

WORSHIP OUTDOORS? - THE PROMOTION OF SPIRITUAL
REFLECTIONS ON BEAUTY AND AWE AS A POSSIBLE WAY TO DEVELOP
INTEREST IN WORSHIP OUTDOORS IN ST ANDREWS.

by
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When we contemplate the whole globe as one great dewdrop, striped and dotted with continents and islands, flying through space with all other stars all singing and shining together as one, the whole universe appears as an infinite storm of beauty.

—John Muir

That is how it is when we praise you. We join the angels in praise,
And we keep our feet in time and place... Awed to heaven, rooted in earth.

—Walter Bruggemann

If I really wanted to pray I'll tell you what I'd do. I'd go out into a great big field all alone or in the deep, deep woods and I'd look up into the sky—up—up—up—into that lovely blue sky that looks as if there was no end to its blueness. And then I'd just feel a prayer.

—Lucy Maud Montgomery

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Soli Deo Gloria.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This project primarily relates to the congregation and parish of St Mark's Church in St Andrews and will address the following question:

In what ways might a series of Sunday morning worship and weekday learning workshops focusing on the themes of beauty, awe and worship outdoors influence - positively or negatively- the participants' views in relation to the setting up of outdoor worship in St Andrews?

In this chapter I will identify why this question is important to me. I will also state why answering it will help my ministry and may allow the congregation of St Mark's Parish Church to discern the right course of action in developing (or not) outdoor worship in St Andrews.

Before doing so let me start with comments on both beauty and awe. An item which is beautiful can lead to awe, but not necessarily. A thing which produces awe need not be beautiful; the feeling of awe may, for example, arise from fear. Some natural occurrences like total solar eclipses are frequently described as being both beautiful and awesome. In that context awe relates to wonder.

Beauty and awe are both subjective. What one person views as beautiful another may not. What stimulates awe in one person may not do so in the next. Beauty may be attributed to an object whereas awe is a sensation of deep respect. It is good to note such differences. Indeed, in general usage today the context of the use of the word awe can have different meanings. It can either relate to wonder or to fear or indeed perhaps both emotions.

The project question is important to me both personally and in terms of the life of the congregation. The Reformed Edinburgh DMin cohort to which I belonged started in 2021. During classes in January 2023 the cohort studied both beauty and awe. These are not topics which, at least in my experience, are frequently, explicitly, considered in Reformed Churches at the congregational level. Both beauty and awe resonate with my interests. On considering the reaction to the introduction of such themes I hope to demonstrate how beauty and awe also resonate with at least some members of the congregation of St Mark's Church.

In terms of beauty, I spent eight years on the Church of Scotland Church Art and Architecture Committee (CARTA) and for over five years convened its Stained Glass Group. There, together in the Group and the larger Committee, we would often consider beauty, if not awe. We recognised how something created could be introduced into a church sanctuary to, amongst other things, both enrich the sanctuary's beauty and also help enhance people's experience of worship. CARTA produced an information sheet to help congregations reflect on *The Setting of Presbyterian Worship* where they say:

Stained glass, lighting, murals, pictures, sculpture in metal stone and wood and the use of colour can enhance the significance as well as the beauty of church architecture. The integrity of creation and how we share this world justly is brought into the space in such a way. A sculptor from Carara [*sic*] who surveyed a block of stone all morning before he set his chisel to it. He chiselled for the rest of the day and as the sun was setting his grandson, who had been watching him work all day, said to him, "How did you know there was a lion hidden in the stone?" Using art forms unveils the mystery of creation and the integrity we have in how we use that creation.¹

¹ Church of Scotland, Mission and Discipleship Council, "The Setting of Presbyterian Worship: An information leaflet from the Committee on Church Art and Architecture (CARTA) of the Church of Scotland" (Edinburgh: Church of Scotland, 2014), 16.

If something from the wonder of creation can be used to increase the beauty of the church sanctuary, then this project question tests whether reflecting on beauty itself might lead people to desire to worship outdoors amid God's creation.

In St Mark's Church, prior to this project, time has not been laid aside to reflect on beauty. Nonetheless its importance for people is seen in congregational life. The flowers decorating the sanctuary, Sunday by Sunday, demonstrate it. The care taken to embellish the church for the festivals of Christmas and Easter show it also. The attentiveness with which communion vessels and elements are prepared and set on the Communion Table for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper indicate how people appreciate and value beauty too.

Beauty therefore resonates with me and the congregation; so too does awe. One of my strongest experiences of awe was on a winter's night, standing outside, in the dark, on a cold clear evening in a remote part of Caithness in the North of Scotland. The stars were spectacular. I felt tiny and the universe immense. I sensed deep awe and offered thanks for the creation encapsulating me. I preached a sermon on awe following on from Ron Cole-Turner's class on Science and Christian Faith which covered that topic. It generated much more excitement and engagement at the door as people left worship than is usually the case. Congregants, uninvited, were sharing with me examples of when they had experienced awe. This highlighted to me clear energy within the congregation to engage with that topic and showed that the topic was important for at least some of them. This growing awareness within me of the importance of beauty and awe for the congregation helped nudge me towards formulating a project question.

Whilst it has been observed that beauty and awe have significance for at least some of the congregation of St Mark's, it can be taken as read that worship is of crucial importance, for it is part of the weekly life of all congregations of Christ's Church. In terms of St Mark's Church, the project question is important because outdoor worship has been a part of its life (and the congregations that united to form it) for many years. Before the Covid-19 pandemic a substantive change to farm practise meant the congregation's annual outdoor Harvest Thanksgiving service had to move from outside on a farm to take place inside the church building.

More recently, during the pandemic particularly, the opposite dynamic was at play. During the pandemic St Mark's Messy Church, by necessity, held all its in-person meetings outdoors. Post pandemic it continues to hold some outdoors. Worship outdoors in different forms, including Songs of Praise services and walks with worship on established pilgrimage routes ending in St Andrews, have been and continue to be, part of the life of St Mark's Church.

Interest in the outdoors, in my experience, leads to increased interest in theology pertaining to the environment (eco-theology). Eco-theology has been working its way up the theological agenda since I was an undergraduate.² It will be shown later in this chapter that engaging with eco-theology has also been an activity St Mark's Church has been involved with. When Harvest Thanksgiving services took place on a farm, comments to me over successive years demonstrated worship there was received positively. When outdoor Messy Church took place during the Covid-19 pandemic,

² For the avoidance of doubt, eco here is a shortened version of the word ecological and does not relate to the American ECO covenant of Evangelical Presbyterians.

seeing a growth in interest in those attending demonstrated something may be afoot. Is the Holy Spirit at work in outdoor worship in St Andrews and if so, can individuals and the congregation grow in awareness of God's presence and activity amongst them? In seeking to answer the project question I will bear that observation in mind. Outdoor worship may have had a role in the life of the congregation in the past and the present but what does that mean for the future?

The main question I pose in this project neatly pulls together various strands of interest for me and the congregation and asks if a focus on spiritual reflections on beauty and awe may lead to developments in the life of the congregation in terms of outdoor worship. The question sets out to test if that is the case, and if so point, however tentatively, to faithful ways forward for the congregation and for my ongoing ministry.

Background

Eco-theology has been important to me since I studied chemistry as a science undergraduate where I learned of the significance of the release into the atmosphere of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) as well as carbon dioxide and other gasses, commonly referred to as greenhouse gases, and how CFCs generated 'holes' in the ozone layer. The scientific evidence pointed to the conclusion that such behaviour continuing unstinted would lead to an increase in global warming. Forty years later global warming has indeed increased and habitat loss has led to an increasing threat to species. As noted earlier since I started studying theology as an undergraduate in the late 1980's eco-theology has risen in prominence.

The last thirty years of my life have been served in Church of Scotland parish ministry. The first parish was in Kirkwall, the capital of the Orkney Islands, and the

second parishes were in the town of St Andrews in Fife and the nearby country village of Strathkinness. Each of these parish churches is (or has become) interested in eco-theology and ecological engagement during my ministry. Each, both in Orkney and Fife, have been awarded an Eco-Congregation award. The Eco-Congregation scheme has evolved over the years, but Eco-Congregation Scotland encourages congregations to, “make the link between environmental issues and Christian faith, and respond in practical action in the church, in the lives of individuals, and in the local and global community.”³

St Mark’s Church’s interest in and support of ecological concerns offers a solid foundation for this project. Laying before people the opportunity to spiritually reflect on the themes of beauty and awe offers people time and space to consider topics which in my experience are seldom focused on in Reformed congregations. Additionally, examining whether that focus may positively or negatively encourage a growing interest in outdoor worship will uncover whether, more or less, similar or varied, outdoor worship in St Andrews has support from the congregation of St Mark’s Church or not.

The project does not set out with pre-conceived notions about what the results will be. I will gather data and analyse the results. My working hypothesis is that by engaging in spiritual reflections on beauty and awe and focusing on outdoor worship the congregation will be moved to desire and wish to participate in more outdoor worship. It could be that the opposite is seen to be true. It could be that focusing on beauty and awe makes the congregation appreciate the beauty of the church sanctuary even more and so wish to worship there and nowhere else. The analysed data will help tell.

³ Eco-Congregation, “Eco- Congregation Portal, Welcome,” accessed March 17, 2024, www.ecocongregation.org.

Global Context

In recent years ecological concerns have not only risen up the theological agenda they have also risen high on the agenda of politicians. Through news coverage, almost everyone, whether religious or not, is aware of the significance of global warming and the necessity to care for and cherish our beautiful and awe inducing planet: although it must be noted climate sceptics do exist. In August 2023, in the wake of the exceptionally high summer temperatures in swathes of mainland Europe, Antonio Guterres, the Secretary General of the United Nations, claimed we had moved from Global Warming to Global Boiling.⁴ Increasing awareness of temperatures rising has led to an increase in anxiety and mental health issues.⁵ The Covid-19 pandemic has compounded these consequences. This is particularly true of younger people as they contemplate their mortality and the planet's fragility. Phillip Inman, writing in *The Guardian* and commenting on the decrease in happiness in young people expressed within the World Happiness Report 2024 notes, "increasing concern at the impact of social media use, income inequalities, the housing crisis, and fears about wars and climate change on the happiness of children and young people."⁶ That is part of the contemporary global backdrop into which the church must serve and tell out the good news of the Gospel.

⁴United Nations, "Hottest July ever signals 'era of global boiling has arrived' says UN chief," UN News, Global perspective Human stories, last modified July 27, 2023, accessed March 23, 2024, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/07/1139162>

⁵ World Economic Forum, "Struggling with climate anxiety? Here's 10+ tips from mental health experts", last modified Feb 16, 2022, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/02/the-rise-in-climate-anxiety-expert-tips-on-how-to-beat-it/>

⁶ Phillip Inman, "World Happiness Report sounds alarm about the welfare of young people," *Guardian (UK)*, March 20, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/mar/20/world-happiness-report-sounds-alarm-about-the-welfare-of-britains-young-people>

Local Community and Church Context

St Andrews has a population of 10 000 all year-round residents and that number doubles when student numbers are added. The town was the ecclesiastical capital of Scotland and is known as one of the centres of the Scottish Reformation. Golfers from throughout the world make ‘pilgrimages’ to play on the Old Course. St Andrews University is the oldest university in Scotland, established by papal bull in 1413. It is an attractive town for tourists due to its shops, beaches, Botanic Garden, cinema and theatre. Education, golf and leisure are its main industries.

St Andrews has twelve Christian congregations and additionally the University Chaplaincy and two Christian student groups (University Christian Union and Just Love, Student Christian Group).⁷ The University employs one full time Chaplain and two part time Assistant Chaplains. They also have 13 Honorary Chaplains covering many belief systems.⁸

Conversations about the town’s three kirk congregations working more closely together was initiated before a recently approved Presbytery Mission Plan was prepared. (Presbyteries have been required to introduce Presbytery Mission Plans by the General Assembly). The Presbytery of Fife Mission Plan invited the kirk congregations to unite to form a united church with a team ministry. Locally, each Kirk Session has agreed that the sitting ministers would be acceptable to them, although any future decisions must go to a

⁷ Three Church of Scotland congregations, two Scottish Episcopal Church congregations and one each from the following: Baptist Church, Cornerstone (part of the United Free Church of Scotland), Free Church of Scotland, Gospel Hall, Kingdom Vineyard, Roman Catholic Church and the Society of Friends.

⁸ University of St Andrews, “Chaplaincy Team”, accessed March 29, 2024, <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/chaplaincy/contact/team/>.

vote involving communicant members. (Since that decision has been taken, I have moved to Edinburgh to serve in the Church of Scotland Offices). Besides two full time ministers of Word and Sacrament, a further half time pioneer ministry is budgeted for. It is possible that a pioneer minister could be involved in running worship outdoors. Discussions about union have been and continue to take place but that may take some time to reach fruition.

The three Kirk Sessions commissioned Brendan Research to prepare a Mission Audit, using quantitative and qualitative data, to help them plan for the future. Brendan Research consulted locally, including interviews with members of the congregations and community. They also gathered data from the Census and population and deprivation figures. They chose to name the report *St Andrews: Separate communities, separate lives?* The report's first paragraph offers a thumbnail sketch of the town.

In compiling this report, it's become clear that St Andrews is a unique town in Scotland, perhaps within the UK. Here, worlds collide in a small geographical area. Day visitors wash in and out like the tide, while students and their lecturers at the university call the town home for a few years before moving on. Older people choose retirement in St Andrews, drawn by the golf, culture, and easy access to the hospital. Business people serve the visitors and students, yet underlying all these remains a Fife town where many struggle with low income, educational attainment and caring responsibilities, shut out from the otherworldly expensive cafes and shops in their main streets.⁹

The report provided the Kirk Sessions with much information to help stimulate their thinking and provide evidence for their future planning. St Andrews have seen the town of their birth become increasingly expensive and indeed the report showed a good number of them feel excluded from the town centre since it is now unaffordable for them. There are an increasing number of students, golfers and people who commute to work in

⁹ Fiona J. Tweedie, Rita M. Welsh, *St Andrews: Separate communities, separate lives?* (Brendan Research (Unpublished), 2022), 2.

the town. Additionally, a good section of the population have moved into St Andrews on retirement because of its wide ranging facilities. This commissioned report is useful to provide focus for the three Kirk Sessions as they try to discern God's guidance and chart the right way forward together in mission and service. It became clear to me that a significant point to note is that enjoying the beauty of the natural environment, the outdoors, has no financial cost attached to it and it belongs equally to everyone.

St Mark's Parish Church Context

St Mark's Parish Church in St Andrews, Fife was formed on 1 January 2022. It materialised through a union of two congregations: Hope Park and Martyrs Parish Church whose building is near the town centre of St Andrews, and a nearby village church, Strathkinness Parish Church. The congregation is made up of around 400 people almost all of whom are retired. Indeed, many are in their late seventies or older. Almost every week no children attend Sunday morning worship, instead children attend St Mark's Messy Church which meets monthly on a Sunday afternoon. 38 elders make up the Kirk Session and five of these were newly ordained and/or admitted in December 2022. Worship attendance was around 100 per week before the Covid-19 pandemic and now averages 70 per week in person with an additional 20 or so participating via livestream.

Hope Park and Martyrs Church was an Eco-Congregation for over ten years whereas Strathkinness Parish Church was not. Work to gain an Eco-Congregation Award was initiated and achieved by volunteers from the congregation. In time Hope Park and Martyrs Church employed a part time development worker and a strand of their service was to grow and deepen that church's Eco-Congregation engagement. Some people from the congregation were actively engaged and others much less so, if at all. Involvement

ranged from collecting milk bottle tops for a charity which recycled them, to giving substantial amounts of time to events such as the congregation's annual household goods sale which promoted recycling and took place at the start of the University academic year.

The development worker established links with student and community eco-groups. They set up and convened an ecumenical St Andrews Churches Eco Network. Links were forged with Transition which is a university funded group that works with community bodies on eco-issues (e.g. electric bicycles, a community allotment, a tool share library, and 'reduce, reuse recycle' initiatives). The development worker joined the committee of the St Andrews Green Film Festival and one year the church hosted a Festival Film and had a panel discussion afterwards. Questions to the panel came from the audience. The panel was made up of church and community representatives and was convened by me.

Regrettably, for personal reasons, just before the formation of St Mark's Church, the development worker had to resign with immediate effect and so the work they had been doing came to an abrupt halt. There was no time to plan for this ending, nor plot a future path. The Kirk Session of Hope Park and Martyrs Church was fully supportive of and appreciative of this development work.

As lockdown eased and St Mark's Messy Church started once more it was noted some people who did not attend Messy Church with their children when held in the church building were willing to attend it outdoors when held in St Andrews Botanic Garden or a local park. This leads to the question would offering more worship outdoors

be welcomed by some who do not normally attend traditional Sunday worship in a church building?

From a Christian perspective God created all things. Jesus Christ (The Word, present at the beginning) highlighted delight in creation. Arising from our God given gifts, humans can appreciate beauty and awe. These concepts are articulated in scripture and by Reformed writers. John Calvin was open to the scientific thinking of his day and his theological writings and biblical commentaries point to an integrated understanding of the created order coming from God and our desire to respond to that creation with thanksgiving as being the right course of action.

The congregations where I have served in Orkney and in Fife are each congregations that have been given Eco-Congregation awards. I have observed that some church members are keen to engage with ecological engagement and others less so. This project, by building on the existing milieu of the congregation, and using scripture and Reformed thinking on beauty and awe will endeavour to explore whether considering these concepts may move church members to desire to initiate and support the setting up of new acts of worship outdoors.

Summary

In this chapter I have outlined the primary question for my research project namely, “In what ways might a series of Sunday morning worship and weekday learning workshops focusing on the themes of beauty, awe and worship outdoors influence - positively or negatively - the participants’ views in relation to the setting up of outdoor worship in St Andrews?” I have described how the question arose, why it is important to

me and the congregation of St Mark's Church and provided an overview of the ministerial context for this project.

In chapter 2 I will offer a biblical and Reformed theological foundation to help address the project's question. Texts from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament will be considered. Primarily, the writing of John Calvin on beauty and awe, amongst the writing of other Reformed thinkers on these topics, will influence the theological analysis. Modern day writing on awe and the interface between science and religion add further breadth and depth to help in the preparation of worship and workshop materials. These inputs offer congregants the opportunity to spiritually reflect on beauty and awe. The Chapter ends with a focus on possible varieties of outdoor worship.

In Chapter 3 I will explain in detail how the project was completed. I will describe how the five interviews were conducted and how interviewees were invited to keep journals. I will offer a description of how questionnaires were distributed before and after the worship and workshop inputs. I will move to describe the results and identify themes which emerged from the data gathered.

In Chapter 4 I will evaluate the project and its results. I will offer some further observations and conclusions building on what was identified in Chapters 2 and 3. I will describe how these conclusions might be shared and applied in the congregation of St Mark's, within my new role in the Church of Scotland where I serve as Ministries Support Operations Manager and for the church more broadly. Chapter 4 will end by tentatively pointing to how things may be taken forward so that God may be worshipped not only within the walls of a church building but whilst worshippers are outdoors, surrounded by God's creation.

CHAPTER 2

This chapter will set out a biblical and theological basis for moving on to address in what ways a series of Sunday morning worship followed by Saturday learning workshops focusing on the themes of beauty, awe and worship outdoors might influence – positively or negatively- the participants’ views in relation to the setting up of outdoor worship in St Andrews. The biblical and theological rationale arises initially in the light of what was learnt in both the Reformed Spirituality class I took which was led by Susan Hardman-Moore (particularly from Belden C Lane’s book *Ravished by Beauty*) and the Science and Christian Faith class delivered by Ron Cole-Turner (particularly from *Awe: The Transformative Power of Everyday Wonder* by Dacher Keltner). In discussing my proposed project theme at the June 2023 Final Project Workshop class Donna Giver-Johnson, the Director of Doctor of Ministry studies, articulated neatly that considering beauty and awe side by side highlighted a Reformed method. Angela Hancock, one of my DMin cohort’s mentors, in a Pittsburgh Theological Seminary promotional video for the Reformed Theology cohort says the standard way to interpret that method would be to “consider what it means to start with what God has done, is doing and promises to do according to scripture” and then think through how that applies to life.¹⁰ God’s action comes first and we respond (c.f. 1 Jn 4:19). The universe is created out of God’s grace and in response to the beauty that is seen there, people can appreciate awe and offer thanks to God through worship and service.

¹⁰Angela Hancock, “Doctor of Ministry Reformed Cohort”, https://www.pts.edu/Reformed_Focus, accessed April 28, 2024.

Beauty and awe are both subjective. Beauty is a combination of qualities that please the senses, particularly, but not necessarily, the sense of sight. Awe can be defined as a feeling of great respect which is sometimes mixed with fear, wonder or surprise. What one person views as beautiful another may not. What stimulates awe in one person may not do so in the next.

On 26 and 27 Feb 2023 the aurora borealis were both particularly bright and unusually visible in the UK much further south than is the norm. On 28 February 2023 in *The Guardian* app article “‘Awe-inspiring’: UK readers share their northern lights snaps” images taken the two previous nights were shown alongside comments. Lee Hesp said, “It is always awe-inspiring to see the northern lights.” Susi Petherick was “treated to these beautiful colours and dancing lights. Magic! What an amazing thing an aurora is. It was breathtaking, really.”¹¹ On 19 December 2023 high in the sky in St Andrews, next to the manse, I saw rainbow-coloured streaked clouds and photographed them (Appendix 1). I had never seen clouds like them before. I now understand they are nacreous clouds. I saw beauty, sensed awe and offered thanks to God. Later, in Chapter 3, the analysis of the project results will note that one element of some people’s description of awe is when they experience things for the first time.

This project will test the desire of St Mark’s Church to move towards offering thanks to God through participating in outdoor worship. It will set out the biblical and theological basis by: offering an introduction; reflecting on the significance of the prologue of John’s Gospel and the Trinity; considering sample biblical texts on beauty,

¹¹ Guardian Readers, “‘Awe-inspiring’: UK readers share their northern lights snaps,” *Guardian App*, February 28, 2023, accessed 4 March 2023.

awe and outdoor worship; examining primarily the writing of John Calvin, but touching on other Reformed thinkers also, on beauty, awe and how that relates to outdoor worship; observing how awe relates to scientific understanding today and finally how this may impinge on the ways a congregation could respond to beauty by appreciating awe and offering thanks for it through various forms of outdoor worship, including Harvest Thanksgiving services, pilgrimage walks, Songs of Praise services and Forest Church. The Chapter will end describing the methodology of how what has been found will be used in the worship and workshops and how it will be evaluated.

Setting the Background

At the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century some churches had statues removed and walls whitewashed, particularly those churches who followed thinking that would become known as Reformed. What had been ornate was pared back. There was a shift in focus away from the visual and a move to the Word of God revealed through Scripture. This was at a time when the printing press was facilitating communication by the spread of material whether visual drawings or printed texts. Note though that a simply decorated sanctuary can still have beauty present (highlighted later in the analysis of project questionnaires in Chapter 3). Although during the Reformation some of the visual stimuli within many church sanctuaries was diminished, still the world of nature produced the same green grass, the same starry skies and the same crashing waves that allowed people to appreciate beauty and sense awe whilst beyond the walls of a church building. For Reformers the Word of God contained in Scripture was important, but important too was nature, which was sometimes referred to as the “second book of

God.”¹² Belden C. Lane helpfully points us to the Belgic Confession of 1561.¹³ It states in Article 2 - The Means by Which to Know God:

We know God by two means: First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe, since that universe is before our eyes like a beautiful book in which all creatures, great and small, are as letters to make us ponder the invisible things of God: God’s eternal power and divinity, as the apostle Paul says in Romans 1:20. All these things are enough to convict humans and to leave them without excuse. Second, God makes himself known to us more clearly by his holy and divine Word, as much as we need in this life, for God’s glory and for our salvation.¹⁴

How interesting that this, an early Reformed Confession, places knowing God in nature immediately after its Article 1: The Only God and immediately before its Article 3: The Written Word of God. Additionally, in the first sentence about how we know God, the universe is described as being before us “like a beautiful book”. On an initial reading the ordering may suggest that primacy goes to knowing God through the universe. This is backed up because not only does it appear before Scripture within Article 2 but it appears immediately after a monotheistic description of God. It must though also be recognised that article 2 is the only place, within the Confession, where the universe is described and if the number of words is the measure to indicate the degree of importance rather than the positioning of the concepts within the Confession then the opposite would be the case and Scripture would take precedence over the beauty of the universe. Lane suggests the

¹² Bruce Stanley, *Forest Church: A Field Guide to Nature Connection for Groups and Individuals* (Powys: Mystic Christ Press, 2013), 32.

¹³ Belden C. Lane, *Ravished by Beauty: The Surprising Legacy of Reformed Spirituality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 20.

¹⁴“Belgic Confession,” Christian Reformed Church, <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/belgic-confession#toc-article-2-the-means-by-which-we-know-god> accessed April 29, 2024.

Confession is placing the book of nature alongside the book of Scripture.¹⁵ In other words he suggests the truth revealed in each is equal in significance with neither greater than the other. Other Reformed thinkers would place the emphasis on the primacy of Scripture and see nature or the universe as an important corollary to what is found there. Some highlight the distinction between knowing God through creation and knowing God through Christ. “Within Reformed dogmatics, these two modes of revelation are referred to as God’s ‘general’ and ‘special revelation’.”¹⁶ The first, they point out, may lead to a knowledge of God but the second is required to lead people to a salvific knowledge of God where God is seen more clearly.¹⁷ Whatever the nuance intended by the Confession both Scripture and the beautiful book of the universe are a means by which to know God. I will now turn to the prologue of John’s Gospel and how what is found both there, and subsequently within the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, help inform the theme of this project.

The Prologue of John’s Gospel and the Trinity

The translation of the Bible used will, unless otherwise indicated, be the Revised English Bible since this is the pew Bible used in St Mark’s Church. I will, in this section, start by looking at selected examples from post-Reformation writing about the prologue of John’s Gospel with particular reference to the Greek words *λόγος* (Logos) and *ἐν ἀρχῇ* (en arche) since these will offer insights that are helpful when considering the project

¹⁵ Lane, *Ravished*, 20.

¹⁶ D Francois Muller, et al., *The Belgic Confession: Historical Background, Contextual Meaning, Contemporary Relevance. Vol. 14* (Cape Town: AOSIS, 2023), 64.

¹⁷ Muller, *Belgic Confession*, 64.

question. I will seek to show that the prologue of John is a critical text that leads to allowing us to see the God whom Christians describe in a Trinitarian form as being there from the beginning. Additionally, that it also allows us to see God as Trinity wherever God appears in scripture.

John Calvin translates Logos as the Speech:

because he is the eternal Wisdom and Will of God; and, secondly, because he is the lively image of His purpose; for, as *Speech* is said to be among men the image of the mind, so it is not inappropriate to apply this to God, and to say that He reveals himself to us by his *Speech*. The other significations of the Greek word λόγος (Logos) do not apply so well. It means, no doubt, *definition*, and *reasoning*, and *calculation*; but I am unwilling to carry the abstruseness of philosophy beyond the measure of my faith.¹⁸

C.K.Barrett notes the influence of two philosophical schools around a century after Christ's birth which can be observed in John's Gospel. First, he observes popular Platonism and also the Stoic 'school'.¹⁹ Barrett is less convinced of the depth of influence of Stoicism in the gospel as a whole but is clear about its presence in the prologue since "Logos plays a vital part in the Stoic view of the world."²⁰ "Logos was divine, and Logos expressed itself in material objects, animate and inanimate, Logos was God and Logos was the universe: Stoic physics was hardly separable from pantheism".²¹ Barrett makes clear that by introducing the word Logos without explanation the writer of John's gospel must be satisfied that readers will understand the theological term. In other words, they must be aware of its philosophical background and meaning. Barrett is clearly less

¹⁸ John Calvin, *Commentary on John - Volume 1* (Grand Rapids, MI), 14, Christian Classics Ethereal Library.

¹⁹ C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1978), 35.

²⁰ Barrett, *John*, 35.

²¹ Barrett, *John*, 35.

hesitant than Calvin to acknowledge and embrace this. It is not a common word in the gospels, indeed besides in John's prologue it only appears elsewhere twice (Rev 19:13, 1 John 1:1).²² Barrett goes on to point people to Colossians 1:15-20 in which he says Paul "reaches a similar Christological position without using the word [λόγος (Logos)]"²³ It will be seen below that the Church of Scotland's Theological Forum also drew a similar parallel in its 2022 report to the General Assembly.

Barrett, when he refers to the meaning of the word ἀρχή (*arche*), usually translated beginning, indicates that, "It is true ἐν ἀρχῇ means that in Jesus one encounters what is beyond the world and time (Bultmann), but it might be even better to say that what is beyond the world and time is known in Jesus."²⁴ For the purposes of this project this points to an understanding where Jesus Christ is intrinsically part of things before creation, during creation and indeed eternally. The prologue of John then refers to both God the Father and God the Son however the Holy Spirit is not mentioned explicitly.

In considering the prologue David Ford makes clear the connection with Genesis 1.²⁵ Genesis 1 is a hymn and Ford describes the prologue of John as a "poetic hymn".²⁶ Each starts "In the beginning" but where Genesis moves to say "God Created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1), the prologue of John takes a step back and moves us into the ontology of God's being. "In the beginning the Word already was." (John 1:1). "It [the

²² Barrett, *John*, 152.

²³ Barrett, *John*, 152.

²⁴ Barrett, *John*, 152.

²⁵ David F. Ford, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2021), 43.

²⁶ Ford, *John*, 42.

prologue of John's Gospel] opens (1:1-5) with the Word related to God and all things, affirming a God-centred, meaningful universe."²⁷ John starts his gospel by quoting the first words of the Pentateuch. Ford is clear you must take John's gospel and lay it beside other existing Scripture for John's Gospel is filled with allusions to that Scripture. Ford says John reads Genesis 1, "thoughtfully, daringly, surprisingly, as no one, so far as we know, had ever read it before".²⁸ It is good to note too that by the second verse of Genesis reference is made to the spirit; "the spirit of God hovered over the surface of the water" (Genesis 1: 2).

There is a contrast, however slight, at least in terms of emphasis, between the interpretations of Barrett and Ford. Barrett's conclusion is unapologetically Christocentric whereas Ford's emphasis leads us more towards the breadth of the ontology of God (God's characteristics, properties and being). Both Barrett and Ford, though, complement The Church of Scotland's Theological Forum which in its report "The Earth is the Lord's: A Theological Account of Creation Care" says, "John takes the familiar Genesis passage of God bringing light and life from darkness and chaos, and reveals that it was through Christ, God's Word, that the world was created. Creation does not come first, then Jesus and his salvation a great time later, but rather, Christ and creation belong together."²⁹ Calvin would express a similar sentiment when he writes, "the sun discovers to our view the lovely spectacle of earth and heaven, and the whole arrangement of nature, so God

²⁷ Ford, *John*, 42.

²⁸ Ford, *John*, 43.

²⁹ Church of Scotland, *Theological Forum Report to the General Assembly 2022*, 10. https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/93374/theological-forum.pdf

has visibly displayed the chief glory of his works in his Son.”³⁰ Lane interprets this by saying “A Christocentric thrust necessarily lies at the heart of any genuinely Reformed theology of creation. The natural world points indelibly to the image from which it is made.”³¹

The Theological Forum’s Report, similarly to Barrett, goes on to make reference both to the prologue of John and Colossians 1:15-19. The Theological Forum’s report says Colossians 1:15-19:

is a rich passage with many nuances. For now, however, we will focus on what Paul means by creation being created ‘through’, ‘in’ and ‘for’ Christ. When Paul says that all things were created ‘through’ Christ, he means that Father, Son and Spirit were intimately connected with every aspect of the creative act. By the action of the Holy Spirit moving across the waters of chaos, God brought order and regularity to the universe and the earth. Through the Son, the Father created all things to manifest his glory, and predestined them toward their ordained ends and purposes. Through the regularities of nature and his providential will, God the Father rules the universe in love, revealing his wisdom and power through the things he has made (cf. Romans 1: 20). In this way, Scripture rejects a so-called ‘deist’ view of creation, in which God creates the universe at a distance and then leaves it to its own devices. Rather, God worked – and is working - closely in all of its operations.³²

Bernhard Lohse acknowledges, “The New Testament affirmations about the Holy Spirit are not so clear and univocal as those about Jesus Christ.”³³ Although the prologue of John does not reference the Holy Spirit, by laying it side by side with Colossians, as

³⁰ John Calvin, *John - Volume 1*, 298.

³¹ Lane, *Ravished*, 22.

³² Church of Scotland, *Theological Forum*, 11.

³³ Lohse, Bernhard. *A Short History of Christian Doctrine*, trans. F. Ernest Stoeffler, revised American edition (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 39.

Ford implicitly encourages us to do, it is clear each aspect of the Christian understanding of God's being has a place in the creation and indeed the ongoing life of the world.

It took until the fourth century for the church to settle on a Trinitarian understanding of God's being.³⁴ When you lay that beside texts such as Colossians 1: 15-20 and Ephesians 4:6 which talks of God being "over all and through all and in all" then the God who would appear as a baby born in a stable in Bethlehem is the Christ who would encompass all time and space. Christ was present through all of history and all of creation. It was simply that humanity did not appreciate or receive that revelation until later. Lohse in reference to the prologue of John says, "[There] the pre-existence of Christ before his earthly life is asserted. In doing so it was possible for the church to begin with certain conceptions which pre-Christian Judaism had formed about the pre-existence of the figure of Wisdom.³⁵ But what had only been an ideal within Judaism was regarded within Christianity from the standpoint of the decisive fact of the incarnation."³⁶ Lane references Karl Barth in *Church Dogmatics* who states, "The Trinity of God is the secret of God's beauty. It is radiant and what it radiates is joy. It attracts and therefore it conquers. Once we deny God's threefoldness, we immediately are left with a lustreless and joyless (and also humourless!) – in short, an uncomely God."³⁷ Julie Canlis, referring

³⁴ Lohse, *Christian Doctrine*, 38-39.

³⁵ Elsewhere in this Chapter I note that John Calvin sees Wisdom as being particularly primarily associated with Jesus Christ, the Word, but also part of the attributes of both God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

³⁶ Lohse, *Christian Doctrine*, 38-39.

³⁷ Lane, *Ravished*, 159.

to Calvin says, “Creation is revealed to be a space overflowing with the fatherhood of God, the mediation of Christ, and the tending of the Spirit.”³⁸

This considered association between the start of Genesis and Colossians 1:15-19 helpfully offers two things – it speaks of bridges between epochs and it points to the Trinity. In terms of bridges between epochs, since Christ and the Holy Spirit stand in and beyond creation and time. A consequence of that conclusion is that although not named explicitly in the Hebrew Bible, this points to a Christian understanding of Scripture that sees not only God the Creator but also Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit intimately involved throughout. In terms of the Trinity it leads to the conclusion that all the passages in the Hebrew Bible that relate to beauty and awe, amongst all other things, can with justification be seen to be part of the life of one God known to Christians as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This conclusion touches on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity and how scriptures of different religions are understood. That has implications for inter-faith dialogue. I believe people from different religions who consider beauty and awe alongside each other can, besides growing in understanding, help ease tensions and dispel misunderstandings as they build up trust between one another. Shirley C. Guthrie notes the challenges such an understanding creates for interreligious dialogue especially with Judaism and Islam since they are strongly monotheistic. Guthrie suggests when dialogue takes place it is important to “understand and appreciate each other, express genuine care

³⁸ Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2010), 54.

for each other.”³⁹ It is important too to articulate knowledgeably “In other words, we try to understand the uniquely Christian doctrine of the Trinity not to cut off but to prepare for a genuinely honest, open, friendly, mutually helpful dialogue with believers of other religious traditions.”⁴⁰ In doing so, understanding can grow and ever deepening relationships can be formed. Martha Moore-Keish points to Douglas John Hall’s view that we should not be content with exclusivism, inclusivism or pluralism but instead be, “telling the Christian story without coercion or threat, in the presence of those from other faith communities.”⁴¹ In the University of St Andrews, Scriptural Reasoning is used to help people of different faiths grow in understanding of each other. Choosing texts that relate to beauty, awe and the outdoor natural world could be particularly helpful. Indeed thinking of beauty and awe and engaging in environmental action together could be a fruitful source of inter – faith engagement for much eco-theology has concerns shared amongst religions.

Throughout my ministry I have been reluctant to read gospel principles back into the Hebrew Bible: it stands on its own feet and in its own terms. Nonetheless the Christian and cosmological understanding highlighted in the prologue of John which goes to the heart of understanding about the being of God helps open useful vistas. When you combine that understanding with the words of Colossians 1:15-19 and Ephesians 4:1-6

³⁹ Shirley C. Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine*, Rev. ed. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 72.

⁴⁰ Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine*, 73.

⁴¹ Martha Moore-Keish, “Divine Freedom and Human Religions: A Reformed Theologian Approaches Comparative Theology,” *Theology Today* 75, no. 3 (2018): 294.

then Christ is not simply there at the start of creation but, as seen above, there in its midst and there beyond time.

The prologue of the Gospel of John describes the closeness, indeed integration, of God and the Word. Jesus Christ as the Word which was made flesh is there as part of God's being from before the creation of the universe. Note that "without him no created thing came into being" (John 1: 3b). Building on that text allows an appreciation of the fact that whether we find words relating to beauty and awe in either the Hebrew scriptures or the New Testament, nonetheless they relate to God the Creator, God the Word and God the Holy Spirit. In other words, an understanding of a Trinitarian God swathes and permeates the creation we experience and respond to. This also clearly implies each text, whether from the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament, has validity in terms of a Reformed Christian perspective.

This points firmly to the fact that the ontology of God is important and indeed leads to the way we, in the end, experience and indeed respond to God. As the first answer in the shorter catechism states, humanity's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy God for ever. Those who participate in worship outdoors do exactly that. God creates through grace and as creatures we can appreciate the beauty which surrounds us, but more than that we can respond to that beauty with thanksgiving as we sense awe.

The significance of these three texts Genesis 1:1 - 2:1, John 1:1-14 and Colossians 1:15-19 and how they mutually inform and support each other mean they are used in either or both the project's worship and workshops which will be dealt with in Chapter 3. I will now turn to look at scripture to deepen an understanding of the place of beauty, awe, and outdoor worship in the Bible.

Collectively these will help offer a foundation upon which the worshippers in St Mark's Church are encouraged to address the thesis of this project. This will be further detailed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 where I will offer a summary and an analysis of the results.

Scriptural Texts

Many biblical texts deal with beauty and awe and are found in the Hebrew Bible. Examples include the creation story in Genesis 1:1 – 2:1 which was referred to above in relation to the prologue of John. In it a song of creation draws listeners and worshippers into the story so that in unison people grow in confidence to recite the chorus, “Evening came, and morning came, the second day”(Genesis 1:8b)...”the third day” (Genesis 1:13)...”the fourth day” (Genesis 1:19) ... Between the choruses, verses build, day on day, as the image of this ever burgeoning planet appears. The beauty and awesomeness of the universe that we can each appreciate and respond to is formed. This finds echoes in the psalms, where is found: “O Lord, our Lord, how awesome is your name through all the earth!” (Psalm 8:1 NAB); “The heavens tell out the glory of God, heaven’s vault makes known his handiwork” (Psalm 19:1); “How awesome is the Lord Most High.” (Psalm 47:2) and “mountains quake before his majesty” (Psalm 46:3).

Calvin uses the word beauty in places in his Psalms commentaries. Psalm 19:1, where the heavens declare the glory of God, has Calvin comment, “When we behold the heavens, we cannot but be elevated, by the contemplation of them, to Him who is their great Creator; and the beautiful arrangement and wonderful variety which distinguish the courses and station of the heavenly bodies, together with the beauty and splendor which

are manifest in them, cannot but furnish us with an evident proof of his providence.”⁴²

Later on in Psalm 19:6 he notes of the sun, “The more forcibly to express and magnify his surpassing beauty and, as it were, magnificent attire, he employs the similitude of a bridegroom.”⁴³

Awe is found in his Commentary referring to Psalm 29:11b which says “the Lord will bless his people with peace” to which Calvin comments, “From this we may learn, that we ought to stand in awe of the majesty of God, in such a manner as, notwithstanding, to hope from him all that is necessary to our prosperity; and let us be assuredly persuaded, that since his power is infinite, we are defended by an invincible fortress.”⁴⁴ In Psalm 4:4 Calvin notes that there is mention of awe and a similar sentiment is expressed in Psalm 46:10, an awe that reduces humanity to stillness.⁴⁵

Other examples of Hebrew scripture texts which point to awe would be Exodus 3:1-6 where Moses experiences holy ground and Ecclesiastes 3:11 as the vast expanse of time is contemplated. Although the Hebrew Bible is particularly strong on examples arising from the beauty of God’s creation and awe, only some of which are highlighted here, nonetheless examples also emerge in the New Testament and it is clear from the life and teaching of Jesus that an appreciation of the beauty found in creation and indeed within human beings is to be cherished and striven for: consider the lilies of the fields

⁴² John Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms – Volume 1* (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, accessed March 11, 2023), 310, <https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom08/calcom08?queryID=24081096&resultID=1086#formats>.

⁴³ Calvin, *Psalms Commentary Vol. 1*, 314.

⁴⁴ Calvin, *Psalms Commentary Vol. 1*, 464.

⁴⁵ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms – Volume 2* (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, accessed January 1, 2024), 175-176, <https://ccel.org/ccel/c/calvin/calcom09/cache/calcom09.pdf>

(Matthew 6:28-29) and the value of sparrows and the even greater value of humans to God (Matthew 10: 29-31). Jesus' teaching showed how crowds were in awe of him (Matthew 7:28-29) and after stilling a storm the disciples were amazed (Matthew 8:27).

It is important to be clear though that scripture verses relating to beauty and awe are not all 'pretty and sweet'. Scripture refers to awesome disasters, whether storms (Job 37: 2-6) or plagues of locusts (Joel 1:1-20). Texts in such a vein offer a completeness. Interviewee A makes reference to contrasts in Psalm 107 and slightly elides the first words from Graham Kendrick's hymn *God of the Poor* which begins with the words *Beauty for Brokenness* and they choose to use the phrase "beauty and brokenness."⁴⁶ This observation too acknowledges the range encapsulated by beauty. Both beauty and awe each have darker sides to them. Indeed, in terms of awe, as will be noted later in this chapter, that is particularly appreciated by John Calvin in his writing. Indeed awe frequently relates to fear. It is good to note that together light and positive as well as dark and foreboding texts offer fertile soil for an examination of beauty and awe.

The Psalms, besides offering examples of beauty and awe, also point to worship taking place outdoors in the open by the creation itself. Psalm 148 starts by listing things which praise God, things in the heavens which might include stars and angels, then the sun and moon are mentioned, subsequently the rain and by the end of the Psalm animate and inanimate things from land, sea and air. Calvin states to ignore such praise would be to show ingratitude,

for all would hear this symphony, were they at all attent upon considering the works of God. For doth not the sun by his light, and heat, and other marvelous

⁴⁶ Brian Kendrick, "Beauty for Brokenness," No. 259 in *Church Hymnary Fourth Edition*. Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2005

effects, praise his Maker? The stars when they run their course, and at once adorn the heavens and give light to the earth, do they not sound the praises of God? but as we are deaf and insensible, the Psalmist calls upon them as witnesses to reprove our indolence.⁴⁷

Jesus too demonstrates instances of engaging in worship outdoors. A good example is shown by Jesus when he gets up early in the morning to go outdoors to a remote spot to pray (Mark 1:35). Other examples can be found when he prays in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-35) or on the cross (Luke 23:46).

Reformed Thinking on Beauty and Awe

Beauty and awe though, however nearly related, are not the same. We may experience beauty without awe and we may sense awe generated from things we would not describe as beautiful. Calvin's thought will be the primary focus for reaching an understanding of the place of beauty and awe within Reformed thought. Other theologians' thought will be touched on, and indeed the writing of Lane and Randall C Zachman in particular, will offer more modern interpretations of Calvin's writing and exemplify how this can be made relevant for today. It will be seen that although Calvin was not a pantheist, and indeed resisted pantheism, nonetheless Lane is able to say of Calvin that "he perceived God's radiant glory to pervade the world so completely- that his thought bordered at times on pantheism."⁴⁸ Pantheism is the total identification with God and creation whereas panentheism has God occupying the created order yet at the same time not being constrained or constricted by it. Examining the distinction between pantheism and panentheism will help deepen appreciation of Calvin's position.

⁴⁷ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms – Volume 5* (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, accessed January 1, 2024), 277-278, <https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom12>

⁴⁸ Lane, *Ravished*, 68.

The project will now examine occurrences of words relating to beauty and awe within *The Institutes of Religion* by John Calvin (*The Institutes*). Earlier in this chapter selected references to beauty, awe and worship outdoors, from his *Psalm Commentaries*, also helped to broaden understanding of his view from primary sources.

I have found word frequency a useful interpretive device. How texts can be examined changes over time. In Chapter 3 it will be seen computer software is able to help with interview text transcription, here computer software can help identify word frequency which offers a swift way to glean information than in centuries past would have been cumbersome to obtain.

Occurrences of Beauty and Awe in John Calvin

In *The Institutes* each use of the word awe (or its derivatives) is either directly or tangentially related to fear. A direct example is found in Book I, Chapter II Section II where whilst talking of the judgement-seat and God as a just judge Calvin says a pious mind stands, “in awe of it, he curbs himself, and fears to provoke his anger.”⁴⁹ An example of it used more tangentially is found near the end of the last section of Book III Chapter XXIV. The Chapter deals in turn with the elect and then the reprobate. Calvin affirms God is in charge of all things and, in agreement with Paul’s line of thinking in the Book of Romans, Calvin states, “let it be our conclusion to feel overawed with Paul at the

⁴⁹ John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Translated by Henry Beveridge (1845) (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, accessed March 6, 2023), 48, <https://ccel.org/ccel/c/calvin/institutes/cache/institutes.pdf>.

great depth, and if petulant tongues will still murmur, let us not be ashamed to join in his exclamation, ‘Nay, but, O man, who art thou that replies against God?’ (Rom. 9:20).”⁵⁰

In the main text of *The Institutes*, excluding footnotes, the word awe appears only nine times whereas the word beauty appears 20 times.⁵¹ Interestingly though, Lane states that, “we find two strains of spirituality that weave in and out of the Reformed tradition in the two centuries between John Calvin's 1st edition of the Institutes and Jonathan Edwards's initial preaching in the Great Awakening. The one begins with a sense of awe at God's majesty, the other with a delight in God's beauty.”⁵² (It is worth briefly noting at this point that beauty and the perception of beauty are very significant for Edwards. “The fundamental nature of anything that exists, for Edwards, is beauty, and the most distinctive characteristic of God is his divine beauty. To know and love God, therefore, is to know and love the beauty of God, and to know the ultimate nature of the world is to know and love the world as an image of God’s beauty.”)⁵³

Even although the word beauty appears more often than the word awe in *The Institutes* why might Lane highlight a sense of awe being found in Calvin’s writing?

I think caution needs to be exercised when dealing with statistical data. In a publication as long as *The Institutes* although the number of appearances of the word awe appears less than the word beauty, with the words appearing only nine times and 20 times

⁵⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 822.

⁵¹ Figures obtained using a pdf ‘find’ search for the words awe and beauty in Calvin, *Institutes*, accessed March 2, 2023, <https://ccel.org/ccel/c/calvin/institutes/cache/institutes.pdf>.

⁵² Lane, *Ravished*, 27.

⁵³ Sang Hyun Lee, “Edwards and Beauty,” in *Understanding Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 113.

respectively, you could argue without much difficulty, that these frequencies are relatively insignificant in terms of the whole work. Does such infrequent use suggest the concepts of beauty and awe, although present, fade away into the background of the work or are insignificant? It has already been noted that is not true for awe, according to Lane. I suggest one reason may be that other words might be used by Calvin that are, if not synonymous with, certainly nearly relate to beauty and awe. Take for example the words glory, glorious, wonder and power. A brief search shows that glory appears in *The Institutes* 412 times, glorious 35 times, wonder 91 times and power 861 times.⁵⁴ For accurate figures demonstrating the frequency by which these words enter the arena of beauty or awe within the whole of *The Institutes*, a word-by-word analysis would need to be undertaken. I shall simply offer some examples to demonstrate how their selection by Calvin may lead us to understand something of the occurrences of such usage. First, I provide examples that point to beauty, then examples that point to awe.

When Calvin comments, “No created object makes a more wonderful or glorious display than the sun”⁵⁵ clearly it is getting close to concepts of beauty. Similarly, in Book I Chapter V he talks about ‘The Knowledge of God Conspicuous in the Creation’ and notes, “His essence, indeed, is incomprehensible, utterly transcending all human thought; but on each of his works his glory is engraven in characters so bright, so distinct, and so illustrious, that none, however dull and illiterate, can plead ignorance as their excuse.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Figures obtained using a pdf ‘find’ word search in Calvin, *Institutes*. Translated by Henry Beveridge (1845) in the Christian Classics Ethereal Library, accessed January 7, 2024 <https://ccel.org/ccel/c/calvin/institutes/cache/institutes.pdf>.

⁵⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, 176.

⁵⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, 58.

In terms of awe in Book I Chapter IV when Calvin identifies how those who doubt God are wrong he states, “Thus although they are forced to acknowledge that there is some God, they, however, rob him of his glory by denying his power.”⁵⁷ In terms of the word glorious, it is on more than one occasion used by Calvin when quoting from scripture; examples of this would include 2 Corinthians 4:4,⁵⁸ from within Titus 2 :11-14,⁵⁹ Philippians 3:21⁶⁰ and Ephesians 5:25-27⁶¹. Although then Calvin does not tend to use the word glorious very frequently, when it is used in the examples from scripture given above, it, I posit, pertains to awe.

When sampling Calvin’s use of the word power I did not identify any uses solely in the context of beauty but most certainly did solely in the context of awe e.g. after talking about the vigorous nature of weather systems including thunder, lightning and storms he says, “Here we might refer to those glowing descriptions of divine power, as illustrated by natural events, which occur throughout Scripture; but more especially in the book of Job, and the prophecies of Isaiah.”⁶² Additionally it is used in contexts that could be understood to encompass both beauty and awe e.g. “because the glory of his power and wisdom is more refulgent in the firmament, it is frequently designated as his palace.”⁶³ This understanding is similar to what was found with modern comments on the

⁵⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, 54.

⁵⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, 358.

⁵⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 576, 665, 824.

⁶⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 826, 828, 834.

⁶¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 859.

⁶² Calvin, *Institutes*, 63.

⁶³ Calvin, *Institutes*, 58.

aurora borealis and my experience of nacreous clouds. It is not unreasonable therefore to conclude that although the actual words beauty and awe are not used frequently in *The Institutes* nonetheless the concepts of beauty and awe do indeed feature and the meaning and frequency of such additional words which embrace the meaning of beauty and awe must be borne in mind. Even although, as Lane highlighted, Calvin started with the concept of awe at God's majesty, whereas Edwards started with delight in God's beauty. Note that Lane does not suggest beauty cannot be found within Calvin. Awe, he simply remarks, is the starting point.

These observations give confidence in accepting a broad interpretation of what can be rightly classed as constituting beauty and awe within Calvin. What then, additionally, can we learn about these themes from his writing?

Beauty and Awe: A Reflection on Calvin's Work as Interpreted by Reformed Scholars with an Emphasis on Randall C. Zachman and Belden C. Lane

I move now from primary to secondary sources and seek to uncover how beauty and awe within Calvin's writing are interpreted by present day Reformed scholars with an emphasis on Zachman and Lane. I will use three metaphors highlighted by Zachman as a template to negotiate consideration of beauty and awe as well as additionally focusing on the heavens.

In The Universe as the Living Image of God: Calvin's Doctrine of Creation Reconsidered Zachman points the reader to three significant metaphors that Calvin uses

to talk about, “the created order: the theatre of God’s glory, the living image of God, and the beautiful garment of God.”⁶⁴ I will look at each in turn.

i) The Theatre of God’s Glory

Note that when Calvin talks of the created order being the theatre of God’s glory humans are not actors on the stage but spectators. It is God who is the player, with creation providing the supporting cast. God reveals to humanity that God is the “author and fountain of every good thing.”⁶⁵ It is God, through the powerful and intimate action of the Holy Spirit, who uncovers for the spectators the reality of the created order and an appreciation of the involvement of God. This allows them to marvel at the beauty of God and be open to sense awe.

Zachman articulates Calvin’s view by saying you cannot be faithful, godly or pious and not “contemplate God in creation.”⁶⁶ Further though he notes it is the powers of God, which work on us, and these Calvin states are what we should contemplate. In other words, most importantly, our focus should be directed towards God. Calvin’s preferred powers are wisdom, goodness, and power.⁶⁷ These three can be present in something which induces awe. Zachman posits that these three are suggestive to Calvin of the Trinity; goodness (the Father), wisdom (the Son) and power (The Holy Spirit). These all

⁶⁴ Randall C Zachman, The Universe as the Living Image of God: Calvin’s Doctrine of Creation Reconsidered.” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (October 1997), 302, <http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/zachmanrcalvindoctrineofcreation.pdf>

⁶⁵ Zachman, *Universe*, 304.

⁶⁶ Randall C Zachman, *Reconsidering John Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2012), 9.

⁶⁷ Zachman, *Reconsidering*, 9-10.

work together, as the Trinity works together, but each power is not the preserve of one person of the Trinity e.g. the Son is, in addition to being wise, also powerful and good and the Holy Spirit besides being powerful is good and wise.⁶⁸ Commenting on this differentiation within the Trinity Lane says,

In other words, the Father, as Calvin sees it, expresses a delight in being-in-general, bringing the world into undifferentiated existence. The Son desires that this creation take specific shape and form—calling forth the elegance of trees, for example. And the Spirit hungers for the lively individuality and intricacy of bristlecone pines, Japanese red maples, and coconut palms. The distinctive “beauty of the universe,” says Calvin, “owes its strength to the power of the Spirit.” In each of these ways, God as Trinity takes pleasure in creating ever new possibilities for relationship in a ceaseless reflection and celebration of the divine splendor.⁶⁹

ii) The Living Image of God

Zachman points out that Calvin combines Hebrews 11:3 and Romans 1:20 to generate a metaphor “that the universe which we behold is the living image of God. ‘In the whole architecture of the world God has given us clear evidence of God’s eternal wisdom, goodness, and power, and though he is invisible in himself he shows himself to us in some measure in his work. The world is therefore rightly called the mirror of his divinity.’”⁷⁰

At this juncture care needs to be taken. Susan E. Schreiner in her book *The Theater of His Glory* notes, on Calvin’s relationship to the Stoics, that he, “denied their pantheism and the virtue of passionlessness.”⁷¹ This in part mirrors what Barrett said of

⁶⁸ Zachman, *Reconsidering*, 11.

⁶⁹ Lane, *Ravished*, 63.

⁷⁰Zachman, *Universe*, 304.

⁷¹ Susan E Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic,1991), 17.

the Stoics, earlier in this chapter, when writing about of the prologue of John. “John Leith argues that Calvin’s horror of deism leads him to the brink of pantheism, a position he only avoids by repeated stress on divine transcendence.”⁷² Lane is able to say, “We don’t usually think of Calvin as an exponent of ‘creation spirituality,’ yet in a rare excess of language, he could go so far as to say that ‘nature is God’ in recognizing the degree to which the cosmos is utterly filled with God’s glory. He celebrated the divine presence in the created world to such an extent that his language could almost slide into pantheism.”⁷³ A most significant word in the last sentence is almost. Clearly all three are saying Calvin is not a pantheist. “The Reformed tradition has persistently discerned God’s glory filling the earth, even as it warns that God’s being is never contained by anything within it. A panentheist amazement lies close to its heart.”⁷⁴ Pantheism is the total identification with God and creation whereas panentheism has God occupying the created order yet at the same time not being constrained or constricted by it. God is more than the creation we see around us. In considering the universe and God’s creativeness, presence, and sustaining ability, God does not simply create at the start of time but actively holds the creation in being, each moment of each day.

iii) The Beautiful Garment of God

The beautiful garment of God is the third metaphor Zachman explores as he interprets Calvin. This metaphor arises from Psalm 104:1-2 and Calvin sees “the universe

⁷² John Leith, *John Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox, 1989), 112- quoted in David Fergusson, "The Latin Default Setting." In *The Providence of God: A Polyphonic Approach*, 59-109. Current Issues in Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. 84. <https://doi-org.eux.idm.oclc.org/10.1017/9781108683050>

⁷³ Lane, *Ravished*, 29.

⁷⁴ Lane, *Ravished*, 25.

as the garment with which God clothes himself in order that the invisible God might become somewhat visible.”⁷⁵ According to Calvin, when we rightly contemplate the beauty of the richly ornamented garment of the world, our minds and hearts should be ravished with admiration, so that our hearts are incited to praise God even as we are aware of our inability to do justice to the beauty of the world which we behold.⁷⁶ In *Calvin’s Ladder* by Julie Canlis she focuses on what she calls a Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension and her argument chimes with Zachman when he notes, “Such amazement and admiration are clearly seen by Calvin as part of the upward ascent we are to make to God from the beauty of the Lord clothed in the garment of the universe to the Lord himself, by means of the praise of God that it inflames within us.”⁷⁷ This chapter already noted that understanding when quoting Calvin’s words on Psalm 19:1 in the Scriptural Texts section previously.

The Importance of the Heavens and the Earth

In *The Institutes* Calvin frequently talks about the heavens. Davis A Young points out Calvin is a biblical theologian and although due to weather conditions the sky was dimmer for Calvin in Geneva than in the Holy Land he focuses on the heavens since biblical writers do that: Abram’s descendants would be more numerous than stars in the sky and David would write psalms and say the heavens declare the glory of God.⁷⁸ In the

⁷⁵ Zachman, *Universe*, 305.

⁷⁶ Zachman, *Universe*, 306.

⁷⁷ Zachman, *Universe*, 306.

⁷⁸ Davis A Young, *John Calvin and the Natural World* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2007), 23-24.

sixteenth century though, unlike today, there would be no artificial light pollution outside to diminish the beauty and awesomeness of the starry sky.

Both Scripture and an understanding of humanity's place in the universe lead Calvin to enthuse about the heavens. In general, Zachman summarises his view neatly by saying, "this medium of vast extent is awe-inspiring. It still is beautiful. It is splendid, it is magnificent - but it is also terrifying."⁷⁹ Contemplating the heavens can help humanity recognise both the beauty of God and be moved to sense awe.

Note though it is not always about directing attention to the heavens. Zachman makes clear that Calvin also wishes individuals to focus on the creation around them on the earth. This is exemplified by Calvin's words on Psalm 19:1, "When a man, from beholding and contemplating the heavens, has been brought to acknowledge God, he will learn also to reflect upon and to admire his wisdom and power as displayed on the face of the earth, not only in general, but even in the minutest plants."⁸⁰ It may be particularly important to make time to focus on the heavens but even what, without consideration might seem small and insignificant, are created objects of beauty, where people can learn of God (Matthew 6:28-29).

It would be remiss of me not to touch directly on providence since it is so important to Calvin's worldview. Providence is critical to Calvin's thinking and spirituality and his understanding of how the universe functions since he sees divine providence being integral to creation. David Fergusson notes, "It is not a general ordering

⁷⁹ Zachman, *Reconsidering*, 34.

⁸⁰ Calvin, *Psalms Commentary Vol. 1*, 309.

or superintendence from a distance but instead a wise and all-pervasive action of ruling, willing and guiding.”⁸¹ It is about holding, sustaining and caring for every created thing.

Even so it is not all about beauty and good things as Lane identifies,

Nature serves as a school of affliction as well as a school of desire. It disrupts the ego, redirects misplaced longings, and teaches radical trust. The earth's fury, as well as its beauty, drives the church to prayer. In fact, says Calvin, the performance of praise in the church (and throughout the theater of God's glory) is *itself* a contributor to God's providential care. The longing of the faithful shares in (and supports, as it were) God's own longing for a restored creation.⁸²

Although the main focus has been on beauty and awe within God’s creation it must be noted that beauty can also be seen and experienced through the products of human made items. In truth, God creates everything; this is simply being mindful of a distinction between naturally occurring things and secondary things created by humans working on primary objects. Human beings can create beauty through a piece of music, or a work of art. In the Kirk’s Society Religion and Technology Project’s Report *While the Earth Endures* a Constable painting is acknowledged as being so beautiful and valuable that it must be preserved. Lord Ashby suggests the landscape itself should be placed into a similar category. This introduces ideas about the measuring of beauty and the consequences arising from that.⁸³ How we choose to respond to beauty and awe will be important. If a human painting of a landscape is valued why not equally the God given landscape itself? This was considered in a presentation made by me during Kenneth

⁸¹ David Fergusson, "The Latin Default Setting." In *The Providence of God: A Polyphonic Approach*, 59-109. Current Issues in Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, 84.<https://doi-org.eux.idm.oclc.org/10.1017/9781108683050>.

⁸² Lane, *Ravished*, 64.

⁸³ SRT Project, *While the Earth Endures: A Report on the Theological and Ethical Considerations of Responsible Land Use in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Quorum Press, 1986) 6.

Woo's Theology in Context class. It prompts each person to gauge how they grant worth to the God given landscape before them in relation to things they value readily. Indeed, such reflection may even increase a desire to go outdoors to further appreciate such beauty and perhaps even sense awe. Later in Chapter 3 it will be noted that by being encouraged to reflect on beauty and awe (and it must be acknowledged that this observation could be expanded to include other concepts) the ability of people to articulate what they think or feel about a subject grows.

A modern scientific understanding of awe (and indeed aspects of beauty) is considered by Dacher Keltner. This will further deepen understanding of awe and his writing, alongside others, is considered now.

Awe – A Scientific Understanding

A recently published book *Awe: The Transformative Power of Everyday Wonder* by Dacher Keltner was introduced to the cohort by Cole-Turner in his class on Science and Christian Faith. Keltner is not a Reformed Theologian but a Professor of Psychology, but he has done extensive work over many years on awe. Helen De Cruz also tackles awe in her writing. We noted Calvin's thoughts on the things of earth, sometimes small things and turning up to the vastness of heaven. De Cruz also examines the small as well as the vast. Sarah Lane Ritchie, who served for a time as the Vice-Convenor of the Church of Scotland's Theological Forum, was also on the class reading list and she has work which intersects with the findings of Keltner and which will, I hope the project will demonstrate, offer a fruitful synthesis to demonstrate how awe affects our bodies and so may improve mental health. Later in this chapter it will be noted that by establishing

worship outdoors and increasing opportunities to help find awe then this too may increase opportunities for wholeness and wellbeing which are key Christian themes.

Dacher Keltner's and Helen De Cruz' Study of Awe

Keltner in his book *Awe: The Transformative Power of Everyday Wonder*⁸⁴ describes how having taught happiness for many years he reached the conclusion that people should, "FIND AWE."⁸⁵ He explains how he has been working in the field of awe for decades and has published many articles. After much consideration and with collaborator Jonathan Haidt they produced a definition of awe:

Awe is the feeling of being in the presence of something vast that transcends your current understanding of the world.⁸⁶

That definition will be used as I reflect theologically on awe by drawing on science (mainly Helen De Cruz and Keltner) and other mainly Reformed writing.

Awe and Wonder in Helen De Cruz

Helen De Cruz accepts and quotes Keltner's definition of awe.

Side by side with awe De Cruz chooses to talk of wonder, noting they are not always distinguished from each other in psychological literature.⁸⁷ She does note wonder is different from surprise and that wonder is associated with curiosity. "Whereas awe is

⁸⁴ In the USA the same content is entitled *Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How it Can Transform Your Life*.

⁸⁵ Daniel Keltner, *Awe: The Transformative Power of Everyday Wonder* (Allen Lane, 2023), xv, Kindle.

⁸⁶ Keltner, *Awe*, 7, Kindle.

⁸⁷ Helen De Cruz, "Awe and Wonder in Scientific Practice: Implications for the Relationship Between Science and Religion." *Issues in Science and Theology: Nature – and Beyond*, (2 020): 161. DOI https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-31182-7_13

an emotion that engulfs us through vast and sweeping landscapes or stunning works of art, wonder is a quieter, less spectacular emotion that in part comes about due to our own receptivity and focus.”⁸⁸ If De Cruz is content with awe dealing with vastness then wonder tends to be more likely to be associated with the small, or an individual thing, hence she concludes, “as a general rule of thumb, awe is elicited by the vast and spectacular, whereas wonder is elicited by [the] smaller and unusual (although large stimuli might also elicit wonder, as long as they are not overpowering).”⁸⁹

Calvin, as was noted, uses the word wonder in *The Institutes* and shares her sense that awe is about an expansion beyond our local environment in the world and about lifting one’s eyes and one’s mind beyond the earth and beyond ourselves. Calvin understands that this happens through the action of the Holy Spirit. The heavens and the vastness of the heavens are particularly important for him. “For Calvin the heavens are closer to God than the earth, and they more clearly reveal God than the earth does.”⁹⁰ Calvin desires that we study the heavens, ideally every day, but mindful of human sin, at the very least once per week on the Sabbath.⁹¹ If beauty leads to awe and awe leads to worship, this is a clear example of Calvin calling for outdoor worship, every day if possible, and if not at least once a week on a Sunday. The day most clearly set aside for worship and re-creation.

⁸⁸ De Cruz, *Awe and Wonder*, 161.

⁸⁹ De Cruz, *Awe and Wonder*, 162.

⁹⁰ Zachman, *Reconsidering*, 29.

⁹¹ Zachman, *Reconsidering*, 12.

Zachman informally summarizes Calvin's view on studying the heavens by saying, "he had to be an astronomy nut, you know, he wants us lying on your rooftops every night being swept away in amazement."⁹² Similar behaviours and emotions compared with the compulsion of the stargazers of today marvelling at the aurora borealis whether they are Christian or not. Keltner would express the same desire by saying, find awe. Indeed, later in the chapter we will examine his eight wonders of life which are, he posits, means to find awe.⁹³

A fuller picture of Calvin's thought is obtained when we appreciate how he viewed the world and creation. Picking up on metaphors used by Calvin, Lane comments,

If we view the earth as a school, mirror, or theater of God's glory, we naturally desire its wholeness as a consequence of our amazement at its stunning beauty pointing us back to God. On the other hand, if we are distracted by the earth's loveliness as an end in itself, we bear witness to the perils of a desire that tries to possess its object rather than standing in awe before it. We end up betraying God and the creation as well.⁹⁴

The heavens are important to Calvin but the creation around us too helps us expand our individual horizons and helps lead us to God's glory and awesomeness. Being open to awe is important for Calvin.

Zachman noting Calvin's beliefs also considers the work of Blaise Pascal. Pascal was born around sixty years after Calvin's death. Two instruments, the telescope and the microscope, influenced his work and thought. The telescope further enlarges the sense of the vastness of the universe, but the microscope goes the opposite way and instead of us

⁹² Zachman, *Reconsidering*, 29.

⁹³ Keltner, *Awe*, 18, Kindle.

⁹⁴ Lane, *Ravished*, 46.

feeling small before the universe, we feel gigantic in comparison to the microscopic world. Both the microscope and telescope help induce awe. Zachman says of Pascal, “Now he wants you to approximate not infinity but nothingness. He wants you to look through a microscope, and when you look through a microscope you will see universes within universes in tiny, infinitesimal things... suddenly we human beings appear to be colossal.”⁹⁵

It's as though scripture and the science of the day enthused Calvin to look both at the earth around us and outwards and upwards to sense awe. He valued science and embraced its learning. By the time of Pascal, not that much later, science had moved on, and the introduction of good microscopes allowed Pascal to dig down and see awe in the small. A vast number of ever smaller things can still be awesome.

It is worth noting when Keltner reflects on wonder he asserts, “Wonder, the mental state of openness, questioning, curiosity and embracing mystery, arises out of experiences of awe. In our studies, people who find more everyday awe show evidence of living with wonder.”⁹⁶ Whether wonder follows awe, or wonder is something that edges us towards feelings of awe, doesn't matter as much for the purposes of this project, what matters more, is that it helps provide further evidence of the closeness of the two. Today powerful nuclear microscopes get down to a resolution half the width of a hydrogen atom and the Hubble telescope goes the opposite way penetrating deep into the universe. Each in their own way can generate beauty, wonder and awe.

⁹⁵ Zachman, *Reconsidering*, 32.

⁹⁶ Keltner, *Awe*, 38, Kindle.

Keltner and Awe - Eight Wonders of Life

Having established something of the breadth of language used to express feelings of awe, I turn to consider Keltner's view on awe. He articulates what he calls "eight wonders of life"⁹⁷ which are: moral beauty, collective effervescence (e.g. when we become part of a group such as when participating in a wedding, funeral or graduation), nature, music, visual design, spirituality, stories of life and death, and epiphanies (where essential truths about life become apparent to us).⁹⁸ He found when people told stories of awe, money and material goods did not feature. "Awe occurs in a realm separate from the mundane world of materialism, money, acquisition, and status signalling – a realm beyond the profane that many call the sacred."⁹⁹ I think that is a hopeful realisation for the Christian Church that deals with the sacred and picks up on Jesus' teaching about material wealth found in passages such as Luke 12:16-21, Luke 18:22-25 and Luke 19:8-10. Whereas Calvin's direct use of the word awe related it to fear, nowadays however, "most moments of awe- about three quarters- feel good, and only one-quarter are flavoured with threat."¹⁰⁰

Keltner points to the importance of what he calls everyday awe. A daily diary exercise to learn of everyday awe was conducted. Participants were encouraged to express feelings as emotions. "In our daily lives, we most frequently feel awe in encounters with moral beauty, and secondarily in nature and in experiences with music,

⁹⁷ Keltner, *Awe*, 9, Kindle.

⁹⁸ Keltner, *Awe*, 11-17.

⁹⁹ Keltner, *Awe*, 18.

¹⁰⁰ Keltner, *Awe*, 24.

art and film. Rarer were everyday awe experiences of the spiritual variety (although had we done the study at a religious college, this no doubt would have been different).”¹⁰¹

I want to make two points on these conclusions. Firstly, Keltner goes on to point out that students in Beijing were more likely to find awe in moral beauty and students in the United States more inclined to find awe in nature. I was surprised that moral beauty came ahead of everyday awe experiences in nature. Perhaps that is because I am from a Western European background and so may be culturally more in tune with the expressions of everyday awe found in the United States as opposed to China. Indeed it will be seen in chapter 3 that worshippers often chose an example of awe from nature.

Secondly he talks about what ‘no doubt’ would have been a higher occurrence of everyday awe of the spiritual variety in a religious college. In the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary Reformed Edinburgh Doctor of Ministry Class on Science and Christian Faith which considered awe in January 2023, students were invited to offer an example of when they had experienced it. Not everyone offered an example but out of those who did, using Keltner’s eight wonders of life categories, and taking people’s first given story, since some offered more than one, only one out of a class of eighteen offered a spirituality example. Ian Alexander described visiting an Orthodox Church in the Holy Land reputed to be the site of the story of the healing of the ten lepers as found in Luke 17:11-19.¹⁰² It was not a scientific experiment with a control group, it was simply a poll to list stories the students came up with on that day. The highest number was in the nature

¹⁰¹ Keltner, *Awe*, 24.

¹⁰² Ron Cole-Turner, “Awe, student comment during lecture” (lecture, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, January 7, 2023).

category with six stories, and the lowest fell into the epiphany category with zero. The only categories that had more than one entry were: stories of life and death with three, two relating to giving birth and one of accompanying someone who was dying; and collective effervescence with two, one a sporting fixture in an international soccer match and one an uncoordinated gathering of people from many nations on top of a hill overlooking Edinburgh. Interestingly only two fall into the moral beauty category; Iain May tells of being rescued at sea¹⁰³ and Andrew Holbrook describes being amazed at the efforts of his wife giving birth.¹⁰⁴ These statistics don't necessarily contradict anything Keltner concludes, however stories in the spirituality category could not have been lower without registering a zero return even although made within a Theological Seminary class.

Awe Walks and the Easing of Anxiety

Keltner articulates that everyday awe was found to be stimulated by taking regular awe walks. This involves trying to go somewhere new each week and be open to wonder, whether a grand vista or the intricacy of a leaf. Participants were invited to take selfies of themselves whilst on these walks. Results were: more awe was experienced each week; the self became less central as the self extended into the environment e.g. as time passed the selfies taken showed a happier person with less of the person and more of the surroundings taking prominence; lastly walkers felt less anxiety and depression.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Keltner, *Awe*, 104-107, Kindle.

Keltner is clear when experiencing awe “our individual self gives way to the boundary-dissolving sense of being part of something much larger.”¹⁰⁶ This sense stills us and “the voice of that interfering and nagging neurotic”¹⁰⁷ eases. Interestingly, Calvin was thought to suffer from anxiety,¹⁰⁸ from what we learned earlier of his desire to look at the heavens perhaps finding awe in everyday life, following Keltner’s analysis, helped ease anxious thoughts. The sense of the vanishing self has been studied in parts of the cortex that sifts information from an egocentric point of view - the default mode network (DMN). At a chemical level awe in us stimulates the release of oxytocin and dopamine and the vagus nerve responds.¹⁰⁹ This response is involuntary and alters body functions such as the immune system, the heart rate and digestion. It has been shown “excesses of the ego, including self-criticism, anxiety and even depression, quiet down.”¹¹⁰ If we feel part of something larger then another benefit is that feelings of loneliness and isolation fade.¹¹¹

When experiencing awe, individuals may sense “the chills”. They may arise from varying sources including from literature, music, during an epiphany when we unite with others in a common cause, or when God is encountered as in Job 4:12-17.¹¹² This might be a cold shiver where isolation is felt or goosebumps where there is an increased sense

¹⁰⁶ Keltner, *Awe*, 30, Kindle.

¹⁰⁷ Keltner, *Awe*, 34, Kindle.

¹⁰⁸ Lane, *Ravished*, 65.

¹⁰⁹ Keltner, *Awe*, 249, Kindle.

¹¹⁰ Keltner, *Awe*, 36, Kindle.

¹¹¹ Keltner, *Awe*, 36, Kindle.

¹¹² Keltner, *Awe*, 50-51, Kindle.

of being part of a community. In terms of divine interaction, Keltner argues, if the former then the individual will feel “condemned by an omnipotent God.”¹¹³ Yet Jesus Christ came to teach that we may have life and have it to the full (John 10:10). Calvin, by recognising the significance of the church placed an emphasis on community rather than individualism and so what engenders community is more likely to be in keeping with the Christian view and understanding of God’s will for the world. “The whole world is a theatre for the display of divine goodness, wisdom, justice and power, but the church is the orchestra, as it were – the most conspicuous part of it “¹¹⁴

Both Keltner and Lane Ritchie, refer to William James’ *The Varieties of Religious Experience* which arose from his Gifford lectures in 1901. James describes seeking “wild in the universe” and this can be reached through almost infinite pathways, what Keltner would call everyday mystical awe.¹¹⁵ For James religion is about the feelings and experiences of an individual and how these relate to the divine. “Mystical awe often originates in inexplicable experiences that transcend the expectations of the default self.”¹¹⁶ Studies show that mystical experiences, indeed even recalling them, stimulates brain activity involved in joy and bliss and the DMN is deactivated.¹¹⁷ Clearly Keltner observes and comments on religion from a less than engaged stance. Lane Ritchie takes a different view. I turn to her writing now.

¹¹³ Keltner, *Awe*, 52, Kindle.

¹¹⁴ Lane, *Ravished*, 67.

¹¹⁵ Keltner, *Awe*, 201, Kindle.

¹¹⁶ Keltner, *Awe*, 201, Kindle.

¹¹⁷ Keltner, *Awe*, 203, Kindle.

Sarah Lane Ritchie, James K A Smith and Resonances with Keltner

I want to draw two parallels in particular. The first relating to the place of the relationship between the physical and mental, the body and brain, and secondly between being open to awe and being open to the God whom the shorter catechisms starts by saying is the one whom we should glorify and enjoy for ever.

Keltner makes a case for the need for wild awe, in terms of neurophysiology sensory stimulations, noting these “lead to awe-related vagus nerve activation and reduce fight-or-flight cardiovascular response, blood pressure, cortisol and inflammation”¹¹⁸ Lindsay Bruce and Lane Ritchie are content to affirm theology is not threatened by accepting the naturalistic explanation for mind-brain observations, acknowledged by most scientists. “Science-and-religion can welcome scientific research on the gut-brain axis, incorporating such insights into theologies of mental health and overall well-being”¹¹⁹ She notes the gut is often referred to as “the little brain” because it has its own nervous system (Enteric Nervous System) which allows the brain and the gut to signal to each other. Nutrition can therefore indirectly alter mental health. She notes the work of Gershon and Tack from 2007 when saying, “Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that plays a major role in mood, anxiety, and depression, and appears to function in gut-to-brain communication by activating vagal afferent neurons.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Keltner, *Awe*, 127, Kindle.

¹¹⁹ Lindsay Bruce, and Sarah Lane Ritchie, “The Physicalized Mind and the Gut-Brain Axis: Taking Mental Health Out of Our Heads.” *Zygon* 53 (2): 357.

¹²⁰ Bruce and Lane Ritchie, *Zygon*, 362-363.

James K A Smith in his book *You are What you Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* acknowledges the importance of “gut feelings” picking up on “what [the Apostle] Paul calls our *splanchna*, our “inner parts” that are the seat of our affections.”¹²¹ Keltner, Lane Ritchie and Smith each demonstrate how interwoven and complicated the human person and the functioning of the human body is. It is a hopeful picture; be actively open to awe and choose good nutrition and positive benefits for wellbeing flow. How does God more specifically fit into this?

Jesus says that he came that we might have life and have it in all its fulness (John 10:10). Keltner identifies that being open to awe and repeating actions where people are intentionally open to awe, such as regular awe walks, are shown empirically to improve wellbeing.¹²² Lane Ritchie recognises that some people long to experience belief in God, but don’t do so.¹²³ She complements Keltner’s research by asking how intentional repeated religious practices such as daily prayers, liturgy and ritual, change the brain’s functioning so that there is a more intuited appreciation of and engagement with God. If you are seeking belief in God can you do anything to increase the possibility of finding it? It was seen earlier Calvin would have us out of our rooftops appreciating the heavens and worshiping God repeatedly.

Lane Ritchie wishes to ask, since “both normal cognitive mechanisms and more exceptional experiences contribute to a felt belief in—or a felt knowledge of—God, is

¹²¹ James K A Smith. *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2016), 9.

¹²² Keltner, *Awe*, 106-107, Kindle.

¹²³ Sarah Lane Ritchie, “Integrated Physicality and the Absence of God: Spiritual Technologies in Theological Context,” *Modern Theology* 37(2): 296.

there anything non-believing individuals can do to initiate, encourage, and develop that felt, experiential sense of belief?”¹²⁴ Lane Ritchie is keen to promote “divine involvement with the physical world at all times and places”¹²⁵ Note this is very much in keeping with Calvin’s understanding. I’m reminded of a plaque a friend hangs in their hall which reads ‘Bidden or not bidden, God is present.’ People cannot help but be involved with God, whether they recognise that or not. Lane Ritchie highlights explanations from both cognitive science of religion and neuroscientific research on ‘exceptional experiences’¹²⁶ and concludes,

Those who wish to embody a felt religious belief are both scientifically and theologically warranted in working *with* the biological processes involved in exceptional experience and belief formation, in cooperation with pre-existent evolved cognitive dispositions and mechanisms that make belief thoroughly natural, thereby altering one’s neurobiology and enhancing the organismic responsiveness necessary for a felt sense of belief.¹²⁷

Engaging in Christian practices longingly, including outdoor worship, can produce fertile soil for faith to emerge.

James K A Smith, picking up on Philippians 1:9-11, argues it is not our head but our heart that is primary and leads to growth in faith (Proverbs 4:23). He points to Jesus as the one who teaches us how to live by demonstrating how to love.¹²⁸ “I love in order to know.”¹²⁹ His book’s title *You are What you Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* neatly

¹²⁴ Lane Ritchie, *Modern Theology*, 307.

¹²⁵ Lane Ritchie, *Modern Theology*, 297.

¹²⁶ Lane Ritchie, *Modern Theology*, 302.

¹²⁷ Lane Ritchie, *Modern Theology*, 315.

¹²⁸ Smith, *Love*, 2.

¹²⁹ Smith, *Love*, 7.

sums up the direction of his argument. Regular worship is critical for Christians. It helps restate what is truly important and loved. This may lead to closeness to God, faithfulness in service and the establishing of community. Worship rightly, repeatedly, and the appropriate mindset and consequent actions faith requires will likely follow on.

It is worth for a second noticing that in my reading although actions are leading to positive consequences for people's wellbeing in Keltner, Lane Ritchie and Smith, their individual focus is different. Keltner although accepting some people have faith makes little comment on it. Lane Ritchie primarily talks about the relationship between a person and God with little reference to Christ's church. Smith values highly the importance of the Church and the importance of finding a suitable worshipping community.

However these writers choose to express their conclusions we have three clear examples of how, by being open to awe, open to repetition, or engaged in the spiritual power of habit, these each may lead to greater wellbeing. Repeating a well-chosen action produces positive consequences. I think this coalescing is exciting for this project in terms of how it might have positive consequences for outdoor worship. The project now focuses on that.

Worship Outdoors

As was seen in Chapter 1, St Mark's Church has a history of involvement with outdoor worship. Annually in St Mark's Church, until the field use changed, Harvest Thanksgiving services took place on a farm overlooking the town and out to sea. A number of years ago a BBC Songs of Praise was recorded on the 18th green when The Open Championship was being hosted in St Andrews. More than one pilgrim route

finishes in the town. Pilgrimage walks have taken place covering some of the last section of the routes and worship has been part of these opportunities. An outdoor Ecumenical Good Friday walk through the town stopping to worship at various significant locations takes place annually (except when Covid-19 forced it to be conducted online).

Ecumenical Easter Day worship takes place at St Mary on the Rock, the place of the earliest Christian worship site in the town, at 7am. St Mark's Messy Church meets outside periodically and during the pandemic also met outside in the Botanic Garden.

These examples of outdoor worship are familiar to the congregation. St Mark's Church have no experience of the Forest Church movement and the experience of outdoor worship that it encourages. I turn now to focus on the Forest Church movement so that in the project intervention I can teach the congregation about it.

Forest Church

Bruce Stanley's book *Forest Church: A Field Guide to Nature Connection for Groups and Individuals* offers a helpful introduction to Forest Church to those unfamiliar to it. It was noted earlier in this chapter he observes nature can be described as the Second Book of God and he further states that awe is a way in to understanding it.¹³⁰

Another helpful publication is the Rev Cate Williams' *Forest Church: Earthed Perspectives on the Gospel*. She deals with the planning, the practices and the theology of Forest Church. Williams comments, "if so many people find that their natural spirituality is outdoors, then the outdoors is a place where the church needs to be!"¹³¹ In terms of

¹³⁰ Stanley, *Forest Church*, 33.

¹³¹ Kate Williams, *Forest Church: Earthed Perspectives on the Gospels* (Cambridge: Grove Books Ltd, 2019), 3.

biblical texts she chooses to draw on Jesus praying outdoors, nature based parables, and the theology of the land and how people interact with it. She references Bruggemann and how in his understanding “the Old Testament texts point to a three-way relationship between, God, people and the land, rather than a two-way relationship that views non-human creation as an optional add-on.”¹³² An important word for Williams is reconnection. People and planet reconnected for the benefit of each. She concludes, “Reconnection and reconciliation, offered through Christ, bringing to fulfilment the threefold relationship between people, God and the land expressed in the Hebrew Scriptures.”¹³³

It is worthwhile stating clearly that I would not see Forest Church replacing the existing Sunday morning worship offered in St Mark’s Church. It would be in addition to it or as an alternative to it, just as Messy Church does not replace Sunday morning worship but takes place monthly on a Sunday afternoon. Chapter 3 will show that I make this clear in the Outdoor Worship Workshop I lead.

Forest Churches are missional for they encourage not only existing worshippers but offer something new and fresh to help encourage those on the edge of or outwith church life. If attendance of new worshippers at St Mark’s Messy Church when held outdoors is an indication, then those who are unaccustomed or unwilling to attend traditional Sunday morning worship indoors may find Forest Church a more attractive proposition for them. Inviting people to worship surrounded by God’s creation, coupled

¹³² Williams, *Forest*, 5.

¹³³ Williams, *Forest*, 21.

with the worship's focus on the outdoor environment, can only help encourage people to be mindful of beauty and hence increase the likelihood of being open to experiencing awe. It provides an opportunity, alongside others, to allow God's Spirit to touch lives in new and surprising ways.

The main point though of offering Forest Church, whether for existing members of St Mark's Church or not, would be to encourage them to respond with thanksgiving for the beauty that surrounds us made possible through God's creativeness. As noted earlier in chapter 2, if repeated attendance at outdoor worship becomes a habit for people, it increases the likelihood of a deepening of their spiritual life and the richness of their journey with God. Note that these positive outcomes can apply to everyone whether existing St Mark's Church worshippers or not.

Outdoors or Indoors?

During the worship and workshops described in the next chapter once participants have engaged in spiritual reflection on the topics of beauty and awe the focus will turn to 'worship outdoors?' The question mark is important. It allows participants to reach their own conclusions. Outdoor worship may not be the necessary end point after reflections on beauty and awe have taken place. Certainly, worshippers and project workshop participants will be pointed to the breadth of outdoor worship opportunities. Many styles, as noted earlier, they will be familiar with; others such as Forest Church, they may never even have heard of. That being the case more will need to be said about Forest Church when options are laid before them so they can appreciate the range of possibilities and to help them grow in appreciation of what Forest Church involves. Indeed, to be clear, the possibility of reaching an 'indoor' rather than an 'outdoor' outcome after reflections on

beauty and awe will also be laid before them. The working hypothesis may mention worship outdoors but perhaps participants will conclude they would, for example, like to choose to ponder an icon indoors to further deepen their appreciation of beauty and awe and respond to God with thanksgiving. This smorgasbord of options will allow people the freedom to conclude what they wish. The Holy Spirit is being given space to blow and move people.

Summary

This chapter has set out the biblical and theological basis which will be used in the project implementation phase. It did so by reflecting on the significance of the prologue of John's Gospel and the Trinity; considering sample biblical texts on beauty, awe and outdoor worship; examining primarily the writing of John Calvin, on beauty, awe and how that relates to outdoor worship; observing how awe relates to scientific understanding today and finally how this may impinge on the ways a congregation could respond to beauty by appreciating awe and offering thanks for it through various forms of outdoor worship, including Harvest Thanksgiving services, pilgrimage walks, Songs of Praise services and Forest Church. This understanding will be used to craft the worship and workshops which in turn will look at beauty, awe and worship outdoors.

Before moving to the implementation phase and the specific results of the research project I conducted, I wish to explain the research methodology and framework and how the results will be evaluated.

Research Methodology and Framework

I have as part of this process listened to and taken on board feedback from my teachers, Readers and fellow students so that the project methodology has steadily morphed to reach this stage.

The concepts of both beauty and awe could be classed as being rather esoteric to the day-to-day life of a parish and yet the project tests whether by encouraging the congregation to spiritually reflect on these topics they may be emboldened to increase the amount of outdoor worship that is offered. My working hypothesis may or may not be proved correct depending on the results found.

The research method will be mainly qualitative inquiry with a particular focus on ethnography. Earlier in Chapter 1 existing quantitative results from a report by Tweedie and Welsh from 2022 entitled *St Andrews: Separate communities, separate lives?* commissioned by the Church of Scotland Kirk Sessions in St Andrews was referenced and provided helpful data to set the scene.¹³⁴ Further quantitative information will be gathered from a second set of questionnaires issued on 29 October (questions 8 -13). Although quantitative results will be drawn on, the project will primarily focus on the newly generated qualitative material from worship, workshops, the earlier questions in distributed questionnaires, interviews and journals. Quantitative and qualitative methods each offer different means of establishing truth. John Swinton and Harriet Mowat examine the differences between them. In doing so they note ideographic truth, which encompasses qualitative research, is where meaningful knowledge can be gathered in

¹³⁴ Tweedie, *Separate communities*, 2022.

“unique, non-replicable experiences”¹³⁵ They helpfully conclude, “As practical theologians who take the Bible seriously, we can do nothing other than take most seriously the authenticity and reality of ideographic truth.”¹³⁶ The use of qualitative material provided rich insight that would have been almost impossible to achieve if quantitative material alone had been gathered.

I conducted one to one interviews with five people. These interviews took place before three acts of Sunday morning worship and a further three workshops on each of the following Saturdays after the worship services (Appendices 4, 8, 9). The themes were beauty, awe and worship outdoors. In the run up to these, and throughout, I kept a personal contemporaneous journal to capture thoughts, emotions, and observations on the topics and in the light of the worship and the workshop events. This too provided resource material for the project and allowed me to reflect on my experience as an ethnographer and participant observer. Worshippers were invited to complete questionnaires before the first and after the third acts of worship and those interviewed were asked also to keep journals during the period from their interview to the last workshop. More detail will be offered in the next chapter. The results from the qualitative and quantitative analysis will also be provided. These will provide a starting point for the development of themes for further reflection.

¹³⁵ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat. *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 43.

¹³⁶ Swinton, *Qualitative Research*, 44.

CHAPTER 3

The project began by encouraging the congregation of St Mark's Church in St Andrews to spiritually reflect on beauty and awe. Further it sought to discover whether, in the light of those reflections, there was a desire (or not) to engage in outdoor worship. The congregation has a long history of participating in outdoor worship but one of their main expressions of that, an annual Harvest Thanksgiving Service on a farm, had stopped due to the farmer changing the use of the field. During the Covid-19 pandemic, when worship indoors was not possible, the congregation's monthly Messy Church started meeting outdoors and some attended it who had not participated whilst it took place inside the church building. Identifying whether there was an appetite for outdoor worship might allow an expression of praise to God that is less achievable indoors. I chose this topic to help elicit whether the congregation was discerning (or not) that outdoor worship, going forward, should rise in prominence in the worship offered by the parish church.

The practical research element of the project focused on exploring selected scriptures and writings on beauty and awe. Texts from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament were considered. John Calvin's writing on beauty and awe was the main Reformed input, but other theologians' views were also noted. Additionally, information about scientific and philosophical connections between awe and mental health were shared with the congregation. Outdoor worship, and a selection of different ways by which that could be expressed, were laid before the congregation too. A number of themes emerged from the project and these will be elucidated in Part III arising from an examination and analysis of the project results. The findings will be further explored in the conclusions expressed in Chapter 4.

Part I - Project Overview

In this project I have sought to determine whether spiritual reflections on beauty and awe would lead to the conclusion (or not) that worship outdoors should rise in prominence within the selection of worship offered by the parish church of St Mark's in St Andrews. I am doing this project because the DMin classes on Science and Christian Faith and Reformed Spirituality encouraged me to reflect spiritually on beauty and awe. I preached on awe one Sunday after these classes and it met with positive and animated responses from some worshippers as they left the sanctuary. The congregation of St Mark's had a history, for many years, of worshipping outdoors on a farm for the Harvest Thanksgiving service. Opportunities have arisen to go on walks on pilgrim routes that end or start in St Andrews. During lockdown Messy Church events took place outdoors. I also became aware of the Forest Church Movement. The learning and observations coalesced and made me wonder if by encouraging the congregation of St Mark's Church to spiritually reflect on beauty and awe whether they might be energized to engage further with outdoor worship. My results are produced by using primarily qualitative, but also quantitative material gathered through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and journals.

Hours after receiving final project approval I received the news that I had been offered a new post to work in the Church of Scotland Offices. I consulted Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and I called a Kirk Session meeting before worship on 1 October 2023 to inform them of my forthcoming move to become the Ministries Support Operations Manager. I also sought their view on the project's future by drawing on their collective wisdom. They were very supportive of me continuing on with my project as

originally planned. I expressed my gratitude and re-iterated that I would share with them the results of it.

I prepared and presented material on beauty, awe and outdoor worship in two contrasting and complementary ways. First by three acts of Sunday morning worship where the themes were focused on, week by week, in turn. Secondly, I led a weekly series of three workshops which followed on later in the week from the Sunday worship. Again, the workshops focused on the same themes, week by week, in turn. The content of the worship and workshops was developed from the understandings reached and fully articulated earlier back in Chapter 2. The worship was conducted on the last three Sundays of October 2023 and the workshops on the following Saturday afternoons. In other words, the first act of worship took place on 15 October 2023 and the final workshop on 4 November 2023.

Questionnaires were also prepared by me and distributed to worshippers, and they were invited to complete them before the first act of worship on 15 October 2023 and after the last of the three acts of worship on 29 October 2023 (Appendices 5, 6) There were five exceptions to this. Five members of the congregation had agreed to be interviewed and their second questionnaire was completed after the final workshop on 4 November 2023 (Appendix 7). This was done because they were the only individuals who had committed to attend the workshops and had the second questionnaire only been issued to those attending the workshops, and not simply Sunday worshippers, the range and numbers of views garnered would have been diminished. At Sunday worship the week before the project implementation started, worshippers were informed of the themes for the worship for the subsequent three weeks and invited to consider completing

questionnaires anonymously (Appendix 3). The anonymity was designed to allow participants to express themselves freely. It was made clear it was an invitation and that they could attend worship and were under no obligation to complete questionnaires. Indeed, in the end some people only answered some of the questions.

As indicated above, the interviews, which were semi-structured, were conducted by me with five members of St Mark's Church during the week before the first act of worship on 15 October. The interview questions arose in the light of reflections on the fruits of the research carried out in Chapter 2. These interviews lasted approximately thirty minutes. Interviewees were invited to choose an interview venue. Four interviews were conducted in the St Mark's Manse and one interview was conducted in a participant's home. Those interviewed were asked to commit to attending all three acts of worship and all three workshops, as well as complete the two questionnaires and keep a journal.

It was important to attempt to introduce balance within the group chosen. I appreciated any selecting will be subjective to some degree. These people will be over sixty since that is the overwhelming demographic of the communicant membership of the congregation. There was as near an equal balance between genders as possible (in the end three women to two men). Each member was committed and a very regular attender at worship. The breadth included a communicant member who had joined less than two years ago, an elder who had been ordained less than a year, and three more long serving elders. I initially thought I would attempt to select a spread by choosing at least one who is known to be keen to support eco-congregation initiatives, and at least one person whom I have observed does not engage in those initiatives. The others selected would

have been observed to demonstrate a more ‘support at times’ behaviour towards eco-congregation events. In the end I revised that methodology. I could have been making false assumptions about people’s involvement or lack of it and that could lessen the true balance of the interviewee group. In revising the methodology, I invited members to indicate to me where they considered that they lay on a scale from 1 to 5 in terms of their eco-engagement where 1 represented those whose choices were very strongly influenced by their ecological understanding and where 5 represented those whose choices were not at all influenced by their ecological understanding. Whilst everyone would interpret the scale differently, by selecting for interview a range of participants who self-classified as lying on different points of the scale, the intention was to further solidify balance within the interviewee group. No-one from the pool of possible interviewees selected numbers 4 or 5. Those in the end invited to be interviewed categorized themselves as follows: one 1, three 2’s and one 3. It should be noted, the fact that a person classifies themselves as a 1, will not necessarily mean they will be supportive of the setting up of worship outdoors and likewise the fact that a person classified themselves as a 3, does not mean they may not be receptive to outdoor worship. All those invited accepted the invitation to be interviewed. Those interviewed each signed an Informed Consent Form (Appendix 2) allowing an audiotape recording of the interview to be made.

Before the project implementation I had announced to the congregation that I was nearing the end of my ministry with them and moving to serve in a position in the Church of Scotland Offices. Therefore, although the views of the five people interviewed would become known to me, they knew that I would soon be moving on. That fact diminishes any likelihood that they may be tempted to answer questions in a way that they think may

please me or which attunes with their perceived understanding of my hopes for the future direction of the life of the congregation. The interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and were transcribed using software. I manually checked the texts against the original recordings for accuracy and made necessary corrections. The corrections tended to be either when the word *awe* was often substituted by *all* or where there was a mis-rendering of local place names that the software did not recognise. I was also at that point able to introduce subsidiary comments where the text itself didn't quite capture the true meaning or ambiance of the contribution e.g. words offered hesitantly, or in a questioning tone.

These five individuals were also asked to keep a journal during the period from the first act of worship to the last workshop. They were asked to share it with me. The journals will be used to help measure the change and impact of the worship and workshops. I passed on an information sheet about journalling and offered each a blank paper journal. Four accepted them and one said they would keep their journal on their home computer and email me it on completion. This allowed a qualitative analysis of how their thinking and responding was developing as the days and weeks passed. As a researcher I also kept a journal throughout this period and its contents too provided research material. I updated it frequently and particularly soon after worship and workshops.

The two sets of questionnaires, the interview transcripts and the journals were analysed for data, categories were formed, and themes developed where possible. Using these themes, I was able to write an ethnography, a descriptive study of the people of St Mark's Church.

By offering to include all members of the congregation in the worship and workshops no-one is being excluded. By inviting five people to commit to attending all worship and workshops it provides a group whose movement from start to finish (and the points in between) can be gauged through analysis of their interviews, questionnaires, and journals. Only once the worship and workshops are completed and the data is collated will I start to identify any patterns, or lack of them, which emerge. The data garnered will guide the conclusions I reach, however provisional, and establish whether my working hypothesis was correct or not.

Part II: Project Implementation

My fellow cohort students' input at the Final Project Proposal class and further reading enabled me to develop an initial list of questions and these were modified in the light of comments from Alison Jack. The appointed readers, Richard Frazer and Bethany Sollereeder, also helped me to focus on revising the final form of the interview questions. The interview questions were grouped around the three weekly themes – beauty, awe and worship outdoors. I also invited participants to describe beauty and spiritual beauty. Additionally, they were invited to comment on how beauty and awe were different and related. The questions were designed to offer them space to share exactly what they wanted to share without me as the researcher imposing any preconceived notions on the answers they may give. That was why, methodologically, I felt it important to conduct all interviews before the first act of worship took place. Those interviewed were offering their views on these themes before any input was presented to them by me. All the questions asked at interview were open questions and asked to elicit qualitative responses, not closed questions that invited short responses. I took short notes in my

journal during and immediately after the interview to add richness to the gathered material for example adding notes that would not be reflected in the audio tape such as noting body language, or an interviewee looking out of the window reflectively. The point of the questions was to allow them the time and space to reflect on concepts that are often not front and centre in our Reformed tradition. Indeed, I don't think in thirty years of ministry I have chosen beauty and awe as the primary theme for Sunday worship until these were featured in DMin classes. Certainly, I would have touched on beauty and awe but not, from my recollection, as primary themes.

I will now turn to describe each part of the Project Implementation input.

i) Questionnaires

The questionnaires (excluding those from the five interviewees) were completed anonymously. This provided snapshots of the views of the worshippers at the start and end of the process. The questionnaires from those who had been interviewed could, additionally, more directly discern their individual movement from the start to the end of the project intervention. I collected and numbered all questionnaires to make data gathering easier. This was particularly helpful for the questionnaires from the interviewees but helped too with all the others.

The number of questionnaires completed on 15 October was 31 and the number completed on 29 October was 33. Through leading worship week by week, the worship leader gains an awareness of frequent worshippers who attend each week and is aware also when the regular worshippers are absent. Subjectively I was aware that many

worshippers were at each act of worship and therefore may have accepted the invitation to complete two questionnaires.

The five interviewees answered all the questions put to the worshippers and an additional four questions on the questionnaire distributed to them after the last workshop on 4 November.

ii) Interviews

I telephoned each prospective participant and explained what was being asked of the interviewees. I checked that each person invited to be interviewed was also able to commit to attending the three acts of worship and the three workshops on beauty, awe and worship outdoors. They also agreed to complete two questionnaires and engage in journaling during the project implementation period. This was a major time commitment from them, and I wish to record my gratitude for their generous and thoughtful engagement with the project. Before inviting them to be interviewed I informed them that they would be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form before the interview began and that at any time, they could withdraw their consent. Before each interview began, I allowed them time to read the Informed Consent Form and talked through each point with them. I also explained that in the finished project or any subsequent writing or sharing of results their contributions would be anonymised. Time was given for them to ask any questions they had. There were not many, but I answered them to their satisfaction before starting the interview. All five people I had identified as a well-balanced group agreed to participate. Interviews ranged in length from 22 mins to 38 mins and in total 160 minutes of recordings required to be transcribed. Checking and correcting or adding nuance to the automated transcription (as noted earlier) allowed me to revisit each interview. Some

weeks later I subsequently re-read the corrected transcripts side by side and that allowed noteworthy phrases or stories to be identified. I coded the transcripts by adding main question numbers (those questions asked of each interviewee) and this made it easier to view the material side by side

In due course this analysis helped me identify themes and helped me to focus on similarities or differences. The invitation was to open people's minds and encourage them to think about topics in a broad way. It was perhaps not surprising that the themes which emerged were wide ranging.

I move to outline the worship and workshops and for ease, when not giving specific calendar dates, I will give numbers to the weeks so the worship and workshops on beauty will be termed as happening in week 1, those dealing with awe in week 2 and those with outdoor worship in week 3. Before each workshop the PowerPoint slide presentation used at worship was again shown.

iii) Worship

The worship was an enhanced version of the usual liturgy. Over the course of the three Sundays it was designed to have similarities and differences from one week to the next. Usually at morning worship there is no facility to show PowerPoint slideshows. For the three weeks of the project implementation a member of the congregation agreed to set up a projector and screen. A different rolling PowerPoint slide show each Sunday focused on the topic for the week and was shown before the start of each service and after the benediction at the end. This set the mood, and before any words had been spoken, allowed worshippers to reflect personally on the week's theme. I was mindful that beauty

and awe are subjective categories (as identified previously in Chapter 2). I tried however to offer a range of examples of things some people may class as beautiful, or at the very least appreciate how others may perceive them to be so. Most of the *beauty* themed slides were taken by me. They included, amongst other things, weather conditions, landscapes, water, a newly married bride and groom, pets, plants, impressive architecture, fruit, flowers, ceramics, sculpture, autumn leaves, bathing feet, a birthday meal, stained glass, a close up of a snowflake, St Mark's Church, images from the parish and stars in a dark sky. 38 slides were chosen for inclusion.

The 13 slides for *awe*, picking up on John Calvin's desire that we look to the heavens to draw near to God (outlined earlier in chapter 2), were primarily taken from Images from the Hubble Space Telescope (with credits shown as required for NASA, ESA and STScI). I also included a couple of slides of Sycamore Gap still showing its tree in place. A pass where a well-known, dramatically sited and much loved tree had been felled illegally recently. It made national news in the UK. Again, this was reflecting Calvin's view that the earth too could induce awe and point to God.

The 42 slides prepared for the *worship outdoors* service included hints at pilgrim routes either from Iona to St Andrews (The Three Saints Way), or the Fife Pilgrim Way which also ends in St Andrews. Slides also represented the four seasons, and pilgrimage or outdoor worship in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

A psalm is often sung in our worship, but less frequently read. Each week verses from a psalm were read as one of the scripture portions. Usually, hymns are different each week and I make sure they are each not selected more than a few times a year. During the three weeks of the project implementation one of the hymns each week, which neatly

touched on all three themes, was the same for the successive weeks. It was *Let all creation dance* by Brian Wren.¹³⁷ The organist was invited to choose music for the worship that kept in mind the week's theme. Usually, they are simply aware of the point in the lectionary we have reached. Lectionary readings are normally used but for these three weeks I selected the texts myself. At the end of the sermon on the first two weeks worshippers were invited to spiritually reflect on the theme for the week. (Indeed, afterwards over coffee a member of the congregation was sharing with a visiting student how she had found the invitation to engage in spiritual reflection particularly moving and meaningful and she took time to thank me for them). Many of the prayers were based on resources found in the reading list of the Reformed Spirituality class. These included prayers from John Ballie's *A Diary of Private Prayer* but also a prayer from George MacLeod's book *The Whole Earth Shall Cry Glory*.

The worship was structured to allow people the time and space to sit with the concepts of beauty and awe and encourage them to perceive them broadly, and appreciate their place in Scripture and Reformed thought- primarily John Calvin's thought. The third week of worship laid before people examples of outdoor worship. Either examples that the congregation historically, or in the recent past, had engaged with: an outdoor Songs of Praise with the BBC; Messy Church meetings in local parks and the St Andrews Botanic Garden; Harvest Thanksgiving services on a local farm and engaging in sections of pilgrim routes that end in St Andrews. It also pointed people towards Forest Church; a newer movement encouraging worship to take place outside. What was important was

¹³⁷Brian Wren, "Let All Creation Dance," No. 149 in *Church Hymnary Fourth Edition* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2005).

what emerged from the congregation. I specifically highlighted that an option arising from beauty may be a desire to sit before a beautiful icon and reflect and pray in the comfort of one's own home instead of a desire to pursue avenues for outdoor worship. That is why in the order of service sheet for week three the theme was not "worship outdoors" but "worship outdoors?" How the Holy Spirit directed people as they collectively reflected and responded would offer clues for the congregation and Kirk Session as it discerns the right way forward in the coming months and years.

Usually, worship runs like a well-oiled machine. However, regrettably in the first two weeks, circumstances meant that was not the case. The church sanctuary heating had been broken and although the heating engineer had changed a valve, on 15 October the church sanctuary was cold. This did not help people relax and feel as comfortable as normal. The weather too was cold. Three older members of the congregation decided they were not willing, understandably, to worship in a cold church building and the three of them removed themselves to the Church Hall where the heating was functioning. The person dealing with the church audio hurriedly managed to make sure the sound could reach the Church Hall, and the worshippers were given hymn books. Although not able to see the slides they were given service sheets and hymn books and were able to participate in the worship. I understand two of them sang the hymns out loud. They did however lack the visual stimulus of the sanctuary that day. I informed the congregation of the option to worship from the church hall but only the original three decided to do so, everyone else remained in the church sanctuary.

In the United Kingdom bad storms are given names. On 20 October strong winds and heavy rain came with storm Babet. St Andrews remained in an amber zone but the

city of Dundee only 13 miles away was in a red zone which means dangerous weather with a risk to life. The storm may have been awesome but at the same time lives were lost. A sobering reminder that nature is not always kind and beautiful.

In week two, whilst preaching, it seemed to me that there was a roaring noise in the sanctuary. I first thought it was a truck passing on the main road outside, then I thought a few trucks, then I thought it was the sound of a strong wind hitting the roof- had roof tiles come off during storm Babet and the wind gained access? I knew however there was little wind that day. I was concerned that the central heating boiler that had been fixed and which was again heating the church sanctuary was malfunctioning. I was aware that a few of those present were looking around, but only a few, and no-one who was on door duty felt the noise was of such a level that it merited further investigation. My journal states, "Week 1 – no heating, week 2 – roof noise!" I have always taken the line that the worship leader should keep going unless something critical needs to be addressed and that it is the duty of those on welcome duty to attend to matters which arise e.g. showing late arrivals to a seat or offering water to a worshipper who is coughing. This made me think the noise was perhaps louder for me in the pulpit than for the other worshippers and I took the decision to continue on. St Mark's has an accomplished organist and they were to play Handel's Halleluiah Chorus. It was not in the end, through no fault of the organist, the most stirring rendition. It became clear by the end of worship that the digital organ had been malfunctioning. It was from it that the noises were emanating, and it was for that reason that the rendition of the Halleluiah Chorus was less awesome than might have been expected. Looking back it is quite humorous, but at the time much less so!

As has been noted earlier I had already announced that I was soon to end my service beside them as a parish minister. This meant the number of weeks I had available to conduct the research was limited. On 7 October 2023 the Hamas attack on residents of Israel initiated a strong response from Israel and this was dominating the news headlines. The worship took place against this as a backdrop. If I had more weeks left in St Mark's I may have decided to postpone the worship related to the project since there was a clear and obvious disjunction between Hamas and Israel's actions and the theme of beauty in week one or indeed by week two associations between military action and recollection of the use of the phrase "Shock and Awe" from the start of the second Gulf War back in 2003. This "Shock and Awe" link was picked up by Interviewees D and E. In week one I resolutely stuck to the theme but by weeks two and three, although maintaining a clear focus on the weekly themes, I adjusted prayers or the sermons slightly to take cognisance of the ongoing situation.

It is helpful to note that: the military and political situations in Israel and Gaza; on 15 October the cool temperature in the sanctuary; and on 22 October the malfunctioning organ, all in their own way, helped lessen an ability to generate a peaceful, warm, calm environment in which to engage in spiritual reflections on beauty. In terms of spiritual reflections on awe it is, I think, less clear cut. People could sense awe at the destruction caused by war or storms and remind themselves of the power and harshness that comes with some manifestations of awe. On the other hand, marvelling at the stars or the birth of a child is perhaps impeded with such a powerful encompassing backdrop.

iv) Workshops

Everyone attending worship and all members of the congregation who allowed email contact from the church office were informed of and invited to the workshops. The first workshop took place in the largest Church Hall. This was appropriate since it was unclear how many people would attend and it offered the chance to have space to lay out the (possibly) beautiful cards and objects mentioned below. Workshop 2 had to be held in a smaller meeting room because of an existing Church Hall booking but it was preferable for week 2 since the seating was more comfortable – a lounge like space. The workshop participants decided they preferred and wished to remain in the smaller space for the final workshop.

I had initially hoped the workshops would take place midweek. This would allow a few days space between each worship and workshop event; such time intervals would allow time to reflect and engage in journalling. In the end however, they happened on a Saturday afternoon as this was the only time that all five interviewees could commit to attending. This was not my first timing choice but nothing from the results shown in Part III below led me to conclude the timing was detrimental to the results. In the end eight people (besides me) attended the workshops each week; although not always the same people. Four who had been interviewed attended all workshops and one interviewee had to submit their apologies for the second workshop. I offered that interviewee, and they accepted, an invitation to run through the content of the workshop with them. The workshop was on the Saturday afternoon which was too close to Sunday morning worship for that participant to learn of its content before week 3's worship but time was found to share with them before Week 3's workshop.

I chose the word workshop to help engender a sense of participation rather than passivity. I was trying not to engage in didactic teaching but to invite the participants to be open to the movement of God's Holy Spirit and sense where she was blowing. Each workshop started with a repeat of the PowerPoint slideshow used at the previous Sunday worship on the same theme.

Week 1's Workshop

In the workshop on beauty, I attempted to cover not only additional biblical texts and include content from the writings of Reformed authors, particularly John Calvin, but I worked my way through each of the five senses and attempted to invite them to think about beauty and how it related to each one. In terms of sight at the start of the workshop I had laid out on a table several objects, many of which could be classed as beautiful. These included a selection of plant cuttings or leaves, a range of seashells and a selection of individual photo cards (an *Evoke Cards* pack by Jane Stokes). The cards were not only showing classically beautiful images (Appendix 10). Animals, waste, wire and clouds, to name four choices, sat next to each other. Note I asked people to select a card with a beautiful image on it or an object and everyone chose an item before then going on to describe why they selected what they had chosen (Appendix 11). I too participated but did not select nor share my choice until everyone else had participated and made their contribution.

The other senses were treated in similar ways – food to eat mindfully (a selection of citrus fruit, dark chocolate and boiled sweets), pieces of music, the smell of scented candles to stimulate reflections on beautiful smells. In terms of touch, we reflected on pre Covid-19 sharing the peace during celebrations of Holy Communion.

Interestingly in terms of sight, two people could not choose their first choice since someone else had chosen it before them. This perhaps indicated a common sense of what is seen as being beautiful by these individuals. Nevertheless, everyone was able to select a picture card or other object. The workshop ended with a short spiritual reflection on beauty (the same reflection used at the previous Sunday's worship on beauty).

Certainly, after the first workshop one participant, who I think had been apprehensive about attending, said that they enjoyed it very much. People knew each other and the opportunity not only to listen but to share their thoughts at each workshop helped further deepen a sense of community.

Week 2's Workshop

At the start of workshop 2, after a short recap on beauty, workshop participants were invited to write down an example of a time when they had experienced awe. These contributions were then periodically offered and discussed as the workshop proceeded. Interspersing these contributions were inputs from the writing of Calvin, Young, Zachman, Keltner, Lane Ritchie and Smith drawing on the material from Chapter 2. Additional biblical texts were read and pieces of music that some may describe as awesome were heard.

Week 3's Workshop

Week 3's workshop started indoors with a recap on beauty and awe from the previous two weeks. It moved to ask if having reflected spiritually on beauty and awe might that encourage people to support worship outdoors in some shape or form, or not.

I had included on the Informed Consent Forms a note to alert participants that they should dress appropriately so that if a taster Forest Church was conducted then they would be suitably attired. Before the workshop I checked the weather forecast, which was not ideal, but it indicated there may be less likelihood of rain than at other points of the day. If the weather was too inclement, I was not going to invite the participants outside and so had prepared paper sheets with a couple of images of labyrinths that could be used by finger tracing if necessary (Appendix 12). I have used a wooden finger labyrinth before. Finger labyrinths are useful if someone is immobile or disabled, perhaps blind, and they can use a finger or a stylus and trace their way to the centre and back out again. An image of a similarly sized labyrinth on paper is not as good but I considered it was a satisfactory emergency fallback. Although not actively used during the workshop these labyrinths were distributed to the workshop participants.

In the end the weather was sufficiently calm to go to the local labyrinth in Kinburn Park. This is a walk of a few minutes from the Church Hall where the workshop was taking place. For reasons of anonymity none of the participants are shown, but images of the labyrinth taken during the workshop are offered in Appendix 13. Participants were invited either to walk the labyrinth, or go and reflect mindfully in the natural surroundings of the park, each an example of something that might be part of a Forest Church worship event.

Whereas the previous workshops ended up with a spiritual reflection on beauty or awe, the third workshop ended up with a prayer and a blessing outside – a chance for participants to engage in outdoor worship.

Having outlined how the project was implemented I will now turn to the results of the project in Part III of this chapter.

Part III – Project Results

In this part I will provide a summary and analysis of the findings from the research project. The initial and final questionnaires, worship, workshops, interviews and journals generated a considerable amount of material. I will begin by focusing on the questions answered by all worshippers including the five interviewees and then move to consider the questions they alone answered. I will weave into the results comments from the questionnaires, workshops and journals (including my own journal) which included comments on the worship, workshops and comments made to me after worship ended. For questions 1 – 7 I will look at answers provided first from the questionnaires. Similarities, differences and striking themes will be highlighted.

For the sake of clarity, note that the answers to questions 1- 7 of the first questionnaire were given by the interviewees during their interviews and they only completed answers to question 8-11 in paper form for that questionnaire. The approximate number of worshippers each week was 70 people. 31 first questionnaires and 33 second questionnaires were returned. In other words, returns of 44% and 47% respectively.

Questions 1 and 2 asked participants to name something they would describe as beautiful and say why they had chosen that. From the 31 responses one person named music (Handel’s Messiah), two related to items designed or constructed by humans – “buildings of amazing architecture” where they appreciated all the work to achieve it and

“involute gear tooth” where there is “perfect meshing – of every tooth”. (In truth I didn’t know what was being referred to and now having looked it up can truly appreciate why it was chosen.) The questionnaires were distributed as autumn colours were appearing on trees. Five made references to seasons directly: “a view from the top of a hill on a clear summer’s day”; someone who selected trees because the “countryside is beautiful at this time of year” (autumn); “nature” since they “love the changing of the seasons”; “the little daffodils coming up in the garden again in spring” and another “yellow daffodils” because “the sight of bright yellow in early spring time lifts the heart thinking of the new season ahead.” Although colours were mentioned in relation to garden flowers, besides this mention of yellow, the only other colours specifically mentioned, were by one interviewee who spoke of, “rosehips in the rain - the red against green.” In all the responses to these questions (besides interviewees where two of them mentioned God) only one person mentioned God by saying they have, “always seen God in nature.” One interviewee mentioned their wife and daughter but no other humans were referenced by anyone else as their choice of something beautiful in the first questionnaire. Two respondents specifically referred to animate creatures one “birds and bees” and the other to “birds singing”. That though does not mean to say birds or animals were not referenced in broader reference categories e.g. three simply offered the word “nature.” I did not expect neatly categorising the responses to be easy since individuals were given complete latitude in terms of how to respond but pulling similar categories and broad themes together and not double counting meant: The Universe 0, Human design 2, Music 1, Gardens (including plants and trees) 8, country landscapes (whether mountains or lakes)

8 , seascapes 1, townscapes 2, the Sky (including sunrises and sunsets) 4, Nature 3, family members 1, Autumn colours 0, no return 1.

One person did not answer the qualitative questions and indeed only offered two quantitative answers (to questions 8 and 9).

Almost all choices related to visual encounters. There were two clear exceptions: birds singing and Handel's Messiah. No-one chose a smell, a taste or a touch.

Nature and seeing beauty in the surrounding environment whether a garden or a country landscape collectively accounted for 19 responses – over 63% if you ignore the zero return. That might have been with specific reference to Scotland or the town of St Andrews.

I turn now to the second questionnaires. As noted above, this time there were two more questionnaires 33 (compared with 31)

One form only responded to the new questions and stated, “already completed Q 1-11 two weeks ago”. This made me ask, on hindsight, should I have made it clear to participants that they were being invited to respond to all the questions again. In doing so that would help identify any changes in responses over the course of the project implementation period. I chose not to say that however. The intention was that in the light of what was experienced in the previous weeks at worship and in workshops, they could answer the questions again, afresh, and not be prompted by me, in any way, to recollect what they had said previously. Since only one person out of thirty-three people wrote in that way it is right to note their comment. It is also important to note by not specifically

asking respondents to answer again almost all people did so. I think this provides support for my course of action.

There was a reasonable degree of consistency in the categorisations. Nature and seeing beauty in the surrounding environment, whether a garden or a country landscape, collectively again accounted for 19 responses. Within that though was the most significant shift: 4 responses related more directly to gardens, plants and trees rather than country landscapes in general. This may indicate a shift from the general to the specific as people concretely visualise something beautiful. Indeed, in the first questionnaire two people specifically mentioned trees, in the second survey that rose to six. That is a considerable shift. It may indicate that as people went about their lives considering beauty, awe and worship outdoors the colours on the leaves surrounding them would be approaching their best autumn shades. One of the interviewee's responses altered from seeing beauty in their spouse or child to choosing listening to Allegri's Miserere Mei. This was the most dramatic shift however only one interviewee remained with exactly the same answer – "a view of St Andrews looking out over the sea". The remaining three demonstrated slight movements: from "rosehips in the rain" to a "goldfinch"; from "a garden which included flowers, sky, sunshine and clouds" altered to "trees or clouds"; and from "mountains" to "autumn colours on trees".

It is good to note too that the workshop methodically worked through each of the five senses and yet still four of the five remained with the sense of sight in their choice of beauty whilst one person shifted to another sense and went to listening to music.

Interviewee A who had self-selected as being most engaged with eco-theology and green

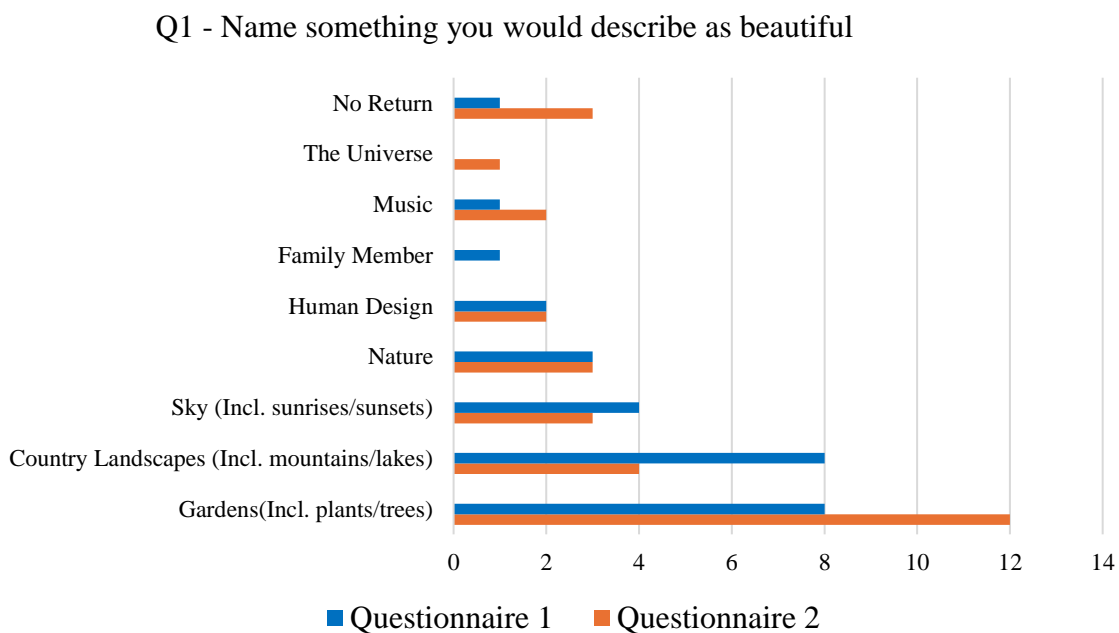
issues chose a variegated branch as their beautiful item. Although other leaves, shells and plant matter were on offer everyone else chose one of the cards.

Following the earlier broader categorisation it meant for all responses: The Universe 1, Human design 2, Music 2, Gardens (including plants and trees) 12, country landscapes (whether mountains or lakes) 4, seascapes 1, townscapes 1, the Sky (including sunrises and sunsets) 3, Nature 3, family members 0, Autumn colours 1, no return 3.

The responses do not allow me to conclude there was little movement from every individual especially since four of the five interviewees varied their responses. However, looking at all the responses from each questionnaire they were, overall, remarkably consistent. In the first yellow daffodils of spring, in the second a specific mention of autumn colours on trees. The most significant and only completely new category was one person choosing “The Universe”. This may have been directly related to the slides and sermon in week 2 encouraging people to follow Calvin and look to the heavens. However, it is also possible that the person who answered in that way did not complete the first questionnaire and had they done so they may have chosen “The Universe” there too.

The overwhelming place where people expressed beauty was through the sense of sight. Notably too most responses selected things to see outside.

Bar Graph 1. Question 1 of Questionnaires



Question 3 arose from the title of Belden C Lane’s book *Surprised by Beauty: The Surprising Legacy of Reformed Spirituality*. Asking participants to describe more specifically spiritual beauty allowed a comparison to be made between it and beauty.

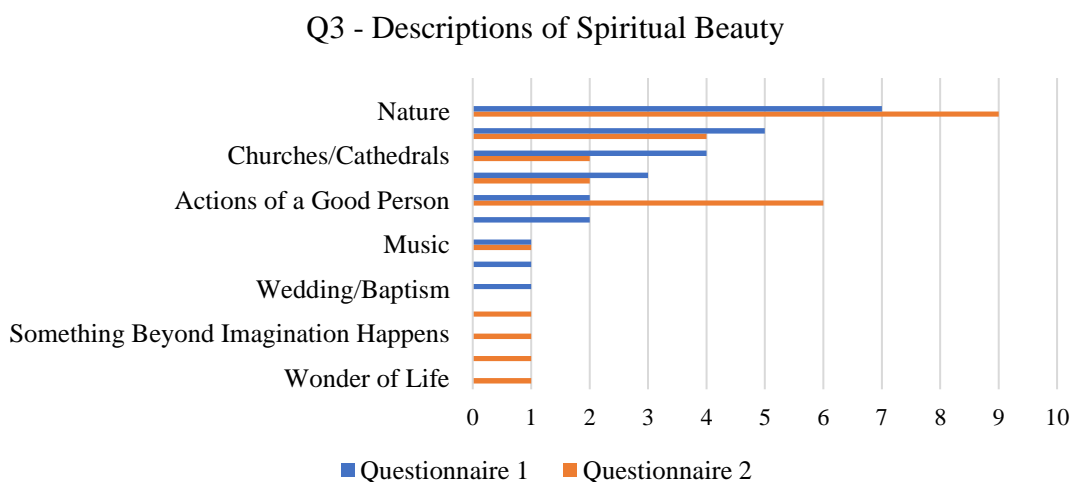
More people found this difficult to answer and six left the answer blank in the first questionnaire and seven in the second and one indicated “not enough time to think right now” perhaps indicating nothing was quickly coming to mind. Again, like with question 1, when asked for a second time to select something they would describe as demonstrating spiritual beauty numbers shifting between categories were slight. The biggest shift was an increase from 2 to 6 where participants chose people- either the action of a good person or the perceived good within a person. The next biggest shift upwards was in the nature category where the increase was from 7 to 9 participants. This

was again the largest category each time. Three categories saw shifts downwards, all by one response less, apart from churches/cathedrals which moved from 4 to 2.

Although only one person specifically mentioned God when writing about beauty that was not so when writing about spiritual beauty, where in the questionnaires God was specifically named 7 times.

The participants, besides speaking more directly of God, having taken time to focus on beauty in a broad way, when asked to comment on spiritual beauty lessened that focus on church buildings and increased it to be seen in nature or within people. This shift follows a similar pattern to those individuals engaging in everyday awe walks as seen in chapter 2 where the environment grew in significance for the walkers. Whereas initially at the start of the project implementation period people were more focused on a church building and scripture, on clearly ‘religious things’, after reflecting, by the second questionnaire they moved to see spiritual beauty extended into people and the natural world outside the church sanctuary. This will be picked up further in chapter 4.

Bar Graph 2. Question 3 of Questionnaires



Question 4 asked people to describe when they sensed awe. There was a broad range of categories ranging from a church building to the birth of a child.

Two words were prevalent in descriptions: the word ‘first’ and the word ‘above’. Each were mentioned 5 times in the first questionnaire. The word ‘first’ produced the first: “sight of a new baby”, “worship in a new sanctuary”, “sight of a rocket take off”, “flight in a glider”. At least one other response, although not using the word first specifically, was expressed to indicate that it too was a first when they stated, “visit a cathedral in a new city”. Earlier I indicated a sense of awe on experiencing nacreous clouds for the first time. Chapter 4 will reflect on how this sits in relation to Keltner’s desire that people seek everyday awe i.e. not only awe in things experienced for the first time. The word ‘above’ produced examples of “flying above Greenland” and “climbing above the clouds on Munros” (Scottish mountains above 3000 feet high).

In questionnaire 2 the word ‘first’ was still shown but less frequently. A decrease from 16% (5 from 31 responses) to 9% (3 from 33 responses) of the returned questionnaires. This time the participants commented: “the first: time I saw sheet lightening” and “the first birth I witnessed.” Again at least one other response although not using the word first was expressed to indicate that it too was a first when they referred to a “grandson’s heartbeat in [an] early ultrasound scan”. The word ‘above’ being used explicitly fell even further to 1 use and this time not people being above looking down, but being on the ground looking up at “mountains above a lake in Italy.”

Another word which appeared an above average number of times was awe at worship: “early Easter morning worship”; “Christingle service” and “worship for the first

time in a new church” (it’s unclear if this is the first time anyone had worshipped there or the first time that person had worshipped there).

Participants mentioned birth twice in the first questionnaire and four times in the second questionnaire. This was mentioned in the sermon when referring to the awe sensed by the DMin cohort where, there too, two people spoke of awe at a birth. Just as human subjects were offered as responses more frequently between the first and second questionnaires on spiritual beauty, the same has proved true when awe was being commented upon. As noted in Chapter 2, one of Keltner’s concepts was the importance of seeing awe in everyday life and how that could bring mental health benefits. Interviewee A picked up that link in a conversation with me and Interviewee B in their journal.

The plethora of varied responses is difficult to display in graphic form and so I offer here a few of the comments to illustrate their range: “one of the early morning Easter Services when the sun was rising and sky beautiful”; “seeing humpback whales migrating to the Antarctic in the Pacific Ocean. Truly wonderful”; “On holiday swim looking back to the land”; “seeing my 5-year-old daughter so graceful and focused walking slowly down the aisle carrying the bible in church behind the minister. I remember the amazed look on the congregation’s faces.”; “Micro and macro views of the world of nature” and “A visit to Le Madelaine in Paris with two teenagers. My sense of awe was complemented/increased by their reactions.”

Question 5 sought to determine the difference between beauty and awe and a wide range of views emerged. In the first questionnaire the most prominent (with three) was that “beauty is seen” and in contrast awe is (by implication) not seen, or it is “within the heart”, or it is “created by God”. Awe was described as “being less tangible than

beauty” and by another awe was “more ephemeral than beauty”. In terms of chronology one person noted “beauty is long-lasting but awe is momentary”. One person stated that “beauty is all around but awe is more limited”; another, in contrast, that “awe is immense but beauty can be any size”, but they continued, “that said, I am awed by the structure of a nuclear pore!” This is a clear example of what Zachman recognised and the project noted back in chapter 2. I too would have expressed awe as a spectacular intrusion into the ordinary everyday reality of life, before I took Keltner’s view of awe into account. One participant said, “beauty is instant but awe, although also instant is jaw-dropping wonderment. Something that you remember and talk about for the rest of your life.”

In terms of the second questionnaire one person thought it was “too subjective a question” and another “too difficult” and they thought there was an overlap “but perhaps not a large one.” Whereas previously 3 people mentioned beauty as something you see and also 3 that it was “in the eye of the beholder”, this time there was a slight shift and the phrase “beauty being in the eye of the beholder” was used twice directly and once tangentially. Beauty as something nice or lovely to look at was used twice also; no-one said it was something seen. The difference between ‘seen’ and ‘looked at’ is not perhaps overwhelming but I wonder if this shift indicates a slight change of focus. The agency has moved from the outside to the inside. No longer is it something that is seen passively but something a human being more actively looks for and can recognise. This resonates with Keltner and his desire that individuals find awe¹³⁸ and certainly with Zachman’s comment on Calvin that it is as though he would have us on the roof stargazing each evening.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Keltner, *Awe*, xv, Kindle.

¹³⁹ Zachman, *Reconsidering*, 29.

Another distinctive phrase in the questionnaire was, “awe has elements of threat and domination in it.” This is not untrue at times, but Keltner identified that nowadays, “most moments of awe- about three quarters- feel good, and only one quarter are flavoured with threat.”¹⁴⁰

Two noted beauty was “not always awesome”, one contrasted by saying awe was “a step further” and the other noted “awe is not always beautiful”. The other word that appeared 3 times here, and only from one of the interviewees previously, was the word wonder. This was perhaps lifted from my sermon and the section that referred to wonder, picking up from what was learned in chapter 2.

Question 6 sought to determine how beauty and awe are understood to be related. Comments were either missing or quite wide ranging.

Eight individuals including one interviewee (C) did not provide a response to this in the first questionnaire. In the second questionnaire nine people declined to provide an answer. At the interviews, when there was more room for informal expression, the comment was made by Interviewee A, in reference to questions 5 and 6 that, “they’re not easy questions.”

The most prominent theme was the recognition by five in questionnaire 1 that beauty and awe were not always related. By the second questionnaire that number had risen to 13 which includes all five interviewees. The Interviewee who didn’t answer the question in the interview stated, “you can be in awe of something beautiful.” Another participant mirrored that by saying “beauty often fills us with awe and wonder.” Others

¹⁴⁰ Keltner, *Awe*, 24, Kindle.

chose the phrase “sometimes” or “not necessarily” to highlight that one can be present without the other.

One person commented they were related “only by philosophers.” First questionnaire responses included the fact that both beauty and awe “lift one’s spirits and give a sense of well-being”. One person said awe made them think of “grandeur and large expansive things whereas beauty was in the small: snowdrops and a spider’s web”. Interviewee B stated that “Milan Cathedral was beautiful, but St Peter’s Basilica was awesome”. Interviewee D said they were “different aspects of the same thing and that something awesome might not be beautiful”, offering a “huge, pillared church” they considered ugly as an example. They went on to say that awe, “could be a dangerous emotion if carried too far” since “it can lead to giving it some import, some spiritual significance”. These comments reminded me of the golden calf (Exodus 32) and also the second and third commandments (Exodus 20 :3-4). Indeed, Interviewee A also picked up on and explored these texts extensively in their journal. One contributor in each questionnaire noted both are wonderful but “awe goes much deeper and has a profound effect.”

The second questionnaires had two people actively mention God. One said “both fill us with thankfulness to God and they lead [us] towards worshipping God.” One individual said they were related through the “joy they both bring”. In summary a wide range of views but many demonstrating that you can have beauty without awe and awe without beauty and sometimes both together.

Question 7 asked for thoughts on outdoor worship.

In terms of the first questionnaire there were 23 positive responses (79.3%), 2 neutral responses (6.9%) and 4 negative responses (13.8%), with 2 no returns. The positive comments used a range of descriptive words including: "I like it very much"; "sharpens senses to the natural world"; "love it"; "I'm all for it" and "uplifting". More neutral responses were: "has a place, such as Harvest or Easter"; "okay with good sound and warm dry weather". This was the only response that mentioned sound and during my time in St Andrews the 7am ecumenical Easter morning service, which in earlier years had no sound amplification, moved latterly to use a portable sound system. I imagine this response was either affirming that decision or commenting on a service they attended and at which they struggled to hear. The Harvest Thanksgiving services at Allanhill farm did have sound amplification but on occasion it could be temperamental.

Besides positive comments weather was clearly uppermost in many people's minds. All the negative responses and 9 of the positive responses included a comment about the weather which can be cold, wet, and windy in Scotland all year round but particularly in the winter months. One negative comment about outdoor worship was, "on a regular basis, Scotland not ideal for this! If warm dry weather can be guaranteed, it may be suitable."

The second questionnaire provided 17 positive responses out of 26 (65.5%), 5 neutral responses (19.2%) and 4 negative responses (15.4%), with 7 no returns. The responses this time were generally longer and more nuanced. The positive comments used a range of descriptive words including: "connection with God was very close" [in outdoor worship]; "it could have a positive impact on the experience, engagement and learning of the congregation"; "good in connecting us with God's creation and his natural

world”. Neutral comments rose and included these phrases: “a bit ambivalent - I’ve experienced it occasionally and I’m not quite reconciled to it”; “worship is everywhere – all the time”; “open to the idea”. Negative responses included one person commenting, “Devil’s advocate – didn’t we build churches to shelter worshippers from the weather.” Interestingly though this time only 3 of the 4 negative contributions referred to the weather and only 4 of the positive responses did so. A fall of over 50% compared to the 9 in the first questionnaire.

Interviewee A noted in their journal that “the voice of the able bodied is prominent but the voice of those with chronic illness and disability is silent”. On reflecting on the sermon, they concluded outdoor worship must be, “accessible, inclusive, provide various alternatives and cater for people’s physical circumstances.”¹⁴¹

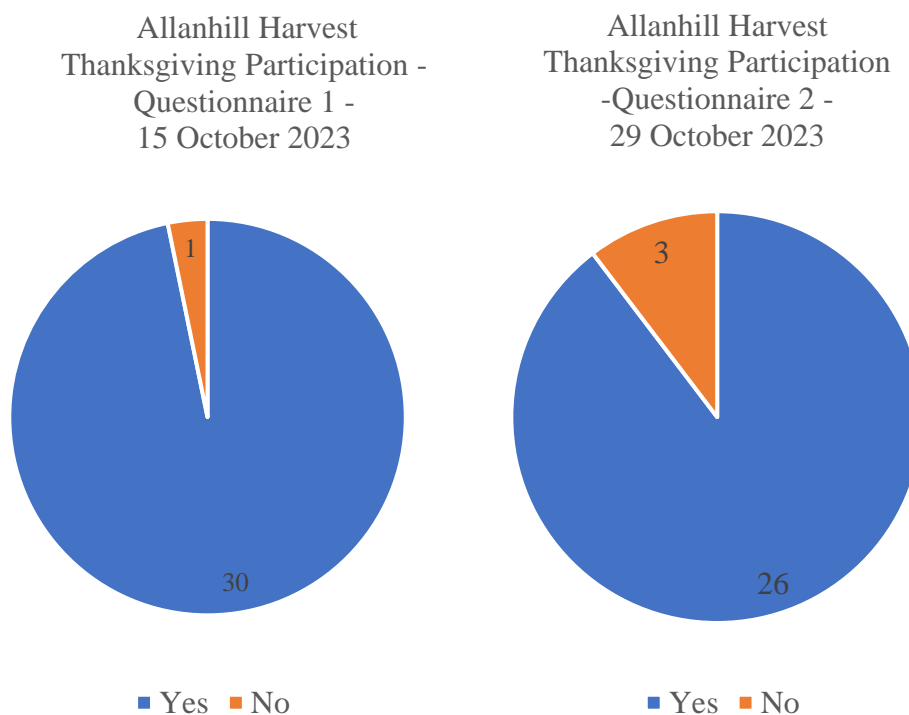
Interviewee E in the first questionnaire said worship at Allanhill farm was “excellent”, although from their overall comment it was clear that they didn’t like worship outdoors in the street e.g. the Good Friday and Easter morning services. By the second questionnaire they simply said, “not a great supporter”. I think this is quite significant when compared with the other results, and indeed may help point to what is happening. On the one hand you could read that as having engaged in spiritual reflection on beauty and awe they were not led to desire an increase in outdoor worship provision. On the other hand, you could interpret it as a growth in confidence to be truly honest about their view. As an interviewee, although they were aware, through the informed consent form, that they would be anonymous in the project results, they knew they were

¹⁴¹ Their thoughts were stimulated after reflecting on a Radio Scotland programme. It interviewed contributors to the anthology *Moving Mountains Writing Nature Through Illness and Disability* by Louise Kenward.

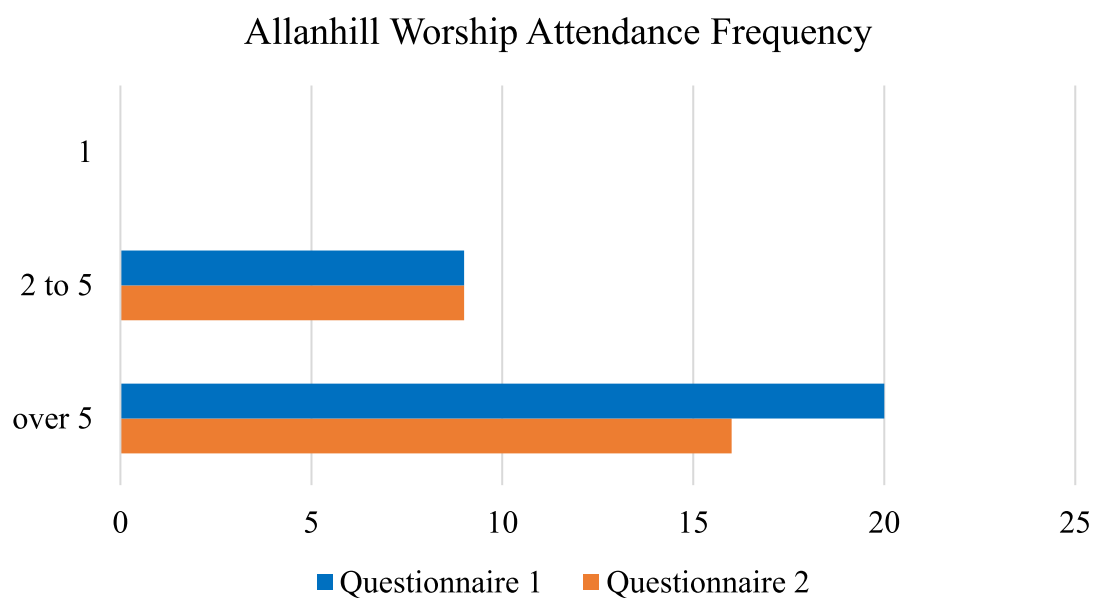
not anonymous to me. Those not interviewed were truly anonymous with every contribution they made. The percentage of those expressing favour was 79.3% in the first questionnaire and 65.4% in the second questionnaire. A clear majority, both before and after, were positively inclined towards outdoor worship. More will be said about this later in the conclusions.

Questions 8, 9, 12, 13 give quantitative responses and the data, which is self-explanatory is shown below, interspersed with comments on questions 10 and 11.

Pie Charts 1. Question 8 of Questionnaires

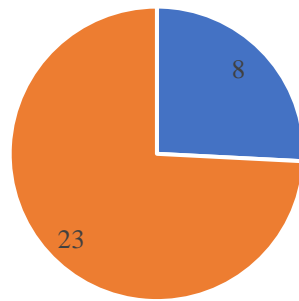


Bar Graph 3. Question 8 of Questionnaires



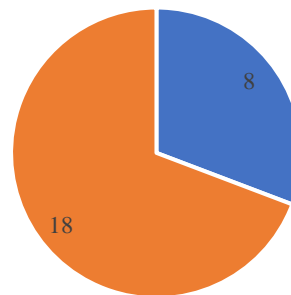
Pie Charts 2.Question 9 of Questionnaires

Messy Church Participation -
Questionnaire 1 - 15
October 2023



■ Yes ■ No

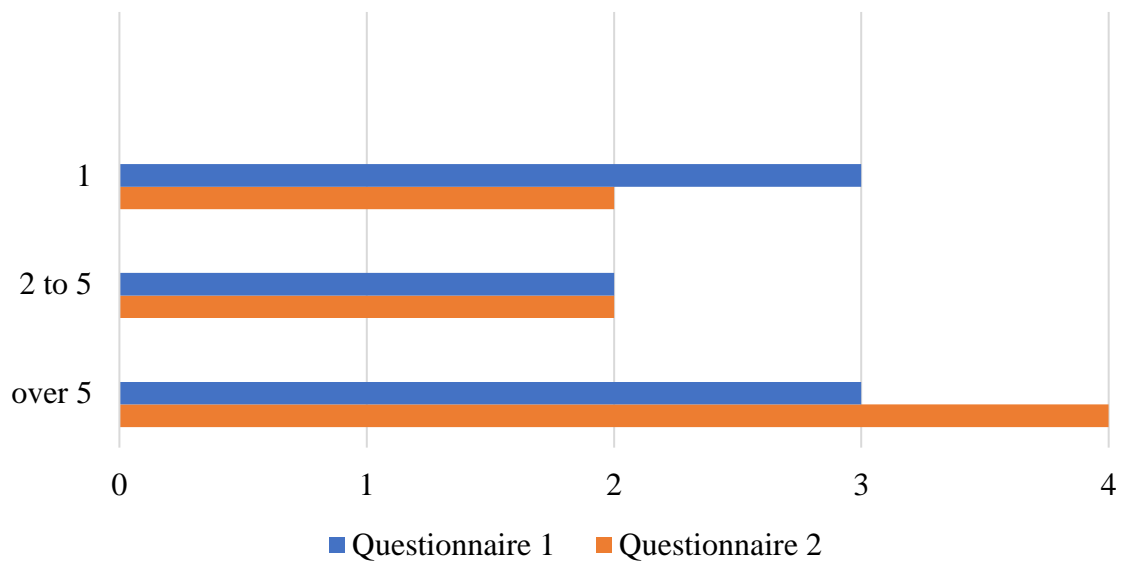
Messy Church Participation -
Questionnaire 2 - 29
October 2023



■ Yes ■ No

Bar Graph 4. Question 9 of Questionnaires

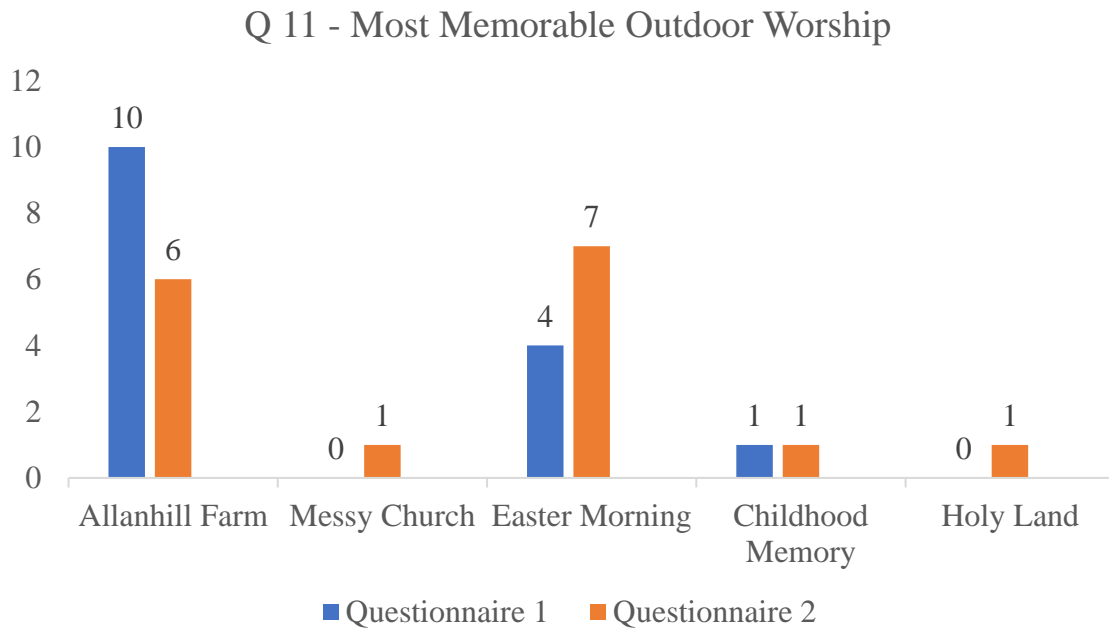
Messy Church Outdoors Attendance Frequency



Question 10 illustrates the breadth of experience of participants in outdoor worship both inside and beyond their experience within St Mark's Church of Allanhill Farm Harvest Thanksgiving worship and Messy Church. Both Remembrance services at war memorials and the annual Fife Nativity Play using real animals were included in and mentioned a few times over both questionnaires. Other responses were single responses and each only mentioned in one of the questionnaires including: "Holy Land worship"; "mother's funeral"; "Guild Worship"; "Christmas Eve in Hawaii". Clearly a wide range of outdoor worship has been experienced by the congregation.

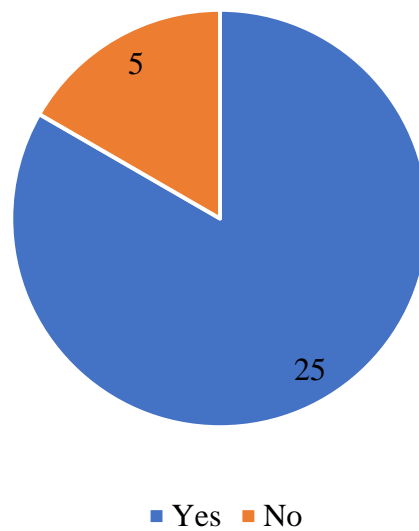
Question 11 gives their most memorable experience of outdoor worship. Besides Allanhill Farm by far the largest category for most memorable worship in both questionnaires was Easter Day worship followed by a range of experiences from childhood such as a BB or Scout camp. In terms of numbers: Harvest Thanksgiving worship on Allanhill Farm (10/6). The second choice was Easter morning worship (4/7) and the only others mentioned were childhood worship (1/1), Messy Church (0/1) and worship in the Holy Land (0/1). The numbers in the brackets are the response numbers for the first and second questionnaires respectively. This displays a clear association with memorable outdoor worship and special seasons whether Harvest, Christmas, Easter or Remembrance. (These results are shown in the bar graph following).

Bar Graph 5. Question 11 of Questionnaires



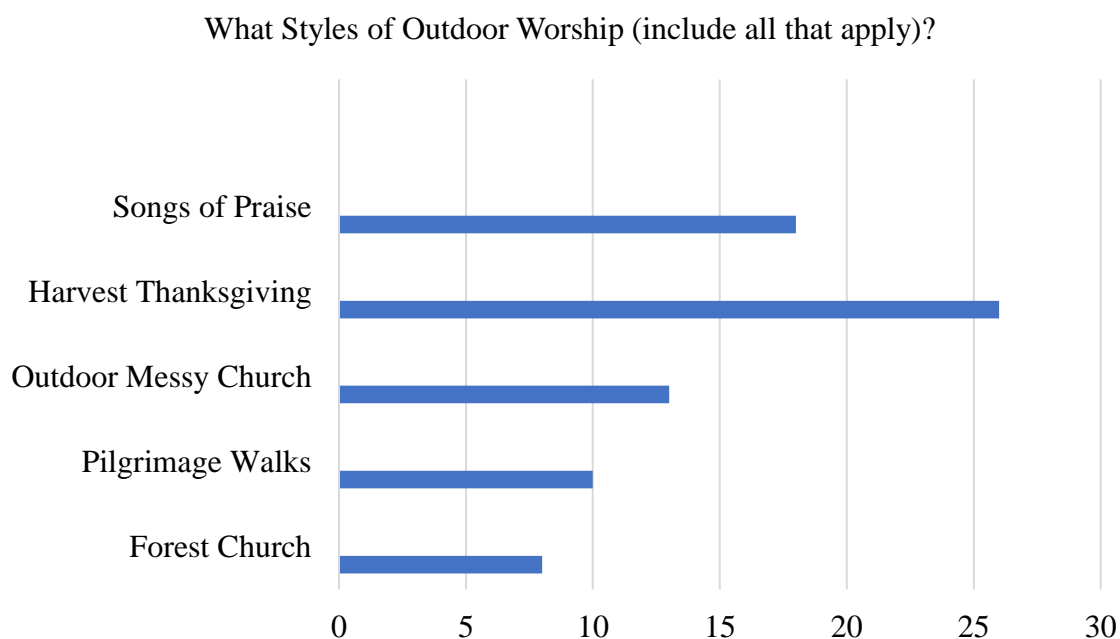
Pie Chart 3. Question 12 of Questionnaire 2

Should St Mark's Church organise Outdoor Worship?



An overwhelming majority believe the congregation should offer more outdoor worship, though a small minority thought not. One person who answered Q12 with a ‘NO’ in block capitals added the additional note that at the end of the questionnaire that, “It is easier to concentrate inside a simple building – outdoors there are always distractions”.

Bar Graph 6. Question 13 of Questionnaire 2



In summary the most important points to note are most participants had attended Harvest Thanksgiving worship at Allanhill Farm and of those, most over five times. The opposite was true for outdoor Messy Church with most having not attended it. Question 12 is significant because after spending time engaging in spiritual reflections on beauty and awe and considering forms of outdoor worship the vast majority (26) voted in favour with 5 voting against. In other words, 83.9% of those who expressed an opinion or 78.8% of all those who returned questionnaires concluded that St Mark’s Church should

organise outdoor worship. The most popular being Harvest Thanksgiving services outdoors (although no longer possible at Allanhill Farm). The least popular being Forest Church. I note the most popular is what most people had experienced over many years and the least popular what people within St Mark's Church have no experience of. Even so that is over 1 in 4 of participants who expressed an opinion being supportive of a Forest Church.

Questions 14 -17 were only put to the Interviewees. No-one's eco-engagement had shifted in the light of the inputs about beauty, awe and outdoor worship. I started at the outset asking the question to provide a more objective measure to identify a balanced interview group. I noted there may not have been a link between that score and their views on outdoor worship. It is now clear that there was and is a correlation. The person who was a 1 offered a full response to question 14 and in question 15 ticked all the boxes. The three who were 2s all simply ticked that they would attend outdoor worship. The person who was a 3 also ticked they would attend outdoor worship but added "on rare occasions only." This helps demonstrate the interview group was indeed balanced. The gender balance and length of service on the Kirk Session (or not) also added to the balanced composition of the interview group. It also showed though that the worship, workshops and journalling, had little impact on their wish to engage more deeply with outdoor worship.

General Observations on Results

The responses to the second questionnaires were more fully expressed. This helps to demonstrate that by being given the time and space to focus on beauty, awe and worship outdoors, both at worship and in the workshops, people were stimulated to be

more articulate and expressive. Under normal circumstances that would be a conclusion which could be reached with a degree of confidence. I have though, in this instance, a caveat that makes me slightly hesitate, and that is the fact that the heating was fully functioning after worship on 29 October but not on 15 October. If you are feeling warm and comfortable it is easier to express longer opinions than when it is cold and you are wishing to get home to get warmed up.

When asked about beauty hardly anyone chose a piece of music. Interestingly during the journaling where people were intentionally reflecting on beauty, awe and outdoor worship all five interviewees mentioned music there. Four in terms of beauty and awe and one using the word “admired” to describe the music heard. Interviewee C almost every day selected a hymn that came to mind.

The demographic of the congregation is overwhelmingly over 60. Besides talking of relatives such as grandchildren only Interviewees A and B reflected further on children as part of the life of the church. Interviewee A spoke perceptively about children, outdoor worship and how we can learn from them. They said, “children appreciate nature and the outdoors, and I guess they experience awe as they’re exploring and learning. And so it’s nice to learn from that and possibly regain some of that that we’ve possibly lost” (*emphasis on lost*). They further reflect saying, “in outdoor worship there is more of a sense that we are all equal and, in all things together. And we lay aside our [*sic*], whatever our roles might be in the church, and we put on our wellies. And we are all affected by the rain or the wind or the heat or the sunshine, equally the same.”

I think it is important to recognise there were hints within the questionnaire responses at an assumption that when I was speaking about worship outdoors, some were

interpreting that as Sunday morning worship. Indeed, with hindsight, since the figures show most of the congregation's experience of outdoor worship was during Sunday morning worship, this is perhaps not surprising. I wonder if I should have more clearly articulated that I was talking about outdoor worship over and above Sunday morning worship most of the time, apart from on rare occasions, such as Harvest Thanksgiving? This may have lessened the number referencing the weather, particularly if at the back of their mind they were seeing the choice before them as Sunday morning worship inside or outside, rather than Sunday worship happens inside anyway and outdoor worship is offered additionally. I noticed that Interviewee B in their journal commented that "the discussion[s] have all been around outdoor worship in addition to what we currently do. The discussion[s] have highlighted the many forms outdoor worship can take and there is certainly a place for it alongside what we currently do." Looking back, describing outdoor worship in distinct addition to Sunday morning worship may have been expressed clearly during the workshops, but not clearly enough during the Sunday worship services.

Part IV – Summary

- Whether in interviews, questionnaires or workshops almost all choices related to visual encounters. There were two clear exceptions: birds singing and Handel's Messiah. No-one chose a smell, a taste or a touch.
- In the second questionnaire there was shift from the general to the specific as people concretely visualised something beautiful.

- When comparing the first and second questionnaires the responses were, overall, remarkably consistent, although 4 of the 5 interviewees varied their responses.
- Descriptions on beauty shifted from ‘seen’ to ‘looked at’, perhaps indicating a more active participation on behalf of the contributors.
- Notably most responses selected beautiful things to see outside.
- When talking about spiritual beauty more participants mentioned God than when talking about beauty. In terms of spiritual beauty there was a shift from the start to the end away from church buildings and scripture towards it being seen within nature or within people. This shift follows the theological rationale set out in chapter 2.
- In terms of awe in questionnaire 2 the word ‘first’ was used less frequently; a decrease of 7%.
- Although a link was made between an increase in seeking everyday awe and mental health wellbeing in the worship and workshops only two people, interviewees A and B, commented on that.
- Many demonstrated that you can have beauty without awe and awe without beauty and sometimes both together.
- Weather during outdoor worship was clearly a concern for a significant number of people although the numbers referencing it fell by 50% from the start to the end.
- There was a clear association with memorable outdoor worship and special seasons, particularly Harvest Thanksgiving and Easter.

- 83.9% of those who expressed an opinion, or 78.8% of all those who returned questionnaires, concluded that St Mark's Church should organise outdoor worship.
- The most popular form of outdoor worship was the Harvest Thanksgiving services outdoors. The least popular was Forest Church. This mirrors participants' lived experience of that form of outdoor worship. Even so over 1 in 4 of participants who expressed an opinion were supportive of a Forest Church.
- Comment was made on how outdoor worship must be accessible, inclusive, provide various alternatives and cater for people's physical circumstances and that it offered an opportunity for equality beyond the restrictions of worship in a church building.
- The worship, workshops and journalling had little impact on altering the participants' wish to engage more deeply with outdoor worship.

These summary points will be picked up in Chapter 4 as links are made with the theological rationale outlined in Chapter 2. Chapter 4 will also look to how St Mark's Church may choose to take forward the findings and indeed how they relate to my new role as Ministries Support Operations Manager. It will also think about the church more broadly.

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

The project question, in essence, took an ‘if... then’ style. **If** spiritual reflections on beauty and awe and considering worship outdoors are presented to the congregation of St Mark’s Parish Church **then** how will these inputs influence the congregation positively or negatively in decisions about setting up outdoor worship in St Andrews.

The question intrigues me for different reasons. I was aware some people attended Messy Church whilst it was outdoors who never attended whilst it was indoors. Perhaps some people are happy to worship outdoors in a shared public space who are less willing or not willing to worship inside a church building? The congregation of St Mark’s is an eco-congregation with experience of worshipping outside and with links to other churches and bodies in St Andrews that also recognise the deep importance of environmental awareness. In my mind was a question that would not go away. Would the congregation be interested in offering more opportunities for outdoor worship? Might there be a useful synergy where existing worshippers support and attend more outdoor worship and those who do not attend Sunday worship in church may be minded to attend worship outdoors? The teaching I benefitted from in DMin classes revealed to me that spiritual reflection on beauty and awe may act as a good springboard to help reach a decision about whether organising more outdoor worship was desired or not.

I will in this final chapter consider both the ‘if’ and the ‘then’ of the project question. I will conclude by identifying implications for the future ministry of St Mark’s Church, for me and my ministry and for the church more broadly.

The 'If'

The worship and workshops used the theology expressed in Chapter 2 to encourage people to take time to think theologically about beauty, awe and outdoor worship. They also allowed the reflective space for worshippers and participants to engage in spiritual reflections on beauty and awe and additionally consider the breadth and style of forms of outdoor worship. Indeed workshop participants engaged in outdoor worship in a short sample Forest Church.

A number of facts were noted from the results that indicated that participants were engaging with the worship and workshop content which arose from the theological foundations laid in Chapter 2. I turn now to list those I have identified.

Firstly, the number of questionnaires rose by 2 from the first to the second completed forms (from 31 to 33). Not a large rise but demonstrating people were participating and willing to continue to engage with the project from beginning to end.

Secondly it was noted in general that the responses given in the second questionnaires were often more developed than those in the first questionnaires. This too demonstrates engagement.

Thirdly it was seen that in the second questionnaires there was a shift from the general to the specific as several people were able to express more concretely a particular thing they classed as beautiful. This indicates an increased attentiveness to the environment in which people live.

Fourthly taking the broad results on beauty by comparing the first and second questionnaires the responses were remarkably consistent. Almost all respondents chose

choices related to visual encounters and almost all of these beautiful things were seen outside. No-one chose a smell, a taste or a touch. Yet of the five interviewees, whose progress could be definitively traced, four of the five of them varied their responses, and one radically; moving from beauty seen in family members to beauty in a piece of music. It can be concluded that although overall there was little observed change amongst all participants, at the same time 80% of interviewees responded differently in each questionnaire. It is like a fisherman with local knowledge observing a calm sea but knowing undercurrents are there too.

Fifthly there was a shift in the language used which indicated a movement from a more passive 'seeing' to a more active 'looked at.' This further strengthens the case for showing participants were engaging with the topics being presented to them.

Sixthly by inviting people to comment on the differences between beauty and awe and also how they are related, participants were able to make connections between the two. Although some found these questions more difficult, and some said so, nonetheless many expressed that you can have beauty without awe and awe without beauty and sometimes both together. This question is a less sensory and more intellectual engagement with beauty and awe but it provides further evidence of people grappling with the topics.

Penultimately when asked to comment on spiritual beauty, more people referred directly to God. What was also seen was that by the second questionnaires there was a marked transition away from comments about church buildings and scripture and towards spiritual beauty being seen in nature and people. Both these categories were referred to in

the worship and workshops, again demonstrating people taking the information given in the project input and altering their responses in the light of it.

Finally in terms of awe there was a decrease in the number of people using the word 'first' in their descriptions of awe from the first to the second questionnaires. In Chapter 2 it was observed Keltner saw seeking everyday awe was a beneficial thing to do. A shift away by some participants from seeing awe in first occurrences of new experiences and being open to finding awe in other repeated or repeatable experiences chimes with his view. It also increases the likelihood that participants may be open to finding awe more frequently and so gain the benefits that were noted earlier which flow from that.

In the light of these points, it can therefore, with a reasonably good degree of confidence, be concluded that people were engaging seriously with beauty and awe. The 'if' part of the project question has been established as having occurred. I turn now to consider what were the consequences of that engagement and did my working hypothesis turn out to be accurate or not and if so to what degree.

The 'Then'

On a surface reading of the results it is not clear that that my hypothesis turned out to be correct. Yes, it is true to say that 78.8% of all those who returned the second questionnaires concluded that St Mark's Church should organise outdoor worship. However, I also note that between the first and the second questionnaires all those interviewed had not moved their position in terms of how much they wished to engage or participate in outdoor worship. That later result, demonstrates that taking time to

contemplate beauty and awe and indeed engage in a workshop which saw participants go outside and experience a labyrinth, did not materially influence, to any demonstrated extent, their views on outdoor worship either positively or negatively. Those who were strongly for it remained so, those who were not particularly inclined to engage in outdoor worship remained so.

In chapter 2 we noted Calvin's wish that the heavens were studied every day and only if that was not possible then at the very least every Sunday. Just as evening services always have a different tenor to morning services; so outdoor worship has a different ambiance to indoor worship. Skilled humans can craft beautiful worship spaces in which to worship but how much more spectacular and glorious to be surrounded by God's creation as the wind blows, the waves crash, the birds sing, the plants flower and as "all the trees in the countryside will clap their hands" (Isaiah 55:12). Creation is an extraordinary backdrop given to us by God. As this project has progressed my belief has grown that we should use it more often and more effectively to help the church tell out the good news of the Gospel. Jesus often taught outside; by a lake, in a boat, up a hillside and on a cross. I grow in conviction that the church should follow his example more closely and teach and worship whilst outdoors. Earlier in Chapter 2 we noted that if a painting of a landscape is beautiful and of great value how much more so the landscape that was painted. Landscapes help situate things in context and allow us to gauge our place within them too. What a powerful and unrepeatable gift to use God's creation around us to help tell out God's glory and point people to God's love and care for all. Outdoor worship could, indeed must, go beyond beauty and awe and can choose any theme. If I were leading worship outside I might use the phrase "when Jesus was outside

he taught this...” A simple way to help link the environment of the worship to the Jesus who taught outdoors. If people dress appropriately then the earlier expressed concerns about the Scottish weather need not be a factor. Outdoor worship could offer moments of calm beauty in spring sunshine or point to awesome power as winter waves crash on the beach after a storm.

Looking back, I wonder if Question 12, which asks participants if they think St Mark’s should offer outdoor worship, should also have been asked in the first questionnaire. I decided not to ask it in the first questionnaire because I did not want to pre-empt or offer strong hints as to what I hypothesised their response might be. I am though aware of an implicit contradiction since in the church notices distributed the week before the project implementation started, and again mentioned at worship on week 1, the project question was given there. I believed that it was right to share that information. I was being totally open and transparent with the congregation about what question I was trying to address and answer. The congregation were also aware by that time that I would soon no longer be serving amongst them as their parish minister. This means there was no need for them to try, in any way, through loyalty or to court favouritism, to accommodate me by answering questions in ways they sensed I would like them answered.

I am now though, with hindsight, wondering if having ministered to the congregation for over ten years there would have been sufficient trust built up that they would simply have ‘accepted’ my leadership and engaged with the workshops and worship I was offering. This would have meant them answering questionnaires not knowing in advance what the project question was. Whereas that route may have had

some merit, the questions themselves may have offered a strong hint at least to the field in which the project question sat.

It is true to say that if question 12 had been included in the first questionnaire there would have been a direct comparison between participants answers between the start and the end dates. This would have been interesting data to obtain, however, on balance, I think being fully open with people about the project question from even before the start was the right course of action. Although a quantitative comparison could not therefore be made, question 7, which was asked in both questionnaires, allowed room for a qualitative analysis of results. It asked the open question, “What are your thoughts on outdoor worship?” The benefit of this question is that people were free to comment in any way they chose. Chapter 3 found that from the first to second questionnaires the percentage of those expressing favour about outdoor worship only saw a slight shift from 79.3 % to 65.4%. Both figures showing extremely strong support for outdoor worship. It indicates asking the question about outdoor worship was like pushing at an open door. It was and remains in favour with people.

There are other findings which emerged from the results which relate to what extent the project question was answered. I know that weather is often used as a point of conversation when small talk is made in Scotland. The weather too was a prominent feature in comments. The uncertainty of the weather was seen as a drawback for outdoor worship in Scotland. The congregation for many years worshipped outdoors for the annual Harvest Thanksgiving service which usually took place on a farm on the last Sunday of September. I’m aware there was always a flurry of discussion about what the weather would be like and whether, if inclement, we could use a barn as a fallback

option. A barn was not always available and was never needed in my time of ministry in St Mark's Church. The number of people referencing the weather, as was noted in Chapter 3, fell by 50% from the first to the second questionnaire. At the very least, from the start to the end, this shows that concern about the weather was not increasing, if anything it was decreasing.

If outdoor worship was arranged and the weather was poor, a decision would have to be taken about whether it went ahead, with people reminded to dress appropriately, or whether it would be postponed. Both would be valid options. I recall one year the two-hour ecumenical walk with prayer stations on Good Friday through the streets of St Andrews: the weather was foul; a cold temperature, a strong wind and torrential rain. I felt it was my duty to attend but it was not comfortable even wearing the best waterproofs I owned. The number of worshippers were smaller than usual at the start and steadily, and not surprisingly, decreased. Outdoor worship on an ordinary day can be postponed but Good Friday cannot and something of the weather spoke to the desolation that is a theme of that day. I spoke to a colleague who organises a Forest Church and they have actively taken the decision to postpone when the weather is particularly bad. I believe the results indicate, for St Mark's Church, it would be wise to seek the collective wisdom of the Kirk Session to decide which option to choose between the two. Concerns about the weather are best noted and dealt with practically, however they are not interfering with the conclusion that outdoor worship provision be provided.

The results show most participants in St Mark's Church who experienced outdoor worship did so at special points in the church year such as Holy Week, Easter and Harvest Thanksgiving. These have been longstanding locally established times for outdoor

worship. Harvest Thanksgiving is the only one to take place as the main act of Sunday morning worship. If one of the reasons individuals were hesitant to support outdoor worship was for fear of losing Sunday morning worship inside the church then they could be given the clear assurance, except for Harvest Thanksgiving, that would not be the case. At present the difficulty with re-establishing Harvest Thanksgiving outdoor worship is not the desire to make it happen but identifying and securing a suitable venue. Offering the assurance that, almost always, Sunday morning worship would take place inside the church and outdoor worship would be offered at different times or on different days may further increase the level of favour for outdoor worship from an already high level.

That may satisfy some, however the results showed it would likely not persuade everyone. Interviewee E suggested that they would engage in outdoor worship but only “on occasion.” They could see a logical connection between worship outdoors on a private farm at Harvest Thanksgiving and that made sense to them and so made it acceptable for them. Worship in a fully public place, like in the street or in a park, was a step too far and they had never, to offer an example, worshipped at St Mary on the Rock on Easter morning.

Scots are known for their sense of reserve. Indeed, the thought of leading worship outdoors takes me beyond my personal comfort zone. Somehow it is easier to do it at special moments in the church year rather than on ‘ordinary days.’ I did not feel totally comfortable leading worship at the sample Forest Church by the side of the labyrinth in a public park. For me though the level of comfort does not relate solely to the time in the church year but also to the expectations of people as I act as parish minister. I have no hesitation leading a funeral service outside at a graveside which is a public place. As a

minister and worship leader I was under no illusion that the project question, if implemented, would challenge my Scottish reserve. I always knew that but if the conclusion was that the congregation was keen, or even willing, to offer more outside worship I would have implemented that conclusion. Outdoor worship can be offered but, like all public worship, individuals are free to choose to attend or not, and some will choose not to do so.

In truth whether I would have led outdoor worship myself or whether I would have made it a responsibility of a new member of staff as part of a team ministry in a larger unified parish covering the whole town will not be tested since I have moved posts. I believe though that the Gospel is challenging, Jesus didn't say "follow me" and life will be easy. I hope had I still been minister of St Mark's I would have pushed through my reserve and led the congregation faithfully into imaginative and differing outdoor worship experiences.

Another interesting finding related to inclusiveness. Interviewee A made comments in their interview about outdoor worship that are worth heeding. They observed it is very levelling with children and adults alike participating side by side with each other; each a person equally loved by God. In their journal they also spoke of how outdoor worship must be accessible, inclusive, provide various alternatives and cater for people's physical circumstances. They saw it as an opportunity for equality beyond the restrictions of worship in the St Mark's Church building.

The St Mark's Church building was opened in the late 19th century. The Kirk Session have looked at making it more fully disabled access friendly so that everyone can come into church through the main door but it was decided it was prohibitively expensive

and those in wheelchairs or who cannot manage steps need to enter by a different door. It would be good if when organising outdoor worship everyone's needs were considered and the fullest participation of all enabled. Suitable meeting places could be selected. Forest Church does not literally need a forest. In St Andrews it could take place in areas within the Botanic Garden which are disabled access friendly. It could even take place on the West Sands utilising the local beach wheelchairs.¹⁴²

The project results demonstrated that the most popular form of outdoor worship that participants wished was a Harvest Thanksgiving service. The least popular was Forest Church with 25% choosing it. Interestingly this sliding scale from highest to lowest reflects the degree to which participants have experienced that form of outdoor worship. Most have already experienced Harvest Thanksgiving on numerous occasions. A lesser number took part in outdoor worship on Good Friday and Easter Day, lesser still Messy Church. No-one, apart from those attending the third workshop who experienced a sample taster Forest Church, had experienced Forest Church. The results offer a wide range of opportunities in how to choose to develop outdoor worship locally in St Andrews. Nothing is 'off the table' since nothing received a very low positive return rate. If one in four of Sunday morning worshippers decided to attend a Forest Church, I would class that as a tremendous success which could be built on further.

In terms of the second section of the project question it shows that the worship and workshops did not alter, to any marked extent, either positively or negatively, the

¹⁴²St Andrews Environmental Network, "St Andrews Beach Wheelchairs", accessed April 17 2024, <https://www.standrewsenvironmental.org/projects/st-andrews-beach-wheelchairs>

congregation's desire to offer outdoor worship. They also though demonstrated a high level of support for it. A clear green light for more outdoor worship.

Implications for Future Ministry

i) St Mark's Church

I will distil the essence of this project and pass a summary on to the Kirk Session and congregation of St Mark's Parish Church. I will also prepare an article for the St Mark's Church magazine and ask the Interim Moderator if they are willing to allow it to be printed. I will additionally pass on the full text of the project to any who ask to see it. It will be for the Kirk Session and Interim Moderator or future Ministers to decide how (or if) they introduce or re-introduce outdoor worship as part of the ongoing worship life of the congregation.

I suggest, if approved by the Kirk Session, the setting up of a small Outdoor Worship Task Group to take the lead in developing and implementing a strategic and mindful way forward. This would be done with the theological underpinnings from chapter 2 and the results from chapter 3 offering solid justification for the establishment and remit of such a Task Group. It may be best to share my project findings in the church magazine, if allowed, a little after the Task Group is formed. This would allow rekindled reflections from the congregation on beauty, awe and outdoor worship to generate renewed interest in what might be offered; fertile soil for the proposals coming forward from the Outdoor Worship Task Group.

Interviewee A was clear that they wanted to participate in outdoor worship and I would hope their enthusiasm would motivate a few others who could then become a core

group to move forward with additional options for outdoor worship. Anything from a pilgrim walk to a Songs of Praise service at the town bandstand. The results offer strong encouragement to source a new outdoor venue for Harvest Thanksgiving worship. In terms of Forest Church it could be on the West Sands with sound amplification and beach wheelchairs reserved for those who need them. It could be at the labyrinth in Kinburn Park. Another possibility would be gaining access to one of St Andrews more hidden gardens and appreciating the wildlife there. Options are limited only by the leaders' imaginations.

Looking ahead at what, God willing, may emerge is exciting. Worship taking place outdoors that is accessible for all, where publicity for it has reached beyond the existing members of the congregation to members of the parish, tourists and the student community. Worship surrounded by God's creation where there is a chance for God's Holy Spirit, to move amongst and between people, touching lives in positive ways and helping engender not only individual growth but a deepening sense of community with other worshippers. Depending on the theme of outdoor worship this could resonate with at least three of Keltner's eight wonders of life described back in chapter 2; collective effervescence, spirituality and epiphanies.

ii) Implications for Ministries Support

Part of my responsibility as the Ministries Support Operations Manager, alongside my colleagues in Pastoral Support, is to deal with awarding retreat grants. Every Church of Scotland Minister with at least two years' service is entitled to a grant of up to £250 each calendar year for use on retreats in Scotland. During the implementation phase of this project I led people to engage in spiritual reflections on beauty and awe and indeed

engaged in these reflections myself. I also considered outdoor worship in various contexts. I posited the question, would spiritual reflections on beauty and awe lead to a desire to wish to engage in and offer outdoor worship? I am surer now than before that it is good to encourage and engage in worship outdoors. I can think of many retreat centres in Scotland which are set in rural areas or in grounds with pleasant gardens. Indeed, these retreat centres are listed on the Church of Scotland Ascend web page.¹⁴³ If any new retreat centres open or I become aware of any that are missing from the given list I will ask for them to be added.

If a minister enquires about retreats or seeks advice on what they might do whilst on retreat I can now more readily talk about the importance of making time to go on a retreat and that considering beauty, finding awe and worshipping whilst outdoors may be most beneficial. In the outdoor worship workshop, I encouraged people to walk the local labyrinth. I know of one retreat centre that has two labyrinths and I could encourage individuals to go and experience them. Retreats need not be in designated retreat centres and therefore a cottage in the country or by the sea could equally encourage a good atmosphere for a positive retreat experience. If someone took a flat in St Andrews for a retreat not only would they be by the sea but they too could be encouraged to go and use the public labyrinth in Kinburn Park.

The project observed how the congregation of St Mark's Church had walked parts of pilgrim routes. If a minister approaches me seeking to use their retreat funding for a walk on a pilgrim route, I would be keen to permit that. At present I do not know if the

¹⁴³Ascend, "Retreat," Church of Scotland, accessed April 4, 2024.
<https://ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk/services/retreat/>

rules and regulations surrounding retreats allow the Pastoral Support Team to authorise such use of retreat funds, but I will investigate this. If we are not able to authorise such expenditure I hope to use the results from my project to make a case to try to expand the way retreat funding is interpreted. I hope therefore that this project leads to developments in Ministries Support that is offered to those in Church of Scotland Ministries.

iii) Broader Implications

It may be that I could use this project to help prepare an article for the journal *Theology in Scotland* to share the findings with a wider audience. I could pick up and further develop the theological themes from Chapter 2 encouraging other ministers to identify whether these topics might be worth focusing on in their parishes.

Even more broadly the project starts to uncover questions that would be worth further thought and development. It shows many chose an image of beauty from outside. It recognised some people chose to worship outside at a Messy Church but not inside a church building. It noticed that climate change is high on so many agendas. These observations, when linked, open avenues of discussion surrounding how the church engages and encourages individuals' spirituality when the inherited model of Sunday worship inside a church is not attracting them.

How do we as a church encourage people to sense and be attuned to the presence and promptings of God's Holy Spirit whilst outside. How do we as a church encourage people to cherish, value and care for creation? How do we as a church find the humility to realise many people's spirituality or developing spirituality does not comfortably fit into traditional church schema? How does reflecting on Reformed thinking on beauty,

awe and outdoor worship feed into these discussions? If being outside surrounded by God's creation allows, or encourages, people to tap into spirituality and do so alongside others at outdoor worship how can the church encourage and kindle such interest? How can it discern and be open to the Holy Spirit blowing freely and moving the church into new forms of worship and leading individuals into increased spiritual engagement which brings positive results? How then may those who have been nourished whilst outside respond in service to care for and cherish God's creation? The Church of Scotland is a Reformed Church always in need of further reform. Outdoor worship may well be a part of that, and this project highlights many avenues for further consideration and possible engagement.

Conclusion

This DMin cohort of which I have been a part has had a Reformed focus. Besides the importance of scripture which is one of the most significant aspects of Reformed thought another is recognising and then responding to the goodness and graciousness of God who creates all that we know. God's love spills out beyond God and into the act of creating. An action motivated by a Reformed perspective is to recognise creation as a gracious gift from God and respond to that with thanksgiving through faithful life and worship. This project has identified that Reformed dynamic as one which can positively influence the whole of life. The project results identified that when invited to describe something beautiful almost everyone chose something outside. In terms of awe a high proportion did. If by being outdoors beauty and awe is more likely to be experienced, then worship outdoors increases the opportunities for God's Spirit to use God's creation to touch the lives of worshippers in meaningful and positive ways.

I have encouraged people from St Mark's Church to engage in spiritual reflections on beauty and awe and invited them to reflect on outdoor worship. The theological chapter, Chapter 2, considered beauty, awe and outdoor worship within scripture and the writings of Calvin and also more contemporary writers. It recognised the importance of beauty and awe and more modern writers identified mental health benefits can emerge from pro-actively making efforts to experience everyday awe. In the light of these findings, choices about what outdoor worship is offered by St Mark's Church can be made by the Kirk Session. Church buildings and traditions can impose a formality or an expectation of how a liturgy will flow. Outdoor worship could start with a blank slate. If a Task Group is set up, they could engage in 'brainstorming', giving space for God's Spirit to blow, and allow their imaginations to be innovative.

I too can use the findings to help encourage others serving in Church of Scotland ministry to appreciate beauty, find awe and respond with thanksgiving through choices about how to engage in retreats. I will also undertake to find out if the Pastoral Support Team can authorise funding for or find ways to support pilgrim walks.

More broadly the themes considered and the results gathered prompt questions to lead the church into thinking more about the relationship between beauty, awe and outdoor worship and how this can touch and influence the spirituality and lives of individuals whether or not they are willing to engage in Sunday worship inside a church.

Keltner's conclusion in two words is, "find awe". May appreciating beauty and finding awe lead to thanksgiving offered from a place of health and wellbeing so that God's name is praised and God's creation cherished.

Appendix 1

Nacreous Clouds visible from St Mark's Parish Church Manse on 19th December 2023.



Appendix 2
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
Informed Consent Form

Introduction: My name is Allan McCafferty, and I am a postgraduate student in the Doctor of Ministry program at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

My phone number is 01334 478287. My email is:
AMcCafferty@churchofscotland.org.uk.

My research advisor is Rev Dr Richard Frazer. His phone number is 0131 667 6610. His email is: minister@greyfriarskirk.com. The study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary chaired by Professor Angela Hancock. Her phone number is 001 412 924 1453. Her email is: ahancock@pts.edu.

Feel free to contact any of us at any time if you have questions at any point about this project.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to study the results of focused consideration on beauty and awe and whether this may lead to an interest in the possibility of worship outdoors at St Mark's Church, St Andrews.

I am hoping to learn more about beauty, awe and outdoor worship. The anticipated title of the study will be **Worship outdoors? The promotion of spiritual reflections on beauty and awe as a way to develop interest in the possibility of worship outdoors in St Andrews.**

Procedure: If you consent to participate in this study, you will be asked to commit to be interviewed by me for up to thirty minutes, attend three acts of worship and three workshops, keep a journal and complete two short questionnaires.

I will also make an audiotape recording of your interview. If so, after the project is completed, I will destroy all audio recordings.

Time required: The project will begin on 25 September 2023 and conclude on 30 April 2024. You are being asked to commit to 9 hours of your time.

Voluntariness: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may still decline to be part of any session or answer any question that you do not wish to engage. You are completely free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Risks: I anticipate the following risks:

if weather is inclement there is a risk of slipping on wet ground during the outdoor worship taster session.

In any human subject research involving self-disclosure, there is always the possibility that you may feel discomfort or distress in the course of the research. If this happens, please inform me immediately and decline to participate if you wish.

Benefits: I anticipate the following possible benefits to you:

A broadening of your reflection on the topics of beauty and awe,
engagement with the topic of outdoor worship,
possible increase in mental health through being open to awe,
increased energy to support/initiate regular outdoor worship.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: I will be the only researcher present during the study. I will be the only person who sees/listens to any of its recordings. I will not share personal information that you tell me you have decided you do not wish to disclose. When I write the final paper, I will use pseudonyms (made-up names) for all participants and/or code the data I have received in such a way that your name will not be associated with it and neither will you be identifiable in it.

Sharing the results: I anticipate that the results of this research will be shared in the following ways: with the congregation and Kirk Session of St Mark's Church, St Andrews and more broadly within St Andrews, the Presbytery of Fife and the Church of Scotland.

You can receive my research findings by requesting a copy of them from me.

There is the possibility that I may publish this study or refer to it in published writing in the future. In this event, I will continue to use pseudonyms (as described above) and I may alter some identifying details in order to further protect your anonymity.

Before you sign: By signing below, you are agreeing to participate in this project with the possibility of being audio-taped, videotaped, and your words being included in a final paper. Be sure that you are fully satisfied with the answers to any questions you may have before signing. If you agree to participate in this study, you will receive a copy of this document. I will keep a copy, and the original will be kept in print form for three years in the Office of the Associate Dean of Academic Programs and Assessment.

Participant's printed name: _____

Participant's signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Researcher's printed name: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix 3

Worship Notice

Worship outdoors? The promotion of spiritual reflections on beauty and awe as a way to develop interest in the possibility of worship outdoors in St Andrews.

Allan is moving into the research phase of his DMin Final Project. The title is **“Worship outdoors? The promotion of spiritual reflections on beauty and awe as a way to develop interest in the possibility of worship outdoors in St Andrews.”** Over the next three weeks worship will consider beauty, awe and outdoor worship. Each act of worship will be followed by a Saturday afternoon workshop from 2:00-3:30pm. Everyone is warmly invited to attend all (or any) of these workshops if they are free. Before the first Act of Worship today and again after Worship on 29 October those attending will be invited to fill in a short questionnaire. It will be filled in anonymously. The information gathered will be used to provide material for the DMin project. The more completed questionnaires the fuller the material gathered will be however no-one is under any obligation to complete these questionnaires. The first questionnaire will be distributed with the order of service sheet at worship today. Please do consider completing one.

Appendix 4

Interview Questions put to the five people who were interviewed.

Describe something beautiful and why it is so?

Describe spiritual beauty for you?

Describe an experience where you sensed awe?

How would you describe the difference between beauty and awe?

How do you think beauty and awe are related?

What are your thoughts on outdoor worship?

Briefly describe other times/ places you experienced outdoor worship (maybe up to three)?

Briefly describe your most memorable experience of outdoor worship?

Appendix 5

DMin Questionnaire on Beauty, Awe and Worship Outdoors? – 15th October 2023

Please answer the following questions:

1. Name something you would describe as beautiful?
2. In a sentence or two please say why you choose that?
3. In a sentence or two please describe spiritual beauty for you?
4. Briefly describe an experience when you sensed awe?
5. How would you describe the difference between beauty and awe?
6. How do you think beauty and awe are related?
7. What are your thoughts on outdoor worship?
8. Have you participated in one or more Harvest Thanksgiving services at Allanhill Farm?
Yes No
How many times? 1 2-5 over 5

9. Have you participated in Messy Church outdoors (e.g. St Andrews Botanic Garden, Cairnie Fruit Farm, Kinburn Park)? Yes No

How many times? 1 2-5 over 5

Where? _____

10. Please briefly list other times/ places you experienced outdoor worship (up to three).

11. Briefly describe your most memorable experience of outdoor worship.

Appendix 6

DMin Questionnaire on Beauty, Awe and Worship Outdoors? – 29th October 2023

Please answer the following questions:

1. Name something you would describe as beautiful?

2. In a sentence or two please say why you choose that?

3. In a sentence or two please describe spiritual beauty for you?

4. Briefly describe an experience when you sensed awe?

5. How would you describe the difference between beauty and awe?

6. How do you think beauty and awe are related?

7. What are your thoughts on outdoor worship?

8. Have you participated in one or more Harvest Thanksgiving services at Allanhill Farm?
Yes No
How many times? 1 2-5 over 5

9. Have you participated in Messy Church outdoors (e.g. St Andrews Botanic Garden, Cairnie Fruit Farm, Kinburn Park)? Yes No

How many times? 1 2-5 over 5

Where? _____

10. Please briefly list other times/ places you experienced outdoor worship (up to three).

11. Briefly describe your most memorable experience of outdoor worship.

12. Should the congregation of St Mark's organise outdoor worship?

Yes

No

13. What styles would you prefer (please tick all that apply)

- Forest Church
- Pilgrimage walks
- Outdoor Messy Church
- Harvest Thanksgiving
- Songs of Praise
- Other (please describe)

If you did not tick any boxes, please briefly say why?

9. Have you participated in Messy Church outdoors (e.g. St Andrews Botanic Garden, Cairnie Fruit Farm, Kinburn Park)? Yes No

How many times? 1 2-5 over 5

Where? _____

10. Please briefly list other times/ places you experienced outdoor worship (up to three).

11. Briefly describe your most memorable experience of outdoor worship.

12. Should the congregation of St Mark's organise outdoor worship?

Yes

No

13. What styles would you prefer (please tick all that apply)

- Forest Church
- Pilgrimage walks
- Outdoor Messy Church
- Harvest Thanksgiving
- Songs of Praise
- Other (please describe)

If you did not tick any boxes, please briefly say why?

14. Please describe how keeping a journal has (or has not) helped shape your reflections on beauty , awe and worship outdoors?

15. Within St Mark's Church would you be willing to (Please tick all that apply):

- support the practicalities of setting up outdoor worship (e.g. speak to a worship leader, liaise with the Botanic Garden or St Andrews Churches Eco Network)
- attend outdoor worship
- lead outdoor worship

16. In the light of the fact that St Mark's is an eco-congregation, at the start of this research, before the first act of worship (perhaps at a Kirk Session meeting), you were invited to choose a number between one and five which represented where you lay on a spectrum of eco-engagement where 1 represented those whose choices were very strongly influenced by their ecological understanding and where 5 represented those whose choices were not influenced at all by their ecological understanding.

17. Having engaged in this process considering beauty, awe and worship outdoors these last weeks what number would you assign to yourself now?

Appendix 8

Worship Order of Service Outlines

St. Mark's Parish Church, St Andrews – SC014934

Sunday, 15th October 2023

Theme - Beauty

Welcome and Call to Worship

Hymn 181 – For the beauty of the earth

Prayers of Approach and Confession

Bible – Psalm 19:1-6 (*p461*), Matthew 6:24-34 (*p5*)

Hymn 149 – Let all creation dance

Sermon

Music for reflection – Sunrise – EA Dicks

Hymn 201 – Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness

Prayers of Intercession and Lord's Prayer

Offering (Hymn 807)

Hymn 137 – All things bright and beautiful

Benediction – Amen, amen, alleluia, amen (Hymn 822)

Voluntary- For the Beauty of the earth – Improvisation

St. Mark's Parish Church, St Andrews – SC014934

Sunday, 22nd October 2023

Theme - Awe

Welcome and Call to Worship

Hymn 124 – Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Prayers of Approach and Confession

Bible – Psalm 46 (*p464*), Matthew 7:13-29 (*p6*)

Hymn 149 – Let all creation dance

Sermon

Music for reflection – Hallelujah Chorus - Handel

Hymn 154 – O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder

Prayers of Intercession and Lord's Prayer

Offering (Hymn 807)

Hymn 132 – Immortal, invisible, God only wise

Benediction – Amen, amen, alleluia, amen (Hymn 822)

Voluntary- The Heavens are Telling – Haydn

St. Mark's Parish Church, St Andrews – SC014934

Sunday, 29th October 2023

Theme – Worship Outdoors?

Welcome and Call to Worship

Hymn 147(vv 1-4,7) – All creatures of our God and King

Prayers of Approach and Confession

Bible – Psalm 148 (*p528*), Colossians 1:13-23 (*p178*)

Hymn 149 – Let all creation dance

Sermon

Music for reflection - Andante - John Stanley

Hymn 138 – Nourished by the rainfall

Prayers of Intercession and Lord's Prayer

Offering (Hymn 807)

Hymn 150 – Sing to God with gladness, all creation

Benediction – Amen, amen, alleluia, amen (Hymn 822)

Voluntary - Allemande: The Prince - Anon 16th century

Appendix 9

Workshop Outlines

Beauty Workshop

21 October 2023 in St Mark's Church - Hope Park Hall

As people gather a PowerPoint Presentation (shown at worship on 15 Oct 2023).

Welcome and Introduction.

Opening Prayer.

See – look, choose, share.

Participants are invited to select a beautiful image or object (shells, leaves, cuttings, Evoke Image cards are available for selection from a table) then a discussion on beautiful sights.

Read Gen 1:1 – 2:1 and John 1:1 – 5.

Taste – mindfully eat either citrus fruit, boiled sweet or dark chocolate then a discussion on beautiful tastes.

Smell – identify the smell of perfumed candles then a discussion on beautiful smells.

Touch – a discussion on sharing the Peace at worship before Covid-19.

Hear – listen to 'beautiful' pieces of music and a discussion on beautiful music or sounds.

Spiritual reflection on beauty (as used in worship on 15 Oct).

Prayer.

Closing musical blessing (Aaronic Blessing).

Awe Workshop
28 October 2023 in St Mark's Church – Strathkinness Room

As people gather a PowerPoint Presentation (shown at worship on 22 Oct 2023).

Welcome and Opening Prayer.

Recap on beauty from last week.

Participants are invited to write down an experience of awe.

Teaching and sharing on awe.

Including:

- Teaching on the writing of of Calvin, Young, Zachman, Keltner, Lane Ritchie and Smith.
- Four blocks of: feedback and discussion from participants on their experience of awe.
- Listening to music which some may class as awesome and a discussion.
- Bible Readings (Colossians 1: 15-19 and 1 John 4:19).

Spiritual reflection on awe (as used in worship on 22 Oct).

Prayer.

Closing musical blessing (Aaronic Blessing).

Worship Outdoors Workshop
4 November 2023 in St Mark's Church - Strathkinness Room

As people gather a PowerPoint Presentation (shown at worship on 29 Oct 2023).

Welcome and Opening Prayer.

Recap on beauty and awe from previous two weeks.

Teaching and sharing on Outdoor Worship.

Including:

- What might spiritual reflections on beauty and awe lead to? A desire to reflect further indoors or worship outdoors or...?
- Introduction on varieties of Outdoor Worship possibilities.
- Reading Ephesians 4:1 - 6 and Mark 1:35 - 37.
- Discussion on Outdoor Worship and sharing of experiences of outdoor worship.

Distribution of Labyrinth Images.

Taster Forest Church (group moves outdoors to the labyrinth in Kinburn Park).

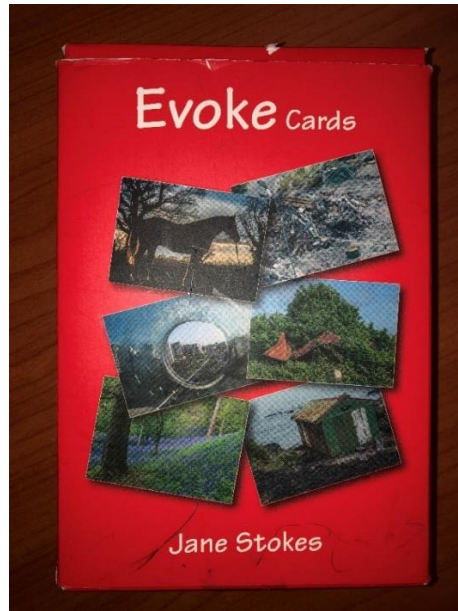
Participants are invited to walk mindfully in the labyrinth or reflect mindfully in the park.

Prayer.

Closing musical blessing (Aaronic Blessing).

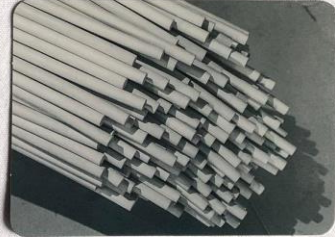
Appendix 10

Evoked Cards by Jane Stokes









Appendix 11

Items selected at Beauty Workshop on 21st October 2023



Appendix 12

Finger Labyrinths distributed at Outdoor Worship Workshop on 4 November 2023





Appendix 13

Labyrinth, Kinburn Park, St Andrews on 4 November 2023



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