and Swazi. Rituals are informal and congregationally driven, that is, they are based on crises, issues and inspirations relevant to church goers. During one Sunday service, congregants were welcome to dance in the pulpit area to show how they felt God moving through them. During my first year of research at TECPC, there was no formal choir; congregants sung following a piano accompaniment. During my second year at TECPC, there were two attempts at organizing musical groups. First, Emma made an effort in organizing a formal choir; however, this did not succeed as there were very few participants. The second attempt was with the formation of a 'praise band' as new adherents offered their expertise, in what they called their God-given gifts, in guitar and drum playing to the congregation. Some congregation members enjoyed the inspiration and vitality of the band, while other congregants were discontent that the music, telling me that it strayed from congregational tradition.
Queensview Presbyterian Church and Toronto Central Presbyterian Church

Queensview Presbyterian is located on the East side of downtown Toronto, within close proximity of an Asian neighbourhood enclave with a predominantly Chinese and Vietnamese constituency. Church attendees, however, reflect a different demographic. While attending Sunday mass at Queensview Presbyterian, there are about fifty church goers: 10-15 Asians and five Caribbean folk—all of whom were young, mostly in their mid 30s to mid 40s, and the rest were elderly white people. Unlike TECPC, Queensview Presbyterian has a well-developed Sunday school program for children of all ages. While attending Sunday sermons, I observed that there were about 10-15 children attending with their caregivers. Children remain in the church sanctuary and participate for the first portion of the service, then they are later led to the children's worship center behind the pulpit.

At the rear of the church is a small cluttered museum that houses various historical materials on display to connect people, over time and space, to a sense of identity, affiliation and tradition. There is a display of bibles, religious paraphernalia, Black and white pictures, missionary advertisements in a small room, all dating back to the 1860s, commemorating the long history of Presbyterianism in Canada. In the Presbyterian imaginary, Presbyterianism was integral to Canadian nation-making. A pamphlet, for example, explains that the 1954 issue of Canada's $2 bill is engraved with a scenery featuring St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church along the St Francis River Valley in Quebec. Other pictures on display show congregations from the 1950s, some with over 150 white church goers in attendance. Indeed, there are no items that speak to the denominations racialized populations. Together, the artifacts infer a history of the denomination’s Anglo past where the church was strong and unified by the show of white congregation members.

Toronto Central Presbyterian Church

The structure of Toronto Central Presbyterian Church is similar to Queensview Presbyterian, however at a much grander scale. On a given Sunday, there are about 200 church goers in attendance, mostly Asian and white, all dressed in formal conservative Sunday attire. An associate minister at Toronto Central, Reverend Thomas, a white Canadian of Scottish descent, explained to me that over the past five years, the congregation’s numbers is steadily growing, which he
assumes is corresponding to the increasing population density of the neighbourhood. With the influx of developers building high rise condominiums, young professionals are moving into the area. Reverend Thomas tells me that the local condo development has not only increased the number of families and retirees but has also made the congregation multicultural. He says, "It's much more diverse than what the congregation had been. It's still primarily white, but that is changing fairly quickly and age-wise, the younger people are more diverse than the older group of people". The changing demographics of the congregation is compelling elders and ministers to question the structure, organization, and style of worship at Toronto Central, following the direction of other Presbyterian and mainline churches. Reverend Thomas confided that elders and ministers were, at the time of our conversation, holding a series of meetings to discuss the future and direction of the church. He shared his thoughts that Toronto Central has made very little movement in addressing the multi-racial and multi-ethnic needs of the congregation. The dilemma of inclusion is how to include the spiritual and cultural needs of a diverse congregation without losing congregational identity. The inclination of elders and ministers at Toronto Central is to remain an Anglo-centric church. He says, 'People who are coming from non-white, racially, ethnically and non-Presbyterian backgrounds are coming to Toronto Central because of tradition. They want to be a part of what seems to be traditional". Reverend Thomas admitted that there is no easy answer but shared a common and steadfast perspective held by leaders and long-time members of the church.

Similar to Queensview Presbyterian Church, Toronto Central has a small museum in the basement of the church commemorating the Canadian regiment of the Scottish military elite, memorializing a history of military service of Scottish-Canadian Presbyterian communities. The materiality of the artifacts allows for viewers to make a connection between Presbyterianism and Scottish militarism to the Canadian state and nation. On display are military robes, banners, infantry armaments, all which signify the regiment's past in Canadian warfare, including their participation in: the Boer War, the first war in which Canada sent troops overseas in 1899; WW I and WWII; the Korean War as well as more recent militarized events. The mobilization of Scottish military symbols within the space of the church invokes an imagined origin of the church and congregation as distinctly Scottish in origin and Canadian in making. This past is not particular to Toronto Central, but is a salient denominational imaginary as most elite Presbyterians from high tradition churches have shared their view of and, at times, their critiques of the church as Scottish. I asked
Reverend Thomas to elucidate how the church came to house the military museum and he explained that Toronto Central was 'home' to the regiment because the minister of the congregation was also the regiment's chaplain from the 1880s-1925. The banquet hall of the church is decorated in Scottish tartans symbolizing different clans; however, Reverend Thomas expressed that there was debate among church elders whether to 'modernize' the church by taking down the traditional tartans and displaying the work of local artists. Throughout the church hallways and enclaves, regiment banners and flags adorn the walls, some displaying the regiment's Gaelic motto 'Dileas Gu Brath' (Faithful Forever). The display of Scottish military flags and banners aligns the church identity as Scottish in origin, celebrating its cultural heritage to a European homeland, and recognizing its contribution to Canadian militarized and colonial history. For some members of the church, the Presbyterian church is imagined as culturally tied to Scottish and British tradition, making it an ethnic church that adds to Canada's multicultural landscape.

Presbyterian Polity

The Presbyterian Church of Canada is founded on a system of courts consisting of: Session, Presbytery, Synod and the General Assembly. Each governing body is composed of elders and ministers (known as teaching elders); elders are elected by the congregation. Among the congregations with whom I stayed, church goers referred to teaching elders as ministers, reverends, and pastors, sometimes using the terms interchangeably. For teaching elders who hold a doctoral degree, some congregants may address them as ‘reverend doctor’. The primary role of the minister is to teach congregants about scripture, guide the celebration of particular holidays and sacraments, such as baptisms, and to grow the spiritual well-being of the congregation. Hayes (1978) suggests that members of Session cannot govern the teachings of the minister, stating that “Session have no right to tell ministers what to preach” (14); however, ministers told me that, in practice, they felt compelled to follow the desires and will of Session. One minister informed me that elders expected him to circulate a copy of his sermons prior to worship for their approval.

Elders are long term members of the denomination who are nominated to the eldership and voted into the role by members of the congregation. The Presbyterian Church categorizes its congregation into two different populations: 'members' and 'adherents'. Through the rite of baptism, members gain certain rights and privileges: they may be elected as elders; they are
allowed to vote at congregational meetings, and they are entitled to call on ministers for services. Once members are elected as elders, they form Session and serve for life unless the congregation calls for their re-election after having served a period of six years (Book of Forms, Presbyterian Church of Canada 2013). Unlike members, adherents have not undergone the rite of baptism and thus, have no electoral rights or privileges. They solely participate in congregational services and church activities. Throughout this dissertation, I use the term 'participants', 'congregants' and ‘church goers’ to identify both members and adherents.

Session is the court at the level of the congregation. The number of elders and teaching ministers varies depending on the size of the population. In small-scale congregations with about 30 people attending Sunday sermons, Session may involve only one half-time minister with a group of five or six elders. In large-scale congregations with several hundred people attending sermons, Session may comprise of three to four full time teaching ministers and eight to ten elders. Session is responsible for managing congregational ministries, which may include pastoral care, ministry of worship, outreach ministry, and education ministry. The main duties of Session are: first, to approve and supervise associations that develop among members and adherents, which may consist of a Women’s group, Children’s group, or after-school tutoring groups; second, to maintain congregational records; third, to develop programmes that grow congregational participation; fourth, to form a Board of Managers for financial management of the church and care of church property, and fifth, to carry out the duties as directed by higher courts of the church. Session usually convenes once a month and meetings are closed to church goers.

The Presbytery is a ruling court above Session, which is comprised of ministers and elders representing different churches within a contained geographic region. For example, the Presbytery of East Toronto consists of 21 congregations and several ministries, such as Evangel Hall Mission, a charity organization that provides social services to those living in poverty. Presbytery convenes every three or four months, meeting rotationally at churches within the Presbytery’s geographic jurisdiction. Presbyteries are predominantly understood to govern the ordination, transference, and dismissals of ministers to congregations. I was invited to attend one Presbytery meeting that was hosted by one of the churches in which I was staying, and the three-hour meeting followed a precirculated agenda, informing the Presbytery of activities occurring within local congregations and deciding on congregational proposals seeking small sums of money of a few thousand dollars to support congregation-based social welfare programmes. One congregation, for example, was
seeking the financial support of the Presbytery for a program designed to help sex workers willing to leave the sex industry. Elders of the congregation were required to present an actionable plan that did not place church members at risk. Members of the Presbytery questioned the proposal, methods, implications and feasibility of the program. A member of the Presbytery would then make a motion regarding the funds, which required at least two supporters of the motion, before members of the Presbytery were allowed to vote on the matter through a show of hands. Laity never spoke to me of the Presbytery, unaware of the role and influence of the Presbytery in the functioning and organization of the congregation.

Above the Presbytery is the Synod, a governing body that usually convenes once a year and consists of several Presbyteries over a larger regional area. There are eight Synods throughout Canada, each consisting of approximately 45 presbyteries. The role of the Synod is to govern issues and concerns that arise from the level of Presbyteries (Hayes 1976:16).

The national level court of the Presbyterian Church of Canada is the General Assembly. The General Assembly meets once a year over several days to appoint and commission committees on matters relating to church constituency, denominational policies, global missions, and doctrine. Members at this level also debate and vote on petitions, proposals, appeals, and complaints from the lower courts, ie synods, presbyteries and session. Ministers, members of ministries, and elders are commissioned to the General Assembly by presbyteries. The General Assembly is a temporary governing body that dissolves once the meeting is adjourned; members of the General Assembly have no further power as representatives of this court once the meeting dissolves. The temporary existence and decentralized authority of the General Assembly is a refusal of an autocracy as per the denomination's protestant heritage (see Book of Forms, Presbyterian Church of Canada 2016). This distinguishes the Presbyterian denomination from Catholicism and its papal autocracy, a critique that I heard by ministers at Presbyterian congregations.

Presbyterian Church of Canada: A Mainline Denomination

The Presbyterian Church is classified as a ‘mainline’ or ‘mainstream’ denomination, a category that includes the Methodist Church, Anglican Church, Baptist Church and more recently, the
In 1901, 51.4 percent of the Canadian population identified as Protestant, of which 15.7 percent of that population identified as Presbyterian (Heath 2017:4). Historically, mainline denominations were politically and socially recognized as reputable and decent Christian communities in Anglo-Canada (Bramadat and Seljak 2008). Ministers from the ‘big four’ denominations held privileged and powerful positions in various spheres of Canadian governance regarding social welfare, such as government boards and commissions, armed forces, penitentiaries, and public education (Bramadat and Seljak 2008: 39). Presbyterian and Methodist denominations were the two largest religious groups in the early 20th century and dominated the Canadian landscape (Heath 2009).

Canadian Presbyterianism is founded on the practice of a ‘full-orbed Christianity’, a form of social evangelism where commitment to a Christian ethos is practiced through social action. In the early years of Canadian formation, this was distinguishable from gospel evangelism in the United States and was seen as a radical move away from a traditional orientation of personal piety. Social evangelism “grew out of a perceived need to appeal to a democratic public” and conservative Christian values and beliefs (Christie and Gauvrau 1996:4).

The social and political recognition of ministers as experts on moral behaviour and social problems vis-à-vis increasing urbanization in the late 19th and early 20th century emerged from their dual role as academic professors of social Christianity and as congregational ministers (Christie and Gauvrau 1996). With the absence of the social sciences in Canadian universities until the 1920s, “Protestant churches would function as the central clearing-house of research, publicity, and lobbying for reform legislation had a profound effect on both the intellectual training and the social

18 Until 1925, mainline denominations were known as the ‘big four’. The United Church was established in 1925 through what is known as ‘church union’, when the Methodist Church, the Congregational Union of Canada and the Presbyterian Church amalgamated through federal legislature. From a Presbyterian perspective, church union fractured the identity, coherence and unity among Presbyterians as many congregations did not want to unite with other denominations. From 1925-1939, Presbyterians were no longer legally allowed to use the title of “Presbyterian Church of Canada”. Also, they lost rights to denominational and congregational property including universities and residential schools that were previously held by the Presbyterian Church of Canada, as title was transferred to the United Church. In 1939, the United Church relinquished ownership of the title of “Presbyterian Church of Canada”, which permitted Presbyterian groups to reunify and reuse the name and rebuild the denomination.

19 According to Heath (2017), 17.1 percent were Methodists, 12.7 percent were Anglican and 5.9 percent were Baptists (2017:4).
role of the rank-and file minister” (Christie and Gauvrau 1996: 76). Presbyterian churches also established universities and colleges across Canada, including Queen’s University, Ontario in 1841, and Manitoba College in 1871, which later became the University of Winnipeg in 1967, and Knox College in 1844, which entered formal affiliation with the University of Toronto in 1885 (Klempa 1994: 8),

Social evangelism was intellectually demanding as Christian social action required justification from scientific knowledge (Christie and Gauvrau 1996:247). Mainline churches, particularly the Presbyterian Church and Methodist Church, were open to the methods, arguments, and debates circulating in emerging fields of evolutionary sciences and Darwinism, philosophy, sociology, and anthropology to regulate the direction of social reform in Canada and missionary work at home and abroad (Christie and Gauvrau 1996, Bush 2012). Presbyterian clergy were trained in the social sciences through church college curriculum to ensure that Christian faith was not displaced by the sciences, and more so, to apply Christian thought in the development of social theories and government policies (1996:83, 246). In doing so, the melding of science-based knowledge and the directive of Christian morality garnered and secured public support of Christian-based government administered programmes. What we see in this era is the systemic influence of protestant Christianity in shaping Canadian values, welfare policies, and social security programmes, which provided the underpinnings for Canada’s current social landscape20. This was a nation-making effort in shaping the emerging Canadian nation into “His Dominion”, a Christian nation (Heath 2009, Christie and Gauvrau 1996, Wang 2006).

The Presbyterian Church as a Settler and Colonial Institution

The Presbyterian Church of Canada has had a long history in managing racial diversity since the early 20th century. When compared to Protestant missions from Britain and the United States, Canadian Protestant Churches involved in foreign missions were relative latecomers to the

20 Christie and Gauvrau (1996) argue that “Protestant churches did not simply accommodate Christianity to modern thought; rather, they were the central means by which modern values and institutions were introduced” (246). This is unlike the United States where protestant churches were becoming increasingly divorced from social reforms as business interests took over.
overseas endeavor. The Presbyterian Church sent out their first mission from Nova Scotia to Vanuatu (formerly the New Hebrides) in 1844 and later branched out to other regions of the South Pacific. Presbyterian Churches in Ontario established missions in Taiwan, China and India by 1870 while other mainline denominations sent out missions to Burma (Baptist Church) and Japan (Anglican Church) during this period (Austin and Scott 2005: 11). While the Presbyterian Church has a long history in foreign missions to many regions of the world, such as Trinidad, Guyana, India, Korea, China and Taiwan, this dissertation attends only to the position of the Church on the British colonial Boer War (1899-1902), the implementation of Indian residential schools, and the establishment of the Department of the Stranger in regulating the arrival and movement of racialized and European immigrants into Canada. These examples are some of the structures that exemplify the systemic arrangement of the Presbyterian Church as a colonial and settler denomination. Empire, from the purview of the Presbyterian Church, as with and other mainline denominations, supported the church’s goal of spreading missions for Christianity and civilization (Heath 2009).

Canadian Presbyterians and Imperialism

In his study of the role of Canadian mainline denominations in the British-Boer war, Gordon Heath (2009) contends that protestant churches considered Canada’s contribution in sending troops to fight along Britain’s imperial war efforts as a critical event in the Canadian nation-building process. The British-Boer war was initiated in October 1899 when the two Boer republics (Afrikaners) invaded British settler territory in South Africa, sieging the town of Ladysmith, Mafeking and Kimberly (Heath 2017:1). Despite the dissenting voices of individual Canadian Christians and large populations of Roman Catholic Canadian francophones, protestant churches in Canada were unified in their support as they believed that churches and their missions would be better off under British rule. Heath states that “the threat to empire was considered to be a threat to Canada, as well as to an empire that considered to be God’s providential tool to spread Christianity and civilization around the globe” (2009: xxi). In other words, British rule was perceived to be more benevolent than Boer rule. With the circulation of newsletters, journals, and congregational pamphlets, protestant denominations had a strong voice in shaping Canadian imperialist sentiment. Presbyterian literature represented British colonials as protectors of African natives by propagating the war-effort platform as Boer tyranny, pointing to Boer refusal to abolish
slavery, thus inferring Boer’s inaptitude for civilization (Heath 2009). The logic for social reform at home in Canada was transposed onto South Africa; colonial war efforts was understood as a pathway for liberty and justice for natives (Heath 2009). Protestant leaders in Canada saw in British imperial sentiment a sense of Christian belonging through social evangelism to civilize the degenerative character of natives (Heath 2009: xvii, Samaroo 1975).

The question of the native problem, whether at home or abroad, is centrally a question about white Canadian identity (c.f Lawrence 2003). Heath (2009) remarks that the early 20th century was an era of categories and discourses of difference. He says, “the terms of ‘race’, ‘breed’, ‘stock’ and ‘native and the like were common, and for most [white Anglo people], were considered inoffensive” (2009: xxiii). While it is true that he is speaking about white settler society, Bonita Lawrence argues that classificatory systems shape ways of thinking about native identity today. Classificatory terms of the past have become imbedded within legislative acts that have ordered how people currently think about native people, and more so, how native people think of themselves (Lawrence 2003: 4).

The Boer war, which had the strong support of Canadian mainline churches, was a military strategy that attempted to quell a growing crisis of British Anglo-Saxon supremacy. There was a dominant perception that as other nations were growing military and economic powers, they became potential threats to the British empire. If Britain was to lose the war to the Boers, this loss would publicly and politically infer that Britain was vulnerable and would place Britain’s colonial stronghold over India in jeopardy. As noted by Heath (2009), the most important colony to Britain was their control over India, the “jewel” of the British empire: “lose India and the empire would be lost” (Heath 2009: 4). What was at a stake was British authority over land and resources, and militarism was the method for protecting British acquisition and affirming British imperial prowess and sovereignty over their colonies. Indeed, it is difficult to distinguish between the dissemination of protestant Christianity and the spread of empire as the two domains are linked in an interdependent process that unifies Anglo-Saxon peoples (Heath 2009). Today, Canadian Presbyterian war efforts are commemorated at Toronto Central Presbyterian Church through the memorialization of a Canadian Highlander regiment and the battalion’s origins in the Boer war on behalf of the Presbyterian Church of Canada and the Canadian militia.
The Presbyterian Church and Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island

Although this dissertation does not speak to the contemporary relationship between the Presbyterian Church and Indigenous Peoples on their traditional lands on Turtle Island (Canada), it is important to make visible the role of the church in managing Indigenous populations that served the interests of the Canadian settler state. Until 1927, the Presbyterian Church was in charge of seven Indian residential schools and five day-schools located on Indigenous reserves. With church union, the federal government awarded five of the residential school and all of the day schools to the newly formed United Church (Bush 1993: 177).

The position of the church in governing Indigenous groups was an ambiguous and uneven endeavour as the Presbyterian Church did not provide any firm direction on whether missions to Indigenous people followed guidelines for home-mission tactics or whether to apply foreign-mission protocols. According to Bush (2012), foreign-missions would ideally emphasize a model of cross-cultural understanding. This would include the will and ability of missionaries to learn the language of local speakers and to preserve “helpful aspects” of native spirituality “in the development of a Native Christian faith” (2012:116). Bush points out that in some locations, residential school principals and teachers were “recommended” of the need to learn Indigenous languages and to protect Indigenous people from “unsavory aspects of Euro-Canadian culture” (2012: 116).

In 1912, the Presbyterian Church underwent structural changes that shifted the Presbyterian Native ministry to the responsibility of the Home Missions Board (Bush 2012). With this change in governance, native missions were no longer concerned with learning Indigenous languages cultures as a method for spreading the gospel and scripture. Under the new direction of the Home Missions Board, native ministry took on clear assimilationist tactics, reflecting the primary goal of the Home Missions Board to Christianize and civilize every aspect of Canadian society (Bush 2012: 116). In the first half of the 20th century, the Presbyterian schools were heavily reliant on

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21 The residential schools were established in: Kenora, Ontario; Portage-La-Prairie and in Birtle, Manitoba; Round Lake and File Hills, Saskatchewan, and Alberni and Ahoushat, British Columbia. After church union, the Presbyterian Church was in charge of the schools located in Kenora (ON) and Birtle (MB) until 1969 when responsibility was transferred to the Canadian government.
the distribution of government grants and paid per child enrolled. Government funds were first used to pay for teachers’ salaries then the rest was barely sufficient to cover the necessary food, clothing and transportation of Indigenous children (Bush 1993: 177). As the church became more reliant on government funds, the financial support came with stipulation for better management of finances and resources. With demands that centered on economic accountability and liability, staff and missionaries felt that these new protocols deviated from the original intention of native missions in spreading the gospel to Indigenous communities. Many of the ministers hired as school principals for Indigenous students had little or no experience with management and accounting (Bush 1993: 178). By the 1940s, the aims of Presbyterian native ministries were undistinguishable from those of the state as the school curriculum shifted to full-day classroom and was standardized to follow the curriculum mandated by provincial governments.

A notable stance by denominational members is that members of the church did not know better and were carrying out programmes that were considered normative actions of white Anglo Canadians towards Indigenous people at that time. Utterances such as “we know better now” or “we did not know at that time” is a tactic that does not accept any wrongdoing (see McElhinny 2016: 55). In church documents on the administration of residential schools, writers quote reports by school principals stating that Indigenous people approved and acquiesced to church-led schooling. For example, they state “‘The Children’s English is improving, so that their Indian language is seldom heard in the playground or around the building. Most of the Indians praise the full-day system, and some see the advantage of entering school early’” (Report of the Principal of Birtle School, WMS Annual Report 1945:52). This passage fails to attend to claims made by Indigenous people of the trauma and abuse they experienced when they spoke their language; the passage infers that English was desired along with their participation in residential schooling. Another passage from a document on Presbyterian administrative history of residential schools, healing, and reconciliation describe Indigenous home life as “broken” and “very bad” and that Indigenous students were “orphans” (Report of the Principal of Birtle School, WMS Annual

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Report 1958) 23, thereby ignoring Indigenous claims of forceful removal of children from Indigenous families by church officials. The absence of Indigenous voices, even Indigenous Presbyterians, is conspicuous as this is a report that is supposed to speak to healing and reconciliation. Without Indigenous presence, it becomes evident that the report is not written for an Indigenous audience as there is little accountability to the violence of residential schools. The rearticulation of historical harm is cleansed of ‘intentional’ wrongdoing.

In 1994, the Presbyterian Church of Canada issued a public confession acknowledging the Church was complicit in a government program to assimilate Indigenous people. However, it was not until 2014 that the document was presented before the General Assembly to Phil Fontaine, the former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. This action may be read as an attempt by the Church to move the apology from a symbolic gesture to a domain of sincerity. For an apology to be recognized as authentic and meaningful rather than an expression of sympathy, an apology ought to engage with those to whom the apology is made in a manner that is public and/or through actual reparations (James 2013, McElhinny 2016). Between 1998 and 2003, 246 survivors made claims against the Presbyterian Church outlining the abuse they suffered as students by church staff. As an act of redress, the church settled for over two million dollars of which half was allocated to programs to develop and promote education, healing and reconciliation programs. Matt James, professor of political science, calls this kind of compensation “neoliberal heritage redress”. Neoliberal heritage redress’ characterizes how minority groups gain government funding if they undertake commemorative and educational projects, with terms dictated by funding agencies. This kind of redress follows neoliberal multiculturalism as ethnicity and culture are marked out in terms of past injustices and become a source of social capital that facilitates the market participation of those receiving redress (James 2013).

The Presbyterian Church and the Department of the Stranger

In the early 1900s, mass migration from Britain, the United States, Norway, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Ukraine, Poland and Italy was a major concern for the Presbyterian Church of Canada. The Board of Home Missions and Social Service sought to help new arrivals, both immigrants and returning Canadians, through a process for surveying and governing their settlement into Canada. Mrs Joseph West pushed the board to organize a Department of the Stranger to record, report and 'welcome' immigrants as a service for helping immigrants adjust to life in Canada (Department of the Stranger 1922). Established in 1911, the Department of the Stranger functioned as a systematized network of ministers, who were stationed along the port entrances along Canada's eastern shores and abroad in ports of departure in Scotland and Britain. They worked in cooperation with 'Stranger Secretaries', who were representatives from the Woman's Missionary Society, located throughout Canada's major cities and townships: Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver. Ministers stationed abroad accessed records from ships' passengers, education boards on the transfer of children, colleges, and employment bureaus to archive the immigration of Presbyterians. From these records, ministers in sending cities sent this information to ministers and Stranger Secretaries in receiving cities to find and track newly arrived Presbyterian women. The department directed Stranger Secretaries to record the movement of strangers in a diary detailing the names and addresses of the strangers. Secretaries were later called on to transcribe their findings into tabulated forms for submission to annual reports for circulation within the echelons of Presbyterian polity: the local congregation, the Women's Missionary Society, and the Strangers' Secretary of the Executive Board. The Stranger Secretary of the General Council of the PCC would then compile all reports throughout Canada for presentation to the General Council at the annual meeting.

In the formative years of the department, the primary purpose was to regulate the movement of Presbyterian women into and within Canada. Members of the Women's Society thought young, unmarried Presbyterian women, migrating from the British Isles to work in Canada as nurses and domestics, required safeguarding from moral decay. Workplace contact with Asian, Jewish, Black and Indigenous men was thought to lead to moral degeneration, as certain groups were racialized and placed on a social moral hierarchy based on criteria of civility. Poor living conditions were also in a racialized environment and metonymically linked to the 'savage tendencies' of sexual
gluttony (Valverde 2008: 121-122). As such, by controlling and protecting the moral character of Anglo-Saxon women, the Department of the Stranger put into action a process for policing the moral and social order of Canadian cities, thereby ensuring the vitality and purity of British 'Canadian-ness' (Valverde 2008: 121).

Welcoming strangers, a theological and governmental rationale, was predominantly understood as a benevolent and caring practice that promised happiness and exaltation. A pamphlet circulated in 1919 by Mrs. Joseph M. West from the Department of the Stranger addresses concerns over increasing migration with the Christian duty of welcome. She writes,

Thousands of strangers will continue to come to our shores. Welcome them heartily. We have prepared for them at the ports and everywhere in Canada. When in hospital, we shall visit them. When they wish to learn our language they can be taught. Let every Secretary, appointed by her Auxiliary, do her part...Delay in dealing with the lonely or distressed may mean unnecessary suffering and lost opportunity.24

Their service and sympathy for strangers worked alongside a sincere belief that they were carrying out the work of God (Keane 2002). Their love of God was inspiration for performing welcome and care. As Christ is theologically understood to be found in each stranger, Presbyterians accepted that immigration was an opportunity presented by God to grow Christian "membership individually from ocean to ocean"25. Performing welcome then, would help reveal a more complete understanding of Christ and His Dominion. Performing welcome produced feelings of happiness; performing welcome was divine inspiration. In many pamphlets circulated by the Department of the Stranger, the narratives of workers offer testimonies of spiritual fulfillment: welcoming strangers was a means for saving strangers' souls. Performing welcome was interpreted as an action of divine inspiration; ensuing feelings of happiness were moments of exaltation where one could feel the Holy Spirit and God’s love, of being "emptied of self and be so filled with His

24 United Church Archives, Women’s Missionary Society, Department of the Stranger, Box 1
25 United Church Archives, Women’s Missionary Society, Department of the Stranger, Box 1
Spirit. This moment of knowing God is not only experienced by workers but was also assumed to be experienced by the stranger through their gestures of gratitude to the secretary.

While the practice in welcoming strangers was initially implemented to regulate and track the movement of young Presbyterian women from Britain and Scotland, the program was later extended to racialized groups from Eastern Europe and Asia. Valverde (2008) observes that the category of 'stranger' was a flexible classification scheme to identify who and which groups were different and in need of saving. This, she argues, "allowed church workers to shift their targets from immigrants in general to single women and back again" (Valverde 2008: 125). When immigrants were deemed less problematic then single Anglo women became civilizing targets. For Anglo Presbyterians in the early 20th century, race was not simply based on biological 'facts' of visible differences but was also constituted on moral character. Degenerate traits attributed to race were thought to be improved through the regenerative attributes of British civility (Samaroo 1975). Stranger secretaries assumed that they could improve the character of racialized groups by inculcating ethics of self-regulation, self-control and respect (Valverde 2008: 105).

In a 1913 report by Louise A. Reith from the Women's Missionary Society, she describes the appearance of Chinese immigrants as "drifters" arriving from the United States to work on the Canadian railway. Chinese immigrants who arrived into Canada via the United States presented a concern for Presbyterian congregations in British Columbia because they feared that Chinese immigrants would settle on Canadian land and in close proximity to Anglo communities (1913:21). Their presence posed a threat to the moral health of Anglo settlers and especially to single Anglo women. As such, stranger secretaries focused their efforts to civilizing Chinese communities, believing that they were carrying out God’s calling. They sent reports back to Women’s Missionary Society in Toronto detailing their success, documenting the innovative and enterprising strategies of Chinese strangers in Vancouver. They wrote of the efforts of Chinese women in developing Presbyterian Sunday school curriculum for their children and of Chinese men in establishing a Young Men's Christian Institute (YMCI) within their community. These efforts demonstrated to members of the Presbyterian Church that Chinese strangers were embracing Christian ideals. Missionaries viewed that Chinese settlers were 'on the right path' for

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26 United Church Archives, Women’s Missionary Society, Department of the Stranger, Box 1
improving self-control and moral character, both individually and as a community. For them, this explained why some Chinese individuals were tolerated to come into closer proximity with white Canadians by working in universities, public schools, businesses and civil service departments (Reith 1913:22). Inspired by the success in developing the moral character of Chinese immigrants, this "awakened [missionaries] to the need of work among other racial groups in Canada" (1913:21). Influenced by Chinese reform, stranger secretaries in British Columbia turned their efforts to Japanese and other Oriental groups and in the Canadian prairies, stranger secretaries sent reports that they were working with Scottish and Irish Presbyterians. In Toronto, most of the work with foreign strangers was with Ukrainians.

What is left unsaid in reports is that the Chinese who were or became Presbyterian were neither allowed nor welcomed to fully participate in mainstream Anglo Presbyterians churches. The goal was for racialized Christians to grow a church and congregation within their own community, and as such, white congregations remained contained and distinct from Chinese Presbyterian worship. There is also an underlying assumption in the Department of the Stranger reports that assimilation is desired by those targeted by secretaries, yet racialized Presbyterians were (and arguably, still are) separate from a white Presbyterian nation. Moral reform and social evangelism, vis-a-vis the governmental practice and Christian ethic of welcoming strangers, was to make strangers more "neighbourful" for the purpose of preserving the character of white Anglo Christian Canadians.

While Mrs. West emphasized the importance in tracking the movement of strangers, stranger secretaries also emphasized the care work involved by becoming 'friends'. For instance, in Vancouver, stranger secretaries focused on the influx of Chinese men, women and children, reporting that this group of people were 'unwelcome strangers' in various public domains. They remarked that Chinese were in need of 'friends' to help them assimilate whether they were foreign born or Canadian born. Reports on cross-racial friendships describe how these relationships developed and even flourished if strangers, such as the Chinese, acquiesced to the help of stranger secretaries. Stranger secretaries provided aid in the form of English training, locating and securing

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'suitable' employment, and offering comfort in times of social isolation, sickness and death\textsuperscript{29}. In their reports, Secretaries wrote about their gratitude and humbleness when their friendship was officially recognized on Canadian Citizenship papers, where strangers marked their religious affiliation with the Presbyterian church and identified a stranger secretary as a reference, all of which displayed in their view the right moral disposition.

The organization and implementation of the Department of the Stranger by the Presbyterian church in the early 20th century demonstrates that the church has had a long history and vested interest in working with and regulating multi-racial, multi-ethnic groups. Settlement of racialized strangers organized by the Presbyterian Canadian Church was based on a practice of partial assimilation. Full integration into Canadian life and a development of a unified congregation was never the goal. Racialized strangers would always remain just that- strangers who were to be distinguished from the white Christian population. Unlike native populations, immigrants were lauded for their industry in establishing ethnic churches within their own community. This was looked upon more favourably than to have a mixed-race congregation. Black settler Presbyterians who attended white churches were segregated from white congregants during worship; a curtain was erected to mark racial divisions.\textsuperscript{30}

From a brief historical overview, we can see that the Presbyterian Church in the early part of the twentieth century was deeply entrenched in colonial and settler structures. Their role in supporting the Boer War colonial war efforts, residential schools and civilizing missions among newcomer populations settling into Canada were actions that sought to protect the British empire and Anglo Canadian nation. Acquisition of land, dispossession of natives, and partial assimilation of the right kind of labour immigrant were tactics to protect Anglo Christian character, and more so, to inculcate proper moral values onto strangers.

\textsuperscript{29} Presbyterian Church of Canada Archives. Women’s Missionary Society. Annual Report 1914.

Conclusion

From a historical overview of the church, we can see that the Presbyterian Church has a long history in managing diverse racialized populations at home in Canada and abroad. While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to unpack the range of civilizing programs and their effects on targeted groups, the central point I raise here is to historicize how the church has welcomed and interacted with racialized and Indigenous groups over a long period of time. It offers the groundwork in challenging more recent claims made by church leaders who state that the church does not know how to deal with the problem of multiculturalism and ethnoracial diversity, seeing this as a ‘new’ problem, as will be detailed in the next chapter. This chapter also provides a synopsis of the governing apparatus of the denomination, demonstrating the various tiers of governing bodies that regulate people, programs, and politics occurring at the level of the congregation. Finally, this chapter describes Presbyterian congregations. It is important to note that at the level of the congregation, Presbyterianism as a denomination is not practiced nor experienced as a homogenous religion. The congregational practices and rituals in one site are quite different than the practices of another congregation, which is mediated by the identities of the congregants along with politics of the congregational elders, who are the members of Session. Some congregations that serve a predominantly aging population are in a crisis of church decline as churches are facing closure due to declining populations. The problem they are experiencing is: How to welcome in times of decline and change?
A major and ongoing concern voiced by church members is the impact of declining membership which has affected not only Presbyterian churches but other Christian churches from mainline denominations. Nearly every Christian denomination in Canada is reporting drops in membership and attendance and concerns over membership are culminating into a crisis “because smaller numbers means near-empty churches on Sunday, fewer services, and poorer financial resources” (Bramadat and Seljak 2008: 14). In the Greater Toronto Area, many small churches built in the mid 1850s and early 1900s were constructed to seat a capacity of several hundred churchgoers, while large capacity churches, such as those located in the downtown core of Toronto, were constructed to house over a thousand churchgoers. Currently, on most Sundays, small churches are typically occupied by only a handful of congregants while large churches welcome one to two hundred churchgoers (Bramadat and Seljak 2008). The sanctuary at TECPC, for example, has the capacity to seat 300 people, yet on most Sundays, the pews are sparsely populated with a scattering of approximately 35 church members.31

For many long-term members and elders, the shortage of churchgoers is unsettling. Low numbers are interpreted as spiritual waning within the church community, which raises anxiety over the uncertain role of Christianity in Canadian society. My informants expressed their concerns that dwindling numbers would draw attention from upper levels of church polity and prompt calls for closure (elaborated in Chapter 4). Within the upper echelons of church governance of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, the crisis of decline remains a prevalent and ongoing concern since the national membership dropped from approximately 202,566 in 1964 to 135,958 in 199832 (Presbyterian Church of Canada 2000: 309). What the Presbyterian demographic numbers reveal is that the denomination is losing prominence and influence within the Canadian national

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31 TECPC congregational demographics are described in the Introduction and Chapter 2.

32 Demographic data was gathered for an interim report on denominational membership decline submitted to the General Assembly in 2000.
imaginary. Presbyterianism, according to MacDonald (2008), is no longer “a brand that many in Canada identify with or possibly even recognize” (MacDonald 2008:198). As such, church officials and laity are experiencing an institutional depression, which one official defined as a "despairing lethargy" and "Ecclesiastical Depression". These terms describe an overarching feeling within the Church: a melancholia that cripples ways of envisioning change (Haynes 2012: 16-7). The state of spiritual restlessness and lack of inspiration is oppressive and discouraging throughout the national Church as explained in a recent denominational report:

It is the realization that the Church is getting smaller, and a despair that there seems to be nothing that can be done about it, that leads to a general lethargy about trying new things. This feeling in turn leads to a decreased capacity to change and a reliance on the inherited models of the church that have worked in the past (Haynes 2012: 16-17).

The downward trend in church numbers for Presbyterians affirms a reality in which the Church, as an institution, is no longer central in the social, spiritual, and political domains of Canadian society.

Since the mid 1960s, the General Assembly and its committees have commissioned multiple studies from various task groups within the PCC and from external management consultation groups to explain the causes of decline and to provide directions for reviving a meaningful Presbyterian tradition suited for contemporary Canadian social life. Based on archival research, this chapter parses the narratives told at the national level of the Presbyterian church, specifically the reports commissioned by the General Assembly, the highest court of the PCC, news articles covering denominational resources, ministry reports, and recommendations from church administrative proceedings. By looking at the divergences and contestations between denominational reports over a fifty-year period, it becomes evident that church decline is symptomatic of church precarity. Underlying anxieties over the uncertain future of both Christianity and Presbyterianism in plural societies along with the dilemma of financial instability within congregations33 and decreasing populations, have produced precarious conditions for

33 Financial instability and church closure at the level of the congregation is discussed in Chapter 4.
various churches in urban settings. Moreover, a genealogy of denominational reports allows a lens into the normalization and standardization of white Presbyterian identity and the differential treatment of racialized congregations. This offers a broader understanding into the crisis of church precarity that questions what it means to be Presbyterian and the desire to belong to and affiliate with a Presbyterian congregation in post-Christian era.

This chapter examines denominational reports on church decline from 1969-2013; it does not provide a comprehensive reading of each report. The stories told within denominational reports tell a larger story on whiteness and colour blindness within the Presbyterian church. To represent a unified church, the bodies, voices and concerns of racialized Presbyterians are recognized yet silenced. Despite momentary stories of growth among non-Anglo Presbyterian churches in church documents, there was and continues to be a refusal to gather qualitative and quantitative data on ethnic and racialized Presbyterians. While attending a six-day intensive Workshop on Intercultural Ministry, “Deepening Understanding for Intercultural Ministry” (DUIM), a landmark gathering for the development of an intercultural missionary framework to decolonize evangelist practices of preachers, ministers, and church elders, I met Aisha, an elegant older Indian woman with an Oxbridge accent, who was an elder at a Presbyterian congregation in Ottawa. We were paired together because we were the only representatives from the Presbyterian Church in attendance, which was a dismal number when compared to the number of representatives from other mainline denominations as each had between four to six representatives. As we worked on the day’s activity, which was for us to analyze our church’s culture with a visual representation of ‘what is going on in our homes’ using diverse crafting instruments that lay before us, such as poster paper, Crayola markers, Play-Doh putty, post-it notes and a vast array of fuzzy chenille craft wire, Aisha explained to me that she did not want to be at the workshop. “Why am I here? Because I am the token person of colour…write that down: ‘tokenism’”, nodding at the marker and poster paper. Over the next 45 minutes, Aisha

34 The relationship between precarity and church closures is elaborated in Chapter 4.

35 Post-Christian is a term used to describe the present situation of Christianity in North American and Western Europe where people may practice Christian morals, values, attitudes and beliefs yet distanitaze themselves from explicitly identifying as Christian and affiliating with Christian institutions (See Casanova 2013, Bramadat and Seljack 2008)
described the Presbyterian Church as a “rump group”, a remnant of the pre-1925 Presbyterian era. The enduring quality of the Presbyterian church, for her, is its “laager mentality”, a refusal to change because the church is perceived to be in a perpetual state of struggle: a push to reclaim a glorious past, a pull to address the racial and ethnic diversity within the denomination, all while striving to survive and grow in the present. This makes for an uncertain future.

Figure 2 Workshop Poster on Presbyterian Culture

Denominational diversity, in terms of a plurality of ethno-racial representation within the structures of church governance, is a topic that is sidelined in discourses concerning spiritual growth and congregational vitality. The Reverend Gordon Haynes, the former associate secretary of Canada Ministries at the PCC, provides a brief statement in his 2012 report on church decline acknowledging that multiculturalism and integration entail ‘difficult questions’- questions that are
largely unnamed in the report. I ask, “difficult for whom?”: this framing is central to this chapter. Why are church experts reticent in examining multiculturalism and/or cultural diversity? Haynes writes that cultural diversity is “messy”, tacitly inferring that to attend to multiculturalism would unhinge a perception of denominational harmony and unity. This kind of thinking leads to the production of racism (Ahmed 2012: 4). In the view of Presbyterian experts, they consider that their modes, writings, and strategies are lacking undertones of racism because there is no explicit racist intent. The problem is the tendency to reify colourblindness, which is no less violent (both psychically and affectively), for the purpose of institutional cohesiveness and preservation that is endemic to settler colonialism as a structure of Canadian society.

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, my primary focus is on the Haynes Report (2012) because this report is referenced by church members at TECPC, Queensview Presbyterian Church, and Toronto Central Presbyterian church. For church elders, the Haynes Report offers insights to improve church hospitality and modes for better engagement of neighbourhood community, all of which to insure the future of the church. What emerges from a genealogy of church reports are “narrative moments” that attend to ongoing debates that are shaping a denominational social imaginary over the future of the church and the crisis of decline. These narrative moments contextualize and historicize the issues raised within the Haynes' Report. Haynes’ focus on social concerns over changing patterns involving family, gender roles, and generation have a long history in Presbyterian ministration. These topics are usually at the center of conversations involving white Presbyterians who are concerned with the problem of decline. In tracing a brief history of national denominational rationales, my aim is to unfold the narratives, perspectives and themes: how they are divisive, how they unite, how they endure, and how they occlude. This chapter does not discuss the implementations made by the national church because the most notable recommendation in each report was for further studies. Andrew Faiz, an author for the Presbyterian Record, writes
that it is a running joke at the PCC "that we love committees more than action". Additionally, many documents leading up to and including the Hayne's Report concluded that previous report recommendations for institutional changes, such as opening the church courts to women and youth and/or encouraging congregations to minister and evangelize more flexibly and experimentally, were mostly adopted. The impact and modes in implementing recommendations, however, were not assessed. As noted by church experts in several documents, the problem of church reports is that agreement and endorsement of recommendations rarely translates into implementation (Haynes 2012: 15).

In the second section of this chapter, I extract narrative moments in documents indicating growth among ethnic congregations, such as the Han-Ca (Korean-Canadian) Presbyterian Churches, which renders dominant (white) claims of an institutional crisis of decline less legible. All too often, I commonly heard talk over the tensions between Korean and ‘Canadian’ Presbyterians. Abraham, the Hispanic-Filipino minister at TECPC, would tell me that Korean Presbyterians are not ‘real’ Presbyterians. When I pressed various elders to explain how Korean Presbyterians were different, the markers of difference were numerous, incoherent, and vague. For example, it could be their style of worship being more American than Canadian, they sang too much, or that they did not worship properly, meaning that they practiced Presbyterianism in a manner that strayed from the denomination’s Calvinist roots. The stories and history of Han-Ca congregations are not distinguished in denominational narratives of church decline but are documented in magazines and church documents on ethnic congregations and institutional racism. The uneven claims to institutional diversity through the representation, categorization, and recognition of racialized bodies is a mode for manufacturing a particular kind of multicultural church identity and "make[s] it appear that there is more diversity and radicalism than is actually the case" (Alexander 2005: 138). This parallels the dispossession and exclusion of racialized congregations from early denominational reports which served to impose boundaries between racialized others and the whiteness of the Presbyterian Church institution.


37 Ministers explained to me that ‘youth’ were people under the age of 35. One minister joked that youth currently referred to those under 50 because the congregation was predominantly populated by the elderly.
A Church Institution in Crisis

Discussions within the Presbyterian church of Canada over ‘the current’ crisis of decline is not a particularly recent nor unusual debate. To date, I have found that locating the origins of the crisis is an ambiguous endeavour since an archeology on church documents is an excavation of crises. Aisha’s assertion that the Presbyterian Church has been in a state of crisis and instability since Church Union of 1925 is a recurring narrative in church documents. This historical moment is the origin of Presbyterian fractioning when 70% of the Presbyterian Church of Canada amalgamated with the Congregational Union of Canada (a Puritan-oriented Protestant denomination) and the Methodist Church to form the United Church. This is echoed in the 1969 Ross Report quoting a minister, commenting anonymously that the Presbyterian Church is "[a] small, conservative church that hasn't gotten over the 1925 union, [it] wants to be influential and finds it isn't" (Ross 1969: 28). From 1925 until 1939, independent congregations identifying as Presbyterian did not have legal access to the denominational name "Presbyterian Church of Canada". Additionally, they no longer had access to previously held church properties, missionary facilities and other resources, all of which were transferred to the United Church (Wang 2006: 77). This era is highlighted only in passing in church documents covered in this chapter; however, this historical moment continues to accumulate meaning in shaping, organizing, and legitimizing a Presbyterian identity among some contemporary Presbyterians.

Religious decline involves a broad range of concerns and trends in relation to Presbyterian membership: from ministers leaving the Presbytery, drops in baptism to weakening Sunday school enrollment. National denominational research reports examining the crises of church identity, membership and participation are generated across various ministries, boards and committees of the PCC, such as the Board of Congregational Life, The Board of Evangelical and Social Action, and the Life and Mission Agency. When church officials diagnose problems and evaluate causes for membership decline, they typically report that the rate of social change is so rapid that congregations are unable to cope with what they term the “new realities” of Canadian social life. The changing values, habits and practices within everyday work, family and leisure are targeted

38 Wang (2006) writes that Chinese Presbyterian congregations from Victoria, Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal did not join Church Union (the United Church) but continued to identify as Presbyterian. They later rejoined the PCC when the denomination was officially formed again (2006: 76).
as domains of declining Christian belief. They view Canadian social life as godless, that is, devoid of transcendence, rather than irreligious (c.f. Casanova 2014).

The work of crisis attends to feelings of urgency and concerns over denominational identity that is circulating at the national domain of the church and within certain congregations that are experiencing what is perceived to be a devolution in church identity. Crisis, as noted by Roitman (2014) is “a historical event as much as an enduring condition of life” (2014:2). As a condition of church life, narratives of crisis qualify the contemporary mood and shared feelings of urgency and despair that a better future is not now, not yet. The problem for mainline protestants is that church closures are representative of a slow decay, marking the death of Christianity. Vine Deloria Jr explains that death is a central fear among Anglo-Christians because they experience time and history following a unilineal trajectory. The bible, for example, has a chronological and predictive value as events in the Old Testament contribute toward and project the birth, life and death of Jesus, and ultimately, the end of this world and an uncertain existence in an extraordinary domain: heaven (2003: 102). Unlike Indigenous understandings of death as part of a life cycle of creation, death from a Christian perspective is to be feared: there is no divine assurance that their souls will continue to exist in heaven (Deloria Jr 2003: 183).

For members of the Presbyterian church, they see the devolution of the church as a long continuous crisis, known through a collective sense of urgency, despair, and dejection that the inevitable may be coming, which is that the denomination is dying. Each document and their narrative moments of crisis are what Roitman calls ‘moments of truth’ (2014:3). Writers of the document are trying to motivate readers to analyze the conditions that have foregrounded church decline, to question the normativity of the church, and how to move forward to save Christianity and ensure human salvation in the afterlife. Crisis is working to focus people to invest their energy to diagnose where the church has failed and to offer possible solutions to improve the conditions of the church.

Crisis of decline generates a lot of talk but not many programs to implement because church experts are continually tasked in making decline legible. In this way, I see crisis narratives as ‘regimes of enunciation’ (Rose 1999) because they attend to the relationship between power and language. This domain considers “conflicts over who can speak, according to what criteria, from what places, authorized through what media machines, utilizing what forms of rhetoric, symbolism, persuasion, sanction or seduction” (Rose 1999:29). Regimes of enunciation arise
during crises by responding to a problem and articulating who has authority to discern and define what counts as truth (Rose 1999:29-30).

The problems that are articulated by church experts prioritize white church traditions and sidelines non-white members in their diagnoses of white church decline. This may be a means of distinguishing ‘real’ Canadian Presbyterianism from the kind of Presbyterianism, usually marked as American, that is assumed to be practiced by non-white members. Yet, it may be that white church experts cannot see the Christian practices of their non-white brothers and sisters, a population that is usually described as a growing congregation, because they are usually categorized and seen in terms of deficiencies, and thus, can offer no viable solutions to the problem of decline. As noted by Li, “experts tasked with improvement exclude the structure of political-economic relations from their diagnosis and prescriptions” (2007:7). The crisis of decline in certain denomination documents exclude categories of adherents and ethnoracial Presbyterians because these groups are not seen as truly and genuinely Presbyterian.

The Haynes Report

Performatives, Keywords and Metaphors

The most recent report, the 25-page The Haynes’ Report: An Enabling Vision, was commissioned by the General Assembly to the Life and Mission Agency (LMA), a national level social justice committee with a primary mandate for renewing and revitalizing congregational life. The department also offers guidance and resources to lower level courts of the church, ie. synods, presbyteries and congregations. The LMA works with 'Aboriginal Peoples' (the term used in the LMA mandate), refugees, and diverse communities in Canada and abroad through outreach, assistance and development projects, that combine evangelism with social action. The research

39 This report is hailed as both comprehensive and honest by readers of the Presbyterian Record, an online magazine for followers of the Presbyterian Church.

40 http://presbyterian.ca/about/guiding-statements-of-the-life-and-mission-agency/

41 http://presbyterian.ca/about/life-mission-agency/
The purpose of this research project is to provide a report for the Life and Mission Agency (LMA) for its use in charting a way forward with vision and an enabling spirit for ministry. It will provide a realistic understanding of challenges and offer recommendations to the LMA that each presbytery could take further study and the LMA can incorporate into future planning (Haynes 2012: 1, emphasis added).

This is an institutional speech act as it is making truth claims about the Church as an institution by naming qualities for a future action (Ahmed 2012:55). The language of this statement suggests the Church is failing to change, that is to say, to develop in becoming socially influential and economically sustainable despite social trends of diminishing church participation. The phrase ‘in charting a way forward with vision and an enabling spirit for ministry’ is performative as it brings into reality a church identity currently in a state of stagnation and disability. It is also a non-performative commitment for change. According to Ahmed (2012), non-performatives do not produce effects. She states, “in my model of the non-performative, the failure of the speech act to do what it says is not a failure of event or even circumstance, but is actually what the speech act is doing” (Ahmed 2012:117, emphasis in original). The commitment for change depends on the work done by church participants.

Additionally, by stating that he will provide a “realistic understanding of challenges”, Haynes is offering a truth claim about specific transformations whose veracity is proven through numerical evidence. The presentation of numerical data makes the behaviour of Presbyterians legible, calculable and knowable. Indeed, numbers allow for interpretations and evaluations to appear depolitical, and more so, they legitimize claims of a crisis (c.f. Rose 1999, Wedel et al. 2005). This strategy is an outward, unreflexive orientation for addressing the issue of decline, which contrasts with many previously commissioned reports.

For the most part, earlier denominational documents focused on the internal institutional processes and spiritual focus of the church as opposed to societal and secular changes that are thought to
impede the influence and authority of the church. Some reports provide ample discussion rationalizing the cause and effects of institutional problems. For example, the *Ross Report* (1969)\(^{42}\) is largely concerned with the internal organizational structure and outreach strategies of the Presbyterian Church. The report offers little analysis of larger social forces impacting the workings of the Church. In another document, the ‘real’ problem according to writers of *Declining Church Membership* (1971) is the familial and social ignorance of the Gospel. The report infers that the issue of rapid change is common among all institutions with strong traditional roots and heritage, such as Girl Guides Scouts and the Freemasons. In this report, institutional change such as decline is not only a church problem as other social institutions are addressing similar changes.

Later, the *State of the Church Report* (1995) identifies that the use of outdated evangelical techniques is the primary cause for church decline. Report writers describe the current condition of the church using utterances such as a "wilderness journey" in the "chaotic terrain" of post-Christian Canadian social life, which mobilizes sentiments of uncertainty and confusion. Following a reformed tradition that looks to scripture as the source for guidance, utterances from this document mobilize biblical metaphors. The wilderness in biblical passages is a space of transformation and revelation, where faith is tested. The use of 'the journey' describes the liminal state of the church in a process of becoming meaningful, guided by the inspiration by the Holy Spirit for improving the Church's evangelical techniques. The destination in the "journey" is unknown; the purpose is about learning to become a community through mutual support and encouragement through discovery of 'signposts' along the passage.

In 1992, the LMA used similar metaphors in their report to the General Assembly, which perpetuates an image of the church as displaced and misunderstood. Paraphrasing the work of Hauerwas and Willimon (1989), members of the agency describe the church "as a colony... a holy nation of people sharply focused on values in a devalued world" (A&P 2002: 309). Being a

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\(^{42}\) The *Ross Report* (1969), a 124 page document, is a shortened title for the *Report on a Program of Research and Development for the Presbyterian Church in Canada Relating to the Pastoral Care and Other Ministries in the Changing Context of the Presbyterian Church in Canada*, submitted by P.S Ross and Partners an esteemed accounting and management consultation firm with a history of contract work for several sectors of federal, provincial and municipal governing bodies, as well as by affluent companies and organizations. The Ross Report was commissioned by the Committee on Recruitment and Vocation as members were seeking 'objective' assistance from experts experienced in management consulting external to the church.
Christian is experienced as a stranger or an "alien people" in a world that does not know Jesus. Together, these metaphors form a persuasive semantic cluster to motivate congregations of the Christian duty to evangelize to the world and sharpen and revitalize the Presbyterian faith. The Haynes Report makes similar assertions, yet they are framed with social science-oriented rationales based on observable social changes. Writers of the Haynes Report are not interested in alternative problems. The crisis remains intact, yet numbers and graphs are used to constitute and render visible a different vantage of the problem (Rose 1997: 212).

The Alternative Rationale: “Facts”

According to Haynes, the most significant and unresolved dilemma for Presbyterian churches is the dwindling participation of youth and children. In his report, he raises four interconnected observations explaining the ‘reality’ of Canadian society that historically and socially contextualizes the decline of the church. He lays out the problem in this way: (1) children are less socialized into the church; (2) each generation is less involved in the church than the preceding generation; (3) religion is losing its meaning and value due to the lack of participation, and (4) secularization is increasing because Christian meanings are waning. Indeed, these observations reiterate previous findings; the difference, however, is that Haynes justifies these observations by explaining the linkage to shifts in family practices. Specifically, he identifies the issue of working mothers as the root cause that has had dire consequential effects on cultural values, specifically the value of independence and freedom. Together, this formulation has facilitated the de-institutionalization of Christianity (Haynes 2012: 9, 5). He writes,

The most significant societal change in the past fifty years has been the dramatic increase in working mothers, which has been suggested as the #1 reason for the decline in worship and attendance among families. Families with two working parents now need the weekend for household management and family time (Haynes 2012:9).

Of course, the story of decline is much more complex than the explanation put forth by Haynes and indeed, it is arguable that Haynes is aware of the complexity of the problem. The main purpose of the report, however, is to provide a vison, hope and commitment for the future. More
importantly, the point is not to critique nor criticize the Church since such a strategy would only elevate the feelings of institutional 'despairing lethargy'. The narrative on working mothers and metonymic ideologies of a patriarchal, heteronormative and affluent 'traditional' family structure makes decline legible. Scott (1998) describes legibility as a tool of statecraft, making what appears complex and illegible into something simple, intervenable, and administratively manageable. Simplifications, Scott writes, "[do] not successfully represent the actual activity of the society they depicted, nor were they intended to; they represented only that slice of it that interested the official observer" (1998: 3).

In the best interest of the church, Hayne's rationale on church decline is provocative to some church officials because of its simplicity. In his report, he describes decline as a self-perpetuating cycle: as families become less conversant on the gospel and Christianity then religious practice becomes less public, and as religious practices become less public, then the Christian faith ceases to be meta-narrative between generations. In other words, Christian beliefs, values, practices and meanings, as an epistemology, are less prevalent and less important as a topic of discussion among Christian identifying families. In not talking about Christianity and scripture, families are no longer experiencing Christianity and making sense of the world within a Christian frame. For example, changing family structures have, according to Haynes, effectively displaced the spiritual importance of Sundays, the day of Sabbath, a holy day of rest for spiritual observance and discussion (Haynes 2012: 9). Decline as a crisis has not changed; however, Haynes proposes a different perspective, thus a different reality: It is not a church problem, but a social and familial problem. Younger generations are losing Christian knowledge and experience as a result of parenting choices (Haynes 2012: 7).

Hayne’s observations on the disappearing participation of children and youths within Presbyterian church life is a common concern, given that reports since the mid 1960s have raised the same problem. In A Special Report to the Presbyterian Church in Canada 1969\(^{43}\), The Ross Report (1969), and Declining Church Membership (1971), these studies raise concerns over the lack of involvement of youth and children within the church. These reports, however, point to church's organizational strategies, such as practices that exclude youths who

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\(^{43}\) This Report was submitted by the Committee on Life and Mission to the General Assembly in 1969.
are under the age of 25 from sharing in the planning of church activities and functions. Writers from these reports explained that exclusionary tactics carried the unintentional effects of discouraging innovative ideas put forth by youth for reviving church participation. In the *Special Report on the State of the Church from 1978* circulated by the Board of World Mission and Congregational Life, denominational analysts contend that youths lose interest in Christian belief once they become less committed to the church. The 1978 report concludes that an authoritarian approach to Christian pedagogy vis-à-vis traditional modes of teaching through ‘telling’ disengages children, according to the analysts. To cultivate a continued interest in Christ and the church, the report recommends alternative educational tactics to encourage active participation and discussions to develop and promote Christian commitment. Demonstrated in these earlier reports, research analyses are framed reflexively, looking inward to the internal structures and spiritual focus of the church to assess areas for improving church relations and opportunities for members. Earlier documents were not inclined to assess the impact of societal changes impeding the influence and authority of the church.

**Why does Haynes target families?** In an interview for the *Presbyterian Record*, Haynes describes his personal and working relationships with fellow Christians. For him, church is about building quality relationships with others who believe Jesus is the son of God: relationships inspire, develop community, and produce a sense of belonging within God's family and home, the church. Haynes elaborates that interactions and conversations with people doing Christian work and being with people who are "blessed by God", empowers Christian commitment by enabling Christian followers to ‘hear the Holy Spirit’\(^44\). The family, for Haynes, is a set of relationships that are intrinsic to cultivating the ability to hear and be moved by the Holy Spirit.

It is arguable, then, that an implicit point he is trying to make within the contours of a denominational report is the need for the church to develop and enhance social relationships. In his document, Haynes makes reference to Grace Davie, a professor in the Sociology of Religion, inspired by her concept of “believing without belonging”. This statement attends to the post-Christian era where people have Christian beliefs and practices, such as celebrating the

birth of Jesus Christ or reading the bible for ethical inspiration, yet who do not belong to a congregation nor attend church. “Believing without belonging” offers a perspective to better understand how religious belief persists yet religious belonging is socially, spatially and temporally variable (Davie 1990, cf. Haynes 2012: 9). For Haynes, the alignment between believing and belonging focuses attention to the centrality of church relationships, within and external to the space of church buildings, as a method and practice of developing Christian worship. Put another way, failure to experience belonging by affiliating with members of a church community adversely impacts a person's belief in Jesus and his teachings (Haynes 2012: 9). To make the 'fact' of spiritual and social decline of the church visible and even more simple, Haynes included a series of demographic charts in his report

Statistical ‘Facts’ and Presbyterian Identity

Recalling Hayne’s imperative is to provide a realistic understanding of challenges into the future of the PCC, Haynes looks to the use of numbers to validate his central claims to familial change: the lack of children's participation will devolve the church over time as less people look to and return to the church as they age. A key observation noted in the Haynes' Report is the wave of senior citizens participating within congregations. Currently, according to the report, senior citizens constitute a demographic majority among Presbyterian members, a population that has increased since World War II (Haynes 2012:4). To calculate the ‘reality’ of this problem, the report reproduces statistical charts from the work of Brian Clarke and Stuart Macdonald (2010).

Haynes measures population over time (from 1945-2008) through five domains of religious participation: baptism; professions of faith; church school enrolment; worship attendance, and membership. What the charts show is that the Presbyterian church experienced a dramatic spike in growth in the post-World War II era especially in baptisms, professions, church school enrolment and membership (Figures 3 and 4).
In the original findings, Clarke and Macdonald (2010) report that Sunday school enrolment had a population of 72,337 in 1945, spiking to 109,864 by 1962 and then declining the following year.
By 1973, there was a 40% drop in Sunday school population dropped and by 2008, enrolment was reported to site at 19,670. Baptisms followed a similar pattern as 6,040 baptisms were performed in 1945, increasing by 88% over a 13-year period and peaked at 11,380, then dropping the following year. Baptisms steadily declined and in 2008, a mere 2,217 baptisms were reported (Clarke and Macdonald 2010: 4).

To further exemplify the 'reality' of declining membership, Haynes shows the following chart on membership enrolment from 1945-2008.

Figure 5 Membership, Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1945-2008 (Haynes 2012:10)

This demographic chart (Figure 5) shows that membership hovered at 173,000 in 1945, peaked at 202,500 in 1964, then declined since 1969, with present numbers at 113,000, which is 40% lower than the 1945 population statistic. Together, Figures 3-5 support a view of church decline as an institutional and organizational devolution. Previously, according to Haynes, there was a prevalent mentality that building churches and opening its doors would unequivocally attract followers of faith. In other words, raising a church building in neighbourhoods once guaranteed strong numerical membership.
Writers of the Haynes' report, however, do not place the chart on membership (Figure 5) in comparison to the demographic chart measuring the population of both adherents and members (Figure 6), which is occluded from their report. Since 1982, the Presbyterian Church of Canada created a new category of membership, called ‘adherents’. Adherents are informal members, affiliated with a Presbyterian congregation, yet who have not yet taken official steps in joining the denomination through the rite of baptism. The chart showing the number of members and adherents (Figure 6) shows a picture of a rather steady population at 225,000 between 1982 and 1997, with marginal decline occurring since 2000 where numbers currently sit at 175,000.

Figure 6 Members and Adherents, 1982-2008 (Clarke and Macdonald 2010:11)

By excluding adherents, writers of the Haynes Report are dismissing the financial, spiritual, and social contribution of non-baptized participants of the Presbyterian Church. Indeed, measuring the number of members and adherents in the Presbyterian church problematizes and delegitimises persuasive claims of crisis. The rejection of adherents manufactures consent over a crisis of decline. Additionally, as Figure 7 will show, measuring the category of adherents alone makes decline illegible and a hindrance to formulaic rationales and interventions (Scott 1998: 78).
The chart showing the number of adherents (Figure 7) shows that this population grew quite significantly between 1982 and 2008, by nearly 58%. While formal membership has declined, informal membership and ongoing participation in the Presbyterian Church shows resilience to decline (Clarke and Macdonald 2010: 16). This chart, similar to the previous chart measuring the number of members and adherents, is excluded from the Hayne's Report. A double tale unfolds as membership, baptism, professionalism and church school enrolment decline, yet the number of adherents demonstrate increased church involvements among a population of church goers. Why is the measure of adherents suppressed in the story of decline? The double tale directs us to assume that adherents are devalued and less worthy of recognition. The suppression of the chart is more troublesome given the Hayne's mandate to provide 'an enabling vision' which may be achieved by evaluating the reasons for growth among adherents.

The characteristics and attributes constituting the population of adherents are unknown, similar to other demographic charts. The charts measuring the two categories of populations, members and adherents, offer no indication of ethnicity, age, gender and class. They are homogenized groups by which dimensions of strangeness and difference are made invisible through a category of sameness, fashioning a hierarchy of church participants that prioritizes baptism. It is arguable that the category of adherents are perhaps comprised of a large number of racialized individuals and immigrants to Canada, given that (a) the increasing number relates to an period
of increasing immigration to Canada by racialized immigrants since the 1980s, and (b), the growing number of adherents corresponds with passing observations made in reports of growing populations among Presbyterian ethnic churches. MacDonald, for example, writes that there is a large population of Presbyterian Koreans who are contentious in their affiliation with the PCC, which I later discuss in this chapter (MacDonald 2008: 184).

The odd and peculiar interpretation of the statistical data and the use of certain statistical graphs, rather than the comprehensive range of formal and informal membership provided by Clarke and MacDonald (2010), sustains uniformity and a sense of unity within the church. The numbers are made concrete as Haynes has no desire to question the classification schemes and objectivity of the statistical observations. As stated by Rose (1999), “numbers are integral to the problematization that shape what is to be governed, to the programmes that seek to give effect to government and to the unrelenting evaluation of the performance of government” (1999: 199). Indeed, Haynes is not interested in a critique of the church, that is, in identifying problems related to the church structure and processes because that would infer that the church was, and continues to be, accountable for its current state of deterioration. The point Haynes emphasizes is that the story of decline is “not directly tied to our doctrine, or our music, or anything having to do with being Presbyterian” (2011: 19).

An Era of Civility, Virtue and Christian Values

Together, three demographic charts (figures 3-5) published in the Haynes Report come to represent a 'golden' period of institutional growth. The nostalgia and imagination of a Presbyterian 'golden moment' plays a pivotal role among many church members on the public influence of the Presbyterian church in social, economic and political domains of Canadian life. In the Acts and Proceedings of the 128th General Assembly (2002), the official record of the minutes and reports of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, LMA officials recall a Christian era where Canadian civility sprung from Christian values:

life was simpler for the church and its people. It was the time when the Christian Church was the dominant force in the Western world. The church was perceived as the lens through which people viewed the world
and ordered their public and personal lives. Churches had the ear of
governments and the citizens valued its opinion. In this Christendom
period, the church was the empire. When it spoke, people listened and
followed its instruction. Out of respect and loyalty to institutions as well
as God, families attended church, often more than once on Sunday. It was
the recognized Sabbath, and stores, movie theatres, workplaces and
sporting arenas were closed. There was prayer in public schools and at the
beginning of public meetings. When someone mentioned God, everyone
understood what was meant. In social terms, being a good Christian
equaled a good citizen. It was a time when the clergy were the social elite
of society and being a minister was high prestige and low stress (A&P

This passage from the Acts and Proceedings (2002), a record of the minutes and reports at the
General Assembly, is an origin story. Presented by the LMA, the narrative provides an institutional
and spiritual identity to denominational members. It recalls a time when simple models of Christian
evangelism were all that were needed in a Christian society. The passage provides no date, yet the
sentence describing Sabbath infers a time prior to the 1960s.

Sunday, the day of Sabbath, was a holy day devoted for a time of pause to observe religious
practice either through the reading of Christian texts, participation in community preaching, or
visitation to the church. In the Bible, the fourth commandment stipulates the observance of
Sabbath as the day of rest and devotion. Wang (2006) notes the Lord's Day was historically a tactic
for protecting Canadian Anglo civility from potential "damage" to Canadian moral, social, and
political ideals resulting from the intermixing of racialized migrants in the late 19th century (Wang
2006: 90). The Lord's Day Act was also a colonial intervention to the treaty of the Haudenosaunee
and their claims to sovereignty as crown officials investigated Sunday Lacrosse games held on
First Nation reserves, citing the sale of alcohol and fruit, disorderly conduct and monetary
exchange between non-Indigenous spectators (Downey 2015). Sabbath was legislated by the
federal government in 1906, restricting the operation of sports, labour, libraries, and commerce,
and was abolished in 1985 when Big M Drug Mart challenged the Lord's Day as a violation of the
Canadian Bill of Rights, specifically the section guaranteeing freedom of religion (Brundrett 1992:
7, Downey 2015). At the municipal level of governance, the law was contested much earlier. In
1950, Toronto's mayor, Allan Lamport, proposed a bill known as "Sensible Sunday" to allow professional team sport events on Sundays. This bill was barely approved by Toronto residents, due to the efforts of the Roman Catholic Church, raising funds of over $25,000 in support of a citizen coalition contesting the proposal. Despite the success of the city's referendum, professional team sports were not played on Sundays until 1959. In 1960, Toronto held another successful referendum permitting entertainment, performances and screen movies on Sundays (Levine 2014). Changes to municipal laws were not conceived as overt challenges to the church but were a means of developing the city and its market economies. Arguably, the municipal success of Lamport may be attributed to his civic relationships with members of city council and allied business partners who would support the economic growth of the city. According to Good (2009), "support for policies that a city's business community would like to see implemented must be negotiated among a group of local leaders with combined resources necessary to the local agenda" (2009:22). At that time, municipal politicians did not want to take the risk in offending church goers over the sanctity of Sunday worship, demonstrated by the slow development of Sunday sports. The precariousness of mainline protestant churches was, and still is, negotiated by market economies mediated by the rationale of right-bearing individuals pursuing freedom and equality. Christian churches were disestablished and depoliticized from the domain of state politics and management; which meant that churches were distinguished as a religious community rather than a political community (Casanova 1994, 2013).

In the LMA statement of a golden Christian era, officials iterate a colonial settler identity and hope for a return to spiritual enterprise and denominational stronghold. The past is imagined as a time of growth in which agents of the Presbyterian tradition were fulfilling their destiny in making Canada ‘His Dominion’, by preserving Anglo-Saxon civility and evangelizing Protestant Christianity (Wang 2006: 141). Central to the memory of a recent past and future inspiration, Psalms 72 of the New Testament is the Gospel defining the inspiration, vision and knowledge for the church to engineer Canada into God’s earthly kingdom (Wang 2006: 151).

8 May he rule from sea to sea / and from the River to the ends of the earth...

11 May all kings bow down to him / and all nations serve him.

(Psalm 72, Bible, New International Version)
Psalm 72 is seen to provide the guidance and encouragement for Presbyterian evangelicalism in producing Christian citizens and inculcating Christian conduct for proper belonging into God’s family—a community who is responsible to Canada and God.

The relationship between Christianity and nation-building is also raised by O’Neill (2010) in his study of El-Shaddai, a neo-Pentecostal Christian sect, in Guatemala. For Christian believers, the practice of Christianity is intrinsic to performing citizenship as their moral conduct inculcates a sense of meaning, responsibility and belonging to the nation (2010:200). The imagined Presbyterian citizen is a similar relation to the Canadian state where being a ‘good’ Christian constitutes ‘good’ citizenship, ‘good’ moral conduct and ‘good’ Christian governance of the Canadian nation. The past is remembered as a glorious moment when the church was privileged with authority and expertise in the administration of social programs and strategies that shaped, organized and regulated social infrastructures and political activities necessary to state governance and Canadian civility. The memory of the church is looked upon as the way forward, the vision of an effective and realizable Presbyterian future. In other words, debates over declining membership, church closure and spiritual deterioration have come to mobilize a master narrative of Presbyterian identity and Christian belonging - a truth justified by selective numerical data and historical nostalgia.

**Filling Seats or Fulfilling Individuals?**

Despite the plethora of reports on church decline, some experts within the denomination have questioned the validity of claims of a crisis in decline. DeCourcy Rayner, former editor of the Presbyterian Record, interrogated the legitimacy of such claims. In his perspective, metrics were causes for concern rather than alarm. He writes,

> The church and its members will never cease to evangelize, but the true strength of the Christian church cannot be measured by numbers. Pruning dead branches from the tree is just as necessary in the congregation as it is in the garden. The quality of witness is what count’s today (Rayner 1967: 4).
In his perspective, the effectiveness and power of the church is not in statistical measures, but rather it is in evangelization and through the Gospel. This rationalization puts to question for Presbyterian readers whether the crisis is pertinent to filling seats or fulfilling individuals.

References from the 1970s and 1980s had the mandate to focus on the growth and the “deep and sincere desire for renewal in the life of the church” (Sauer 1983:3). Writers disputed whether success in quality, efficiency and effectiveness of church ministry ought to be determined by numerical indicators in membership (c.f. Rose 1999). For example, in the report, *Declining Church Membership Report* (1971), the writers ask,

> Does the question of declining membership arise out of concern for security and survival or does it arise out of a sense of mission? The quantification of Christianity is a questionable measurement in and of itself.45

A reformed tradition looks to scripture for guidance and the path forward is shaped by an openness to the Holy Spirit for doing acts and deeds that make worship meaningful, both personally and for the community. Apostasy, non-belief and the refusal of scripture, is seen to be the problem rather than the building, operation and maintenance of churches.

Crisis, as a regime of enunciation, is persuasive for understanding the precariousness of the church. Yet, there have been alternative methods for rendering the problem of institutional precarity intelligible by reframing narratives of decline as a narrative for church growth. In so doing, the search of growth by denominational experts produced a truth claim that was disruptive to the 'normal' and standard operation of the church institution. The criteria of growth brings into being alternative descriptions of the problem, which would eventually shifts modes of governing. "Language is not secondary to government, it is constitutive of it" says Rose (1999: 28). Indeed, a plethora of reports (see *Ross Report* 1969, Saur 1983) looking at growth have recommended support of innovative and experimental techniques that make the gospel meaningful.

The questions, then, are what is a successful church and how is quality measured? The dilemma is whether the aim is institutional fortitude through a strong show of numbers or whether the goal is for spiritually strong congregations and communities. In 2012, in an interview with the Presbyterian Record, Gordon Haynes relates that successful churches are not simply big churches, but it is the quality of spiritual experience, his "vision of the church is that we become obsessed not with survival, but with hearing God's words in our lives" (Wardle 2012). He elaborates by pointing out that congregations that stray from 'normal' institutional structures, such as operating without a church minister, are not measured as successful and receive little financial support from the Presbytery despite doing "good Christian work" within the community. The interview with the Presbyterian Record, however, does not coalesce with the Haynes Report, which states that:

There has been a level of denial about the reality of the decline or the need for change. For example, I have had members of the presbyteries tell me that there isn’t an issue around decline... Others have pointed me to specific congregations in their area which are growing as evidence defeating of a general decline. This leads to the danger that we will try to maintain everything that we have done in the past, which in turn means that the PCC risks living beyond its means— paying for programs and structures that are no long [sic] needed out of monies saved over time (Haynes 2012:16)

The wording of the report diminishes the importance of innovation within congregations operating on the margins of normative institutional structures. Instead, institutional success is emphasized in terms of economic survival and raising finances.

Regulating Racialized Congregations

The alarmist accounts of membership decline within the Presbyterian church, however, is much more complicated than the number of bodies that attend and participate in church. Implicit in the crisis is a neglect of certain kinds of bodies, the non-white, non-British bodies, that remain unaccounted for and excluded as followers of the Presbyterian faith. Looking at the ethnoracial diversity of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the privileging of a British, Irish, and more
favourably, a Scottish tradition within the PCC has systematically marginalized the history of Chinese, Korean, Caribbean and African Presbyterians in Canada. Many of these groups were shaped by missions to their communities within Canada and abroad (MacDonald 2008). While British, Irish and Scottish bodies have diminished in number, the increased participation of Korean, Caribbean and African Presbyterians over the past fifty years have changed many white congregations into racially mixed congregations. In many instances, racialized Presbyterians developed their own ethnic congregation to deliver worship in their non-Anglo language and to practice worship that is culturally sensible.

It is arguable that many racialized congregants make up for the increase in adherents as we saw in the demographic chart measuring the number of adherents (Figure 6). Ethnic Presbyterian congregations have experienced a growth in membership, particularly Chinese Presbyterian congregations, Han-Ca (translated as "Korean-Canadian") Presbyterian congregations since the 1960s, and more recently, Ghanian and Nigerian Presbyterian churches (MacDonald 2008:175).

In assessing the genealogy of denominational reports addressing church decline over the past fifty years, I was unable to locate a single document on decline focusing on an in-depth analysis of ethnoracial Presbyterian congregations in Toronto or elsewhere in Canada. Mostly, documents on the crisis of decline briefly describe the presence of ethnoracial churches, providing a sentence that recognizes that these congregations are a growing population of Presbyterians (without evidence of statistical measures) with non-white ways of doing church. There is tension within the denominational narratives: an unwillingness to recognize non-white congregations, especially those who do not conform to the institution protocol of the PCC, thereby obscuring the value and presence of non-white Presbyterians. Denominational reports mobilize colourblind politics, advancing a worldview where racialization and ethnicity is made to appear as to bear no consequence to the assessment and evaluation of church directives. In doing so, reports on decline demonstrate the complicity of church experts in perpetuating a system of privilege regulating the welcome and integration of 'strange' Presbyterians. As argued by George Lipsitz (1998), racism today is not the same as racism of the past vis-à-vis overt racial segregation and slavery. Today, racism is shaped by race-neutral social reforms over the past sixty years. Social policies, such as the distribution of work benefits and protection and resources, are predominantly channeled away from inner-city neighbourhoods and racialized enclaves. He writes, “Racism in the United States sometimes proceeds through direct, referential and overt practices of exclusion. But it manifests
itself more often through indirect, inferential and covert documents that use the denial of overt racist intent to escape responsibility for racialized consequences” (2006: 216-7). Systemic racism, unlike racial prejudice, is not so easy to point out. Whiteness, then, is "an identity created and continued with all-too-real consequences for the distribution of wealth, prestige and opportunity (Lipsitz 2006: vii). Challenging white privilege does not signify an opposition to white people. As noted by Lipsitz, "nonwhite people can become active agents of white supremacy as well as passive participants in it hierarchies and rewards” (2006: viii).

Ross Report (1969)

In the late 1960s, writers of the *Ross Report (1969)* took note of the propensity of the PCC to ‘compartmentalize’ the work of non-Anglo Presbyterians through race-based semantic clusters, such as ‘Chinese work’, 'French churches', and 'Hungarian churches'. For Ross et al., the formation and development of ethnic communities and churches raised several questions for the national church to consider. Denominational analysts carefully inferred that ‘ethnic’ congregations are a creative and experimental source of church growth. They write, “the Presbyterian Church will not survive… if it has any illusion it can minister only to faithful, traditional Presbyterians” (1969:57). Additionally, in the report, they ask: Does the PCC want to work with ‘ethnic’ Presbyterian Churches? Do ‘ethnic’ churches want to work with the PCC? The recommendation made by Ross et al. was for the church to critically assess, rather simply embrace, the hegemonic nostalgia of the church as empire (recalling the passage from the Acts and Proceedings of the 128th General Assembly in 2002). Ross et al (1969) state,

> The prime requirement appears to be an elimination of the ‘little empire’ concept and to cease to treat ethnic churches as ‘islands’ within the church. The church must define its attitude to ethnic churches. This is nothing new or startling. It is a matter of attitude and doing what needs to be done, whether it be with ‘ethnic’ or ‘non-ethnic’ congregations (1969:56).

The *Ross Report* shows early concerns attending to church governance over racialized congregations. Writers iterate the uneasy relationship between ethnoracial congregations and the white dominant mainstream and it is unclear how and why this insight disappears in
successive documents. The laissez-faire and colourblind mode of governance retains the positionality of white churches within its location of structural advantage. Ruth Frankenberg explains colourblindness as “a mode of thinking about race organized around an effort to not ‘see’, or any rate, not to acknowledge race differences” (1993: 142). This is a tactic of implying that ‘we are all the same’ to maintain white privilege. The above passage shows that the church was not fully prepared to welcome and accommodate racialized congregations into dominant discussions and mainstream debates pertinent to the national church.

Special Report on the State of the Church (1978)

The *Special Report on the State of the Church* (1978) documents the strategies, methods and problems with ethnic churches, most notably the enunciation and dissemination of the term "ethnic". The report suggests that the church represents itself as a weak mainline denomination when it identifies itself as an ethnic church through its Scottish traditions. More specifically, writers problematize the semantic linkage between the terms ‘ethnic’ and Scottish Presbyterian. The terms, in their perspective, are incommensurable. Collapsing Scottishness into the category of ‘ethnic’ undermines the Presbyterian origin story and the centrality of the church in developing political, social, and moral domains in Anglo-Canadian society. Suggesting that Scottishness is ethnic racializes whiteness by marking an unmarked category, thereby effacing British presence and influence as a founding Canadian nation (see Haque 2012). Collapsing Scottishness within the term of ‘ethnic’ denotes a failure in identification, undermining the Anglo-role prestige and history of the church in engineering Canadian civility and social governance. The term, ‘ethnic’, takes on a ‘dirty’ meaning, as writers infer that an ethnic church loses social and political value, it is no more than a ‘minority sect’. For church experts, labelling a congregation ‘ethnic’ would suggest to its members that there is something problematic or needs to be problematized within the congregations. This kind of legibility was simply not desired and ‘ethnic’ was redirected towards Presbyterian causes that were racialized in terms of visibility.

Accordingly, distancing the church from ‘ethnic churches’ is imperative to denominational experts. For them, the church’s Anglo-Canadian affiliation ought to be made known, highlighted by doing acts of mission to (non-white) immigrants from other countries. This
racializing ideology contextualizes the committee’s evaluation that “In both theory and practice, the many Presbyterian congregations have failed to welcome and to minister to and with other ethnic communities”\textsuperscript{46}. In response to this finding, the writers recommend that the church carry out inner-city and ethnic ministries, noting the rapid growth among ethnoracial populations in Canada. Report writers rhetorically ask, “If the church can send people to other lands to share the gospel with other cultures, why can’t it join in the gospel ministry with people of other cultures who have to live in this country?”\textsuperscript{47} This query mobilizes an assumption that doing ‘ethnic ministering’ is a new practice for the church, eliding the long history of the church in ministering to Canadian Indigenous populations and Chinese migrants since the mid 1850s (Wang 2006). It is important to note that this report ignores earlier findings on ethnic congregations by writers of the Ross Report.


In the State of the Church Report (1995), a committee convened to assess reports over ongoing conflict within congregations and diminished participation in evangelical participation (A & P 1995: 394). In this report, writers explain church decline as a structural problem of the church institution, specifically the inaptitude of the Church to govern particular congregations properly. Denominational experts write that certain problematic ethnic congregations show a lack of ‘reverence' for church annual proceedings, such as attendance and participation in the General Assembly. For them, particular congregations were failing in their roles and duties as elders of Session, which they attribute to a misunderstanding of church reports since material, at that time, were provided solely in English. Denominational analysts called for translated versions of material resources containing reports central to the rules and processes of the


Presbyterian Church of Canada. The committee recommended that: (a) “special consideration will be required to maintain a national dimension for ethnic ministries given their unique context and needs” and (b) funds are allocated for the distribution of resources to special ministry areas, such as ethnic ministry, ministry to Indigenous peoples, francophone ministry, youth ministry etc. (A & P 1995: 399).

In the report, analysts classify ethnic, Indigenous, French Canadian and youth ministries as ‘special’ categories, inferring that these segments of the Presbyterian population are exclusive to the dominant collective identity that is white and Anglo. The classification schemes, moreover, dilute the variegated histories and voices of Caribbean, Guyanese, Nigerian, Korean, Chinese Presbyterians by lumping them all under ‘ethnic ministries’. These ‘special ministries’ emerged as targets for Church improvement after writers of the 1995 report listed and described empirical symptoms of congregational conflict and disregard for doing mission. The inference made in the report is that ‘special ministries’ are inattentive and would benefit from national resources to improve their spiritual and moral conduct.

Arguably, denominational experts did not want to bring focus and scrutiny to specific ethnic congregations, such as the Han-Ca (Korean-Canadian) Presbyterian congregations, who were debating separation from the PCC. Han-Ca Presbyterians congregations have been members of the PCC since the 1970s; however, there is very little information regarding their practices, rules, and minutes in documents circulated at the national level. It is within the 2001 reports submitted by the Life and Mission agency to the General Assembly that request the national church to establish a report on racial harassment because of allegations emerging between HanCa congregations and the upper governing body, the Presbytery. Writers of the reports do not explicitly name the problems between the Han-Ca Presbyterian congregations and the

48 The report made four recommendations to intervene in the bureaucracy of the national church through the dissemination of program resources. All recommendation were withdrawn (A&P 1995: 399).
Presbyterian Church of Canada, but offer an ambiguous statement that Korean congregations felt “disconnected” from the national denomination.

They felt ignored and marginalized, existing only in name and without a meaningful relationship with the larger church. They felt left out because of the linguistic and cultural gaps. Soon they lost interest in their local presbytery. *On the other hand, presbyteries did not seem equipped or ready to deal with the challenge of diversity.* Often the presbytery became involved when they encountered church problems. This required the presbytery to be judge over people with whom they did not have a close relationship and did not know very well. This attitude and behaviour further marginalized the Korean congregations from the denomination (A & P 2004: 386, emphasis added).

This passage not only details the tension between Han-Ca congregations with Anglo Presbyteries but also the lackadaisical resolve of the national church body in addressing ‘the challenge of diversity’. A few important concerns surround this passage. First, the only solution offered by the denomination was to offer Korean congregations the mandate to form their own Presbytery, that is, their own governing body above the level of Session. For the Presbyterian Church of Canada, the act of institutionalizing Han-Ca churches within the governing structure of the denomination is seen as a will to effect change by allowing a Korean Presbyterian representation at the Annual General Meeting (A & P 2004: 386). The issue, however, is the ways in which racialized representation is tokenized: it appears as an opening, yet in practice, it becomes a closure. While attending monthly Presbytery meetings at TECPC, I observed that the majority of elders and ministers in attendance were predominantly white with only one or two Korean elders and one black minister in attendance. Because of the democratic process in which elders vote on issues brought forth by particular congregations, such as funding for after school programs, support for soup kitchens, or programs to support prostitutes, the white majority outvoted the racialized minority. The issues relating to social justice, equity, and charity were deemed as either too costly, inefficient, or unsafe for church volunteers. This, according to Tania Li, is a feature of expert scrutiny whereby an opening unfolds into a closure (2007:11). Although the goal of the denomination is to include HanCa congregations and elders, it does not necessarily evolve into
actionable programs on issues relevant to non-white congregations within the higher echelons of church governance.

Second, the passage demonstrates that racial and cultural diversity within the church is perpetually marked out as a problem: many years before the Haynes report and decades following the Ross report. The confessionary diagnosis confronts a willfulness for inclusion and welcome. Yet recognition devolves into a technique that forecloses any diagnosis of the problem because such statements shape a perception that there is no feasible solution- it is simply too “challenging”. Arguably, the performativity of the statement renders Presbyterian experts docile in avoiding the problem of diversity.

Ministers with whom I spoke had divergent perspectives on Han-Ca Presbyteries. One Korean minister explained to me that there are some strengths in having ethno-specific congregations. Such congregations become spaces in facilitating community cohesion. For example, Presbyterianism is practiced in ways that may be offensive to ‘traditional’ white Presbyterians: there may be lots of singing with a band, there may be the use of overhead projectors, the sermons may be given in only Korean as a way of making Presbyterian faith and belief more vivid. In this way, racialized groups carve out their ethnic identity through clear lines of cultural demarcation, from which they may experience a sense of validation, creating a place of moral and cultural belonging within Canadian space. The problem for some ministers though, is that ethnospecific congregations structurally and psychologically removes white and non-white congregants from interacting and bridging differences. One Korean congregant at TECPC, a young woman who migrated Canada several years ago and who continues to travel back and forth between Korea and Canada, told me that Presbyterianism is very strong in Korea. “Some Koreans” she says, “have no intention to merge with Canadians because they already have a tradition that is theirs and it is very different”. To demonstrate the difference, she pulled out her cell phone and played an audio recording she had made of a worship while she was in Korea. The melodious and vibrant voices of the congregants’ singing, along with the accompaniment of a pianist and string musicians, emanated from the speaker of her phone: music, she says, is central to worship. She told me that she made the recording because this kind of Presbyterian worship made her heart feel at peace when she is away from Korea.
It is also important to point out that the report states that Han-Ca congregations are "the fastest growing congregations in this denomination" since the mid 1970s.\textsuperscript{49} Statements of growing numbers of racialized congregations in the Presbyterian Record suggest that the crisis of decline does not accurately portray all sectors of the denomination. One Korean minister from the Eastern Han-Ca Presbytery, which covers congregations from Montreal (Quebec), Toronto, Thornhill, Brantford, Chatham, Kitchener, London, Niagara Falls and Mississauga (Ontario), remarks that Korean congregations are more evangelical and have a mission of growing churches, which is an area that white dominant members have abandoned, in his perspective. For example, Korean Presbyterian congregations in the west end of the Greater Toronto Area have established relationships with the Biinjitwabik Zaagin Anishnabek First Nations in Rocky Bay Ontario and the Mistawasis First Nations in Saskatchewan. For them, they feel a stronger connection with Indigenous peoples in Canada, finding common ground through shared experiences in segregation and displacement that arise from the violence of structural racism.\textsuperscript{50} Amy MacLachlan, the former managing editor of the Presbyterian Record, provides numbers for the Eastern Korean Presbytery. Between 1998 and 2004, the presbytery grew from 979 members to 5,000 members and from 270 adherents to 4000 adherents.\textsuperscript{51} The numbers within Korean Presbyterian congregations tell a different narrative of growth that is occluded in reports on church decline and renders invisible the presence of racialized congregations and the kinds of partnerships that are occurring along the margins that attend to the challenge of diversity.

For members of the white dominant church, the growth seen in HanCa congregations impel feelings of uncertainty and aversion as people with whom I spoke were more inclined to distantiate themselves from HanCa forms of worship. When I queried into the success and growth of HanCa congregations, I was told that they did not follow ‘real’ Presbyterian practices. Confused by this, I asked Abraham to explain the difference he saw between Korean and white Presbyterian practices and he too told me that they did not worship “the right way”. He closed the conversation by telling me that their style of worship is more American than Canadian. In the Presbyterian Record, In

\textsuperscript{49} The report does not provide quantitative data.

\textsuperscript{50} “Mission, Evangelism and Growth in the Eastern Han-Ca”, Presbyterian Record, May 1, 2007

\textsuperscript{51} “Mission, Evangelism and Growth in the Eastern Han-Ca”, Presbyterian Record, May 1, 2007
Kee Kim, a minister at St. Timothy’s church in Etobicoke Ontario, writes that Korean congregations were more inclined to follow the rules and regulations that they were familiar with and socialized into while growing up in Korea. Because of the importation and dissemination of Korean Presbyterian governmental practices in local church in Canada, this created a disjuncture between HanCa congregations and Canadian Presbyterian presbyteries who enforced the Book of Forms, the document detailing the procedures and protocols of the Presbyterian Church of Canada.52

Given the failure of Anglo presbyteries in quelling the unrest of Han-Ca congregations, the PCC formed Han-Ca presbyteries to ensure that Korean congregants remained within the PCC. “The establishment of the Han-Ca Presbyteries was an open and creative response to this situation of exclusion and isolation that Korean congregations felt both from the church and from each other” (A & P 2004: 386, emphasis added). By assuring that Korean congregation are subjected to a laissez-faire form of governmentality, the church offers recognition of Korean congregations yet cleavage between ethno-specific congregations and ‘traditional’ congregations is far from being mended as there remains a prevalent ideology that Han-Ca Presbyterians are deviant from the norm.

In both State of the Church reports (1995, 1978), we can see how the concept of the ethnic church is grounded on the differential treatment and exclusion of racialized groups of Presbyterians. The logic of the documents crystalizes instances of institutionalized racism that are captured in text as opposed to effects of actions and practices (San Juan Jr. 2002: 46). Following San Juan Jr (2002), racism is based on the ascription of negative characteristics and attributes, whether real or imagined, to a group of people “whose social significance implies differential treatment (sometimes known as ‘racialism’) or differential exclusion in the realm of politics, economy, and other areas of public life” (44). Church documents express the racialism of certain groups of Presbyterians, gesturing towards a racial hierarchy. Indeed, report writers recognized that the strategic use of the term ‘ethnic’ has a racializing effect as they did not want the Presbyterian church to be identified as an ethnic church, denoting the negative connotations of the term in a

52 “Moving Radically- Letter from HanCa”, Presbyterian Record June 1, 2012.
time of emerging state multiculturalism (San Juan Jr 2002: 47). Yet, the term remains justifiable for politely expressing the classification of non-Anglo Presbyterians.

The Messiness of Ethnoracial Diversity

From a brief genealogy of church documents on decline, there is evidence of an awareness of racialized Presbyterian congregations ostracized from full inclusion into the church. The exclusion of non-white, non-British bodies from a Canadian Presbyterian tradition is evident and continuous in a long line of church documents. The picture of aestheticized racial relations is ongoing as the national church continues to manage racialized congregations as ‘little islands’; they are separate, different, unique, ‘special’. This mentality and attitude remains widespread today and it is a disposition of white exaltation.

Returning to the Haynes’ Report, Haynes takes note of a major social change in Canada since the World War II: the effects of multiculturalism. While Haynes admits that churches are increasingly diverse in culture and ethnicity, he does so while embedding a recognition of church growth among racialized congregations. In his sole paragraph on diversity and multiculturalism, he writes,

> Canada is today made up of people of many colours, cultures and religions, which mean further changes in how we interact with the society around us. That change in the makeup of our Canadian society also impacts the church. Our church has become more diverse. Much of the growth we have experienced over the last few years has been in the planting of congregations, and many of those congregations have been based on a common language or culture. Of course, there ARE an increasing number of congregations which contain a mixture of cultures, but the question is how we can integrate all this diversity into the whole of the PCC (Haynes 2012: 4, italicized emphasis added).

In the utterance, “all this diversity”, the use of ‘this’ is a means of marking the ethnic ‘other’ who does not yet belong, while the use of ‘we’, in “how we can integrate”, points to the
unmarked, white subjectivity who belongs to the Presbyterian community. For Haynes, the task of reflecting on diversity is overwhelming and messy that takes away from the coherent story and stable identity of empire. As with preceding denominational documents, Haynes recognizes the social fact of mixed-race, ethnoracially-specific, and multiracial and multiethnic churches, which is collapsed within the concept of culture and language.

The “mixture of cultures” is sidelined from discussion and compartmentalized as a separate topic, foreclosing any discussion on the “effects of multiculturalism”, whether such effects are declining or growing racial congregations, changing styles of worship, or inclusionary practices raised in racial harassment allegations between 2004 and 2008. The Crieff Hills Report (2008), a document generated by conference proceedings involving ethnic and racial minorities in the Presbyterian church discusses policies and strategies to improve the inclusion of racialized Presbyterians on committees, ministries, and staff within the upper echelons of church governance. In their statement, they write “We are marginalized. Our voices are not heard within the existing structures of the Presbyterian Church in Canada”. 53 Although they offered a variety of strategies that emerged from conference workshops, there is a disconcerted effort in transforming talk into practice. Aisha, the British-Indian Presbyterian elder, whom we met at the introduction of this chapter, was a participant at the Crieff Hills proceedings and the crisis for her, are the “brick walls” that she and others come up against when they try to transform “suggestions” into practice (See Ahmed 2012). According to Aisha, her presence is not necessary at forums and workshops on diversity because of her body or her visibility. She expressed to me that she is tired of doing the travel, taking time away from her family. For her, she would like to see more white Presbyterians become more active in engaging with the diversity and challenges that the church currently faces, rather than assuming that there is only one singular challenge in welcoming the plurality of members within the governing structures of the church.

Conclusion

The story of church decline is shaped by colour blindness, which Bell (2002) labels a ‘sincere fiction’. Sincere fictions “paper over or obscure knowledge that white people do in fact possess about how race and racism function in this culture, but that is usually kept out of consciousness” (2002: 237). Haynes and denominational analysts before him may indeed have a commitment towards the virtues of equity and social justice, yet the stories they tell institutionalizes racialism where certain types of bodies are occluded and/or excluded from a Presbyterian narrative on decline. White identities benefit as narratives of Christian unity displaces the lives of racialized Presbyterians, limiting their opportunity to belong as equal children of God. The documents crystalize instances of institutionalized colour-blind racism, that are captured in and experienced through text (San Juan Jr. 2002: 46, Lipsitz 2006), gesturing towards a hierarchy of racial classification.

The practice of writing reports is founded on legibility, which according to James Scott (1998) is acquired by simplification, that is, to bring the phenomenon or the problem at the center into focus. A tunnel-focused vision on church decline, however, wipes away the complexity of family, class and racialism, which effectively normalizes whiteness as a category of privilege. Experts on church decline treat racialized bodies differently, diluting their presence, histories and voices. To make this even more explicit, in an interview with a reporter for the Presbyterian Record, an online magazine, Haynes’ retells his experience at the dedication of the Ghanaian Presbyterian church in Montreal. He explains,

Sometime during the service, I came to the startling realization that Linda [his wife] and I were the only two white people in that whole place, in hundreds of people. And a second realization came in the same moment that it didn’t matter. I was enjoying the worship so much, and wonderful fellowship with these people, that it didn’t matter whether we were black or white or red or yellow or spoke another language. It didn’t matter! And that’s what I think is the mission of the church.

This statement crystalizes a moment of colourblind racism and the normalization of white decency. Frankenberg (1993) elucidates that statements, such as ‘it didn’t matter if we were black or white or red or yellow’, is a technique in power evasion whereby it “camouflages socially significant
differences of color in a welter of meaningless ones” (149). Such colourblind statements preclude (white) people from questioning their own assumptions about race, racism and racialization. Bell (2002) says that this is what makes sincere fictions particularly dangerous: it undermines responsibility to address systemic racism and it absolves individuals from understanding their collusion in perpetuating the status quo.

The regime of enunciation within these documents is the privileging and process of whiteness. What emerges is a polarization of insiderness and outsiderness. We see that: (a) unity is situated within whiteness and (b) racial diversity is so overwhelming, that it becomes a threat to church and denominational unity—whiteness. The denominational resource documents discussed in this chapter offers a macro-level understanding of institutional concerns of decline throughout all tiers of Presbyterian polity. The rationales and methods used to understand the problem at the national level of governance, discussed in this chapter, are concomitant with the decentralized policy practices at the level of congregations that allow members of Session to formulate, implement and amend strategic solutions, discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 4
Keeping Tradition and Moving Forward: Continuity in Times of Economic and Spiritual Austerity

“On the 136th anniversary of God’s history in Don Valley Village. Remembering as we have forgotten that many of the churches of mainline denominations have left this place and the churches have turned into condos. And that before long, we may be the only protestant church standing in this community. Remembering, all that I ask is that you pause in silence, thank God’s presence, thank God’s power, thank blessed mercy for allowing us to be here for a hundred and thirty-six years” (Reverend Abraham, November 17 sermon)

In his study of megachurches in the United States, Elisha (2011) draws attention to the fundamental importance of developing social and Christian relationships, which usually occur outside the space of the church building. Within the spaces of people's homes, "religious commitments are forged through interpersonal bonds built on faith, love, humility and mutual accountability" (2011:21). Understanding one's relationship with Jesus and gaining a broader appreciation of the diverse ways in which God is present emerges from one's embeddedness in a network of Christian relationships. Interactions with other Christians, from debates, discussions and active listening, are moments for guiding a depth of Christian reflexivity and mindfulness. These interactions inspire and affirm a commitment to Christianity, validating personal and community Christian identity, values and beliefs. Many studies suggest that interactions develop best in small group meetings, usually within the basement of congregants' homes because large-scale church services are unconducive to creating and sustaining small-scale bonds that collectively socialize and discipline individuals into the larger religious institutional apparatus (Elisha 2011, O’Neill 2010, Bielo 2011).

Followers at TECPC, however, seldom gathered for activities that were external to the church. Over time, I came to realize that the church building is crucial in sustaining the congregational collective. The church is a place for gathering and developing intimate relationships, because for many congregants, hosting fellow church members within their homes is neither desirable nor
practical. Many congregants reside in small dilapidated rental apartment units and are unable and uncomfortable in hosting church gatherings. Some congregants simply do not have a stable residence, moving from shelter to shelter or temporarily rooming with a friend who is residing in a subsidized apartment. For the handful of congregants who have settled in an established home, some do not dwell in the church neighbourhood but make a long commute to TECPC while others told me they did not want to emphasize their socioeconomic privilege. For a low-income fellowship, an established church building is perceived as a secure space to anchor small groups of believers convening beyond Sunday sermons. The perception of stability, however, is a contentious subject among elders and congregants when juxtaposed with the costs of operating a church building, which in the case of TECPC entails financial expenditures that are beyond the economic means of the congregation.

The church building is an enduring structure and the goal of the aging population of church goers at TECPC is to ensure that the church, as a Presbyterian place and community, will continue to thrive well past the lifetime of congregants. Unlike other congregations, TECPC does not have an established children’s program because there are only a couple of children, at most four kids under the age of 12, who attend church intermittently. When the church was slated for closure due to low church attendance and dwindling financial resources by the Presbytery, members of the congregation were required to develop strategies that would renew the congregation. The problem that members encountered is how to move forward.

Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses on the spatial and temporal continuity of a congregation in the current neoliberal socio-economic environment. Saving the church and congregation can be understood in terms of the congregants’ “moral ambition”. Elisha (2011) uses this concept to describe the inspiration and desire that evangelicals (in the United States) have of themselves and others to live by the virtues of grace and compassion, a disposition “to enhance volunteer mobilization” (2011:2). The practices that emerge from the resourceful and innovative outreach strategies of moral ambitions are, however, tempered by institutional and historical influences and disagreements. This chapter draws attention to the moral ambitions of the congregation at TECPC to save the church and congregational community when TECPC faced closure by the Presbytery
due to insufficient financial resources and little church participation. Indeed, many of their ambitions went unrealized. In the first section, I describe the moral ambitions of congregants at TECPC that are shaped by an imagined past, a time in which the church was a space for children, who are looked to as the material subjects of Christian continuity. Children are objects of hope, yet are subjects that are not prioritized in modes of hospitality. They come to signify the passing of time. As noted by Daswani (2015) on Pentecostal transformation in Ghana, “moving into the future is always a reflective process” (205) as the past shapes the present, which in turn, changes an understanding of the past and mediates a shared futurity (19). This temporal phenomenon allows Christians to find a sense of common identity and affiliation through a mutual past (2015: 25). In the second section, I discuss the strategies put forth by a TECPC committee tasked with the congregational survival and the ensuing discontents that emerged: some of the strategies were perceived as a radical revisioning of Presbyterian church life which interfered with the desires of some elders in keeping the church traditional. In the final section, I consider the concerns of church members on the past, present, and future role of the church congregation in growing its Christian community in a non-Christian time and space. Some of the key questions that emerge from congregants is whether growing church numbers is best for a loving and compassionate Christian community and whether the urgency and expediency in revitalizing the church, as dictated by the neoliberal environment, coincides with ‘God’s time’. Overall, this chapter looks at the temporal continuity on church revitalization and the future of renewal.

**Church Precarity**

During my first year of fieldwork at TECPC, I was unaware that the church was in the midst of developing programs to spiritually revitalize the congregation. The aim of Session was to grow the population of the congregation and to strengthen congregational social networks through activities supported by the guidance elders and scripture. I assumed that programs, such as bible study and monthly community dinners, were in place for many years and that calls for volunteers made at the conclusion of sermons were for an established program as opposed to an initial call for an introductory church activity. Based on the plethora of activities from the determination and consistent participation of congregational volunteers, I did not know that, at that time, TECPC was slated for closure. It was not until an elder confided that TECPC underwent review for closure
by the Presbytery. Between 2008 and 2010, TECPC was evaluated by members the Presbytery who concluded that TECPC was experiencing a crisis in ‘spiritual and financial vitality’.\textsuperscript{54} According to the Presbytery, with low congregational numbers, the church was not bringing in sufficient funds to sustain its future.

Between 1970 and 2008, church attendance for Sunday worship steadily dropped from 100 members to 50 members: a 50\% decline over a 38-year period; however, the three-year period between 2008 and 2011 saw a sharper decline as congregation participation fell from 50 members to just 20 members on a given Sunday. The dissolution of a previously self-sustained congregation translated into dire economic repercussions since TECPC was operating with an $8,000 annual deficit.\textsuperscript{55} Annual congregational income of approximately $33,000 consisting of Sunday tithes and donor funds simply did not suffice in meeting an annual expenditure of $104,000.\textsuperscript{56} The subsistence of the congregation was, and continues to be, heavily reliant on the rental income from organizations unaffiliated with the Presbyterian congregation, such as a Vietnamese Evangelical church, an African Christian church, music school, yoga school and baby and toddler programs. With large open spaces with hardwood floors in the basement, in the banquet room on the main floor, and in the attic, these various floors in the TECPC building are available at simultaneous times for maximum rental income. TECPC is not alone in their financial predicament. It is now a common practice for many mainline congregations to generate revenue through the rental of church space for yoga classes, music classes, fitness ‘boot camps’, and religious worship to pay for necessary renovations and maintenance fees needed to sustain the operation of the church building.

In addition to rental revenue, many churches are financially supported by the fundraising efforts coordinated by elders and congregational participants. At TECPC, annual yard sales, bake sales and holiday bazaars would usually raise an additional three hundred dollars per activity in support

\textsuperscript{54} Progress Report of the Congregational Direction Committee Discussions, October 4, 2009.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{56} The salary of a minister working 2/3 time is $50,000 and the annual expenditure for utilities, insurance, building maintenance and music are approximately $54,000 (Progress Report of the Congregational Direction Committee Discussions, October 4 2009).
of the church. Yet, despite the resources from rentals and fundraising activities, TECPC is having difficulties in meeting the high costs of operating and maintaining a church in the city of Toronto. This is especially true for church buildings that are over a century old that require new roofs, new furnaces, structural repairs, plumbing upgrades, recarpeting and other major renovations.

For churches that are unable to meet operation costs and fail to make payments on property taxes, it is frequent for these churches to become targets for development companies, especially older church buildings located on prime real estate. In these situations, the ‘home’ congregation will relocate and merge with a neighbouring congregation of the same denomination. The church building may be developed into housing if allocated with heritage status or slated for demolition. Promoting redeveloped church buildings as sites of heritage endorses a political strategy of multiculturalism that sanitizes ways of remembering. According to James (2013), heritage is endowed with and instills a sense of national cohesion and identity through a historical amnesia of racist and social transgressions. The cultural genocide of Canadian First Nations, the inculcation of racial prejudice against Chinese and other racialized populations, and the marginalization of women and LGTBQ groups from church leadership are some examples of historical and contemporary injustices by mainline churches, including the Presbyterian Church of Canada (Hinds 2014, Russell 2009, Wang 2006). Transgressions are made ordinary, unexceptional and forgotten when framed by heritage commemoration. The effects of commemoration, according to James (2013), "helps to quell potentially unwieldy debates about past conduct and contemporary responsibility" (38).

Recently, a Presbyterian church built in 1911 in a neighbourhood north of downtown Toronto was assigned with heritage status and is scheduled to be converted into 3-story townhomes adjoining a condominium.\(^{57}\) The main wall and turret of the church building will be preserved along with an adjoining wall with three arched windows; however, the roof will be removed to transform the church sanctuary into an outdoor meeting place. The preservation of portions of the church building becomes a point of prestige as the condominium development project is marketed as

architecture that is “steeped in heritage and embellished with luxury”. The marketing strategy mobilizes a celebratory and anaesthetized memory of a colonial and settler past, which is genuinely valued by contemporary consumers looking for markers of authentic Canadian-ness. Authenticity, in this context, aligns with statist narratives of Canadian identity that is valued as white and British in origin (Haque 2012, Thobani 2007) Although the church building undergoes a ritual of desanctification, the remaining materials are still endowed with sacred meaning that has economic value: an imperialist melancholia grounded in the belief that the influx of immigrants is abetting the degradation of whiteness (see Gilroy 2005).

Figure 8 Converting Churches into Condos


Residual Traces: Children in the Church

Some church members believe that the will and ambition to develop and revitalize church-centered programs is inspiration imparted through God’s guidance. Beliefs and strategies that 'feel right' are interpreted as moments in which the guidance of the Holy Spirit is present, experienced and made knowable. Janet, an elder in her late 60s who migrated from Guyana in the 1980s, acknowledged God as the source of the ideas that came to her mind for church activities. She explained that she heard a voice in her mind that the congregation ought to share meals together, and the idea of community dinner unfolded. Janet did not 'own' the ideas that blossomed in her mind but gifted upon her from her openness in receiving the love of God: the ideas emerged from her openness to the Holy Spirit. This relational way of knowing and experiencing God, according to Luhrmann (2012), is through His participation in your mind. This can be thoughts, dreams, and images that are internally heard similar to external speech (2012: 41). Revitalizing and growing the congregation, according to some elders, necessitates the willingness to listen to God, to understand that God is present and that His plans are not linear and may unfold very slowly, well past one's lifetime.

Many elders at TECPC remarked that they 'felt' that the church 'needs' more children and more family involvement, that the congregation would benefit from the participation of children. One afternoon, Janet and I were sitting in the banquet room at the church conversing over a cup of tea. When I asked her about the scarcity of children in the congregation despite the flourishing number of families in the neighbourhood, she paused for a long while, looking down at her small clasped hands cradled in her lap. She looked up and past me, staring beyond me in the direction of a bundle of toys stacked in the far corner of the church. She suddenly exclaimed, "Do you see that!" lifting her arm towards me and nodding at the direction of her forearm. Seeing a series of speckles raising across her arm, I query "Um...Goosebumps?", unsure of the change in topic. Janet lowered her arm and carried on excitedly "I was thinking about your question, we have so much space and nobody is here. This", nodding at her arm, "is a sign from the Holy Spirit". This was Janet's response to

60 See Chapter 6.
me: she did not offer succinct reply nor a formulated plan on how to encourage family involvement, nor was she, at that moment, gifted with an articulated divine strategy, but she knew through the presence of the Holy Spirit that families, especially young families, are integral to the solution in keeping the church open. For her, glimpses into God's plan are affective moments known through her senses of the Holy Spirit. As noted by other scholars, the Holy Spirit for many Christian is a force that works in unanticipated and unpredictable ways in guiding individuals towards an unknown near future (Daswani 2015: 205).

While the 'feelings' of congregants on the role of children and families align with the general response circulated in Presbyterian national policies, laity rarely cited institutional recommendations, and most were completely unaware of the movements within the upper echelon of church polity. More so, the idea of encouraging the participation of families and children within the church is no easy task. The population at TECPC is mainly comprised of elderly individuals. It is an ongoing joke within the congregation that young adults are those who are in their fifties. Some congregants, on occasion, would bring their grandchildren to Sunday sermons. Throughout my two years of fieldwork at TECPC, there was only one family who consistently attended church: a single father with two young pre-teen girls. Because of the population trend of older adults, the Congregational Direction Committee at TECPC focused church revitalization efforts on adult-oriented programs, such as bible study groups and women's meetings. Yet, in spite of these programs, many congregants wistfully looked to children as a necessary orientation for congregational development. Continuity for the church and Christian future is perceived by some church goers to be dependent on the participation of families, which is a growing trend in the gentrifying neighbourhood.

The neighbourhood in which TECPC is located is historically an enclave for low income and working-class families, and is only recently undergoing rapid gentrification. Neighbouring factories and warehouses are being converted into boutique condominiums and lofts, while the number of dilapidated houses is decreasing as they are renovated into upscale housing for professionals and middle-class families. As a family hub, many neighbourhood stores cater to baby gear and indoor play grounds. While helping one of the elders with the planting of flowers along the church building during the summer months, I observed the flow of children, strollers, nannies and parents who crossed the church grounds as a shortcut between their residences and
the street shops and public transit stops. Seeing the flow of families made me question why there is such little family participation, specifically families with children, within the church.

According to congregants' observations, the decline in children's participation at TECPC started approximately after the 2000s. When speaking of children's decline in the church, elders recount a general waning of children within the surrounding neighbouring. Some elderly church members have lived in the neighbourhood of Don Valley Village since the mid 1980s and they tell me that they see the ebbs and flows of children within the church as a normative community experience. Between 1990s and 2000s, they recall the presence of many children in the area. To explain the movement of families, congregants drew upon memories of Halloween, which for many, is an evening that clearly reveals the ebbs and flows of children and families in the neighbourhood. Elders reminisce on the visibility of children emerging from homes and the vibrant and raucous chatter as they ventured out in the neighbourhood decorated with lit jack o’ lanterns and spooky decorations in the yards and along the house windows. The number of treats given out to children who were trick or treating and how quickly the treats were gone, they say, points to the population trend of young children in the neighbourhood.

The relationship that congregants are making between declining numbers of children within the church and memories of a non-Christian, yet children-oriented, event is an affective attachment. Elders and church members rarely spoke of specific moments or memories of children within the church. They provided neither narratives of Sunday school nor recollections of children sitting in the pews, nor could they draw upon any recent memories of interactions with children in church. It is possible that at one point in the past, the presence of children was quite ordinary and over time, their ephemeral presence slowly flickered out of view. What remains is a feeling invoked by the residual traces of children as material objects. They encapsulate a potentiality what Kathleen Stewart (2007) describes as "a thing immanent to fragments of sensory experience and dreams of presence" (21). Children persuade feelings of longing and possibility, a potentiality for mending a sense of loss and silence that is felt within church life and captured in fragments beyond the church. Scenes of Halloween provide an obtuse yet relational perspective for understanding the intensity of thoughts and feelings to explain the collective experience of decline and continuity within the church.
Between 2000 and 2010, the number of children decreased significantly. Elders recollect that the neighbourhood during Halloween throughout these years was unusually barren and silent. In retrospect, they remember that children did not come knocking on their door for treats and that the neighbourhood was predominantly a community of older and retired individuals. Natalie, a church goer who migrated from Guyana with her husband and children in the mid 1990s and joined TECPC in the early 2000s when she was trying to make sense of and make amends with the death of her eldest daughter\(^61\), tells me about the changes in the neighbourhood:

> There was absolutely no children on the street, cause it was all elderly still living in their homes. They died off, including the woman next door to me whom nobody found for a week! Then families are moving in. You can see all the condos being built and the ramshackle houses are being refurbished. But now (2013), it’s different, there’s families on the street and there are all these kiddies running up and down.

Natalie's narrative tells of the rapid gentrification of the neighbourhood, which is compelling the resurgence of families and children. 'Ramshackle' houses are appealing and alluring to professional and middle-class families because of their lower costs and renovating potential. The recent resurgence of families, however, has not translated into increased participation of families and children in church worship services or activities. In my conversation with Joan, she says,

> Families are just not coming in! And I do believe that we, our church, our congregation, are weak there. There are tons of kids that come into the church for dance programs and a whole slew of kids come in for music programs [these programs are not run by the church].

For her, the lack of family involvement within the church is a result of the larger problem of congregational hospitality and outreach especially in a time when going to church on Sundays is a decreasing priority for many families. Similarly, Liam says to me “how do you get people to come

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\(^61\) She did not speak to me about her family's migration experience, but explained to me that TECPC was the only church where she was able to find solace in God through the love and continued support of the women at the congregation.
into church on a Sunday? You know people are really busy and there is just so much to do and no time in getting stuff done! You gotta have a really good reason to get people in here!!” Liam raises a point that was voiced by many other church goers. As families are busy with work, housework, yard work, children’s school work and extracurricular activities, and other chores, people are hard pressed for time. For Liam, a lack of church participation does not mean that church and God are less important to people, but rather that people are hard pressed for time. For church goers, they see this as a symptom of today’s ‘Godless society’, an era in which Christian values and knowledge is no longer welcome in society (Bialecki and Bielo 2016, Strhan 2015).

Intergenerational Disconnects: In Whom is the Future of the Church?

Within the walls of TECPC, remnants of children’s activities are evident as toys are tucked away in a corner of the banquet hall, such as cars, activity games, puzzles, cozy coupe riding cars and child sized table and chairs. Throughout my participation at TECPC, rarely did I observe children play with the toys in the banquet hall or interact with one another during the post-service gathering. Often, children appeared timid and detached, preferring to sit silently beside their grandparents throughout the hour-long friendship tea in the banquet hall after Sunday worship services. I observed that elders and church goers rarely engaged the children in conversation. Children mostly kept to themselves, eyes downcast and keenly focused on using their fork to pick at the cookies and cake on their plate. When I inquired into the intergenerational disconnect between the younger and older generations, Natalie explained that the “older members are not open to having young children”. She is inferring a stereotype of church members inclined towards a formal and conservative conduct of children, signifying their obeisance to God, their elders, and respect of God’s home: the church.

While some Presbyterian churches have little family participation, there are a few Presbyterian churches that do have a thriving population of children. Queensview Presbyterian Church, for example, has established the church as hub of children’s activities within the neighbouring vicinity. The children’s room is decorated with individual photographs of children, with their names labelled underneath their picture. This is a strong show in the number of children involved in church activities. Several rooms are devoted to children: one room has layers of large and small colourful
pillows on the floor and rack of pictures books of biblical tales against the wall; another room has a variety of toy musical instruments and another room has a rectangular table with six child-sized seats and four easels against the wall with cabinets full of arts and crafts. For teenagers, there is a study room with two large tables, each surrounded by six sturdy wooden chairs, with little to no distractions. Non-Sunday church programs include after-school tutoring and full-day camps during non-school days. During the summer, the church has a weeklong camp in the cottage country of Ontario to engage children in activities that engage with Christian principles and scriptures. To make families feel welcome at Queensview Presbyterian Church, the Sunday pamphlet has a column devoted to parents with young children, reminding them that “God put the wiggle in children—don’t feel you have to suppress it in God’s house”. In explicitly stating that there are no expectations for parents to subdue and restrain the voices and actions of children, the church is reshaping a perception of children in the church. An ethic of openness thus includes intergenerational hospitality that welcomes children, including their unruliness, curiosity, and liveliness. The key phrase here is that there is no need to ‘suppress’ children as their ‘wiggle’ is part of God’s will and the goal is to embrace and accommodate the diversity of humanness, which is also situated in children.

Abraham, the teaching elder at TECPC, tells me that it was only recently that the Presbyterian Church started to include young children under the age of six in worship. From my observations and conversations with ministers from Queensview Presbyterian Church and Toronto Central Presbyterian Church, the temporal marker of ‘recently’ applies only to TECPC. Both Queensview Presbyterian and Toronto Central churches have organized and implemented programmes that include younger children in worship activities beyond Sunday sermons, to varying degrees of success since the mid 1980s. TECPC, however, had not strategized to make church life appealing to families with young children and for elders, this was a contentious and divisive issue. For other elders, they told me that making the church hospitable for children should not be a priority when there is an absence of children.

Abraham, continued to explain that for children under the age of 13, the protocol is for children to attend the first twenty minutes of sermon, then they are gathered and led out the sanctuary to the
The narthex at TECPC is a vibrantly coloured room, with rough textured walls coloured in cornflower blue. The west side displays a hand painting of a large wooden boat, representing Noah's Ark, which is sitting atop a large rainbow, with the jolly visages of giraffes, elephants, lions from the ark's windows. In this room, there are a variety of second-hand picture books narrating biblical tales. Because the church has very little income, Joan explained that she or another elder usually pick up "discarded" and "unwanted" biblical children's books when they visit Value Village-a store that sells donated household goods and clothes. Joan tells me that the story books provide a basis for introducing scripture to respond to children's worldly queries: how the world was created; on relationships and interactions with family, friends, communities, and other living creatures, and of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

While TECPC currently has some structured activities for children, these kinds of activities have an enduring influence in shaping a person's desire to return to the church and Christian living later in life. One Sunday morning while waiting for the commencement of the first session of a new bible study forum, I made small talk with the only other participant attending the meeting. I sat across from a white woman, who appeared to be in her mid-thirties with dishevelled hair, broken teeth and unkempt attire. I thought she was new to the church as this was my first encounter with her after being at TECPC for over a year. She lets out a soft laugh and tells me that she has been coming to TECPC since she was a "young girl with braids". She confides that she recently returned to church for community support in her battle with substance abuse. Very rarely, does she join

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62 At TECPC, the narthex is a room on the eastside of the church that is approximately 20ft long and 11ft wide. Three large windows on the east wall brightens the room, even on the cloudiest days. Elders use this architectural term to describe the Sunday school room space following Christian doctrine: the narthex is a space for individuals who are restricted from joining the congregation during sermons.

63 The Sunday morning Bible Study group was a new program initiated and implemented by Reverend Abraham with the goal of increasing and developing the spiritual participation of adherents and members of the TECPC. This bible study was advertised in church pamphlets for several months, yet each time I showed up to participate, I could not locate the bible study group in the church. Finally, I asked Reverend Abraham about the bible study and he said that it was new program that he wanted to start, but was still in a preliminary state of organization (despite announcements in the weekly pamphlet for several weeks). For the next two weekends, Reverend Abraham arrived early to church and tried to promote the bible study. On the first gathering of this bible study session, only three people showed up including myself. The following Sunday, I was the only person who attended. This bible study group was halted due to the lack of attendance which did not warrant Abraham’s three-hour commute from his home to church.
Sunday sermons because "it’s so hard to wake up early in the morning!" yet today, she "surprisingly made it out for bible study, perhaps" she says, "that is God's will for me to be here today". While we chatted, she emphasizes that bible study is an activity that she finds personally meaningful, now that she "is trying to kick the habit" with Jesus beside her. Growing up in the Don Valley village neighbourhood, she recalls with fondness when the church had greater participation. She says to me:

I always lived in this neighbourhood, let me tell you, lots of change over the years. I’ve been coming to Toronto East Presbyterian since I was in grade school, I was five or six [years old]. The church had lots [of people] back then, more than now. I remember Sunday school, [it was] very different than now…Back then, I didn’t like it much but it was stable, and when I think back, it made me get to know people living around here. There were lots of us! I think there was about twenty of us kids and the room was filled and we had two Sunday school teachers.

Some church members fleetingly recall the social relations they developed, "hanging with their buddies", while acquiring a meaningful understanding of scripture and its relevance. Listening to and learning the stories about Jesus inculcates a steadfast and affective experience, a wisdom that is felt, intangible and unconscious until an experience motivates a recollection. For this woman, she recalls church as a 'safe' and 'secure' place, a consistency in her childhood when juxtaposed to her current position in its transience and instability. Church members who attended Sunday school held by protestant denominations in Guyana rarely spoke of their experience, politely yet intentionally refusing my queries (c.f. Simpson 2014).

Materiality of Hospitality

Because TECPC is currently a small congregation, the concept of 'saving the church' highlights two interconnected debates occurring within church polity: first, is saving the church about renovating and beautifying the church building, or secondly, is saving the church about the spiritual strength of the church congregation. Joan tells me that the issue of church buildings is an
ongoing concern at Presbytery meetings as presbyteries deal with a central question of “where is the Presbyterian church going?”

There are some very bright men and women that are ministers, they [members of Presbytery] are not all stodgy old guys or old women, but there are some of those too! [laughs] They are trying to figure out what are we doing. The question we had to answer ‘Were we being dragged down by our buildings’? Really, this is what’s happening here [at TECPC]. We need a new roof, we need this and that so we are busy raising money for that. Is that really what a church is here for? It’s not you know, but at the same time, if you don’t have a building where do people come to church? So there’s two sides to that too.

Joan recognizes the importance of having a stable place for people to congregate and worship together. The issue, however, is how people can come together to take care of the building while taking care of each other and each self. For some church members, focusing on beautifying a building, of making it more hospitable, makes it appear that the congregation is more concerned with materiality than with spiritual growth. Yet at the same time, the appearance of the building is important because it creates an affective experience, a first impression, that denotes the privileged position of a newcomer and her or his decision to return or not. Shryock (2004) remarks that among the Balga Bedouin, the “stagecraft” of hospitality is a contained space where “ideal representations are played out for [guests], and things that suggest inadequacy are sheltered from their view” (2004: 37). The display of materials, sharing of foods and information and the overall attitude of generosity shapes the social critique that guests may tell of their hosts once they emerge from the home. The same holds true among congregants at TECPC as they are concerned with the talk that newcomers share with others regarding the hospitality of the congregation. In essence, “reputations are at stake” (Shryock 2004: 36).

Strategies to renovate church buildings and improve their structural attractiveness are rationalized as having the potential for increasing congregational participation over time. These tactics, however, do not unfold as planned. At Toronto Central Presbyterian in downtown Toronto, the minister showed me a developed portion of the church that was constructed in the 1980s for a Christian daycare facility. The plan to expand a wing of the church was conceived to increase
congregational participation and membership of families and children and at the very least, to
develop children's sensibilities of God and the Holy Spirit. Stepping inside one of the rooms of
this section, child-sized vestibules lined the white barren walls and in front of me were round
wooden laminated child-sized tables that could comfortably seat five children if only there were
child-sized seats; there were none to be found however. Located at the back wall were stacks of
adult chairs. Asides from these furnishings, the room was empty and sterile looking. Reverend
Thomas says to me,

They [members of Session] debated about what the church was and what
would happen here, so this [section of the church] was developed as a
daycare center. They were going to have a daycare here and it’s all set up
for that. They had it all done then they realized they did not have enough
outdoor space for kids to play and it’s never been used for kids (chuckles).
So for thirty years, we have talked about ‘what else do we do [with this
space]?’….It’s really under-utilized, and part of that is that it is not a very
multipurpose, you know.

The room captures a hope that was thwarted and now memorialized by the presence of children's
furnishings. Miyazaki (2004) suggests that moments of hope may either: (a) fade away and
reappear fleetingly at different moments, (b) simultaneously open and close or (c), replicate as a
past hope emerges in the present (Miyazaki 2004: 106, 110). Hope in the children's room at
Toronto Presbyterian is museumized when the materiality comes to represent a simultaneous
experience of hope and despair. Refusal to remove children's furnishings is an ambition for
continuity: refusal mobilizes the hope for a time that is 'not yet' and repudiates despair over the
spiritual waning of the church. Hesitation, according to Daswani (forthcoming), parallels hope as
an ethical practice that is immanent and imminent (17). Hope and hesitation involve actions of the
ordinary that “allows us to transcend life and anticipate the about-to-happen character of the near
future” (18). Hesitation offers a pause, which in this case is for thirty years, to reflect on alternative
solutions that have the potential in making the church more hospitable to a population that has not
yet materialized, which is an imminent quality and a near future orientation. Refusal has the
potential to unfold into a hope that abides by "God's time".
The strategy of "building a church" as a pathway towards congregational growth is, according to some elders, an "old evangelical mentality". The "build it and they will come" approach assumes that once a church is built, the church will draw in a large following without extraneous effort and publicity. One congregant used an analogy to a movie he saw, he says

It's like this, there was a movie a while ago, maybe it's before your years. It goes like this: this man in a small town hears the Holy Spirit whispering to him to build a baseball field on his farmland and everyone thought he was crazy, but he built it anyways. And slowly, people came to play until a one of those big league baseball team comes to play, and people come to watch! Well that is the mentality that some of the older members have, that if they build a church, build a nursery room, build whatever, we open the doors and people will just flock in. Well, it doesn't work that way, not anymore.

Nearly forty years after building the daycare facility, members of Toronto Central Presbyterian Church have not put the room to its intended use, nor do they have the numbers of children to use the room as a Sunday school or after-school facility. While the congregation awaits, the room is now rented to non-church organizations, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers, providing the church with additional financial resources.

**God’s Time**

Unilineal time and its relation to notions of progress and growth does not offer immediate assurance of church continuity. Without glimpsing signs from God or the Holy Spirit, there is no guarantee that followers are living righteously and faithfully in a manner that would bring about God’s plan. The goal is not to know God’s plan, this is simply unknowable, but to discern indications that there is a future and that each person is contributing, individually and together, thereby making this life more fulfilling. There are two interpretive readings of ‘God’s time’ from the perspective of church congregants that are distinct yet overlapping. First, to explain the lack of church growth is the belief that followers are not living up to the principles and precepts laid out in the bible for proper Christian living. This stance was not widely voiced amongst members of TECPC. It demonstrates, however, that for some individuals the bible is central in guiding Christian conduct to determine one’s destiny (see Davie-Kessler 2016: 5). Second, and more
commonly discussed, God’s time is simply not human time, it is incommensurable. What may be experienced as a slow degradation of Presbyterian Christianity may not be a sign of the death of Christianity after all, but a moment, a flicker of time, when placed on a grander cosmological scale. Bialecki (2017) calls this “the already/not-yet”. He explains that this is a transitionary period between two time frames, where a beginning and an end are experienced at the same point, of either being a past or a future but not the present (2017:46).

Many congregants see today’s technology as an example of the ways in which people are deviating from God’s presence and are unable to experience God’s time. The instantaneous modes of communication (via emails and text-messaging) and the instant gratification that people experience with mass consumption were examples made by congregants on the problem with today’s experience of Godlessness. Elderly congregants who find technology economically and socially inaccessible and confusing are seeing younger generations’ focus on cellular phones and computers as a consequence of an insular orientation that is reshaping one’s relationship with God, a connection that is more individual and personal. This individualized relationship with God shrouds an affective experience of God who is ‘out there’ within the mundane, working almost imperceptibly in the present moment. To elucidate this point, I will jump ahead to a time during my fieldwork when I was sitting and chatting with one of TECPC’s elders. Indeed, this ethnography has a lot of talk because my elderly research participants did a lot of sitting and talking at the church, and rarely, was I invited to one’s home.

William, an elderly Australian man who immigrated to Canada in the 1970s and a Session elder at the church, invited me on several occasions to sit with him in his garage while he worked in refurbishing old furniture as part of his own business. One summer afternoon, we were sitting in reclining wooden chairs staring up at the swaying canopy of leaves that rustled and glimmered with the late afternoon sunshine. He had just finished recounting one of his life stories to me, telling me of his affinity to climbing trees as a young boy to get away from his older sisters who were trying to dress him in feminine fashionable attire, similar to one of their dolls, and how these early experiences shaped his career path in working with wood, first as an arborist and later in restoring wood furniture.

After he finished telling me of one of his childhood stories, we sat in silence. This was a comfortable silence, with the summer sun shining down on us, its rays refracted by the canopy of
green leaves of various hues from the large trees (a rarity in Toronto). The hum of cicadas reverberated in the warm afternoon heat and as I lifted my face to take in the sun’s warm embrace, a refreshing breeze rustles through the leaves overhead, impelling a shimmer of recursive patterns of cascading light, and sweeps gently over us caressingly. “Did you feel that Lisa? That is the work of the Holy Spirit” says William to me, bringing me out of the moment. This event allowed me to better understand the comments made by members of the congregation on the workings of God’s time. Feeling the Holy Spirit entails moments of stillness for awareness to experience the sacred qualities of the mundane. If a person was busy on their phone or other electronic device, they would not experience this moment of grace- of being caressed and embraced by the Holy Spirit (Strhan 2015). A sublime moment of experiencing nature, from the rays of the sun glimmering through the fluttering leaves of aged trees to the cool breeze striking at the right moment, and the symphony of sounds of insects and nature, and their calming effect on one’s mind and the ensuing fleeting surrender of the self is a moment in which the ordinary becomes extraordinary and the natural becomes supernatural. Bialecki (2017) in his ethnography of the Vineyard, an American evangelical movement, details how the minutiae of biological processes from the rhythmic beating of a heart, to the rush of blood through the dilation and contraction of capillaries, to the flow of hormones and chemical changes within the body are the micro-workings shaping affect that are “in mutual relationships with events occurring at other timescales and on different orders of magnitude” (2017:35). While his argument is that worship can push and excite bodily functions and affective experience in a way that becomes transmissible so that others respond to the energy that engulfs them (2017:36), the work of the Holy Spirit at TECPC is palpable by experiencing and feeling (super)nature that is not in the past nor is it in the future, nor is it quite in the present. It is a feeling that is already underway (Bialecki 2017:46) and its minutia is not contained but relates to larger cosmological connections to God.

Feeling God’s time also offers an opening into God’s hospitality. For William and others who believe that God is ‘out there’ is that being in nature is God’s hospitality. The natural world, in all of its diversity, otherness, and messiness, is God’s creation and the materiality of hospitality. The act of welcome in a multicultural society is usually perceived as an event, a moment in celebrating one’s arrival and reception into a new country. Hospitality in God’s time is not a singular event but a process of welcome that is situated in the already/not-yet conundrum that involves overlapping ethical relations between humans as members God’s children, between God and
people (which is discussed in Chapter 6), and also between God and non-human qualities. Similar to the experience of God’s time as both ordinary and extraordinary and natural and supernatural, so too is Christian hospitality. For congregants who see God as ‘outside’, His presence is experienced through the diversity in which we live, as His creation is his stagecraft of hospitality. Every aspect of the non-human world is God’s presence, as told to me by William in our moment, God is the feeling of the embracing breeze and He is the sound of the rustling leaves.

Moving Forward: Becoming More than a Sunday Church

At TECPC, while the scarcity of families and children is an ongoing concern, the overall downward trend of churchgoers is unsettling. To elders and members of the Presbytery, diminishing numbers are a three-prong problem: first, it is a financial predicament due to reduced funds and donations; second, some Presbyterians interpret the numbers as symptomatic of waning spiritual vitality of the church congregation, and third, it is indicative of the uncertain role of Christianity in a ‘Godless society’. A church building with a small congregation sitting on a multimillion-dollar property is an uncertain future.

William found some hope in current church numbers. Reflecting on the recent past, he explained that TECPC is witnessing a small yet substantial growth in its current membership, the first since the 1980s. The number of current worshipers points to a 75% growth, from 20 to approximately 35 church members. Growth is incremental and his optimism is present, even if constrained, telling me that we must be patient with God’s plan for spiritual growth. “God’s time” he says, “works quite differently than our understanding of time”. A spark of hope flickers then fades as the elder later quietly conceded that the numbers are not strong enough to sustain and maintain church operations in times of austerity.

To prove that TECPC is a spiritually and financially sustainable church to members of the Presbytery, members of Session at TECPC were tasked to develop a committee to formulate a strategy for revitalizing the congregation in 2008. Liam, a white Elder in his early 50s with a greying and balding hairline, sat down and explained the procedures and processes that followed the Presbytery review. Liam is an enigmatic figure. During the first year of my field work, I heard rumours that he was a prestigious and influential business executive; however, his attire often
masked his class status and social privilege. On Sundays during the summer, he dressed in rumpled cargo shorts, disheveled golf-style shirts with short sleeves, and white socks and sandals. His attendance during the winter was sporadic due to his teenage son's hockey schedule. The only time Liam revealed his professional status is when he joined the community dinner one evening. On the last Wednesday in January during the second year of my field research, I saw a man sitting at a table alone, dressed in a dark trousers and blazer, polished shoes and a full-length coat and eating a plate of spaghetti. When I approached the gentleman, who stood out amidst a room full of disheveled people with unwashed hair and an odour of combining the smells of stale cigarette smoke and dirty laundry, I was surprised to see Liam eating alone. When I commented that it was great to see him because I had not seen him in several months, he explained dispassionately that he was very busy tending to business mergers in Iceland, flying back and forth between Toronto, Iceland and Hong Kong over several months. He dropped by for dinner on that particular evening because he wanted a quick bite to eat before returning home to his family, a few blocks north of the church. This was the first time and only time Liam came in and participated in the community dinner. Moreover, this was the only time his privileged status was made explicit.

While devouring his spaghetti, Liam explained to me the directives made by the Presbytery to Session. He rationalised each directive in terms of costs, benefits, and effectiveness. As he describes each directive, his tone became more animated, more passionate when describing the strategy for a 'self-sufficient ministry', intimating his inclination and hope for a radical congregation within a conservative denomination.

TECPC Revitalization Schemes

In 2009, Session convened a "Congregational Direction Committee" involving several elders to identify and develop future directives for advancing Christianity while attending to the financial visibility of the church. Liam clarified that the congregation did not necessarily need to grow the number of church-goers as this seemed, to him, unlikely given the church's demographic trends. Improving the church thus entailed: (a) the reduction of the congregation's financial expenditure, accomplished through the hire of a part-time minister as opposed to a full-time preacher, and (b) a plan for becoming more than a Sunday church. During this time, TECPC had little to no congregational involvement apart from Sunday morning sermons, which distinguished the church
from neighbouring congregations who had programs such as knitting groups, afterschool programs, weekend camps, church dinners and bible studies classes. In a report submitted to Session, the committee proposed five strategies for compliance to the Presbytery’s requirements: (1) Merger with another congregation; (2) Half-time minister; (3) Adoption (Merge and Mission); (4) Self-Sufficient Congregation, and (5) Half-time minister with funding.

**Merger with another congregation:** This strategy called for the merger of TECPC with the closest neighbouring congregation, Queensview Presbyterian. According to Liam, congregants from TECPC would join the worship services and church committees of Queensview Presbyterian. Members of Session at TECPC would amalgamate into Session at Queensview. This directive included the sale of TECPC, both property and land, of which the proceeds would be invested into the merged congregation. Liam confided that this plan was not favoured by elders at TECPC as the social and spiritual costs outweighed the financial benefits. Moving to Queensview Presbyterian did not accommodate the mobility needs of elderly congregants: the commute would be much further and many would need to rely on public transport, adding to the cost and time of attending worship. Liam also noted that elders at Queensview Presbyterian declined an initial offer made by TECPC to discuss their interest in a potential merger, which inevitably meant that this scheme was negated.

**Permanent Interim Ministry.** The rationalization of this directive is the cost effectiveness of operating the church without a full-time minister. An interim moderator, appointed by the presbytery when a congregation is between ministers, would moderate Session meetings and locate pulpit supply (these are student ministers or retired ministers for short term preaching). According to Liam, this strategy was projected to save the congregation approximately 35k per year. Members of the committee projected that this directive would enable the church to amass sufficient financial reserves to call a full-time minister in 5-10 years. The risk of this strategy is that that congregants may leave the church, thus reducing congregational offerings.

**Half-Time Minister.** With this directive, the committee proposed that employing a minister from full-time to half-time would reduce the church's operational cost by about 10k per year. To address the full needs of the congregation, this strategy recommended for church members to adopt more active roles, duties and responsibilities in pastoral care, a domain typically assumed by the
minister. The main problem of this directive, raised by the committee, is the potential for conflict between the minister and congregation over the division of labour.

**Adoption (Merge and Mission).** With this directive, the committee proposed for TECPC congregation to merge with a neighbouring congregation TECPC building space would remain open as a place for mission and outreach. Liam explained that while TECPC church goers would join the parent congregation and Session at TECPC would amalgamate into the parent church's Session. This would allow elders from TECPC to advocate on behalf of members from TECPC, ensuring that their interests and needs are met. This directive also calls for TECPC board of managers, those who direct the operations and maintenance of the church building, to remain intact thus continuing the board's role and duties in managing TECPC church space. Session at the parent church, however, would oversee the board of managers and would, additionally, appoint a part-time resource person for mission and outreach. The drawback of this directive, according to the committee, is that this directive would not appeal to members of Session at potential parent congregations. Liam also pointed out that issues related to commuting, i.e. lengthier distance and extended time, for meetings, missions and outreach were cited as potential drawbacks.

**Self-Sufficient Congregation.** This directive, according to Liam, was a radical and creative strategy for doing congregational ministration, saying that this model was likely "the first of its kind" within the national denomination. The foundation of this approach is a bottom-up orientation for doing ministry, meaning that ministration would come from the cooperation and organization of church members. In this regard, a minister would be sourced to the congregation as a resource person only, offering advice and support to members of the congregations so that they may help each other. The minister would not be a member of Session, nor would they occupy the position of teaching minister. In laying out a plan to operate without a full-time minister, the committee proposed that Sunday sermons, for example, would be coordinated by teams consisting of 3-4 people and facilitated by monthly guest speakers, the use of media based resources. Because this form of ministry depends on the flexibility and availability of church members in offering their time and services, the committee suggested a time-saving mechanism to ensure that the members of the congregation would not be overburdened. One example suggested by the committee was for the discontinuation of the church bulletin, a pamphlet disseminated at the beginning of Sunday sermons. The bulletin is the schedule of hymns to be sung, of bible passages to be read, and at times, a list of key questions or quotes to help guide congregants towards the theme or lesson of
the sermon. Usually, this is typed up by the minister, then volunteers print out the page, cut the paper to the size of the bulletin (two bulletins are printed out on one page of paper) and finally distribute the bulletin to church goers along with a book of hymns and a bible as they enter the church. Instead, elders would pass around blank pieces of paper and promotional pens with the Presbyterian logo of a burning bush for congregants to write notes during service.

Unlike other proposed directives put forth by the congregational directive committee, this strategy was the most detailed plan, demonstrating that the idea of a ‘self-sufficient church’ was attainable and under foremost consideration by the committee for implementation. To improve congregational outreach, the committee assessed three areas requiring development: (1) building visual appeal; (2) congregational interaction, and (3) adult education. First, the committee suggested that the visual appeal of the building required some renovation to make the church more welcoming and aesthetically pleasing through small, low-cost, time-effective projects, such as: masonry cleaning, new signage, improved lighting, refinished entranceways, removal of carpets and refinishing of wood floors. Staging hospitality by improving the attractiveness of the building to persuade people to walk through the doors was thought to be an initial and necessary step for growing the congregation.

Second, the committee identified the need to ‘close the gaps’ among church goers. Because the space of the sanctuary at TECPC was originally built to seat around three hundred people for worship, the current number of congregational members dispersed throughout the large sanctuary makes for disconnected interconnections and an isolated and estranged mode of worship. The committee, at the time, did not have a solution for ‘closing the gaps’.

Third, the committee identified the need to improve adult education. While the committee recognized that children’s educational programmes are traditionally the normative focus, committee members determined that this was not a realistic goal for TECPC. Given the current demographics of the church with most congregants over the age of 40 years old, the committee suggested a mandate to focus on adult understanding of biblical scriptures through the implementation of bible study groups on weekday evenings and the use of online media resources. The committee suggested that children could participate in the adult service or affiliate with Queensview Presbyterian Church, which has an established program for integrating children into
church life through choirs, participation in church service and volunteerism in the church community.

**Half-Time Minister with Funding.** According to Liam, this directive was an experimental plan combining two aforementioned directives: half time ministry and self-sufficient ministry. This option was a compromise between two factions within the church: one group advocated to retain a permanent minister while another group pressed for congregational self-sufficiency. For many, the presence and practices of a minister is the anchor of a church community. Traditionally, a teaching minister is a learned clergy person, achieving graduate degrees in theology or areas of ministry (such as divinity, religious education and pastoral studies) and is an expert on providing pastoral care, spiritual guidance, and leadership to the congregation. The specifications of a self-sufficient ministry necessitated the congregation to become much more actively involved in the duties, roles and practices related to ministration, sharing such responsibilities with the minister. Liam explained that members of the congregations could, for example, form teams with specific duties for developing and implementing aspects of worship and outreach. Financially, the committee projected that the implementation of this directive would require additional support of 5k per year over a 5-10 year period, which could be sought out through small pots of funds from various donors for creative ministry.

Each of the above strategies are innovative models from the purview of Presbyterian congregants. The opportunity to rethink their church future was seen by some as an opportunity for the congregation to emerge as a radically different model of doing church. Two models of doing church that were the front runners: the model of a self-sufficient congregation and half-time minister with funding. The model of a self-sufficient congregation was favoured by congregants who saw this scheme as a model that centered on ministration from within the congregation as opposed to having a minister guide congregational learning. For many, this model would break from traditional Presbyterianism and refocus the congregation as a spiritual community within the neighbourhood. Indeed, congregants who favoured this model also wanted to rename the church

64 The permanent position of a minister is achieved through the ordination of a candidate minister to the titled role of Minister of the Word and Sacrament. Ordination is initiated by members of Session and the role is a lifetime obligation and relationship between the congregation and the minister.
to highlight the church as a Christian space rather than a denominational place. It was an opportunity to renew the church through new forms of being missional. Bialecki and Bielo (2016) define missional as proselytizing dispositions “to build relationships with non-Christians”, an ethic that characterizes a particular kind of Christian belonging (2016:73). Congregants who preferred this model told me that this model would require much work from members of the congregation to plan and organize worship along with church activities for outreach, but in that work, of working together and deliberating ideas, is the potential of becoming a strong, intimate, and vital congregation. Liam explained to me that becoming a cohesive, strong church community is intrinsic to developing compassion and love for others. In doing so, individuals experience a synergy of nurturance, love, and security that develops out of their participation, commitment, and attentiveness to other members of the church. Liam says, “church is about ‘human-ness’, it’s about being human, allowing yourself to be human and not beating yourself or get beaten for just being human, it’s simple”.

The model that was eventually adopted was the strategy of Half-Time Minister with Funding. I was told that that consensus was reached with much deliberation over criteria and processes for growing a congregation that is Christian, and more importantly for some elders, authentically Presbyterian. Congregants who favoured this model believed that a congregation without a minister could possibly contribute to the congregation’s rupture with Presbyterianism. This would make the church more alien in a city that is already perceived to be complex because of its pluralism and diversity (Strhan 2015). Without a minister, there is little assurance of a commitment by the congregation to continue with its Presbyterian missional practices, values, and beliefs. If the disposition of mission changes then the identity of the congregation shifts as well. This, for long time congregants, is an abomination of their sense of identity and sense of self. The rejection of a congregation without a minister is a temporal index. Among congregants who see the current social climate as an era marked by Godless qualities, most notably through the absence of Christian values, thoughts, and practices, they look back to a time in which the church was a dominant force (see Chapters 2 and 3). “To successfully ‘be the Church’ in this new pagan world” writes Bialecki and Bielo (2016), “contemporary Christians must rediscover how their distant relatives in time engaged the old pagan world. The imperative is temporal to the core: look back, remember, return, rediscover” (2016:74). In moving forward, congregants are looking back at what they see as necessary markers in perpetuating a Presbyterian church. In looking back, there is no
evidence, no narratives, in which a thriving church with a growing congregation flourished without a minister.

**The Affect of Small Numbers and Congregational Divisions**

Being church is a practice in “self-care” where the regulations, obligations and duties, and more significantly, the stresses that are often attached to paid work are put aside. For Presbyterian Christians, the care of the self entails a practice in caring for others, strangers, and neighbours. The synergy of self-care waxes and wanes depending on the changing situation of church participants. Some church members may not attend church for months, then return when they feel overwhelmed and overburdened with life events. Liam, for example, tells me that church life is important to him because it gives him the space and time to reconnect with others. To elucidate how he experience church life, he juxtaposes his need for church with his work life. Work, he says, pushes him to be away from his family and children for extended periods of time. Frequently, he works late into the evenings and quite often, he is required to travel abroad for extended periods of time. It is not unusual for him to fly to Iceland or Hong Kong because of work demands and his time away may last for several weeks, and at times, for several months. Although he acknowledges that his work has provided him with financial security, he experiences work as dehumanizing. Church life allows him to be with others, without feeling or experiencing pretentiousness, prejudice or self-consciousness which he associates with his work life. The community at TECPC, he says, allows him to rediscover his humanity and regain a sense of peace.

While other elders at TECPC are focused in growing the population of the church as required by the Presbytery, the small numbers are precisely what Liam finds important to church life. A small congregation enables a long term and more complex experience of hospitality, an environment encouraging to the initiation of closer bonds of intimacy and compassion. Liam says:

> If the church is too big, there’s too many people to interact with, you can’t get to know them…There’s much value in an intimate setting like you find at TECPC. Even we [congregation members] struggle with that at times.

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65 Liam is not alone in juxtaposing the dehumanization of work life with the humanization of church life. See Abraham’s story in chapter 5.
We gloss over some stuff. I think that church needs to be intimate. Although some people don’t like that, they like the distance because they’re not comfortable talking about themselves.

As individuals learn to remember each other by name and become comfortable sharing personal experiences and problems concerning family members, mental health dilemmas, physical ailments and financial dilemmas, church members feel and experience ‘deep compassion’. Natalie, a woman who migrated to Guyana in the 1980s, came to the congregation in the mid 2000s when her adult daughter was killed in an automobile accident. She was invited by Janet to come to church to feel the loving hands of God and the support of a small group of Guyanese women. Only with members of the congregation did she allow herself to surrender to her grief, because, she tells me, with her family, she felt that she had to remain strong for them. At the church, she felt assured by the patience and kindness of members who care her, she could ‘let go’.

Similarly, Hank, a white Canadian who is in his early 60s would often confide the troubles he was having with his wife, who was suffering from depression. During bible study sessions, in the company of four to six congregants, Hank would use this time to share his despairs and doubts. For him, he was unsure if he was being a ‘good’ husband when he placed his wife in an extended care-home. When he visited her, she would tell him how much he must hate her to have her ‘incarcerated’, and at times, she refused to see him. As he shared his pain, he spoke to a group of people, both white and racialized, whom he has known for several years. More so, this group of people also knew his wife intimately and reassured him that he is loved by her and by them. They seemed to know what to say to alleviate his doubts and uplift his spirit, even if it was for a moment. When he left bible study, he seemed assuaged by sharing his burden. In many narratives of loss and illness, the burning question that congregants held was: Why? What was God’s plan? How can God be good when people are feeling so much pain. One congregant told me that she understood that her daughter’s battle with cancer may be part of God’s plan, but she will fight Him on this because she was not ready to let her go. Small numbers are a quality to make connections with people who may appear different, without feeling judgement or obligation. Sharing stories and personal dilemmas is one way in which to bridge differences, when in an intimate setting of compassion. It requires the willfulness to open oneself to the care of others, which is an opening for the emergence of intimate relations.
Compassion are ‘flickers’ of hospitality where congregants are working at being ‘in this world’ through mutual relationships of care and trust that reaffirm their dignity (Russell 2009). Mundane moments and interactions become exceptional in diminishing boundaries of race and class by reaching out across difference, making the ‘other’ less fearful, less strange. Disparities do not disappear, but they become less pronounced for people to discuss their personal lives and concerns. Some stories centered on loss, work, depression and cancer narratives to discern how and why God was working in such ways in their lives. According to Liam, these kinds of interactions allow for a profound, more fulfilling relationship with God and each other. The synergies of compassion, benevolence and humanness is felt to advance Christianity, which is perceived as greater than the self but also simultaneously works on improving the self. For Liam and William, these ‘core’ moral values are understood to be inherent to humanity and are neither recent nor novel occurrences but have been instilled since the time of Jesus.

Liam uses the analogy of yeast rising a loaf of bread to explain the impact that small intimate numbers have on the church and the implications towards social and moral relations.

It only takes a small amount of leaven …[in the time of Jesus] you take lump of raw dough out of the previous batch, save and put it in the new batch and it grows and it grows and raises the new batch. The analogy is this: the church, even though it be a small amount of people, the people are the leaven that grows the rest of society’s values. Of course the church has not had its problems, but it is a strong promoter of the values of love and acceptance.

For Liam, small numbers can make a large social impact on how one experiences Christian belonging. Christianity has the capacity to unify and transcend difference, which may be more easily and successfully achieved with lower numbers. In this sense, Liam perceives that a strong focus on spiritual values will ultimately benefit the church by providing congregants with a moral connection. William sees the church through a similar sensibility, telling me that Christianity and the path of Jesus is about personal relationships, “Jesus came, not to save the world, but to offer that saving to individuals, personally, one at a time”. Large groups of people, he says, unify through a “distilled and compromised” version of biblical truth claims that closes a community from being ‘in this world’.
The conflict between the models of a *self-sufficient congregation* and *half-time minister with funding* evolves around the question of formality and informality of ‘doing church.’ The model of a *self-sufficient congregation* would be a radical approach for doing church as rituals that are usually associated with the role of the minister would need to change. Liam was excited with the potential of this form of doing church as it would require greater participation of congregants. He tells me that he does not attend the big and ‘successful’ churches because “it’s too big, there’s too many people to interact with”. He says,

> It’s all very liturgical, it’s all distant you know, you have the preacher up in the pulpit. It’s all very formal and you don’t have the chance to converse, to share, to be revealing about yourself or for other people to share. It’s not incorrect or anything like that, it’s impersonal, it’s distant.

In his perspective, the ‘bigger’ the church, the more it formalizes and structures Christian rituals as a technique in regulating its populations. He sees the large churches as being “too liturgical”, meaning, that the focus on worship is formal, ritualistic, which usually follows that there are expectations of congregants to participate in worship dressed business or formal attire; they cannot be who they are.

**Keeping Tradition and Moving Forward**

While some church goers discussed the benefits of spiritual cultivation by fortifying congregational affiliation, other church members perceived efforts that moved away from a traditional church structure grounded in terms liturgical rituals and a practicing minister as facilitating church deterioration. For church goers who attended TECPC throughout the 1980s, they talked to me about the presence of the attending minister, Minister Frank Caroll, who had a reputation for bringing the presence of the church into the community of Don Valley Village. He was an active minister at TECPC from the mid 1950s until the early 1990s and was known for walking through the industrial and working-class neighbourhood, conversing with families and street people.
The neighbourhood at the time of Minister Frank Caroll was quite different, characterized by industrialization, factories and low-income housing complexes. For current long-time church goers, Minister Frank is iconic of a ‘good’ minister who made TECPC more than a Sunday church. While preparing the community dinner\(^{66}\) on Wednesday evening, Janet and Nancy talked of the street preaching by Minister Frank. They highly respected him and his efforts in making himself available at all times to members of the community. They commended him on his decision to live in the community, of doing mission to members of the neighbourhood. According to Janet and Nancy, a minister’s decision to live in the neighbourhood in which they preach should be the norm, rather than the exception. They told me that teaching ministers in many congregations must commute over long distances to minister to their home congregation.\(^{67}\) Some church members indicated that Reverend Frank was intrinsic to the establishment of the Don Valley Village Community Center, located next door to TECPC, for providing social and health services. This community center is frequented by many church goers for a variety of resources and programs from health practitioners and addiction counsellors. In looking to the past where the spiritual practices of Reverend Frank supported congregational and community development, congregants see how the hope for uplifting the congregation is rooted in the leadership and activities of the teaching minister.

After the retirement of Reverend Frank in the early 1990s, TECPC fell under the “mismanagement” of several preachers until the 2010s. This era is opaque and convoluted as most talk centered on rumours, what one congregant heard from another congregant who heard it from another. Long term church goers were reluctant and tentative to discuss the events that transpired, perhaps because most did not have first-hand observation, while others desired to forget rather than memorialize congregational conflict. From the medley of narratives, I was able to discern

\(^{66}\) Community dinners are discussed in chapter 6.

\(^{67}\) Since Reverend Abraham is the first ordained minister at TECPC since Reverend Frank, some church goers are critical of Reverend Abraham’s absence in the community. During my fieldwork at TECPC, Reverend Abraham was present on Sundays for the delivery of sermons and sporadically on Wednesdays for pastoral care, as he must commute from Cambridge Ontario, a small city that is 105 kms west of Toronto. He explained that housing is more affordable outside the Greater Toronto Area and his wife is employed full-time as an accountant in the vicinity. Living in Cambridge made an easier commute for his wife, who was required to travel daily.
that the church had a series of several short term and interim ministers. The more recent minister was Minister Melissa who was forced into early retirement by Session. Elders provided snippets that I have parsed together to elucidate a narrative of Minister Melissa. Some members of Session believed that she was suffering from dementia because she was mismanaging the church’s financial resources, evidenced through incongruities in the church's financial accounts. Elders were also concerned over the growing atmosphere of fear and insecurity as Melissa excluded the participation of certain populations into the church. According to Joan, Minister Melissa, “was afraid of ‘dirty people’ coming into the church” which encouraged an aura of fear and insecurity among members of the congregations of those who were perceived as different, unknown and strange. Joan continues,

the other ladies [in the church] would be afraid that they would be harmed by these people coming into the church. Don’t you hear people still shouting ‘Lock the doors! Lock the doors!’? We are a church and we still have that mindset. If people want to steal a bible, let them steal a bible! Good! Have a bible!

While Melissa was minister at TECPC, attendance fell to 11 church goers. Nancy, a white Canadian elder and organizer of the women's committee at TECPC who has been a church member for 68 years, is best described as an intimidating, stubborn and vocal advocate of the church and congregational tradition. She has made it known on several occasions that she will die saving the church. She took me over the far wall in the banquet room, where a quilted blanket hung on display. She said to me, "See this, this was made by the women on my mother's side. It dates all the way back to the early 1900s" as she pointed out women's name dated to 1912. "I have been coming to this church all my life since I was three years old, and there is no way over my dead body that this church will close down!". She also explained to me that during the time of Minister Melissa, the “congregation was carrying the minister when it’s supposed to be the other way around”. She says, “that was not a good time for us, Lisa. It was time for her retirement”.

My point here is to demonstrate how church goers, especially elders, were divided in the direction of the church given differences among elders in formulating a way forward. For church goers who were members of TECPC during Frank’s direction, members experienced a time in which a preacher had authority in the community. The minister, through his charisma and dedication to
ministerial education and pastoral care is seen to have the capacity in growing the church as demonstrated throughout their church history. For members of the church are past their mid 50s, an ordained preacher will likely outlive current members of the congregation. For elders vying for a self-sufficient congregation, this is potentially a short-term model since the plan had little direction for increasing the numbers and children of the congregation to sustain church revitalization.

Build It and They Will Come…or Not

Joan and Reverend Thomas raise important insights into the mentality of building-focused solutions for growing congregations. The logic behind the ‘build it, and they will come’ stream of thinking is that having a congregation-ready place is poised for success: the building is a sign to the faithful and will motivate church goers to emerge and congregate. However, congregation-ready buildings do not necessarily encourage congregational growth because there is usually less effort placed on community relationships and spiritual outreach. The ‘if you build it, and they will come’ mentality is a passive form of outreach, that places the decision of people passing by to enter the church and to face an unknown. My decision, for example, to enter the church on that particular day when I first embarked on my field research is interpreted by church members as an illustration of the unexpected ways in which the Holy Spirit is at work. In my situation, church goers interpreted my decision to step into the church as evidence of that I was guided by the Holy Spirit. Teaching ministers also recognize that the church, by virtue of being a sacred place, may impede those who are interested and curious on entering because they are uncertain and hesitant of the unknown and strange, such as expectations on the proper form of conduct in a sacred domain.68

When I asked Reverend Abraham why TECPC was subdued in exhibiting Christian material, he responded that churches are being refashioned as multi-purpose buildings. He says,

68 Individuals are increasingly choosing to avoid church worship and seek online spirituality. Churches are recognizing the role of social of media and recently, the Church of Scotland Christianity are planning methods for online baptisms and other sacraments (Religion News Service, May 19, 2016).
Try to attend a place that is totally foreign to you, and that is just to immerse yourself in a learning experience to see what it’s like to be confused, to be clueless, because sometimes, that is the experience of a migrant...I can only think on what kind of dissonance is happening. As they [migrants] come into church, they want to worship. They don’t understand the songs, they don’t know when to sing, when to stand, they look around and you can see that they are uncomfortable. They try to blend in and they also want to avoid being noticed.

The limited display of religious artifacts is a means for making the church building welcoming to people who are not accustomed to the sights and meanings of Christian material symbols, and the related ‘traditional’ practices of worship.

By shedding the church of religious material, elders see the church as more hospitable to migrants and guests (to Sunday worship or to non-religious activities) unfamiliar with white Anglo-centric Canadian Christianity. The simplification of the church is understood as making the church appear less white and more flexible to the sensibilities of non-white and non-religious guests, as worshippers or as yoga practitioners (and other participants in secular community activities held at the church). Admittedly, the first few times I entered TECPC, the church did not feel imposing and the atmosphere did not exude reverence that is usually attached with sacred domains. While elders of the church associated the ‘simplification’ of sacredness as a tactic in accommodating and expanding the utility of the church as a multipurpose building, Presbyterians from neighbouring churches explained that simplification is rooted in and follows a Presbyterian tradition.

For Joan, TECEPC must do more in reaching out to the community to make members of the church knowable. In her view, what makes the church attractive to people in the neighbourhood is making the church less strange.

I believe we need to do more in the community. I spoke to a couple of mothers on the street, and as I told you, my son and daughter-in-law live on the island [Toronto Island], and they invited them over to the boat to spend the day there. So I am sitting down at the meal time talking and the
one young woman, she is a prosecutor, and her husband looks after the family, he’s the one who stays home, so I said something about church. I wasn’t beating her over the head, it just happened! And she goes, ‘Oh you go to church? I would like the kids to know about church!’ I said, ‘by all means, bring them!’ You know, Lisa, that is how I started the Sunday school!

Going out into the community, from Joan’s perspective is a key in growing the church. Outreach to one’s neighbours that is candid and personal allows the church and its members to become knowable to newcomers within the neighbourhood. While other members of the church agree with Joan’s premises of going out and speaking with members of the neighbourhood, there is reticence in publicly expressing their Christian witness of Jesus.

While this form of outreach may be recognized as urban missionization (Biolo 2011, Elisha 2011), many of my research participants refrained from describing or categorizing their actions as missional. Members of TECPC do not want newcomers to feel obligated to attend church, but rather, they would prefer for people to come to church out of their own volition through God's guidance in their emerging belief, faith and critical self-reflection. They must be willing to accept God before stepping into his house, the church. This does not mean that church members are inhospitable to newcomers, but rather stepping into the church is understood to be an act of welcoming and being welcomed by God and his children. Looking back to Joan’s statement, she stresses that her neighbourly talk about church is offhand and noncoercive as she states, “I wasn’t beating her over the head, it just happened”. From this utterance, Joan did not want me to judge her for her actions as evangelization nor to interpret her actions as those of a zealous believer.

On a different occasion, I asked Liam if his friends and family were aware of his religious practice. He looked at me and crossed his arms,

I am not particularly great at communicating because I don’t like sharing my ideals and I don’t like pushing them on people. I’m just not very good at sharing.

Liam explained to me that reaching out makes him uncomfortable. He says, “In practice, that is hard to do and I am not necessarily comfortable. I just find it hard to sort of reach out to people,
even if I know them”. Congregants impressed upon me that they are hyper aware of being ridiculed and made to feel strange if they perceived to be sharing their love of God and Christian values outside the church walls. For church goers, intentional missional practices carry negative connotations and social stigma. For them, mission is socially associated with aggressive proselytizing practices.

Conclusion

J.D.Y Peel says that “the conditions of doing ethnographic fieldwork, especially for the first time, encourage us to forget that we always enter in media res, that we only have direct access to the smallest temporal cross-section of our subjects’ lives, and that their direct actions are informed by a knowledge of the past, their own and their community’s which is not open to our observation” (2016: 535). This chapter captures a present time in the religious life of my research participants and their moral ambition for congregational continuity through the place of the church.

From my observations and discussion with congregants, what emerges is the shared importance of the church on the identities and social relationship of church goers. In his study of the Emerging Church in the United States, Bielo (2011) remarks how sense of place is a condition of lived religion (193). He describes his tours of two different neighbourhoods in Cincinatti, each tour guided by different clergyman. What he learns from these tours is how congregants are embedded in and experience the space of their locations. Similarly, at TECPC, the church for many congregants, is a place that many congregants look to as a space of stability, community, home, morality, faith, continuity and memory. There is unity in congregants’ sense of church place, demonstrate by the will of the congregation to save the church from closure. The attachments that congregants have with the church are diverse and at times, incongruent.

The church as a lived place is a space of continuity. Congregants depend on the presence, stability and security of the building, it is representative of a home where they can depend on the virtuous and hospitable relations within for compassion, love and belonging. As noted by Daswani (2015), the past folds into the present as congregants look to different points in the recent past and far past, recalling different events that they see as necessary for continuity into the future.
What is troubling for congregants is the pace of time, of being stagnant in the ‘already/now-yet’. The urgency in finding a financially viable solution to closure brings into question whether the economic environment outweighs the value of spiritual sustenance and deep compassion of a small and older church community. God’s time, congregants said, works at a different pace than the current compression of time. This has led some congregants to assert that there needs to be more action, rather than talk of change. Sitting with Joan, a wry elderly Scottish woman who immigrated to Canada in the 1960s and an elder at TECPC for over six years, we discussed community development within the church. She says

Change is happening very slowly, probably this [timing in change] is the proper time for God’s plan, it’s just that I think that we should have done more by now and I think our basic problem is that we talk, but we don’t walk the walk. We talk about being friendly to the neighbourhood but we actually don’t go out there and help people.

The problem that Joan sees is the need to make the church central to community involvement, that is a ‘just hospitality’ (Russell 2009) rather than focusing on the cultivation of personal spiritual development. In the following chapter, I begin to unpack the relationship between hospitality and multiculturalism. Is making the church more multicultural a mode for “walking the walk” for growing the church? How do newcomers to Canada and to Canadian Presbyterian churches understand and experience multiculturalism and Christian hospitality?
...I have come to liberate you from the clutches of the structures that keep some out and as such have deprived my church from coast to coast in this land, of the ability to truly engage the richness of its diversity! In Jesus Christ I have come to rip the curtains from top to bottom- to expose injustice and bring about true justice! I have come to point out to you, the incompatibility of a justice-seeking church that positions itself on the cutting edge of justice in many fields, but is hesitant to move out and shake up its own structures to make them reflect the full racial/ethnic diversity of my people!


What makes a church multicultural? When I first put this question to church goers at Toronto East Community Presbyterian Church (TECPC), I expected the reiteration of keywords, such as inclusion, tolerance, or diversity, that would index normative state-centric multiculturalism or nod in the direction of affirmative action. Raymond Williams explains that keywords are “significant, binding words in certain activities and interpretation; they are significant, indicative words in certain forms of thought” (1985:13). The use of keywords by individuals helps locate their particular positionality within structures, which in this case, would be multiculturalism. My question, however, was often met with awkwardness and prolonged silences. In some instances, congregants, both white and racialized, would dismiss my queries on multiculturalism in the church by stating that “the church has always been multicultural”. To them, it was simply common sense. They pointed out that the social facts were all around me: on the street through the culinary diversity of restaurants; in the ethnic population within the congregation naming each racialized congregant and their country of origin; the plurality of languages spoken throughout the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), and the different types of clothing styles. These initial responses did not
quite align with my expectations that evolved from the statement on the church website: "Toronto East Community Presbyterian Church is a multicultural church on [sic] one of Toronto's trendiest neighbourhoods" (December 2012).

I posed the question of multiculturalism to different members of each congregation. The clergy who are well versed in the concept mobilized the term as an instrument for outreach and ministration. The utility of multiculturalism, however, was not a homogenous and even practice across congregations. Each congregation has differing practices of multiculturalism: high tradition congregations tended to deploy programs that emphasized state-centric multiculturalism by accentuating assimilation and integration of racialized church goers to white Canadian culture: learning a professional register of written and spoken English and learning signs that index Canadian values, holidays, food and utterances. In such practices, multiculturalism is an unidirectional flow of learning and engagement. At TECPC, a low tradition congregation, multiculturalism is a tool for making the congregation open to differences based on an ethic of justice and equality. This is an irregular endeavour, however, as congregants make sense of multiculturalism through their hopes and risks in migrating across borders and through their experiences and interactions with people who are racially, economically, spiritually and culturally different. As discussed in the Chapter One of this dissertation, the regulation of Canadian borders and changes in migration policies shape how different migrants experience Canadian and Christian hospitalities.

Chapter Overview

This chapter considers how three Presbyterian congregations are engaging with the idea of multiculturalism as a process, method and ideology of being church. In the first section, I look at multiculturalism from the perspective of church ministers, the teaching elders of the congregation. I juxtapose narratives between a white minister from a high tradition congregation with a Filipino minister from a low tradition congregation. This section considers the challenges of ministering unity within diversity. In the second section, I examine the narratives of the laity, which include elders on their personal understanding of multiculturalism. Their stories reveal their experience of Canada as a place of tolerance and benevolence when compared to their experiences of life before their arrival and settlement. The narratives reflect on migration from the Philippines,
Scotland and Guyana and experiences of integration into Canada. Overall, this chapter argues multiculturalism is a controlling process, which Nader (1994) explains as "the transformative nature of central ideas, such as coercive harmony that emanates from institutions operating as a dynamic components of power" (1994: 712). As such, the congregants’ narratives demonstrate the processes that work on the level of the individual and the congregation, persuading their participation in or shaping their resistance to the hegemony of state-centric multiculturalism and the ideology of Canadian hospitality.

What is a Multicultural Church?

From the Perspective of a White Minister in a High Tradition Church

When I posed this question to elders, ministers and laity of mainline Protestant denominations, I received an array of responses, all of which reflect the diversity within the congregation. Teaching ministers, who are highly educated clergy with most achieving doctoral degrees, each had different approaches to multiculturalism as a concept and different perspectives on its utility within the church. Most commonly, they used the term to discuss observable cultural and linguistic differences, but when placed in association with 'the church', such as when I asked what made a church multicultural, the term became convoluted and not as easily discernible. For some ministers, talk of multiculturalism entailed the challenge of maintaining congregational unity in spite of ethno-cultural differences.

I first met with Reverend Thomas, a teaching elder at Toronto Central Presbyterian (TCP), who is well-known within the Presbyterian community, both locally and nationally. Born to Scottish parents in a small town in Ontario, Reverend Thomas is a white middle-aged man, with squoval-shaped spectacles. His father was a Presbyterian minister. My meeting with him was set up in late March 2014 by Aisha, the British Indian Presbyterian elder whom we met in Chapter Three, a retired economic professor, from a congregation in Ottawa, whom I met at a weeklong Intercultural workshop on intercultural ministry in early February 2014, held by the Canadian Churches Forum
For Global Ministries (CCFGM)\textsuperscript{69}. He is also known to members at TECPC as he served as an interim moderator\textsuperscript{70} for 18 months from 2008 when the congregation was without an ordained minister. When I met him one afternoon in late March, I could tell by his ponderous expression and quiet demeanour that he was burdened by an immediate and pressing issue. Our get-together followed his meeting with Session and he confided that the primary topic of the meeting was church culture at TCP. He informed me that teaching elders, who consisted of himself and two other ministers, were pushing an agenda to make the space of the church, and by extension church life, more open to diverse populations, particularly those who live in the downtown neighbourhood of TCP. He explained that to make the church more open, the ministers had proposed a plan to members of Session for the permanent removal of Scottish tartans that decorated the banquet hall of the church. As we walked through the church dining hall, Reverend Thomas stopped and drew my attention to several paintings and sculptors hanging along a wall above the dining tables. These were temporary installations, he said, showcasing local artists. Previously, Scottish tartans were on display in honour of the annual tradition of Kirking the Tartan. This is a ceremony that commenced long before his arrival at the church and he explains that the ritual involves the blessing of tartans by placing them over the bible. The ritual of Kirking the Tartan is believed to be an immemorial tradition, linking Presbyterianism to a Scottish ancestry. MacDonald (2008) contends, however, that the ritual was imported from the Presbyterian Church in the United States and was first performed in Canada in 1994. MacDonald says that the ritual “serves to affirm the identity of those who are Scottish and those who wish to claim to be Scottish” (2008: 195) by memorializing a time in which tartans were banned in Scotland.\textsuperscript{71} Reverend Thomas told me that

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{69} CCFGM is an ecumenical agency located at the University of Toronto. The program was attended by 15 ministers from various denominations throughout Canada. It was held at Scarboro Missions, a catholic organization and home to priests and laity, located in Scarborough Ontario.

\textsuperscript{70} The role of an interim moderator is to oversee and manage a congregation who is without a minister. An interim moderator is expected to chair session meetings and to organize pulpit supply by inviting guest ministers from neighbouring congregations and graduate students from such fields of divinity studies, theology and pastoral care. An interim moderator cannot take on pastoral care for the congregation but is expected to help session and the congregation in locating the services of a minister. These tasks include the organization of a search committee and recommending potential ministers as candidates. As interim moderator, Reverend Thomas had recommended Abraham as minister for TECPC.

\textsuperscript{71} This is related to the Dress Act of 1746 which made the adornment of tartans and kilts illegal as a method for eradicating the Highland clan system.
\end{footnotesize}
there was some discussion among church leaders on permanently removing the tartan display. Elders vehemently opposed this proposal. The tartans, they argued according to Reverend Thomas, are important markers of tradition and heritage that also beautified the church.

Reverend Thomas had hoped that changing decor could help intervene in dominant Presbyterian narratives by involving the artistic contribution of people who are other than white. He had thought, as other teaching elders in the church, that the change in decor would have been a small step in making the church less Eurocentric, less representative of Scottish and Anglo traditions. His ambition was to fortify community relationships between the church and the neighbourhood. Staring at the art display, he briefly recounts that Presbyterianism is not just a national denomination, due in part to the work of Presbyterian global missions among non-white populations, some who have now immigrated to Toronto and currently live within the vicinity of the church. Indeed, non-white, non-Anglo Presbyterians have liturgical variations based on ethno-cultural adaptations from their homeland (see MacDonald 1995), however, when coming to Canada, their contributions as Presbyterians are occluded.

My conversations with Reverend Thomas presented a common and deeply infused settler narrative among white church leaders: they see their church as a marginalized denomination among mainline protestant churches. This crisis is unsettling and impels feelings of uncertainty over the moral dilemma of taking pride in whiteness while practicing a hospitality of welcoming strangers. "A key question that we [church leaders] are talking about," says Reverend Thomas, is the "change in the makeup of the congregation: How is that reflected in our worship, in our organizational structures? In how we work together? I would say, we haven't gone very far". This concern over the changing demographic of the congregation is not particular to the congregation at TCP, but is endemic to many congregations, within and beyond the greater Toronto area. Some church leaders

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72 Reverend Thomas did not speak of Presbyterian missionary work as a colonial endeavour

73 The experiences of Korean and Ghanian Presbyterians are documented in the Presbyterian Record. Since the mid-1980s, the Presbyterian of Church of Canada have strategized to maintain the membership of Korean Presbyterians as some congregations have voiced a desire to separate from the Canadian denomination, citing exclusionary and marginalizing tactics that have disenfranchised their participation in the upper echelons of church government. This is further discussed in Chapter 3.

74 See Chapter 3 for a discussion on church decline.
are unapologetic in resisting the inclusion of non-white traditions into church structures and they want to assert their pride in their whiteness, which does not necessarily mean that they are white supremacists. What they desire is to maintain a sense of Anglo-European tradition, marking out a white identity in an increasingly non-white society. In framing the denomination as an ethnic and religious minority, as a church built on marginalization, strife and empowerment; some congregations see their church as one of many ethnic groups competing for recognition in a multicultural society.

Conversing with Reverend Thomas, he perhaps unconsciously reiterates racializing narratives to retain a sense of harmony and unity within the church. Rather than elaborating on his ambitions in making the church multicultural\textsuperscript{75}, he switches his narrative by considering that that newcomers may actually prefer to attend a Eurocentric church as a place for learning and integrating into Canadian sociality, which I discuss later in this chapter. The following passage demonstrates how church leaders, whom Reverend Thomas characterizes as being "very white and very conservative", identify as bearers of benevolence and their perception of Asians as a model minority. The ideology of the model minority are immigrants who are praised for their "work ethic for self-affirmative action...to transcend specific historical and material condition in order to achieve happiness" and success (Ty 2017:3) According to Eleanor Ty, the term model minority is not as overt in Canadian discourse as it is in the United States, nonetheless, the ideology is just as prevalent in Canadian sociality. "With or without the explicit discourse of the model minority myth, Asian Canadians, like Asia Americans, feel a certain amount of pressure to excel and perform" (Ty 2017:5).

Reflecting on the growing Asian population in his congregation, Reverend Thomas explains that a large segment speaks English as a second language. To accommodate the needs of this church population who come from Hong Kong, Philippines, Korea and Singapore, he says

\begin{quote}
there are a lot of people from Asian backgrounds attending church who speak English as a second language. They \textit{appreciate} when we are
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{75} I am refraining from using the term 'decolonizing' because it was not used by research participants throughout my research. Some church leaders would later use the term 'interculturalism' to infer mutuality between and among white and racialized congregants.
preaching, speaking a little bit more slowly. For people who are working on their English, they appreciate that the sermon is in English. Because of lot of the service is written [through the reading of biblical passages], they are reading and saying the words. They are getting fairly high level of English, academic level English. Some people may not find our service very comfortable because there is a lot of reading and it is a very traditional kind of language used. (emphasis added)

This description, at first glance, appears benign, indicating that newcomers are grateful for their relationship with white church goers. On a deeper level, however, the passage is an exalted discourse (Thobani 2007) by which a racist subtext is articulated into an appealing message: the church is generous in providing a gift of social service of lessons in standard English to newcomers. As many Asian congregants already speak English as a first or second language, their linguistic competence is not seen as a legitimate form of white standard English (Lo 2016). English competency is thus not good enough in becoming fully assimilated into church life. Competency in the diction of an academic register is a value that separates whites and Asians. Franz Fanon reminds us that "to speak like a book" is "to speak like a white man" (Fanon 1952: 5). The above passage is a racial discourse, which according to Peter Li (2016), "assumes an opaque appearance" when people "learn to verbalize racial tolerance and adopt a benign language to articulate racial messages without appearing racist to themselves and others" (2016:50). Ways of knowing include an affective dimension of 'good feelings' as church leaders perceive and experience a deep sense of appreciation, dulling their sense of racial tensions.

Since the 1980s, the Presbyterian Church of Canada (PCC) has documented concerns over the friction between ethnospecific Presbyterian congregations76, however, ministers at TCP dismiss this claim. Teaching ministers stated to me that have not witnessed any sharp divisions between white and racialized congregants. Church leaders point out that church goers who enter the doors of the church are entering because they themselves have already predetermined their desire to be involved with something that is culturally different, such as an Anglocentric liturgical experience, or if not something different, then they are seeking religious familiarity, such as high tradition.

76 See Chapter 3.
sermons. In other words, they are entering by choice; they are not coerced. More specifically, church leaders believe that newcomers enter because they desire a church life as offered by Toronto Central. This kind of talk is persuasive because it provides an appearance of congregational harmony among the white majority, despite underlying schismatic concerns of racialized congregants documented at both the congregational and national level of the denomination. Welcome then, is what the church can do for newcomers rather than an openness for what newcomers can do for the church.

When speaking about multiculturalism, Reverend Thomas sees the most problematic tension in church life is within ethnospecific congregations. The issue, he emphasizes, is not about cultural and racial disparities between white and Asian groups, which are the two dominant racialized groups at Toronto Central Presbyterian, it is the differences within immigrant groups: the needs of newcomers; and the intergenerational needs of naturalized immigrant groups. He also notes that schismatic concerns of racialized immigrant groups in predominantly white congregations is an expected process of immigrant community development. Ethnospecific congregations are one method for a group to come together through common ground; it is how communities develop particularly among first generation immigrants (Bramadat and Seljak 2008, Wang 2006, Yoo 1999, Tseng 1999). He says, "it's the center of their community and there’s sense of empowerment in being part of a community and place of comfort". He goes on,

but from my own experience, there is inevitably a huge tension between the first, second and third generations of people, especially if there is a different language group or a different language than English. The second-generation functions mainly in English, but the first generation continues to use whatever language is part of the culture. So there is always the tension among generations. And also, the tension of 'who are we?' We are, say Taiwanese, but have grown up Canadian and that's my identity. Say I am Taiwanese, but I have never been there. I speak the language because I have to speak to my elders or to members in the church, but most of my life is spent in English.
Reverend Thomas believes that the traditional Anglo-centric churches are more appealing to second and third generation Canadian-Asians because these congregations, from his perspective, are more diverse and more open to differences than ethno-specific congregations. In this sense, white church members assume that a white church offers continuity of inclusion through language for second and third generation racialized Canadians. Yet, Reverend Thomas' racial discourse also points out that children of immigrant parents and grandparents are not recognized as Canadian. As second and third generation Asians speak standard English, their identity is Canadian, yet they are still marked through their ethnoracial identity. The statement, ‘We are say Taiwanese’ is performative and a linguistic ideology as second and third generations are perceived as foreign and outsiders, despite having grown up Canadian; they are still 'Taiwanese' despite never having visited Taiwan. The absence of stating that such a person is simply Canadian infers that they do not fully belong within the domain of Canadian-ness. In her discussion of the rise in populism in Canada, Eva Mackey notes that white Canadians are the unmarked category of Canadian identity, they are the Canadian-Canadians (Mackey 1997).

Although church leaders recognize that the Presbyterian denomination is institutionally a white church, there is little discussion on how to improve the inclusion and participation of racialized congregants within the structures of church governance. Reverend Thomas tells me that the organizational tradition of the church is "one of the places that we are really challenged" in opening to diversity. He says,

leadership is very white, very male, and very professional. That's how they [members of Session] function and how they understand the system. We're getting an increasing number of younger, often male professionals, and some women too, who are professionals. It [leadership] mimics their jobs. You have to be able to work in a certain way, keep a meeting to an hour and you take minutes and you read the minutes, and you pass motions, that's how you do things, and you know how to read a financial statement. People do not have a whole lot of time to waste in terms of leadership.

I use the hyphenated term Canadian-Asian as opposed to the common term Asian-Canadian to highlight the Canadian affiliation, belonging and citizenship of racialized groups.
In this passage, Reverend Thomas is direct in stating his awareness of the white patriarchal organizational structure that regulates the participation of young people based on class and gender. The actual practice of inclusion follows a very narrow definition as age and gender are the markers of difference within this specific church. For members of Session who are working against the entrapments of conservative church leadership, they see the participation of these groups as small victories in a very long battle, given that elders are elected to session for a lifetime in most cases. It is telling that no relationship is made between the organizational structure of the church and the systemic racism in leadership. Diversifying church leadership from the perspective of elders in this congregation does not necessarily mean the inclusion of racialized congregants. Reverend Thomas makes no reference of measures taken to intervene in the ‘very white’ attributes of the church governance. The association being made in the above passage links professionalism with whiteness, which acts to legitimizes the authority of white congregants. Standard white English competency, work life outside of the church, skills in running a business-oriented meeting, financial expertise, and managerial experience, these qualities work together as exclusionary tactics to regulate the participation and inclusion of racialized congregants into church leadership and to distinguish white congregants as superior. Racialized congregants are tacitly marked as non-professionals, which subsumes racial tensions within class-based divisions. White privilege remains protected from the encroachment of racialized guests, who remain within the domain of guests and recipients of white congregational benevolence. The proximity of racialized congregants is a challenge to white identity, privilege and entitlement. As Thobani remarks, “If ‘they’ are like ‘us’, if they become like us, can even surpass us in their notable and sometimes spectacular achievements, what makes us better? Who are we if they can become like us?” (2007: 152). A constrained notion of diversity is being implemented, assuring the certainty and continuity of white privilege. Making the church more multicultural impels uncertainty and fear, because for white members, it means a departure from a sense of tradition and history. Rather than a view in managing differences and disparities, the virtue of openness is thought to disrupt an entitled white identity.

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78 Elders explained to me that in rare cases, elders may hold a position for a one-year term.
From the Perspective of a Hispanic Minister

Ministering in one of the most diverse Presbyterian churches in the GTA in terms of class, gender, age and ethnicity comes with many challenges. The diversity within the TECPC congregation is well known as ministers from Presbyterian churches from Toronto to Ottawa stressed to me that TECPC was 'not really' Presbyterian. To outsiders, the liturgical style diverges from Anglo-centric high tradition congregations. They proceeded to invite me to visit their respective churches so that I would gain a sense of what they viewed as authentic Presbyterian church culture. I see these invitations as a process of intolerance, a controlling process, through their refusal to recognize the Presbyterian citizenship of this particular congregation.

When speaking with Reverend Abraham Villanueva, the teaching minister at TECPC who migrated from the Philippines to Canada in the 1980s to work as a chef in the Alberta tar sands, he offers an alternative perspective on multiculturalism and the church. For him, diversity and pluralism has been, and still is, at the root of a prevailing conflict in Christianity, which he says has not changed over the past twenty centuries. "The conflict" he explains, "is how can God be for all people when we are so different". Belief in a God, he says, who is just and good is challenging when people not only face personal hardships but must contend with social sufferings.

According to James Cone (2011), a Black liberation theologian, personal and social suffering makes faith even more challenging (153). Speaking from the context of the United States, Cone writes that the struggle of belonging in a Christian community without feeling shame, fear, rage or despair that comes with being black is "to make sense of being black and Christian" (2011: 154). The American Christian community is full of tension and contradiction because of a history of hatred, violence, segregation and oppression that cumulated into the lynching and slavery of Black Christians. Cone writes that it takes a powerful religious imagination to find healing, salvation and hope, and more importantly and more willfully, to realize love and solidarity with one's own blackness and with white allies (2011: 157, 166). While Cone draws attention to Black American Christian experiences, it is an endeavour shared by many racialized Christians who are

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79 See Chapter 3.
situated within and experience systemic racism and inequality. At TECPC, underlying questions of "what does it mean to be Filipino and Christian?", "what does it mean to be Guyanese and Christian?", "what does it mean to be Korean and Christian?" and much more explicitly "what does it mean to be white and Christian?" are circulated and negotiated, yet rarely fully discussed because these questions quickly dissolve congregational harmony and unity.

Multiculturalism, for Abraham, is a diagnostic for discussing the pluralism within the church without overtly challenging the authority of white leaders. Indeed, it was his idea of naming TECPC a multicultural church on the church website, an identity that refuses an acknowledgement of Canadian Presbyterianism as solely white and Scottish. When I asked him to define what is a multicultural church, his response conveys his justice-seeking politics and entails an imaginative yet potent interpretation of biblical passages. A theological understanding of the biblical narrative, he tells me, is a multicultural narrative of encounters and engagements with those who are different. He says:

I will relate the story of God in scripture as a mission in God. That means, that this is a story about a God who calls and sends people, and a God who travels and migrates. In other words, every person from Abraham right up to Jesus are all migrants. They are people who are called out of their homes, their places of origin, and God tells them to go to a new place. It’s the story of Abraham, it’s the story of the Israelites, it’s the story of Ruth, it’s the story of Ester, all the way to Mary and Joseph fleeing to settle in a new land. Every time that you move, every time that these people moved, the story is that you are encountering a different culture.

He goes on:

In the first century of the common era, because of the Roman empire, most of Palestine was already multicultural, even the languages: the native people spoke Aramaic, the Jews spoke Hebrew, there was a lot of Greek and other dialects were being spoken. The greatest event in the history of the primitive church would be of Jerusalem and the Pentecost [the Pentecost is commemorated as the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church] that was recorded from all over the place. The text says that
‘they heard it’, ‘it was spoken’ in their own languages- there were a lot of languages out there!

When you look at the history of the church, you will see that with people like Paul who explore that entire geographical area around the Mediterranean, from Palestine to Syria, all the way to the Greek islands and then to Rome, that is the first multicultural journey. That is the western story. But there is another story that we are trying to recover today, and that is the eastward journey, from Syria to China and from Palestine to India.

By looking at the geographic and linguistic migration of Christian scripture, Abraham is conveying through the use of biblical stories a multicultural history that unites people in the past, while situating relevance in our present time (Daswani forthcoming; Haynes 2015). The stories that Abraham draws upon are characteristic of Harding’s (2000) “type-scenes” which she explains as stories that speak of a situation encountered by several characters at different times and in different ways. The significance of type-scenes is that, when taken all together, they provide an interpretive method for explaining how each story contributes to a prevalent historical and biblical pattern through “meaningful insights” (2000: 28). In this way, there are multiple type-scenes of multiculturalism within the bible that smooth over tensions and inconsistencies, for each character shares a common experience of being called by God.

Framing multiculturalism through a register of canonical language and a frame of biblical images, Abraham elucidates multiculturalism as moral conduct and divine quality. It indexes the work of miracles as God’s sacred presence is within the mundane domain of humanity (Stromberg 1993:11). Christian multiculturalism is demarcated from state multiculturalism because of its continuity is understood to be long before the emergence of multiculturalism as a state apparatus. State multiculturalism is thus rendered unexceptional and Christian multiculturalism is more than ordinary because of its enduring qualities that explain the nature of migration, the cosmos, and the divine as seen in the bible. The larger pattern is that Christians have a long history of engaging with cultural and linguistic interactions between people of different ethnoracial groups and because of this, there is a variety and plurality of Christianities. Christianity is thus framed as inherently diverse yet united through the word of God.
This formulation is quite different than the narrative offered by Reverend Thomas because here, in citing scripture, Reverend Abraham is connecting a past from long ago with current experiences of practicing belief in different languages, and in spite of linguistic and cultural variations, diverse people are united in the message. Being part of God’s family does not require English competence, it is about being open and welcoming to a dialogic experience of God, of communicating in and listening to a language that may not be accessible or understood by others. In a world with so many cultures and languages, the indexicality of scripture positions individuals as fellow Christians (Garriott and O’Neill 2008). The word of God is referential to the ethics and belief that God is for all people. Russell (2009) elucidates that the biblical story of the tower of Babel from Genesis 11:1-9 explains that securing unity through the spread of a singular language is a form of domination and coercive unity. God’s actions was “to confuse languages” to assure the perpetuity of diversity (Russell 2009: 54-5). Storytelling of biblical narratives in diverse cultures and in languages is an ethical stance as it is understood to unify people by bringing them together across their differences. Power imbalances in the telling of stories, however, was not raised by Abraham.

Reading from the bible in languages other than English is a deeply political and theological act for Abraham. It is common for him to preach the gospel in Spanish, or to invite congregants to read passages from the gospel in Swazi, Korean, Chinese and other languages spoken by church goers. Indeed, people reading the bible in other languages were not reading to an abundant ethnic group in the congregation. TECPC is a small congregation and readers and their families are usually the only speakers of the language articulated in the reading. Congregants unfamiliar with the language did not appear either upset or distressed over the use of languages other than English. When I asked Enzi, a member of the church who migrated from Swaziland in the 1970s, about his thoughts on speaking Swazi to the congregation, he told me that God can hear in all languages, but he articulates his love of God more clearly in Swazi. He says, "you see Lisa, I speak English very well, but my heart speaks strong in the language of my people". When I asked Abraham why he reads from the bible to his congregation in Spanish when there is an absence of Spanish-speaking congregants, and as opposed to Tagalog (the national language of the Philippines), he responded abruptly that he is Hispanic, his mentors from Latin America encourage him to speak Spanish, and his personal bible is in Spanish. Confused by his terseness I let the conversation drop and did not press Abraham for more answers. To better understand his perspective, I look to the work of Justo Gonzalez (1990), a Cuban-American theologian, whose writing was referred to me by Abraham
two years after this exchange while we attended a conference on intercultural ministry. According to Justo Gonzalez (1990), reading the gospel in one's native language brings a different perspective, an alternative interpretation, that is located from personal and historical situations. It influences and forces a relationship with biblical passages, which readers are interpreting to better understand themselves and their situation. Gonzalez writes that among Hispanics, "we know that we are born out of an act of violence of cosmic proportions in which our Spanish forefathers raped our Indian foremothers" (1990:77). Reading the bible in Spanish is 'comforting' because "when we the read the genealogy of Jesus and find there not only a Gentile like ourselves but also incest and what amounts to David's rape of Bathsheba"(78), the text is no longer understood in an apolitical past, but is 'alive' in the present. This is an analytic for better understanding oneself. Reading stories produce and structure a visceral and flexible domain for making sense of what it means to be Christian and racialized by collapsing the past into the present. The cultural, political and personal interpretations of the bible of non-Anglo Christians are often dismissed by white church leaders who do not locate value in the interpretive variations of racialized groups. The bible, then, is the vessel to understand oneself living in a situation where multiculturalism arises from the movement of people, understood as God's will. A theological perspective that interconnects migration and multiculturalism since time immemorial makes the common-sense statement of ‘the church has always been multicultural’ intelligible.

**Multiculturalism through Migration: Welcome and God’s Guidance**

Abraham's personal perspective grows form his own labour migration. He did not migrate to Canada as a pastor, but rather it was his experience in migration and his precarious existence in Canada that allowed him to hear God’s calling. Prior to his role as a preacher, Abraham received his MBA and culinary chef certifications. Eventually, he worked for Kentucky Fried Chicken as the International Director of Operations, travelling between Atlanta, Vancouver and Manila. He migrated to Canada as a professional in the 1980s; however, despite his work experience and educational credentials, he had much difficulty finding a job in his field.

I was an executive and at the top of my career, and here I was, mopping the floor at 7-11 [a convenience store]. I found that demeaning because that is not what I came here for…there were times that I lied on my bio
data [on the resume] to downgrade it just a bit to find a job. To show the truth of who I was, the more I felt I’ll just be excluded. It was better to hide my degrees.

Abraham eventually landed a job in Fort McMurray, a gateway town to the oil industry in northern Alberta. He worked in food services for Compass Group, one of the largest global catering companies that provides food services and support to academic, healthcare, sport and defence, offshore and remote institutions and workplaces. In Fort McMurray, Abraham was managing the meals of over 3000 migrant men who were working in an oil exploration project for extraction from the Athabasca oil sands. Working in a remote area, away from his family for extended periods of time, was a turning point for Abraham, he realized he had ‘enough’.

It was a very different lifestyle. Fort McMurray was just a spot on the map. People were not yet conscious that Canada could be a petro state. So, we were coming as explorers, and at that time, people discovered this place, which was basically First Nations territory. You could actually see the oil flowing from the side of the mountains! So, imagine a place, almost like a desert or a village and suddenly, almost a city comes up, money flows, a high school graduate who knew how to operate a machine for oil extraction could earn $100 an hour. People who did not have experience making a lot of money came; prostitution and drugs came.

Labourers from Newfoundland, from Latin America, they were all coming from everywhere by the plane loads because they needed workers. I came for the money myself, it’s like a gold rush. It required me to leave my family for 24 or 25 days a month, go on a company plane to Edmonton, and then take a flight to Vancouver, stay maybe 13 days, then back to camp again. Eventually it killed me. It burnt me out. Shifts were 24/7, there was no Saturday or Sunday, we just kept cooking and cooking, feeding and feeding. I just felt like I had a call to be somewhere else and I started to look for seminaries on the internet…. I felt that I needed to build on what I have and I think you can see the immigrant fighter in me.
Returning to the seminary was a spiritual and political choice. His work life in Canada was dehumanizing both emotionally and mindfully. He felt neither welcome nor valued in Canada.

I’m not seeing Canada as a friendly place. It’s really the experience that I have been kicked in the teeth so many times, I gotta fight for myself. Nobody is going to defend me out here. Not even the church, because I know there is racism in the Presbyterian church. When I look at the history of the church, it took 137 years to ordain a Filipino pastor.

Although his turn to the seminary was a refusal of the rigid demands placed on working-class and racialized labourers, he says that even in the church, he continues to experience systemic inequalities. He recognizes himself as a token of diversity.

To white congregants, his visibility and status as a minister makes it appear that claims of the Presbyterian denomination as open and welcoming to all are substantiated. The politics of recognition is a pretense as racialized structures remain unchallenged (Coulthard 2011). Abraham continues to face difficulty in receiving a call to minister in a high tradition white church. He reflects,

I’m not sure that a white congregation will hire me, maybe that’s why I’m not called or maybe I am called to multicultural churches and go for the underside of society rather than the big and wealthy Presbyterian churches.  

His uncertainty in ministering for a white congregation is rooted in his experiences as a guest minister at a church in Cambridge, Ontario. He tells me that it was common for white church leaders to judge his sermons based on the quality of his delivery in standard English. He says, "they were telling me things about my grammar, how a word was being used, how to communicate

80 In 2015, soon after my fieldwork, Abraham was hired as a half-time minister at a wealthy, predominantly white Presbyterian congregation. This resulted in factions at TECPC as some congregants argued that Abraham failed to uphold his responsibility to raise TECPC congregational membership. As a result, some church goers left the church and denomination.

81 Student ministers are expected to preach four times in nine months to practice different teaching models.
it, my tone whether it was too loud... and in all, the people who were talking to me were white, I didn't like some of the things they were saying!” Abraham did not voice this to his observers; he remained silent.

The precarious experience as a migrant labourer, devalued and unwelcomed inspires Abraham to reflect on how to minister and provide pastoral care. Many congregants at TECPC who migrated from various countries all shared a commonality in which they make sense of their belonging in Canada through a comparison to their experiences in their natal country. American missionaries in the Philippines introduced Presbyterianism to Abraham during his youth in the 1970s. In a country that is primarily Catholic, he remembers that he was drawn to Presbyterianism because one of the missionaries was able to answer his burning question at that time: what is church? He recalls how they responded: "The role of church is to be a disturber of government”. Abraham explained to me that this was not a radical thought for American Presbyterians who have a history of political involvement in the United States since the country's national formation. He goes on,

That became my motto, a beacon for my studies. We have a role to play here and if we, who have been oppressed, who have experienced and bear the scars and wounds of oppression, can go into the church and be this church, a church that is a disturber of government. The power of the church in the struggle against the state, that is the calling I am pursuing. That is who I am. You know I brought in the protest chaplain movement for Occupy Toronto, gathering clergy to be with the protesters, accompanying them, believing that whether we agree with what they are saying or what they are doing, the thing is: these are daughters and sons of God. We have a duty of care towards them. Some may say, 'Yeah that is good!', others will say 'What is Abraham doing? That is not wat pastors are supposed to be doing!' (laughs).

[82] Church goers who immigrated to Canada did not speak of their natal country as home; they had migrated over 30-50 years ago and established their family network here in Canada with siblings, children and grandchildren.
His claim that the role of the church is a disturber of government disrupts a prevalent assumption that the church in Canada is, and must continue to be, separate from the domain of politics.

Today, Abraham sees himself as a ‘street preacher’ because he refuses to separate his work as a minister from his political work with the homeless and with migrant workers.

My entire reading of the biblical narrative is all political. It cannot be helped that if I am telling a story from the bible while here in the pulpit, I’m going to tell you that story using politics as the lens.

He tries to bring to the church the synergy he feels on the street, protesting in solidarity with other people and raising awareness of social justice and contemporary issues on inequality, which at the time of my fieldwork related to concerns over housing, migration, and the incarceration of transgendered men. He wants people to be “out there” rather that remaining confined to pews. For him, the belief behind the saying of ‘we are church’ is that people, as the children of God, need to make change happen. In Abraham emphatic words, “What does God want? God wants to change our world. He does not want suffering, starvation and death. If we don’t move, nothing is going to change.” Welcoming others is thus not only about ‘guests’ crossing the threshold of church doors, but it involves the conduct of ‘hosts’ in stepping outside God’s domain to reach out to people, who are categorized as strangers, as people who are outsiders, because of their racialized and socio-economic differences. Radical hospitality is not a celebration of difference but a conduct of compassion and love that takes on the question of being different and equal.

For ministers who advocate for multiculturalism as social justice, they see the story of Ezekiel as a narrative that makes sense of the experience of uprootedness and otherness in order to bring about a message of hope and change. Ezekiel is a very different prophet - he stands out and apart in the bible conveyed through a narrative style that carries a different tone than other biblical stories, especially through the use of vivid and lurid language. The narrative emphasizes visions of destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem due to the presence and worship of false idols, which are perceived by God as an abomination. Hope and change is marked out when God takes Ezekiel to the Valley of Dry Bones and asks him whether the bones can live (verse 37). Ezekiel responds, “Sovereign Lord, only you alone know”. God commands Ezekiel to prophesize breath onto the bones so that tendons and flesh may grow, and the people are resurrected and live. Among racialized congregants, Ezekiel conveys a moment, a scene, where having faith can lead to hope
and change, especially during times when there is an overwhelming feeling of hopelessness and despair. The bones in the Valley of Bones represent the desiccation of hope and Ezekiel, who is an outsider and an exile, does not have a particularly bold response to God’s question. His response, as racialized ministers explained to me, implies that he is trying to make sense of the uncertainty of the changes that are occurring- it is a confused and chaotic time of upheaval. His choice in response conveys his willfulness to surrender himself, be open, and have faith that only God knows the answer. Ezekiel is an immanent figure among congregants today who experience marginalization and otherness. Ministers, who see multiculturalism as an opportunity to transform church structures into a condition that fosters justice and equality, use the story of Ezekiel to elucidate that people who are marginalized and oppressed by church, colonial and socio-political structures, are bringing message to the church to account for and to transform church institutions that perpetuate exclusive and repressive practices. Pastoral care and political care thus go hand-in-hand. This, however, does not always sit well with some white congregants at TECPC.

In one sermon, Abraham was raising awareness of racialized immigrants in Canada. He purposefully refused white examples in his sermons as a method to intervene in the normalcy and privilege of white experience. This tactic, however, excluded the white majority within the congregation, which they experienced as an affective moment of discrimination. Joan, who migrated to Canada from Scotland, was irate with Abraham's refusal. Unable to identify with the experiences of racialized immigrants who entered Canada in the 1980s, she tells me:

What I find with Abraham is the emphasis on immigrants and the trouble they have in Canada. Abraham decided to do something of a talk to people and he had a group of immigrants up in the front of the church. He passed the microphone and asked them: What was it like coming to Canada and what kind of troubles did they have in settling in Canada etc. I kind of put myself in there because all of them are different colour. And I felt they had to realize that immigrants are more than different colours, there is white too. So I snuck in there and sat down. When the microphone came to me and I said, ‘Well, I came to Canada as an immigrant but I came as an educated person. I didn’t have to worry about getting a job because I was a nurse. Everybody got a job in those days as a nurse. So we came here. We worked. We never took anything out of the system. We just
worked! I couldn’t even pay into unemployment insurance because nurses were never layed off.’

What Joan finds particularly problematic is the premise underlying the question of immigration as a homogenous negative experience. Joan goes on, “It is the premise that immigrants have to be in trouble that was irking me at the time. And it wasn’t just me, when Abraham approached Enzi, he said ‘I came here and I have thoroughly enjoyed it ever since I got here and I have never had any trouble’”. In making the church an explicit site of contestation for social equality and social change, Abraham experience push-back from congregants who do not see themselves in the experiences of racialized immigrants who arrived more recently.

**Ministering Unity in Diversity**

Raising the awareness of white congregants to concerns within racialized and economically-challenged communities as an intervention to structures of racism is a practice of friction, that is, to be political while maintaining harmony. This requires creative forms of ministering during worship. Abraham rarely remains within the pulpit, preaching in front of the congregation. Commonly, he would preach walking up and down the aisles in the sanctuary with a microphone in-hand, engaging church goers with questions. As Abraham paced and preached among members of the congregation, they became more attentive, sitting straighter in their seats as Abraham approached. To engage congregants, Abraham asks questions for church goers to openly share their personal experiences, which he uses to facilitate a discussion connecting the diverse and personal to a unified Christian understanding of God's teachings. In one sermon, Abraham was ministering on ‘Who is Jesus’ and to help the participation of congregants, he showed a movie clip from the movie *Anger Management* (2003). In the scene a group of adults are seated in a circle in a room, Buddy (Jack Nicholson) asks Dave (Adam Sandler), "Dave, tell us about yourself, who are you?"

83 This sermon was taught in reference to the biblical passages from Matthew 16, verses 13-20.
Dave: Well, I'm an executive assistant at a major pets products company...

Buddy: (interrupts) Dave, I don't want you to tell us what you do, I want you to tell us who you are.

Dave: Oh, alright. I'm a pretty good guy. I like playing tennis on occasion.

Buddy: Also, not your hobbies Dave. Just simple, tell us who you are.

Dave: Just...maybe you could give me an example of what good answer would be? [turns to another charater) What did you say?

Buddy: You want Lou to tell you who you are?

Dave: No, uh...I'm a nice easy going man. I might be a little indecisive at times.

Buddy: Dave, you're describing your personality. I want to know who you are.

Dave: I don't know what the hell you want me to say!!

After showing this clip on the projector, Abraham stepped down from the pulpit and walked up to congregants seated in the pews. With a microphone in hand, Abraham asked congregants, “Who are you?” Some church goers responded quickly and with conviction, while others were uncertain and hesitant. Each congregant provided a different response: “I am a mother”, “I am a Christian”, “I am Samuel”, "I am poor", "I am loved", showing the diversity and plurality of subjectivities that made up the congregation. In spite of the differences that were said and unsaid among congregants, Abraham proclaims, "Each of you is a child of God". What this means, says Abraham as he walked down the middle aisle, is that each person is more than just an image of God because inside each person is a piece of God. The goal of today’s sermon is for each person in the congregation to practice the love and generosity of Jesus as God is with us. The statement that “each of you is a
child of God” confirms that each person is in an “intimate relationship with God as well as providing an opportunity for them to reflect on what it means to be a Christian” (Garriott and O’Neill 2008:394). Congregational recognition and affirmation that each person is in a relationship with God is a means of creating affiliation as Christians rather than as individuals (Bialecki and Daswani 2015). Each congregant is tasked with thinking and feeling beyond subjective views and to ponder, even for a moment, the responsibility of being part of a Christian collective. Therein lies the possibility and optimism of being unified within diversity by laying seedlings of congregational collective dialogue, a tactic that refuses to align with dominant preaching methods among white ministers who, as individuals, remain at the front of the pulpit.

Being at TECPC, Abraham sees much opportunity to try alternative preaching methods, which he categorizes as multicultural. As he says, he does not want his sermons to go "from beginning to end, like a program, then after one hour, it is done". He wants congregants to interrupt him and to ask, "why are you asking me that!". For him, mutuality and a deeper understanding of Jesus can only be achieved when congregants are active listeners and willing to engage in discussion. Showing a scene from a popular movie is an attempt at making passages from the bible more accessible to people who come from different racialized and socio-economic situations. It is Abraham’s acknowledgement that Presbyterians do not always share the same theological inclinations and requires an interpretive strategy that balances personal realities and unifies communal experiences with biblical authority (see Bielo 2009).

Indeed, I did not witness or observe congregants challenging Abraham with his ministration techniques. Congregants were more likely to critique Abraham among themselves, stating their preference for more ‘traditional’ forms of ministration. Janet, a Guyanese congregant whom we meet in the next chapter, told me that she preferred the ministration of a visiting Korean minister named Jonathan, who was completing his divination degree at the University of Toronto. Jonathan always remained in the pulpit, speaking with authority and charisma. His pitch emphasized words from biblical passages and his arms gestured to illustrate such emphasis to the audience. His sermon was similar to a music conductor leading an orchestra. There were no questions and he did not engage the audience in conversation. While commuting back to the downtown core after the sermons, Janet told me, “I can really feel God’s presence in Jonathan, he is really good, don’t you think?” On another occasion, Abraham’s wife, a young Filipina, also confided that she was not fond of Abraham’s style, telling me that he is preaching like he was a professor rather than a
minister. In spite of trying to make the sermons more accommodating to racialized congregants through active participation, it was racialized congregants who were vocal in their critique because of their desire for more ‘traditional’ forms of ministration. When I asked what made for a ‘good’ sermon, both women explained that a minister should speak with authority, similar to the Anglo-missionaries of their youth, back in their natal country.

Among white congregants, many told me that they are unsure if Abraham is trying to make the church more ethnic or more multicultural. Both terms index the congregational perception that church is moving away from normative Anglocentric practices. Reading the bible in different languages and bringing the experiences of racialized congregants are perceived as "something new, something different" as told to me by Joan. Reading in different languages is political action that refuses the language and methods of white leaders, the status quo and the privileged (see Simpson 2014) without raising animosity and discord. It is an optimistic refusal that rejects the existing structure of white church culture by offering teachings and pastoral care to racialized church goers as if they were white congregants. This follows his rejection of wearing his clerical robes for every sermon. Instead, he commonly wears the Filipino barong, a tattered sweatshirt or a Hawaiian-style golf shirt and jeans.

White Congregants, Hospitality and Multiculturalism

Queensview Presbyterian: Monday Night in Canada

Among the laity at the Presbyterian churches, they had more difficulty in articulating the relationship between multiculturalism and the church. On one hand, multiculturalism in the church was perceived through church-based community services. At Queensview Presbyterian Church, white elders praised the humanitarian-based work of white anglo congregants who provided English learning services to members of the Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese communities residing in neighbourhoods adjacent to the church. Racialized participants are mostly newly
arrived international students from Korea and China and migrant labourers who have been in Canada for several decades, yet who only have basic-level English skills\(^{84}\).

The community dinners at Queensview Presbyterian Church are called 'Monday Night in Canada', a play on words that were intentionally "fun and catchy" according to organizers. When I spoke with racialized and immigrant guests attending the dinners, it seemed that the humour of the name was lost. Most were unfamiliar with the brand name 'Hockey Night in Canada' by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) for their weekly segment on National Hockey League (NHL) games on Saturday evenings.

The mission statement of this outreach program is "to provide hospitality to new immigrants...[and] a chance for newcomers to experience common Canadian cultural activities and to practice English while doing these activities" (Monday Night in Canada pamphlet). When I spoke with white volunteers, they noted that the program developed from the requests of racialized church goers residing within the neighbourhood. They said that they wanted to improve their English so that they may better navigate Canadian society.

The goal of the program is for an "intentional offer of hospitality" through social interaction. Organizers and volunteers distributed to each dinner guest conversation sheets listing various topics of discussion pertinent to Canadian food, holidays, habits, values and beliefs. This strategy was a way to help non-English speakers learn English language skills and a method for starting dialogue between immigrants and white Canadians. White volunteers demystified Eastern Canadian colloquIALisms such as 'tube steak' and '2-4'\(^{85}\) and demonstrated the nuances of eating Canadian finger food, such as hamburgers and pizza\(^{86}\). They also explained the symbols, customs, and values attached to national holidays such as Thanksgiving and Halloween. Guests at these

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84 Most of the women who immigrated over twenty years ago spoke to me in English yet with great difficulty. They did not learn English because they were afraid to go out beyond their immediate neighbourhood. They worked at home sewing clothes and relied on their children to translate for them when necessary. They view the church community dinner Queensview as a safe place to learn English and Canadian manners (i.e. how to eat a hamburger), values, and beliefs, such as the settler colonial perspective on Thanksgiving.

85 Tube steaks were explained as cheap hot dogs that you buy at hot dog stands on the street (also known as 'street meat') and 2-4 is a 24-pack of beer.

86 Hospitality and commensality are further elaborated in Chapters 6 and 7.
dinners appeared to enjoy their time with church volunteers, smiling and nodding their head, which was interpreted as gratitude and appreciation. During these dinners, church space was a microcosm of white Canadian benevolence and hyper-nationalism.

Multiculturalism in these activities, however, was not about social justice nor radical politics. Canadian multicultural hegemony underlay the affective and practical experience through recognition and tolerance. Radical multiculturalism as modes of hospitality that emerge from love and compassion for healing and justice, which ministers called ‘interculturalism’ is perceived to encompass mutuality and mutual learning. This kind of multiculturalism was not practiced at Monday Night in Canada. The exchange that transpired at Queensview Presbyterian, was normally unidirectional where white congregants dominated the floor, speaking to each other and trying to clarify each other's word definitions. At times, the interaction between the volunteers only added to the confusion of participants. In one exchange between two white Canadian volunteers, Katherine and Louis, their turn-taking is best characterized as a ping-pong match. Katherine would cut off Louis from completing his definition of a word to reframe the definition. Other times, one would interrupt to complete the other's sentence. The turn-taking was very quick and Chen, a student from China, had a very difficult time gaining the floor to speak. He resolved his dilemma by pulling out his cellular phone from his back pants’ pocket and used the google translation app.

While white congregants tried to decipher the nuances of Canadian food, language idioms, national holidays and customs, there was little reciprocity in which newcomers were asked to share their own cultural values, language, beliefs and experiences. When Chen and Ray divulged to Katherine they were from China, she interjected their utterance to explain the history of Chinese migrants in Canada. She positioned herself as an expert, educating the newcomers on the Canadian railway and the role Chinese labourers in uniting Canada. Welcome in this instance, is to help support the integration and adaptation of non-Canadians into Canadian social life as opposed to learn from and listen to the experiences of newcomers. Indeed, there was no Christian proselytizing during the community dinners and many of the dinner guests told me that their only affiliation with Queensview Presbyterian was their participation in the Monday Night Dinner.

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87 Ray is also an international student from China, currently studying at George Brown College.
Toronto East Community Presbyterian Church: Learning to Become Multicultural

At TECPC, the initial response of nearly all white congregants was to direct me to speak with non-white congregants. Multiculturalism, was at first, racialized as only congregants with non-white skin colour were recognized as figures of authority and expertise on culture and ethnicity. When Joan and I sat down to talk about multiculturalism and the church, she divulged her initial reaction, my thought was ‘I may be the wrong person to ask about that’. You need to speak to Daina Smith. I think she is Black African, I’m not quite sure where Daina comes from, but she’s definitely ethnic, very black, corn row type hair, very strong woman and I admire her a lot…. She runs a mission where I think the whole community is every colour under the sun. Her preliminary thoughts are to refer me to someone who is “definitely ethnic”, “very black” and who works with a community that is “every colour under the sun”. The consistency in which white laity refrain from positioning themselves within multiculturalism, specifically as non-ethnic, demonstrates how they see themselves as external to culture. Joan’s response is normative of a prevalent disposition among white Anglo-Canadians who feel they are devoid of cultural experiences, particularly ‘ethnic’ culture. Jonathan, a white Anglo youth in his mid-twenties, who volunteers at an afterschool program at Queensview Presbyterian church, explained to me that he experiences fleeting moments of dejection when he tries to locate himself within a multicultural Toronto. As a third generation Canadian, Jonathan traces his genealogy to Ireland and England, yet he tells me that he does not feel any strong ethnic or cultural ties to a ‘homeland’

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88 I did not have the opportunity to speak with Daina Smith, who was a minister in a Presbyterian church located in the northwest area of Toronto; my research was carried out between the south and southeast region of Toronto. One of the conundrums of field research among urban congregations is that church sermons and activities occur on simultaneous days and times, making it difficult to meet with ministers from various areas who are vested in multiculturalism in the church. I will also point out that each church is located within different ethnic and socio-economic enclaves, which influences the methods and strategies used by ministers to preach and care for their congregation.

89 I met Jonathan while participating at Queensview Presbyterian Church's Monday night community dinners.
external to Canada. When I asked him if his family still observes and practices any rituals or habits that are British in tradition, or if they prepare and eat Irish and English cuisine, he tells me that he doesn't think there is any ethnic or cultural connection: it is just Canadian (c.f Mackey 1997). Being white and Canadian is experienced as an empty vessel; there is a profound sense of cultural loss and absence of ethnic membership and there is no memory or commemoration of a home prior to Canada (Frankenberg 1993, Ahmed 2012:169-70). This sense of loss may be particular to white Canadians, where finding cultural affiliation and relevance is an attempt to mark the unmarked white category of Christian and Canadian identity. Jonathan is unable to forge any personal meaning to multiculturalism as a white Canadian, except to welcome and help newcomers navigate and eventually integrate into Canadian social life.

To elucidate how church laity make sense of the church's commitment to multiculturalism, I turn to individual narratives of two elders at TECPC. Joan and Janet draw upon their personal understandings and experiences to ‘make obvious’ why and how the church is multicultural. A commitment to multiculturalism is a reflective practice by temporally and spatially situating particular events and personal tribulations that are from the past. For example, migration experiences are recalled into the present to understand their present selves as members of a good multicultural faith and citizens of a tolerant and benevolent state. For white and racialized immigrants, they look to their migration experiences to mark out differences to produce boundaries between what they see as exemplary and virtuous, such as tolerance as opposed to intolerance and happiness versus unhappiness.

Living Multiculturally and God’s Diversity

"Why do you think TECPC is a multicultural church?" For the first months of fieldwork at TECPC, this was a common question posed to me by members and adherents. When I informed them that there was a statement on the church website declaring the church as multicultural, church goers and elders were genuinely surprised. Some congregants were even shocked that the church had a website. Asides from the website, I was unable to locate multicultural mission statements within TECPC church property; there was no additional information on weekly church bulletins, informational pamphlets and leaflets, informing church goers that TECPC was a multicultural
What I found particularly interesting, however, is how the declaration that the church is multicultural motivated research participants to reflect on instances in which the utterance demonstrates a commitment towards multiculturalism. Unlike Abraham, most white and racialized congregants did not articulate multiculturalism in terms of social justice. For many, it was a witness to racial, economic, religious differences, and for others, multiculturalism is a method for learning to welcome and be welcomed by those who are different. Witness was a passive form of observing ‘culture’ without questioning the politics and ethics that motivated the performance of ethnoracial difference. This tended to undermine the deeply political intentions behind ritual performances of non-Anglo Presbyterian practices as congregants interpreted such rituals as apolitical, reframing them as celebrations of cultural differences. In this sense, the narratives point to a form of cultural pluralism that aligns with and diverges from Canadian state multiculturalism.

Joan

“They killed each other over there, but here, I found it really interesting that nobody asked what is my religion!”

Joan reflects on the relationship between multiculturalism and Christianity from two perspectives: first, from memories growing up in Scotland and second, from experiences with church activities in Canada. While we worked together at community dinners and church bazaars, Joan would pass the time by telling me “wee stories” of her time in Glasgow, Scotland. These stories did not begin as critical reflections but were meant to pass the time while we worked. "Wee stories" are memories that are attributed as trifling and insignificant recollection of events, such as what she witnessed, felt or experienced while riding the subway or describing the smells of living in high density housing. Affectively, they are recalled in a manner that shapes her contemporary understanding of human relationships and more compellingly, they underpin strategies for structuring and negotiating human differences. For her, these stories become critical revelations about her own transformation and relationship with God.

Joan grew up during the era of World War II in Glasgow. She recalls Glasgow as a “big dirty industrial city” where the river Clyde, one of the longest rivers in Scotland, was a “big sewage dump”. She vividly remembers the smell permeating her hair and clothes. Reminiscing on her
childhood during the war and post-war era, she considers her upbringing as pretty wealthy. In comparison to her neighbours and friends, her family had the resources to live within the upper echelon of the poor working-class neighbourhood.

We were wealthy, in my own mind, because we actually had toilets in our apartments…No such things as bathtubs, you went to public baths and you had to pay to go there or your mom would put you in a big bucket. We didn’t know we were poor because we didn’t lack for anything… When I was born, there was no such thing as fruit. I was born during the war.

Growing up in Glasgow as a white protestant in a predominantly white society, intolerance of the 'other', the stranger, did not fall along racial differences and relationships according to Joan. Prejudice, injustice and discrimination were conceptualized along religious difference.

See, when I grew up, we didn’t have to worry about colour because we didn’t have anybody of colour! But, you see, we had Catholics and Protestants, and, that was the difference. And I think human nature likes to cling to itself and not go to anything that is a bit different.

The first section of Joan’s narrative, “we didn’t have anybody of colour” suggests that there was a form of social segregation by which Joan did not live with or see other people of colour. This is elaborated in the subsequent passage where she articulates the visibility of Jamaicans. The invisibility of colour is used as a foil to distinguish Canadian multiculturalism and its ideological focus on racialization and culture with other forms of human difference that are remembered as imminent threats. In this way, colourblindness maintains an assertion that an absence of racial dynamics translates into an absence of racism and racial inequality (Bonilla-Silva 2006, Frankenberg 1993). Her colourblindness in Scotland is distinguished from her ability to see colour in Canada, which is explained in the following story where Joan recounts a subway trip with her nephew.

In the following narrative, Joan articulates the virtue of tolerance by forging common ground and a shared humanity. As member of a white majority, she is situated in a position of privilege and safety. She says,
When I was nurse in Scotland, I worked for a zulu doctor, I worked for Black Jamaicans, but because I was the white majority, I didn’t feel threatened. I think some people get threatened by different colour people for whatever reason. [In Canada,] I remember my nephew came to live with me from a small town in Ontario and he was on the subway and here was all these people from different colours! He whispered to me, ‘Oh Aunt Joan! How do you travel on that subway?’ And I said to him, “instead of looking at them and thinking ‘how do you travel the subway? are these people going to hurt me?’ Sit and think ‘I wonder where he comes from and what his background is’ and you’ll find that you got people from all over the world sitting on that subway!’ I said it is something to be honoured, like something wonderful rather than something to be afraid of. I don’t think that multiculturalism makes a difference.

She is able to frame her story in a manner that smooths out racial fractures; however, the reference of Jamaican doctors as ‘zulu’ practitioners is a racializing discourse. It devalues and renders primitive the professional work of Jamaicans working in Scotland.

Her narrative demonstrates how she is projecting the possibility of racial fears onto her nephew by assuming that he is speaking of the visibility of racialized transit riders. Her use of specific words such as “all these people from different colours” is a subtle form of race talk that avoids direct racist terminology. Talking about race, as noted by Bonilla-Silva (2006) and Bell (2002), is jarring and make one appear racist. As such, Joan is unsure how to talk about race to me, and her use of racial terms was a means of assuaging the tension of participating in race talk. As a result, her stories on multiculturalism and race are paradoxical and inconsistent, especially when she affirms that ‘race does not matter’ yet her stories show that race is in fact relevant. At the end of the story of her nephew, she leans towards me and says,

I don’t think it [multiculturalism] should make a difference at all. Because I believe that God is neither black nor white, and he created all mankind, which means ‘anybody could be God like’. God doesn't look like what I have come to believe. I'm just telling you the things that have influenced my thought process. There was a movie called 'Oh God' that I saw years
ago. Jack Burns, an old actor, was casted as God, a wee shrimp of a guy with a cigar! That movie to me was exactly the way I believe God is like. He can do anything. In the movie, he showed himself to a grocery store manager and of course, the grocery store manager was ‘oh! you don’t look like God’, and he said, ‘well what is God supposed to look like?’

I believe God created everybody in his image and I have come to this over many years. So that means he created you in his image, he created me in his image, he created the blackest man of God, he created the yellowish woman of God. Have you read the book, The Shack?

L: No I havn’t.

J: You should get hold of The Shack. It is an old book. In The Shack, God is a woman, a big Black woman and Jesus is a Jew, which is sallow skin and big nose, you know, the typical Jew. The Holy Spirit is a wee yellow woman or a wee yellow man, I can’t remember. I found that very interesting to read it and I thought ‘yeah! I can see that!’ The story is of a man who goes to meet God. This is what he finds when he gets there, the Father, the son and the Holy Spirit, but they are all flipping about him in all these different colours.

In stating that God is transcendental to ethnoracial difference, she is stating that a shared humanity is rooted in humanity’s affiliation with God as creator. For Joan, she has come to learn through her life experiences from migration and settlement into Canada that God is not a concrete subjectivity, but malleable and individualized. Her story shows that seeing racial differences allows one to be open to the possibility of confronting racialized disparities. Although seeing and recognizing racial differences aligns with statist discourses on multiculturalism, recognition has the potential of brewing a virtue of openness through curiosity and wonder (from her story with

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90 The Shack is a novel written by William Paul Young that narrates the encounter between a father, who is grieving over the mysterious disappearance of his daughter, God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit to help him find resolution and healing.
her nephew). To wonder about the life experiences of someone who is different is a starting point that grasps at a possibility of a justice-oriented hospitality and the willingness to open oneself to stories that do not align with one’s own. Using Liam’s analogy in growing the congregation, openness is the leaven of welcome. Joan’s account does not yet fully embody a justice-based orientation of hospitality as recognition still entails the amnesia of ethnoracial inequities.

**Religious Diversity**

Joan sees a ‘bigger’ challenge in living multi-culturally: learning to transcend Catholic and Protestant factions. During the era in which Joan was growing up in Scotland, religious affiliation was a key marker of identification and difference. Religious identification was codified by colours, schools and soccer team affiliations. For example, Joan was forbidden from wearing green in the homes of some of her more devout family members because green was a Catholic colour. Schools were divided into two religious streams separating populations of children into Protestant or Catholic religion, which for Joan, cultivated intolerance. She says that children were brought up to think “the other is different”, and the cleavage between Protestants and Catholics ran deep among some of her family members. Joan remembers a time where “it wasn’t murder to kill a Catholic” because that was an act that “would rid the earth of scum”.

Even after immigrating to Canada in the early 1960s, the violence rooted in religious intolerance is far closer to Joan on a personal level than challenges related to ethnoracial diversity. Telling me a story of a couple she befriended in Canada, she explains that their return home held potential for violence and shame.

Friends of mine, he is Catholic and she is Protestant, they met here in Canada and they married. But, they can’t visit each other’s houses back home! They just don’t go home. They would not bring their children home because they might have been subjected to somebody bombing the home.

I personally believe that if a baby is born Catholic, and grows goes up to be a good Catholic, I can’t see that God would be annoyed with that. That is what the child knows and that’s what he’s been brought up to be just as I was brought up to be Protestant. And that’s what I know! I do believe in a good Catholic, a good Buddhist, as long as they are doing good for the
community. If they are running around shooting their guns, or chopping people up for religion, then it’s wrong. There’s no religion, in my opinion, that has God on their side that is going to kill people. I am thinking Muslim at the top of the list because they seem to be higher on the totem pole, but they are not the only ones, there is voodoo type people that do chopping up and you know there is all sorts of things (laughs).

Living multiculturally for her entails the accommodation and openness to religious difference. Her belief is that God speaks to each person in unique ways as witnessed by the diversity of religions. She tells me that in Canada, it is a novelty to invite, welcome and listen to Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah’s witnesses, Mormons and Bahai proselytizers who are walking from door to door to outreach to potential converts. For a few years, Joan participated in a Pentecostal church that began as a neighbourhood church in the basement of a neighbour’s home. However, she returned to Presbyterianism when the minister started the practice of speaking in tongues. She says,

I’ve been involved in Pentecostal, nothing against the people, I’m just not into speaking in tongues. There was a man who started a home church in the neighbourhood and he invited us to come. So we went to that church and he, I must say, actually taught me more about the bible. He lived the bible and we had very lively bible discussions. And I stayed with that church until he himself got involved in speaking with tongues and he, well I wouldn’t judge anybody’s juggling with God, he came to realize that he didn’t have the Holy Spirit unless he had the gift of tongues. He was very serious about that.

One night, I was watching Saturday Night Live and they did a spoof on church, and the spoof was a minister talking about something and he would say “Halleluiah” and the congregation would say “Hamburgers” and “French Fries!” and I thought, “that’s what I think, I don’t get this speaking in tongues stuff”. So, when I went to church on the Sunday morning, all I can think of was hamburgers and French fries (laughs). So I think I should be changing my church! I was born to a Presbyterian family, and my father was an elder in the church.
Being in Canada allowed for an opportunity to experiment, learn and live with different Christian religions without stigma and fear of social retaliation. She was welcome and welcomed to practice different beliefs and ways of knowing God, a journey which supported an experience of divergent Christian expressions. This was an ethical process that brought a different set of challenges and opportunities for her to learn about different Christianities and to gain a better sense of her own Christian identity and belonging.

Janet

“Everyday I say, ‘Lord! Thank you!’ I cry out, ‘Dear God, thank you for bringing me here to Canada!’”

Sitting in the banquet hall at TECPC, I listen to Janet's history; it is a story that weaves hardship and the endurance to transcend adversity. For her, living multiculturally cannot be distinguished from living Christianity; it is through God's love and salvation that guided her to Canada. In her opinion, being in Canada is her salvation from a life of misery in Guyana; it is a sign of God's grace.

Janet arrived in Canada in 1980 with her husband to visit her brother in Toronto, who immigrated 10 years earlier. She vividly recalls hearing the voice of God as she disembarked from the plane.

Janet: When I touched down at the international airport here in Canada, at that moment, I knew that God was there with me, telling me ‘you are not going back’. The voice was from Him! The Holy Spirit! ‘You are not going back!’

Lisa: What did that feel like?

Janet: It was very powerful. I just felt like I was landed, like this is my home now. I felt like I am free. At that moment I didn’t remember the kids. I just remember saying those words, ‘I am not going back to Guyana, I have to stay in Canada’. I was very secure in those words.
In her heart and mind, Janet feels that God guided her Canada, conflating the goodness of God with Canadian benevolence. Those two aspects for her are inseparable. Janet has never returned to Guyana and she tells me on occasion that she loathes Guyana.

She begins her story of multiculturalism with her life in Guyana by recounting a fragmented family history of her grandmother, whom she calls 'nanny', the first of her family to live in Guyana. It is a disturbing narrative of colonial violence and forced displacement:

My nanny, my mom's mom, came from India at the age of nine, brought to Guyana by some English people. She was taken from the market [in India]. I have to say that I think that was really good of God to bring her out of India. She got pregnant from an English man before she had her first menstruation. We think that it was the white man who paid money for her capture, we do not know how that really went because nanny didn't speak English. She went to work as a maid in the home of an English man, but it so happens that the gardener for the English became in love with my grandma and they were married at the age of twelve.

Janet only provides a partial story of her grandmother's survival; perhaps because the gaps were never filled by family members who did not want to talk about this particular past. According to Espiritu (2014), subsequent generations of survivors of war and trauma experience gaps in family history as bits and pieces. This is a form of forgetting and silencing to "protect and cherish and/or deny and control" (2014:147) the past. Janet makes connections to the ambiguity of her granny's experience by making sense of it as an example of God's love and mercy: God is good to have brought her to Guyana, where her grandmother ultimately found love, because life in India could have been far worse as an unwed and pregnant girl. She elaborates, "I think it was good she was brought away this way. She saw a different life." From the bits and pieces that she describes, her migration and integration to Canada connects Janet to her past, her grandmother, and by extension, to God.

Similar to Joan, Janet tells me about her life prior to migration for me to understand how she experiences Canada as place of welcome and God's love. Guyana, for Janet, is a place of despair and hardship; she says she was unable to provide proper care, specifically economic care, of her three young boys and she felt trapped from the control of her abusive husband. She tells that as
the youngest of 11 children in a family living in poverty, she was forced into an arranged marriage when she was 18 years old. The first time she laid eyes upon her husband-to-be, she thought that life would be good. Janet’s eyes softened, reliving these memories of her initial encounters with her fiancé. "He was too handsome of a guy", she says to me softly as she pulls out her wallet to show me a weathered black and white picture of her husband, Galisim. These are the moments when Janet bares the hopes she once held of her marriage. Her narrative tone changes; Janet sighs and shifts uncomfortably in her chair. Her story now takes on an emotional swing as she tells me times of crisis and anxiety of Galisim ‘flaring’ up. These were the episodes of abuse, once extraordinary, then becoming ordinary. She recalls how he pushed her out of a window, threw beer bottles at her, and hurled his dinner at her if she had not prepared it to his liking. Yet, despite these daily recurrences, she tells me that she was thankful that he did not cut her or make her bleed.

It hurts and hurts and hurts. It (the pain) never goes away. I may be sitting at home [today] eating my meal and I think of him, and I start crying. My tears fall in my food and I can’t forget. I am asking God to help me to forgive him for what he has done to me, but I can’t forget. That will be in my heart always, Lisa. The time we saw each other, I don’t know if I should say I fall in love with him or what. He was a very good looking man. And after all he does to me, I still carry his pictures around.

Unlike Canada, Guyana was a place of extreme despair and hurt, a place where she felt disempowered and God’s love was opaque. She says that “sometimes it felt like God didn’t care”. She confesses that she had thought of committing suicide, but she tells me that she heard the voice of God asking her, “who will take care of the kids?” During times of despair, Janet found solace in the presence of God. God spoke to her and comforted her. For Janet, God is real and tangible through her senses (Luhrman 2012). While she never told her family or friends of the abuse she was enduring because of potential stigma and interfamilial conflict, she says that she was able to keep going forward with God as her ally and confidante.

When Janet thinks of her time in Canada and her role at TECPC, she reflects that her choices were God's help, guiding her out of despair and to find strength for tomorrow.

I’m telling you that God’s hands are so long, so deep, and his love is in his hands, those pierced hands, and he went down and picked me up {her voice
wavers}. Today, that is why I try to do good things, because God is kind to me. God is good!

The joy of leaving Guyana was, and continues to be, mixed with the pain of leaving behind her three young boys in the care of her sister. She tells me that she had no intention of leaving her boys and it is evident that, thirty years later, she is still haunted by her actions. Her eyes well with tears and she softly whispers of her shame and guilt at having left her youngest son, Malik, who at the time, was still nursing. She tempers her feelings of guilt with the knowledge that God guided her to Canada so that she could provide better care for her sons through remittances to Guyana and preparing a home for them in Canada.

Janet's level of commitment to the church, specifically TECPC, and devotion to church work developed significantly while in Canada, despite her religious upbringing with the Anglican Church. Janet says that she was guided to TECPC because it was God's will. To illustrate this point, she recalls a specific episode when her husband kicked her out of the house in Toronto. A neighbour from the church came upon her as she was sitting on the curb of the road,

I was bitter crying. I really didn’t care anything and then my neighbour said ‘don’t cry’. I told him my husband had a few drinks and came home with the bottle of whiskey. He’s drinking and all of a sudden, he gets upset. He had beer, he had whiskey. It [the alcohol] would get him flared up, up high. He pelted the beer bottle at me, he opened the door and he pushed me out. Whatever he is angry about, I don’t know.

The neighbour, a police officer, brought Janet to Sara Johnson's home, who was a minister at TECPC at that time. From that moment, Sara's home became a place of refuge whenever Galisim 'flared up'.

Janet, as with other members of the church, experience the congregational space as an embodiment of the congregational members. It is a virtuous place of benevolence, compassion and care. Sara's hospitality to Janet, offering Janet a bath and clean fresh towels, and a cup of warm tea are actions that helped Janet feel safe. Unlike in Guyana, where she felt compelled to hide her abusive situation, in Canada, she felt more free to confide her story with Sara, a stranger to her. She felt validated by Sara's care and compassion and shared anger towards Galisim. The Christian ethic
of hospitality - of welcoming the stranger, is a theme that is explained in more detail in the next two chapters; yet, it is important to highlight here, how Canadian multiculturalism aligns with Christian hospitality - of welcoming the non-citizen through a virtue of neighbourliness.

The Benevolence of Church and State

To elaborate on the linkage between Christian and Canadian generosity, Janet tells me of her experience in becoming a documented resident. After having arrived in Canada, Janet and her husband intentionally let their visitor visas to expire. They worked as tailors for a company, using ‘borrowed’ social insurance numbers. Janet describes their status as 'illegal' suggesting that she has taken on the pejorative and racializing association of immigrants who are in Canada without documents. Gomberg-Munoz (2011) and Maynard (2017) argue that the term "illegal" effaces the humanity of racialized migrants by classifying them as criminals and undeserving of employment, state benefits and social services. According to Gomberg-Munoz, framing migration as illegal obscures the construction of immigration policies as social policies that are subject to change; they are malleable solutions to political and economic concerns of the state (Gomberg-Munoz 2011: 135). Maynard (2017) similarly contends that the term ‘illegal’ is used to justify the incarceration and deportation of black bodies, noting that white visitors who overstay to work in Canada do not experience the same treatment by state officials as black visitors.

Janet explains that her undocumented status was discovered by state authorities when she was in a car accident and taken to the hospital. She says,

I had no fear. I wasn't going to be sent back. I knew in my heart. God filled me with that hope and I was going to stay. The minister that I got to meet here, this church, both of them are on my side. I knew it in my heart. I had no fear.

91 While Janet continues her narrative using the term illegal, I have chosen to reframe her identity and experience as undocumented.
The support and hospitality of the church instilled Janet with the confidence necessary to overcome the predicament with immigration officials. She recalls the minister telling her that ‘she does not have to worry, they are going to help me’, words that made her feel strong in heart and mind. Government officials detained Janet and husband in a hotel room for eight months. She remembers with gratitude that her employer, Mr. Stevens, provided officials with a letter referencing her strong moral character, her commendable work ethic, and her dependability over the four years in which she was under his employment as a seamstress. She also remembers that Sara, the minister of the church, similarly provided officials with statements on Janet’s character. These statements coupled with couple’s savings, an excess of 18k, was evidence to the officials that Janet and her husband were not ‘burdens’ of the state. Janet's story closely aligns with the idealized immigrant: the model minority.

After undergoing a humanitarian and compassionate review in 1984, Canadian officials granted Janet and her husband permanent residency. In 1988, after eight years of separation, she was reunited with her children. Today, Janet expresses her love and gratitude towards the Canadian state, “I love this country. It [immigration and reunification] went so smoothly in my case. Everything went so nice”. This experience for her, is what it means to be tolerated by a tolerant state: to be incarcerated yet feel compassion and love from subjects of the state.

Janet does not speak of the church in terms of the congregation or practices as multicultural but looks to the benevolence and tolerance of the church from the way she was welcomed into the church community. She felt recognized, loved and valued.

I came to Toronto East Community Presbyterian Church. It was God’s plan. When I came here, everybody loved me.

What Janet means by this, is that she felt included and cared for within the community of the church. The church became a place where she could be herself without experiencing stigma and shame.

Things changed after that [night with Sara]. No more harsh words, no more pelting beer bottles towards me.
To Janet, this was a miracle, the work of the Holy Spirit. She did not leave her husband, the abuse diminished after she sought refuge with the minister Sara. Janet felt protected by members of the church community, especially by members whose professions signified Canadian authority.

In Guyana, she tells me that she could have told her family and friends about the abusive situation; however, she could not bring herself to do so because she felt that she would be bring shame, embarrassment and disrespect to her parents. Here, in Canada, as an outsider who was welcomed within a community of Canadian Christians who were strangers to her, she felt loved under their generosity and care. She felt empowered in submitting to the care of the church and to God as mode for challenging the rule of her husband— participation with white Christians allowed for personal transformative practice (Frankenberg 2004). Her commitment to the church is to keep the church hospitable and benevolent, and to try to do ‘good things’ to others.

Conclusion

On the TECPC church website, it states two significant utterances signifying a relationship between multiculturalism and Christian Presbyterianism: “TECPC is a multicultural church in Toronto’s trendiest neighbourhoods” and “we have always been a multicultural church”. These speech acts are statements of commitment towards multiculturalism but for the laity, the commitment is esoteric and obtuse as they are unsure how to explain the purpose for and the strategies used to make the church multicultural. Similarly, Ahmed finds that mission statement on diversity and racial equality are shrouded in uncertainty and opacity because “it is not obvious why it [the commitment] says what it does” (Ahmed 2012: 118). While speaking with congregants at TECPC, it is apparent that they do not take church statements on multiculturalism for granted. Long-time members worked in forging connections between a commitment to multiculturalism and Christian life to make the speech act meaningful and productive. In her research on diversity workers, Ahmed suggests that the “use of commitment [is] a mode of subject constitution” (116), meaning that it is a tactic in which to bridge individual to collective commitments. Building on this, I suggest that subjects are not only being constituted by the institutional commitment, but

92 Janet never mentioned that the abuse ended and I did not press her for details. It is likely that conditions became tolerable. It is important to note that in spite of the abuse, she consistently emphasized her love for her husband.
they are also constituting the contours of ‘non-performative’ commitments. Their understanding of multiculturalism is derived from their migration experiences and settlement into Canada, highlighting particular events in which they felt welcomed and unwelcomed. Predominantly, congregants were not actively engaging in transforming the institutional life of the church, which maintains the church as a space of coercive racial harmony (c.f. Nader 1994). The church is predominantly perceived as a place of respite from the disparities of a capitalist, neoliberal and settler society, obfuscating the operation of the church in reproducing systemic inequities.

Among teaching elders, multiculturalism takes on divergent ideological strategies in pastoral care and ministering unity within congregations characterized by ethnoracial and class disparities. White church leaders were more inclined in reproducing neoliberal multiculturalism, training racial groups in becoming economic Christian citizens by inculcating an academic English language register, denoting the possibility of prestige and privilege. Such strategies align with non-religious community programs that support language training, cross-cultural communication, and improvement of race relations (Das Gupta 1999, Allan 2016). For non-white church leaders such as Abraham, they are trying to challenge the whiteness and uniformity of the church through innovative and overt tactics that are perceived as celebratory of difference, such as narration of biblical passages and the singing of psalms in languages other than English, but are actually political and ethical practices that make the church hospitable and open to the histories of diverse racialized groups.
Chapter 6
Hospitality and Commensality: Nourishing the Body and Disenfranchising the Spirit

Throughout the city of Toronto, it is common to have various ethnic and cultural festivals throughout the year, often during the summer months. Cultural events invoke promises of a sensorial immersion into the strange, that is, different cultures and communities who are other than white. On a popular online magazine, BlogTO, the writer of "The top 20 street festivals in Toronto for summer 2016" makes a promise that participation in "the top street festivals in Toronto... are like taking a trip around the world in one season" (Villeneuve 2016). Festivals, such as 'Taste of Manila', 'Taste of the Danforth', and 'Taste of the Kingsway' are a gustatory exploration of culture. Other forms for public cultural learning vis-a-vis ethnic celebrations, such as the Ukrainian Festival, Tamil Fest, Chinatown Festival, Festival of Asia, Caribana Festival promise a holistic cultural experience from the consumption of material artifacts. This propels spectators to consume 'tradition' through aesthetic displays of clothing, music, dance, food and trinkets from happy non-white bodies. Street vendors, parades, ethnic-themed street events, music and dances make for "joyful crowds" engage with the senses for an affective experience. As such, multiculturalism as a celebration evokes cultural and ethnic integration as harmonious and successful to reify a happy register that obscures state interest in promoting and encouraging values of integration, tolerance and recognition (c.f. Ahmed 2008).

To maintain a happy and celebratory atmosphere, multicultural festivals and community events are distanced from the domain of state governance. They appear apolitical, emphasizing uncomplicated, homogenizing, amicable, and superficial ideas of 'culture'. According to Mackey (1997), these events are sponsored through corporations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) receiving government funds for the disbursement in support of multicultural / diversity initiatives. The visibility of private corporate donors, as opposed to state sponsorship, constructs a fiction whereby multicultural and grass-root events appear to be removed from the direct influence of the state. Multicultural events then imply an ideology of tolerance recognition through carnivalesque reconciliations of racial, cultural and national divisions between diverse ethnic groups, a tactic for assimilating multiple ethnicities into a unified national community (Thobani
The ideology of state multiculturalism is convoluted and opaque because it has taken root in the field of commons sense. Multiculturalism is perceived, especially in Toronto, as natural, practical and simple, a quality that Geertz characterizes as the “air of ‘of-courseness’” (Geertz 2000: 85), yet it has substance because its hegemony is felt. From the purview of multiculturalism in the United Kingdom, Sara Ahmed (2008) observes that the register of the political language of multiculturalism has an affective force. She notes that emotions, such as happiness and unhappiness transform multiculturalism into an affective object that is shared, experienced, and made knowable in terms of bodily, psychical and emotional senses (Ahmed 2008: 125). Multiculturalism is not learned per se, it is generally perceived as an innate social good. The “visibility” of racialized communities, the diversity of food, the plethora of cultural celebrations occurring nearly every weekend throughout the city’s neighbourhoods were pointed out to me as mundane examples of everyday multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is ordinary in contemporary Toronto life. As pointed out to me on multiple occasions, the city has delivered on its promise of multiculturalism.

The story distinguishing Toronto from other Canadian cities is that it locates its origin in diversity. Within the media, government reports and advertising literature, Toronto has a reputation for being the most multicultural city in the world (Harris 2010: 190). The city's motto "Diversity Our Strength" refers to the amalgamation of the surrounding municipalities of Etobicoke, York, North York, Scarborough and the Borough of East York into the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto.

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93 Harris (1990) draws on the work of Michael Doucet, a geographer, who researched claims of Toronto’s reputation, finding that there was no substantive basis; rather Toronto’s urban identity as ‘the most’ multicultural city is an urban legend (1990: 190).

94 City of Toronto (https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/awards-tributes/tributes/history-of-city-symbols/).
however, within the public, the motto is imagined to imply the city’s identity in relation to multiculturalism and linguistic diversity. Some Torontonians I met had a saying for Toronto, calling it 'the Center of the Universe'. This phrase, a creation myth, is often said with pride and it allows for an enduring imagination of what it means to live in a multicultural city: its exceptionalism (socially, economically and politically) and the nexus of Canadian diversity and welcome. More importantly, Toronto is imagined as a place where people want to be. This perception of Toronto makes the city distinctive to its inhabitants and enables its people to find common ground, ideologically, on what makes Toronto special; however, as noted by Harris (2010), this perception of Toronto does not engage with the tensions "over cultural identity, difference and the limits of tolerance" that comes with living together (191). The state discourse on recognition, unity and cultural harmony dissembles the relationship between racism and power, particularly as minority groups take on the prejudices and politics of the white Canadian nation and suppress facets of their culture that are deemed problematic by common (white) Canadian culture, all in the name of integration (Thobani 2007:161, Ahmed 2010: 47). In her critique of Canadian Multiculturalism, Sunera Thobani contends that “statist multiculturalism has proved to be more than simply a mode of reflecting cultural difference and managing it; it has actively constituted such difference as the most significant aspect of the nation’s relations with its (internal) Others” (2007:145).

Chapter Overview

The topic of food and commensality, the practice of sharing food and drink with other people (Cowan 1990: 64, Fischler 2011), coalesces with the practice of Christian hospitality as many congregations host monthly community dinners. Fischler (2011) defines the etymology of commensality as "eating at the same table", from Latin with com meaning 'together' and mensa meaning 'table' (529). The process of procuring a meal, from purchasing staples from food markets, transforming cold substances into a warm medley of sights and smells, to sitting down at a table, and eating together present micro acts of hospitality, leads up to the apogee of the feast, establishes

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and consolidates social relations, and expresses values of generosity (Cowan 1990:65). For church volunteers and guests, God's presence resonates within the social interactions and individual motivations that impel commensality: He is experienced through one's relationships with other people; He is the feeling of giving and receiving love, comfort, warmth and belonging, and He resonates with believers through the residue of Christian hospitality. At the same time, generosity is a virtue that is racialized, feminized, and at times, undermined through a logic of help involving time and money saving strategies.

Food-centered events entail power shifts where the materiality of food and the transformation of food (through types of cooking styles) are used to diffuse social and racializing tensions (c.f. Appadurai on gastro-politics 1981). This chapter explores the layers of hospitality and hostilities that occurs at various points in the process of commensality, from food preparation, meal sharing and the talk that unfolds that makes meals a sensorial and affective experience. In the first section, I detail the work and hospitality among a small group of racialized women in preparing the community dinner. Food preparation is a time of bonding by which the smell, texture and taste of fresh food is representative of God’s love and presence. In the second section, I explain the affective experience of commensality among dinner guests. For them, commensality was not a time for overt evangelization but a time to share stories and experience a sense of belonging within a Christian family. Yet, in the role of guests, they asserted their right to dignity, refusing a category of ‘charity case’ through a strategic network and plan to assess and determine which hosting church dinner to attend. Finally, I discuss a deformation in hospitality by which white ‘help’ disenfranchises and coopts racialized women from church service. Overall, this chapter attends to the complexity, multi-directionality and layers of hospitality while considering commensality as a process of identity formation, relations of power, and sensuous knowledge production.
Community Dinners at Queensview Presbyterian

The community dinners at TECPC are distinct from those held by neighbouring Presbyterian churches, such as Queensview Presbyterian, who frequently serve packaged, processed or frozen goods. These choices are based on an economic logic: they were easy to prepare, cheap, quick and did not require much labour. Queensview Presbyterian received financial support from the Presbytery and donations from church members. These dinners are part of the Monday Night in Canada program and is organized by a team of paid workers, including a coordinator and babysitter. The dinner has a minimum of seven volunteers, but I saw up to 22 volunteers on special occasion dinners such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. Volunteers also undergo informal training for teaching language skills from individuals who have had ESL (English as a Second Language) training. Meals served at Queensview Presbyterian include frozen hamburgers, packaged hotdogs, frozen pizza and spaghetti made from bottled sauces. During my brief time at Queensview, the idea of preparing meals with fresh vegetables and meat was not considered. The primary concern was to offer meals that were perceived as representative of food consumed in Canadian society. In the information pamphlet distributed to me by the lead organizers, it explains that meals are "simple" and "very economical".

Watching the racialized guests eat the foods, it was evident that it was a novel and strange experience for many of them. Some would awkwardly handle a knife and fork to cut a hamburger into small bite size portions, others precariously balanced a hamburger between two chopsticks as they took careful nibbles, while a few wrapped their burger in a napkin to avoid having their hands and fingers come in direct contact with their food. Guests who were unsure how to eat the food before them would look to the actions of the white hosts for cues on how to eat.

Most guests did not show any concern whether the food was fresh or frozen, nor did they show any apprehension on how the food was presented on a disposable paper plate. For them, the food was a novelty, a new yet bizarre experience. One woman who was holding a plain hamburger wrapped in a napkin, nodded her head and was smiling vehemently as if to convey that she was enjoying the meal. When she finished eating her hamburger, I asked her in English if she enjoyed

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96 Community dinners at Queensview Presbyterian offer language and cultural program for newcomers, discussed in Chapter 5.
it. As I uttered my question, she gave me a startled panicked look of confusion and turned to a woman beside her and spoke softly to her friend in a language I did not understand, covering the side of her mouth with her napkin in hand. They both smiled and nodded in my direction. Louis, an elderly white volunteer, who was sitting beside us, turned to me and said, "well, I think she likes it! " I was not convinced and Louis’ commentary had the unintentional effects of infantilizing the racialized woman. I interpreted her smile as a measure to avoid conflict and pressure from responding in an unfamiliar language. As such it is difficult to assess whether the food was enjoyed or tolerated, performing gratitude for the generosity of the church volunteers.

While these foods were unique to the guests at Queensview Presbyterian, these types of foods were considered disrespectful to guests at TECPC. While we worked in the kitchen at TECPC, volunteers voiced on many occasions of the virtue of transforming "fresh" produce and raw meat into cooked meals. For them, serving processed foods was morally crass and cheap as these choices were mundane. Most guests at TECPC dinners are socio-economically disadvantaged white Canadians and processed foods are a staple as the vast majority received subsidized income. A 99cent bottle of spaghetti that was warmed up and served over a 99cent package of pasta would have been unimpressive. The slow and laborious transformation of food, in the purview of volunteers, demonstrated their care, love and generosity. The community dinner was meant to stand out from daily life.

Community Dinners at TECPC

At TECPC, the monthly community dinners cleave out the boundary of the church as an exceptional place to nourish one's spirit, mind, heart and body. The dinners are a common yet significant event in which racialized church members express their hospitality, both hosting and welcoming each person into God's home. The dinners are a recent church activity that was put into motion by Janet, an elder at TECPC\(^\text{97}\), who was inspired to make the church a prominent and mindful place for community, not only for the surrounding neighbourhood but for the

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\(^{97}\) Janet is introduced in Chapter 3. She migrated to Canada from Guyana and is an elder at TECPC for over 20 years.
congregation. For her and other congregants, the church is a home for God-loving people; however, over the years, she has witnessed a change in Christian participation in the church. She would often say that the spirit of the church community would flourish if only congregants were more involved and participated in church activities.

Janet's initial idea of hosting free community dinners was motivated from a conversation with other elders during a bible study session on strategies to improve the role of the church for the congregation and surrounding neighbourhood. Janet tells me that the idea of cooking was simple: she loves to cook and knew that she should share her joy of cooking. This was God's gift to her, which for her, was a spark for something greater: It was hope for bringing people together and making the church community visible and strong. She says,

> We have such a large church space and we are barely using it! Nobody wants to do anything. I suggest that we could do dance lessons or cooking gatherings, that would be nice to bring people out of their house. It is good for them to get out than to always stay home inside.

For her, she aspired that a show of participation and involvement would inspire other church goers to mobilize, develop and enjoy a range of church-based gatherings, such as dance socials, exercise get-togethers and cooking classes, all run by members of the congregation. Her hope is best conceptualized as a moral ambition, which Elisha (2011) defines as the “individual aspirations that involve persuading and recruiting others to do likewise” (2011: 19). Her hope was for her moral ambitions to resonate with other church participants and gain motivational traction.

The community dinners began in May of 2013 and were held on the last Wednesday of each month and open to the general public. A large wooden sign was propped up beside the main church doors advertising the dinner along the busy pedestrian path. For the first year and half, Janet, Natalie, Patty, Mi-Na and I would arrive between noon and 2pm to prep fresh vegetables, herbs, and meat, while the actual cooking of the meal commenced around 4pm for a dinner start time of 6pm. An hour before the arrival of guests, who usually showed up between half an hour and 15 minutes early, we would arranged four old wooden rectangle tables with metal folding legs, forming two rows of two tables. We placed clean fresh table clothes for uniformity, hiding the unevenness of the tables. We unstacked and arrange cushioned chairs around each row of tables. During special occasions, we decorated the tables with festive embellishments, for example, during Christmas,
brown woven baskets filled with green, red and golden ornaments of various sizes were center pieces for each table.

Figure 9 Dinner at TECPC December 2015, photo taken by the author.

The meal was organized buffet-style along three tables at the front of the banquet hall. Stainless steel forks, spoons, and knives, ceramic plates and disposable napkins and cups were placed at the front of the arrangement, followed by hot main courses, cold salads or fruits, desserts and cold drinks. Warm drinks such as coffee, tea and hot chocolate were placed on a separate table on the right side of the room. Most of the meals are best characterized as ‘home cooked’ style meals, such as spaghetti, chicken noodle soup and meatloaf.

Passing the Time: Sharing Good Food and Memories

For the first year and half, the community dinners involved the work of Janet, Natalie and Patty who all immigrated from Guyana in the 1980s, and Mi-Na who migrated from Korea in the 2000s and returned home for several months each year. All of us looked to Janet as the woman in charge: she decided which dishes we would prepare, she directed each person into tasks for the stagecraft of commensality, and she assigned each person with the purchase of foods (whom she later reimbursed) only after being assured that the task was convenient. Natalie and Patty are long time
members of the church; however, they do not hold official positions in the congregation. Natalie told me that God guided her to TECPC 10 years ago when she needed care and support to cope with the death of her daughter, a topic that she evades. The few times in which she did mention her daughter over the two and half years of my fieldwork, pain would flash in her eyes followed by dullness signaling her retreat from the conversation.

Patty told me that she volunteered at the church because she wanted time away from her government subsidized housing, especially from the unruliness of her neighbours and the stench of mold and garbage that permeated her housing hallways. She was a very quiet person, who actively listened to conversations, yet would rarely take the floor. She preferred to speak personally with only one person at a time and would predominantly engage in small talk, speaking of the weather or her trip to the bakery. She seemed to enjoy being in the moment by participating in activities. On occasion, she shared a food story of Guyana, usually telling us of spices and food preparation methods.

Mi-Na, a young vibrant Korean woman in her early 30s, lives in a loft that was once a factory building, located within a block the church. She is an active church goer who participates in every Sunday sermon, at times, bringing her white Canadian boyfriend whom she met while living in the Prairies. She works from home, managing and dealing with online exports of raw resources between Korean businesses in Canada and Korea. She was raised Presbyterian in Korea and came to TECPC to continue her Presbyterian worship, which she says is very different in Canada. She volunteers at the community dinner because she says that enjoys the company and good food, but on a deeper level, she tells me that she participated because it is a very good social service for the people in the neighbourhood.

When I spoke to Janet after one Sunday sermons to inquire if I may participate and observe in the community dinners, I asked her what kind of meals she served. She clasped her hands together and told me that they wanted to cook "Canadian comfort food". The problem, she told me, was that none of the volunteers knew how to cook Canadian food, which for them, was spaghetti, chicken noodle soup, meatloaf and chili. I asked Janet why these particular dishes were being considered for the community meal, and she stated that these particular dishes would make for 'good' meals for church guests. She explained that guests were predominantly white, middle-aged and elderly women and men, most depending on government subsidies and living on the streets or in
subsidized housing and she wanted to warm their spirits. Later, I observed that Asians (Canadian and non-Canadian) attended the community dinner, many whom were friends and neighbours of white guests who habitually attended. Sporadically, there were Asian and Black families, mothers and fathers with their young children, and a few times, immigrant non-English speaking Asian families joined the dinner but hastily departed after eating.

I asked Janet why she felt compelled to prepare food that she is uncomfortable and unaccustomed in making, suggesting even, that she prepare meals that were familiar to her. She let out a soft exasperated exhale, "they [the guests] would not like Guyanese food, Lisa. It has spice and white people do not like spice". Hearing this, Natalie joined in with a big broad smile and laughing eyes, "Yeah! White people do not like flavour in their food!" It was evident that there was an ongoing joke on culinary tastes of white church members. At first, I was dubious of the stereotype they were drawing upon, however, I later found out that there was some truth to their observations. To Janet's delight, I conceded that I was capable in making the meals they wanted to serve.

**Fresh Food and God’s Love**

Preparing the food from fresh produce was integral to Janet's desire in making a 'good' meal. During the summer months, she volunteered at the Good Food Market through a stall that was set up on the church gardens once a week for the afternoon. It was important to her that much of the ingredients are 'fresh' yet also a 'good deal'. I would meet her at the church between noon and 2pm depending on the type of meal planned for the evening. While we washed, diced and chopped the fresh vegetables and herbs with old dull knives over worn wooden cutting boards, Janet would typically make conversation by explaining to Patty, Natalie, Mi-Na and me where she bought each of the produce items and the 'good deals' she found. For example, she would tell us that she bought a bunch of carrots, three onions and three bulbs of garlic from the Good Food Market for three

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98 The Good Food Market is a non-profit community organization with the mandate of providing fresh produce from local farmers and the Ontario Food Terminal at affordable prices throughout the GTA.
dollars, herbs such as basil and oregano that were reduced by 50% in price because they were approaching the stickered date of expiration, or the bunch of celery that she bought from No Frills (a discount grocery chain) for one dollar. At times, the celery she pulled out of her grocery cart looked limp with brown speckles rather than the picturesque version seen on grocery ads: crisp, stiff and crunchy. Janet assured us that all we had to do was pull back the long strings of fibres from the celery and it would make the celery taste fresh and easy to chew, especially for the elderly. She highlighted her point by giving us a demonstration of the process which she concluded by taking a big resounding crunchy bite from the stalk of celery. For Janet, avoiding food waste was just as important as working with fresh resources. If there was a blemish on the food, then we were instructed to simply remove it.

Janet sees her labour in gathering fresh produce as an articulation of her love of God. The process required much of her time and care to research, locate and shop for the necessary ingredients. During the summer months, it was easier for Janet to purchase cheap fresh produce from the Good Food Market. She reminded us that "God is good" when she brought in free produce she received from the market that did not sell during the day. These were times when such small fortunes were interpreted as events showing God's love and presence.

In the winter months, it was much more difficult for Janet to shop for the produce. She traveled 10kms by streetcar from her home to the church, then walked half a kilometer to discount grocery chains, such as NoFrills or Basic Foods, in the snow, rain and wind. Even when temperatures reached -25c which felt even colder when the wind was blowing hard, Janet was not be deterred from her destination for good deals and fresh food. She would bundle up in her long black winter jacket, which came down to her ankles, warm her neck and cheeks with a knitted black scarf, don a matching winter hat and black leather gloves and march out with her grocery cart in tow behind her. She never asked for helped but gladly took up offers of a car ride for grocery shopping made by members of the Women's Association, who convened in the church at the same time as community dinner volunteers worked in the kitchen. Only then would Janet divulge the arthritic pain in her hands that was exacerbated by the cold weather, or the soreness along her shoulder blade for which she was seeing a chiropractor. She gave meaning to her hardship by highlighting moments in which she experienced social good rather than seeing her journey and frugality as consequences of a capitalist economic system (c.f Fischler 2011). Janet would recount the moral good she saw in the actions of strangers whom she encountered in the streetcar and from the transit
conductor. She told us how they physically supported her to step down the steps of the streetcar or carried her grocery cart from the streetcar to the sidewalk. She would tell us how she met "a nice gentleman who helped" her or "a young person who was so kind" to her. For Janet, these were small acts that were evidence of God's love. She told us that He was present in those who helped her because she could feel His strong loving hands through them.

Sharing, Smelling, Tasting, Friendship

After Janet, Patty, Natalie, Mi-Na and I fell into a routine of food preparation, Janet surprised us one afternoon by bringing us a small treat from home. She unrolled a brown lunch bag, unfolded the corners of an item wrapped in aluminum foil, and revealed a thin, round flat bread. She placed it on the center island in the kitchen and we gathered around. “In Guyana, we eat this with curry, do you like curry?” she asked as she reached into her cart and pulled out a small plastic container. Inside was a thick yellow sauce: "this is curry with chick peas". Mi-Na exclaimed that she loves roti and reached over to pull off a small morsel of roti and dipped it in the curry. "Janet did you make this roti? I don't like making roti, it takes so much time!” inquired Natalie as she too reached over for some roti and curry; she savoured the warm roti with a small sigh as Janet affirmed that she did make it herself. While we delighted in the sample of her meal, Janet pours us some warm and tea and recounts how she stayed up until 3am that morning, making roti for us because she would never make the meal just for herself. Mi-Na nods her head while leaning against the counter and helping herself to another piece. With her mouth full of roti, Mi-Na tells Janet she would love to learn to cook Guyanese food. Janet beams with Mi-Na’s praise, “Well if you are interested, let’s set a date for all of us to get together and I will cook for you here! We will have a cooking session. You know that the kitchen is not being used. We can come here to the church instead of sitting at home.”

Over the following months, a ritual emerged where Janet prepared culinary dishes at home and brought it to church to share with volunteers while we prepared the community meal. Janet initiated the ritual by inquiring whether we would like to try some homemade Guyanese food. As she went over to her metal grocery cart, she would pull out a small plastic containers or aluminum foil packages and say, “I made this at home! Would you like to try some?” Her eyes brightened in anticipation, awaiting our affirmative response. Even if one of us politely declined by stating "oh!
I just ate!" or "I'm not hungry right now", I soon found out that any dissenting response would not be tolerated by Janet. No matter our response, Janet placed a portion of her meal on a small plate, set it in front of each of us while we worked and offered us a cup of tea.

Mary Douglas (1972) sees the sharing of warm meals as a symbolic structure containing close friendships and relations; it is a boundary, marking "the line between intimacy and distance" (1972:66). Although commensality here was not voluminous, it entailed the elements which Douglas uses to define a meal. “A meal” she writes, “incorporates a number of contrasts, hot and cold, bland and spiced, liquid and semi-liquid, and various textures. It also incorporates cereals, vegetables and animal proteins” (Douglas 1972:66). Crossing the threshold from one domain of food categories, such as cold substances entails the restructuring of such relations, as "the meal puts its frame on the gathering" (1972:66).

Each month, Janet brought different dishes to share, we would gather around kitchen island as Janet each handed us a small plate with a sample of unique culinary indulgences that she prepared at home along with a cup of tea. One month, she brought us a large container emanating a robust cinnamon-like fragrance. Filled inside were darkened pieces of chicken with a baked marinade that tickled my nose: jerk chicken. Janet placed a piece of seasoned chicken leg on a plate for each person and passed it around, and a chorus of "thank yous" were murmured with gratitude, reverence and anticipation. Natalie's eyes widened as she bit into the juicy meat and exclaimed, "how do you have the time to make this! This is very good!" With this lead-in, Janet recounted how she could not sleep during the night because she was distressed over her financial difficulties. She confessed that after her husband passed away, she discovered that their joint account was missing over $25k dollars. She confided that she believes he sent money to his "outside child", his daughter conceived from an affair; however, she has no physical proof, it was a feeling that haunted her. The doubt and growing anxiety over the missing money, she said, made her feel like she was drowning, "I could not breathe, I felt like I was choking". To ease her mind at 3am, she decided that she would make jerk chicken for us. According to Tye (2010), preparing a meal can be reminder to nurture self-identity especially when a sense of self is fractured (192). Indeed, preparation and consumption of certain foods can help repair the continuity between the past and the present through labour intensive structures. For example, Tye writes after the passing of her mother, her father took on the jam-making process that her mother habitually carried out because it brought a sense of structure back into his life, reconnecting him to the past and his late wife
through food production (199). In this way, food production has meaning and it carries a form of spiritual and mindful healing. Unlike Tye’s father, however, Janet was keenly invested in producing ‘good taste’, transforming materiality into a gustatory sensation, aligning and connection herself within a circle of women whom she perceived as sharing similar values through sense of taste.

These habitual events are episodic of hospitality, Janet had no expectation of reciprocity. She was sharing with us her joy of cooking. The generosity was not calculated for a return of a meal, but rather, it was experienced as a moment of exaltation where she was no longer an outsider, a stranger, but a member of a community where she felt at ease to share a sense of herself, her story, her identity through her cooking. These moments were empowering for Janet and for volunteers on various levels as sharing weaved intimate bonds of friendship. In the beginning, Janet was hesitant, even reluctant, to open up to us about cooking and sharing her ethnic cuisine. Smells are notorious markers of otherness and racialization that are difficult to contain and neutralize (Ameeriar 2017: 97). Odours, both bodily and culinary, are subjectively experienced as either welcoming or repulsive and one’s reaction to a smell is not taken lightly. In her ethnography of Khmer refugees in the United States, Aihwa Ong writes that Khmers made efforts to hide the smell of Cambodian cooking after learning that Americans were offended by the odours. Offending food odours has an effect of “resenting Americans’ sense of their place” (2003: 97). I often felt and observed Janet’s scrutinizing gaze, watching us with anticipation for any perceived negative reactions to the smell and taste of the Guyanese food she prepared at home. After passing the sensory reception, Janet’s shoulders became noticeably more relaxed as her anxiety dispelled.

In these small scalar moments of hospitality, she experienced a small temporally marked shift in status, from one who is welcomed to a host who welcomes. Over time, she shared various other dishes, such as fried chick peas, guyanese fried rice and chow mein. Mi-Na asked Janet on several occasions why we did not serve some of these dishes to the community dinner guests. To which Janet would dismiss, saying there was not enough funds to support a Guyanese community meal. TECPC did not receive financial support from the Presbytery. The meals came from monetary and food donations from church members and a few dollars that guests made to the donation basket as they left the banquet room after the meal. Those who prepared the meal and organized the banquet room into a dining area were not remunerated for their time. Community dinners usually had a budget of $35: $10-15 dollars would be spent on meat and the rest would be allocated for
the purchase of produce, grains, herbs, and fresh bread from the bakery. On special occasions, such as the celebration of the birth of Jesus in December or the Last Supper of Jesus in April, one or two church members would provide extra funds for us to make special meals for these months. Despite her claims that there was insufficient funds to host a Guyanese dinner, it is likely that the risks in producing a sensuous ethnic meal was not worth the potential in offending the olfactory and gustatory senses of white Presbyterians.

“Where is the Meat?”: Dinner Guests Talk Back

Meat was the most significant criteria that made the community meal stand out for guests. The first time Janet made chicken noodle soup for the church dinner, she prepared the meal using the habits and standards of cooking meat that was normative to her upbringing in Guyana. She chopped whole chickens into pieces, browned the pieces separately by panfrying, then added the chicken pieces, both the meat and bone, into the soup. That evening, to our surprise, one of the guests complained that there was no meat in her bowl. A short heavy-set Caribbean woman with short black hair and dark heavy rimmed glasses who regularly attends Sunday sermons was sitting near the front of the dinner table. Chastising Janet, who was sitting beside her, in front of the other dinner guests and volunteers, she exclaimed emphatically, "There is no meat! Where is the meat? I come here and there is no meat!" To visually emphasize her point, she dipped her large spoon into her bowl, raised it high above the bowl and turned it over to let the contents of the soup slowly cascade back into her bowl. She repeated this action over and over again. Everyone witnessed that her spoonfuls lacked a piece of meat. What we saw instead, was a large meatless piece of drumstick bone splash down into her bowl. I was seated on the next table, at the opposite end and could not hear Janet's soft response to the woman.

Later that evening while we were doing the post-dinner clean-up, Janet, who was quite irate, said to Natalie, Mi-Na and me:

There are so many people who say there is no meat and you know, they don't like that there is bone in the soup! I told that woman that if she don't like the bone, then she can take it out of her bowl. You know what she said? She said that it is a health hazard and we are not certified [as a
charity]! This food is free for them! If they want more meat, then they should contribute a dollar or two to bring more food to the table.

That evening, there were no donations in the 'charity hat'. I observed over the years that donations did not accurately reflect whether guests enjoyed the meal. Donations are not equivalent to a tip but were subjectively given based on their economic circumstances. Guests tended to donate funds when they had the extra dollar to spare. One guest told me that she preferred that there was a donation hat because she did not feel stigmatized in being viewed as a 'charity case' and that it 'felt good' if she could contribute anything, even if it were 50 cents. From that moment on, chicken noodle soups were turned into a stew; there was much less liquid so that cascading spoonfuls were thick and dense. Volunteers took the extra time and effort to remove the bones to appeal to the desires of guests, and dishes were served boneless.

The woman was not alone in her discontent. Many dinner guests offered suggestions and recommendation on how meat dishes could be improved. Church members openly expressed their discontent with me, hoping that I would speak to Janet on their behalf for their desired meal choices. William, whom we met in Chapter 3, told me that we could opt for a "simple dinner, such as bread and meat". When I asked him what kind of meat, he said that ham would be good. The problem for him, was an overabundance of seasoning, such as the sprinkling of basil, thyme and oregano in spaghetti, and the use of cumin, chili powder and paprika in chili. "Spice" did not mean food with a piquant taste as volunteers were careful in refusing the addition of cayenne pepper or vegetables that stimulated a sharp flavour, such as garlic or ginger. For Liam and other dinner guests, seasoning was analogous to an expeditious and impatient style of cooking. "Make the dinners better," he said, "use less spice and do 'slow cooking'". He then told me that slow-cooking was the way that his mother used to cook, reminiscing of what he called "Australian-style" cooking. "Slow-cooking", he tells me, "draws out the natural flavour of the meat by cooking it at low temperature all day; 'Quick-cooking' relies on spice for flavour".

Critiques of food choices and preparation made by dinner guests demonstrate that the aspirations of the community dinner in developing a sense of belonging and community are being achieved. At a surface level, these behaviours and attitude by the guests may be received as inhospitable acts; yet on a deeper level, the laments, suggestions and recommendations suggests that guests feel a sense of familiarity and affiliation with their hosts and share a sense of hope within church
commensality: this is a process of and for hospitality. Fischer's (2014) understanding on the good life and wellbeing (2014) allows us to consider how hospitality is meaningful for different people. "Notions of the good life" writes Fischer, "orient the aspirations of agency and provide a dynamic framework with which to interpret one's own action and those of others, all the while bound by the realm of what is seen as possible" (Fischer 2014: 6). When framed in this way, hospitality does not necessarily entail an immediacy of warm, fuzzy, good feelings, but has an aspirational quality for both guests and hosts. It is a process and strategy that is constantly improved, it can be better. An effective welcome is an affective welcome by which the smell, sight and shared enjoyment of food have the potential of invoking nostalgic and treasured memories of the past within the present but incongruent relationships. For those who complained about the food, they yearned for a welcome that was more personable and they complained because they were within a community where they felt uncensored and comfortable to voice their discontents. Complaints do not quite align with inhospitality but were moments in which they aspired for ‘better’ hospitality to feel a sense of temporal and authentic unity. These are opportunities to negotiate what it means to feel welcomed, a facet of what makes life good.

**Nourishing Bodies, Nurturing the Spirit**

With the guests with whom I spoke with, they describe the joy they experience in attending the meals. For many individuals, the experience of sharing a ‘home cooked’ meal and making conversation was compelling for them to attend the meals. Liam, an elder whom we met in Chapter 3, described the dinner as an example of the love and virtue of the Christian faith. Sitting at a banquet table in his professional attire: an impeccable black suit, polished shoes, manicured appearance, and a subtle emanation of cologne, Liam's appearance starkly contrasted with those with whom he was making conversation over the meal. He engaged in conversation with Lauren, Samuel and Marlene, three under-privileged white church members who regularly attended the church dinners but rarely participated in Sunday worship. On this November day, they were dressed in dishevelled, ill-fitting and rank-smelling clothes, which was quite usual for them. Despite the contrasting appearance between Liam, Lauren, Samuel and Marlene, they all spoke to each other as old friends, who appeared unfazed by the bodily smells and appearances of socio-economic differences. They knew each other by name and their dinner conversation showed social
intimacy; they spoke with ease of personal details of their families, home and work, their desires and goals, and mental and physical health concerns. Surprisingly, during the dinners, there was little talk of God, persuasions for conversion, or concerns over becoming better Christians as I had heard during bible study sessions.

Conversations around faith evolved around ‘mysteries’ of the universe. Events or observations that resonated with people as awe-inspiring and unexplainable, and when compelled, left feelings of wonder. One guest, whom I call Lauren, is in his mid 40s and regularly attended the monthly meals. He resides in the social housing complex within walking distance of the church. Along with governmental income support, Lauren earns a living through short-term contractual job such as painting and landscaping work. He is instantly recognized as he typically wore his trademark white painter's overalls for the community dinners. Joan explained to me that he was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and that he has some difficulties functioning in social settings. However, from my observations, he appeared at ease and comfortable, often initiating and carrying conversations with people sitting beside him. One evening, over a warm bowl of chili, Lauren tells me that most people who come to dinner are outsiders of Sunday church. What he means by this is that they are Christian but do not come to worship, which was also expressed to me by several other dinner guests. Some reasons were that it was the weather is terrible during the winter or they would participate during the summer if the church was open or they found the worship start time of 11am to be just too early. Lauren also stressed that many people did not want to talk about God at these dinners. Lauren’s statement paralleled a point Joan made to me months earlier that some elders did not want the dinner to turn into a proselytizing event. Some elders were uncomfortable with overt proselytization and believed that Christianity was best known by how faith felt, by the ‘good’ feelings in being with fellow Christians.

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99During my last year of fieldwork, the church was closed during the summer months for a variety of reasons: to save money; for Abraham to minister at a neighbouring church; people were away at the cottage or travelling elsewhere, and/or the church was too hot with no air conditioning.
A Place to Feel Beloved

Commensality involving an odd mix of socio-economic diversity and disparity among dinner guests is an opportunity for strangers to interact and share life stories with each other. According to Liam, church dinners was a time to practice the virtue of neighbourliness and to overcome the discomfort of connecting with people who may be different and even strangers. "You don't need to become friends with the person sitting beside you, it [eating together] teaches you: don't be judgemental. It's really simple stuff". For Liam and others, commensality was a few hours a month where people could be, what some of my informants called, "beloved". Perhaps the most elusive concept, they spoke of 'beloved' with reverence and exaltation, conveying that the concept was more than a loving community. It was a sense of being cherished that integrated the divine, the blessed and love. It made a Christian community unique, to welcome and be welcomed through the virtues of unconditional love and tolerance, meaning, a practice of accepting each other and each person’s shortcomings.

When the flow of guests filling their dinner plates tapered to a trickle, I would take myself away from the volunteers working in the kitchen and sit with dinner guests. There was one person with whom I regularly sat and conversed. Samuel was not a practicing Christian and did not attend Sunday worship. He was, however, known to elders and many dinner guests, which suggested that he frequented church activities for many years. A fairly large, white fellow in his mid-fifties, Samuel had a rugged brown beard, shaggy hair and wide rim glasses. He was usually attired in grey sweat pants and a charcoal colour sweater, infused with a heavy residue of stale cigarette smoke. Over several months, Samuel explained to me that he spiraled into depression after his wife divorced him and was granted full custody of their two daughters fifteen years ago. Having lost his job and falling into debt with divorce fees, lawyer expenses and monthly spousal and child support, he could no longer afford to see his daughters when his ex-wife moved to Hamilton.

For him, separation from his daughters has been spiritually, emotionally and mentally debilitating, which made the dinners important to him. Samuel says,

> The meals remind me of what home should be like. Sitting with people and enjoying a few smiles and good food and good conversation is much better than being alone. I can’t do this by myself. When you buy things from the [grocery] store, it [the portion size] is always for more than one person.
It is only me and I can’t do this. I eat alone, sometimes I have a few friends for a drink. We don’t eat at a table like this, you know… and it’s really hard to get out. I wasn’t going to come tonight [to the dinner] but I’m glad I did.

For many dinner guests, the act of eating together recalls the idea and practice of family socialization as it is normative in North America and Western Europe for family members to eat an evening meal together, defining their identity as a family unit (Ochs and Shohet 2006:37). When Samuel states that he was, in the end, pleased that he came out for dinner, he is reaffirming a will to experience a sense of belonging within a family and a community. According to Riley and Cavanaugh (2017), food sharing embodies a "multisensual reality" influencing food-centered interactions by which people may feel more open to express themselves, their identities and emotions, which in turn, enhances the value of the food. "Communication about, around and through particularly salient food may be read as a highly enriched form of nourishment" (Riley and Cavanaugh 2017). Nourishment, then, is not only about the body, but also about the mind and spirit, of feeling a sense of welcome without condition.

Food sharing forces an intimacy between people as it first contextualizes then structures communicative practices (Douglas 1972, Ochs and Shohet 2006, Riley and Cavanaugh 2017). The form of talk that took place during community meals were similar to those that occur within family relationships. Oftentimes, my dinner time talk with Samuel would begin with small talk; we discussed the weather, how our day was going, and comments and observations on the meal being eaten. It became common for Samuel to ask me about food: what were the seasonings, methods used in the preparation of meals and strategies in cooking. I would describe where each ingredient was bought and the process in making the meal, while he nodded his head, urging me to continue. This form of mealtime conversation, I later learned, provided Samuel with informal knowledge on food along with elementary culinary skills which he accumulated for his own self-care. In late September, during my last year at TECPC, Samuel approached me with a large beaming smile. He was lean and vibrant, walking as if a weight was lifted off his shoulders. "With all the good food you have shared with me, I was inspired to start my own garden". He pulled out an older model iphone and showed the pictures of his raspberry bushes and berries, grown along a picket fence and picture of three large zucchinis that he was growing in a community garden. I listened carefully as he detailed his desire to grow his 'good' food and described the sights, smells and
texture of the raw vegetables and fruits, which he saw develop over the course of the summer and into the Fall. It was the first time that I saw Samuel convey elation, and he was sharing his joy with neighbours in his social housing by distributing the produce from his garden.

From the purview of my informants, Samuel’s story exemplifies the intentionality of Janet's work in developing the community of the church as God's family. Her intention was to warm the spirit and bellies of dinner guests, and for Samuel, this is exactly what the community dinner achieved for him. By participating in commensality, Samuel carved out a space of belonging through loosely sutured attachment to church community. Through food and stories, he was drawn in to a community, nourishing a sense of love for himself through a renewed sense of care demonstrated through by producing the materiality of his garden. My interlocutors may suggest that for Samuel, he was guided by the Holy Spirit to come to the community dinners and to grow his garden, a space for him to experience the joy of God's presence. Food, in this way, is embued with moral value (Ochs and Shohet 2006).

Making the Dinners Christian

For the first two years, there was a marked absence of rituals signifying the dinner as Christian. Most notably, Abraham, the Hispanic-Filipino pastor at TECPC, was absent from the community dinners. Near the end of my fieldwork, I became aware that a few elders did not share Joan's belief that the dinner should be void of Presbyterian and Christian signifiers. For other elders such as Nancy, a member of the women's association and long-term member of TECPC for over 60 years, she saw the pastor's absence as neglect and the lack of Christian rituals as demoralizing and a sign of spiritual abandonment. Nancy did not participate in the community dinner for the first year and half but started frequenting the kitchen in the spring of the second year of the community dinners. While I chopped some vegetables for the dinner's meal of chicken noodle stew, she expressed her critique of Abraham, bluntly and loudly stating that he was failing the congregation and was neglectful in growing the church, which she said was the most important condition of his ordination at TECPC. Nancy is definitely not a soft-spoken woman and oftentimes Joan would say that Nancy has as much tact as a bull in a chinaware store. Her critiques of Abraham came faster and louder: he was consistently absent on Wednesdays; why was he being paid?; he has little idea what his congregation is doing; he should attend the dinners!; Why did they even post on the website that
he was scheduled for spiritual counselling on Wednesdays, yet he was never here! While sitting in the kitchen together, she turned to me and said, "Lisa, he needs to be here! How are these dinners Christian if the minister isn't here? He should be here to bless the food at the very least, even say a small prayer before the meal! He is not living up to his obligation to this congregation". With those impassioned words reverberating off the walls of the kitchen, she stamped her cane on the ground emphasizing her claim.

The following month, Abraham was present at the dinner for the first time to the surprise of many. There was a marked discomfort among volunteers who were unaccustomed to working and chatting within Abraham's presence, who became unusually silent and more focused on their tasks. Dressed in a black mock-neck sweater and black trousers, Abraham entered the banquet room at 4 pm. He ambulated around the kitchen and greeted each volunteer. He then proceeded to open the lids of each pot, peering into the simmering contents of spaghetti sauce. When it became apparent that he was staying for dinner, Natalie whispered emphatically to Janet, "what is Abraham doing here??" Janet whispered back, eyes downcast, "At the last Session meeting, Nancy was so angry. She said in front of us all: he needs to lead the congregation; he is not doing his duty to the church. She said that the dinners were not Christian".

Agency, Commensality and Refusal

Overtime, guests developed a system of refusal for certain meals. During the second year of the dinner program, I noticed that Lauren would show up around 4:30pm, and enter the banquet room and announce with a large booming voice, "Hello ladies! Something smells delicious!" He strides towards the kitchen, slowing his pace to gaze over and assess the desserts and fruits displayed on the serving table. Moving towards the kitchen, he stands in the threshold, looking toward the kitchen island table where volunteers gathered around, slathering butter with freshly grated garlic on donated bread from a neighbourhood bakery. As volunteers greeted him with 'hellos', he took an awkward step into the kitchen, scrutinising the simmering contents in the pots on the stove, and glancing over the vegetables remnants that were just about to be placed in the compost. As he took note of the kitchen arrangement, he asked volunteers what we were serving for dinner that evening. Delighted with his interest in our work, Janet happily responded by telling him what we had prepared and from where the ingredients came, as was her habit. He then excused himself, saying
at times, that he had to freshen up and that he would see us later in the evening. He walked out of
the church.

For several months, I did not ascribe any meaning to Lauren's mid-afternoon drop-ins until one
evening in January, during my usual dinner conversation with Samuel, I expressed that I was glad
that he was able to make it to the community dinner given the bitter cold weather, made worse by
the strong gusts of wind. He responded that he would not miss a meal of spaghetti. "What do you
mean? Did you know that we were having spaghetti?" I asked. Samuel revealed that Lauren had
informed him and others earlier in the day what they could expect for dinner that evening, as some
of them were not fond of the chicken noodle stew. Samuel went on to explain that they could rely
on Lauren, who would stop at different shelters and churches in the afternoon to find out what each
organization was serving for dinner. He would then report back to his neighbours and friends in
the subsidized housing complex. His communication allowed guests to make informed decisions,
whether it was worthwhile for them to travel through rain, snow and cold weather conditions to
eat, or which organization was offering the best meal. After Samuel brought this to my attention,
I took note of an emerging pattern: when Lauren discovered and reported back that TECPC
volunteers had prepared chicken noodle soup or previously frozen lasagna and pizza (a change I
explain in the next section), then dinner participation was minimal at around 15 guests; however,
when we served spaghetti, meatloaf with mashed potatoes, chili or baked chicken and fried rice,
then we would have a large turnout of approximately 35 guests. This form of agency demonstrates
the innovative strategies of refusing a meal without insulting volunteers hosting the dinner. Janet,
Natalie, Patty and Mi-Na did not take note of the fluctuations, except for the dinners in which we
had only 10 guests attending for a meal of chicken soup. Janet was quick to assume that the
fluctuation in numbers were attributed to weather conditions. Chicken soup was seldom offered
in Fall and Spring months.

Lauren's actions attend to the agency of guests in navigating the structures of hospitality. Lauren
and others dinner guests, who are situated within a lower socio-economic status, refuse to see
themselves as 'charity cases'. They reject the association of their socio-economic challenges to the
category of 'need' that is derived from the Christian perspective of strangers, including the
impoverished, hungry and beggars to whom the virtue of hospitality is due (Pitt-Rivers 1963:18).
This strategy in deciding which dinner to attend accentuates the rights of guests within the process
of hospitality. It is a form of conflict avoidance and a means in which to assert agency prior to the
actual event of commensality. Unable to 'escape' the assumed category of guest from the purview of hosts, they do not see themselves as supplicant to the generosity of church hosts. This is unlike prior discussions on hospitality that see guests as a status without rights: if one does assert their rights then such acts has the potential to invite hostility from the hosts who gain no honour from charity (Derrida 2000a, 2000b; Pitt-Rivers 1963).

Pitt-Rivers (1963) explains that the status of 'guest' is characterized by a potential for hostility because it is perceived as a status without rights (24). The status of guest is one who is situated between host, that is someone who is an established member of the community, and a stranger, someone who “remains potentially anything” and whose status in their community of origin is unrecognized in the receiving group (1963:16). A stranger is transformed into a guest once they start to form relationships with members of the community; they are known ambivalently through their affiliation with friends and/or patrons. The status of guest is not fixed because there is the potential of collapsing back into the domain of stranger, that is, to be treated with hostility (1963:20). As noted by Pitt-Rivers (1963), Ahmed (2012), and Derrida (2000a, 2000b), hospitality is a reciprocal structure by which the host and guest can never be equal. Reciprocity within hospitality is an alternation of roles as opposed to an alternation of identities (Pitt-Rivers 1963:21). The exchange of roles, as opposed to identities, argues Pitt-Rivers, is a form of conflict avoidance. Conflict, as seen in the next section, undergirds hospitality as ‘guests’ desire the identity of hosts.

Disenfranchising Spiritual Growth

This section describes a shift that was developing in my last few months of fieldwork: the help of the Women's Association vis-a-vis an economic logic that disenfranchised community dinner volunteers. The Women's Association involved a small group of white women, both naturalized citizens and long-time British immigrants, who are 60 years and older. Membership numbers of the Women’s Association fluctuated from season to season. During the winter months, there would be approximately four to five active members, while membership increased to eight members during the Fall and Spring.
Under the direction of Nancy, the elder whom we met in the previous section of this chapter, the Women’s Association organizes fundraising activities such as yard sales and bake sales to support the operations and maintenance of the church. For the community, the Women’s Association strategizes and implements charity initiatives, such as warm sock drives in December. The association also mobilizes church members to participate in annual church cleanups, which are usually held in May. Volunteers at the community dinner were not members of the Woman’s Association; however, they would volunteer their time at events organized by the Woman’s Association.

The Women’s Association was consistently recruiting new members, including adherents to the church, new church goers and long-time denominational members. Every Sunday, Nancy announced at the end of church worship that anyone and everyone was welcome to participate at the Women’s Association weekly gatherings. These weekly gatherings were usually held on Thursdays at 11:30am at the Mandarin Restaurant\textsuperscript{100} and at times, if there was an extremely low participation, then at church. To entice participation, Nancy emphasized during her announcements that seniors receive a 20% discount on their meal, as part of the Seniors discount at the restaurant. The distance of the restaurant from the neighbourhood and the time of the Association’s gatherings impeded the participation of women who told me that they desired to participate. Younger women told me that they could not attend for a variety of reasons: they worked during the day; they did not have ample economic resources for a buffet lunch; they did not have a vehicle for transportation, or they were busy caring for children. The women volunteering for the church community told me that they did not participate in their gatherings because they did not feel comfortable. Most notably, Nancy’s reference to a Senior’s discount inferred that the association was a space for older women only. The only time in which I observed younger women affiliating with the Women’s Association was for their charity and church-based initiatives.

\textsuperscript{100} The Mandarin is a buffet restaurant chain that is located throughout Southern Ontario. The restaurant serves what they call "Chinese Canadian fare" involving soup, salad, sushi, an assortment of Asian-style culinary dishes, pizza, and a broad selection of desserts. The cost of a lunch meal is approximately $17. (https://mandarinrestaurant.com/our-story/).
For the first year, members of the Woman's Association were not involved in the community dinners. Many of these members expressed their view of the community dinners as successful: the community dinners, they said, were effective in outreaching to and drawing in guests from within the neighbourhood, and dinner guest numbers were, on average, reaching the target number of 25 people. As such, they saw no reason to intervene or interfere with what they saw as Janet’s project. However, this would change over the course of the second year as Janet made repeated requests for them to participate.

Janet wanted the full participation of church members: ‘working together’ was a means for ‘coming together’. Most importantly, she felt that all people should be welcome, even if some volunteers mentioned that there was no need for extra help. Janet’s welcome without condition, however, did not mean there was an absence or refusal of social fissures and racial tensions. Prior to the Woman's Association participation, Janet and Natalie would, on rare occasion voice the racial hierarchy that I observed during the post-sermon friendship tea, a time when congregants gathered in the banquet hall to socialize over cookies, small cakes, crackers, cheese, as well coffee and tea, after Sunday worship (discussed in Chapter 4). As we chopped and prepped in the kitchen one Wednesday afternoon, I noticed that Janet appeared irate, contained in her own thoughts. Her movements and conversation were a brusque and at times, tense. Concerned, I asked her if all was okay not knowing if she had another unsettling episode during the night or if she was experiencing some of her physical aches and pains. She sighed and responded, "it's okay, Lisa", then dropping her voice in a low whisper,

Janet: Those ladies [nodding in the direction of the foyer where members of the Women’s Association convened] are here at noon for their meeting and they don't even come back to help after! It is just us cooking for thirty!

Lisa: I noticed during the Friendship Tea [after Sunday sermon] that they sit at a separate table...

Natalie: Ahhhh Lisa, that bunch is very closed. You know it feel like they are always observing us, like we are under their watchful eye.

Lisa: Is this recent?
Janet: Nooo no. It has been like this ever since I started coming to church 25 years ago.

Continuing in a low whisper, Janet emphasized that we needed to be careful in not being heard because some members of the Women's Association were still in the church foyer organizing the library. In relation to the kitchen, the foyer was on the opposite end of the church.

It is important to note that racialized congregants never explicitly mentioned racism and marginalization in the church. Voicing such ideas would infer that they were trying to create trouble by challenging congregational unity. It was common for Janet to pull me aside, or to phone me a few days after expressing her displeasure with white congregants. She would say to me, "Lisa- you have to keep this between you and me because I don't want to start any trouble". Janet saw me as her confidante and wanted to insure that I remained loyal to her. This was especially important to her as members of the Woman's Association encroached on the ‘safe space’ of the kitchen, which I discuss later in this section.

The fear of 'starting' trouble underscores that a precondition of 'trouble' already exists for Janet and other racialized congregants. The trouble to which Janet is inferring is that she does not want to challenge “white sensibilities”. Although members of the Woman’s Association expressed a virtue of non-intervention with Janet’s dinners, this is a partial representation. When Janet first proposed her project to the Session, elders who were members of the Woman’s Association, spoke out in opposition to Janet’s proposition. Joan, the elder who migrated from Scotland, tells me of some of the barriers that Janet experienced behind the closed doors of Session:

There are some people who are complaining about the money, who are complaining about the time. But Janet does not speak up for herself. She is so soft-spoken with those people [white members].

Drawing on her own work experiences as a head nurse working with nurses who migrated from various countries such as the Caribbean and the Philippines, Joan tells me that her work developed her awareness of hierarchal and racialized as colonial interactions. Offering her own theory:

Janet has come from an upbringing that was dominant with whites and she was taught to respect them. When you work with all nationalities under the
sun, you realize that some people like Janet will walk in and say, [whispers and hunches her shoulders] 'How are you today Joan?'. I would not use the word 'subservient' because I don't think she means to be subservient, but that is her culture, you know. I don't mean to be glib, Lisa and it sounds like I have to come down off my perch, I don't mean that. I mean that for her, to just make her feel 'up', come up! Don't stay there down at the bottom... My belief is that everybody is equal. Janet wasn't brought up like me and so that is still in her culture. She is sixty-years old and her upbringing is still there! It is part of her.

From Joan’s perspective, Janet continues to embody the subjectivity of an outsider, despite her status as an elder. Drawing on a study of Guyanese Presbyterians, Macdonald (2008) asserts that Guyanese "come from a culture where whites had historically dominated" thus upon integrating into Canadian churches, he says that they have an "understanding that whites should be in charge" (187). This assertion, however, fails to address: first, why whites first presume that they ought to take charge, which only adds to their position of privilege, and second, an assumption that racialized church goers are passive in their willingness to allow whites to be in charge. There is a disconnect in communication as racialized and white church goers are overly concerned with maintaining a status quo, all in the name of unity. From my observations during the community dinners, Guyanese Presbyterians did not want white people to take charge, but desired their participation. The transition for racialized congregants to take on and/or retain an authoritative role as ‘host’ within the church is no easy task when perceiving attitudes and behaviours that infer their subjection from white members, thereby limiting their full inclusion and participation in developing congregational growth.

Crossing racialized boundaries is a complex and agentive process. I observed changes in racialized volunteers’ demeanor when they engaged with and oscillated between white and non-white cliques within the church. When members of the Woman's Association or other white congregants entered the kitchen, Natalie and Patty would greet them politely then turn away, busying themselves to create spatial and affective distance. Janet’s behaviour also underwent a marked change. When she interacted with white church members, such as Nancy and Hank, both of whom are white Canadians and long term elders of Session, she spoke to them with acquiescence and supplication. Her shoulders would take a slight slump, making her petite 4’10 frame even smaller. I took note
that she avoided prolonged eye contact and clasped her hands together in front of her while she spoke in soft tones to them. She containerized herself while interacting with white congregants. For Janet and other racialized women, they perceived that voicing their perspectives would further alienate them from their calling to church service as they would be seen as ‘causing trouble’.

Janet's critiques on the initial lack of support by the Women's Association was a result of her conviction to have all members participate. Janet did not always articulate her reasons rationally and coherently on her desire and need for white support but would tell me how her intentions derived from what she feels is the right thing to do. Her fear was that the project would end with her. She would tell Mi-Na, Natalie, Patty and me, of her uncertainty that she could carry on with the project because of various health concerns, her arthritic hands, sore shoulder and other ailments. Janet saw that the community dinners needed to take on a life of its own by becoming larger than herself. For her, it was the 'right thing' to include members of the church community and to be open to their involvement. She would say, for example, “if people are home doing nothing then they may as well come to the church”. These “people” were understood as white people as she listed names of white congregants. She saw her openness as a means of helping uplift their spiritual well-being, which would remediate their inclusion and involvement. The dinners were not Janet's solution to the problem of church decline, but it was the beginning of a larger vision that she had for developing the church into a broader set of multi-dimensional and multi-faceted community, accented as Christian worship.

Worship for some racialized congregants does not necessarily mean participation in formalized structure vis-a-vis church rituals, but as a coming together, where people are involved relationally in the house of God, experiencing love and welcome. The practice of openness goes beyond the individual and be affirmed as an institutional arrangement to demonstrate that the church is invested in this virtue. Janet asserted to me on more than one occasion, "the church should be open all the time. We should be worshipping for seven days, instead of having church on one day". Having the participation of white women was a difficult yet virtuous calling. Janet knew that that she and other racialized women would fall under the gaze of whiteness, of having her Christian and community project come under scrutiny. It was an act of hospitality, of welcoming those who are different within the church. It was also an inversion of Derridean hospitality by which the leaders of the church, who are usually categorized as church hosts, were made into guests through the acts of invitation. This did not mean, however, that they would remain as guests, but worked
to reaffirm their position as hosts. Having the participation of white women in the church dinners was an opportunity for interethnic relations, and more importantly, in taking down barriers that systematically segregated women of colour and white women.

White Help and the Disenfranchisement of Racialized Volunteers

Despite the desire for interethnic relations, white members of the church were not as optimistic as Janet in growing the church. The primary concern of the Woman's Association was an economic logistics of running a church full-time. Some women, both white and racialized, saw this rationale as an impediment in developing church community, especially with talk of making the monthly community meals to bi-monthly events. Joan said to me,

There are some people here who are complaining about the money. I say give her (Janet) the money! It is only twenty dollars to feed thirty people and Janet was paying out of her own pocket when this all started

Many individuals voiced their frustration with members who only focused on the cost of meals. However, when I spoke with Nancy, she provided a broader perspective on the cost of the meal. In her assessment, running the community dinner more than monthly was unsustainable. She acknowledges that the groceries for the community dinners are quite cheap; her concern is the expenditure related to: heating the church during the winter; running the air conditioner during the summer; the cost of electricity such as lights and stove, and the cost of replenishing pots, pans and other cooking utensils that were over 40 years old. She also added that the church would eventually need extra funds to make the church building wheel chair accessible, and potentially, she added, a cost of a dishwasher if Presbytery deemed it necessary for food safety concerns.

Making the church building hospitable is a precarious endeavour. Programs, such as the community dinner, are not based on profit yet will incur expenses that are uncovered by donations. I asked Nancy about accessing funds from the Presbytery, she sighed and explained that the community dinners would not likely qualify. Her fear was that a request would create an opening for the Presbytery to put regulations in place to protect the church from potential lawsuits. Members of Presbytery, for example, would likely raise concerns over food handling practices
since volunteers did not have food safe certifications. Even if TECPC was successful in acquiring funds, the financial support may not even cover the costs of materials and certifications required by Presbytery. Nancy raised an example of a nearby Presbyterian church who had sought Presbytery funding and were required to install a dishwasher to ensure that all utensils are properly sanitized. She also noted that if this was brought forward, there was the possibility that the congregation would be told to terminate the community dinners because of these concerns. At the same time, the community dinners are significant for ensuring that TECPC, as a church, does not close. Through reports submitted to the Presbytery, the community dinner project demonstrates that TECPC is actively outreaching to the neighbourhood and working to grow its congregation, both spiritually and in numbers. “I have been at this church since I was two years old and I am now 70”, says Nancy. “There is no way that I will allow this church to be closed by the presbytery”. Ultimately, the goal for Nancy and members of the Woman’s Association is to keep the church open.

By the second year of the community dinner program, members of the Woman's Association began to volunteer their time. Janet was ecstatic that she had four additional women working in the kitchen. To help, Nancy bought a case of spaghetti sauce jars that were a 'good deal' at the grocery store. Carrying in the case and placing it down on the kitchen table, she radiated pleasure and fulfillment. As she heaved the box on the kitchen island, she announced that this was more cost effective and would save time by reducing the labour of manually chopping up the vegetables. Over the following months, volunteers arrived at the church at 4pm to warm up frozen goods or items that Nancy found on sale at local grocery chains, bought in bulk and transported to the church. Dinners were no longer 'fresh' and 'homemade', but were now frozen lasagnas, pizzas and burgers, and canned spaghetti. Nancy expressed her belief that she had 'done good', emphasized by saying that dinner guests should be happy and are lucky to be served such foods, saying "It is more than they could afford". In terms of preparation, these meals were "successful" as they were quick and easy and did not require the involvement of more volunteers.

With less time devoted to food preparation, conversation between women became expedient, shallow and closed. They shifted to small talk: conversation of the weather, grocery sales at local markets, upcoming congregational events and church maintenance projects. Time-saving foods did not allow for time to engage relationally. Talk of home in Guyana and stories of family ceased; new volunteers did not have time to share their own stories. The habitual sharing of foods also
came to an end. For two months, Janet continued to bring in food to share with others; however, the new volunteers (the white women) politely declined to sample the home-cooked food, citing problems with digestion. Although the volunteers did not show any malice intent in refusing the food, Janet read their rejection as courteous revulsion. She did not insist that they try her food, she would take a step back and with a slight hunch in her shoulders, murmur "Oh I understand" or "That's okay, maybe next time". The white women did not seem to notice how their response affected Janet and more so, they were unaware how racialized women interpreted their response as inhospitable actions. Refusing commensality of ethnic food was interpreted as a sensorial and gustatory distantiation of Janet’s ethnoracial identity, which contradicts a facet of state multiculturalism where food is central to the celebration and tolerance of difference in public cultural festivals. In her study of Pakistani women in Toronto, Ameeriar (2017) finds that food is one of many components of a ‘sensorial regime’ of racial knowledge “to produce selective forms of racialized, sensorial alterity, disciplining Other subjects into a minoritized space” (77). Refusing the taste and smell of Janet’s ethnoracial identity is an exclusionary practice that socially distinguishes her apart from a tolerable, pleasurable aesthetic and “sensuous experience of difference” (Ameeriar 2017:97).

By the end of my fieldwork, Mi-Na, Natalie and Patty rarely participated; new volunteers recruited by the Woman’s Association showed up thirty minutes prior to the dinner commencement to hastily lay out the stagecraft of hospitality- lining the table with dinner clothes, putting out bowls of chips as center pieces on each table and laying out drinks and desserts buffet-style. To help expedite post-dinner clean up, the Woman's Association bought paper dinner plates and disposable cutlery. Dinner guests did not voice their displeasure with the changes. Instead, they made eye contact with a slight frown as the disposable plates were flimsy, awkwardly spreading food to ensure that their plate was balanced. Other guests would take two to three disposable plates, stacked one on top of the other, as a method of creating a stronger structural support system for the food. Some guests seemed annoyed as plastic forks would warp with the heat of the food, requiring two to three trips to the garbage can as new forks were retrieved.

Unintentionally, white help quickly disintegrated the camaraderie racialized women had established through their labour as partners, transforming ordinary relationships into friendships. Russell (2009) calls this a "deformation" in hospitality “when it is practiced as a way of caring for so called "inferior people" by those who are more advantaged and able to prove their superiority
by being "generous", rather than using a model of partnership" (80). The deformation in hospitality because it “[takes] apart and [reshapes] a previous understanding” of the community dinners as a concept and confluence practices of ‘being of this world’ (Russell 2009: 80). The help provided by the Woman’s Association undermined the formation of partnerships. Racialized volunteers were repositioned as 'objects of charity' as the call for more bodies was interpreted as incompetence in management and skill, that the dinners had grown too successful for the current volunteers to cope. Nancy soon began making decisions on behalf Janet, in the name of 'doing good'. Implementing a strategy based on saving time and money repositioned TECPC to fall into uniformity with dinners held by neighbouring Presbyterian churches. TECPC was no longer unique nor exceptional.

**Conclusion**

The challenge to congregational unity, according to feminist theologian Letty M. Russell is that it is hard work and difficult to achieve (67). In casual conversations, many Christian Presbyterians believe that faith alone provides a foundational connection between diverse and disparate people: faith unifies through the virtue of hospitality. However, this chapter articulates the tension between the unity and difference through a detailed exploration of commensality between hosts and guests. Unlike the category of stranger, guests are known to the hosts. The classification scheme between guests and hosts is awkward and ambiguous and are mediated by racial and class divisions. First, racialized women hosting the community dinners are hosts to predominantly white guests, most who are socially and economically disadvantaged. Meals offer the materiality of hospitality and create a space for the sharing of personal stories that emerge from the sensorial experience of ‘homecooked’ meals (Cowan 1990, Candea and Da Col 2012, Ochs and Shohet 2006). Materiality of food thus links with spatial and temporal awareness of what is ‘divine’, ‘good’ and what can be ‘better’. Fresh food, for example, was imperative in making a ‘good’ meal. The sensorial experience of fresh produce that required labour for its transformation into a warm meal was experienced as God’s gifts of love and life.

Guests, moreover, do not see themselves as individuals without rights. Time and time again, they assert their desires and will upon their hosts to make better meals that attend to their personal memories of family, compassion and love. They articulate explicitly and straightforwardly their
culinary and gustatory values. Janet, Jennifer, Mi-Na and Patty perceived these actions as annoying shaming tactics, yet they did not interpret them as hostile or threatening to their role as hosts. The requests were acted upon to improve and diversify the meals each month, experiencing small pleasures when guests expressed their delight with the food. Respectful mutuality was in the process of emerging as dinners were prepared not out of obligation, but from a desire to ‘warm the spirit’ of guests.

Secondly, white women, who come from middle-class backgrounds, situate themselves as hosts to racialized women, taking over and displacing them from the role of dinner hosts. This act of subversion was unintentional yet consequential in relegating racialized volunteers to feel and experience second-class Christian citizenship. As noted by Pitt-Rivers (1963), Ahmed (2010) and others, hospitality is based on structures of inequality that cannot be resolved because this would entail conflict. Rather than seeing inequality as the precondition of conflict, conflict is already in situ within the relations of inequality. People who navigate systemic inequalities have had much practice in conditioning themselves to function within oppressive relations that retain white impressions of their benevolence and ‘to not make trouble’. To name or voice their disenfranchisement creates more work for racialized women: there would be an assumption that they are not ‘friends’ with white Christian fellowship or that do not value their participation in volunteer work. Worse, there is the potential that they would be ostracized from the church community in order to retain congregational unity. As such, racialized volunteers occupied the role of hosts to dinner guests and second-class hosts to white members of the Woman’s Association.

According to Russell, "unity is an impossible possibility. Although the church is one in Christ, it lives each day torn by difference while seeking to manifest that oneness" (68). Unity is thus experienced quite differently as women of colour work harder at producing a false sense of unity, and white women were often oblivious to these relational inequities. In this sense, women of colour are intentionally maintaining the barriers that maintain their marginalization because they do not want to make trouble for those at the center. For them, they see this as an act of hospitality as they are consciously and carefully keeping God’s house running smoothly, despite their resentment. Resentment here did not unfold into hostile relations but signified a failure of welcome through the refusal of the hosts’ sense of self.
Finally, reciprocity within the context of community dinners at TECPC does not involve human-human interactions. Janet had no expectation of a return from sharing her Guyanese meals with fellow volunteers and did not expect gifts from dinner guests. Guests and volunteers similarly did not express any obligation of returning a gift. For Janet, hospitality was a reciprocal activity with God. God provided the food, guided her to ‘good deals’ and inspired her with the idea of the community dinners as an ambition to grow the congregation’s spiritual vitality. She felt God’s grace and was thankful for moments to experience His love and compassion through her service to the congregation. Grace, according to Pitt-Rivers (1992), is a comparable concept to Mauss’ hau of carrying the essence of the donor which is sacred and dangerous if given in excess. Yet, while Mauss proposes that there is an obligation of a return, Pitt-Rivers suggests that the obligation is in fact voluntary. What is in fact a reciprocal obligation is an exchange of grace: “The moral obligation is only to return grace and what is resented if it is not returned is not the material loss but the rejection of the donor’s self” (1992: 239). God’s grace is located in all aspects of hospitality, within the inspiration, materiality and guests themselves.
Chapter 7
Welcoming the Stranger and Jesus: Christian Hospitality

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

26 “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

27 He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ and ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’”

28 “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

30 In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”


The biblical story of the good Samaritan provides a narrative for congregants at TECPC that exemplifies an ethical perspective for virtuous behavior on welcome and openness to those who are marked as different, strange, and ‘other’. In church sermons and bible study session, it was common for me to hear congregants and elders discussing the personal virtue of being and becoming a ‘good’ neighbor as well as collective strategies for ‘welcoming strangers’. The Social Action Handbook (SAH), a manual circulated by the Presbyterian Church of Canada states that “Jesus emphasizes God’s unwavering, unconditional love for the stranger regardless of economic
or social status and makes such love central to discipleship” (SAH 85). The migrant, the widow, the orphan, the impoverished, and the hungry are all examples of ‘the other’ who, according to biblical doctrine, fall with the category of the stranger. They are those who are disconnected from home, family and spirituality. “The people of God have a long tradition of giving hospitality to the stranger or ‘alien’….God places the alien or stranger in the same category of needs as orphans and widows” (SAH 85-6). This passage exemplifies a history of Christian doctrine in welcoming strangers as a spiritual virtue.

Politically and socially, at a preliminary level, the figure of the stranger is fetishized as an outsider, an unknown person who can potentially be anything because the stranger is a person without status. As noted by Pitt-Rivers (1963), the status and identity of the stranger in their group of origin is not transferable to the new group, it is ‘othered’. On the one end of the extreme, because of their ambivalent status, strangers are looked at with suspicion and conceptualized as a category of hostility and violence (Ahmed 2000, Pitt-Rivers, 1992, Derrida 2000b). Ahmed (2000) articulates that crime prevention discourse of ‘stranger danger’ defines what is safe and what is threatening. Strangers in this discursive domain are particular kinds of bodies that are marked out in relation to a neighbor (who is safe), while a stranger is popularly imagined as an opaque figure lurking in the shadows awaiting nefarious opportunities. The stranger is thus perceived as dangerous because “the outside is contained within a figure we imagine we have already faced” (Ahmed 2000:2, emphasis in original). A stranger is a predetermined body: it is already known, formed by what is already deemed unsafe, antagonistic and inimical. The stranger is depersonified, and at times dehumanized, as they are detached from their own history as a means of making them knowable to the host/receiving community. According to Ahmed (2000), the act of welcoming produces the stranger because it already assumes that certain groups do not belong (2000: 21).

Parallel to ‘stranger danger’ is the alien stranger who is not only a relational encounter but also a spatial foreigner; the alien is the “outsider inside” (Ahmed 2000:3). The stranger is not only a relational quality but also a spatial attribute as there is an assumption that strangers desire to settle, importing values, ideas and beliefs to the receiving community (Simmel 1950). A stranger stands out only if they stay; a stranger who remains mobile is more inclined to be welcomed by a community because acts of openness and hospitality do not necessarily entail expectations or commitments of reciprocity (Simmel 1950: 404). Certain kinds of bodies are cleaved out as particularly alien and dangerous, necessitating protectionist border regulations and tightened
immigration policies that are designed to protect citizens (Maynard 2017, Thobani 2007, Ahmed 2000, Derrida 2000a). Undocumented migrants and refugees are deemed ‘illegal’ because they cross borders without documents, their unknown status is perceived dangerous to citizens and their bodies are required to be detained and made knowable for the safety of the receiving community (Maynard 2017, Gomberg-Munoz 2011). For host communities, the alien stranger configurates the limits of hospitality as receiving such individuals cannot be thought of as a ‘welcome’ because of the hostility and potential of physical, emotional and psychic violence that debases a person’s dignity and sense of personhood, re-emphasizing that they do not belong. Indeed, what is lacking in multicultural formulations of the stranger are the mobile bodies and their mental health concerns. At TECPC, persons struggling with depression and forms of dementia were predominantly transient strangers. Some entered the church for only an evening and never returned. A few may settle on the church grounds for a season, usually during the summer months, before moving on, and never returning. Some may remain within the church and yet, do not feel accepted by the racialized and white members of the church. Indeed, they are simply tolerated. Many elderly racialized women at TECPC feared underprivileged white people who exemplified a stranger.

Chapter Overview

This chapter is about the struggle to be open to difference and the struggle for mutuality and welcome. I begin this chapter by considering who are strangers for church members to assess how different members struggle to welcome. In the first section, I discuss the importance and value of the biblical narrative of the good Samaritan. This parable provides a foundation for church goers to discuss, understand and relate their own experiences of giving and receiving hospitality. In the second section, I detail the stories of three white ‘strangers’ and how they were welcomed (and not) by elderly women who are long term members of the congregation. This section examines the contradictions in hospitalities that emerge from the ethic in being open and vulnerable to the unknown. The experience of vulnerability is a concealed aspect of hospitality, hidden by a desire for exaltation through love and compassion. In the third section, I discuss the transformative process of hospitality by welcoming the sacred within oneself: conversion. Here, I detail the experience of one church elder, William, in welcoming the Holy Spirit and opening himself to
God's presence. Openness to God and the Holy Spirit is an act of surrender to the ultimate stranger. Conversion is an act of receiving the Holy Spirit within oneself whereby one becomes both stranger and host simultaneously, briefly collapsing the categories of hospitality. In the last section, I conclude with a discussion on the technical aspects of hospitality, such as the resources and objects that congregants and elders believe will make the church more accessible and welcoming to elderly members of the church community. The overarching theme of this chapter is boundary crossing, both spatial and spiritual, rupturing and suturing structures of separation.

The Good Samaritan: A Moral Exemplar

Biblical stories, such as “The Parable of the Good Samaritan”, offer narratives for thinking about hospitality and for deliberating proper Christian social relationships, most notably in making strangers into neighbours and on welcoming strangers into the church. Biblical stories open discursive spaces for thinking about and discussing universal human qualities such as love, compassion and humility. The biblical parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10) is one popular story that congregants turned to on multiple occasions. Liam explains,

There are some bible stories that always struck me as a kid, even though I hated Sunday school, they always struck me on what is relevant, what makes sense to me, what I identify with, and what I think is true. Storytelling is a great way to convey messages. Just a few words speak an incredible amount to me, even as a kid. The logic of stories like the Good Samaritan rings with me and that's why church is relevant. What one would say in a thousand words, the bible says to me in just a few sentences. Is there a lot there? Yup!

The story of the Good Samaritan offers several perspectives and points of reference for elaborating how one is to give hospitality to others in relation to degrees of relational intimacy, to people one meets only in passing, to people who attend church activities and to those whom one considers neighbours and friends. For some congregants, the parable as with other biblical stories are personalized and deciphered to better understand their experiences with other people, for making sense of who and what is a neighbor and more importantly a good neighbor, and how they, as
members of faith, ought to conduct themselves with people whom they did not know. People whom congregants encountered during fleeting moments and mundane encounters were referred to as strangers; they were not known to congregants. However, more significantly, they did not deem strangers as either hostile or dangerous. During bible study session, the Good Samaritan was a narrative device for congregants to relate their experiences of carrying out, receiving or witnessing good deeds from unknown individuals, such as someone helping an elderly step off the transit car. ‘Nice’ and ‘helpful’ experiences reified a shared humanity between strangers, which congregants interpreted as examples of God’s presence and grace in a contemporary post-Christian society. For Toronto East Presbyterians, they experience Toronto as a secular city that only tolerates sparks of Christian values. One congregant in particular saw herself and other Christians as a minority sect whose Christian identity and values are socially denied and excluded due to cosmopolitan political correctness that recognized non-Christian religious diversity (Klassen 2011).

Biblical stories such as the Good Samaritan reorient congregants toward Christian values for relating to one another, justifying and making sense of one’s own experiences, improving their actions and upholding their spiritual and moral beliefs by motivating ideas on what is ‘good’ through affective forces of compassion and love. These two emotions are, for Toronto East Presbyterians, the very core for encouraging merciful actions which makes people feel a shared humanity. Liam says in one bible study session,

Samaritans were looked down upon back in Jesus’ time because they weren’t a tolerated group. They were very low on the social ladder, if you know what I mean. A Samaritan wouldn’t have any reason to stop and help. You would expect that from the priest! But a Samaritan? No. What this story shows is one of the essential messages on being a neighbour and that is love and compassion.

In his perspective, being a neighbor is more than a superficial welcome, it is a deep action that entails an openness tempered by compassion to those who are situated in and experiencing discontents and challenging circumstances. It is on one hand a return of dignity, and on the other hand, of giving respect. Openness and welcome is similar to Elisha’s discussion on compassion among Christians in Knoxville, specifically that social outreach “reinforces the importance of
taking risks and stepping outside one’s comfort zone” (2011: 167). For Toronto East Presbyterians, a neighbour is not only a spatial relation, it does not only infer someone who lives next door or in close proximity to your home, it is an affective relation because encounters, no matter how brief, are potentially transformative impressions. Compassion and love are Christian values that are conceptualized and idealized as qualities of a ‘good life’, especially in today’s society which congregants’ characterize as ‘Godless’ (see Chapter 3). Too often, they experience a lack of happiness, time and fulfillment to live and feel ‘life’ due to the hurried pace and growing demands of work and family obligations. Giving and receiving compassion is a form of empowerment and is experienced as a positive sense of being. Liam continues,

The Bible’s essential message is about love, about ‘love your God’, ‘love thy neighbour’, and it is about humanness— that means something and it touches me personally. It touches my heart. It is not just an intellectual exercise but also from practical experience. I see it in action and it just convinces me more and more... It’s how you live the faith that we are taught and how much you demonstrate your love for others and accept each other’s and our shortcomings. In other words, don’t be judgmental. It’s really simple stuff. I find that at TECPC, we are a church family. There are some rough edges, but really it’s brothers and sisters.

When congregants discuss how they helped or were helped by people whom they did not know, strangers on the street or neighbours with some chores, they interpret such actions and experiences as God’s love and grace. Indeed, neighbor and stranger are interchangeable categories as God’s presence is the stranger, and as one congregant said in bible study, ‘we are strangers to the stranger’. Compassion and love are intertwined emotions that propel and motivate act between those who are socially, culturally and religiously different, yet at the same time, who are equal in spite of such differences (Elisha 2011). Each person is a child of God and this is understood to be a basic principle, a shared essence, that unites all people. The story of the good Samaritan exemplifies how a neighbor and stranger ought to conduct themselves to each other.

Building a community of faith flourishes from one’s relationship with God. It is a relationship rooted in personal and spiritual reflection and branches out as people learn to relate to each other. As explained to me by members of the congregation, God intends for each person to learn what is
relevant to them. This makes faith a personal journey (Luhrmann 2012). Faith is not static, but relational and situational and as such, faith will evolve, develop, and change, growing from the shifting circumstances and experiences of each individual. Having faith is recognizing and understanding that each person is on an intentional and personal journey that is shaped by God. It is at once a ‘personal connection’ between an individual and God and a ‘personal practice’ that is shared with others. The bible provides a vigorous understanding for practicing “what it means to be human” and a shared dignity that transcends time and space.

Parables are moral exemplars (Humphrey 1997) by which congregants draw upon to better understand and judge their own morality and virtuous conduct. Exemplars, according to Humphrey (1997) have three main characteristics. First, they work on the level of the individual. The appeal of the good Samaritan as an exemplar of Christian hospitality is subjectively and intentionally selected from a vast array of potential biblical stories. In her study of exemplars in Mongolia, she notes that “exemplars are not the same for everyone, but chosen by subjects in their own particular circumstance” (1997:34). Exemplars can inspire qualities that appeal to individuals given their personal circumstances and experiences. Second, exemplars do not instill consistency or uniformity because they are unique to each individual. This is a willful way of reinforcing “different ‘ways of life’…which acknowledges rather than denies social conflict” (1997:34). The relevance, prevalence and understanding of the story of Good Samaritan as an exemplar of hospitality may be incongruent with other Presbyterian and Protestant denominations and even among congregants within the same church. Third, “exemplars as moral discourse are open-ended and unfinished” (1997:34). As will unfold during this chapter, there are multiple ways of ‘reading’ the parable of the Good Samaritan. There is no single meaning in the parable, rather what emerges is that the parable is given meaning by congregants depending on their specific situation and need. When Liam states that “storytelling is a great way to convey a message”, what he is inferring is the that biblical narratives produce a discursive space to deliberate and reflect on the different ways of transforming oneself and of one’s commitment to certain ideals, virtues and qualities (see Humphrey 1997:42).

The Good Samaritan is a complete example of a character that elderly congregants, especially those attending bible study, returned to as an ethical example on how to conduct oneself when encountering someone whom they did not know. As noted by Laidlaw (2014), people learn virtuous living “by placing themselves in specific relation to an exemplar” rather than by
“assimilating a complete and coherently ordered tradition” (2014: 83). The story of the Good Samaritan is instructive as it is a small part of a larger whole: it relates how ordinary people can live like Jesus, who is the exemplar of all exemplars of righteous living. “Exemplification” according to Bandak (2015) “emphasizes the capacity of particulars to relate to universalities” (2015: 53). When congregants say statements like “live life like Jesus” or “do as Jesus”, such utterances are valued yet do not provide a clear sense on how one ought to act or how to respond in certain situations. During bible study, Janet, an elderly Guyanese woman, reflected on an instance in which she encountered a young woman, who was sitting on the street corner asking for money. She told congregants how she gave the young woman a few dollars, but did not understand how the woman was not helping herself given her own experience in migrating to Canada and making a living from nothing. Her concern, in hindsight, was that the woman was taking advantage of her. Liam, the professional accountant, and Natalie, another elderly Guyanese woman, told Janet that she must think of the story of the Good Samaritan, because we cannot know what happened to the woman, what event brought her to that street corner. After a few moments of silence, an elderly blind white man, named Jonathan, who was sitting on a couch near the back of the room, said:

It’s true that you may have been taken advantage by that homeless woman, that is something that we can’t know now. I don’t think that matters. If you think about the Good Samaritan, he too risked being taken advantage of. The point I think is like Abraham said on Sunday, that we have to think about righteous living. The right relationship for the Samaritan is about helping someone with a clear heart. We can’t judge other people.

After Jonathan’s reflection, the small group of people attending bible study, five in total including myself, sat in silent reflection with our ponderous gazes casted downward toward the carpet, contemplating Jonathan’s extension of the exemplar to Abraham’s sermons. Abraham’s Sunday sermon, to which Jonathan is referring, explained the meaning of Jesus’s words “You are blessed”. Abraham unpacked the meaning of blessed by describing the original word used in the Greek New Testament, *Makarios*, to elucidate that blessed is something more than being happy, as per the English Bible. *Makarios*, according to Abraham, is about a sense of well-being. “People of God, people who are into Jesus”, he says, “live inside blessing because they refuse to allow their lives be upset by circumstance. They continue to live inside the relationship [with God] no matter what
happens”. Doing good, no matter how it is received by others, is ultimately about one’s relationship with God, of experiencing God’s grace. Grace, in this sense, is about God’s unconditional love. The Good Samaritan is a figure that inspires congregants in making direct and indirect connections to the bible and its stories, characters, and relationships, to imagine and think how they can imitate or become like certain exemplars, such as the Samaritan, and by extension, ‘be like Jesus’ (see Bandak 2015: 52, 54). In doing so, it makes the bible as the Word of God accessible, meaningful and relatable.

**Hospitality in God’s House**

In one sermon, Abraham preached to the congregation that the decision of newcomers, as well as each member of the congregation, to walk through the threshold of the church doors is not an individual choice but is an action guided by the will of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Abraham elaborated by drawing on an example of a recent newcomer, an elderly Scottish woman named Ruth who had not set foot in a church in over sixty years. She had the intention of doing so for many decades; however, she had put it off time and time again. It was not until one recent Sunday, she was passing TECPC while strolling along the busy walkway, and quite randomly decided to step inside for Sunday service. Abraham asks the seated congregation, “What force, after forty years, finally compelled Ruth to enter a church?” To which Abraham responded that it was God guiding Ruth along in her journey. Ruth’s story is one of many narratives telling of the various callings that compel individuals to enter the church. Toronto East Presbyterians conceptualize callings as ‘invitations’ put forth by God to enter His house- the church. As stated by Abraham in his service, “if God is the one that opens the door, who are we to close it?”, an emphatic reminder that members of the church are to welcome newcomers and each other with hospitality. The church is conceptualized as a household where each person is not a ‘stranger’ but to be accepted and respected as members of God’s family. The virtue of hospitality is to be open to God’s gift of love and grace, to be like God without becoming like God.

In the following section, I present three episodes that stood out as endemic to the practice of welcoming strangers and neighbours. Welcoming strangers is a difficult endeavor, although ideologically, it seems like it ought to be simple. Indeed, the disjuncture between ideology, morality, and practice makes the church appear hypocritical as the will to welcome and be
welcomed is not only constrained to racialized people but experienced by those who are white and underclass. This highlights the emergent contradictions within modes of hospitalities. As seen in the previous chapter, some racialized women strive and speak of a desire to welcome and be welcomed; however, when they encounter white strangers, the will to hospitality encounters a blip, that is, a temporary deviation.

The strangers at TECPC that I discuss in this section are white, middle-aged and come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. For white and racialized congregants, what made these neighbours particularly different was their mental health. One of the strangers frequently attends church activities, while the other two were transient and did not participate in ongoing activities. They occupied the space of the church and received the welcome and support of white church members, while racialized church elders were challenged in opening themselves to conduct a welcome with a ‘clear heart’. White transient people struggling with depression and dementia were strangers to racialized congregants, exemplifying ‘stranger danger’. This configuration of hospitality is a different configuration of multiculturalism that stresses a welcome (or lack of) between two different categories of strangers.

Three Tales of (White) Strangers

“Angry Martin”

When I spoke with Joan, an elder at TECPC, she explained the work of hospitality to me in relation to the ongoing dilemma of attracting people to come to church, which is an ongoing concern for many Christian churches in Toronto (see Bramadat and Seljak 2008). She says,

We as a people will never get people to come to church, that’s not what we are meant to do in my opinion. What we are meant to do, is like the story of the Good Samaritan, have you heard that one? God never wanted buildings. He wanted us out there on the street, doing what we do.

Joan is well known throughout the neighborhood at TECPC for her generosity and compassion for street people. Twice a day, she walks the neighbourhood, stopping to talk with the panhandlers and street people standing around the local pharmacy across the street or on the sidewalk along the
neighbouring community center. She knows each person by name and converses with them about the nuances of their daily life— their friends, their background, their despairs and hopes.

One evening, during the summer, I walked with her around the neighbourhood, we navigated towards a busy intersection that was bustling with mothers and nannies walking with strollers or holding the hands of young children. She nodded towards a young man with unkempt blondish hair and dishevelled clothes sitting on the sidewalk in front of the local supermarket. She says to me,

I got to know Mark fairly well because I would talk to him. I believe that is what the church is for. We’re here to be ‘out there’. I can’t go leading services and stuff, but I can do my own, and I can talk to as many people as I can.

We stopped to greet Mark, who perked up as he welcomed Joan with a broad smile. When she asked how he was doing, he confided that he needed help paying for his medical prescription for ear pain he was experiencing. As she rummaged in her purse, she pulled out a ten-dollar bill and told Mark that “God must be looking at you today”. Through this off-handed remark, she is inferring that their encounter was no coincidence but was guided by God. After we parted ways with Mark, she turned to me and explained that she understands that many people within the church would think that Mark’s story was ‘rubbish’.

We cannot judge people and let them walk away. Now you see that I have given him $10 today, but I probably won’t give him anything for two weeks and that’s fine. A lot of the people you see here have a lot of psychiatric problems. Have you met Angry Martin?

‘Angry Martin’ is older man of German descent who usually attends post-sermon tea at TECPC. I became acquainted with him during the World Day of Prayer post-service tea that was held on

101 World Day of Prayer is global movement in which women from various denominations join together, regardless of nationality, culture and language, for prayer and social justice.
the first Friday in March 2013 at TECPC. He approached me while I was pouring my tea at the front of the banquet room and his first comment to me was not an introduction but a statement, “the reason why men attend service,” he said to me, “is to meet and court women”. After just listening to a sermon on social justice for women as practitioners within the church, this utterance caught me off guard. He continued, becoming impassionate and vehement in his speech, “there are always more women at church than men and because of this, I will never have a voice in church”. I asked him, “why do you think that?” now silently questioning why he was attending a sermon celebrating women and feminist inclinations. Leaning forward, he spits out, “I come from the most hated region in the world: Germany. I’m forever condemned by everyone!”. As our exchange unfolded, I learned that he sees himself as an outsider because of his ethnoracial origin. Although white and speaking with unaccented standard English, he feels stigmatized, an outcast, a social prejudice of Germans that he traces to the actions of Nazi Germans and Jewish genocide during World War II. Feeling increasingly uneasy, I excused myself from the conversation and walked away.

Since this first meeting, I have come to learn that Angry Martin’s outbursts are not unusual. For some congregants, their name for him is a means of recalling that they must be patient and open to his difference. They did not call him “Angry Martin” when conversing with him, but used the term when referring to him. The name was a reminder that perceived hostilities are not to be taken personally but are manifestations of his antipathy of systemic injustices. Joan explained to me on our walk,

Angry Martin will yell and talk- that’s the way he likes to flex his muscles, that is very important to him, but when you listen to his story, he has had a rough time. He thought he would come to Toronto, I don’t know what he thought he would do, but his brothers and his father had all committed suicide. So now he has some psychiatric problem so he can’t work. But Martin is so angry that he can’t get close to people and it’s everybody else’s fault, not his, in his mind. I’ll be walking the street and he’ll come hobbling along because he got a bad knee and will tell me all about the political setting here. He’s got big depth of knowledge of the political system, on the [city] councillors and the MPs [Provincial Members of
Parliament]. He knows the intricacies of government. If you really listen to him, he’s really quite interesting.

But sometimes he gets so angry and he lands in jail because he fights these drug addicts. He gets very fed up with the drug addicts that live in the building and take over the building. I know from another fellow whom I met on the street, Jackson, now Jackson was a guy who had his own business but ended up on alcohol, lost his family, lost his business, but managed to get his own apartment here. He was lying on the grass in the park and I say ‘Jackson, what are you doing out here?’ and he says ‘well the addicts have taken over my apartment, so I just cleared out’. He’s confirming what Martin is already telling everyone about that building, but the lasses [women attending church] aren’t open to talk with him because he is so angry.

Hospitality does not simply begin ‘in’ the church but begins through neighbourly relations and interactions with people who may be jarring to the senses such as Martin and with those whom many pass on the street without thought, like Jonathan. Joan draws attention to a willingness to be ‘open’ in making conversation with the local street people, which in turn, humanizes individuals who are predominantly perceived as strangers and threats. Congregants like Joan seem to be an exception at TECPC as each time I saw Martin at post-sermon tea, he sat alone in the corner of the banquet hall, leaning to the side and crossing his legs while holding a cup of tea. He did not approach anyone and very few individuals attempted to engage him in conversation. Commonly, he is treated as if he does not exist yet his presence was, at times, recognized. As noted by Joan, many church goers perceived Martin with apprehension, violating a Christian ethic of hospitality in practice. This was a hospitality that did not show any overt tensions, but asks the question of what it means to be tolerated.

In spite of his close spatial proximity with church congregants over a long period of time, he stands out as a strange presence. He is recognized yet interacting with him is strange and different. His impassioned speech is easily misinterpreted as irritation, making interactions feel confrontational and disconnected (Simmel 1950). For those who are unaware of Martin’s proclivities, an encounter with him is too easily dismissed as a hostile meeting with a stranger, reifying the concept of
‘stranger danger’. Seeing Martin is tolerating Martin, which does not necessarily infer that Martin is welcomed. Many church goers are not seeing Martin as he wants to be seen, for his presence is only tolerated. There is no openness to difference in tolerance. This form of tolerance and recognition is a characteristic of settler colonial structures. According to Audra Simpson (2011), settler recognition is a type of “not seeing that is so profound that mutuality cannot be achieved” (23). In my encounter with Martin, he was voicing how he does not belong and feels othered. To reify his otherness, he mimics the shared prevalent perception that many congregants have of him, even offering an interpretation of his own strangeness. That, for many, is reason to be angry and resentful.

“Summer”

I arrived at TECPC one afternoon to meet a congregant for an interview in late May. I leaned my bicycle at the back of lawn bench adjacent to the sidewalk and I noticed a curled-up figure laying on the grass on church grounds. The young white woman appeared to be no more than in her 20s, and had long brown stringy hair that covered her face. She was wearing ill-fitting clothes and was lying on a blue-plaid sleeping bag. She had a pillow and backpack within her arm’s reach. I approached to assess whether or not she was in any distress, knowing that a community health clinic was adjacent to the church which had programs for people with mental health and housing concerns. As I drew near, I asked her if everything was okay. She met my eyes with a forlorn look, she uttered softly, “I lost my soul”. Unsure if I heard her correctly, “your soul?” She started picking at the blades of grass, “my soul is trapped in a nail and I can’t find it. It’s buried somewhere under this grass”.

This woman, whom the congregation called “Summer”, camped out on the church lawn for the entire summer that year, looking for the nail that held her soul. After two months, Abraham introduced her to the congregation during sermons in early July saying, “In case you havn’t noticed, we have a guest who is staying with us outside. Her name is Summer and she is a child of God. God guided her here to us. Welcome her!” Summer was not a stranger who was feared, but was a stranger who unified members of the church through compassion and acts of hospitality. Elders invited Summer into the church multiple times, yet she vehemently declined. She confided in Joan that she was cursed and would die if she entered the church without her soul.
Elders thus went out to her and shared church meals with her. Every Sunday during post-sermon tea, Janet, Joan or Emma (the minister’s wife) would bring a small plate of crackers, cookies and tea out to her in the lawn, and on the last Wednesday of the summer months, they brought Summer warm meals during the community dinners. She accepted the food, avoiding any skin to skin contact with the elders by placing her hands within her shirt sleeves and taking the food with her clothes. Summer returned empty plates and cups by ringing the church buzzer at the rear entrance of the building and leaving the dishes at the foot of the door.

In early September, Summer left the church grounds. Elders and congregants did not know when or why she left, some jested that she may have found her missing soul and nail. Summer did not ask for help in her search for the nail and I was not aware whether congregants offered their help. What was unexpected after Summer’s departure is the sense of loss that some congregants experienced as congregants voiced her name during sermons when the minister asked the congregation to call out the names of people needing God’s love. Summer is an interesting figure of the stranger/neighbour as I rarely heard congregants speak of her with distrust. There was no talk of fear or lack of safety as congregants walked past her as she occupied the church lawn. What did emerge was a unified compassion and openness of Summer’s presence. According to Pitt-Rivers (1968), a stranger can be thought of as a sacred being because hospitality entails the possibility of reciprocating honour, dignity and grace. This is not typical of all strangers but to a stranger who is ambiguous, belonging yet not belonging, and more significantly, who is mysterious: “the mystery surrounding him allies him to the sacred and make him a suitable vehicle for the apparition of the God, the revelation of a mystery” (Pitt-Rivers 1968: 20). Summer’s presence was treated as an honour, as special care was taken to ensure that meals were taken out to her, the minister proclaimed to the congregation to welcome her, and she was offered a place to sleep within the church when the weather was unfavourable. Congregants respected her humanity and the integrity of her being on church grounds without an expectation of conversion or assimilation, nor was their obligation of an exchange. Summer was the ideal stranger as she made no demands on congregants but maintained a “character of suppliance” (Pitt-Rivers 1968:21). Indeed, congregants did not speak of the honour or compassion they experienced nor of their good deeds because to do so would be boastful. During bible study sessions, if congregants spoke of the good deeds they did for others, they were reminded that Jesus was humble.
“Christine”

Unlike Angry Martin and Summer, Christine is a stranger who had only a brief, single and awkward encounter with TECPC congregants. Of all three, she was treated with overt hostility. At around 4pm while we were preparing for the community dinner, a tall, heavy set white woman with brown hair pulled back into a lop-sided pony tail entered the banquet hall. Her unexpected appearance caused all conversation to cease. Entering the banquet room, the woman was visibly in distress, moving her hand frantically in front of her and her eyes were darting from side to side. She said that she did not know where she was, she was lost. Both Janet and Jennifer, who are Guyanese congregants, paused in action except to look at each other, unsure how to proceed. With their slight pause, she came up to me and pleaded that she need to charge her phone so that she could call her case worker. I brought her to the far end of the banquet room where a power outlet was located. I told to have a seat while we figured out whom to call. As she charged her phone and sat down, she looked up at me and said that her name was Christine, she was lost and came into the church because she saw the church sign that read there was a free meal.

I returned to Janet and Jennifer and reiterated Christine’s story. Janet sat down beside Christine and conversed with her for about 5 minutes. When she returned, Janet declared, “I don’t believe her”. I was quite surprised as Janet is usually welcoming to newcomers to the church, I asked her what led to believe Christine’s story was a fallacy. She said, “That woman is taking advantage of us! She wants a free meal”. Now, even more stunned than before, I asked, “why do you think that?!”. Janet turned to me and said, “Lisa, she is not really homeless. You see her iphone and digital camera in her bag? She is not homeless”. Jennifer nodded in agreement with Janet, saying “Does she look homeless to you? This meal is only for those who are homeless”. I did not push Janet and Jennifer any further seeing that she was becoming irate; the sign outside did not mention that the meal was only for the homeless and needy, it read “free meal, 6-8pm”. Although most guests who do attend the community dinners are of lower socio-economic situations, there are congregants who are of working and professional class statuses who shared and consumed the meals. When Joan, a Scottish elder, arrived, Janet informed her of the stranger sitting in our banquet hall. Alone, Joan escorted Christine into the minister’s office for her to call her case worker and they emerged a few hours later, returning to the banquet hall when dinner commenced.
A few days after this event, I met Joan at the church and she offered a different perspective. She told me, “it doesn’t matter if Christine’s story is true. She says she was walking for hours and fell asleep in a park and when she woke, she had no idea where she was. She started walking until she came upon our sign. We may have been taken advantage of, but we can’t just send her out walking with nowhere to go”. Years later, this event stands out as a moment of inhospitality, distinguishing how racialized and white hosts diverged in their welcome of a stranger. During my two and half years of fieldwork at TECPC, this was the only time that Janet, the elder in charge of the community dinner, stated that dinners were for homeless people only. This event made me question why Christine was perceived as a threat, an undesirable, to some racialized congregants.

Unlike Martin and Summer, Christine is an ambiguous exemplar of a stranger. She appeared looking for help, yet for church volunteers the materials items in her possession were not representative of a person in need. Christine’s material possessions of an iphone and digital camera contrasted with the sincerity of her utterance identifying her subjectivity of a lost wanderer. Her material items come to stand for her rather than her own words. Keane (2002) writes that “representational economies” between things, language and people carries moral implications that are linked with the metadiscourse of sincerity. She was unlike the familiarity of white church goers who are situated in troubled and low-socioeconomic situations and who are able to afford similar prestigious material objects, such as iphone and digital camera. This made Christine a categorical stranger for racialized congregants at that particular moment because of the rupture between words and objects. Due to the presence of the material items, Christine’s utterance casted doubt and opacity on her character and was thus evaluated as insincere, motivating distrust and closedness for some congregants. Janet suggested that it was probable the items stolen goods, stating “how else could that woman own an iphone!”. In writing about the ‘stranger danger’, Ahmed (2000) states, “We recuperate all that is dangerous about the unknown into the singularity of the alien form: danger is not only projected onto the outside, but the outside is contained within a figure we imagine we have already faced (2000:2, italics in in original). Christine’s perceived insincerity incapsulated a vivid sense of immorality of the outside world, which in this instance, was the “needy” who owned affluent material goods. In the perspective of congregants, her outsider status was closed off and her character was criminalized. Christine was a failure in hospitality. Her presence is an example in which the idea that “the door is always open” is susceptible to prejudice.
The stories of Martin, Summer and Christine demonstrate the difficulties of putting hospitality into practice, specifically when whiteness is casted into the strange by racialized congregants. Some racialized congregants, particularly elderly women, may be habituated in seeing whiteness as a marker of prestige and status and to encounter whiteness that does align with their perception is mystifying. Strangers became less strange, over time, and if they did not cross the threshold of the church too soon as demonstrated by Summer. This allowed elderly congregants to interact with these newcomers, recognize the ‘humanness’ of others, and experiencing compassion for their humanity. At times, this can bring about an affective experience of exaltation, of ‘good’ feelings in which members of faith recognize as ‘moments of grace’. These are the times when congregants become aware that they are “met by God” and of being in a blessing, that is, a sense of well-being. These are the episodes that enable one to sense moments of ‘feeling’ God’s presence—a sensation of blessing that is both an affective and spiritual experience of God. Hospitality is a gift; it is not a transaction between human-human relations, but between God and His followers, it is a divine-divine/human interaction. As one visiting minister explained during her Sunday sermons at TECPC, a faith community is about recognizing that “We are all God’s children and we are connected because Christ is in others as he is within us. It is like this- You see God in me, I see God in you”. Jesus is embodied in the figure of the stranger and also with oneself, the transcendental is thus immanent. Put another way, God and the Holy Spirit may be thought of as a dividual being, “divisible or divide-able into component parts or relations that are transactable with other similarly constituted dividuals” (Mosko 2015: 362). The return that congregants experience is the joy in feeling God’s grace in the present and within their interior selves and their exterior relations, which glimpses of the future promise of an afterlife in God’s kingdom.

As Jesus is within each person, Presbyterian scripture informs congregants that Jesus embodies various faces of the stranger—the impoverished, the homeless, and the migrant. The stories about ‘Jesus as stranger’ remind congregants of their own experiences of mobility, unwelcome and unbelonging. For example, congregants discuss the various passages of ‘Jesus the stranger’ in the bible: Matthew describes that Jesus was born impoverished in a stable far from home; Luke explains that Jesus was a refugee, and John narrates that Jesus was repatriated but remained unwelcomed. Such biblical narratives help congregants make sense of their own fears of those they perceive as ‘strangers’, making the strange more knowable and relatable by revealing that the strange is within oneself. This revelation can only happy by looking inward (Keane 2002), opening
their interiority to exterior relations and interactions. Narratives of Jesus relate the virtues of welcoming and of being welcomed, which, orients one to think and act with ‘humanness’— a good neighbor.

Hospitality and Conversion: Welcoming Jesus

Among congregants at TECPC, conversion is thought of as a moment of hospitality because a Christian subjectivity begins by welcoming the holy spirit into one’s heart. More so, conversion requires an act of hospitality for a willful opening of oneself. It is widely argued that conversion necessitates the transformation of a subject from a previous state of being by redefining and distinguishing former ways of knowing and sensing (Keane 2002, Mosko 2015, Daswani 2015).

One elder from TECPC spoke to me of his conversion to Christianity, which he describes as a moment of welcome, of opening himself up to the possibility and potential of Jesus. This was a life changing experience for him, empowering him to connect with people, in better mediating boundaries between stranger and guests and neighbours and friends. His story, which follows, is his story of the potential of openness. By opening himself up to the Holy Spirt, he felt more welcoming, and welcomed, in his interactions with others.

On the first Saturday in May, TECPC holds an annual spring cleanup and silent auction. Members of the church are asked to donate individually-wrapped baked items for auction for members of the Don Valley neighbourhood. While the auction is organized and run by members of the Women’s Committee, some members help dust and polish church pews, vacuum and mop the floors, and carry out other detailed cleaning inside the church. Other church goers perform landscaping and gardening chores on the church grounds. On this day, I was directed by Nancy, the woman in charge of the Woman’s Association, to seek out William, a member of Session who is in charge of maintaining the church grounds. William, a robust elderly Australian fellow

102 Nancy is introduced in more detail in Chapters 4 and 6.
103 William is introduced in Chapter 4.
with long grey-streaked white hair and a matching beard who labored as an arborist and landscaper for over twenty years during his youth, welcomed me with a broad smile and mischievous eyes.

For a couple of hours, we worked alongside each other with a mix of small talk and amicable silence as he inquired about my research project at TECPC. After a certain amount of time of steady weeding and planting, I sensed that William had stopped gardening, I looked up to see him holding the handle of his shovel that was firmly spiked into the ground. He was staring intently at the ground, then looked up at me and said, “I had an experience you know”. I waited for him to go on, but he said nothing and continued to hold my gaze with his blue eyes. I finally asked, “what kind of experience?” His shoulders relaxed and he said, “I experienced God. I will tell you about it soon”. He nonchalantly returned to spreading dirt across the lawn, signaling that the conversation was concluded.

A few weeks later, we sat in his garage, cluttered and overrun with various antiquated pieces of wood furniture. This was my third meeting with William and I had grown accustomed to the disorganized and chaotic placement of tarnished pieces of wood furniture, such as lounging chairs, dining tables, and dressers that were in various states of disrepair. The smell of linseed oil permeated the small enclosure of his garage. This was his work space for his wood restoration business, and he explained to me that he was commissioned to restore all of these pieces. Today, we were talking about his move to Toronto. William did not migrate directly to Toronto; rather, he arrived first in Vancouver, staying there for several years, then moved to Winnipeg, returned to Australia for several years, then came back to Canada and settled in Toronto. He says that his journey, both physical and spiritual, are intertwined with his longing for ‘truths’ that appeal to his sense of moral and objective sensibilities. Although his mother was a devout Christian, William did not believe in Jesus nor the Holy Spirit during this period of wandering. He says, he “always wanted to know the truth, the scientific and philosophical truth of how things work in life”.

He never attended university, yet William considers himself a learned person through his own initiatives in reading scientific journals and philosophical writings and by engaging in discussions and debates with friends and neighbours. During one of my initial interviews, William introduced me to his neighbour who was coming by for a visit, a tall older white man who is a professor in the natural sciences at the University of Toronto. William divulged that he enjoyed his talks with this professor covering esoteric topics of black holes, planets and other stellar discussions. From
my observation, William and the professor had an exceptional friendship as their discussions melded scientific and Christian perspectives to decipher natural wonders. For William, knowing is an intellectual practice that becomes spiritually meaningful when it involves the mind and heart—both, he said, must be cultivated in order to become open in welcoming Christ. For example, intentional learning of the bible and conversations with others about Christianity is a way for him to forge a linkage between what was ‘in his heart’ and what was ‘in his mind’.

Looking at me, William tells me of his “experience” that occurred twenty years ago when he first moved into this area. He befriended a person in a variety store, whom William describes as “a guy who was reading the bible and going on about Jesus”. This piqued William’s interest.

I borrowed his bible to read about what Jesus says…there were a lot of wonderful things that Jesus says that suddenly brought together what was in my heart, that was in the background. At that time, I didn’t think I had any spiritual foundation! I didn’t know how to be part of that. When I saw this guy in the variety store again, I said to him, ‘how do you get to know this Jesus?’ ‘Simple! Just ask him to come into your heart!’ he said. I never saw him before and I never saw again afterward.

William recalls quite vividly that evening. When he retired for the evening, he knew intuitively and with certainty that he was ready to welcome Jesus.

So I walked back home, got ready for bed, lay down, and in all my senses, I was ready. I said, ‘Jesus, come into my heart!’ I went to sleep and then three hours later and I woke up singing! I could hear other voices, a whole choir singing this beautiful song, and I was singing along with these voices, and my body was just vibrating in a wonderful pleasurable way. I am not a very good singer and that is what woke me up. I remember thinking, ‘what is going on?’ And I realized that my whole body was becoming nothing, I couldn’t feel it! All I was, was vibration, energy vibration I guess. And for years, after that [experience], food didn’t matter to me much. I couldn’t eat anything much, I couldn’t sleep at all, I didn’t get tired. From that day on, I was a fully pledged believing Christian.
By calling out to Jesus, William was willful in opening himself to the possibility, potentiality and vulnerability of the Holy Spirit, which at that time, was a sacred yet unknown presence. Inviting and welcoming Jesus into his heart is a transformative and spiritual form of hospitality that came from a culmination and affirmation of self-knowing and self-loving. When William called Jesus into his heart, he performed an invitation in which the supernatural substance of the Holy Spirit responded by welcoming William. Songs of worship, as noted by Luhrmann (2012), are a means of feeling His love, “never, ever, does a song suggest you fear his anger” (2012:4). For William, his conversion was an event in which he felt and continues to feel the grace of God, telling me often that he can still feel the Holy Spirit within him because he remains ‘open’. The Holy Spirit was felt through its aural presence, and he participated in this joining through his own melodic vocality.

Selwyn (2000) notes that hospitality is a moral action that can put into motion transformative processes for social relations. He describes hospitality as a form of conversion by which relations can be established and consolidated (2000:19). Yet a precursor to transformation is the virtue of openness, which is similar to Christian ideas on confession through the practice of opening one’s interiority and to willingly become vulnerable to an evaluation by an unknown and mysterious presence. Among protestants, confession is an ethical emergence that is not only through “a single and discrete outward act, but of a permanent transformation of attitude, through the agency of God’s grace” (Banner 2013: 11, emphasis added). The idea of ‘a permanent transformation of attitude’ is critical to William’s experience in welcoming Jesus. His actions were motivated by an intentionality and a culmination of practices in self-care, namely reflexivity and sincerity (Keane 2002). William’s willingness to enact an ‘openness of attitude’ had the effect of a sensorial experience and an affective emergence into a Christian being: William experienced vibrations within his body, yet he says felt that his body became ‘nothing’. His conversion is an act of hospitality of inviting the Holy Spirit within his body and of hosting the Holy Spirit within his being. This was an event in which boundaries between host and stranger collapsed and William and the Holy Spirit were unified yet distinct.

Since this event, William tells me that he continues to feel "some sort of spiritual energy residing within me". The hospitality of his conversion has altered his social relationships by being welcomed and welcoming to others. He says,
When I went to my job the next morning, there was a woman who was having family problems, and I found myself spouting things I had never thought about! She was comforted by my words, she was crying. This went on for years. I would run into people all over the place and for whatever reason, they had to hear what I had to say. A lot of people would cry and be thankful. I was led by the Spirit. I had no agenda, no plan.

It is important to note that William’s conversion is not a rupture from a worldview that was perceived or understood as inferior or wrong and an emergence into a present that is morally right (Glazier 2003). Conversion in this specific instance entailed fulfillment in feeling complete and whole by bridging the mind and heart. Welcoming Jesus is a continual process as opposed to a singularity; he must open his interiority to exterior supernatural energies to welcome his internal changes that influence his social relations and his overall physical being. William continues to experience long term bodily sensations; he has little need or desire for food or sleep. He is revitalized in body, mind and spirit and he recognizes that he has the ability to affect others. Although hospitality brings about a rupture in knowing, it also sutures as a means of reconnecting the self with an alternative way of being.

After listening to William tell me his experience of welcoming Jesus, I pressed him with further questions to gain a clearer understanding of his experience. I asked, “So was it just Jesus himself that came?” William responded quite quickly and amusedly, “Nope! Never met him. Never met Jesus.” Confused, I hesitantly queried, “But, you welcomed him into your heart…?” William leaned back in his chair and folding his hands in front of him and looked at me ponderously. He took his time to respond, making me think that I somehow missed an obvious point to his narration. After a few moments, he says,

Yes, I welcomed Jesus, but Jesus is identified in people, not through his presence but through the presence of the Holy Spirit. That is why Jesus says [in the bible] “I am leaving you now, but I am sending a great Comforter to be with you at all times”. This is representative and true, Lisa. The Holy Spirit is always with us. The church [TECPC] doesn’t get it. I brought up the Holy Spirit with Abraham, you know, he is a well-intentioned guy and he really wants to do the right thing but when I
mentioned about the Holy Spirit, he scratched his head and said, “hmmm, yeah, that seems to have disappeared!”.

On a cosmological level, congregants give praise to God and Jesus and often discuss God's plan, yet there is a sense of indifference to the role of the Holy Spirit. According to William, the 'closed' attitude and failure of Christians to recognize the Holy Spirit is because of the individual and denominational inclination of prioritizing a relationship with God and Jesus. The indifference in recognizing and welcoming the Holy Spirit by members of the congregation is perceived by William as immoral, a form of inhospitality. Throughout my time at TECPC, William often remarked that "love of the Holy Spirit is not apparent", within the congregation and also within Canadian society. William speaks of the Holy Spirit as a divine being that reveals, guides, loves and comforts. William says to me,

It's fundamental to acknowledge the Holy Spirit. It's really simple: Acknowledge it. Live it. Test it. Use it. Obey it. Go with the flow! Doors open and things come up. The Holy Spirit is always with us.

Hospitality is about establishing and consolidating different kinds of relationships (Selywn 2000), both sacred and mundane. The Holy Spirit is present, guiding people along God's plan, and for some congregants such as William, people have an obligation to recognize and acknowledge the work of the Holy Spirit.

“Best Practices” In Hospitality
Throughout my fieldwork at TECPC, it was rare to see congregants and elders introducing themselves or approaching newcomers to personally welcome them into the church. More commonly, it was the teaching elder (the minister) alone who conducted an individual welcomes to those who were new to TECPC. Before the commencement of service, Abraham approaches newcomers sitting in the pews and engage them in conversation, asking their name, whether they are new to the neighbourhood, and what brings them into the church. At times, some newcomers are hesitant and wary of being identified as an outsider and approached. Some individuals prefer to remain marginal or even ignored so that they can get the ‘gist’ of the sermons and the ‘feel’ of church life. As one visitor to TECPC told me, “When I see the pastor approaching, sometimes I
try to busy myself with my bag or [with items] in the pew. It is embarrassing because everybody is watching and it feels very awkward.”

The awkward experience of being welcomed into the church is usually made more evident at the end of service when the minister stands before the congregation and requests that newcomers stand and introduce themselves to the congregation. Some newcomers hesitated for a moment, unprepared when they were given the floor. Most stood up and quickly introduced themselves by stating their name and quickly sat down. Others gave a succinct statement on what brought them to church, at times providing a narrative that they are new to the neighbourhood and were looking for a church. A few explained to congregants that they were looking to convert to Presbyterianism for their marital ceremony. Some newcomers offered more depth and reflection in their introduction, like Jean-Francois, who introduced himself as a war veteran. When Abraham asked him to say a few words about himself, he opened up to the congregation and explained that he was on a personal journey of redemption, narrating how he came to experience a profound burden in his heart that has grown from his sense of guilt and horror in his actions during his deployment to the Middle East and of his experiences in witnessing the deaths of friends and allies. Jean-Francois’ openness, however, did not necessarily entail his return to the church. Indeed, this was the only time that he attended TECPC.

Liam explained to me that within the congregation, some members expect the role of hospitality to fall within the domain of the teaching elder – the minister. This expectation, he says, is a prevalent misconception by members of the church.

Some see the minister to be central in making people feel welcomed. But there’s a balance and there are techniques that are well published throughout the church world. When ministers come in [from the seminary to the church] they don’t have a particular focus on it. To really operate a church, it has to be driven by the minister because he or she is the central individual. This does not mean that it is their job to do the hospitality, this is what I see as sort of illusion. It’s the minister’s role as a resource coordinator. He may organize everything by putting the right people with the right skill sets in certain situations and makes sure everything is done according to the best practices.
What Liam is acknowledging in his utterance is that the ministry of hospitality must be carried out by the congregation. These are not burdensome activities but small elements of church life that makes the church friendly, inviting and accessible, such as the dissemination of user-friendly bulletins\(^{104}\) that refuses jargon.

The successful operation and development of the church hospitality is linked to business initiatives in scripture. Liam draws attention to models of management techniques that develop out of biblical understanding,

> If you looked at the Bible and the way Jesus operated, you’ll see tons of management techniques in there. For example, doing things in twos. The bible references sending out disciples in twos. You always have two people doing stuff, you always have a partner. And there is a ‘team’ thing, you have a lead and a person who is learning. If someone is away, it allows continuity in terms of handing stuff down. That is an initiative or a way of organizing things to get things done successfully.

Following the best practices from biblical narratives offer a foundation in techniques in hospitality, such as the practice of welcoming members of the community into the church. On Sunday mornings, a half hour before the start of service, two ‘greeters’ are in the lobby to meet people entering the sanctuary. The greeters are usually members of the board or elders of the church, and they welcome newcomers into the church by saying “Hi how are you? Welcome to Toronto East Community Presbyterian Church!” using the time from walking them into the sanctuary to explain the church bulletin. For returning congregants, greeters welcome them by greeting them by name, followed by inquiries into their family and work life. Each greeter hands out a psalm book and a bible to each person entering the sanctuary and they collect these at the end of service. The greeter is expected to remain in the lobby until twenty minutes past the start of sermon so that latecomers may also be greeted and receive the books of worship.

\(^{104}\) Church bulletins are folded pamphlets that details the theme and program of the sermon and provides the names of the hymns and biblical passages. They are usually circulated to congregants as they enter the church as part of the welcome.
Although greeting is a structure common to Christian churches of various denominations, the particular nuances in which they are carried out differ between churches. In one Presbyterian Church on the Toronto East side, there were no greeters at the entrance; rather, there was a large table placed before the sanctuary with pamphlets introducing the church, newsletters describing church events and activities, and handouts of the church calendar, while in another Presbyterian Church in the west side of Toronto, coffee, tea and cookies were organized along a table in the church lobby so that new newcomers had the opportunity to intermingle with longtime members of the congregation prior to the start of service, all while two ministers circulated and engaged with congregants. A minister from this church explained to me that members of Session decided to “flip the script” of the friendship tea protocol, which is usually held at the end of church service, to cultivate a church that felt inviting to members of the community. For newcomers who are looking for a new church, one minister emphasized to me that the congregation has two minutes to make an impression, saying that it is the first two minutes that decides if they will return. If the church and congregation is experienced as closed or inhospitable, whether it be because of perceived unfriendly interactions or the décor of the church, rarely does the congregation receive another opportunity to make another impression.

Hospitality, Not Charity

Some congregants are careful to distinguish a model of hospitality from charity, admonishing that the two domains should not be conflated. Liam explained to me newcomers should not be “objects of charity” because a model of church as a provider of social services is not a sustainable program, financially or morally. His concern is that TECPC is embracing a standard of churches as neighborhood social service providers. The problem for him is that a charity-centered church that has declining attendance cannot support expenditures such as feeding the poor, when other technical aspects of hospitality require attention. This point of view tends to demarcate the conduct of hospitality as a personal ethical imperative as opposed to an institutional alignment. For him, his goal is to ensure that the church building attends to the needs of church members and adherents, who return each week and provide weekly financial support through tithes. This is hospitality to one’s own cohort, in caring and welcoming members of the Presbyterian community, especially the elderly.
The inaccessibility of the church building, for example, plays a significant factor in prohibiting the entry of many elder congregants who have issues with their mobility. Because the church was built over a hundred years ago, each access point to the sanctuary and banquet hall has a flight of stairs. From the main entrance, church goers must climb about seven stairs to the lobby or they may enter from the rear entrance where they must climb about 5 stairs that are on a steep gradient. Hank, a white Canadian elder whom we met in Chapter 3, remarked to me on several occasions that the church must become more accessible for the elderly and the disabled. One Sunday, he expressed his dismay to me that members of Session passed a vote to use church funds for a projector head for power point presentations during sermon. He went on,

I know a lot of people who want to come to church but they can’t! They can’t climb up the stairs! We know that most of our congregation are elderly. I can only see the need for a ramp as a priority. Not a projector system! Pretty soon most people here will need it [the ramp]!

When I asked him why they went through with the projector over the installation of the ramp, he told me that the cost of the ramp was too much at $4000-5000, whereas a new projector and speaker system would only cost $1500 and was perceived by members of Session that this object of hospitality would help modernize the church. He says that “I have visited people and they tell me that they would come if there was a ramp”, which for him is more welcoming than having the words of scripture posted on a slideshow. Herein lies one tension in making the church more hospitable: hospitality is structurally and spatially demarcated. Entrance into God’s home is not only conditional on one’s openness to an invitation, but more so, one’s ability to enter the church. The door may be open, however the door remains unattainable for some members of faith, regulating who may and who may not enter. What elders did not consider is whether the projector makes worship and the reading of scripture more accessible for church goers whose English is not their primary language or for people with hearing or visual impairments.

Liam narrates a similar point of view, maintaining that the church cannot simply be a place where people simply say, “Wow! Wonderful experience!”. For him, church has more importance, an experience that resonates at a deeper level. In his view, it must provide more than social services
to certain populations, stating that charity is the domain of government. He says, “you want to help people? Give them something the government doesn’t give people and that is peace and Jesus Christ”. The sustainability of church is about the value it has for people. For many congregants, this value of the church in the current socio-economic and political time is to be a place where ideally you can find people who are welcoming without judgment- a place to (re)turn when facing hardship. Liam tells me,

The church has to have legs. It has to have value. You have to accept that people are not going to come all the time, but on the other side, you have to let the congregation know you, let them know when you are under stress or something, say somebody dies or you need peace or if you are having stress somewhere. You can say ‘I know church, I will come to church’. We’re here. That’s what we can do as a service to the community.

Liam returns to the idea that the hospitality of the church is founded on the love, generosity and humanity of congregants because this is what it means to be a neighbor: the interplay of mutuality that is necessary for welcome and of being welcomed, the mutual role of ‘guest’ and ‘host’ as members of the congregation occupy both roles. While the host may care for the guest, the guest has a responsibility to inform their hosts of their needs, bringing awareness and validation of their care of the self. The affective dimension of hospitality is thought to generate an energy that will not only grow the church spiritually but entails the anticipation that God’s presence will manifest.

The Limits of Hospitality: Racialized ‘Clusters’

When I asked Janet how TECPC has changed over the years, she highlights two interconnected changes since she attended in the 1980s: the racialized population, and the development of ‘clusters’. Janet remarks that for the first 10-15 years in which she attended the church, the church was about 90% white and the neighbourhood in which the church is located was “so peaceful”. She suggests that the church, when it was predominantly white, was a time in which people within the church supported each other as a community, she says, “when people needed help, we helped them”. Now, she finds that people are “too clustered”. She explains that “people get into a cultural
thing”, suggesting a perspective that neighbourhoods and communities are bounded entities. She is aware that ‘clusters’ are working within the church, that there is a ‘disconnect’ of care between groups of congregants across generation and “culture”. On one hand, she enjoys the diversity of the food, but on the other hand, she sees that the ‘clustering’ has produced problems, such as drugs, shoplifting, and latchkey kids among the younger generation. Janet does not make any association between social problems with larger systems of social and economic inequality. She firmly believes that Canada is a place of benevolence and ‘goodness’, which arguably is an effect of multicultural hegemony. She believes that as ‘good Christians’, people need to relearn how to care for each other, to support each other, as God had done for her. For Janet, (re)connecting with God provides the foundation, the common ground, for forging alliances in a network of support for inclusion. Janet explains that ‘clusters’ are produced by people who are no longer responsible to each and who are interested only in their own needs, which is a self-perpetuating cycle of ‘uncare’. ‘Clusters’ can be understood as exclusionary practices that impede hospitality and mutuality between groups of people.

Racialized segregation within the church is not only perceived at TECPC but also within other Presbyterian churches. Queensview Presbyterian Church on the East side of downtown Toronto is located within close proximity of an Asian neighbourhood enclave, characterized by the influx and settlement of Chinese and Vietnamese groups. During Sunday mass at Queensview Presbyterian, there are about 10-15 Asians and five Caribbean people—all of whom are young, mostly in their mid 30s-mid 40s, some attending with their young children. What is striking here, is that I observed over a course of several weeks that the racialized group sat in the back two rows of pews in the church. There was little intermixing between the racialized and white groups. When mass concluded, nearly all the Asians exited the sanctuary doors; this is a typical Sunday scene that ensured that there would be no interaction.

AT TECPC, racialized and self-organized segregation is also present, most notably during the post-sermon friendship tea in the banquet hall, located behind the sanctuary. As part of the concluding announcements during Sunday mass, an elder announces an invitation to all members of the congregation, old-timers and newcomers, to convene in the banquet room for tea and cookies. Unlike Queensview Presbyterian church where racial segregation transpired during sermons, at TECPC congregants would organize themselves along two rows of three tables: white members of the church sat around one row of banquet tables and conversed amongst themselves,
while racialized members seated themselves around the other row of banquet tables that is parallel to those of the white congregants, closest to the exit. This type of racialized organization is similar to Joan’s observation on ‘clusters’. When I asked various members of the congregation whether they were aware of the racialized segregation, most conceded that the friendship tea seating arrangement is an ongoing dilemma that they were trying to resolve. The racialized segregation, however, was not interpreted by the minister as acts of racism because of the perceived absence of enmity and hostility. Reverend Abraham said to me:

There is segregation happening right here in the back in the banquet hall, basically the people of colour [sit] here [motions to one table] and the white people [sit] here [motions to the other table]…

Lisa: So what is your take on the racial segregation that happens here?

Abraham: It looks racial from the outside, but um…it really isn’t. There is some discomfort around it but there is no animosity. So the people that are here [pointing to the table where the white people sit] are Nancy’s group and they have been here for the last twenty years. They are the women’s group. The people who are back here [where Black and people of colour sit] are ready to cross over. Joan sits on this other side. And Fanny [an elder of Caribbean ethnicity] is comfortable going out here [points to the table where the white people sit], because Fanny relates to white people, you know, comfortably. She does not have inferiority…This is very different than being made to feel that you are not welcome.

Explaining instances of racial segregation places the reverend in an uncomfortable situation and he switches his narrative to identifying instances of exception in which an individual ‘crosses over’ the racial divide. I tend to disagree with Abraham as Joan and Fanny are representative of uncommon interactions. Indeed, as Reverend Abraham remarks that Nancy’s social group has had a long history of attending and governing the church, he does not acknowledge that members of the racialized group have also had a long history in the church, where some members of the church
have participated in church activities for 30 years. As I discuss in chapter 6, Janet experiences her interactions with members of the white group as unwelcoming. She is careful in voicing her unwelcome, telling me that she does not desire to cause trouble. For white congregants, when I asked them why they did not sit at the other table, they responded that they never noticed the seating arrangement, that is was “just the way it has always been”. Their response suggests a refusal of accountability, both sides at a stalemate awaiting one side to cross the boundary. It is likely that both groups feel unwelcomed at each other’s tables as the spatial arrangement infers ‘closed-ness’ rather than openness; both sides co-exist.

Hospitality work, as with diversity work, is a challenging endeavour. Ahmed expresses the difficulty of overcoming institutional barriers, what she calls the “brick walls” and “institutional inertia” to describe the lack of institutional will to change (Ahmed 2012:26). The drive for institutional change is immobilized when habits or traditions of those working within the institutions are required to move away from the norm. What this means is that the desire for difference does not translate into a will for change (2012:26-8). Diversity work “is an experience in encountering resistance and countering that resistance. Each new strategy or tactic for getting through the wall generates knowledge of what does or does not get across” (Ahmed 2012: 175). This is the same with hospitality work. It has the potential of creating trouble: any change to institutional routines is deeply unsettling for those who are entrenched in the habits, procedures and ordinary features of an institution.

The imagery of Ahmed’s brick walls of institutional work (Ahmed 2012, 2017) brings to mind enclosures, containment and boundaries that protect those within its walls and impedes guests and strangers, those who are deemed different, from participating, contributing or amending the internal dynamics of an institution. Walls are a form of refusal that do not speak to radical politics, but rather a refusal that upholds tradition and the status quo (c.f Simpson 2014:105). Walls can be generative: they allow us to recognize moments and signs of privilege and power. Openness is the virtue of surrender and vulnerability, to reach across boundaries and to be together without assimilation or domination. Openness is arguably a precursor to hospitality, lying somewhere between desire and willfulness.
Conclusion
Throughout this chapter, I have articulated the affective, spatial and technical tensions in hospitality. The stranger is an ambiguous figure. The stranger is not only racialized but white, guests, hosts, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, all are configured within this category. Who is considered strange, different or othered is dependent on the willingness and desire to cross boundaries. Such boundaries can be physical spatial crossings, such as going out into the beyond church walls to speak with socially disadvantaged folk or crossing the floor in the banquet hall to speak with fellow longterm members. Hospitalities are also temporal as who is welcomed may remain for only a short duration or hospitality may be long term as William welcomed the holy spirit into his being. What these events point to is the potential quality for transformation in establishing and consolidating different kinds of righteous relationships. In doing so, subjects of hospitality, no matter their subjective location in the interactional process are shaped by the actions of welcoming and being welcomed.

In her work on Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life, Sara Ahmed (2012) criticizes the virtue of welcome. She argues that the practice of welcome is a structure of exchange, founded on hierarchal structures between those who welcome (host) and those who have the obligation to return the welcome (guests/strangers) by assimilating into the institutional organization of the host (those who welcomed) (Ahmed 2012:43). If guests challenge the ‘home’, organization or institution of the host, this may be perceived as ingratitude for the host’s generosity. As a consequence, guests may then be ostracized for voicing their concerns. “The very structural position of being the guest, or the stranger, the one who receives hospitality” writes Ahmed, “allows an act of inclusion to maintain the form of exclusion” (2012:43). Accordingly, conditional hospitality is understood as a unidirectional exchange because the categories of stranger, guest and host are bounded categories by which hospitality flows from the host. She sees hospitality as an irreconcilable difference by which unity, in terms of equity, cannot be achieved.

Ahmed’s orientation towards hospitality lacks the virtues of compassion, openness and solidarity valued in Christian hospitality. In the domain of Christian political theology, one way in which hospitality is formulated is through social justice and social healing, that is, one’s participation in righteous relationships. Letty M. Russell, a political theologian, describes hospitality as “solidarity with strangers, a mutual relationship of care and trust in which we share in the struggle for
empowerment, dignity and fullness of life” (Russell 2009: 20, emphasis in original). Hospitality does not infer unity through uniformity. Uniformity, she argues, goes against God’s plan. A focus on difference to form categories of exclusion is a “misuse of difference” (Russell 2009:71). Russell draws attention to biblical parables from Genesis and Acts 2 to explain that God’s creation is ‘good’ through purposeful and intentional ‘riotous difference’. “Each time God creates life of another kind”, she says, “there is the refrain: ‘And God saw that it was good’ (Gen. 1:25)” (Russell 2007:54). From this vantage point, hospitality is ideally “an expression of unity without uniformity” (2007:65) to denaturalize power structures that position strangers as those who are the ones in need. In a world of riotous difference, strangeness includes but is not limited to racialized differences. Strangers are, at times, positioned as white, economically disadvantaged, elderly, and those with mental health concerns. The challenge in a low-tradition and economically struggling church is how to welcome and be welcomed meaningfully and rightfully, with compassion and love.

The most sacred exemplar of the stranger is the figure God and by extension, the Holy Spirit. They exemplify the unknown and they can only be fathomed by learning and engaging with scripture that is read and discussed. This alone, however, does not cause one to welcome God or the Holy Spirit into one’s heart and to convert to Christianity. It requires a certain disposition, a willingness to open oneself to the unfamiliar. Susan Harding (2000) remarks that among contemporary fundamentalist Protestants “listen[ing] with an open ear” is a condition for understanding and accepting God’s Word (2000: 36, emphasis added). This is understood to be a kind of hospitality whereby there is a willingness to undergo a transformation of self, to surrender one’s will and prejudice, in order to experience and become different. Conversion is the collapsing of boundaries between stranger, guest, and host that can be actualized within the mundane.

Hospitality is a deeply affective experience. On one end, church goers explain an emotive energy where they feel love and compassion, but this energy is not yet fully encompassing because it needs to be cultivated and developed: congregants are still in a process of generating a kind of community belonging where people can be who they are without judgement and evaluation. This is ideological but it is an ideology that has value to many congregants. On the other end, congregants may at times act with hypocrisy through overt unwelcoming actions and hostile interactions, judging those who are thought to be insincere in their presence within the church.
This is a refusal in being vulnerable because the risks of insincerity, of ‘being taken advantage of’, and of the unknown are perceived as real and encompassing which can make the familiar strange.
Chapter 8
Conclusion

Derrida on Hospitality

Derrida states that hospitality is culture; it is ubiquitous, permeating nearly all aspects of social and moral life. Mediating and negotiating encounters with those who are different, hospitality is inherent to all domains of social life: juridical, ethical, historical, emotional, rational, political and economic (Derrida 2000a, Still 2010, Westmorland 2008). While Derrida was inspired by the work of Levinas on the ‘other’, his work on hospitality was also a response to Kant's understanding of moral and legal cosmopolitan rights of people who cross the boundaries of their communities, specifically the moral and legal relationship between hosts and strangers. In this text, Kant discusses the rights of foreigners and the role of the receiving state and its citizens, which resituates the domain of hospitality from the sphere of philanthropy and placed within the political (Derrida 2000a:4). Hospitality for Derrida is a series of multiple double binds, rooted in the principal that universal hospitality cannot be conditional. Throughout his discussion on hospitality, Derrida focuses on two categories of hospitality: one form is “absolute hospitality”, which he also calls “universal hospitality”, “Law of Hospitality”, and “unconditional hospitality”, and the other form is “conditional hospitality”, which he also names “laws of hospitality”.

Absolute hospitality, Derrida argues, is impossible because it is unconditional and immediate (Still 2010: 8). By making the stranger (a foreigner) feel 'at home', the host (either a citizen or the state) must relinquish their sovereignty and deprive themselves of their own identity. This, according to Derrida, is the crux and the double-bind of hospitality. Ideologically, a stranger is expected to make themselves 'at home'. In actuality, however, this is a conditional form of welcome based on the premise that the stranger will observe and obey the rules, conventions, and expectations of the host (Derrida 2000a: 12). A completely open welcome, which is at the core of 'absolute hospitality', is a welcome without laws, limitations, invitations or reciprocity (Derrida 2000:14, Still 2010: 8, Westmoreland 2008:5). Ahn (2010) thinks of this paradigm of hospitality as “a gift without gift” because it requires the surrender of “judgement and control over who will receive that hospitality” (2010:250). Declarations, such as an invitation, are not fully acts of hospitality.
because an invitation presumes the presence of a door, a metaphorical or literal separation between strangers and hosts, that must be crossed. Hospitality is an intentional experience; the decision to cross a divide is result of an invitation, which then places a condition for hospitality (Derrida 2000a:2). This contradiction, where the ideal of hospitality intersects with, and is incommensurable to, the practice in hospitality attends to a central tenet of 'openness' (Candea 2012:38).

Hostility and Hospitality

According to Derrida, absolute hospitality presents a double-bind, an impossibility, by which the presence of a guest deprives the host of her own mastery: it is an interruption of the self (Westmoreland 2008: 1, Still 2010). The host is the master in her home: she has authority within her enclosure, she is well acquainted with her surroundings and social relations, she has knowledge of the expectations, behaviours and values. Derrida warns that receiving guests without limitations will eventually entail hostilities as the host is required to suspend her authority, privilege and identity (Derrida 2000: 4). Inquiring into the identity of the guest, for Derrida, is an example of an imposition on the guest as the act of naming places the guest under regulations of the state and community (Still 2010, Westmoreland 2008).

While hospitality is generally recognized and experienced as a structure of reciprocity, whereby the host is recognized as a host through the guest's gratitude and perhaps eventual reciprocity, absolute hospitality entails no recognition, debt or expectation of exchange as these are conditions of hospitality (Still 2010: 15). This, for Derrida, is the crux of hospitality: In the act of depriving sovereignty to accommodate and welcome a guest, hospitality folds into the domain of hostility as the host can no longer be true to herself. The guest transforms into an enemy and is treated with hostility (Derrida 2000: 4, Westmoreland 2008). In other words, the host works to include the guest through practices that ensure the host's own exclusion. This unilineal flow of hospitality is also assumed by other scholars.

In his introduction to a collection of essays on the anthropology of the Mediterranean, Pitt-Rivers argues that a guest cannot hold the same privilege and status as hosts within the receiving community. This, he says, will lead to hostile relations (1963:29). A guest may only become a
host if he willingly relinquishes a portion of the self by giving up his own identity. The act of relinquishing the self, a form of assimilation, is deemed an inhospitable act if undertaken by the host. Ahmed (2000), who draws upon the work of Maurice Blanchot, makes a similar argument that acts of assimilation fall within the domain of inhospitality. Hospitality, for her, is "a way of being together with strangers, without assimilating them fully into the home" (Ahmed 2000: 150, italic in original). The central point in all cases here is that acts of hospitality burden both the guests and hosts to surrender a piece of themselves, of their desires and identity, as a way of being open.

From Hospitality to Hospitalities

On one level, Derrida's hospitality provides a necessary intervention for discussing the intersectionality between politics and ethics. The theoretical utility of Derridean hospitality is not so much as a resource to explain ethnographic data (Candea 2012), but more so as a starting point to explain the fraught relationships arising from subjectivities that circulate between strangers, guests and hosts. What I argue throughout my dissertation is that over time, people may find themselves situated within several categories of hospitality, moving from one to another through the microprocesses of everyday acts of hospitality and more eventful moments of welcome. A stranger becomes less strange entering the domain of guests, guests engage in host-like practices, and strangers may interact with guests as if they were hosts, and hosts may become guests. As such, I show how a person or group of people shift from the category of a stranger to the category of the guest, and over time, into the domain of the host. My dissertation dwells in these moments of tension, capturing how long term guests mediate their desire and struggle to become hosts within God's domain- the church. Derrida's perspective is that a permanent guest is a contradiction, exemplified by the history of colonial settlers and oppression of Indigenous and native inhabitants (Derrida 2000a:5, Still 2010: 14). Where individuals are immigrating from post-colonial societies to multicultural settler states, are these strangers or guests?

My dissertation demonstrates that Derrida’ position on categories of hospitality is inadequate. Indeed, his primary concern is of a pinnacle hospitality, which for him, can never be realized. Derrida tends to prioritize the subjectivity of the host, most notably the tensions and potential hostilities that a host may experience. In doing so, Derrida reifies the agency of the host who is
either subjugating or is subjugated by the guest or stranger. This assumes a unidirectional flow of
generosity and hostility, streaming from the host to the guest. Openness, in the aporia of
hospitality, would entail the possibility of the host to welcome a change in his subjectivity through
alternative ways of knowing that arise from his interaction with strangers and guests. Derrida has
set up hospitality as an impossibility. For him, the tension between hostility and hospitality comes
to fruition when transformation is an onus, rather than a willful openness, of the host to step back
and become a guest (Derrida 2002a:55). Transformation, according to Derrida, inevitably leads
to violence and hostility (2002b); however, a refusal to change is unethical. As such, a conceptual
innovation of my dissertation is to rethink hospitality in terms of ‘modes’ of hospitality as I
demonstrate that there are diverse and various ways in which different Presbyterian communities
reproduce and challenge state multiculturalism as they put hospitality into practice. As such, the
focus that I bring is to demonstrate that there is more to be said about hospitality, namely, to think
of modes of hospitality in terms of variety, multiplicity, temporality, and scale, and as such, it is
conducive to think in terms of hospitalities.

Hospitalities and Multiculturalism

Throughout this dissertation, I articulate that hospitalities are best understood as affective, social,
and political processes for negotiating ethical relationships. Many congregants look to modes of
Christian hospitality through moral exemplars in the bible for alternative perspectives on relating
with people who appear different and/or marginal in society. This provides a framing for affiliating
with others that is placed in tension with Canadian state-multiculturalism as hospitable interactions
coalesce with and at times refuse the state ideology of multiculturalism. Indeed, I show that there
are two prevalent macro-level strands of hospitality for implementing multiculturalism within the
Presbyterians churches that I visited. First, among high tradition congregations, hospitality aligns
with the processes of state multiculturalism as it is currently institutionalized in secular spaces.
Second, among low tradition congregations, there is a potential for a radical hospitality to emerge
by developing an ethic of openness and mutuality. Put another way, it is the willfulness to not
only welcome but to also be welcomed.
Let me unpack the first strand of hospitality, which I call ‘multicultural hospitality’. Today, policies that support state multiculturalism are predominantly about managing diversity by organizing cultural inclusion through language acquisition of one, or both, of Canada’s national languages, English and French. In a government report titled *Canadian Multiculturalism* written by Laurence Brosseau and Michael Dewing (2009), multiculturalism is conceptualized as inclusion through integration, rather than assimilation, to promote national unity. According to the authors, assimilation is the elimination of distinct group characteristics; whereas integration, from the purview of state multiculturalism, is perceived as a process by which racialized individuals may participate in the social, economic, and political domains of Canadian society, without giving up their culture and language (Brosseau and Dewing 2009:3).

With changes to Canadian immigration policies that saw an increase of racialized groups since the 1970s, the primary focus of government supported multicultural programs is to integrate immigrants through language training programs and professionalization workshops. The ethnographic work of Kori Allan shows that state formulation of immigrants’ social inclusion is inherently linked to their market integration via their language and communication skills (2016). These programs, she notes, often include soft skills training that compel immigrant attitudes and behaviours to align with Canadian mannerisms. Similarly, on her ethnography on immigrant Muslim Pakistani professional women in Canada, Lalaie Ameeriar (2017) remarks that government funded settlement services focus on clothing and hygiene to impose a particular way of conducting oneself as Canadian. As foods and smells from different ethnoracial groups are celebrated as markers of Canadian tolerance and the freedom of racialized others to enjoy their heritage (which, at times, are consumed by Canadians), these same attributes are what cleaves racialized people out as different. The smells and sounds that are celebrated are also a mode of exclusion. In Chapter 6 in my dissertation, I demonstrate how this form of exclusion trickles into the mindset of older Guyanese women, such as Janet, who are reticent in offering Guyanese food for the church community dinners, who are predominantly attended by white underprivileged Canadians: she is unsure if guests will celebrate or scorn the meal. Thus, although she does not identify the church as multicultural, she conducts herself in a manner that internalizes, and aligns with, the model of state multiculturalism. As stated by Ameeriar, “the practice of multiculturalism as it pertains to the integration of foreign bodies is ultimately not about getting employers or the
larger public to not discriminate; rather, it is about making oneself into someone who will not be discriminated against” (2017:6).

Throughout this dissertation, I argue that state multiculturalism works persuasively in shaping values, attitudes, and behaviours of interethic relationships and encounters, and second, multiculturalism is not contained to the domain of secular society but diffuses and penetrates all parts of society, including the domain of religion. This is an area that has been largely ignored in current research on Canadian multiculturalism. In Chapter 5 of my dissertation, I show that Presbyterian churches support congregational initiatives to improve the English language skills of racialized groups, both newcomers and those who have resided in Toronto for decades. One church, purposefully utilizes an academic register of the English language during bible study and worship, rationalizing that this improves the professional employment prospects of racialized church goers. Another church program, Monday Night in Canada, at Queensview Presbyterian church, also teaches English to racialized members within the neighbourhood, along with inculcating popular Canadian beliefs, traditions, attitudes, and values inherent to Torontonian social life. This initiative, labelled as ‘hospitality’ by program coordinators, aligns more closely with state supported multicultural programs that facilitate the integration of newcomers in Toronto, teaching them to become more Canadian, specifically white Anglo-Canadian, thereby making individuals that are competitive, competent, and efficient in the Canadian labour market. This mode of hospitality aligns with state multiculturalism. This is a unilineal flow of hospitality as white Presbyterians welcome racialized and immigrants and they are not so open in being welcomed by newcomers. In other words, they are the doers of welcome rather than the recipients of welcome. This kind of interaction is marked by an absence of mutuality that characterizes a mode of radical hospitality by ministers invested in social justice and decolonizing theology.

For Presbyterians in high tradition churches, their main concern evolves around the question on how to integrate migrants into the dominant church culture. This is not a new anxiety, but one that that the Presbyterian Church has encountered since the denomination assess the problems of decline. In practice, integration takes the form of assimilation. The church is perplexed by the potential synergy of migrants, particularly racialized migrants, who bring their values, ideas, beliefs, and language into the habits and rituals of the church. The crisis of whiteness is the fear of change, of relinquishing the role of host, as integration may overtime transform Anglocentric Presbyterian traditions, most notably Scottish markers of church identity. For Derrida, this is what
renders hospitality hostile: change among those who welcome is perceived and experienced as burdensome and an imposition. Congregants may speak of change, they see the benefits and needs for change, yet there is little will to actuate institutional transformation. This perspective of hospitality closely aligns with state multiculturalism (Ahmed 2012, 2017). Settler and Canadian Presbyterians may be comfortable with the visibility of objects of non-white culture such as food and art, but if such items remain spatially immediate and linger, they are no longer welcomed because such artifacts challenge congregants’ sense of self and the centrality of white Presbyterian identity. Rev Paulette Brown writes in the PCC Crieff Hills Report, *For Ethnic and Racial Minority Presbyterians*, that historically mainline Canadian denominations in Halifax erected curtains in their churches in order to separate blacks from white congregants. While barriers were once concrete, walls are now the ‘traditions’ of one group impeding the participation of another group. An inclusive church does not necessarily mean that people are expected “enjoy each other’s company” (2008:4), inferring that openness can be deeply unsettling and uncomfortable; rather, it is that each person shares a calling to God’s family.

It is arguable then that state multiculturalism is obstructing the church from becoming radically hospitable. When congregants tell me that multiculturalism is all around me they are attending to the visibility of difference which infers that others are objects to be interpreted and celebrated; this purview does not align with the Christian virtue of welcome. Seeing difference alone does not inspire unity within diversity and ultimately ignores social justice issues (Russell 2009). Levinas point out this dilemma and argues that responsible communication, as opposed to visual representation, is an ethical choice. Unlike Derrida, Levinas does place emphasis on the self alone but rather that the formation of the self and society (or self and community) emerges together. According to Strhan (2015), “Levinas’s philosophy is concerned with how we respond to these others [forms of differences] and the nature of civility and compassion in our understanding to difference” (2015:78). When one speaks ‘with’ as opposed to ‘to’ another they are entering and participating in a relation that requires one to "pay attention to the other and take account of him and his world" (Levinas 1969: 15). This relationship is risky, for it necessitates speakers to go out of their way to engage and welcome an unknown and unpredictable relation. In encounters of hospitality, people are engaging with many dimensions of otherness by many different others, which is the condition of living in a multicultural society (Strhan 2015:79). The willingness and willfulness to open oneself to difference has the potential for transformation. Such possibilities
are a means of doing justice to the experiences of the self and other (Levinas 1969). This is where I have recently seen some benefit in returning to Levinas in theorizing hospitality, specifically, that interactions are not just dyadic with a self and other, but are more dynamic and may involve interactions with a self, other, and other, which includes forms of othering such as gender, class, mental health, and age. Indeed, hospitality may invoke hostilities and individuals’ may experience offense in interacting with others. What is important though is that contradiction is necessary and even vital; it has an emergent quality for deepening mutuality and respect. Contradiction or the aporia of hospitalities is productive, generative and worthwhile because in hospitable interactions, the ethical moment is how people make themselves susceptible and responsible to each other in suturing cleavages that may arise.

As Joan tells me, "My Scottish Presbyterian brain has had certain experiences, but I have had different experiences with different people and different churches. It has broadened my experiences with God in different ways". This multicultural alternative refuses assimilation and this is the second macro-level strand of hospitality, which I call ‘radical hospitality’. Radical hospitality is a mode of hospitality based on mutuality, of being open to difference. This is a mode that deviates from state multiculturalism. What stands out as a virtue of radical hospitality among the laity who participated in my research is about responding to difference through compassion, because compassion has the potential for finding a common humanity. Openness infers a willfulness to learn about each while respecting each others’ sovereignty. Ministers concerned with social justice tell me that it is the church that must be evangelized rather than racialized and low-income church goers; put another way, the dominant church is tasked to question its own culture. It is recognition of the harm that is brought to church goers who bring the gift of difference, life and hope. “God’s justice” according to Iris Marion Young, “includes the absence of oppression, not just the presence of distributive rights” (Russell 2009:106). This vision of social justice hospitality is the ethics of a beloved community.

TECPC is an ethnographic outlier and is not representative of most Presbyterian congregations in the Greater Toronto Area, but one of a small number of mainline denominations who are trying to promote integration through intercultural relationships between their ethnoracially diverse church goers. This is demonstrated in Chapter 5 where I discuss the difficulties in ministering to racialized Canadians and immigrants that go beyond celebratory perspectives of ethnocultural difference. Communicating the bible in a different language is deeply unsettling to a settler and colonial
church and speaks to the experiences of colonized Christians. For white church goers, the utterance of biblical passages in languages other than English is interpreted as a celebration of difference, aligning closely to state multiculturalism. For non-white church goers, reading the bible in their local language provides an affective analytic for better understanding their colonial history in the present and validates their experiences of oppression and racialization as a Christian. Yet, for ministers working towards a decolonizing multicultural theology, they contend that congregants and ministers involved in theological training and education need to teach the laity to read the bible from the side, that is to become “decolonizing readers” (Russell 2009, Hinds 2014). The goal is to convert an apolitical congregation into a socially engaged church that encourages a sense of unity in faith without the elimination or assimilation of difference. This is the method and ethic of living as a neighbour.

Hospitalities are not linear processes; they oblige us to consider what occurs within the space and over time of doing welcoming and unwelcoming acts and between the affective and rational forces that impel openness and closedness of one’s will to hospitality. Hospitalities are imperfect because there are, at times, misalignments with what people say and what people do. Most discussions relating to the affective and rational dimensions of hospitality usually pertain to generosity and gratitude. This dissertation builds on these debates by bringing to the forefront congregants’ needs and desire to experience the values of love and compassion. This is what makes churches extraordinary for many church goers, both racialized and white from all socio-economic backgrounds: the church is a community where individuals may feel a sense of belonging because they do not feel judged or stigmatized, it is a place where there is respite and pause from work obligations, social isolation, and personal, economic and health problems, that frame everyday routines. Radical hospitality that attends to generosity (such as commensality) attends to feelings of acceptance and validation, to be loved without condition. Many congregants hold that the need and desire to experience compassion and love unifies all people, it is the essence of humanness. Church community dinners entail various scales of hospitality where food and drink are the materiality of hospitality and the process of transforming materiality into a gustatory sensation for guests is a mode for encouraging familiarity between volunteers and bridging generational, racializing, class and gendered divides through story-telling. It is arguable that Christian compassion attunes to the national myth of “Canadian exaltation”, a term used by Sunera Thobani to describe how ‘goodness’ is used as a technique to ensure a person’s bonding and solidarity with
the nation (2007:10); however, the experience of exaltation also has the emotional and experiential force to bond people with each other to feel a sense of unity that transcends state multiculturalism: to become a beloved community.

A key consideration that this dissertation challenges is the categories used to define who welcomes and who is welcomed. The models of stranger, guest and host imply a conceptual fixity of boundaries and rarely are these boundaries analyzed in terms of their porosity, flexibility and simultaneity. The dominant thought is that a stranger may remain a stranger or alternatively, over time, transform into a guest. This is the best exemplified through anthropological fieldwork (Rabinow 2007, Candea and DaCol 2012, Powdermaker 1967, Pitt-Rivers 1992, 1963). A guest may take on the roles and obligations of a host over time and if she remains within close proximity of a host who has taken responsibility for them within the community (Pitt-Rivers 1992, 1963). Thus far, a stranger and guest can transform their status, yet what occurs with the host?

Throughout this dissertation, most notably in Chapter 6, I have demonstrated that the hierarchal and privileged status of the host is predominantly a white position within the church. Recall in Chapter 6, the ability of white women, members of the Woman’s Association to unknowingly coopt the work of racialized congregants attends to the struggle as Presbyterian hosts; whereas, racialized women prefer to not “make trouble” for the sake of unity. This form of racialized and colonizing relations transforms a host into a guest and disrupts the congregational belonging of racialized members, even those who are elders and members of Session.

The ambiguous and opaque positionality of racialized hosts who simultaneously occupy the status of guests is a tentacle of Canadian multiculturalism, permeating throughout secular and religious Canadian institutions. Racialized Canadians and naturalized immigrants are persistently perceived and treated as something other than ‘just’ Canadian, an identity that is indexed through utterances, such as the question of “where are you from?” (see Mackey 1999) This colourblind utterance rejects racialized Canadian belonging and is potentially psychically and affectively violent in forcing individuals from the subjectivity of host into the status of guest and/or stranger. According to Mahtani (2014), this is byproduct of Canadian multicultural policy that distinguishes between “‘capital-C Canadian’ society that exists more or less independently of ethnic groups and to whose development ethnic groups are encouraged to make their various contributions” (2014: 116). Left unsaid is that the value of racialized contributions to congregational life should not surpass those of white congregants. The proximal status of racialized congregants encourages a crisis of
whiteness and Presbyterian identity within some congregations (see Thobani 2007). Thus, despite decades of participating in the church, racialized congregants experience congregational life as outsiders, marginalized from full congregational citizenship.

Hospitality, Reconciliation, and Indigeneity

At its core, the virtue of hospitality addresses respectful relationships that pay particular attention to the value of mutuality, which I discuss in Chapter 6. For church ministers active in making a just multicultural church, they see the contemporary Canadian political climate of documenting the history and impact of residential schools on Indigenous peoples as a unique opportunity to transform settler and Indigenous relationships. In 2014, I attended a workshop on intercultural ministry developed and administered by the Canadian Church’s forum where I met a minister from Winnipeg who was striving in bridging racial and cultural cleavages within her ethnoracially diverse congregation involving white, Filipino and Indigenous congregants. She explained to me that a welcoming congregation is a call for humility and her congregation now had the unique opportunity to reconcile current prejudices along with past injustices of cultural abuse from denominational civilizing practices and the harmful techniques in evangelization. At the time, she was still in the process of strategizing the congregational work towards Indigenous and racialized reconciliation. She attended the workshop to gain theological education and training to respond to the diverse needs of congregants with each other and with their relationships with God.

Situating Christian hospitality in relation to settler-Indigenous history, we find that the virtue of Christian hospitality is not so radical. Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars articulate that historical treaties signed with settlers are founded on principles of mutuality and respect. Treaties are sacred and political; they attend to ethical ways for distinct nations to co-exist harmoniously, peacefully, and respectfully (Mackey 2016, Turner 2012). One example of a treaty that centralizes the virtues of mutual and harmonious co-existence is the two-row wampum or Guswentha. This treaty of peace and friendship is acknowledged by Indigenous elders as a sacred and political understanding between the Haudenosaunee and European nations when they first came into contact (Turner 2012: 48). Grand Chief Michael Mitchell of Akwesasne describes the wampum:
There are two rows of purple, and those rows have the spirit of your ancestors and mine. There are three beads of wampum separating the two rows and they symbolize peace, friendship and respect.

The two rows symbolize two paths or vessels, travelling down the same rivers together. One, a birch bark canoe, will be for the Indian people, their laws, their customs and their ways. The other, a ship, will be for the white people and their laws, their customs and their ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boat. Neither of us will try to steer the other’s vessel (Turner 2012: 48).

Turner elaborates that the two-row wampum offers the principles of two independent distinct nations who are in an interdependent relationship that is maintained through peace, friendship and respect (2012: 54). This understanding for interdependent relationships demonstrates an Indigenous history in which Indigenous peoples are hosts to European nations, who over time are subjected to status of the strange—so strange that they become peoples to be eliminated and estranged from their lands (Simpson 2014). More importantly, it demonstrates how welcome interconnects the political with the sacred, of which hospitality is one variant of co-existence.

Mackey (2016) draws attention to the role and responsibility of settlers as treaty people. She sees that there must be critical self-reflexion, remarking that settler ‘help’ of Indigenous peoples “often reproduce coloniality by imposing normative and often unconscious settler standards, appropriating Indigenous worldviews or spirituality, or engaging in a myriad of other destructive, albeit well-intentioned and ‘charitable’ acts resulting from an ingrained sense of entitlement” (2016: 128). As such, she calls for an epistemological shift in settler thinking by reframing treaties as an ongoing process. Non-colonizing mutuality means that settlers, both white and racialized, ought to see themselves as treaty persons who continue to build respectful co-existence and mutual relationships because “settler people already are participants in, and beneficiaries of treaties” (Mackey 2016: 130, emphasis in original).

Hospitality has a tendency to devolve into inhospitality and hostility once settlers focus on their own futurity. Although my dissertation focuses on the hospitality of the church towards immigrants, racialized Canadians and white Canadians from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, the Presbyterian Church and other mainline denominations are developing and engaging in social
justice seeking ambitions in mending relationships and past injustices among Indigenous, non-Indigenous and Christian peoples. The ambitions for decolonizing reconciliation may encourage settler Christians to question what it means to be welcomed as opposed to doing the welcome.


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