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BETHEL UNIVERSITY
BETHEL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

LITURGICAL DRAMA IN THE CHURCH:
AN APPLICATION OF DAILY SCRIPTURAL LIVING

A THESIS PROJECT SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP

BY
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ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA
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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research was to study the validity of using liturgical drama as a vital tool of expression in helping to make Scripture come alive for the application and transformation of lives, first of those of the researcher's local congregation and eventually of other churches. The researcher wrote and directed a play using members of the Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church as actors and crew. The entire church was a participant of this research as the play was done during a Sunday morning worship service as part of the liturgy.

The mixed-method approach presented the most viable pathway for this study and the researcher surveyed a cross-section of the congregation both as actors and audience members. The essential elements considered in using this method to achieve this goal involved selecting a passage of Scripture that would allow the playwright to bring Scripture alive in a thought provoking yet simple way without compromising the essence of the message of Scripture; additionally, observation of the participants during rehearsal to determine their level of understanding of their roles as well as motivation for their actions was carried out; and as no analysis or measurement of any kind had ever been done on liturgical drama written and directed by the researcher, for this study, a survey was done to measure and analyze the effectiveness of the play in increasing biblical knowledge and inspiring transformation that would produce daily scriptural application.

For a more successful and objective case study, the researcher chose those members who presented with a limited understanding of Scripture and were interested in

learning through their participation in the play. Rehearsals run once a week for six weeks, with individual cast members having to add extra rehearsals each, during that final week. Moreover, twice that final week for two extra hours each the entire cast also rehearsed.

While the researcher has written and directed plays in the past, writing for this project proved a daunting and challenging task. First, the researcher wrote the play as an academic exercise this time and had to try to be creative yet remain true to the text. Another challenge was how to make this more educational than entertainment. The researcher had to be intentional about keeping the sacredness of Scripture, as part of the liturgy during a Sunday morning worship experience.

The focus of the observation was on the conduct of the cast from week to week. The researcher assessed each cast member for transformation and changes in behavioral patterns as they assumed roles and tried to bring Scripture alive. The researcher looked for clues as to whether the cast members were individually expressing any changes in their daily lives or at least showing any transformation, however little.

The findings suggest that using liturgical drama as a model for teaching the Word of God can be an effective teaching tool. The researcher claims that there is still hope of liturgical drama being a key part of the liturgy and worship.

After going through the process of researching and understanding more about liturgical drama, the researcher believes that life is quite similar to a liturgy. The difference is that the liturgy (the order of service) is determined by man and the order of life is determined by God. The stage is set and the curtains go up and life begins.

Liturgical drama is a way of celebrating God through movements, the hands, the voice, kneeling in awe in worship.

INTRODUCTION

How Christians interpret the Word of God matters. If they fail to convey the message of the Word of God, they have failed to communicate God's will to others. When the researcher was a child, the piano was the only musical instrument that was allowed to be played in the church. Back then pop or rock music could not have been part of congregational worship. Instead, the researcher's church played the same old boring melodies week after week: hymns alternating with African American spirituals. The congregants sang the same songs routinely and unenthusiastically. Sunday after Sunday, there were no drums or foot-stomping, no horns or the like. Keeping the rhythm and beat meant merely swaying from side to side. After some years, more instruments were introduced and the worship service became more emotional, more in keeping with the Psalmist's command and invitation: "Praise him with timbrel and dance; praise him with the strings and pipe; praise him with the clash of cymbals; praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord" (Psa. 150:4-6), although some of these musical instruments would still be rejected.

As the researcher grew up, coming humbly before God, submitting to His perfect will, was what being a Christian was all about. Bibles were few and for adults only. God's Word was preached from the pulpit every Sunday morning. Although Psalms 150:4-6 cites instruments that could be used in praise, worshippers were not limited to those particular instruments. It was the researcher's desire to use liturgical drama as a vital tool of expression to help bring about scriptural awareness aiding in daily

application. Hoping that those who become involved, both actors and audience, in a liturgical drama experience, will be transformed to apply God's Word to their daily lives.

From early childhood through college, rap songs and dancing in worship were unheard of. Then, over the next ten or fifteen years, many changes occurred. Though judged and often rejected, different forms of expression in worship were introduced, such as praise dance, guitar, drums, rap, and miming. Roleplaying or liturgical drama only happened in church during Christmas and Easter celebrations.

Liturgical drama found its way into the church as a genre and form of ministry by which to communicate God's Word. By promoting the use of liturgical drama, it is the researchers aim to encourage a more complete message and application of the Word of God. By utilizing Scripture, liturgical drama can help congregants learn to apply Scripture to situations in daily living. The researcher intended to use liturgical drama as a tool to bring about practical awareness and clarity to the Word of God.

CHAPTER ONE: LITURGICAL DRAMA AS A MODEL

This project addressed the problem of the lack of a model thereby using liturgical drama as a means of teaching God's Word, to bring about practical awareness to understanding the Word of God in Christian churches. Presenting a dramatized visual of the written Word of God can provide a process of bringing a clearer understanding of scriptural applications within individuals and congregants. Through liturgical drama, Christian churches could be inspired to apply Scripture more fully to their daily life. To address this problem, the researcher (a) reviewed biblical theological data to examine Scripture related to the use of liturgical drama, such as 2 Samuel 6:14, Exodus 15:20, and Jeremiah 31:4, 13 (b) reviewed relevant scholarly literature on liturgical drama in the early Christian church, (c) wrote and directed a liturgical drama production, presented to the congregants of Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church (GFMBC) and (d) assessed the effectiveness of the liturgical drama performed, to determine if the desired outcome was achieved. The goal was to encourage each congregant by presenting a dramatized visual of the written Word of God through liturgical drama, inspiring them to apply Scripture to their daily lives.

Delimitations and Assumptions

This project was presented to the Greater Friendship Church in South Minneapolis, Minnesota. The project involved participants eighteen years and older who were willing to participate in the liturgical drama and complete a survey.

This project explored the written Word of God through the use of drama. Documented evidence on the use of liturgical drama within the African American congregation is not in abundance, however, establishing the use of liturgical drama was welcomed by the immediate congregants within the Greater friendship Baptist Church.

The first assumption was that the Word of God could potentially change a person's view of the Bible. The second assumption was that liturgical drama could serve as an effective tool to teach the Word of God. The third assumption was that the project participants and audience would respond positively to the liturgical drama presented and be encouraged to apply Scripture to daily life.

Subproblems Addressed

The first subproblem explored the uncertainty of biblical data, examining related Scriptures to the use of liturgical drama. The second subproblem reviewed relevant scholarly literature on the use of liturgical drama in the early Christian churches. The third subproblem involved writing and directing a liturgical drama play depicting biblical truth, using the participants and congregants of Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church. The fourth subproblem examined the survey results to reveal whether the

outcome was achieved. The researcher's goal was to promote visual awakening through liturgical drama in congregants, inspiring them to apply Scripture to their daily life.

Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church

The play production was performed at Greater Friendship Church, a Baptist church with approximately one thousand members that is located in South Minneapolis, Minnesota. The church has served in this area for the past sixty years.

The researcher, an associate minister and a volunteer staff member, founded a Thespian Ministry at the church. After joining Greater Friendship, the congregation invited the researcher to teach the Wednesday night Bible study. Having received feedback from members about their inability to understand scriptural lessons, the researcher spoke with the pastor, who asked me to develop and lead a ministry to share God's Word through drama. As a result, the Thespian Ministry came into being.

Six years later, the Thespian Ministry continues to share dramatized biblical truths. The researcher wrote and directed liturgical drama that church members perform during various holidays and annual Christian events, such as Christmas and Easter.

These liturgical dramas took place on the stage where the pulpit is usually located. The scenery of each liturgical drama is designed to replicate a theater setting. The Thespian Ministry typically presents the liturgical dramas on a Friday night; however, last Easter, the drama took place during Sunday morning worship service.

No analysis, survey or measurement of any kind had ever been done on liturgical drama written and directed by the researcher. The feedback on such liturgical dramas has

primarily been given by word of mouth. Recognizing the need to measure the effectiveness of the liturgical drama, the researcher distributed a survey to participants to obtain feedback to use in analyzing its overall outcome, to determine whether the use of liturgical drama increased biblical knowledge and inspired daily scriptural application.

Research Importance

Importance to the Researcher

Since early adulthood, the researcher has felt a strong calling to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Although the researcher had little desire to fulfill the call, out of obedience to the Lord, the researcher embarked on a course of biblical study. This preparation gave the researcher an increased knowledge of God's Word, which better prepared me to bring about a substantive awareness and clarity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in others. During this journey of preparation, the researcher felt deeply influenced by witnessing the inadequacy of some Christians about their lack of understanding of the Bible and its contextual meaning, as well as their ability to follow scriptural teachings within their own lives.

This journey of preparation was full of tragedies and trials; these experiences imparted great insight into the Gospel and its application to life. As Ecclesiastes 1:9 says, "There is nothing new under the sun" all that we need to guide us through life has already been shared with us through God's Word. As time passed, the researcher realized that the real journey is not about the individual or personal knowledge, but about God and His love. Receiving this message during this journey of preparation seemed reminiscent of

the earthly life of Jesus Christ, who out of love and obedience continued the work of his Father.

The researcher believed that drama could serve as a process to facilitate and clarify the Word of God. When first presented, as an add on to traditional service, the Thespian Ministry was not widely received because some congregants wanted to maintain their traditional form of worship service.

Importance to Ministry Context

Although Greater Friendship is a predominantly black church, it has an intergenerational congregation composed of individuals from various socioeconomic backgrounds and national origins. While individuals have different learning styles, they all can learn from exposure to different experiences. Thus, the traditional methods of proclaiming God's Word in black churches have been modified to reach a diverse audience, especially those who are new to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For this reason, the researcher strongly believed that liturgical drama could provide a suitable means of sharing the Word of God with multiple generations. The comments shared by the participants of the Wednesday Bible study clearly showed that many Christians are hungry for the Word of God and wish for their needs to be met outside of the traditional forms of teaching the Scripture.

Importance to the Church at Large

Greater Friendship is not alone in facing Christians' inadequate application of Scripture to daily living. Many believers or those who might want to become believers, in

other churches or parts of the world are experiencing a crisis in this regard. Christians must develop an understanding of how to put God's Word into action to inherit eternal life, which is what helps to form Christianity. Christ's love, as is mentioned in Luke 10:27, which states, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and, Love your neighbor as yourself." Showing such love in all of one's daily actions would validate an application for daily living.

Due to rapid technological advances along with urbanization, immigration, and globalization, Christians have a vast opportunity to share God's truth by expanding their approach and delivery methods. Changing technologies enhance our ability to share His Word. Additionally, Christian churches can choose liturgical drama as a method for communicating the Word of God, thereby increasing scriptural application in individuals' daily lives.

Overview

The researcher reviewed biblical theological resources to record biblical views on liturgical drama. Liturgical drama has been around and considered an expression of worship long before the 16th century. The types of expressions of worship include but are not limited to dance, art, miming, song, and the playing of various musical instruments.¹

¹ Treva Bedinghaus, "Liturgical Drama as a form of Worship, Combining Sacred Movement with Worship," accessed December 29, 2019, <https://www.liveabout.com/praise-dance-basics-1007388>.

This project collected and examined the many expressions of praise mentioned throughout the Bible.

The researcher reviewed relevant literature related to liturgical drama. Resources consisted of literature gathered from secular, scholarly, and spiritual sources, including books and journals that utilize liturgical drama as an expression of worship. The research entailed writing a play based on a chapter or parable from the Bible. The production included characters using props, costumes, and comparable music. The play (Appendix B) included a performance of the chosen chapter or Scripture, dramatized.

The research process involved creating a survey and gathering the data to evaluate the effectiveness of liturgical drama. Gathering and analyzing the survey data will help increase the validity of such penances in the future

CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF LITURGICAL DRAMA

This section of the research will seek to explore and establish from Scripture and other scholarly works, the theological foundation of both drama and liturgy. Using specific biblical characters and events, the researcher asserts that the Judeo-Christian God is the originator, artistic and executive director bar none, of the genre of liturgy and drama. The researcher desired to investigate the development of drama, postulating that both drama and liturgy have evolved and deviated from God's intended purpose and function of true worship, thereby creating the need for a shift in worship and a basis for the renewal of liturgical drama.

Biblical understanding continues to be less important by post-modernist and new-age thinking and it appears humans have evolved in their thinking away from the God of their forefathers, to their present state of function of non-worship and emphasis on prosperity and what they can get from God. The researcher chose two Old Testament prophets, as well as some epic biblical events to inform and educate modern worshipers of God on how they can allow these scriptural truths to provide the moral and relational guidance for living out the reconciliatory message of the gospel, and hence evoke transformation.

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to lay the theological foundation upon which to build the project's efforts to use liturgical drama to expound and teach the Word of God for transformation. It would be safe to suggest that with the varied interpretations of Scripture, the many Bible translations, as well as religious denominations, the researcher's approach and interpretation could be viewed as one interpretation that must be examined and challenged in a peer review. The researcher hopes that it will become one more source for churches, a source for reflection to inspire thoughts on what it means to understand the Word of God and to live it daily. The prayer of the researcher is that the interpretation will be theologically and academically sound to affect the needed guidance and transformation.

Having searched and studied the researcher's significant theological expectations, this chapter will read and examine epic events, biblical prophets of the Old Testament, and apostles/disciples, as well as heroic events in the New Testament, to make the case for liturgical drama as a credible asset for the modern church.

Researcher's Narrative

The Researcher's Ministry Context

The researcher comes from a lineage of pastors. The researcher's father is a Baptist minister as was his dad before him. Although not all of the researcher's siblings are pastors, they all function in some capacity as leaders in the church. Besides being an ordained minister, this minister also went through training to become a hospital chaplain.

Besides being an associate minister in her local congregation the researcher also serves as a police chaplain. Within the church, the researcher functions as the director of the thespian ministry, sings in the choir and is a Sunday school teacher. Until this study, the researcher had not reflected on the relationship between all that she does. In doing this project the researcher was forced, no doubt, to consider where her varying roles intersect and where they diverge and to understand why.

The researcher's role and function as a Sunday school teacher is the genesis for this project. As participants voiced a lack of understanding of Scripture it also invited an introspective look at the researcher's own story and to be more intentional in her role as a teacher and leader. With this project, the researcher sought to find answers within Scripture as the researcher believed it was and ought to be the starting place for everything. Without any formal training in theatre or playwriting, the researcher has headed a thespian ministry for several years. In doing this project, the researcher decided to first answer the question of whether the thespian ministry was a calling and if so, how true or obedient had she been to her call. The second thing the researcher reflected on was whether she had allowed the Lord to lead her play-writing and production.

The researcher's mission to use liturgical drama to expound on Scripture began with this project. Hitherto, the researcher's plays were to entertain primarily and not necessarily to allow for its application and effect transformation. This introspective reflection required that the researcher rely on Scripture and also rely on other theologians and scholars to be her teachers/leaders. The Scripture passages were to explore the

various functions and processes of liturgical drama from creation through both the Old Testament and New Testament. Each of the narratives or passages like the researcher's own life story and roles in the church, would reveal or it could be said, address the tensions of being human and the need to keep the sacred in worship, especially when it comes to liturgical drama.

With this mission in mind, the researcher paid particular attention to her motives and to answer the question of whether God was present in the process when she wrote, directed and produced the plays.

Old Testament

Genesis

God creates space for worship. In Genesis, one encounters the divine in the creation story. This book of divine creation can be viewed as a dramatic event of epic proportions that establishes the boundaries of not just the created order but the relational boundaries that will exist in the worship of the creator. As the reader encounters the divine in the creation, the reader can engage in an awe-inspiring experience of both the limitless as well as the boundaries/limitations within the story. The creation story reads like a liturgical drama:

Act 1: Separating the Light from the darkness (Gen. 1:3-5)

Act 2: Separation of the waters above and below the expanse (Gen. 1:6-8)

Act 3: Formation of the earth and seas as well as all therein (Gen. 1:9-13)

Act 4: Creation of the great lights to separate night from day (Gen. 1:14-19)

Act 5: Creation of living things in the waters and on the land, culminating in the creation of “man”, made in the image and likeness of God. (Gen.1:20-31)

Although the Bible narrative describes the seventh day of the creation story as a day of “rest,” the researcher asserts that on the seventh day, God also created space for individual and corporate rest-Sabbath, a sacred space for a reflective and meditative relationship with the divine. When God created humans, Scripture reveals that he “made them, both male and female” and then He blessed them. God also blessed the seventh day.” In blessing, God consecrated the order of worship thus a divine liturgy. In the creation story, there is movement from nothing to the making of the first Adam who was to oversee all that had been created? God directs the movement through words, “Let there be....and there was.”

The law was established for worship in paradise. Communing with God required no guilt, no shame but total obedience to the law “of all the fruit in the garden you shall eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat. (Gen. 2:15-16)” Then God blessed the physical and spiritual space for which individual and corporate worship must occur within the community of his creation. The Garden of Eden, also called Paradise, was a beautiful setting. In paradise, there shall be closeness yet there shall be a holy separation or reverence of mortals from the divine. God is above all and overall. He is in the heavens and yet with His creation.

In the creation drama, the plot is straightforward and the set is magnificent. There are no antagonists, although one shows up shortly after the created order, to change the worship trajectory for centuries. Imagine a curtain of a drama being pulled back and the drama unfolds slowly and deliberately, the worshiper is engaged in a movement from

darkness to magnificence-beauty from void-God from man. As the narrator-or word of God speaks and commands, the participant is ushered into the beauty and splendor of the majesty of God. The scenery invites the participant's imagination and draws them into a worship experience. The first act of worship is obedience. In paradise, there was no need for confession of sins for there was no sin to confess, just a pure unadulterated intimate relationship with God, which existed on transparency and obedience. Then, the fall happens and God in His infinite mercy created laws, provided rituals and ceremonies to assist His people to continue to worship him in spirit and truth. God expected reverent worship because of His sovereignty and holiness. He created liturgy of worship through ceremonial acts, most of which celebrated his redemptive acts in human history especially for His people Israel, such as the Passover, Feast of Tabernacles, the Day of Atonement, sacrifices, offerings and many other feasts. These acts of worship involved dramatic acts, which formed the basis of liturgical drama, which was not limited to acting or elements of drama as is found in secular drama, but it involved also music, sermons, praise, procession, confessions and recessional as well as prayers and benediction. Mozelle Clark Sherman describes the beginnings and divine approach to drama, “indeed, all of creation depicts a God whose dramatic nature calls forth the colors of spring and fall, the winds of the south and north, the fearfulness of hurricanes, and the songs of birds.”²

² Mozelle Clark Sherman, “*Life More Abundant: The Dramatic Worship Experience*,” Review and Expositor (1993): 90.

An example of the divine presence and initiation of drama in the liturgical element of the offering can be seen in Leviticus 23:10-12. In this passage, God decrees to the people of Israel, that after possessing the promised land they were to establish an offering of the first fruits of their harvest, which they were to bring to the priest for consecration and acceptance. This offering of the first fruits required, the participant/celebrant to “wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you; on the morrow after the Sabbath, the priest shall wave it. And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf and the lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering.” (KJV)

The Lord God established various acts in the elements of worship, which were included in the liturgy of Jewish worship from the formation of the nation until the present. God was intentional in asking that the celebrant “wave the sheaf before the Lord,” a dramatic expression of praise and reverence. The researcher postulated that Worship required obedience and true worship, even greater obedience to the ordinances of God. To wave the sheaf is not only a part of the liturgy, but also a reverent act of worship, where the celebrant is not just giving, but acting in obedience to the Levitical law that says raise your hands to God in worship to wave the sheaf for acceptance. Sherman corroborates the researcher’s thesis that drama, especially liturgical drama has its genesis from the divine and was initially meant to invoke a horizontal relationship with the divine. He asserts that

“drama was seen as one of the first attempts to understand the mysteries of God's existence and the human relationship to deity.”³

Exodus

In Exodus, God created the order of liturgical drama in worship. When Moses went to the Egyptian pharaoh in the book of Exodus speaking as the mouthpiece of Jehovah God, he requested the leader of Egypt to “let my people go so they can worship me.” The chief purpose of human persons is to worship God. To worship God, one must feel a liberation from bondage in any form, physical, spiritual, mental and emotional. Liberation of God’s people came at a cost to Egyptian lives and redemption from slavery. As God gathered his people first in Egypt, then in the desert and prepared them for a reconciliatory relationship with the divine, he set up rituals and festivals through which he could be worshiped. For God, the drama was not a reenactment of events, rather drama required live participation of his people in active worship. Worship requires knowing God and how to relate to him.

Mark Aidoo recounts the exodus story, taking the reader through the various settings of the drama as he makes the case for creation of the order for liturgical worship within the structure of the book. The researcher has placed the structure and order of the service proposed by Aidoo in Table 2.1. The left column shows the order of the liturgy

³ Sherman, 90.

and the next column shows the passages supporting the ritual. The researcher added the setting though evident in the passages.

Table 2.1: Liturgical Drama in Exodus⁴

<u>Form of Worship</u>	<u>Passage</u>	<u>Scenery/Setting</u>
Procession	15:1-18	The journey out of Egypt; Crossing the red sea and entering the wilderness
Song of praise	15: 19-22	The bank of the Red Sea out of Egypt
Affirmation of faith	15:22-17:7	In the Wilderness- The testing of the faith of God's chosen people
Call to worship	19:4-6	At the foot of Mount Sinai
Prayer of Confession	19:10.12-13; 15	At the foot of Mount Sinai
The Sermon	20:2-17, 22-26;21:2-36; 23:10-19; 22:31; 23: 1-19,22	At the foot of Mount Sinai
Response to the Word	24:3	At the foot of mount Sinai
Offertory	24:5-5-6; 25:1-40:33	At mount Sinai
Holy Communion	24:11	At mount Sinai
Benediction	39:43; 40: 34	At mount Sinai
Recession	33:13-17; 40:36-38	In the Wilderness

In the first act of the drama of redemption, praise was of the uttermost importance. Praise as part of the worship experience honors God and speaks of his majesty as well as his sovereignty. Dennis Olson also suggests that “songs that praise God often arise out of the most intense experiences of God’s people, slavery and

⁴ Mark Aidoo, “The Book of Exodus as a Liturgical Drama,” *Kagoro Journal of Theology* 1 (2016): 122–33.

oppression, suffering and conflict, human injustice and arrogance, idolatry and apostasy.”⁵

It is little wonder therefore that in Exodus, after the Israelites crossing of the Red Sea from bondage in Egypt to the wilderness of liberation and redemption, Moses led the men in a song of praise and soon after, Miriam also led the women in a spontaneous act of praise and worship. Both the men and women sang praises of God’s holiness, sovereignty, power, goodness and greatness.

Expression of Song and Dance as Praise

Gods’ spokesperson, Moses and the Israelites sang and celebrated God’s victory and the deliverance over the Pharaoh of Egypt. Pype in “*Dancing for God or the Devil*” contends that the Pentecostal church of Kinshasa encouraged movements as part of their culture and that dance is one of many ways to reveal the theme of their Christian culture.⁶ Adhering to liturgical drama as an expression of praise.

Olson in *God for Us God against Us* acknowledged that the expression of praise to God can be shown in other dimensions of worship. His decree is that praise through song and dance reflects an ancient tradition of women rejoicing after the soldiers had

⁵ Dennis Olson, “God for Us, God against Us: Singing the Pentateuch’s Songs of Praise in Exodus 15 and Deuteronomy 32,” *Theology Today* 70, no. 1 (2013): 54.

⁶ Katrien Pype, “*Dancing for God or the Devil*,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 36, no. 3/4 (2006): 296.

returned from battle in a victory against the enemy.⁷ He also referred to the song of the Israelites' victory over Pharaoh, as "the Song of the Sea."⁸ The song that they sang was recorded in Exodus 15:1-13,

I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted.
 Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea.
 The Lord is my strength and my defense;
 he has become my salvation.
 He is my God, and I will praise him,
 my father's God, and I will exalt him.
 The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name.
 Pharaoh's chariots and his army
 he has hurled into the sea.
 The best of Pharaoh's officers
 are drowned in the Red Sea.
 The deep waters have covered them;
 they sank to the depths like a stone.
 Your right hand, Lord, was majestic in power.
 Your right hand, Lord, shattered the enemy.
 In the greatness of your majesty
 you threw down those who opposed you.
 You unleashed your burning anger;
 it consumed them like stubble.
 By the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up.
 The surging waters stood up like a wall;
 the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea.
 The enemy boasted,
 'I will pursue, I will overtake them.
 I will divide the spoils;
 I will gorge myself on them.
 I will draw my sword and my hand will destroy them.'
 But you blew with your breath,
 and the sea covered them.
 They sank like lead in the mighty waters.
 Who among the gods is like you, Lord?

⁷ Olson, 54.

⁸ Olson, 54.

Who is like you—majestic in holiness,
 awesome in glory, working wonders?
 You stretch out your right hand,
 and the earth swallows your enemies.
 In your unfailing love you will lead
 the people you have redeemed.
 In your strength you will guide them
 to your holy dwelling”

In this passage, liturgical drama take place through praise and worship. Miriam, the sister of Moses, and the women danced, rejoicing in the miraculous works of God. According to Exodus, Miriam led the women into praise through dance. “Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took the tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines dancing” (Ex.15:20-21).

According to Rita Burns who commented in Gerald Janzen’s, “*Song of Moses, Song of Miriam: Who Is Seconding Whom?*”, it was a call to worship not just for the women but for both male and female, so Miriam, Moses and the Israelites performed a dance and sang to Yahweh (God).⁹ It was a beautiful response showing gratitude from the hearts of God’s people as they praised Him through dance and song.

Cornelis Houtman suggests that theologian John Calvin, who commanded how one must worship, would disagree with the movement the people of Israel expressed after

⁹ Gerald Janzen, “Song of Moses, Song of Miriam: Who Is Seconding Whom,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 54 (1992): 215.

their deliverance. Calvin believed everything had a specific place in liturgy.¹⁰ Movement added to liturgy was not considered. The people of Israel experienced an unspeakable moment. It was a moment when words alone would not be enough praise. It was a moment when any thankful individual could not, help but praise God. The movement would be without a doubt done with the use of one's entire being, to express the true praise and worship that they intended to give to God. Houtman further describes the praise as "a complete involvement in the Liturgy."¹¹ Much like the expression described as Liturgical drama when Miriam, the women and the Israelites danced in Exodus chapter 15.

Alan Cole wrote in his Commentary on *Exodus* that dancing could be called a tradition, because it was the role of women to dance and sing or mourn for different occasions. Also, it was characteristic for women to sing and dance to the beat of the tambourines during the time of war victory or an autumn festival. Furthermore, Cole reports that many of the women had been secular singers as opposed to sacred and that such distinction had not been unveiled in the early days of Israel. However, Cole did not necessarily concede to an expression of praise or a liturgical occasion, because he noted that he needed more information concerning Liturgical drama.¹²

¹⁰ Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus*, vol. 2 of Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Peeters Publishers, 1993), 234.

¹¹ Houtman, 234.

¹² R. Alan Cole, *Exodus* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1973), 134.

Brevard Childs, in *The Book of Exodus*, described most about Liturgical drama in his commentary, including the depth of the poem (the song that the Israelites sang), and what it meant to the Israelites. Distinguishing that in Exodus 15:20, liturgical drama as an expression of praise was rendered by Miriam and the women who danced to the tambourines. The moment of crossing the Red Sea was a full celebration with dance and singing as was shown in their worship. Childs stated that the whole community worshiped and praised God for his excellence.¹³

Anja Klein further notes that

The Song of the Sea clearly outlines different priorities: First of all, the praise of God is now attributed to Moses, the leading man of the Exodus narrative, while Miriam's song becomes a mere antiphon. Moreover, the praise is transformed into a hymn of an individual. Thus, the poetry is shaped as a psalm that can be reused over and over again. In view of the content of praise, God's victory over his enemies undergoes a substantial embellishment and is interpreted in terms of his supremacy over the other gods.¹⁴

2 Samuel

Similar to Exodus, Second Samuel also included a liturgy that reveals the proper and improper way of worship. It could be argued that the first attempt of the return of the Ark of the Covenant to the City of David, is a type of the kind of liturgical drama that most churches frown on, involving most of the secular elements of drama at the expense

¹³ Brevard Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical Theological Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2004), 252.

¹⁴ A Klein, "Hymn and History in Exodus 15: Observations on the Relationship between Temple Theology and Exodus Narrative in the Song of the Sea," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 124, no. 4, (2012): 520.

of the sacred. The worship failed, as did the drama, causing the death of a man—Uzzah. Worship of God has to be sacred as it is worship to a holy God. In David's first attempt to bring the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem, (2 Sam. 6:1-14), Scripture shows that king David and by default also a type of priest/prophet for his people seemed not to understand his new role as well as the importance of community worship. The reader of Scripture relates that David had assembled 30,000 choice men who went with him to bring the ark, which verse 2 reiterates, is the "the Ark of God, whose name is called by the Name, the Lord of Hosts, who dwells between the Cherubim." The researcher surmises that David focused a little bit more on the drama than on the act of worship, seeing as God was present in their midst with the presence of the Ark of the Covenant. Although the passage does not show intent, based on this thesis, the researcher makes the case that David could have been more focused on the celebration rather than the worship as he prepared the Ark's return to Jerusalem.

David had assembled musicians for the praise portion of the liturgy of the return but he may not have remembered the linen robe, or the consecration and sacrifice. We read, "Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the Lord on all kind of instruments, on fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals." The liturgy included four movements: Procession to Jerusalem, Musical praise, Rebuke replaced confession and Worship ceased at that point.

David then said something very interesting after the death of Uzzah, he asked himself the question, "How can the Ark of the Lord come to me?" It appears David was

more focused on himself rather than the Lord. Instead of a Benediction, David led a recessional to the house of Obed-Edom. David was leading worship and the entire worship went awry because the liturgy was not well planned perhaps, or the motives not aligned to the will of God. The reasoning or lack of it notwithstanding, it appears that liturgical drama in the church has also shifted from God's original intent of drama as worship in vivo to a self-indulging event where the divine is expected to satisfy worshippers many needs.

In his article, "An Initial Approach for Liturgical Renewal: Holy Drama and Sacrifice," Raymond Hoche-Mong, suggests amongst other things that there has been a shift from the sacred to a more secular approach to Christian Liturgy, postulating that "the Christian church warmed up to the idea that worship could possibly be an act of happiness rather than a burden of significantly disconcerting penitence." He also asserted that "when churches tried to "create relevant liturgies." many new forms of liturgies duplicated, in some cases rather poorly, sessions in group dynamics," shifting worship's intent from the divine as theological assertions were dully omitted" With shifting narrative of what liturgies should feel like instead of what it should be.¹⁵

The researcher had a Thespian ministry for several years at her former church and even though she produced liturgical plays it became evident during this research that like

¹⁵Raymond Hoche-Mong, "Initial Approach for Liturgical Renewal: Holy Drama and Sacrifice," *Saint Luke's Journal of Theology* 17, no. 2 (March 1974): 85-98.

David's first attempt at bringing the Ark back to Jerusalem, the researcher focused a little more on the secular elements of the drama; namely the entertainment and visual aspects of the set, rather than being true to the text of Scripture for transformation. Scripture tells of Uzzah being a son of Abinadab, who had been consecrated or set apart to guard the Ark, but his son may not have been consecrated. A lack of understanding may have caused this fatality and like Uzzah, the researcher now reflects and admits that her past productions of the liturgical drama may have missed the mark of the sacred, lacked the proper worship and failed in the presentation of the gospel in a couple of ways. First, the drama productions were done at night, as an entertainment choice for persons wanting something to do. The researcher also used interpretations that were geared more to help its audience feel good and not necessarily to learn to apply lessons learned to their daily lives.

The Ark of the Covenant and Contents

God instructed Moses how to make the Ark of the Covenant, which was a rectangular box made out of a particular kind of wood with specific dimensions, covered with gold. The Ark of the Covenant consisted of a Mercy Seat, a Tabernacle, and a veil. Poles were placed through the circled rings which extended to both sides of the Ark of the Covenant to carry the box. The Mercy Seat was placed on top of the box and Exodus 26:34 says that the Mercy Seat was the golden lid placed on top of the Ark of the Covenant, which was placed behind the veil in the tabernacle (Ex. 30:6). The Ark of the Covenant represented where the presence of the Lord manifested (Lev. 16:2).

The Ark of the Covenant was the very presence of God and was also used in military battles to defeat those who opposed the Israelites. One of the many things that it held was the tablets of the Ten Commandments. Similar to Exodus, Second Samuel also included liturgical drama as an expression of praise by worshiping through dance and song. David danced when he celebrated the return of the Ark of the Covenant to the Israelites, with an expression of praise through dance. Along with movement, liturgical drama can include the use of important elements that adds to the story.

The Ark served (i) as receptacle for the two tablets of the Decalogue (Ex. 25:16, 21; 40:20; Dt. 10:1-5) and also for the pot of manna and Aaron's rod (Heb. 9:4-5); (ii) as the meeting-place in the inner sanctuary where the Lord revealed his will to his servants (Moses: Ex. 25:22; 30:36; Aaron: Lv. 16:2; Joshua: Jos. 7:6). Thus, it served as the symbol of the divine presence guiding his people. The ark was made at Sinai by Bezalel to the pattern given to Moses (Ex. 25:8ff.). It was used as a depository for the written law (Dt. 31:9; Jos. 24:26) and played a significant part at the crossing of Jordan (Jos. 3-4), the fall of Jericho (Jos. 6) and the ceremony of remembering the covenant at Mt Ebal (Jos. 8:30).¹⁶

Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments, written by God on two tablets, were one of the items in the Ark of the Covenant. It was the Commandments given to the Israelites by God to Moses on top of at Mount Sinai, according to the Bible. The Ten Commandments are found in the Exodus 20:1–17 and Deuteronomy 5:4–21. Both books stated that God inscribed them on two stone tablets that He gave to Moses.

¹⁶ Elihu Schatz, "The Weight of the Ark of the Covenant," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (2007): 116.

Manna

The manna was another item founded in the Ark of the Covenant. According to Deuteronomy 8:3, Manna was “bread from heaven,” and it was the food of Angels, that descended from heaven because God commanded that it should be. Exodus 16:1-36 stated that “Manna was a sweet gum or resin type of bread that God supernaturally sent from Heaven to feed His people during their journey in the Wilderness. Christians live on the words that have come out of God’s mouth as nourishment for survival.

Aaron’s Rod

Moses' brother Aaron’s rod, or staff, is another item found in the Ark of the Covenant. In ancient history, a rod was a symbol of authority. Shepherds used rods to guide and correct their flock of sheep. Furthermore, the rod appeared to have been significant in God’s plan to lead His people out of Egypt and to the Promised Land (Exodus 37:1-9).

According to Psalm 23:4, Moses demonstrated God’s power by performing wonders with the rod that he carried (Ex. 4:1–5; Numbers 20:11). Also, Aaron performed miracles with his rod (Ex 7:19; 8:5, 16). In Pharaoh’s court, Aaron’s rod turned into a snake and swallowed the Egyptian Magi snakes (Ex. 7:8–10). Additionally, in Exodus, Aaron’s rod turned all the waters of Egypt into blood (Ex. 7:19–21). It was Aaron’s rod that declared the plagues of the frogs (Ex. 8:5–6) and gnats (verses 16–17). It appeared that the items carried inside the Ark of the Covenant had very significant value to the history of the Nation of Israel as it was placed in the Holy of Holies which was “the

innermost and most sacred area of the ancient tabernacle of Moses and temple of Jerusalem. The Holy of Holies was constructed as a perfect cube. It contained only the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of Israel's special relationship with God. The Holy of Holies was accessible only to the Israelite high priest, that symbolized the presence of God.¹⁷

The Return of Ark of the Covenant

In Second Samuel 6:14, it was written that the Ark of the Covenant was returned to Israel and David danced. The Ark had been captured and then returned.

The Importance of the Ark of the Covenant

In First Samuel, the battles between Israel and the Philistines continued for many years. However, during one of those battles, the Philistines defeated Israel and captured the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant was the most important and sacred piece that ever existed to the Israelites and was to be handled only by priests. This was so because God commanded that only the Levites (i.e. Aaron) were privileged to handle the Ark of the Covenant (1 Chron.15:2).

But the captivity of the Ark of the Covenant was not without consequences, to the Philistines, when it was taken in battle from the Israelites. The Philistines were devastated by plagues and endured much suffering because of the presence of the Ark of the Covenant. As time passed, the Philistines returned the Ark of the Covenant to the

¹⁷ Judaism Britannica, "*Holy of Holies*," accessed December 29, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Holy-of-Holies>.

Israelites and bearing a trespass offering. When the Ark of the Covenant was returned to the Israelites, it was placed in the house of Abinadab, one of King Saul's sons and remained there for twenty years (1 Sam. 7:1-2).

King Saul and his sons were killed in battle (1Sam. 31:2). David became the successor and was crowned king of Israel. He ordered that the Ark of the Covenant be transported to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:3-7). But there was a delay in transporting the Ark of the Covenant because of their lack of knowledge as to how God wanted the Ark of the Covenant to be handled. The sacredness of the Ark of the Covenant as mentioned earlier, demanded that only certain individuals were privileged to touch the Ark of the Covenant, or death would instantly occur (2 Sam. 5:3-7). However, it took three months to resolve the transporting concerns and the Ark of the Covenant was properly transported to Jerusalem (1Samuel 6:7). Then, David danced with all of his might.

Expression of Dance as Praise

Second Samuel 6:14 says that David danced when the Ark of the Covenant was returned and was not interested in his wife Michal's criticism. God was the center of David's focus for the Davidic kingdom as he celebrated the return of the Ark of the Covenant through an expression of dance, praise and worship.¹⁸ According to David Jansen in his *Commentary on 1st and 2nd Samuel*, David's dancing before the Lord was

¹⁸ David Jensen, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 196.

like being in a trance.¹⁹ He asserts that David was so caught up in the praise that he was deeply absorbed in the moment and expressed himself through dancing. Jensen also mentioned that David seeing the Ark of the Covenant being brought to Jerusalem meant that the presence of God was not something occurring, but a prominent presence of God to which he celebrated through dance as an expression of praise.²⁰

Joyce Baldwin, in her Commentary on *1 and 2 Samuel* describes the celebration for the return of the Ark of the Covenant, the celebration ended abruptly because the Ark of the Covenant was not being properly transported according to God's commands. Baldwin, also mentioned that just as God taught his followers to pray and say, "Our Father," so should there be a need to follow His laws, particularly, when handling the Ark of the Covenant.²¹

Baldwin declared that David was angry at God after seeing one of his warriors brought to death after touching the Ark of the Covenant. The warrior touched the ark when he tried to keep it from falling as it was being brought back to the children of Israel. David then stopped the transport of the Ark of the Covenant. According to 1 Chronicles 15, the correct way to transport the Ark of the Covenant was by the hands of the Levites. When the adjustment was made and several sacrifices offered by King David, the Ark of

¹⁹ Jensen, 197.

²⁰ Jensen, 197.

²¹ Joyce Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 223.

the Covenant was returned safely to Jerusalem. Then, David danced using an old ritual consistent with a whirl, which was not recorded when the Chronicles were written, therefore only known as a dance.²² King David danced with all of his might and had properly dressed in a priestly attire during the celebration, wearing a linen ephod.²³ Using an expression of praise, David demonstrated the use of Liturgical drama and celebrated their victory.

Jeremiah

The chapter of Jeremiah 31 also speaks to an expression of praise; declaring restoration from captivity celebrating through dance.

The word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah commanding him to speak to all of Israel and, God said “Again, I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry...Then young women will dance and be glad, young men and old as well. I will turn their mourning into gladness. I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow (Jer. 31:4,13 KJV).

Background

During the seventh century, Jeremiah was a prophet, and he was called to be a prophet as a youth. He came from Anathoth, a town outside of Jerusalem, where most of his prophetic time was spent. God commanded him to never marry. and was known as the “Weeping prophet,” because he cried tears of sadness because of the disobedience of God’s people for his people (Jer. 16:1-3). Prophets are religious teachers used as a

²² Baldwin, 223.

²³ Baldwin, 224.

messenger of God to convey God's word to the people during their time. They delivered to whomever God specified. The message was describing the events that were going to happen in their present time and event to come in the future. Historically, prophets delivered messages of hope, encouragement and disparities from God.

God informed Jeremiah of his responsibilities. God tells Jeremiah to gird up his loins, which meant to free himself from anything that would hinder him in his work for God. Jeremiah was to declare the whole counsel of God. Every word from God is deep and nothing is to be left out. Jeremiah is to appear against kings, princes, and priests but not to fear, any of them because God will be with him (Jer. 1:17).

Jeremiah was given the task of warning Judah about their sins (Jer. 15:19). He tried to make the people understand that their problem was a lack of belief, trust, and faith in God along with an absence of fear that caused them to take God for granted. Jeremiah was called to tell Judah that, because they had refused to repent of their sins, God had turned against them, and was going to remove them from their land into the land of Babylon, of a pagan king. Jeremiah begged God's people to listen, but they would not. They continued in pagan ways which included worshipping idols and false gods, carrying on in immoral and less spiritual ways.

The hearts of the children of Israel had become hardened by the numbing effects of sin because they no longer believed God, nor feared Him. Jeremiah preached

for forty years and not once did he see any real success in changing or softening of the hearts and minds of this stubborn and idolatrous children of Israel.²⁴

An Expression of Dance and Celebration as Praise

Jeremiah 31:4 describes what will take place after judgment had been made to Israel and Judah. Announcing a victory will come to celebrate with dancing, as they traditionally did for military victories and religious ceremonies, but in time to come the celebration would be for joy and restoration. Utilizing Liturgical drama as an expression of praise.

Jeremiah 31:14 describes the joy and the restoration God has promised. Just as God promised the patriarchs of Israel abundance in the promised land, so would both Judah and Israel be reunited, restored, waiting to adorn themselves and dance with a tambourine in a joyous celebration using Liturgical drama an expression of praise.

According to Lalleman chapters 24-29 of Jeremiah was when God constantly sent prophets to warn Israel and Judah of their wrongdoings and of being observers of false prophets.²⁵ But it seemed to have been easier for them to have accepted a false prophet truth, rather than Jeremiah's declaration. It was harder for Israel to accept what Jeremiah

²⁴ Chuck Swindoll, "The Great Lives from God's Series Word; Who was Jeremiah in the Bible?" accessed May 8, 2019, <https://www.gotquestions.org/life-Jeremiah.html>.

²⁵ Hetty Lalleman, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 217.

spoke to Israel and Judah because he mentioned that they would be following the king of Babylon, which would have been considered subversion.

The false prophets called the “diviners” were speaking just what the people wanted to hear, which was that everything would be all right. Thereby causing them to resist what the prophet Jeremiah presented to them. The author further suggested that chapter 30-31 themes spoke to comfort and promises, those that were near and, in the future, offering hope and restoration, but they continued with resistance. Going on to verses 4-13 in chapter 31 of Jeremiah, the promise of restoration was to be a future celebration and religious ceremony, a Liturgical drama exposure, an expression of praise where everyone would dance, but the people of Israel and Judah refused to heed.²⁶

F. B. Huey wrote in *Jeremiah, Lamentations: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, that Jeremiah was quite an emotional prophet, and after informing Israel of the seventy-year punishment, Huey stated that Jeremiah was so emotionally affected by the disbelief of the children of God, that he was overcome with tears and sadness.

Jeremiah declared that for twenty-three years the Word of God had come to him and had spoken to Israel repeatedly and they have not listened or obeyed God (Jer. 25:3). Instead, they observed the false prophets who sold them dishonesty. As a result, he spoke that there would be consequences. God gave them his wrath involving seventy years of

²⁶ Lalleman, 219.

hardship and ruins into Babylon. And after that seventy years, God disclosed that He would punish the king of Babylon. The sounds of happiness would be that of devastation and the land would be an everlasting waste (Jer. 25:3-14).

Proclaiming that the punishment could have been over the time of 587-539 B.C. which was the fall of Jerusalem to the overthrow of Babylon by Persians. But that would have only been fifty years. Other scholars suggested that the seventy years might have been from 609-539 B.C. But again, that seemed to have been a random date. According to 2 Chronicles, Israel had failed to observe the land's one-year-in-seven sabbath for 490 years, so the Babylonian captivity was set at 70 years to include the deficit. Second Chronicles 36:21 says, "The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah."²⁷

Huey also declared that Jeremiah and other prophets, Hananiah and Shemaiah, taught against false prophets to no avail because God's people refused to listen. Ultimately, the punishment was given. Hananiah was later found to be a false prophet and while in exile the Lord told Jeremiah to tell his people that Shemaiah was a false prophet and that Shemaiah would be punished for his action.

²⁷ F. B. Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations: The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1993), 224.

Huey added that chapters 29-32 spoke of promises made by God through the prophet, including hope, restoration and redemption.²⁸ God will restore Israel and Judah and they will show an expression of praise, the use of Liturgical drama through dance with gratitude and great joy (Jer. 31:13).

Elmer Martens wrote that chapter thirty of Jeremiah spoke of hope and consolation for God's people of Israel and Judah. God instructed Jeremiah to write down everything that he had told him to say in a book (Jer. 30:2). Insisting that a time is coming when both Israel and Judah will be restored.²⁹ Martens also stated that there were fourteen prophecies made to Israel and Judah. In chapter thirty of Jeremiah, there were six prophecies, which included the time of Israel's release from bondage. Martens entitled that section in his Commentary prophecies, "The Recovery of the Land," and they were named, "Write a Scroll," "I will Break the Yoke," "I am with You, and will Save You," "I will Restore you to Health," "I will bring them Honor," and "Guaranteed."³⁰

The prophecies continued into chapter thirty-one of Jeremiah with the next section entitled "The Recovery of a Relationship" which included "I am Israel's Father," and up to Jeremiah 31:4,13, "Like a Shepherd the Lord will watch Over His Flock." The

²⁸ Huey, 246.

²⁹ Elmer Martens, *Jeremiah: Believers Church Bible Commentary* (Scottsdale, AZ: Herald Press, 1986), 187.

³⁰ Martens, 187.

prophesies spoke of a better relationship with God, their father and creator, with the hope for the future to come.³¹

Jeremiah 31:4, 13 as an expression of praise was anticipated through dance when the time came that God would restore the land to Israel. God pronounced that His people would dance, young and old, play their tambourines and be joyful (Jer. 31:4,13). The hope and expectation of Christians by faith that this will happen, as a gift from God.

³¹ Martens, 190.

CHAPTER THREE: LITURGICAL DRAMA LITERATURE

Liturgical Drama as Innovation

According to Michael Norton in *Liturgical Drama and the Reimagining of Medieval Theater*, The expression "liturgical drama" was formulated in 1834 as a metaphor and hardened into a formal category only later in the nineteenth century. Before this invention, the medieval rites and representations that would forge the category were understood as distinct and unrelated classes: "liturgical" and "drama" essentially has no definition, since they have been defined in so many ways.³²

Liturgical Drama Through the Centuries

James Chatham claims that drama was rejected during the early centuries, but by the tenth century, drama depicted the events performed during Holy Week.³³ As a result, three kinds of drama emerged in the medieval church: mystery plays, miracle plays, and morality plays. Dramatized sermons or liturgical dramas can be based on particular characters or accounts within the Bible. Chatham further asserts that preaching depicts typical human accounts that reveal the nature of God. He presents many sermons, songs,

³² Michael Norton, "*Liturgical Drama and the Reimagining of Medieval Theater*," accessed May 8, 2019, <https://www.isdistribution.com/BookDetail.aspx?aId>.

³³ James Chatham, *Enacting the Word Using Drama in Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 2.

and skits in his book *Enacting the Word; Using Drama in Preaching*, demonstrate his point.³⁴ In the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, liturgical drama developed in churches in Spain, England, the Netherlands, and Germany, which used it for religious discussions, ceremonies, and plays.³⁵

According to Thomas Campbell, drama was reborn within the liturgical context of the medieval church. It appeared that scholars were naïve about the displacement of drama during the fifth through the fifteenth centuries.³⁶ The concern about the relationship between theater and the church illuminated a continuing struggle that scholars needed to address. Accordingly, scholars debated on and examined many plays from the simple to the elaborate. Mindful of the “what and how” of the relationship that existed between medieval churches and medieval theater, relative to liturgical practices, scholars concluded that liturgical plays are to be observed.³⁷

The researcher has stated in an earlier chapter that Drama, both liturgical and otherwise, was meant to be lived and not an imitation of life, spontaneous and an act of worship of the divine. Drama was supposed to bring about an intimate relationship with the divine and with each other. It was supposed to be a moving and evolving work of

³⁴ Chatham, 2.

³⁵ Encyclopedia Britannica, “*Liturgical Drama*,” accessed May 8, 2019, www.Britannica.com/Topic/Liturgical-drama

³⁶ Thomas Campbell, “Liturgy and Drama: Recent Approaches to Medieval Theater,” *Theatre Journal* 33, no. 3 (1981): 289.

³⁷ Campbell, 290.

divine art that would feed the souls of men as they worshiped and glorified God.

Unfortunately, human persons shifted off the divine to the world around it, making it impossible to spontaneously worship the Lord as was done with the created order. It appears that this innate quality of spontaneous worship, the real-life drama has begged to be rebirthed back into human consciousness and it was partially birthed, with some limitations and concerns during this Middle Ages. Comparatively, the researcher's thirst to bring Scripture alive has been bubbling for years and it took this project to partially birth it, as there is more to do to make it a sacred act of worship.

Although the researcher has been very active in her church, she is never the less not the senior leader though she has many leadership responsibilities and this begs the question as to what relationship first did she have with the leadership and with the rest of the congregation. Who makes decisions for the plays and what functions must the drama play in the life of the church.

To answer these questions, the researcher recognized that she had primarily decided on the plays and it had never involved much of the leadership except to put limitations on the budget and to cut out most of the set or scenery and the costumes. It appeared that the motive for the plays as far as the leadership role was concerned, was to make a name for the church and hopefully get some seekers to join the church, in other words, it had evangelistic aims via a rather narrow view of the process. Without much thought about this disparity and tension, it appeared that the researcher blindly shelved the main focus on why she started a thespian ministry and, fell into the well of concerns

that existed in the middle ages and beyond where concerns were about the natural structure and function of drama in the church.

Donnalee Dox reports that during the Middle Ages, liturgical drama served as an integral part of the worship experience in the church and was used primarily as a ceremonial religious practice. Dox declared that while dramatic performances were carried out within the church, or nearby, they were not considered a standard part of a church service.

Until this project, the researcher's plays were not a part of the worship service and had a function outside the liturgy of the church. Even though it was a church event and most times fell within the celebrations of the church calendar, such as Christmas and Easter, it was not specifically designed to be part of the liturgy. The basic elements of Music, action and functioned prominently within the play however had always seemed to be on the fringes of the sacred and was entirely as, can now be objectively noticed by the researcher, not being the liturgical drama intended. Liturgical drama represented a special event performed within the service on Easter.³⁸ One unique way of expressing liturgical drama was not acknowledged, or ever a criterion, for modern or postmodern theatrical performance.

In *The Mythological Traditions of Liturgical Drama: The Eucharist as Theater*, Christine Schnusenberg reports that in her discussions of modern theater in 1834 and

³⁸ Donnalee Dox, "Ceremonial Embodiment: The Problem of Liturgical Drama," *Ecumenical* 3, no. 2 (2010): 32.

1835, Charles Magnin asserted that French drama did not originate *ex nihilo* (a Latin phrase meaning “out of nothing”) during the fourteenth century.³⁹ Instead, he argues, it developed from earlier forms of drama born within the rituals of the medieval church, leveraging the evidence of medievalists and literary scholars in his assertions. Thus, the development of modern drama followed a path similar to that of ancient, classical drama; each had progressed from “ecclesiastical” to “aristocratic” to “popular.” Schnusenberg demonstrates that the origins of liturgical drama are found within the mythological traditions of the ancient Near East, beginning with the royal theaters of Egypt, Babylon, and Syria, rather than with the usual starting point of Greece or Rome. The title of her concluding chapter says it all: “In the Beginning There Was Theater”; here, she contends that theater was worship and worship was theater, with participants engaging in mimetic repetition of the drama of cosmogonic myths.⁴⁰

During the Golden Age of Theater from 1870–1920, liturgical plays involved worshippers as participants rather than keeping them as detached observers of visual performance. Song and dance often played an important role in such performances in the early sixteenth century.⁴¹

³⁹ Christine Schnusenberg, *The Mythological Traditions of Liturgical Drama: The Eucharist as Theater* (New York, NY: Paulist, 2010), 508.

⁴⁰ Schnusenberg, 508.

⁴¹ Stage Beauty, “The Golden Age of Theatre,” accessed May 8, 2019, www.stagebeauty.net.

This aspect of no spectators and all participants is a very distinct quality that pervades most African American performances, be they secular or sacred. For the church however, it is a spontaneous act of worship that congregants would break into song, or dance during worship and would be led on by the worship team immediately. According to Charles Gillespie, Justin Kosec, and Kate Stratton in *Treasure in Clay Jars: Christian Liturgical Drama in Theory and Praxis*, liturgical drama is a process of adapting.⁴² It requires the ability to speak clearly about the contents enclosed in the clay jar. The clay jar serves as a metaphor, in following 2 Corinthians 4, which expressed that individuals should be candid with one another and truthful to themselves because God knows all actions. One should strive to be transformative through openness about fear, hesitation, worry, and stress.

This form of liturgical drama, performed without a written script to follow, proved quite interesting, much like the game “Charades,” wherein the audience has to figure out the message that the actors are conveying. It constitutes liturgical drama in the sense that the plays were performed during worship services to provide an expression of feelings about stories and events from the Bible. The process engaged both actors and congregants to enhance understanding of a common topic such as Easter. Individuals expressed their feelings in the process, whether scripted or improvised. These liturgical

⁴² Charles A. Gillespie, Justin Kosec, and Kate Stratton, “Treasure in Clay Jars: Christian Liturgical Drama in Theory and Praxis,” *Theatre Symposium: A Journal of the Southeastern Theatre Conference* 21 (2013): 183.

dramas could provide great benefits whether they used costumes or not and whether they were simple or elaborate.⁴³

Liturgical Drama and the African American Church

“From the beginning of time, African-Americans have been a people of expression, a people of emotion, a people of intensity, and a people of action,” says Candi Dugas-Crawford in *Taste and See the God of Your Ancestors: Drama in the African-American Church*.⁴⁴ The services are full of movements from the hand to the feet. In the African American Church, worship services have traditionally reflected the characteristics she describes.⁴⁵ Dugas-Crawford explains that liturgical drama could allow an individual to use all the senses when worshipping and praising God. He notes that liturgical drama had existed since medieval times, but that it had also existed in African American churches, suggesting that it had begun before the time of slavery and long before medieval times.⁴⁶ It requires the ability to speak clearly about the contents enclosed in the clay jar. The clay jar serves as a metaphor, in following Second Corinthians 4, which expressed that individuals should be candid with one another and

⁴³ Gillespie, Kosec, and Stratton, 183.

⁴⁴ Candi Dugas-Crawford, “Taste and See the God of Your Ancestors: Drama in the African-American Church,” *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 27, no 1–2 (Fall/Spr. 1999–2000): 183.

⁴⁵ Gillespie, Kosec, and Stratton, 184.

⁴⁶ Dugas-Crawford, 184.

truthful to themselves because God knows all actions. One should strive to be transformative through openness about fear, hesitation, worry, and stress.

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Brad Braxton emphasizes that African culture is the root of African American civilizations, and it has been well-documented that religion lies at the center of these African contributions. Africans played an instrumental role in the development of both ancient and contemporary Christianity. In this development, countries such as Egypt and Ethiopia have helped to shape Africa’s involvement with Christianity, which is as old as the church itself.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Gillespie, Kosec, and Stratton, 183.

⁴⁸ Brad Braxton, “Worship and Prayer in African American Christianity,” Huffington Post, accessed October 25, 2011, <https://www.huffpost.com/entry/worship-prayer-african-america-christianity>.

According to R. Clifford Jones, the chair of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, worship represents a key characteristic of African American Christian culture.⁴⁹ Jones contends that due to the struggles of slavery and its aftermath, African Americans sought to bring this form of medicine into their souls to allow for emotional healing in preparation for what they had to face daily during such difficult times.

Jones poses the question of how comfort and healing are engendered during worship. Comfort is experienced as singing songs grounded in struggles that speak of a better tomorrow and hearing testimonies from those who have “come over a way that with tears has been watered.”⁵⁰ Comfort comes in the form of prayers offered that remind celebrants of the power of God to right wrongs and preachers who know how to speak to aching hearts and confused minds about the Word. Dugas-Crawford explains:

For African Americans, worship is not as cerebral and rationalistic as it is experiential and dynamic. This is the case because African-American Christian worship focuses not so much on the transmission of abstract ideas and information as it does on the communal sharing of reality.⁵¹

Dugas-Crawford further states that today, western civilization’s sophistication is restraining the traditional worship of God. When encountering God, African Americans

⁴⁹ R. Clifford Jones, “African-American worship: Its Heritage, Character, and Quality,” accessed October 25, 2011, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2002/09/african-american-worship-its-heritage-character-and-quality.html>.

⁵⁰ Jones, 10.

⁵¹ Dugas-Crawford, 183.

traditionally rendered worship with their whole being, through music, dance, and emotional praise. Worship allowed for a sense of transformation from brokenness to wholeness before God and of surrendering to God.⁵²

In many African American churches, the pulpit is used as a platform or stage to present the dramatized Word of God to inspire conviction and transform lives. Worship that engages all the senses will have a wider use and allow for a greater understanding of the art.⁵³

Braxton argues that African American Christian worship seeks to stir the soul and the whole being of a person, illuminating the head and warming the heart. In African American worship, praise grasps the depth of the emotions, bringing about a redemptive meeting with a righteous God. Braxton further describes African Americans at worship as absorbed to the same degree as congregants with bowed-down heads and hearts uplifted to God, who affirms their identity.⁵⁴

African American worship is thoroughly embodied, deeply musical, highly choreographed sacred drama, with hand-clapping, feet-tapping, elders humming, choirs swaying, ushers marching, preachers sweating, and congregants shouting all for the

⁵² Dugas-Crawford, 183.

⁵³ Dugas-Crawford, 188.

⁵⁴ Braxton, "Worship and Prayer in African American Christianity."

glorification of God, the edification of the human spirit, and the transformation of a troubled world.⁵⁵

Braxton further stipulates that African Americans offer praise for blessings and lift petitions for burdens. African American prayer delivers a passionate plea for Jesus to fix what is broken, heal what hurts, and cleanse what is tainted. African Americans pray fervently, absolutely persuaded that these prayers will touch the heart and move the hands of a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God.⁵⁶

Unlike the Exodus story where the Israelites moved away to worship their God in the desert and later in the Promised Land, using God's created religious rituals to worship, African Americans had to live within the confines of their enslaved masters to worship, even after freedom. This shaped the liturgy and allowed for a syncretistic form of worship that came from the necessity of individuals and the community rather than from above. Each set of slaves having traveled from varying parts of the continent would apply their native religious rituals in worship before learning to worship using the Euro-Western styles of worship. Being foreign naturally, the slaves had to have added elements from their respective traditional cultures to provide some amount of meaning to their well-being and functioning. Over time, some rituals and ways of doing things were maintained and have stayed till the present. Worship then became a way of life for the

⁵⁵ Braxton, "Worship and Prayer in African American Christianity."

⁵⁶ Braxton, "Worship and Prayer in African American Christianity."

African American, incorporating within its liturgies those African elements of movement, songs and the cry for deliverance as well as gratitude for protection and sustenance.

The researcher had the opportunity to informally interview an African lady, Naa Kaaley, an 85-year-old good friend and native African. In talking to Naa Kaaley, the researcher was able to identify several elements in the African traditions that seem to have been carried over into African American worship. One such element is the calling out and appellations during the sermons by the congregants in the African American Church. The lady shared that it was and still is common practice for the people to sing and pronounce praises and appellations when a traditional chief priest, as well as a community chief, speaks. And these actions happen as real-life drama and never a reenactment of the event as do the same practice in the African American church.

Naa Kaaley, explained further that even though music pervades all their life activities, there is no word for music in the local languages of her country. She elaborated that the word music as the western culture calls it, does not exist because any song, with its accompanying musical instruments, as well as dance, actions, lyrics and its dress regalia, is an all-inclusive system on its own and is thereby known collectively and not individually as music. For example, she explained, the style and genre of music as the west would call it, would include in the African tradition, all that constitutes that style or genre, namely; the style of dressing, the instruments, the language of the drums, the songs, the singing style and the role it plays in any event. During storytelling sessions, the role of the “music” will be different than the role it plays during say, a funeral but the

elements will all be the same. Thus, worship had its characteristics and musical styles, which included the robes worn by the priests, the liturgy of the event almost always structured into the lifestyle of the worshipers, and the songs and actions that would accompany the said worship activity.

Kaaley also described that most people in the early years were not formally educated as what it meant to be educated, was not the same as the academic for um that it is presently. Worship, therefore, was not about performance or some adlib event, it was part and parcel of the life experiences of the African people and most of the rituals and liturgy of worship were spontaneous, involved recitation rather than reading and were mostly associated with life cycle and seasonal festivals and events. This is true of the African American worship practices where the liturgy is practiced enjoined by all, blurring the lines of priest/minister from congregants. The resultants actions of the practice of the liturgy, therefore, became the drama, which initially required no reenactment as it was real life.

The African American Lectionary⁵⁷ includes a Service of Healing that is inspired by Leroy Campbell's art called "Repairing the Damage."⁵⁸ This worship service is intended to bring about the calmness of the heart while dealing with ailments. As a

⁵⁷ The African American Lectionary, accessed May 8, 2019, <http://www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org/PopupWorshipAid.asp?LRID=419>.

⁵⁸ Leroy Campbell, "Repairing the Damage," accessed May 8, 2019, www.info@leroycampbell.com.

strategically planned worship service, it bears a strong resemblance to the liturgies performed in certain religious denominations that profess comfort. To reach those who are experiencing physical or emotional struggles, Campbell suggests several steps that readers can take, including setting the mood. This service opens up a time of hope and expectation, allowing verbal testimonies to be shared by those who are willing and who have experienced the power of God in their lives. The next step includes a soul-touching dramatic prayer of surrendering to God, called an invocation, as follows:

God of love, God of power,
 Your sons and your daughters are gathered now,
 Here in Your temple.
 Seeking to see your face on this day.
 We have come from many directions and many spaces to get here.
 And we come with a variety of concerns and issues that we desire to lay at your feet.
 We know that you are a miraculous God, who is able to do exceedingly and abundantly above all we can ask or think.
 And so, we bring our infirmities,
 Our fears, Our aches and pains,
 The sicknesses that have been called “terminal.”
 Our “there’s nothing the doctor can do” reports.
 Our weary bodies . . .
 We bring them to you, Jehovah Rapha, our Healer.
 And in this time of worship, we ask that you would speak a word to us.
 A word of Life.
 A word of Encouragement.
 A sustaining, life-changing Word,
 For we know that with YOUR Word, you’ve Healed the sick,
 Cured the infirmed,
 And even raised the dead.
 So, come into this House and Speak, Lord
 Speak Lord, for your Children are listening.
 In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The African American Lectionary further details the layout of most worship services in African American churches. The songs selected include congregational hymns, traditional, spirituals, anthems, or instrumentals, to be performed by choirs or ensembles. The songs fit the type of service rendered, such as a service for those who are struggling with ailments. Table 3:1 provides a list of song suggestions. Although this type of worship service could be considered common for many African Americans, it is by no means considered a commonality for all African American churches.

Table 3:1 Songs Often Used in an African American Church⁵⁹

Type of Songs	Song Suggestions
<i>Hymns and Congregational Songs</i>	“Great Is Thy Faithfulness” by Thomas O. Chisholm; tune by William Runyan. “I Will Trust in the Lord” (Afro-American spiritual), arranged by Carl Haywood. “God Will Take Care of You” by Civilla D. Martin; tune by W. Stillman Martin.
<i>Spirituals or Traditional Songs</i>	“There Is a Balm in Gilead” (Afro-American spiritual). “I Want Jesus to Walk with Me” (Afro-American spiritual). “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (traditional).
<i>Gospel Songs for Choirs, Ensembles, or Praise Teams</i>	“He’s Able” by Dietrick Haddon. “There Is a Balm in Gilead” by Karen Clark Sheard. “Standing in the Need” by John P. Kee.
<i>Liturgical Dance or Mime Ministry Music</i>	“Please Don’t Pass Me By” by Fred Hammond, Kim Rutherford, and Tommie Walker. “Healing Waters” by Kirk Franklin. “Take Me to the King” by Tamela Mann.
<i>Anthems</i>	“Healing” by Richard Smallwood. “My Life Is in Your Hands” by Kirk Franklin. “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior” by Fanny J. Crosby; tune by William H. Doane.
<i>Modern Songs (Written from 2005–2012)</i>	“Free” by J. Drew Sheard II and Kierra “KiKi” Sheard. “Awesome God” by Fred Hammond. “Now Be Restored” by Vashawn Mitchell and Rick Robinson.

⁵⁹The African American Lectionary, accessed May 8, 2019, <http://www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org/PopupWorshipAid.asp?LRID=419>.

<i>Offertory Song or Instrumental</i>	“His Blood Still Works” by Vashawn Mitchell. “Strength” by John P. Kee. “God Will Take of You” by Edwin Hawkins.
<i>Song or Instrumental for the Period of Prayer</i>	“Broken but I’m Healed” by Byron Cage. “I Need You to Survive” by David Frazier. “Just a Little Talk with Jesus” by Cleavant Derricks.
<i>Sermonic Selection</i>	“It Ain’t Over” by Maurette Brown-Clark. “Safe in His Arms” by Darius Brooks. “Break Every Chain” by Will Regen.
<i>Invitational Song or Instrumental</i>	“Never Be Bound Again” by Bishop Paul S. Morton. “Awesome” by Charles Jenkins. “Can’t Give Up Now” by Erica Atkins, Trecina Atkins, Curtis Burrell, and Warryn Campbell.
<i>Benediction Song or Instrumental</i>	“Amazing Grace” by John Newton. “How I Got Over” by William Herbert Brewster. “Never Give Up” by Yolanda Adams, James Harris, Terry Lewis, and James “Big Jim” Wright.

Michael Horton asks what worship should look like. In response to that question, he concluded that no matter where we are on the religious map, we all use some form of liturgy in our worship services when assembled to praise God. Horton emphasizes that God is the playwright who gives humans the skills and creativity to perform the service.⁶⁰

The Potential of Liturgical Drama

According to Schnusenberg, anthropologists contend that ritual serves as the means by which cultures are defined. Their behavior patterns, principals, encouragement, and discouragement all shape their cultural beliefs.⁶¹ Liturgy, ritual, theater, and drama all seek to answer the question, “Where did we come from, what does it mean, and where are we going?” Schnusenberg proclaims that the origins of liturgical drama are found

⁶⁰ Michael Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 141.

⁶¹ Schnusenberg, 508.

within the mythological traditions of the ancient Near East.⁶² The use of drama, Schnusenberg contends, can aid in fostering a connection to culture and scriptural understanding. Liturgical drama can aid in promoting adequate daily application of Scripture. The example of the African American church shows how powerful the use of liturgical drama can be for those who were oppressed during the time of slavery and afterward. The African American church developed a form of holistic worship that helped to sustain them.⁶³ This worship emanated from their hearts and souls, filled with authenticity and excitement, mirroring drama, much like the liturgical drama expressed during the medieval days. The art of drama involves spirituality and is denoted through its creative approach to helping individuals make connections to the Word of God, which can lead to further examination and belief.⁶⁴ That creativity can be found in liturgical drama, a vital tool for enhancing the daily application of Scripture.

Drama as Innovation

The classical Arabic theater and dramatic literature have been a controversial issue in modern Arabic literary scholarship. According to Joseph Zeidan in *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arabic World*, Shmuel Moreh has argued for the existence of live theater in the premodern Arab world, suggesting that it developed before

⁶² Schnusenberg, 508.

⁶³ Dugas-Crawford, 183.

⁶⁴ Dugas-Crawford, 183.

and during the European-style theater of the nineteenth century. He stated that pagans used theater to ridicule the religious practices of Christians and Jews. Theater grew in popularity and flourished, and the performance of the Greek dramas continued through the sixth century in Byzantine cities. Furthermore, evidence shows a record of a play performance that was intended to mock religion but as a result, actually converted individuals to Christian beliefs. Liturgical drama can change the hearts and minds of individuals and enhance the daily application of Scripture.

It is important to act as agents of transformation. Sherwood Lingenfelter calls this transformation a biblical model of family. He suggests that Christians are called to have internal relationships that are different from those in the world around them, but consistent with the Word of God, to understand the different ways in which people prefer to worship.⁶⁵

Drama as Worship

In *Drama Team Handbook*, “Daniel Jones and Alison Siewert describe worship as being in contact with God, giving individuals the chance to observe what God is like and absorb His promises, with bowed-down heads and hearts raised up in exaltation of the creator.”⁶⁶ Worship is a celebration and a place where individuals can share their feelings. It allows for understanding and connection to God, steeped in the knowledge of

⁶⁵ Sherwood Lingenfelter, *Agents of Transformation: A Guide for Effective Cross-Cultural Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 250.

⁶⁶ Alison Siewert, *Drama Team Handbook* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 20.

how humankind was woven by God through song, dance, and visual arts portraying the events or books of the Bible. Artistic ways of translating the Word of God through music and drama make it accessible to all the generations today. “As the fear, suspicion, and uneasiness of the artist and the church toward each other were replaced by mutual interest, the excitement generated by the drama and the dance was affecting the total life of the church and not its worship,” says Alvin Carmines.⁶⁷ However, if individuals never raise the bar in striving toward common goals, growth will cease.

Carmines says drama and architecture represent two forms of artistic creation and they both play a strong role in the church. With that approach, the worship service appears more like many of the newer forms of drama than the more tightly knit dramas of a preceding age.⁶⁸

According to Siewert and Jones, “Scripture has a huge story to tell: We miss a great deal when it’s communicated in words alone.”⁶⁹ Most traditions miss the opportunity during worship to allow the presence of God to come nearer through creative expression, mainly because worship has been done in one way for so long, with no room

⁶⁷ Alvin Carmines, “Drama in the Church: An Experiment,” *Theology Today* 22, no. 4 (1966): 505.

⁶⁸ Carmines, 505.

⁶⁹ Siewert, 103.

for artistic expression or humor. Humor, says Siewart, represents one of the most important ways of effectively communicating.⁷⁰

When the formal structure of worship leaves room for the spontaneous improvisation of the sermon or prayer or deliberately allows for the freedom of an informal service that creates a strong, unified atmosphere of meaning, people's connection with God may grow stronger. These possibilities are too often ignored when the church presents dramatic works only during particular events such as Easter. Liturgical drama has great advantages in worship, meaning more churches would benefit from using it consistently.⁷⁵ By providing a clearer understanding of Scripture, it generates better results in daily scriptural application.

According to Howard Clausen, drama function is to "show and not to tell." He also claimed if drama becomes too preachy and didactic, it is untrue to its calling which is to illustrate human nature and behavior but allows the viewer to find meanings for themselves. Clausen further explained,

It is a tension every writer feels when he wants to communicate through drama an idea or a theme of some truth as he perceives it: to suggest the truth adequately and to have it emerge out of a dramatic situation without taking from the audience its privilege of participating in the process by which that truth comes to light and having its own joy of discovery: "Yes, it's there, I see it!... It's true....I've experienced it." or "I've learned something about people or about myself as a person that I've never understood in quite that way before."⁷¹

⁷⁰ Siewert, 103.

⁷¹ Robert Howard Clausen, "Using Drama in Worship," *Concordia Journal* 3, no. 6 (1977): 246.

Additionally, Clausen proclaimed that there are dramatic elements in Liturgy, stating that Liturgy itself is not drama, because it does not have impersonation or invasion, but Liturgy does have dramatic elements. It has joyful words, contemplative words, words of praise and words of confession and all are action words. Words he states are given expression in the Liturgy by the worship leader or the worshipping congregants. And if part of the liturgy is sung Clausen mentioned and augmented with hymns, the music becomes part of a dramatic structure, and the elements when assembled properly will give movement and dynamic quality worship. Beyond words and actions, there is the physical setting for visual implementation like props and costumes. We can understand such principles in drama but are often neglected in worship.

Clausen also stated that “God has put into us our capacity for feeling, our imaginative powers. He has given to us our vocal resources... and the more we assert the body movements of the person as a whole, the more successful we will be in involving that person in the act of worship.” In this respect, liturgical worship has something in common with the creative dramatics growth and developments of persons using mental, emotional, spiritual and physical resources.⁷² John Steven Paul suggested that the value of doing drama in the church is plentiful. He further offered four reasons to consider why: 1) a collective art drama can involve more people in the essential mission of the Christian Church, a visual art, drama can connect with our contemporary culture, 3) a collaborative

⁷² Robert Howard Clausen, 246.

art, drama can draw performers and other artists together into groups of mutual support while working together and 4) an art in the service to the liturgy, drama can offer performers the opportunity to serve God and God's people in the church.⁷³

Additionally, Paul believes that all drama is religious drama. He describes three types of drama: Religious Drama, Chancel Drama and Liturgical Drama.⁷⁴

Religious Drama was described as actors seeking to connect with the audience to make invisible visible. And for the actor to have achieved its goal, the audience must be willing to join with them in a ritualized creation, although it's an act of belief. When this action happens, what was unseen can be seen. And since words like belief and communion with one another are religious words, there are some similarities between church and theatre, and in this sense all drama is religious.

Chancel drama was described as a play that physically takes place in the church. The Chancel refers to an architectural formula invented for monastic churches and cathedrals built in Europe in the Middle Ages. In this setting worshippers, the choir and various kinds of ecclesiastical furniture including the altar were situated in the chancel. Additionally, there are specific plays written to be performed in the chancel. Plays in the name of reverence, those written to avoid offending the churchgoers.

⁷³ John Steven Paul, "Drama for the Church: The Soul purpose plays," *Soul Purpose Liturgical Drama and Essays* 35 (2009): 2-3.

⁷⁴ Paul, 2.

Liturgical drama was described as a play that is situated and integrated into a service or an order of service. Paul, agreeing with James White's *Introduction to Christian Worship*, that "Christian worship is a type of worship that relies heavily on the structuring of time to fulfill its purposes. Whereas the same could be said for Western drama and music where liturgical drama finds its place in that structure."⁷⁵

Conclusion

Liturgical drama entails presenting stories from the Bible to dramatically represent the entire scriptural story, portray and reenacting crucial moments in Christ's life. The clarity and understanding it brings are much-needed in today's churches. Furthermore, singing sacred songs, playing music of praise, and reading Scripture acknowledging His glory and excellence brings people into closer relationship with God. Thus, liturgical drama serves as an excellent method of lending the level of clarity that allows for the daily application of Scripture.

When denominations come together recognizing that they all have faith in one God, churches will gain the authenticity to further engage youth in the Word of God. In a worship setting, drama serves as an art and a tool for engaging with our youth, and all congregants creating a hands-on focus that brings Scripture to life. Many churches are therefore beginning to successfully use drama as a teaching tool, which could potentially provide a positive approach for youth programs as well as congregants in general,

⁷⁵ Paul, 2-3.

insightfully depicting the scope of the biblical message or sermon, for any event. Visual interpretation through demonstrative performance may have a powerful effect on the minds of individuals.

In the past decade, scholars explored the use of liturgical drama as a means of encouraging social gatherings through the performance of plays that invited people into the church. This aim served two purposes: First, it created a sense of community while providing space for adolescents to come together and share scriptural truth; second, it facilitated a stronger understanding of Scripture, particularly for traditional Christian celebrations. Churches in the researcher's communities have often celebrated Black History Month, Juneteenth, Easter, and Christmas using drama. When accepted in churches, plays have been successfully used to promote growth in small group programs.

Initiating a permanent thespian ministry provides an innovative way of promoting monthly drama as a means of drawing adolescents in church into fellowship, encouraging them to participate and live the Word of God. Drama opens the mind by asking one to relive the biblical story, better envisioning the nuanced biblical realities.

The researcher hopes that churches would benefit from focusing on different themes each month in their drama program, from which Scripture will be brought to life. The productions can seek to use the language of scriptural passages to bring the narrative to life. This requires research into the time period of the narratives conveying the proposed themes and an interdisciplinary approach to productions.

Churches have a great need for positive activities that engage youth, as well as all congregants within the church, by gaining and retaining their interest. Using drama provides a way of fostering growth in adolescent minds as well as expanding their leadership skills. The resulting shift in behavior can lessen their idle time and broaden their creative minds, influencing them to become more innovative thinkers. The question is not how adolescents can use drama as an effective tool for growth, but how churches can step up to meet the need for creative forms of worship and proactively engage congregants of all ages in liturgical drama as a means of encouraging them to apply Scripture to their daily lives.

CHAPTER FOUR: A CASE STUDY OF LITURGICAL DRAMA

The researcher designed this project to pursue liturgical drama as a tool to bring about scriptural awareness motivating daily application using a play production performed at Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church. The researcher wrote and directed a liturgical drama (Appendix B). To explore the impact, the researcher used both qualitative and quantitative research. A case study method was conducted with a survey as the research instrument.

Methodology

Whether a researcher chooses to use a mixed-methods approach that was grounded in theory, appropriate collection of data, sequence, and interpretation and should be consistent, relevant and current given the need for the research study. The research study should be appropriately explained and described, and the techniques used in the study should reflect properly the hypothetical outcome of the study. The researcher's and respondents' roles should also be clearly outlined with biases, opinions and other issues identified before the onset of the research process. Interpretation of the data should be clearly defined and explained according to the initial research question; if

not clearly explained, the research study could be subjected to inconsistent and misappropriate representation of the material or meaning of the study.⁷⁶

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a type of social discipline research that collects and works with data that is observed not relating to or consisting of numbers and that which seeks to interpret meaning from such data that help understand social life through the study of affected populations or places.⁷⁷

The benefits of doing qualitative as opposed to quantitative research are that the data tells what design features are difficult or easy to complete. Research following a qualitative approach is exploratory and seeks to explain ‘how’ and ‘why’ a particular phenomenon or behavior operates as it does in a particular context. Qualitative research answers who is doing what and why they are doing so, as opposed to how much of what is happening and where. This data is best used to form and test a theory that it will support or reject.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Paul Leedy and Jeanne Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and design*, 9th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Publishing, 2005), 2.

⁷⁷ Ashley Crossman, “An Overall of Qualitative Research Methods,” accessed May 8, 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/qualitative-research-methods-3026555>.

⁷⁸ Jon MacDonald, “Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research: Learning The Benefits,” accessed May 8, 2019, <https://thegood.com/insights/quantitative-vs-qualitative-research-methodology>.

Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is a type of research that focuses on numerical results. Gigi DeVault suggests two benefits of quantitative research. The first benefit is a straightforward analysis.

When you collect quantitative data, the type of results will tell you which statistical tests are appropriate to use. As a result, interpreting your data and presenting those findings is straightforward and less open to error and subjectivity.⁷⁹

The second benefit is prestige. “Research that involves complex statistics and data analysis is considered valuable and impressive because many people don't understand the mathematics involved.”⁸⁰

However, DeVault warns researchers that qualitative research can have disadvantages. The first disadvantage is a false focus on numbers.

Quantitative research can be limited in its pursuit of concrete, statistical relationships, which can lead to researchers overlooking broader themes and relationships. By focusing solely on numbers, you run the risk of missing surprising or big-picture information that can benefit your business.⁸¹

A second disadvantage pertains to the difficulty of setting up a research model.

When you conduct quantitative research, you need to carefully develop a hypothesis and set up a model for collecting and analyzing data. Any errors in your set up, bias on the part of the researcher, or mistakes in execution can invalidate all your results. Even coming up with a hypothesis can be subjective,

⁷⁹ Gigi DeVault, “Market Research,” accessed December 29, 2019, <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/quantitative-research>.

⁸⁰ DeVault, “Market Research”

⁸¹ DeVault, “Market Research.”

especially if you have a specific question that you already know you want to prove or disprove.⁸²

A third disadvantage is that numbers can be misleading.

Many people assume that because quantitative research is based on statistics it is more credible or scientific than observational, qualitative research. However, both kinds of research can be subjective and misleading. The opinions and biases of a researcher are just as likely to impact quantitative approaches to information gathering. In fact, the impact of this bias occurs earlier in the process of quantitative research than it does in qualitative research.⁸³

Case Study

Gustafsson stated that there is no one definition of case study. It can be defined as a thorough study or investigation of a person, a group of people or units aimed to simplify research methodology, in which the researcher examines data relating to many variables to support the claim or question.⁸⁴ A case study has also been described as an intensive, systematic investigation of a single individual, group, community or some other unit in which the researcher examines in-depth data relating to several variables.⁸⁵

According to Hodkinson and Hodkinson when describing what they called Capturing reality, one of the key benefits in pursuing a case study is the ability called “lived reality.” Case studies have the potential, when applied successfully, to “retain

⁸² DeVault, “Market Research.”

⁸³ DeVault, “Market Research.”

⁸⁴ Johanna Gustafsson, *Single Case Studies vs. Multiple Case Studies: A Comparative Study* (Halmstad, Sweden: Halmstad University, 2017).

⁸⁵ N.F. Woods and M. Calanzaro, “Nursing Research: Theory and Practice,” *Evidence Based Nursing* 21 (1980), 21.

more of the “noise” of real life than many other types of research.”⁸⁶ The importance of “noise” and its place in research is especially important in contexts such as education, for example in schools where background noise is unavoidable.⁸⁷

Robert Stakes recorded if a researcher wants to study a specific phenomenon arising from a particular entity, then a single-case study is warranted and will allow for an in-depth understanding of the single phenomenon.⁸⁸ The researcher chose to utilize a case study because it fits the simplicity of receiving support or rejection in the finding. In this case study, the researcher argued that liturgical drama can be an effective method to teach the Scripture using any book or chapter in the Bible encouraging daily application.

Survey Design and Data Collection

The survey was designed with four demographic questions and 19 Likert-scale questions. Demographic questions included age, gender, attendee’s category and participants. The researcher used Likert-style questions to explore participant's perspectives on the liturgical drama they watched or participated in. Likert-scale questions are essential in measuring a respondent's opinion or attitude towards a given subject. Likert Scale is typically a five, seven, or nine-point agreement scale used to measure respondents' agreement with a variety of statements In general, a series of

⁸⁶ Phil Hodkinson and Heather Hodkinson, *The Strengths and Limitations of Case Study Research*, paper presented at the Learning and Skills Development Agency conference, Cambridge, MA. December 2001, 4.

⁸⁷ Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 4.

⁸⁸ Robert Stake, *Multiple Case Study Analysis* (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2005), 28.

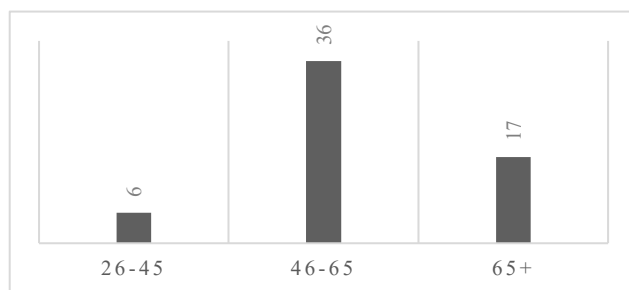
statements each designed to view a construct from a slightly different perspective are leveraged. The power of this technique is that it works across disciplines. It is just as applicable to a social science construct as it is a marketing one.⁸⁹

The survey was distributed to both the drama participants and the congregational audience of the GFMBC with hope that the questions asked would clarify the effectiveness of the play and bring about clarity to Scripture encouraging daily application. The survey was electronically distributed, through QuestionPro, to the drama participants and the congregational audience the following Sunday.

Participants

Surveys were completed by 59 people: one-third of the respondents were male, two-thirds were female. Sixty-one percent of the participants were between the ages of 45-65, twenty-nine percent were 65 plus, and the remaining ten percent were ages 26-45 (Chart 4.1).

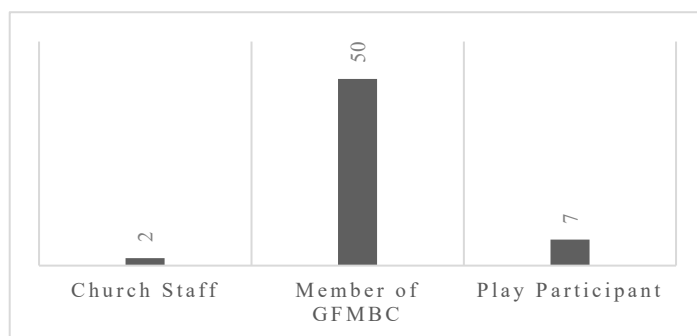
Chart 4.1 Number of Attendees in Age Brackets (n=59)



⁸⁹ QuestionPro Inc, "Likert scale questions with example," accessed December 29, 2019, <https://www.questionpro.com/article/likert-scale-survey-questions.html>

Individuals completing the survey fell into one of the three categories: church staff, member of GFMBC or play participant (Chart 4.2). The majority of participants (85%) were members of the church. The play participants (11%) and staff made up the remaining amount.

Chart 4.2 Attendee Category (n=59)



Play Development

The play used was written and directed by the researcher (Appendix B). Realizing that the event for the season was Christmas, the researcher chose to write a play portraying the Christmas story. That search led to the researcher entitling the play *The Greatest Gift of All Time*. Written from the beginning to end with a burst of creative thoughts, the researcher fashioned and developed the play within four weeks. The play was based on Luke 1:26-35.

All of the actors were volunteers who shared the pleasure of and had an interest in liturgical drama. The rehearsal and the need for actors was advertised through the church announcements every Sunday for a month prior to the first rehearsal for the play. Rehearsals convened every Tuesday until the performance date.

The play *The Greatest Gift of All Time* was performed on December 16, 2019 during the Sunday morning worship at Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist in Minneapolis, Minnesota as a part of the Liturgy.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The researcher designed this project to pursue liturgical drama as a tool to bring about scriptural awareness motivating daily application using a play production performed at Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church. The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative research.

A case study method was conducted with a survey as the research instrument. The survey was grouped into three sections. Questions 5-9 focused on the participant's experience of the play. Questions 10-14 focused on the participant's attitude toward church plays. Questions 15-23 focused on the impact of the play.

Participants Experience of Play

Survey questions 5-9 asked participants about their experience related to church plays. Participants were asked whether they liked the play or not. An overwhelming majority (95%) answered yes, they liked the play, and the remaining five percent said no (Chart 5.1). The majority (89%) had attended church plays previously; five percent had not (Chart 5.2). The data showed the majority (89%) had also been participants or had viewed plays from the audience, leaving about ten percent that answered that they had not been participants or viewed the plays from the audience (Chart 5.3). The data also indicated that 81 percent had acted in or attended a play in the past and 19 percent had not. The majority (95%) enjoyed the play and the remaining did not (Chart 5.4). The

majority (83%) of individuals stated that the play helped them to better understand Scripture and 17 percent responded that the play did not help them better understand Scripture (Chart 5.5).

Chart 5.1 Question 5

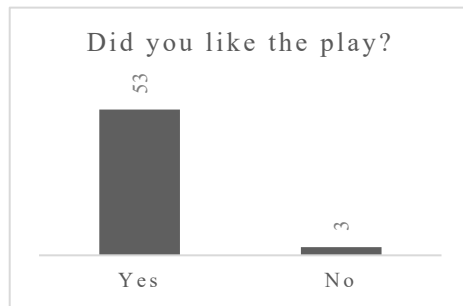


Chart 5.2 Question 6

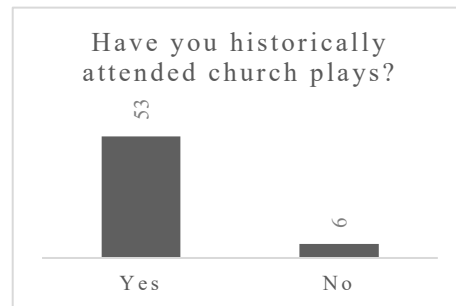


Chart 5.3 Question 7

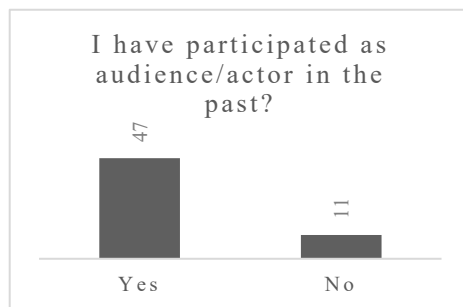


Chart 5.4 Question 8

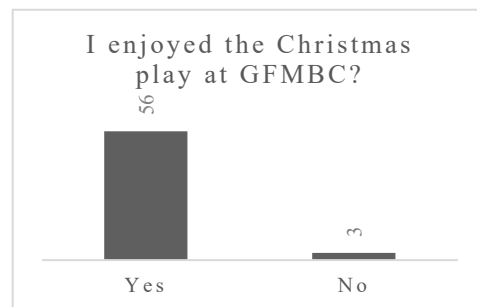
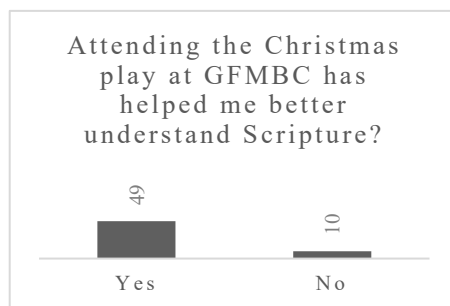


Chart 5.5 Question 9



Participants' Attitudes About Church Plays

Research participants had a positive attitude toward drama in church and used for teaching Scripture. Table 5.1 shows data from survey questions 10-14. Ninety-eight percent had a positive attitude about church plays. The majority (88%) agreed that drama could be a tool for expounding on Scripture. Participants saw value of having drama in church. Seventy-seven percent disagreed when asked if drama should never be used in church and twenty-three percent agreed. The majority (83%) revealed that drama could be entertaining, and 18 percent said it should not be entertaining. A little more than half (51%) said that drama in the church should be used to teach Scripture.

Table 5.1: Survey Questions 10-14

Question	Yes/Agree	No/Disagree
My attitude about plays in church is positive?	99%	1%
Drama as a tool for expounding on scripture is necessary?	88%	12%
Drama should never be used in church?	23%	77%
Drama in church should not be entertaining?	18%	83%
Drama in church should only be used to teach scripture?	51%	49%

Impact of Play

Informational and Encouraging

The survey revealed that the impact of the play was both informational and encouraging. Table 5.2 records data from questions 15-19, regarding the impact of the play. About a third (39%) said that the play was entertaining, while almost half (49%) disagreed. The majority of participants (94%) agreed that the play was informative, but only a few (6%) disagreed. The majority (99%) agreed that the play was educational, the

remaining percent disagreed. The data also revealed that almost three-quarters (74%) agreed that the play made a difference in their life and the remaining quarter (26%) disagreed. The majority (86%) agreed that the play was encouraging while only a few (13%) disagreed.

Table 5.2: Survey Questions 15-19

Question	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
The play was entertaining	39%	13%	49%
The play was informative	94%		6%
This play was educational	99%		1%
This play made a difference in my life	74%		26%
This play encouraged me	86%		13%

Entertaining and Educational

The data also indicated that the play was entertaining as well as educational. Table 5.2 and 5.3 records data about whether the play was entertaining or educational. Participants were split on if the play was entertaining, almost half (49%) said it was not entertaining. The majority (98.3%) agreed that the play was educational while the remaining (1%) disagreed. The participants were split regarding if the play emphasized entertainment more than education, (41%) said yes while (59%) said no.

Transformational

According to the survey, there was a positive report that the play brought about transformation. Table 5.3 records data from questions 20-23, regarding whether the play impacted individuals to change. Over three-quarters at (79%) of the participants indicated that the play inspired them to change their attitude. Over half at (63%) indicated that the play was accurate to the text. More than half at (54%) said that the play had transformed their lives.

Table 5.3 Survey Questions 20-23

Question	Yes	Not Sure	No
This play has inspired me to change my attitude towards others positively	79%		21%
The play was accurate to text?	63%	18%	20%
The play emphasized entertainment more than education?	41%		59%
The play has transformed my life?	54%		45%

Overall Findings

One of the researcher's assumption was that the audience would respond positively to the liturgical drama presented and be encouraged to apply the effectiveness to daily life. The overall findings present favorable results that the participants had a positive experience and response to the play. Many participants indicated that they enjoyed the play and said that the play was educational.

The attitude of the participants reported that they received the play favorable and were encouraged to know more after having seen the play. The participants spoke of their experience as one of transformation and that it led to understanding Scripture better. The researcher concluded that the use of liturgical drama is an effective tool to be considered to teach the Word of God.

CHAPTER SIX: EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION

This project addressed the problem of the lack of a model thereby using liturgical drama as a means of teaching God's Word, to bring about practical awareness to understanding the Word of God in Christian churches. To address this problem, the researcher (a) reviewed biblical theological data to examine Scripture related to the use of liturgical drama, (b) reviewed relevant scholarly literature on liturgical drama in the early Christian church, (c) wrote and directed a liturgical drama production.

Presenting a dramatized visual of the written Word of God can provide a process of bringing a clearer understanding of scriptural applications within individuals and congregants. Through liturgical drama, Christian churches could be inspired to apply Scripture more fully to their daily life. This chapter will evaluate and discuss the effectiveness of the project.

Strengths

The researcher identified four strengths of the research project. First, the participants represented a variety of ages. Participants range in age from 26 to over 65. Having different age groups indicates the difference in generations encouraging a variety of beliefs and acceptance of liturgical drama. Second, the participants experienced the play from a variety of vantage points. They included individuals that were in the play, on staff and those who observed the play from the audience. The participants are always

operating at a vantage because they have the play in front of them and know how it is supposed to turn out, whereas the audience is kept somewhat in suspend. Third, there was full participation from members and staff of Greater Friendship to be used in any capacity needed; fourth, there was a good response of surveys completed. Because Greater Friendship is somewhat conservative, for congregants to have taken the time to complete a questionnaire for a play is a big and welcoming surprise.

Weaknesses

The researcher identified four weaknesses of the research project. First, all of the participants had a connection with the church. Out of the 59 people who responded, most of them were members of Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church and frequently attended the church which could be a weakness in the sense of familiarity and wanting to help. The researcher had done many plays before at other churches and members from Greater Friendship Church reported to have attended and enjoyed some of those plays. Often when members or participants are familiar with the researchers' previous work in another church such as plays, their answers to a survey could be considered bias. Second, survey questions could have been more direct or rephrased. Rather than asking "Was the play accurate to the text" it could have been rephrased to "Will you go and compare the play to the Scripture passage for accuracy?" More direct survey questions would have resulted in a more directed response. Third, the survey did not include open ended questions. Close-ended questions limit the participant to a set of responses, while

open ended questions allow the participant to express an opinion.⁹⁰ Fourth, the researcher could have chosen to advertise outside the walls of the church. To increase the possibility of visitors attending and to lead to positive changes in performance and reinforce current success, the use of other media to advertise the play seemed necessary.

Discussion

The overall findings were that liturgical drama could be a successful tool to bring clarity to the Word of God. Biblically liturgical drama was revealed in Genesis when God set the world into existence, the performance really began when Adam and Evil disobeyed, and so on into Exodus and throughout the Bible, drama exists.

The researcher mentioned that in Exodus the parting of the Red Sea was a celebration after experiencing a dramatic act of God. David performing an act of drama while dancing in 2 Samuel because of the return of the Ark of the Covenant. The Bible says David danced with all of his might, dramatically until he danced out of some of his clothing.

In Jeremiah the drama changes to the expectation of peace and calmness, waiting for that day of relief and contentment as they continued going through the struggles of everyday life. Dramatic in the sense that every day there is an expectation of the unseen,

⁹⁰ William Foddy, *Constructing Questions for Interviews and Questionnaires: Theory and Practice in Social Research*, (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 127.

hope. This life that we live now is a stage set full of waiting and expecting a performance.

Related literature revealed that liturgy is the order of worship service and liturgical drama is an event dramatized during the service. Liturgical drama has been in effect since the medieval age. Many scholars agreed that liturgical drama can be found in movements such as worship, dance, lifting of hands, kneeling, singing and the list goes on. Liturgy is the order of worship and Liturgical is in the spiritual movement, dramatized through actions.

The researcher found it quite interesting that certain churches used liturgical drama as a model to raise relevant issues. These issues were then addressed in a sermon to expose the pain and to get the audience to identify with the character. In hopes that the audience would come to realize that the characters were dealing with the same worldly problems that they do in life, at work, school or play. Contending that drama is the life that one lives and struggles through daily. The liturgy depends deeply on the order an individual has chosen, whether obedience or disobedience to God while entering the next chapter of life. The researcher is reminded of a time when visiting the Work House Women prison population as a Chaplain. The duties were to listen to the inmate and offer prayer. Most of the inmates in their efforts to be transformed requested a Bible and asked to have certain chapters explained to them. The inmates were there for something or someone that they had chosen to disobey. The request was plentiful, so the researcher

decided to use the Easter story of the Bible to dramatize, hoping to engage and help the inmates understand the Scriptures.

Many participated in the production attending practices diligently two times a week. As they began to understand more about the resurrection of Jesus, most of them confessed to having been a Christian at an early age but had not continued practicing the faith, they reported that the reason was mainly that they didn't understand the Bible.

During the practices and after the production the guards on duty and the inmates there voiced that they had come to understand the meaning of the Easter story after watching the practices and hearing the Scripture read. The youth and adolescent inmates while incarcerated, confessed that they experienced growth in applying scriptural to daily living through the lens of dramatization. They professed to want to read more; because of the play production was an eye-opener and would continue the efforts of reading and studying the Word of God.

CHAPTER SEVEN: REFLECTION

While studying and researching the possibility of liturgical drama being a tool to teach the Word of God, the researcher concluded that that liturgical drama may not be the best way of teaching Scripture, and it may not be considered the most common phenomenon in today's worship. However, the researcher is convinced that the act of reimagining or re-exposing liturgical drama to Christians should be a matter for serious consideration for use.

By using liturgical drama as a model for teaching Christians the Word of God they become aware of another teaching tool. The researcher claims that there is still hope of liturgical drama being a key part of the liturgy and worship. It's a start in a positive direction particularly if Christians churches do not already have a ministry of liturgical drama, to help teach the Word of God.

After going through the process of researching and understanding more about liturgical drama, the researcher believes that life is quite similar to a liturgy. The difference is that the liturgy (the order of service) is determined by man and the order of life is determined by God. The stage is set and the curtains go up and life begins. Liturgical drama is a way of celebrating God through movements, the hands, the voice, kneeling in awe in worship. Drama occurred when man decided to live contrary to the will of God, carrying out their own set of rules by which to abide. By dramatizing the

events of the Bible one can come to see not only what was going on with that character portrayed but with themselves as they begin to relate the character to their being.

The thesis is about using a model to teach the will of God so that knowing the will promote a better relationship with others and consequently less drama.

When Jesus died for the redemption of others a stage was set, one of forgiveness. Worship is an important mission, it is God's rule that must be celebrated, and the redemptive act for all is certainly a call to worship.

Lessons Learned Theologically

Lessons the researcher gleaned about church drama is that it ought not to be staged but should be a relational and spontaneous act of worship. That the whole liturgy of worship ought to be spontaneous, active and real, honoring God and evoking repentance on the part of the worshipers. Anything short of this creates an artificial non-sustainable experience that is soon lost under the masses of other events and experiences of life.

One thing the researcher had come to realize is, that choosing to write liturgical plays to be used as a model to teach Scripture and bring about transformation was one of the best decisions ever made. The researcher is aware that not everyone will learn from having seen a play or will enjoy the presentation of liturgical plays. However, it is my deepest suggestion that liturgical drama is used as a way of understanding Scripture because results of a liturgical questionnaire and survey have proven it helpful.

Additionally, clarity of Scripture could bring about a significant change in understanding the will of God, encouraging individuals to apply His will to daily living.

Though there were several lessons learned theologically, perhaps the most important lesson learned was that the researcher, like many others, is inadequate with regards to how God wants His creation to behave. Fortunately, Scripture has the answers for mankind's inadequacy if grasped and accepted: just as Adam and Eve were never meant to survive all alone in their inadequacy, neither are we. Though God gave humanity free will, it is certainly the responsibility of humanity to read, learn, and accept Scripture and be transformed as a faithful servant of God and ultimately live out the will of God.

Equally important, the three texts chosen and discussed in earlier chapters, seemed pretty random, but it became evident that they had several things in common besides the drama of the liturgy. Each had a liberation theology, liturgical movement, theme of the divine presence, atonement for sin and obedience redemptive elements. Over time, the researcher accepted that the liturgy is a tradition and that some feel, if the tradition is broken or changed that God's order is changed. Not so, but a great number of Christian churches today behave in that manner. Therefore, if liturgical drama was introduced to that group of believers it would take much convincing.

Lessons Learned as Playwright

In writing the play, the researcher found herself several times at a deadlock. This research revealed several loopholes the researcher had not been privy to see until now. As a playwright, it appeared that the tension between staying true to the text was always broken/resolved on the side of entertainment to sustain the audience. To keep the narrative pure, one had to be the real actors, a feat that almost seems impossible to attain as long as liturgical drama remains an imitation of life rather than life. Throughout the play the playwright had to use digression, meaning the need to move away from accuracy to exaggerate the meaning. For instance, the Bible does not tell us that David went away but that he came to know that Mary was with child. The Bible said, Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph before they came together and she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame... (Matt. 1:18-25 ESV). So, to bring about an interest unexpectantly, adding an exciting possibility at that time during the play was done to enhance what was said called digression as an act to bring about understanding.

There are many lessons learned during this search on liturgical drama. To share a few, the researcher discovered what writers do when there are many first drafts and many pages later claiming to be the first draft; the writer continues to write regardless until the projected idea is reached. A few rigid thoughts learned behind my being a playwright, deals with drama whether liturgical or theatrical, the writer should defend their ideas and

their work. Also, the researcher recognized that it was important to read plays written by other writers to critique to find what was good, distasteful and what helped in growth. One other lesson learned that the researcher came to realize was that the writer must be open to another point of view because it is a collective effort of growth and others should be allowed to offers their point of view.

Lessons Learned Academically

Academically, the researcher learned that there is much more in the process of writing a thesis than writing a general paper. Writing a thesis involved a theory that the researcher had to present an opinion to be proven or argued. One must embrace the argument considered and included evidence to complete a cohesive supposition. The Kate Turabian guide to writing various kinds of papers, thesis, and more, is a valuable tool to have at hand and its functions, to effectively use the manual during the dissertation process.

Recognizing lessons learned is an essential part of any proposed project and serves several purposes. As the conclusion of a lesson learned was near completion, the researcher begins to capture the essence of the research obtained. After this, the researcher must ensure all information is documented carefully.

When reviewing the document, it should describe what went wrong during the search and generate suggestions on how to avoid parallel incidences in the future. Also, the researcher should know and be able to describe what went well and how similar projects may benefit from this information.

For the researcher, liturgical drama served as a valuable tool for others to grow and explore similar projects. The researcher has written many play productions and accumulated data only by word of mouth. It was the first time that the researcher had ever surveyed a play. Using the Likert style questions and a research survey was enlightening.

Future Research

The researcher desires that liturgical drama be used as a tool to bring clarity to the Word of God. It would be exceptional to have a group of performers to embark upon a journey with an ensemble of actors and actresses willing to go from church to church within a certain radius, and portray a liturgical drama event and get survey results of the performance. Hopefully, others will consider researching the effectiveness of liturgical drama on the road, like a liturgical stage show or musical. There are three future research ideas.

First, conducting the same research at multiple churches that have the play would be a way of increasing the number of research participants and exploring if the results are similar. Second, researching with a small group of individuals, over a year would provide an opportunity to see if their understanding of Scripture increased. Third, interviewing Christian playwright/directors to learn about how liturgical drama might have a positive impact from their perspective,

If other churches are allowed to use liturgical drama or simply allow themselves to be exposed to it during the liturgy, the results of growth in the clarity of Scripture could be very positive.

Researcher's Reflection

Literature Review of best practices for Liturgical Drama

Regarding the Literature review, the researcher recalled Eugene Peterson's article *Why Did Uzzah Die? Why Did David Dance? 2 Samuel 6-7* as having made one of the most reasonable responses regarding worship, when describing David's reason for his dance.

Worship is the strategy by which we interrupt our preoccupation with ourselves and attend to the presence of God. Worship is that time and place that we assign for deliberate attentiveness to God, not because he is confined to time and place, but because our self-importance is so insidiously relentless that if we don't deliberately interrupt ourselves regularly, we have no chance of attending to him at all other times and places.⁹¹

Peterson supports the idea that David's dancing was a form of worship. He also explains that in worship, David was experienced God in a unique way.

In God, David had access to life that far exceeded his capacity to measure or control it. He was on the edge of mystery, of glory. And He danced... He wasn't taking of God, insuring that God would be properly honoured. He was worshipping, responding to the living God. He was open to the life of God flowing around and through him, the God whose ways intersected history in ways defined by that Ark, the ways of salvation and revelation and blessing.⁹²

Worship is from within and is an awe-experience.

⁹¹ Eugene Peterson, "Why did Uzzah Die? Why Did David Dance? 2 Samuel 6-7," *Cruce* 31, no. 3 (September 1995): 8.

⁹² Peterson, 8.

New Testament as Liturgical drama.

Many Scriptures in the New Testament exemplify liturgical drama. Liturgical drama in the New Testament is life as it's viewed today. These passages describe everything from healing a paralytic to finding peace in a storm. This is so characteristic of the Creator of the universe and the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He shares His love.

A liturgical drama account was found in the gospel of Matthew as the researcher read about a woman who was repenting with her alabaster box.

Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 26:5-16).

It was a custom to wash the feet and anoint the head of a guest in the home. This woman went beyond and sat at the feet of Jesus in total submission using her hair to cleanse His feet. Her actions suggested that she was willing to sacrifice all that she had for the glory of God. She worshipped Him within her heart. And because God knows all, and sees all, He could see her heart of repentance. Which reminded the researcher of the Scripture in Jeremiah that could have been revealed to her. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an

expected end (Jer. 29:11).” Liturgical drama was wordless, but worship is shown by her humbleness. This expression could be called wordless worship, as the woman dramatically worshipped Jesus for forgiveness and expressed her feelings without a sound. David danced expressively in worship, but the woman wept in worship.

As a result, the researcher continues the liturgical drama in the New Testament with healing. According to the Gospel of Luke, a blind man is healed.

As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. He called out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” “Lord, I want to see,” he replied. Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God (Luke 18:35-43).

Worship is what the ex-blind man and the nearby people did as they witnessed what Jesus had done. It is truly inconceivable of how the blind man felt after the healing took place. The NIV version said that the man jumped up as if to shout! It could not have been calm quiet worship but it seemed to be an accelerant burst worshipping God for what He had done. Praise through jumping or leaping, another movement of liturgical drama.

Another New Testament liturgical drama account takes place by a pool. The drama involves a man who had an infirmity for thirty-eight years and was healed at the pool of Bethesda. John 5:2-10 says:

Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?” “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.”

The Bible does not tell us that the man jumped up and down and shouted. Nor do we know what this man’s emotions were. But the Bible did say that the man told the Jews about his healing. Liturgical drama here is in the sense he is telling the narrative about the good news of Jesus.

Throughout the Bible that has been set as a guide, God has offered His love. And what He expects in return is obedience, praise and worship. It is hoped that liturgical drama is accepted as a way to learn more about the will of God. His love motivates and empowers us to praise and worship Him. So, most choose to obey Him out of joy and thankfulness. Which reminded the researcher of why God sent Jesus to us. Jesus came that we might have abundant life (Jn. 10:10).

Liturgical drama can be seen in the same miraculous and mysterious vein as praise and worship ever was. Whether it was through dance, song or movement of the hands and feet, bowing in reverence, or what’s heard from the use of musical instruments, liturgical drama resonates as an effective tool for scriptural transformation.

If Liturgical Drama can be used as a tool to teach the Word of God in the 21st century it is possible for transformation.

APPENDIX A

LITURGICAL DRAMA QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey. I would like to remind you that your responses will be confidential, and will be stored in such manner that no one can have access to them. This research will be used for academic research purposes only. Please consider answering this survey as honestly as you can as your honest feedback will assist and impact the researcher's future productions for better outcomes.

1. Gender?
2. Age
3. Attendees Category:
4. If a participant, are you?
5. Did you like the play?
6. Have you historically attended church plays?
7. I have participated as audience/actor in the past?
8. I enjoyed the Christmas play at GFMBC?
9. Attending the Christmas play at GFMBC has helped me better understand scripture?
10. My attitude about plays in church is positive?
11. Drama as a tool for expounding on scripture is necessary?
12. Drama should never be used in church?
13. Drama in church should not be entertaining?
14. Drama in Church should only be used to teach scripture?
15. The play was entertaining
16. The play was informative
17. This play was educational?
18. This play made a difference in my life?
19. This play has encouraged me?
20. This play has inspired me to change my attitude toward others positively?
21. This play was accurate to the text?
22. This play emphasized entertainment more than education?
23. This play has transformed my life?

APPENDIX B:

THE PLAY "THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL TIME"

The Play “The Greatest Gift of all Time”

Narrator—Welcome to a time set aside to talk about the Christmas story. Well let’s peep in the windows of the Thespian Ministry as they present and depict a Liturgical drama of the Christmas story called the Greatest Gift of all Time.

Y o u t h - - - T h e B i r t h o f J e s u s F o r e t o l d i n L u k e .

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ³⁵The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born^[e] will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26, 35-38 NRSV).

Track #1*Singer/Choir---** My Redeemer Lives---- by Nicole C. Mullen

Scene One:

Crowd----(walk out on stage— down to the front of steps to listen, lip talking to one another.)

Isaiah ---- (Kneels to pray) ----Oh, my Father in heaven, to you I pray. It is in you that I believe and only you. Please give ear to me. I’m mocked by my enemies and scorned by the poor. Yet you tell me to speak your Word. Help me, oh God, help me! Help me to stand against such hostility. Your words summon my tongue, and I hold them dear to my heart, but your children don’t listen to me. Must I continue? Send somebody else, I tried. Release me from this duty, please! They don’t listen to me! I pray for your guidance. (falls asleep)

***Lights down

Track #2*Sound---**Angels sound Effect

Voice of God (VOG) ----Isaiah---Isaiah---Arise! You will speak my servant.

Isaiah---My Lord, My God! Is that you?

VOG---You must go Isaiah, and continue to speak the truth of the Savior to come. Tell them that the Savior is coming, the Messiah!

Isaiah---The truth? —A Messiah! A Savior to come. I told them. Didn’t you hear me God? I, I tried. Ahh, to whom do I speak this truth my Father?

VOG---Speak to those ears that hear!!

Isaiah---But God, no one listens to me! You know this. They laugh and make fun, they call me crazy, they don’t listen to me God! They don’t listen, nobody listens to me! ----God, are you even listening to me? God!

VOG---(interrupts)---Go Isaiah! Go! Tell them; unto us a child is born, a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder, and He shall be called Wonderful Counselor, The Prince of Peace, Mighty God and Everlasting Father. (Isa 9:6)

Isaiah---They shall call him The Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father? I, I, I don't understand. (grabs his head in thought). God are you not the Father to whom I pray? Is this real, is this really you God? I know that I'm awake, I'm not dreaming. Oh, my Father, who I am to question you? ---But----- where must I go? ----- And to whom must I speak this truth my Father?-- Oh, my Lord God, they are not going to listen to me. They never do, but I will go as you say. (Exiting right--murmuring words) I am but a servant, so be it, thy will be done my Lord.

***Lights Down

Crowd: (walk out on stage—down front of steps to listen, lip talking to one another)

Isaiah---(enters from back into the audience) ---Listen to me! Listen to me! Oh, house of David. God is with us. The Messiah is coming and He will reign as King of the world. We no longer need to live in darkness. A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and we shall call him Emmanuel, God with us. (Isa. 7:13-4). Stop gossiping, lying, and cheating. God commands us to love, care and share with one to another. He who comes will stand supreme above all, not just us, and he will save us from our sins and shame. The Messiah will come. God almighty will send a Messiah, Our Prince of Peace, Our Savior.

#1---Well now lookie here. It's Isaiah ---the servant of God. Are you telling me that God is gonna send a baby to this market place to be with us, and help us through our hard times? (crowd Laughter)

C#2---Well now if it isn't Mr. Crazy—I mean Mr. Prophet, he hears from God everybody! —We're losing every battle, and he tells us that the Prince of Peace is coming in the form of a baby. (Crowd Laughter)

C #1---Isaiah, what's the news you speak of my friend? Tell us more. Wait. —Shh (to all of the others) --- Everybody, listen up. Isaiah, make your God speak to us, we want to hear him speak. Tell me what does he sound like? (laughter)

C#3---Hey, leave him alone. Go home oh man, take you fairy tales to sleep. (gives him a push) (Laughter) Yea, give that kind of talk to the night owls, or crickets, they will listen to anything you say. (crowd starts to exiting left, stops to meet LB)

Crowd---(exiting left talking about Isaiah)

C#1—All man, that dude is crazy!

C#2—He is crazy. ---Did you hear him talking about God is gonna send a baby from a virgin, does that make any sense?

C#3---Nah y'all, because he doesn't have any sense.

C#1---Wait, you missed it, he said God was gonna send a baby to be the Messiah. Wonder what that looks like? (everybody laughter)

Lady Beggar---(wearing the purple cloth) Hey there prophet of God, you got any bread to give me? I'll give you this wonderful purple cloth. They say it's a piece of royalty fit for a king or queen such as myself. But I will give it up for bread. (exiting after getting the bread) Thank you, thank you prophet.

Isaiah---(gives her bread) --- It is beautiful in color my dear, but go on you keep it, keep the cloth. Bless you my child.

Narrator--- Isaiah a humble prophet and servant of God faced disbelief and mockery from the people of Judah and Jerusalem. Isaiah's message was a call to repentance and holiness, but the hearts of the people had hardened and were filthy. God was offering hope of a Messiah to come. A Savior to save them from their social, moral and religious shame and sins.

Additionally, it was a prediction of the coming King on earth, announcing the birth of Christ, His deity, His earthly power and His reign forever. Also, Isaiah 9:6 stated that God will send the Messiah that everyone hoped for to save them, but not in the form of a knight with shining armor with temporary relief, but in the form of an eternal capability. The King is sovereign over the affairs of man and creation. What a great gift!

Digression

Mary— (enters right) My, It's a bright and shiny day. Ooh (grabbing her shawl), but it's a little nippy too. I, I, was supposed to meet Joseph here. I wonder if I'm too late.

(Calls out while looking for Joseph) Joseph! Joseph! Well, I'll just wait here for a moment, I'm sure he'll be here soon.

Joseph---(enters left) Mary, Mary, I'm so sorry that I'm late. I ran into a man who offered me work, for lots of coins and you know how much we need them.

Mary---I think that's great Joseph, what kind of work will it be?

Joseph— You know, carpentry that's what I do. But I'll have to go away for a while to take the job. And when I return, we'll have enough coins to get married, and I'll build us a home too. A home with our coins! Just for you and me, then we'll have lots of children.

Mary ---I would love that new home Joseph. But we'll need to talk a little more about lots of children. Maybe two?

Joseph---Ok Mary. --(pause)-- Mary, ---I'll have to leave right away. ---Promise me you'll wait for me. You are promised to me right Mary?

Mary --- Joseph, I am promised to you, and I will wait for your return.

Joseph—(embrace)---Good. (embrace) I love you Mary and you are to be my wife. (exit right --calling out) Mary, I love you Wait for my return!

Mary---I love you too Joseph, I love you. (Wandering about) Oh, ---I don't know what am I going to do without Joseph being near me. (sits to read the Word)

Rhonda--- (enters right) -- Hey Mary, how are you girl? What's going on?

Mary—Hey there Rhonda, I'm just sitting here admiring the beauty of the trees and praising God for them. Nature is such a wonderful gift. What about you, how are you?

Rhonda---I've got a secret, and since you're my best friend, I'll share it with you. I'm going to the place now, it's down by the river, want to come with me? I'll show it to you.

Mary---Ok. (exiting left)

Rhonda---Let's go. It's purple and you're going to love it. (they exit left)

Narrator---How sweet it was of Joseph and Mary to have promised to wait for each other. And it's wonderful to have a best friend, but.

The Bible doesn't tell us that Mary had a best friend, nor did it tell us that Joseph actually went on a journey. But the Bible does tell us that Joseph was a gentleman. According to Matt. 1:19, "Because Joseph was faithful to the law, and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, but he had in mind to divorce her quietly." Some kind of a man huh? Maybe we'll see how much of a man later. Let's hear what's next.

Vagabonds 1&2 (enters right)

V#1--Say, I was roaming by the side of the river the other day and I found this fine piece of cloth. It's so royal looking. I'm going to call it my piece of royalty fit for a king. It will be the greatest gift ever.

V#2—You found that down by the side of the river!

V#1---Well, sort of kind of. ---- What's that smell? (pause) Something really stinks. Anyway, it was behind a rock and I didn't see anyone around, so I grabbed it. Just like I grabbed this loaf of bread. You gotta be quick with your hand if you want to make it in this trade. Man, I'm gonna get some coins for this cloth, it's really priceless. A fine piece of cloth like this, I'm talking big coins and it's dyed so perfectly too. It's royalty, and the perfect gift for somebody.

V#3---I'll pay you one coin for it.

V#1---Nope. No way! One coin won't cut it.

V#2---Well, I've got a loaf of bread and a squirrel. (holding the dead squirrel up)

V#1& 3---- oooh! —

V#1---That's what's stinking! (Exiting right) I've gotta go, gotta sell my goods and make some coins, See Ya.

V#2—Me too, ---(following) say, --- wait up, maybe I can help you sell it.

Narrator---Vagabond! Vagabond! Really, it's just a thought that there could've been vagabonds or drifters roaming and taking things that didn't belong to them, but it was kind of humorous. Especially the reveal of the smelly squirrel. So the hope was that the royal cloth would be sold as the perfect gift. Certainly, it could have been so, because selling goods was a way of making a living then and today.

Scene Two:

Mary---(enters left with Rhonda) Rhonda, I'm so sorry that somebody took your purple cloth. That could've been a good business for you.

Rhonda---Yea, I was planning to make lots of coins. --- Well, hopefully I can find the person who took it, and when I tell them that it belongs to me, maybe they will give it back to me.

Mary---I really hope so Rhonda. I don't know why somebody would take anything that doesn't belong to them.

Rhonda---(exiting)---You know what; I'm going to go find my cloth. I believe that if I look hard enough, that I'll find it. Got to find that little piece of royalty, it will be good for a gift to someone. I'll see you later Mary.

Mary---Ok Rhonda, I'll see you soon, hope you find your cloth.---(pacing)---I love looking at the greenery here, it's so beautiful and peaceful, maybe I'll get a few minutes of quiet time with God before my chores.

Angel ---(enter right to visit Mary) Mary, Mary,

Mary---(Jumps up)—Who are you? what do you want! How do you know my name!

Angel---Don't be afraid Mary, --- I'm an angel of God. -- God has found favor with you. He has chosen you to give birth to the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

Mary—What! A Savior! You get away from me!-- My mother is gonna be here soon. I don't know what an angel looks like. You, get away from me, are you really an angel?

Angel---I'm an angel of God. I speak the truth. You must believe me.

Mary---I can't give birth to a child, I'm just a child myself. Anyway I, I, I'm promised to Joseph, we're gonna be married just as soon as he returns and we gonna have children then. Can you come back then? This cannot be happening this is not real. I must be hearing things, and I know that I'm truly I'm seeing things, an angel.! Mother! Mother! You had better get going; mother will be here real soon, Mother! Mother!

Angel---Mary relax, try to understand. You must trust in God. He will do a mighty work in you and you will birth the Savior, the Messiah. The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. Just trust God (Luke 1:35 ESV). I'll be going now, but remember God has found favor in you.

Mary—Wait, Angel! ---I don't understand. How could this be? Please come back, angel, tell me! ---shoot! I must be dreaming. I can't do this. It doesn't make sense. But the angel said that God said so; so be it unto me. (Falls asleep.)

Mother---Mary, Mary, where is that girl. She's always running off; just before doing her chores. I only want her do her fair share of work, but she's always wandering off. She must think I'm playing with her because she's not taking me seriously. But, she's about to get what's coming to her. Mary! Mary!

Mary---I'm here mother, I'm here.

Mother--- Mary, why haven't you done your chores?

Mary---I stopped for a little while to enjoy the greenery and Mother I was visited by well, I saw, never mind, I'll just do the chores now Mother, I'm sorry I'm so late doing them Mother. (exiting right)

Mother---I know that you'd better get busy, if you know what's good for you. Don't let me have to tell you again. (exit left)

Mary---(sneaks back in) ---Angel! Angel! Angel! Can you come back and talk to me? I have another question. Angel! I want to know when this will happen to me. (exit left)

Mother---(re-enters right) Mary! That Mary, I think that she's trying to get one over on me. That child is something else. (left standing on stage.) Mary!

Mary---(exiting right) Meet you back at home later Mother!

Vagabonds----(enter left)

V#1---Say Ms. lady, (to Mary's Mother)—Want to buy this fine piece of cloth? It's only two dollars. It will make a beautiful sash for you. It can be your piece of royalty for just two dollars.

Mother--- It is a fine piece of cloth. But---No, No thank you. (exit right) I can't afford it.

Vagabond #2---Ok but you don't know what you're missing. This piece is Royalty, a great gift for a king--
-I mean a queen, like you my lady.

V#1---Just think how many loaves of bread you can get if you sell this royalty. If you keep it you'll be the talk of the town.

Mother---No, No, go away, leave me alone now, run along.

Lady Beggar---I'm so hungry and cold too, you got some bread? Can I have that cloth? (snatches it and run) I need to keep warm, or maybe I'll give it away as a gift.

Vagabonds---Hey come back here, give me my cloth, that's my purple cloth! That cloth is fit for a king, you can't just run off with it. Come back here! You, you are a thief!

Narrator— Over 700 years later from when Isaiah had prophesied that a virgin will conceive a baby, the Savior of the world; was what the angel said to Mary and was being fulfilled. An angel appeared unto Mary and she was perplexed, to say the least, she practically lost it. Did you see her? But, that's how the 21st century Mary reacted. The Bible says that Mary was really calm and receptive and told the angel "So be it unto me." Can you believe that? Here am I, she said in Luke 1:38, "a servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." No fight at all. Just if God said it, so be it. Why aren't we like that today? If God promised it, it shall come to pass. All we have to do is wait for it to happen. Hallelujah!

Digression

Crowd----(Enters right to converse with each other)

Mary---(enters right with Rhonda) Rhonda it's too bad that you couldn't find your cloth. It would have been a good gift for somebody.

Rhonda---Yea a royal gift too. Are you ok Mary? You don't look well.

Mary—I don't feel well at all Rhonda, I feel nauseous, and I'm sleepy and tired most of the time now. I need to do chores but maybe later. Maybe I can rest here, just for a little while.

Rhonda----Of course you can Mary, what's going on with you?

Mary---Now it's my turn to tell you my secret, but it won't be a secret for long, everybody will know very soon. Rhonda, I have been given a gift, I'm with child. It's not what you might think; an angel came to me and told me that I would birth the Savior of the world. The Messiah!

Rhonda---That's great news Mary, but it's also scary. What did your mother say?

Mary---I didn't tell her because I knew she wouldn't believe me.

Rhonda--- You have to tell your mother, she needs to know. I've got to go, (pause) but you gotta to tell her Mary. (exiting right)

Mother---Mary! Mary! That girl; just wait until I catch up to her. (enters left) Mary, Mary, ooh, you look clammy, ---are you okay?

Mary---Mother I don't feel well and I'm feeling nauseous.

Mother---But you were well minutes ago, was it something you ate? What happen!

Mary---Mother, I have to tell you something. A few weeks ago, and angel of God visited me. And he told me that God found favor with me.

Mother---My goodness Mary, --- you don't have to lie to me to get out of doing your chores.

Mary---For real mother, the angel of God said that I would birth the Savior of the world. The Messiah.

Mother--- My child you must have a fever, are you feeling hot? You're a child yourself, you can't birth a child. (Mary falls faint onto mother) Mary, Mary, Help! Help! somebody help me! My child, somebody help me! Mary wake up my child, wake up. (two men come to carry her away) Mary you'll be okay, they are gonna take you to, to the sick room. Oh God, help my child. (exiting)

Narrator---So Mary is ill and was carried away to a sick room? Hoping to find out what's wrong. Did that really happen? Well the Bible did not go into details about that, but I tell you the village is probably going to have a field day talking about Mary. Because somebody's always up for spreading a rumor before they get the truth. By the way, The Bible didn't tell us that Mary's mother was a stringent one either, it didn't discuss her character at all. But how do you think Mary's mother really behaved after hearing Mary truths, about the angel and the baby? How would you have reacted if you were the mother? Hmmm.

Scene Three:

Mary & Rhonda---(enters left)

Rhonda---I didn't find my cloth Mary, but I believe that I will. I know that I'll find it. I just know that I will. I'm going back to look again, maybe they just brought it back. Because it has to be a great gift for someone. Got to go, I'm gonna find that cloth. See you later Mary, and no more getting sick you hear me? (running off)

Mother---There you are my precious, how are you feeling now?

Mary---Mother, I have to tell you something. I'm with child, just as the angel said.

Mother—Now don't be blaming the angel. You've been sneaking, around haven't you?

Mary—No mother it's just as the angel said. I've done nothing wrong. I'm carrying the Savior of the World. I just have this feeling like never before. There is a child inside of me! It's true. I'm carrying the Messiah.

Mother—My child what happened, who did this to you. At least tell me the truth. (thinks for a moment) A child the Messiah.

Wait a minute, I remember the prophet Isaiah said, Unto us a child is born, a child is given, and a virgin will conceive and bear a child. Oh, my child, you are carrying the Messiah! How special you are my child! My child, my child! My child blessed and highly favored! (Exiting left)

Mary— (pause and ponder, exit left) Who am I that God would find favor in me to help light the way? Truly it's not because of who I am or what I've done. (Pause, ponder, exiting right) But God chose me! (crying)

Track #3 *Praise dancers**----- Recorded---Who am I by Casting Crown: 2:43

Scene Four:

Narrator----Time went on.... and Mary went away for a while to visit Aunt Elizabeth. The gospel of Luke proclaims,

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her (Luke 1:39-45.)

But when Mary returned home from Aunt Elizabeth's and Joseph returns from wherever, how will Mary explain?

Joseph---(running down the center aisle) ----Mary, Mary, I'm home. ---Mary, where are you?

Mary ---(enters left, showing that she's pregnant)

Joseph---Hey Mary, (embrace her) Oh Mary, Mary You, you look healthier. It's a lot more of you Mary. What have you been eating?

Mary— Joseph, the angel said that God found favor with me and that I would birth a child, and now I'm with child.

Joseph---What! you are with what? Mary, we promised to wait for each other, until we were married.

Mary—It's not what you think Joseph.

Joseph—Not what I think. What am I thinking Mary? Look at you, you are carrying a child Mary and it doesn't belong to me.

Mary—The angel came and told me that God found favor with me and that I would bear a child, the Savior.

Joseph—Oh now it's the angels' child?

Mary—No! -- it's the Holy Spirit Joseph.

Joseph—I'm not crazy, I believe in the Holy Spirit but this. Who did this Mary, did they force You?

Mary---No, nobody forced me.

Joseph---No! Mary you did this willingly!

Mary---No! Joseph nobody believes me but, I'm telling the truth.

Joseph---I'm having a pretty da-gone hard time believing you too. Mary how could you. I was true to you!
(exiting)

Mary---(calling out) --Joseph! ---Joseph! Come back and listen to me! Oh God please help me. (linger for part of the song)

Track #4*Singer**---- Open My Heart by Yolanda Adams--- Praise Dancer---2:24secs

Narrator---- Ladies and gentlemen, what you have just witnessed was the 21st century version of a major reaction to a lady impregnated. She was just trying to explain to her husband about the impregnation by the Holy Spirit. Wow! The truth is that Mary did have an encounter with the angel Gabriel. Furthermore, in the gospel of Luke 1:28, The angel really did speak to Mary saying, "Do not be afraid Mary; for you have found favor with **God**. Imagine that! And Mary said so be it.

Really Mary? She is such a role model, so pure and genuine, and servant minded. Maybe that was why she was highly favored to birth the Messiah.

Oh, one other truth, because Mary was with child Joseph really did considered hiding her quietly to protect her reputation, so stated in (Matt 1:19). And according to the Bible, "If a man marries a girl who is claimed to be a virgin, and then finds that she is not, "They shall bring the girl to the entrance of her father's house and there her townsmen shall stone her to death" (Deut. 22:20). That could have been why Joseph wanted to protect her reputation.

Scene Five:

Joseph— (enter right) --The angel came to me and told me that Mary was telling the truth, and that the child that she was carrying was of the Holy Spirit. ---And that Mary was carrying the Messiah, the Savior!

I feel so awful now, she tried to tell me but, I was so caught up in what I knew about the way life happens, that I didn't believe her. God please forgive me. What I've learned from this, is that God works in mysterious ways and his work is always for our good. If she will still have me, I will ask her to marry me again. I want to break the chains of being held hostage by my preconceived beliefs. I want to live the life that you've given me daily trusting in you God. You have given me a special someone in Mary.

Song/Choir---Break Every Chain by Tasha Cobbs: 2:00

Narrator---So, maybe it was that Mary forgave Joseph and they lived happily ever after. The Gospel of Luke tells us that Caesar Augustus ordered a census taken of the entire Roman world, for tax purposes.

Palestine was part of that world, so Joseph, took his pregnant wife Mary to Bethlehem to register (Luke 2:1-5), and suddenly Mary's time came to deliver the baby. But there was no room in the inn, nowhere for Mary to deliver her baby. Finally, Joseph was allowed to take Mary to a place where the animals slept nearby (Luke 2:7). Mary gave birth to Jesus Christ, the Messiah (Matt. 1:21). And what a beautiful baby He was, I mean, I can just imagine that, there laid a beautiful baby.

Track # 5 Singer---The Precious Lamb of God by Kirk Franklin-1:42-2:35 secs.

(Joseph & Mary with the baby enter. Come out admiring the baby, surrounded by two angels, & the choir. Children on second steps.) (exit left after Halleluiah song)

Songs/Children---- O Holy Night & Go tell it over the Mountain.

Saxophone Solo ----Katana Metcalf---Silent Night

Song/Choir----Holy, Holy, Holy

Narrator---- Can you imagine the magnitude of that day when God's love for us was expressed through the birth of His son Jesus? The Savior was born! Born to be King and ruler! And oh, how they must have marveled and loved Him. (the immediate cast exit left) As shepherds watched their flocks by night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said to the shepherds,

Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:8-20 NIV). So, the shepherds hurried on their search to find the baby in swaddling clothes.

The Magi who saw the star in the east followed the star of the east. In hope of finding the baby born to be the king of the Jews, they searched.

Guard---(brings in King Herod's chair) (King Herod and his wife follows)

Guard #1---You have visitors King Herod, my Lord.

Herod---Who might that be?

Herod's Wife---(stands near Herod)

Guard #1---They are Magi from the east.

Herod---Then bring them in to me.

Magi x 3---Your majesty. (they bow to him)

Herod--- Gentlemen you have travel from the east. To what do I have the pleasure?

Magi#1— We have come seeking the baby who was born King of the Jews. We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him (Matt. 2:1-12).

Herod---- Tell me, what was the exact time that this star appeared.

Herod---Humm, (shrugged their shoulders)

Herod---Well, here's my suggestion. Go and make a careful search for the child, and when you find him. Come back and tell me so I can go and worship him also (Matthew 2:1-12).

Magi---(exit left)

Herod---(jumps up from his chair) ---I know that I heard them incorrectly! Did you hear what they said? I'm the King. I am King Herod. No baby will rule me! I am King Herod forever, because I will never die! (exit left)

Guard---(get Herod's chair and exit)

Narrator--- I think that it would be safe to say that Herod the king, was furious. He seemed to be pretty unhappy to learn that a baby was born to be the king of the Jews. He feared the king of the Jews (Matt. 2:3). After a while, King Herod realized that he had been deceived, because the Magi did not return to him with the where about of the baby boy. Let's watch and see what happened next.

Guard---(brings Herod's chair in)

Herod--- Where are the Magi? They didn't return to me! They fooled me? Guard, go to Bethlehem and its vicinity and kill every baby boy up to two years old. (Matt. 2:16 NIV) That way I'm sure to kill that king of Jews that they spoke of. (exit left)

Guard---(gets Herod's chair and exit)

Narrator---As a result, (sadly) what king Herod plotted was to kill the baby boy Jesus, and he ordered that his guards kill every baby boy up to two years old (Matt. 2:16-18 ESV), but unsuccessfully.

Matthew 2:19-20 records, After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead.

And Jesus lived and grew up in a town called Nazareth and at age thirty He started His ministry (Lk. 3:23). His ministry grew and the word got around, that there was a man called Jesus helping people everywhere. (John 1:14) Throughout many villages, Jesus was healing the sick (Lk 4:40 NIV), giving sight to the blind (Matt. 11:5 NIV), sharing, saving the lost and He mysteriously raised the dead (Matt. 10:8 NIV) and was helpful to everyone he met For God so loved the world that he gave us Jesus. (John 3:16 NIV).

Jesus Christ is no longer a baby, he is all grown up now, and Christians believe that Jesus lives and dwells within them (1 Corinth. 3:16).

Jesus said, "I stand at the door and knock. If any man hears my voice and open the door, I will come in and dine with you, you with me. He will come and dine with us" (Rev 3:20 ESV). Halleluiah!

It seems to me that everyone is looking for a gift. One that will show love, and bring joy and happiness. Well, just as it was told that a Messiah would come---with Him would come love, joy and happiness. If this were a physical gift, it could be a good gift to get and a good gift to give, but that physical gift could get old and fade away. With Jesus the Messiah, the love, joy and happiness is eternal. And that's the greatest gift of all Time.

Jesus---(enters in his white gown during narrator's speech) I come that you might have life and life more abundantly. (John 10:10 ESV) "Trust me with all of thine heart and lean not to your understanding and I will direct your path" (Proverbs 3:5-10 NKJV).

(Everyone enters) -----Vagabonds, Lady Beggar, Crowd, Angels, Joseph & Mary, Mother, Rhonda, Isaiah, ----(all gathered around Jesus.)

All Crowd — (enter both sides)

V#1---Everybody! Look! It's Jesus; ---He is truly the Messiah.

V#1 –Jesus, you are the Savior of the World, I saw him everybody. He helped many people, and he raised the dead. You are Our Savior.

V#2— (walks to Jesus to place the purple robe) Yea, so if anybody deserves this royal purple robe, Jesus you do. You are the great gift.

V#3---I crown you Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

V#1--- Jesus you are my king and you are truly the greatest gift.

LB--- I thought I had a gift in this purple cloth, but you brought healing to a dying world. I thought I had a gift in this purple cloth, but he is the greatest gift of all time. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna!

Crowd—Hosanna! Hosanna!

Closing:

Track #6*Song/Choir**—Celebrate the King

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