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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. RESEARCH FOCUS

This master's thesis explores the role of music in the church services of Vienna congregations of the *Freikirchen in Österreich (FKÖ)*, a coalition of Protestant churches which together gained official status as a legally recognized church in 2013. The more than fifty Vienna congregations of the *FKÖ* are distributed throughout most of the city's twenty-three districts and across five member denominations: These are the 1) *Bund der Baptistengemeinden in Österreich (BBGÖ)* (Federation of Baptist Congregations in Austria), 2) *Bund Evangelikaler Gemeinden in Österreich (BEG)* (Association of Evangelical Churches in Austria), 3) *Elaia Christengemeinden (ECG)* (Elaia Christian Churches), 4) *Freien Christengemeinde – Pfingstgemeinde in Österreich (FCGÖ)* (Free Christian Church – Pentecostal Church in Austria), and 5) *Mennonitischen Freikirche Österreich (MFÖ)* (Mennonite Free Church of Austria). The churches of the *FKÖ*, even limited to those located in the capital city, are diverse in terms of their size, style, culture, language, particular history, and certain theological leanings, yet also unified within a broader historical heritage and around core theological convictions that form the basis for their cooperation. On the one hand, the uniqueness of their collaboration itself merits exploration. On the other, the correlation of their faith and practice with a wide swath of free-church Protestantism broadly defined suggests that the findings here are relevant not only to the Austrian church context, but also to other parts of the German-speaking world and beyond.

Although church life depends on a multiplicity of factors, church services are absolutely key for understanding the *Freikirchen*. Stefan Schweyer, professor of practical theology at the *Staatsunabhängige Theologische Hochschule Basel* and for well over a decade pastor in a Swiss free-church context, states:

The high importance of regular Sunday worship services in free churches can be discerned from several factors. Free-church believers usually attend worship services on a weekly basis. Therefore, the worship service usually represents the best-attended gathering in a local free church. Investment in staff, buildings, technology, etc., is directed towards enabling and ensuring the celebration of Sunday worship. There is no other part of congregational life in which so much is invested as in the worship service.¹

¹ Stefan Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste: Empirische Analysen und theologische Reflexionen*, Arbeiten zur Praktischen Theologie 80 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2020), p. 53: “Die hohe Bedeutung der regelmäßigen sonntäglichen Gottesdienste in den Freikirchen wird an mehreren Faktoren erkennbar. Freikirchliche Gläubige nehmen meist wöchentliche am Gottesdienst teil. Der Gottesdienst stellt daher in einer

Focusing in on one main aspect of these services – the music that is sung week by week – diversity is evident; nonetheless, crossover of individuals songs, musical styles, and theological content mirrors the unified substrata that supports the denominational coalition as a whole. My goal here is to provide an introductory overview of *FKÖ* services, with special consideration of the role of music.

1.2. METHODOLOGY

In light of the magnitude of the topic, it was clear from the beginning of my research that I must choose a particular angle from which to explore free-church services and the role of music therein. Thus, it is important to clarify here that this thesis does not attempt to explore, except in passing, the typical church member's understanding of the purpose of church services or of the music in church services, nor his or her musical preferences in sung worship. These angles remain to be explored.

Rather, the focus of my research is on the perspectives of music leaders and pastoral leadership regarding the purpose of sung music in church services and the practical outworking of this purpose in combination with other elements of the service. With this research focus, I was privileged to speak with individuals who have long and deep personal histories with the free-church context here in Austria and whose knowledge of and convictions about weekly services and about music as an integral part of those services arise out of a profound level of personal commitment and hands-on involvement.

Here I would like to address the four main angles from which I pursued my research. First, attending church services over the course of several months provided numerous pages' worth of observations and a mental databank stuffed with the impressions gleaned by participant observation. The role of active observer came in some ways naturally, but in other ways proved challenging. A church-goer myself, at home in wider free-church contexts, I felt generally familiar with the characteristic patterns and parameters of services of *FKÖ* member churches. Nevertheless, the role of observer carries with it a certain automatic self-distancing from the object of observation or from the atmosphere that may be being intentionally cultivated.

The church services visited – thirty-one congregations (with a repeated visit to one church, so thirty-two visits in all) – spanned all five denominations that compose the *FKÖ*, as well as at

lokalen Freikirche in der Regel die am besten besuchte Versammlung dar. Die Investition in Personal, Gebäude, Technik etc. sind darauf ausgerichtet, die Feier des sonntäglichen Gottesdienstes zu ermöglichen und sicherzustellen. In keinen anderen Teil des Gemeindelebens wird so viel investiert wie in den Gottesdienst.”

least one congregation of each of the sub-denominations within the *FCGÖ*. The churches were spread over eleven districts, albeit unintentionally with a particular concentration in the tenth district (eight churches). Services were held in Arabic, English, German, Romanian, Russian, and Spanish (or a mixture of two languages) and included songs or portions of songs sung in several additional languages: Hebrew, Farsi, Twi (one of the languages of Ghana), and a Nigerian dialect. Services ranged from just over one hour to three hours, and congregants numbered anywhere from nine to two hundred plus. Usually, an online contingent was also in attendance, an innovation for many congregations in light of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, all of my observations were in-person. From attending these services, I gained insight into the general atmosphere of the service, basic liturgical form, place of music in relation to the spoken elements of the service, musical style, and congregational participation. A list of churches visited can be found in Appendix 9.5.

The second research method involved analyzing song repertoire from a spectrum of congregations. After attempting to contact all of the Vienna churches within the *FKÖ*, with a request for song lists from the limited time frame of 1 August to 31 October 2021, in the end I received lists from seventeen churches (three *BGGÖ*, seven *BEG*, seven *FCGÖ*). The findings resulting from a comparison of these lists – with regard to musical style, theological themes, song sources, etc. – are the subject of Chapter Six.

My third research method consisted of conducting two written surveys. The first survey was very brief and intended for as broad an audience as possible within the *FKÖ*. While the project was from the beginning primarily focused on qualitative research based on expert interviews and questionnaire responses – about church service practice rather than wider musical habits of church members – I was encouraged by regional *FKÖ* representative Reinhold Eichinger to nonetheless consider including a broader sample study. In an interview, he voiced concern regarding the decline in singing outside of the Sunday church service context,² which he sees as a reflection of a society at large that offers little context for corporate singing: “Singing is no longer a societal norm – as it still was for the previous generation.”³ He expressed interest in what role if any singing plays in the life of church members during the week, remarking on

² Cf. Stephan A. Reinke, “Besser als gedacht: Ergebnisse und Schlussfolgerungen aus einer empirischen Untersuchung zum Singen im Gottesdienst,” in *Gemeinsam singen im Gottesdienst: Empirische und theologische Reflexionen*, ed. by Jürg H. Buchegger and Stefan Schwyer, Studien zu Theologie und Bibel 16 (Zürich: LIT Verlag, 2016), (pp. 23–39), p. 26.

³ Reinhold Eichinger: “[S]ingen ist ja kein gesellschaftlicher Standard mehr – wie das noch die Vätergeneration erlebt hat.” This quote and all further quotes attributed to Eichinger are taken from an interview on 23 September 2021.

the formative influence and sustaining power of memorized texts set to music: “‘earworms’ or lyrics that one can easily recall in particular situations in life for inner edification.”⁴ Thus, I created a nine-question anonymous survey, using a GoogleForms template, which I shared with friends, acquaintances, and music leaders, asking them in turn to share the link within their own congregations or with contacts in other *FKÖ* churches. This survey was intended to provide at least an introductory glimpse into church goers’ (rather than church leaders’, *per se*) musical habits and tastes, as well as their concept of what characterizes “good music” in the context of a church service. Due to the relatively small number of participants (just forty-four in total, from four denominations), and to the comparatively overwhelming response of *BGGÖ* members (nearly fifty-five percent), no definite conclusions can be drawn. However, without trying to differentiate responses based on denominational affiliation, as would be possible in a more thorough survey, a few observations are incorporated throughout below (while complete survey results can be found in Appendix 9.3.).⁵

The second questionnaire was sent to music leaders in churches across the denominational coalition. Initial contact was made in part through existing acquaintanceships; additionally, I contacted churches via addresses or contact forms available on their websites, briefly introducing my research project and requesting contact information for individuals involved in leading music. This specialized questionnaire was extensive, limiting the number of responses received, but fifteen individuals in fourteen churches (five *BGGÖ*, five *BEG*, two *ECG*, and two *FCGÖ* churches) shared their insights and reflections on a series of thirty-six questions, covering four categories: 1) Songs and Musical Style, 2) Music Leader/Music Team, 3) Musical/Liturgical Practice, and 4) Philosophy of Worship/Theological Reflections. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 9.2.

My fourth research method involved conducting expert interviews. First, I interviewed one of the regional representatives of the *FKÖ*, with the goal of gaining a supra-denominational, coalition-wide perspective on music in church services. The original plan was to then interview

⁴ Eichinger: “Ohrwürmer oder Texte, die man in bestimmten Lebenssituationen einfach abrufen kann zur inneren Erbauung.” Cf. Jürg H. Buchegger, “Lieder – alt und neu: Suche nach theologischen Kriterien,” in *Gemeinsam singen im Gottesdienst: Empirische und theologische Reflexionen*, ed. by Jürg H. Buchegger and Stefan Schwyer, Studien zu Theologie und Bibel 16 (Zürich: LIT Verlag, 2016), (pp. 83–91), p. 90: “Singen wir Lieder, die zum Schatz werden, die wir auswendig lernen und von denen wir leben können?” Survey responses to this question varied wildly – from “one” to “unzählbar” (innumerable), but with the bulk of responses broadly landing between ten and fifty, albeit with a good handful around one hundred. The responses indicate that song memorization is ongoing (whether active or passive memorization is not clear), but suggests that it is not a widespread emphasis.

⁵ For church member surveys with questions about what makes a “‘good’ church service” and on church singing practices, respectively, cf. Schwyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 356–372 and Reinke, “Besser als gedacht,” pp. 23–39.

one pastor (or elder) from each denomination within the *FKÖ*, although this was expanded to three pastors from the largest denomination (*FCGÖ*). While approaching each interview with more or less the same set of questions, insights gleaned along the way affected questions I asked in later interviews. Moreover, the natural course of conversation and the particular histories and insights of each expert contributed to a certain variation in interview questions. A copy of the interview protocol can be found in Appendix 9.1.

The interview process was one of the biggest pleasures of the project, and in hindsight I wish I could also have sat down with each of the music leaders for a similar conversation. It is noteworthy that the roles of pastor and music leader overlap in multiple cases. Of those who filled out the questionnaire for music leaders, at least three also serve in pastoral or elder capacities. Moreover, three of the pastors interviewed are integrally involved in the musical aspect of services⁶: One oversees the music team and plays and sings regularly herself, and another leads as needed. A third plays in the band as needed, as well as often leading music for a mid-week service, maintaining the song database, and overseeing the process of auditioning new band members. Perhaps as an interesting side note, in the congregations I visited, at least six of the individuals who preached that day also participated in the musical portion of the service.

Here I would like to briefly introduce each of the eight pastors or elders I interviewed. First, I was privileged to interview **Reinhold Eichinger**, one of the regional representatives of the *FKÖ* for Vienna, Burgenland, and Lower Austria, who until February 2022 was also the chairman of the *BEG*. Originally from greater Vienna, he was raised in what he described as a strict Catholic context and was very active in the Catholic youth program *Jungchar*, in which he took on leadership roles as a teenager. At age eighteen, during his studies in machine engineering, he was “confronted with the gospel and with personal faith in Jesus Christ”⁷ for the first time. In the interview, he described himself before this time as “a devout person, but without a personal relationship to Jesus Christ and without awareness of forgiveness and grace”⁸ – and subsequently as having found “new life” and being “changed, suddenly changed.”⁹ This internal transformation was accompanied by a great enthusiasm for sharing

⁶ Admittedly, Peloschek completed the music leader questionnaire and participated in an interview.

⁷ Eichinger: “Und mit 18 Jahren bin ich durch einen Kollegen mit dem Evangelium konfrontiert worden und mit dem persönlichen Glauben an Jesus Christus.”

⁸ Eichinger: “Ich war mehr ein frommer Mensch, aber ohne persönliche Beziehung zu Jesus Christus und ohne Wissen über die Vergebung und über die Gnade.”

⁹ Eichinger: “[...] verändert, plötzlich verändert.”

the good news with others – “in the first months, although I had practically no idea theologically, ten young people were converted.”¹⁰ Some time later, Eichinger came in contact with members of *Tulpengasse* church (now *Stadtlicht*), one of the oldest *Freikirchen* in Vienna. His passion for the local church was ignited here. He expressed becoming “a fan of church and simply of the blessings of an ordinary free-church congregation.”¹¹ Eichinger worked for a time for Xerox, meanwhile undertaking Bible training via the program *Biblische Ausbildung am Ort*¹² (Bible Training on Location), well-suited for bivocational church workers. Eventually, however, he was able to transition to full-time church ministry, and now from a very active retirement, he can look back on almost fifty years of experience in the free-church milieu in Vienna.

From the *Bund der Baptistengemeinden in Österreich*, I interviewed **Dietrich Fischer-Dörl**, pastor of the *Mollardgasse Baptistengemeinde*. Born in Neunkirchen, Lower Austria, he grew up in Austria and Germany in a Baptist home. These free-church roots he described as more the exception than the norm for pastors from his generation in Austrian *Freikirchen* today and as sparing him a sort of “detachment process” from a Catholic background. In particular the Baptist denomination, he said, “was always my home, and from this home I can observe unstinting many other Christian communities.”¹³ He has been the pastor of the *Mollardgasse* church since 2018, but he was ordained in 1989 and began his first pastorate after his theological studies in Vienna and Hamburg as a second pastor in a German Baptist church in Celle. With a call to minister in a church in Burgenland, he returned with his family to Austria in 1993. Involved in youth and children’s ministry until 2013, he afterwards became a school inspector in the newly established school office of the *FKÖ*. With youth programs and mission projects, Fischer-Dörl has worked and traveled extensively in Germany, Austria, and the United States.

For the *Bund Evangelikaler Gemeinden in Österreich*, I spoke with **Ewald Ring**, pastor of *Evangeliumsgemeinde*. Ring grew up in small-town Styria in a Brethren church context, though he also has strong positive memories of twelve years of religious education at school from a

¹⁰ Eichinger: “Und so haben sich gleich in den ersten Monaten, obwohl ich theologisch kaum Ahnung hatte, zehn Jugendliche bekehrt.”

¹¹ Eichinger: “[...] ein Fan von Gemeinde geworden und von den Segnungen einer normalen, freikirchlichen Gemeinde.”

¹² “Biblische Ausbildung am Ort,” <<https://www.bao.at/>> (Accessed 23 March 2022).

¹³ Fischer-Dörl: “[E]s war immer mein Zuhause und von dem Zuhause aus kann ich in viele andere christlichen Gemeinschaften hineinschauen.” This quote and all further quotes attributed to Fischer-Dörl are taken from an interview on 23 November 2021.

Lutheran pastor (“a very faithful man whom I really liked a lot and respect a lot”¹⁴). As a university student in Graz, he also attended a Brethren church, which he described as a “lively church” with “lots of students.” It was in Graz that Ring became involved with the *ÖSM – Christen an der Uni* (Austrian Student Mission),¹⁵ which is connected to the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES)¹⁶ movement. After volunteering as a student leader and after completing his studies in English and German, as well as a year of student teaching, he joined the *ÖSM* staff, later moving with his wife to Vienna. He became a member of *Evangeliumsgemeinde* and eventually was ordained as a lay elder. After six years in the congregation (2002–2008), he laid aside his work with *ÖSM* and spent a few years in the United States, completing his theological training at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary,¹⁷ a seminary drawing from a broad range of denominations and with a distinctly international student body. While still completing his studies, Ring was asked by *Evangeliumsgemeinde* to return as pastor, which he did in 2011. In addition to his pastoral role, he is also part of the leadership team of *Langham Österreich*,¹⁸ an international Bible-training organization based in London and focused on equipping pastors and lay leaders as biblical expositors.

For the *Elaia Christengemeinden*, I spoke with **Karl Peloschek**, pastor of *Christliches Zentrum Wien (CZW)*. As a teenager, an inner search for a sense of belonging motivated his ardent pursuit of music (including achieving the highest level of merit recognized by the *Österreichischer Blasmusikverband* [Austrian Association of Brass Music] in percussion). However, with a deeper sense of purpose left unmet, he also began exploring various “alternative” forms of spirituality to the nominal Catholicism of his upbringing. In a book on esoteric practice, he encountered a Bible verse, which proved to be a turning point towards personal Christian faith. In the months following his conversion in 1984, his desire for a fresh start – at the time understood as giving up his activities as a percussionist – was combined nevertheless with an ongoing passion for music. Taking up guitar instead and teaching himself to play, he found a new musical outlet and discovered “a love for praise and worship”¹⁹ that met a deep-felt need. After serving as the music leader of *CZW* for some time, in 1999 he took on the role of pastor; in 2005 the congregation became one of the founding members of the

¹⁴ This quote and all further quotes attributed to Ring are taken from an interview on 12 October 2021.

¹⁵ “ÖSM – Christen an der Uni,” <<https://oesm.at/>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

¹⁶ “IFES,” <https://ifesworld.org/en/?switch_language=en> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

¹⁷ “Gordon Conwell Theological Seminar,” <<https://www.gordonconwell.edu/>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

¹⁸ “Langham Österreich,” <<https://langham.at/>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

¹⁹ Karl Peloschek: “[...] eine Liebe für den Lobpreis und für die Anbetung.” This quote and further quotes attributed to Peloschek are taken from an interview on 14 November 2021 – or, when accompanied by “(ECG),” from his written responses to the music leader questionnaire.

ECG. Currently, Peloschek serves as the chairman of both the ECG and the Council of the FKÖ. He is also active in supra-denominational contexts and serves as chairman of the organization *Kreis zur Einheit – Christen in Wien*²⁰ (Circle for Unity – Christians in Vienna).²¹

For the *Freie Christengemeinde – Pfingstgemeinde in Österreich*, I interviewed three pastors. **Walter Bösch**, semi-retired pastor of *Wunderwerk Wien*, grew up in Switzerland and as a teenager found “a personal faith in Jesus.”²² Alongside his work as an electrician, he began to study theology – a study he describes as taking place “in small steps” and as being “life-long.”²³ (In fact, at age sixty he completed a master’s degree in theology, with a focus on leadership.) After serving as a pastor bivocationally in Switzerland, in the late 1990s he was asked by Pentecostal leaders in Vienna to become the pastor of a church in the seventh district (*Halbgasse*, later *Wunderwerk Wien*). Bösch has retired as lead pastor, but remains active in the congregation.

Maria Kisslinger is co-pastor of *Jesus Zentrum (FCGÖ)*, one of seven congregations of *Vienna Christian Center (VCC)*. She “grew up in the church,”²⁴ within Pentecostal circles. Both parents, her father from Austria and her mother a missionary from Sweden, are Pentecostal pastors, and together they raised their children to actively participate in church ministry and leadership – leading music, preaching, etc. Kisslinger described her childhood and teenage years as an invaluable preparation for her pastoral work today, freeing her simultaneously from the allure of the spotlight and from the fear of it – being on stage has always just felt normal – normal but also a “*Verantwortung*” (responsibility). Her upbringing included extensive travel – in Austria, Germany, and Scandinavia – where she was always actively involved in Pentecostal churches: “The motto of my family was ‘I and my house, we will serve the Lord.’ That’s how my parents saw it and what they lived out with us, wherever we were. It didn’t matter to us one bit, whether it was a church with 5000 or five. We just served together, and that meant each in his own capacity, one playing the piano, one singing.”²⁵ When asked how she felt growing up with this expectation of serving in the local church, she

²⁰ “Christen in Wien,” <<http://christeninwien.at/>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

²¹ “Pastor des CZW,” <<https://czw.at/pastor.php>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

²² Bösch: “[...] einem persönlichen Glauben an Jesus gefunden.” This quote and all further quotes attributed to Bösch are taken from an interview on 7 October 2021.

²³ Bösch: “[...] in kleinen Schritten und dann Life Long.”

²⁴ Maria Kisslinger: “[...] in der Gemeinde groß geworden.” This quote and all further quotes attributed to Kisslinger are taken from an interview on 26 November 2021.

²⁵ Kisslinger: “Der Leitsatz meiner Familie war: Ich und mein Haus, wir werden dem Herrn dienen. So haben das meine Eltern gesehen und so haben sie das auch gelebt mit uns – wo auch immer wir waren. Also völlig egal, ob das jetzt eine Gemeinde von 5000 oder fünf Menschen war – wir haben dort gemeinsam gedient und das hat geheißen: jeder gemäß seiner Kapazität, also der eine am Klavier, die anderen mit dem Singen.”

admitted there were challenging phases, especially during her teenage years. That said, she remarked, “I must say that I was always glad to be there. [...] Maybe as a child I didn’t quite understand it, but the older I’ve gotten, I have come to see it as a [...] privilege.”²⁶ She studied theology in Sweden, where she met her husband Martin, with whom she co-pastors *Jesus Zentrum*.

Rob Prokop, pastor of *Christliche Internationale Gemeinde Wien (CIG)*, is originally from the United States but has strong Slovakian roots. Although raised nominally Catholic, he described his early understanding of Christian faith as minimal. However, a strong sense of spiritual need characterized his youth, which was shaped by his growing up in “a very dysfunctional home.”²⁷ At the age of eighteen, coming across Hal Lindsay’s (b. 1929) *The Late Great Planet Earth*, he was captured by a deep conviction of his dire spiritual plight: “I was terrified that I was going to hell. And so I began to look for Jesus.” He recounts spending half a year asking every person he met, “How do you find God? Where’s God?” The whole time he wore a cross, and eventually someone asked him what the cross meant to him. Not able to answer, he was glad to accept an invitation to a church service, where he described hearing the gospel for the first time: “I prayed that morning [...]: ‘Jesus come into my life.’ And from that moment I was saved. I mean, boom, the lights went on. The peace of God. I was different. No more nightmares. [...] From that night on, I had the peace that passes understanding, I mean, I was saved, *saved*.” After attending Bible school, he started helping lead music at a local church. In 1981 he and his wife took a trip to Europe, visiting six countries. Returning to their home in the U.S., his wife had a sense they should return to Vienna. In 1985, they settled permanently in Austria. With friends they met at German classes, they began a Sunday night gathering in their home, which has since grown into an international church of around 400, with “thirty different Christian backgrounds and thirty different nationalities.”

From the *Mennonitische Freikirche Österreich (MFÖ)*, I spoke with **Mutono Barota**. Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, he came to Austria twenty-two years ago and, after visiting an array of churches in Vienna, found his church home in the *Mennonitische Freikirche Wien*. For the past six years he has served there as an elder. This shepherding role includes spiritual oversight and pastoral care of church members and of home groups, as well

²⁶ Kisslinger: “Aber grundsätzlich muss ich ehrlich sagen: ich war immer gern dabei. [...] Es war weder etwas, was irgendwie komisch oder außergewöhnlich war. Es war normal. [...] Vielleicht als Kind habe ich das noch nicht so ganz verstanden, aber je älter ich geworden bin, habe ich das schon auch einfach als Vorrecht und Privileg gesehen.”

²⁷ This quote and all further quotes attributed to Prokop are taken from an interview on 6 October 2021.

as preaching ministry. From time to time, he has led and been a member of the music team. Furthermore, he oversees the vibrant community center *Karibu* (Swahili for “welcome”) in his hometown of Kiliba, a project supported by the Mennonite church in Vienna.²⁸

1.3. STRUCTURE OF TEXT

As stated above, this thesis is based on research findings from the combined resources of interviews, questionnaires, song lists, and service observations, as well as extensive literature. Following this 1) introduction, which includes a summary of the state of research, the text proceeds with 2) an overview of the *FKÖ*, with reference to historical, theological, and structural developments and characteristics, followed by 3) a discussion of the concept of “church service” from religious-aesthetic and liturgical-theological perspectives, with 4) application to Vienna churches associated with the *FKÖ*. From this vantage point, I hone in on the subject of music, first with 5) an overview of music in church services, a discussion of the purpose and role of music in services and the role of music leaders, and a summary of general musical characteristics, followed by 6) an introductory analysis of sample song repertoire. The text concludes with 7) a discussion of research findings and potential topics for further research, followed by 8) a bibliography and 9) several appendices.

1.4. STATE OF RESEARCH

As a relatively newly formed entity, the *FKÖ* offers a wide-open door for new research. Regarding church service practice and the place of music in services, no prior research on the denominational coalition as a whole has been conducted. That said, the amount of literature which addresses any one of many important tangential topics is immense, including the historical roots of various Christian movements and denominations that helped shape the *FKÖ* member denominations, the aesthetic categories of symbol and ritual with application to church services, or the theory and practice of church music and characteristics of current church music trends. Here I would like to name the written sources I found most helpful for my background research.

For wider historical context, I relied first on *Geschichte des Christentums in Österreich: Von der Spätantike bis zur Gegenwart*, edited by Rudolf Leeb and others (2003). As a reference volume on the *FKÖ* and the member denominations, Frank Hinkelmann’s *Kirchen, Freikirchen und christliche Gemeinschaften in Österreich: Handbuch der Konfessionskunde* (2016) was

²⁸ “Centre Karibu,” <<https://en.zentrumkaribu.com/>> (Accessed: 22 March 2022).

indispensable. His *Evangelikale Bewegung in Österreich: Grundzüge ihrer historischen und theologischen Entwicklung 1945–1998* (2014) also proved helpful.

For insight into the realm of religious aesthetics, I drew primarily from Hubert Cancik and Hubert Mohr's article "Religionsästhetik" in *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* (1988). Two volumes by Catherine Bell should also be named: *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (1992) and *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (1997), as well as *The Bloomsbury Handbook of the Cultural and Cognitive Aesthetics of Religion*, edited by Anne Koch and Katharina Wilkens (2020).

In terms of exploring church services from the perspective of ritual-as-liturgy and theological perspectives, I relied on Michael Meyer-Blanck's *Gottesdienstlehre* (2011), David Plüss' *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung: Perspektiven einer Performativen Ästhetik des Gottesdienstes* (2007), *Kompendium Gottesdienst: Der evangelische Gottesdienst in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, edited by Hans-Joachim Eckstein, Ulrich Heckel, and Birgit Weyel (2011), and Stefan Schweyer's *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste: Empirische Analysen und theologische Reflexion* (2020).

This last-named volume provided extensive insight, combining liturgical and theological viewpoints with an extremely practical and detailed analysis of free-church services in Switzerland. Additionally, a 2021 master's thesis by Benjamin Thull, exploring in-depth the song repertoire of a group of Pentecostal *Freikirchen* in Germany, both confirmed some of my own observations and offered significant further insights. The thesis was graciously made available by the author: "Was singt Generation Lobpreis? Eine Untersuchung gegenwärtiger Lobpreiskultur in deutschen Pfingstgemeinden."

Here I should also make special note of the doctoral dissertation of Hella Hagspiel-Keller, with its focus on the church *Projekt Gemeinde*, one of the Vienna congregations of the *FKÖ: Evangelische und evangelikale Freikirchen und ihr neuer Aufbruch: Emerging Church am Beispiel projekt:gemeinde in Wien* (2014). Although focused on this church in the context of the wider "emerging church" movement and less on its place within the denominational coalition, she does of course reference church services and their musical component.

These above-named sources, along with many others, proved invaluable alongside the "original-research" insights gleaned from the churches surveyed, especially from the interviews with pastors and questionnaire feedback provided by music leaders.

2. FREIKIRCHEN IN ÖSTERREICH

As already stated, the *FKÖ* was officially constituted in 2013, albeit with roots going much further back. In order to understand church services and music in church services of congregations in Vienna belonging to the *FKÖ*, it is important to consider the historical context. I will begin with a cursory, big-picture overview of the historical roots of the modern-day *Freikirchen*, followed by a summary of what today characterizes the *FKÖ* denominational coalition as a whole, as well as its individual member denominations.

2.1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the opening chapter of the volume *Geschichte des Christentums in Österreich: Von der Spätantike bis zur Gegenwart*, Georg Scheibelreiter traces the arrival of Christianity to the region that today comprises Austria to the early 170s CE. This date corresponds to a battle between Roman and Germanic forces (in Marchfeld, approximately twenty kilometers outside of the city limits of modern-day Vienna), resulting in a remarkable victory by the Romans, which Tertullian attributed to God's favor on the Christian soldiers among the Roman ranks. While this proof of a Christian presence is thin, to say the least, in the following decades and certainly by the mid-to-late 200s, the existence of Christians within the Roman military forces stationed in the region is attested in scattered written records. Important evidence for the presence of Christians is found in stories of martyrs in Austrian regions during the reign of Diocletian. A certain aged Florian, who lived in what is today St. Pölten and who had held a post of some importance within the local imperial government, was martyred in May of 304. This event has been called "the first established date of Austrian church history."²⁹

From this launching point, so to speak, of Christianity in Austria, we will take a flying leap across the following centuries – which saw the establishment of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire and the decay of the empire; the emergence of networks of bishops and the establishment of monastic communities, as well as the missionary endeavors both produced; the founding of universities (including the University of Vienna), conceived originally as primarily centers of religious (theological) instruction; and the complex intertwining of religious and civil authority (exemplified by the Prince-Archbishopric of

²⁹ Georg Scheibelreiter, "Das Christentum im österreichischen Raum in Spätantike und Mittelalter: Von den Anfängen bis in die Zeit Friedrichs III.," in *Geschichte des Christentums in Österreich: Von der Spätantike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Rudolf Leeb and others, Österreichische Geschichte (Vienna: Ueberreuter, 2003), (pp. 13–144), pp. 13–15. The quotation is from p. 15: "[...] das erste feststehende Datum der österreichischen Kirchengeschichte."

Salzburg and on a grand scale by the Holy Roman Empire) and the centuries-long powerplays with papal authority in Rome – in order to land in the sixteenth century on the eve of the Reformation.³⁰

To understand the appeal of the message of the Reformation, one must take into consideration the state of religious conviction and practice that characterized Austrian lands at the beginning of the sixteenth century. According to Rudolf Leeb, the most pressing spiritual concerns of the masses were the threat of purgatory and the procurement of means to curtail time there, both for one's deceased loved ones and, looking ahead, for oneself. Means of achieving merit included pilgrimages to holy sites, contemplation of icons, receiving the Eucharist, financing side altars and celebrations of Mass, and of course, buying indulgences. The threat of purgatory was rooted in the teaching of the Church, interwoven with the doctrine of justification and the understanding of the sacraments. Clearly, the fear of purgatory was not only a spiritual concern for the masses, but also a convenient tool in the hands of the Church. Financial contributions not only procured the promise of spiritual merit but also addressed monetary shortfalls in Rome.³¹

The Protestant Reformers' success can be attributed in part to a widespread undercurrent of discontent. Various voices had already arisen to critique the power politics that advantaged bishops and clergy of higher status and (somewhat paradoxically) the mendicant orders, as well as Rome's profiteering from the sins and fears of the people (in the form of selling indulgences). Earlier figures such as Erasmus (1466–1536) had critiqued the focus on extra-biblical characters (the saints), the encroachment of superstitious elements (related to saints' relics, for instance), and the superficiality of expressions of piety (for example, the purchasing of indulgences divorced from heartfelt penitence).³² In fact, church reform movements with significance for Austria date back as far as the early 1200s and to the Waldensians; this group was harshly persecuted as heretical, and many adherents were executed in the early fourteenth century.³³ Another early reform movement was led by Jan Huss; the *Herrnhuter*

³⁰ Scheibelreiter addresses the complexities of Austrian religious history from c. 300–1500 in his chapter “Das Christentum im österreichischen Raum in Spätantike und Mittelalter,” pp. 13–144.

³¹ Rudolf Leeb, “Der Streit um den wahren Glauben: Reformation und Gegenreformation in Österreich,” in *Geschichte des Christentums in Österreich: Von der Spätantike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Rudolf Leeb and others, Österreichische Geschichte (Vienna: Ueberreuter, 2003), (pp. 145–279), pp. 150–154.

³² Leeb, “Der Streit um den wahren Glauben,” pp. 154–159.

³³ Sacha Walicord, *Staat und Kirche in Österreich: Gesellschaftliche und rechtspolitische Aspekte und Problemlagen am Beispiel nicht anerkannter evangelikaler Freikirchen in Österreich*, Reformatorische Paperbacks 22 (Hamburg: Reformistischer Verlag, 2005), p. 16.

Brüdergemeine (Moravian Brethren), which trace their heritage back to this Czech leader, had (and have today) a presence in Austria.³⁴

However, it is clear that the appearance of Martin Luther's (1483–1546) Ninety-Five Theses in Wittenberg in 1517 was a unique catalyst for major religious and also political changes, although at the time he could not have foreseen the far-reaching implications of his words. However, with the rapid dissemination of his writings (600,000–700,000 copies of Luther's writings may have been in circulation as early as 1520), he quickly became known far and wide, including in Austrian regions, and the core Reformation message of salvation ("*sola gratia, sola fide, sola scriptura*") was readily received.³⁵ Not only the speed of the spread of Reformation teaching is impressive, but also the extent to which it was welcomed: At least ninety percent of the population of Carinthia, Styria, Lower Austria, and Upper Austria was receptive to the Reformation message – aristocracy and commoner alike. Tyrol was also remarkably responsive, the populace of Salzburg, too, although the archbishopric was strongly opposed.³⁶ Indeed, it is no surprise that Church and imperial leaders were less than enthused by the developments. After all, a message that proclaimed the priesthood of all believers and which denied the need for – or even the possibility of – meritorious acts contributing to salvation undermined the financial security of the Church and its power structures, which were closely aligned with the state.³⁷ The first Viennese martyr of the era was a certain Casper Tauber in 1524.³⁸

Within the Reformation movement, three general streams became quickly apparent. First, there was Luther and those most closely associated with him. What began as a reform movement within the Catholic Church quickly led to Luther's open conflict with Rome and his subsequent excommunication. Luther's Reformation message focused on salvation being received as a gift through faith rather than by works (which also contributed to a reinterpretation of the Eucharist) and on the unique authority of the Bible. These teachings stripped the Catholic Church of its claimed authority as the sole dispenser of salvation. Second, there were the Swiss reformers (especially Ulrich Zwingli). They shared the same basic Reformation theology but interpreted the Eucharist slightly differently and also emphasized the implications of theology for society

³⁴ Franz Graf-Stuhlhofer: "Zeittafel zur Geschichte von Österreichs Freikirchen," *Martin Bucer Seminar Texte* 196 (2020): (pp. 3–16), p. 4.

³⁵ Karl Vocelka, *Multikonfessionelles Österreich: Religionen in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Vienna: Styria Premium, 2013), pp. 100–101.

³⁶ Walicord, *Staat und Kirche in Österreich*, p. 18.

³⁷ See Leeb, "Der Streit um den wahren Glauben," pp. 165–167, 181–184, and 193.

³⁸ Walicord, *Staat und Kirche in Österreich*, p. 18.

at large. A third group (albeit not a discrete group as such, but rather a number of similar movements) advocated a more whole-scale re-understanding of Christian faith – with the classic Reformation theology as the foundation, but accompanied by a more severe break with society, including with more “mainstream” reformation movements. The practice that most set them apart was their insistence on baptism being administered only to adult believers, inasmuch as they maintained that the sacrament should signify a personal commitment to Christ himself and not an empty, inherited status.³⁹

As their name “Anabaptist” (“re-baptizers”; German: *Täufer*) implies, believer’s baptism was the most central – and controversial – conviction held by the Anabaptists: “The re-baptizing of adults (or later on, the first-time baptism of their grown children) as an act of conscious decision by believers was the sign of leaving the depraved world, given over to damnation, and entering the true Church of Christ.”⁴⁰ Here it is clear that adult baptism went hand-in-hand with a whole lifestyle; Leeb names “the general Anabaptist convictions: conversion, renunciation of the world, and the implementation of God’s will in everyday life.”⁴¹

Here it is perhaps of interest to mention the form of early Anabaptist church services. These included Scriptural instruction (Bible readings and exegesis, with contributions for mutual upbuilding from multiple members of the congregation), celebration of Communion, prayer, and the collection of an offering.⁴² Their song repertoire reflected the context in which the movement took root and sought to survive. James White states: “Much of this spirit of steadfastness in the face of persecution lives on in the rich songbook that is marked by a language of suffering and martyrdom.”⁴³ Stefan Schweyer notes the emphasis both on Scripture itself and on general patterns for worship depicted in the New Testament. And, quoting from an early seventeenth century letter from two devout Anabaptists, he hints at the impressive

³⁹ Leeb, “Der Streit um den wahren Glauben,” pp. 160–162, 181–188.

⁴⁰ Leeb, “Der Streit um den wahren Glauben,” p. 187: “Die nochmalige Taufe der Erwachsenen (bzw. später die erstmalige Taufe ihrer erwachsen gewordenen Kinder) als ein Akt der bewußten Entscheidung der Gläubigen war das Zeichen für den Ausstieg aus der verworfenen und der Verdammnis preisgegebenen Welt und für den Eintritt in die wahre Gemeinde Christi.”

⁴¹ Leeb, “Der Streit um den wahren Glauben,” p. 187: “[...] die allgemeinen täuferischen Überzeugungen: Bekehrung, Abkehr von der Welt und die Erfüllung des Willens Gottes im praktischen Leben.”

⁴² Alfred Kuen, *Der Gottesdienst in Bibel und Geschichte*, Theologisches Lehr- und Studienmaterial 12 (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2003), pp. 206–207.

⁴³ James F. White, “Gottesdienst im freikirchlichen und charismatischen Kontext,” in *Handbuch der Liturgik: Liturgiewissenschaft in Theologie und Praxis der Kirche*, ed. by Hans-Christoph Schmidt-Lauber, Michael Meyer-Blanck, and Karl-Heinrich Bieritz, 3rd edn. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), (pp. 183–191), p. 184: “Viel von diesem Geist der Standhaftigkeit im Angesicht der Verfolgung lebt fort in dem reichen Liedgut, das von einer Sprache des Leidens und des Martyriums geprägt ist.”

rigor of their devotion: Sunday worship was composed of two services, which could together total seven or eight hours.⁴⁴

In the earliest years of the Reformation era, Anabaptist stirrings were evident throughout Austria, especially in Tyrol, but also in today's Salzburg, Upper and Lower Austria, Vienna, and western Carinthia, and to a lesser extent in Styria and Vorarlberg – in some cases even before influential leaders appeared on the scene (Hans Hut from Zürich, Jakob Huter [or Hutter] from South Tyrol, to name just two) and found the soil already prepared. From the outset there was variation of teaching and belief within the groups, including one tendency towards communal withdrawal from the world and a second tendency advocating an internal, more individual trajectory with mystical, millenarian elements. Shared, however, was a commitment to the core teachings of the Reformation, as well as an intentional separation from that which was deemed worldly.⁴⁵

The Anabaptists' strong anti-clericalism (a position they, of course, shared with their fellow Protestants) and the intensity of their break with a hostile, lost world revealed a countercultural stance that was deemed potentially subversive to both religious and civil authorities: "There can be no doubt that governments perceived Anabaptists as an existential threat, despite their peaceful disposition. [...] The fundamental opposition of the Anabaptists, their attempt to realize an alternative social and religious order, which included the rigid rejection of the old churches as places of worship, exceeded in the eyes of the authorities the limits of what society could tolerate."⁴⁶

As the intensity of the Anabaptists' convictions put them at odds with the authorities – and also in many instances with their fellow Protestants – intense persecution resulted, which was particularly fierce in Tyrol and Salzburg following the heretic mandate of 1527. (One must stop to consider the speed with which the movement gained strength, long before the age of mass media and digital dissemination; this was a mere ten years after the publication of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses). Bounties were placed on Anabaptists and executions were

⁴⁴ Stefan Schweyer, "Frei liturgisch," in *Freie Gottesdienste zwischen Liturgie und Event: Beiträge der Tagung an der Staatsunabhängigen Theologischen Hochschule Basel vom 20. Juni 2011*, ed. by Stefan Schweyer, Studien zu Theologie und Bibel 7 (Vienna: LIT Verlag, 2012), (pp. 75–91), pp. 77–78.

⁴⁵ Leeb, "Der Streit um den wahren Glauben," pp. 185–190.

⁴⁶ Leeb, "Der Streit um den wahren Glauben," p. 188: "Es kann kein Zweifel daran bestehen, daß die Regierungen die Täufer trotz ihrer friedfertigen Gesinnung als existentielle Bedrohung empfanden. [...] Die Fundamentalopposition der Täufer, ihr Versuch der Verwirklichung einer alternativen sozialen und religiösen Ordnung, zu der auch die rigide Ablehnung der alten Kirchen als Kulträume gehörte, überschritt in den Augen der Regierungen die Grenzen dessen, was die Gesellschaft verkraften konnte."

carried out, particularly by being burned at the stake or by drowning – a thousand executions all told, perhaps more. Many Anabaptists fled Austria for safer regions; particularly, sizeable numbers took refuge to the east in Moravia. However, Moravia did not prove to be the final destination for those communities which survived the attacks of the Counter Reformation and the processes of gradual assimilation. A long and convoluted path of migration eventually led numbers of these Anabaptists to sanctuary in North America – where, for example, today one can still find Hutterite colonies (named after Jakob Huter) speaking a derivative of Austrian German dialects.⁴⁷

In the wake of such intense persecution, an Anabaptist presence in Austria was reduced to almost nothing for centuries. Franz Graf-Stuhlhofer states, “There is still mention of Anabaptists in Austria from the decades around 1600, but after this time the Anabaptist movement did not have a continuous existence here, but survived in other countries of Europe, as well as in America. Successors of the Anabaptists came to Austria only in the nineteenth century.”⁴⁸ That said, the Anabaptist movement as a whole nevertheless represents the historical and spiritual heritage of today’s *Freikirchen*, even if it is impossible to draw a straight line from the sixteenth-century Anabaptists to the *FKÖ*. As Graf-Stuhlhofer states further, “The ‘Freikirchen in Österreich’ see the Anabaptists as their spiritual forbearers; the Mennonites also stand in historical continuity with the Anabaptist movement of the sixteenth century.”⁴⁹ In the descriptions of *FKÖ* member denominations below, reference will be made to other important historical and theological influences for today’s Austrian *Freikirchen*, including Pietism and Pentecostalism.

⁴⁷ Leeb, “Der Streit um den wahren Glauben,” pp. 185–192. An interesting side-note: On 20 November 2021, a service of remembrance and reconciliation was held in Stephansdom, in honor of the Austrian Anabaptists martyred in the early years of the Reformation. Cardinal Schönborn spoke briefly, referring to the grievous nature of religious persecution, particularly when sectarian in nature. The service included a theatrical performance recalling the flight of religious refugees and also short biographical insights into two highlighted Anabaptist leaders and their wives, as well as musical content in the form of a choir from the *Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine* (Moravian Brethren). Before the service, it was possible to visit a temporary museum exhibit about the Anabaptists, which was set up just for the day in Stephansdom. And following the service there was a reception in the courtyard of the adjacent bishop’s palace. I was pleased to be able to participate in the entire event, which could be described as a landmark of Catholic and free-church relations in Austria.

⁴⁸ Graf-Stuhlhofer: “Zeittafel zur Geschichte von Österreichs Freikirchen,” p. 5: “Noch aus den Jahrzehnten um 1600 gibt es Nachrichten über Täufer in Österreich, aber danach hatte die Täuferbewegung hier keinen kontinuierlichen Fortbestand, sondern überlebte in anderen Ländern Europas sowie in Amerika. Nachfolger der Täufer kamen erst im 19. Jahrhundert nach Österreich.”

⁴⁹ Graf-Stuhlhofer: “Zeittafel zur Geschichte von Österreichs Freikirchen,” pp. 4–5: “[D]ie ‘Freikirchen in Österreich’ sehen die Täufer als ihre ideellen Vorgänger; die Mennoniten stehen außerdem in historischer Kontinuität zur Täuferbewegung des 16. Jhs.”

With the Anabaptist movement being largely banished outside of Austrian lands, other Protestants hardly found a ready welcome within, although the menace of the Ottoman Empire provided Protestant nobles some leveraging power against the entrenched Catholicism of the Hapsburg rulers, who desperately needed those nobles' support against the external threat. Under the more friendly hand of Maximilian II, the Lutherans were granted a level of freedom. This however, was relatively short-lived against the onslaught of the Counter Reformation, and the Thirty Year's War reaffirmed the supremacy of Catholicism in Austrian lands (which were excluded from the provision for religious freedom in the 1648 Peace of Westphalia). The following years, both before and after the 1733 *Emigrationspatent*, saw waves of emigration of Austrian Protestants who had for a time managed to survive underground.⁵⁰ Following the long reign of Maria Theresia, under Joseph II and as part of his Enlightenment Era thinking, a limited degree of religious liberty was granted in 1781 to the Greek Orthodox, Calvinist, and Lutheran confessions. A shift in policy in 1850, in the Austrian Age of Neo-Absolutism, restored significant power to the Church, a move conceived as a means of garnering the Church's greater support for the imperial government; the 1855 *Konkordat* established the Catholic Church as the *de facto* state church. Nevertheless, in 1861 under Franz Joseph I, the *Protestantpatent* was issued for the Lutheran and Reformed churches (*Evangelische Kirche, A.B.* [Evangelical Church, Augsburg Confession] and *H.B.* [Evangelical Church, Helvetic Confession], respectively). Ninety years later, in 1951, the Methodists gained recognized status; and in 1961 the *Protestantengesetz* was renewed, but still did not extend to the *Freikirchen*.⁵¹

In his *Evangelikale Bewegung in Österreich: Grundzüge ihrer historischen und theologischen Entwicklung 1945–1998*, Frank Hinkelmann describes what he calls “an initial confessional diversity” as arriving with the first Baptist and Methodist congregations, which were established in Vienna in the second half of the nineteenth century, although Pietistic elements were to be found in some Lutheran/Reformed congregations (in Burgenland and Upper Austria) since the eighteenth century.⁵² But modern-day free-church history gained momentum only after World War II. Eichinger, who has a great interest in free-church history and has

⁵⁰ This underground movement is known as “*Geheimprotestantismus*.”

⁵¹ Walicord, *Staat und Kirche in Österreich*, pp. 18–24. Specifically on the Ottoman threat and Hapsburg responses to Protestant demands in that context, see Leeb, “Der Streit um den wahren Glauben,” pp. 207–211.

⁵² Frank Hinkelmann, *Evangelikale Bewegung in Österreich: Grundzüge ihrer historischen und theologischen Entwicklung 1945–1998*, *Studien zur Geschichte christlicher Bewegungen reformatorischer Tradition in Österreich* 8 (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2014), p. 508: “[...] einer ersten *konfessionellen Vielfalt*.”

published several books on the history of the Anabaptists in Austria,⁵³ stated that “after World War II there were approximately ten free-church congregations in Austria, if one does not include the Methodists.” He attributes this low number to the Hapsburgs, “the Catholic influence,” and “a discriminating legal code that affected everything that was not Catholic.”⁵⁴ He further described how, amidst this inequitable environment, which particularly affected the *Freikirchen*, free-church input came from outside of Austria: “*Freikirchen* in particular were really discriminated against and only after World War II did [...] missionary work begin in Austria from outside, because there was almost nothing happening within.”⁵⁵ These missionary efforts came primarily from Canada, the United States, Switzerland, and less so from Germany. Eichinger described these as “*Pionier-Situationen*” (pioneer situations).

Here the plural is important because, as Eichinger related, missionaries tended to come as individuals rather than as teams, meaning that numerous churches were planted, but in an independent rather than a networked context: “Because Austria is such a small country, many organizations sent just one missionary [...]. This resulted in sort of a puzzle, a patchwork of independent congregations, [...] with active young Austrians. But it was not a landscape with cooperations and collaborations or where larger coalitions were already active. It was mostly independent, individual congregations that were formed.”⁵⁶

In the ensuing decades, a desire emerged among Austrian free-church members to establish their own identity and to work together: “Among the Austrians the longing arose – oh, there are several of us! We want to cooperate, we want to reach Austria and reach it missionally!”⁵⁷ This longing has clearly defined Eichinger’s own life, apparent in the enthusiasm with which

⁵³ Reinhold Eichinger and Josef F. Enzenberger, *Täufer, Hutterer und Habaner in Österreich: Täufermuseum Niedersulz* (Nuremberg: Verlag f. Theologie- u. Religionswissenschaft, 2011); Reinhold Eichinger and Josef F. Enzenberger, *Anabaptists, Hutterites and Habans in Austria: Anabaptist Museum Niedersulz* (Nuremberg: Verlag f. Theologie- u. Religionswissenschaft, 2012); Reinhold Eichinger, ed., *Auf den Spuren der Täufer in Tirol und Vorarlberg* (Nuremberg: Verlag f. Theologie- u. Religionswissenschaft, 2017); Reinhold Eichinger, ed., *Auf den Spuren der Täufer in Niederösterreich und im Burgenland* (Nuremberg: Verlag f. Theologie- u. Religionswissenschaft, 2018).

⁵⁴ Eichinger: “Es gab nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg in Österreich eigentlich grob zehn freikirchliche Gemeinden, wenn man jetzt die Methodisten ausklammert. Und das ist extrem wenig für ein Land. Das hat mit den Habsburgern zu tun; das hat mit der katholischen Prägung; mit einer diskriminierenden Gesetzgebung, was alles nicht Katholische betrifft, zu tun.”

⁵⁵ Eichinger: “Speziell Freikirchen waren wirklich diskriminiert und erst nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg hat dann eine [...] Missionierung Österreichs von außen begonnen, weil im Inneren war fast nichts.”

⁵⁶ Eichinger: “Weil Österreich so ein kleines Land ist, haben viele Missionsorganisationen nur einen Missionar gesendet. [...] Das war eher ein Puzzle; ein Stückwerk von lauter unabhängigen Gemeinden, die irgendwie von irgendwo entstanden sind, aus einem kleinen Kreis mit aktiven, jungen Österreichern. Aber es war keine Landschaft, wo es Kooperation und Zusammenarbeit gab, oder wo schon größere Bünde gewirkt hätten. Es waren vor allem unabhängige einzelne Gemeinden, die entstanden sind.”

⁵⁷ Eichinger: “[U]nter den Österreichern [...] [ist] die Sehnsucht entstanden – o, wir sind einige! Wir wollen kooperieren, wir wollen Österreich erreichen und missionarisch erreichen.”

he told the story. From this desire the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Evangelikaler Gemeinden in Österreich* (established in 1981⁵⁸) arose, which provided a platform for cooperation among the *Freikirchen*. At this time, however, there was not any official cooperation with Pentecostal free-church groups.

2.2. DENOMINATIONAL COALITION

The formation of the *FKÖ* as an umbrella organization and state-recognized church grew in large part out of a shared interest among the various free-church denominations for improved legal status in Austria that would facilitate a broader platform for ministry. Eichinger referred to past “legal discrimination [...] in the most diverse areas – right of assembly, employment law, etc.,”⁵⁹ and commented that “how the Austrian state reacted was not praiseworthy.”⁶⁰ Whereas individual denominations had already been faced with seemingly insurmountable barriers to official recognition, the possibility of a way forward in the form of a denominational coalition was first considered in 2009. Over the course of the next couple of years, discussions took shape – first in view of a coalition between the *BBGÖ*, *BEG*, *MFÖ*, and *FCGÖ*, but with the *ECG* joining the discussion in 2011. (This composition represented an important shift from earlier cooperations, with the inclusion of Pentecostal and charismatic groups.) These discussions led to the formation of the *FKÖ* in 2012 and to the coalition’s being granted official recognition in 2013.⁶¹ Worth noting is the ecumenical support for the coalition – from an instigating voice of a Catholic member of the *Weg der Versöhnung*⁶² (Path of Reconciliation), to the endorsement of Cardinal Christoph Schönborn (b. 1945), to the legal assistance supplied by the Lutheran (*A.B.*) synod president.⁶³

2.2.1. LEGAL STATUS AND BASIC STRUCTURE

The successful establishment of the *FKÖ* depended upon its member denominations’ together fulfilling the Austrian state’s requirements for a *gesetzlich anerkannte Kirche* (“legally recognized church”). The criteria relate to number of members (at least 0.2% of the population of Austria), longevity (at least 20 years’ presence in Austria, with formal organization for at

⁵⁸ Frank Hinkelmann, *Kirchen, Freikirchen und christliche Gemeinschaften in Österreich: Handbuch der Konfessionskunde* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2016), p. 290.

⁵⁹ Eichinger: “Und weil so viel rechtliche Diskriminierung da ist, in den unterschiedlichsten Rechtsgebieten: Versammlungsrecht, Dienstrecht und so weiter, haben sich einzelne freikirchliche Bünde – es gibt ja mehrere in Österreich – immer wieder juristisch bemüht.”

⁶⁰ Eichinger: “[W]ie hier der Rechtsstaat Österreich reagiert hat, war nicht rühmlich.”

⁶¹ Hinkelmann, *Kirchen, Freikirchen und christliche Gemeinschaften in Österreich*, pp. 148–149.

⁶² “Weg der Versöhnung,” <<https://versoehnung.net/>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

⁶³ Graf-Stuhlhofer, “Zeittafel zur Geschichte von Österreichs Freikirchen,” p. 14.

least ten years), and prior status (at least five years) as a *staatlich eingetragene religiöse Bekenntnisgemeinschaft* (state-registered religious community).⁶⁴

One could say that the recognition of the *FKÖ* provided a legal stamp of approval of the home-grown authenticity of Austrian *Freikirchen*, an affirmation that coalition leaders see as more than long enough in coming: “This late development [the formation of the *FKÖ*] is surprising in Austria, since free churches worldwide date back to the Anabaptists of the Reformation period, and this group was large in number also in Austria.”⁶⁵ Moreover, “*Freikirchen* are thus not an ‘import from North America,’ as many people in this country think.”⁶⁶ On a highly practical level, one of the outworkings of the coalition’s legally recognized status relates to education. Eichinger stated: “One of the biggest steps was certainly the fact that we now have the right as a recognized church to give religious instruction [in the schools] with our own teachers.”⁶⁷

The structure of the *FKÖ* is five-fold: 1) the local congregation with its congregational assembly of members and its elected leadership, 2) the individual denominations with their assembly of delegates and elected leadership, 3) the coalition’s Forum (composed of the entire sum of denominational delegates) and Council (a smaller assembly of individuals elected by the Forum), 4) independent organizations associated with *FKÖ* member denominations, and 5) and an arbitration commission.⁶⁸

2.2.2. DEFINING FEATURES

“*Einheit. Vielfalt. Christus.*”⁶⁹ (“Unity. Diversity. Christ.”) This motto quoted in an *ORF* (*Österreichischer Rundfunk* [Austrian Broadcasting Corporation]) article at the time of the *FKÖ*’s recognition, while an apt slogan for the denominational coalition, deserves a bit more explanation. It is important to answer the question of what unifies the *FKÖ* member denominations – with each other and with the broader Church. The following overview

⁶⁴ “Gesetzlich anerkannte Kirchen und Religionsgesellschaften,” <https://www.oesterreich.gv.at/themen/leben_in_oesterreich/kirchenein_austritt_und_religionen/3/Seite.820015.html> (Accessed: 22 March 2022).

⁶⁵ “Freikirchen in Österreich: Entstehung,” <<https://freikirchen.at/entstehung.php>> (Accessed: 22 March 2022): “Diese späte Entwicklung überrascht in Österreich, da die Freikirchen weltweit auf die Täufer der Reformationszeit zurückgehen und diese Bevölkerungsgruppe auch in Österreich groß an der Zahl war.”

⁶⁶ “Freikirchen in Österreich: Entstehung”: “Freikirchen sind daher kein ‘Import aus Nordamerika,’ wie viele Menschen hierzulande denken.”

⁶⁷ Eichinger: “Einer der größten Schritte war sicher, dass wir nun das Recht haben, als anerkannte Kirche Religionsunterricht zu erteilen mit unseren Lehrkräften.”

⁶⁸ “Verfassung der Freikirchen in Österreich,” <https://freikirchen.at/web_documents/verfassung_der_freikirchen_in_oesterreich.pdf> (Accessed: 22 March 2022), pp. 4–13.

⁶⁹ “Freikirchen-Sprecher: Anerkennung ‘ein Wunder,” ORF, <<https://religion.orf.at/v3/stories/2600687/>> (Accessed: 22 March 2022).

provides a glimpse into the theological foundation and structural characteristics shared by the five denominations that compose the *FKÖ*, as well as the historical developments and theological distinctives of each of these five groups.

The foundational theological consensus of the five denominations is found in the Apostles' Creed. The *FKÖ* churches emphasize the unifying force of this ancient Christian statement of faith: "They [the *FKÖ*] consider themselves as connected with all Christians worldwide and see themselves united with them in the Apostles' Creed."⁷⁰ (As a side-note, creeds are rarely, if ever, read corporately in free-church services, at least not in the services I observed. That said, one of the most popular songs, based upon feedback from churches surveyed, is a rendition of the Apostles' Creed.)

Furthermore, the *FKÖ* churches celebrate the distinctives of Reformation theology – namely, salvation in Christ alone through faith alone by grace alone. The centrality of salvation received through the gift of faith was pivotal for Reformation thinkers like Luther, as discussed above, and is absolutely central for the understanding of the Christian faith held by the *FKÖ*: "The 'Freikirchen in Österreich' and their members confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of the world, as set forth in the Bible."⁷¹

The Reformers emphasized the unique authority of Scripture, a position which they proclaimed as a return to the purity and simplicity of the Early Church, and in stark contrast to the medieval Catholic emphases on the authority of ecclesial tradition and of the pope. Here members of the *FKÖ* understand themselves as following directly in the Reformers' footsteps: "They confess that people wrote and compiled the Bible with the help of divine inspiration. They recognize the Bible as the 'Word of God' and, without qualification, as reliable and as the highest guideline in all matters of faith and conduct in life."⁷²

The above-mentioned theological essentials of the *FKÖ* unite the member denominations with each other and also with Protestants going back five hundred plus years, as well as worldwide today. The question remains as to what then unites the *FKÖ* as a denominational coalition but differentiates it from other Protestant traditions. According to the *FKÖ*'s website, the key

⁷⁰ "Freikirchen in Österreich: Glaube," <<https://freikirchen.at/glaube.php>> (Accessed: 22 March 2022): "Sie verstehen sich zu allen Christinnen und Christen weltweit als zugehörig und sehen sich im Apostolischen Glaubensbekenntnis mit diesen verbunden."

⁷¹ "Freikirchen in Österreich: Glaube": "Die 'Freikirchen in Österreich' und ihre Mitglieder bekennen sich zu Jesus Christus als Herrn und Erlöser der Welt, wie dies die Bibel darlegt."

⁷² "Freikirchen in Österreich: Glaube": "Sie bekennen sich dazu, dass Menschen die Bibel mit Hilfe göttlicher Eingebung geschrieben und zusammengestellt haben. Sie anerkennen die Bibel als 'Wort Gottes,' ohne Einschränkungen als zuverlässig und als höchste Richtlinie in allen Fragen des Glaubens und der Lebensführung."

component of their cooperation is the personal and corporate, theoretical and practical, outworking of certain basic freedoms (hence the “*frei*” in *Freikirchen*):

Believers within the “Freikirchen in Österreich” make a free and personal decision for the Christian faith as young people or adults. By doing so, they affirm that the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ were accomplished by God’s grace and for their salvation. Customarily, they affirm this decision by baptism according to the biblical model.

According to the biblical understanding, congregations are the community of believers. They organize themselves independently in their respective places under the principle of the priesthood of all believers. The “Freikirchen in Österreich” appreciate the diversity in spiritual expression, tradition, and history of their congregations.

The “Freikirchen in Österreich” affirm the separation of church and state for historical as well as theological reasons. In their view, this separation enables both sides to fulfill their tasks in the best possible way. This includes freedom of worship for believers of all religions. It also expressly includes the best possible cooperation between church and state in partnership for the good of society, especially in the social sector, education, and development aid.⁷³

Stated in other words, the congregations of the *FKÖ* are characterized first by their belief in the centrality of the individual’s commitment to the central doctrines of the Christian faith embodied in the person and work of Jesus Christ; this commitment is confirmed in the rite of baptism, administered only to believing young people or adults (believer’s baptism) – a “free” personal decision. Second, the *Freikirchen* hold to the centrality of the local church as the context for Christian practice and growth, where freedom and responsibility meet in an intentionally non-hierarchical organizational structure based upon the concept of the “priesthood of the believer” (see 1 Peter 2:5) – “freedom” in terms of church governance. Third, *FKÖ* churches emphasize the separation of church and state, while nonetheless advocating a respect for governmental authority and viewing the government as a potential partner for social initiatives that better the wider community – “free” in relation to differentiation of ecclesial

⁷³ “Freikirchen in Österreich,” <<https://freikirchen.at/>> (Accessed: 22 March 2022): “Die Glaubenden der ‘Freikirchen in Österreich’ treffen als Jugendliche oder Erwachsene eine freie und persönliche Entscheidung für den christlichen Glauben. Mit dieser bejahen sie, dass die Menschwerdung, der Tod und die Auferstehung Jesu Christi aus Gottes Gnade und zu ihrer Errettung erfolgt sind. Üblicherweise bekräftigen sie diese Entscheidung durch die Taufe nach biblischem Vorbild. Die Gemeinden sind nach dem Verständnis der Bibel die Gemeinschaft der Glaubenden. Sie organisieren sich an ihrem jeweiligen Ort selbstständig und unter dem Grundsatz des Priestertums aller Gläubigen. Die ‘Freikirchen in Österreich’ schätzen dabei die Vielfalt in geistlichem Ausdruck, Tradition und Geschichte ihrer Gemeinden. Die ‘Freikirchen in Österreich’ bejahen die Trennung von Kirche und Staat aus geschichtlichen sowie theologischen Gründen. Durch diese Trennung können ihrer Ansicht nach beide Seiten ihre Aufgaben bestmöglich erfüllen. Sie beinhaltet die Freiheit der Religionsausübung für Glaubende jeder Religion. Sie schließt weiters ausdrücklich die bestmögliche und partnerschaftliche Zusammenarbeit von Kirche und Staat zum Wohl der Gesellschaft mit ein, insbesondere im sozialen Bereich, Bildungsbereich und in der Entwicklungshilfe.”

and civil roles. This non-hierarchical understanding of church and church governance is reflected clearly in a segment of the *Bund Evangelikaler Gemeinden* statement of faith, taken from a section entitled “Ecclesiology”:

We profess the independence and autonomy of the local congregation. Each is directly responsible to its Lord. Cooperation with like-minded, Bible-believing congregations can be advantageous for better fulfilling the divine mandate as well as handling internal congregational difficulties. We recognize and support the state authorities in their God-ordained task and follow their guidelines, insofar as this does not violate God’s superior commandments and directives.⁷⁴

2.2.2.1. TERMINOLOGICAL CLARIFICATIONS

Perhaps it is important here to disambiguate the term “*Freikirche(n)*” as used in this thesis. Graf-Stuhlhofer reflects:

The term “free church” originally arose from a distinction to the state church or national church. Due to a change in the situation of church law in many European countries, many peoples’ churches now also have the status of “free churches” from a legal point of view. In order to characterize “free churches,” certain secondary characteristics were incorporated, which can be connected with the term “free church,” e.g., “voluntary church,” referring to the commencement of church membership, or to being (voluntarily) baptized in the first place.⁷⁵

In this text I use “*Freikirche(n)*” (noun) and “free-church” (adjective) primarily to refer to the churches officially associated with the *FKÖ*. However, there are many additional churches in Austria that are “free-church” in the broader theological or theological-ecclesiological sense described above, but which do not belong to the denominational coalition of the *FKÖ*.⁷⁶

Additionally, the evangelical movement should be mentioned here, at least in passing; Schweyer describes the *Freikirchen* “as a subgroup of the evangelical movement.”⁷⁷

⁷⁴ “Bund Evangelikaler Gemeinden in Österreich: Glaubensgrundlagen,” <https://beg.or.at/fileadmin/beg/DOKs/Glaubensgrundlagen_BEGOE.pdf> (Accessed: 22 March 2022), p. 4: “Wir bekennen uns zur Selbständigkeit und Eigenverantwortlichkeit der örtlichen Gemeinde. Jede ist direkt ihrem Herrn verantwortlich. Die Zusammenarbeit mit gleichgesinnten, bibeltreuen Gemeinden kann zur besseren Bewältigung des göttlichen Auftrages sowie innergemeindlicher Schwierigkeiten von Vorteil sein. Wir anerkennen und unterstützen die staatliche Obrigkeit in ihrer von Gott verordneten Aufgabe und folgen ihren Richtlinien, soweit damit nicht Gottes übergeordnete Gebote und Weisungen verletzt werden.”

⁷⁵ Graf-Stuhlhofer: “Zeittafel zur Geschichte von Österreichs Freikirchen,” p. 3: “Der Begriff ‘Freikirche’ entstand ursprünglich aus dem Gegensatz zur Staatskirche oder Landeskirche. Durch eine Änderung der kirchenrechtlichen Situation in vielen Ländern Europas haben mittlerweile auch viele Volkskirchen, rechtlich gesehen, die Stellung von ‘Freikirchen.’ Zur Charakterisierung von ‘Freikirchen’ wurden nun sekundär bestimmte Merkmale herangezogen, die sich mit dem Begriff ‘Freikirche’ verbinden lassen, z.B. ‘Freiwilligkeitskirche,’ bezogen auf den Beginn der Kirchenmitgliedschaft, oder überhaupt auf das (freiwillige) Getauftwerden.”

⁷⁶ For Vienna, see Wolf Paul, “Freikirchliche Gemeinden in Wien,” <<https://freikirchenatlas.at/wien/>> (Accessed: 22 March 2022).

⁷⁷ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 33: “[...] als Subgruppe der evangelikalen Bewegung.”

(Admittedly, evangelicalism has complex historical roots, theological characteristics, and confessional associations, as well as in some contexts today certain socio-political trappings, meaning that some *Freikirchen* may avoid or even disassociate themselves from the term.⁷⁸) Schweyer summarizes the evangelical movement with three defining terms: Bible, conversion, and mission, with reference to the doctrinal statements provided by the *Europäische Evangelische Allianz*. The Bible is understood to be inspired by God, with the dual consequence that it is trustworthy and authoritative. Conversion consists of receiving the gift of salvation solely offered by Christ, received through faith and in repentance. Mission involves all Christians, who together form Christ's "Body" and are entrusted with the message of salvation.⁷⁹ These theological characteristics display strong unity with the theological statements of the *FKÖ* discussed above. Hinkelmann, on the penultimate page of his lengthy volume on the history of evangelicalism in Austria, offers a summary from the angle of what he calls "a kind of religious countermovement to traditional church institutions"⁸⁰: "The emphasis on individualism (in the case of evangelicals, the call for personal conversion), authenticity (in the case of evangelicals, the emphasis on living out one's faith in everyday life) and an anti-traditionalism (in the case of evangelicals, often in the form of a questioning of church traditions, especially in the free-church context) strike the nerve of the times."⁸¹

2.2.3. MEMBER DENOMINATIONS

Having looked at the core unifying elements of the *FKÖ*, it is now time to explore the diversity of the five member denominations, a diversity that is also reflected to a certain extent even within the individual denominations themselves. Here the historical development of each denomination is important, of course along with the various theological and stylistic "*Nuancen*" ("nuances")⁸² they display. Speaking of the *FKÖ*, pastor Karl Peloschek of *Christliches*

⁷⁸ See Hella Hagspiel-Keller, *Evangelische und evangelikale Freikirchen und ihr neuer Aufbruch: Emerging Church am Beispiel projekt:gemeinde in Wien* (Doctoral Dissertation: Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, 2014), pp. 166–186.

⁷⁹ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 31–32. See "Glaubensbasis der Europäischen Evangelischen Allianz (EEA)," <https://www.each.ch/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Glaubensbasis-EEA_0.pdf> (Accessed: 22 March 2022). Cf. also "Verfassung der Freikirchen in Österreich," p. 1.

⁸⁰ Hinkelmann, *Evangelikale Bewegung in Österreich*, p. 520: "[...] eine Art religiöser Gegenbewegung zu den traditionellen kirchlichen Institutionen."

⁸¹ Hinkelmann, *Evangelikale Bewegung in Österreich*, p. 520: "Die Betonung des Individualismus (bei den Evangelikalen der Aufruf zur persönlichen Bekehrung), Authentizität (bei den Evangelikalen die Betonung des Glaubensvollzugs im Alltag) und eine Anti-Traditionalismus (bei den Evangelikalen vielfach in Form einer Infragestellung kirchlicher Traditionen, vor allem im freikirchlichen Raum) treffen den Nerv der Zeit."

⁸² "Staatliche Anerkennung für Freikirchen," <<http://www.pro-religion.at/proreligion/home/article/105466.html>> (Accessed: 22 March 2022); "Freikirchen: Staatliche Anerkennung auf Schiene," <<https://religion.orf.at/v3/stories/2588423/>> (Accessed: 22 March 2022).

Zentrum Wien (ECG) stated, “We are well on the way towards raising a collective voice and saying: ‘It’s not just one group here, one there. There’s a big church, a big community in Austria that is pulling in the same direction – with all its colorfulness and diversity, of course, and with its various viewpoints.’”⁸³ Or, speaking with his characteristic humor, Rob Prokop, pastor of *CIG (FCGÖ)* said, “That’s our home [referring to the *FKÖ*], even though it’s very diverse, you know; not everybody would consider us their closest friend. It goes from very conservative to very charismatic, and we would boast that we’re somewhere right in the middle. That’s where we like to be. The conservatives say we’re charismatics, and the charismatics say we’re conservatives – I like it like that.”

2.2.3.1. BAPTISTENGEMEINDEN IN ÖSTERREICH

The *Bund der Baptistengemeinden in Österreich (BBGÖ)* describes itself as “a free church in Austria, with a long tradition and fresh forms of expression.”⁸⁴ Hinkelmann states succinctly: “Their indirect roots go back to the Anabaptist movements of the Reformation era. Their direct origins lie in seventeenth-century England.”⁸⁵ The Baptist church traces its Austrian origins to the mid-nineteenth century, with the first Baptist church being founded in Vienna in 1869. This event, however, followed on already over 250 years of official Baptist history,⁸⁶ and an even longer pre-history.

Baptists draw on the heritage of the thirteenth-century Lollard reform movement, the Anabaptist and especially the Mennonite wing of the Reformation (and in some circles also the influence of Calvinist theology), the English Puritans (late fifteenth century and beyond), and also Pietism. Methodist Pietism was especially influential in the context of missionary efforts responsible for the establishment of Baptist churches in Germany and Austria in the 1800s. The Pietist movement, beginning in the late seventeenth century, can be placed in a context of a historical, sociological, and theological continuum of renewal and revival movements, including but not limited to Methodism, the Holiness movement(s), and the Great Awakenings. Emphases of Pietism include active faith understood as a personal relationship with God, a

⁸³ Peloschek: “[W]ir sind auf dem besten Weg, diese gemeinsame Stimme auch zu erheben und zu sagen: Es ist nicht nur eine Gruppe da, eine dort. Denn es gibt eine große Kirche; eine große Gemeinschaft in Österreich, die am gleichen Strang zieht – mit all ihrer Buntheit und Vielfalt natürlich und mit den unterschiedlichen Ansichten.”

⁸⁴ “Bund der Baptistengemeinde in Österreich,” <<https://baptisten.at/>> (Accessed: 22 March 2022): “[...] eine Freikirche in Österreich mit langer Tradition und frischen Ausdrucksformen.”

⁸⁵ Hinkelmann, *Kirchen, Freikirchen und christliche Gemeinschaften in Österreich*, p. 150: “Ihre indirekten Wurzeln gehen auf die Täuferbewegungen während der Reformationszeit zurück. Ihre direkten Ursprünge liegen im England des 17. Jahrhunderts.”

⁸⁶ “Bund der Baptistengemeinde in Österreich: Über Baptisten,” <<https://baptisten.at/ueber-baptisten/>> (Accessed: 22 March 2022).

focus on personal study and application of the Bible, and the outworking of faith in social service. The movement's relationship to Enlightenment thinking, also arising in the late 1600s, is complex – at the same time rejecting the exclusive place of reason (and instead including a subjective element in religious faith) and yet embracing the importance of the individual (as capable of and responsible for personal faith in and relationship with God).⁸⁷

After World War I there were still relatively few Baptists (c. 700) in Austria (although there were many more in the regions that were part of the Austrian Empire until 1918),⁸⁸ even after the denomination took form officially in 1953.⁸⁹ Only in the last thirty years has marked growth taken place; today there are c. 2900 members in thirty-three congregations (eleven in Vienna).⁹⁰

From their inception, the soteriological focus of the Baptists has been on personal, individual repentance and allegiance to Christ – followed by the sign of immersion baptism (hence the name) –, accompanied by an emphasis on individual access and responsibility to the biblical text and the guidance of the Holy Spirit within the context of the church.⁹¹ Fischer-Dörl noted the strong emphasis within the Baptist denomination on the local congregation: “We have cultivated this understanding of the local church as a highly autonomous entity.” This, however, does not mean they see themselves as the only “true church.” Rather, “supra-local hierarchies or connections” are rejected, “unless, of course, one has voluntarily joined together to form an association.” In this ecclesiology, known as congregationalism, “the local congregation is the final authority.”⁹²

A key characteristic of the Baptist church, as they reflect on their own history and current practice, is a commitment to and public stand for human rights. This emphasis dates back, for instance, to a religious freedoms manifesto penned by one of the founders of the Baptist movement (Thomas Helwys [c. 1575 – c. 1616]).⁹³ Austrian Baptists today are active in a number of social services for the marginalized, including refugees and victims of human

⁸⁷ Hagspiel-Keller, *Evangelische und evangelikale Freikirchen und ihr neuer Aufbruch*, pp. 141–157.

⁸⁸ “Bund der Baptistengemeinde in Österreich: Über Baptisten: Baptisten in Österreich,” <<https://baptisten.at/ueber-baptisten/baptisten-in-oesterreich/>> (Accessed: 22 March 2022).

⁸⁹ Hinkelmann, *Kirchen, Freikirchen und christliche Gemeinschaften in Österreich*, p. 151.

⁹⁰ “Bund der Baptistengemeinde in Österreich: Über Baptisten: Baptisten in Österreich.”

⁹¹ Hinkelmann, *Kirchen, Freikirchen und christliche Gemeinschaften in Österreich*, pp. 151–152.

⁹² Fischer-Dörl: “Wir haben dieses Verständnis von der Ortsgemeinde als sehr autonome Entität gepflegt. Dass man keine überörtlichen Hierarchien oder Zusammenhänge hat, außer wenn man sich aus freien Stücken zu einem Bund zusammengeschlossen hat, natürlich. [...] Diese Betonung darauf, dass die Gemeindeversammlung die letzte Instanz ist – das ist Kongregationalismus.”

⁹³ “Bund der Baptistengemeinde in Österreich: Über Baptisten.”

trafficking.⁹⁴ Moreover, Fischer-Dörl noted a strong evangelistic/missional element: “[W]e are not a church that grows by means of simple population growth, but [...] we say that everyone must actually have this encounter with God himself or herself.”⁹⁵

2.2.3.2. BUND EVANGELIKALER GEMEINDEN IN ÖSTERREICH

The *Bund Evangelikaler Gemeinde in Österreich (BEG)* has approximately sixty congregations, as well as a handful of church planting projects,⁹⁶ with a combined membership of over 3000.⁹⁷ Beginning in the late 1960s, a number of congregations joined by common theological leanings, established an informal cooperation in the form of annual training courses. This eventually led to the formation of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Evangelikaler Gemeinden in Österreich (ARGEGÖ)*,⁹⁸ mentioned above. As the name implies, the *ARGEGÖ* is a parachurch organization intended for interdenominational partnership, with ties especially to various Baptist, Brethren, Free Evangelical, and Mennonite churches. Eichinger described a desire growing within the organization for a more “formal cooperation” of churches, one that would require different financial and legal parameters than the loose affiliation provided by *ARGEGÖ*. From this desire the *BEG* was birthed. The official recognition of the *BEG* as a state-registered religious community was a long process, partly because of controversy regarding the use of “*Evangelikal*” in the name – which the *Evangelische Kirche* deemed as encroaching upon their own nomenclature. But the denomination was established in 1992, with official recognition as a state-registered religious community six years later. The churches that make up the *BEG* include congregations coming out of *Volksmission* and *Brüdergemeinde* contexts, congregations growing out of overseas missionary work, and church planting projects.⁹⁹

The missional stance of the *BEG* is reflected in the fact that one of their four emphases as a denomination is church planting. The other three priorities of the *BEG* are “Bible-based

⁹⁴ “Bund der Baptistengemeinde in Österreich: Soziale Tätigkeiten,” <<https://baptisten.at/ueber-baptisten/soziale-taetigkeit/>> (Accessed: 22 March 2022).

⁹⁵ Fischer-Dörl: “[...] eine missionarische Bewegung, dass wir als Kirche keine Nachwuchs-Kirche sind, sondern dass wir sagen, jeder muss eigentlich selber diese Begegnung mit Gott haben.” See also Hinkelmann, *Kirchen, Freikirchen und christliche Gemeinschaften in Österreich*, pp. 152–153.

⁹⁶ “Bund Evangelikaler Gemeinden in Österreich: Gemeinden,” <<https://beg.or.at/gemeinden#c6177>> (Accessed: 31 March 2022).

⁹⁷ Hinkelmann, *Kirchen, Freikirchen und christliche Gemeinschaften in Österreich*, p. 153.

⁹⁸ “ARGEGÖ,” <<https://evangelikal.at/>> (Accessed: 25 March 2022).

⁹⁹ Hinkelmann, *Kirchen, Freikirchen und christliche Gemeinschaften in Österreich*, pp. 154–155. See also pp. 289–290.

theology,” “collective decisions,” and “independence of the congregation.”¹⁰⁰ The congregations located in Vienna include eight German-speaking congregations, as well as congregations worshipping in Chinese, English, Macedonian, Persian, Polish, and Russian.¹⁰¹

2.2.3.3. ELAIA CHRISTENGEMEINDEN

The *Elaia Christengemeinden (ECG)* consists of nine congregations throughout Austria, with two in Vienna, and the denomination is set apart by its particularly strong emphasis on the Jewish origins of the Christian faith and the special place of ethnic and political Israel today. The *ECG* exists since 2006 as a state-registered religious community (although the denomination was formed a year earlier),¹⁰² with approximately one thousand members. The history of the denomination is somewhat diverse, encompassing both Catholic and Protestant influences and including charismatic elements.¹⁰³

Borrowing the Greek word for “olive tree,” the name “*Elaia*” refers to a metaphor used by the Apostle Paul, depicting non-Jewish Messiah-followers as wild olive branches that have been graciously grafted into the cultivated olive tree that is the Jewish people (Romans 11). Accordingly, all Christians share “Jewish roots.”¹⁰⁴ The particular emphasis given to the theme by the *ECG* congregations makes them unique, as well as their active partnership with Messianic congregations and strong support for Israel, understood both as ancient Israel of the Old Testament and as corresponding to the modern nation-state.

In fact, Peloschek stated that the most apparent characteristic of the *ECG* congregations is that “they’re very much concerned with Israel.” “We care a lot about it, not just as a topic, not just as an orientation, but as a vital essence. Why? Because we are, after all, grafted into the precious olive tree, and thus without becoming Jewish, we have nevertheless become a part of Israel, that is, of spiritual Israel.”¹⁰⁵ He continued: “That’s what we want to communicate to

¹⁰⁰ “Bund Evangelikaler Gemeinden in Österreich: Über uns,” <<https://beg.or.at/ueber-uns-1>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022): “Bibel begründete Theologie,” “[g]emeinsame Entscheidungen,” “Selbstständigkeit der Gemeinde.”

¹⁰¹ “Bund Evangelikaler Gemeinden in Österreich: Gemeinden.”

¹⁰² “Elaia Christengemeinden,” <<http://elaia.at/>> (Accessed: 22 March 2022).

¹⁰³ Hinkelmann, *Kirchen, Freikirchen und christliche Gemeinschaften in Österreich*, p. 157.

¹⁰⁴ “Elaia Christengemeinden: Wer wir sind,” <<http://elaia.at/werwirsind.php>> (Accessed: 22 March 2022): “jüdische Wurzeln.”

¹⁰⁵ Peloschek: “[D]ie beschäftigen sich sehr stark mit Israel.” “Da liegt uns sehr viel daran, nicht nur als Thema, nicht nur als eine Richtung, sondern als eine Lebenssubstanz. Warum? Weil wir ja eingepfropft sind in den edlen Ölbaum und somit ohne jüdisch zu werden, trotzdem ein Teil Israels, also des geistlichen Israels geworden sind.”

people, to say, ‘Israel is not just a country we can find on a map, and we’ve been there and visited Jerusalem. There’s much, much more to it.’ And that is Elaia.”¹⁰⁶

Peloschek mentioned a certain sense of responsibility of the Austrian Church for Israel, due to Austrian participation in Hitler’s regime and deflection of blame for so many years after World War II: “And in that remembrance, I also have a longing to pray for Israel and to bless Israel.”¹⁰⁷ The blessing works both ways, he said – blessing for those who bless the people of Israel: “And hence it is also God’s command to us as Christ’s Church to bless Israel.”¹⁰⁸ This biblical Israel is understood as having significant overlap with the modern state of Israel, but “this does not mean that we approve of everything they do, in the government and in the country and in the politics. That’s clear. But we recognize that the hand of God is upon it all.”¹⁰⁹

2.2.3.4. FREIE CHRISTENGEMEINDE – PFINGSTGEMEINDE IN ÖSTERREICH

The *Freie Christengemeinde – Pfingstgemeinde in Österreich (FCGÖ)* is unique among the *FKÖ* denominations, in that it itself is a coalition of four sub-denominations (*Freie Christengemeinde – Pfingstgemeinde, Rumänische Pfingstgemeinden, Afrikanische Pfingstgemeinden, and LIFE Church Österreich*), together comprising 115 congregations with about 7300 members (but with total attendees around 12,000).¹¹⁰ Twenty-five of these churches are in Vienna, but this figure actually represents well over thirty congregations, if one counts multiple (multi-lingual) congregations that belong to one church (and also congregations on the outskirts of the city, with either their meeting space or postal address in Lower Austria).¹¹¹

The *FCGÖ* traces its heritage to Pentecostal, charismatic, and neo-charismatic roots (with earlier formative influences of eighteenth and nineteenth-century revival movements and the twentieth-century Holiness Movement) – worldwide more than half a billion people.¹¹² The modern Pentecostal movement goes back to the early twentieth century and to the Los Angeles “Azousa Street Revival” of 1906. Out of this and subsequent revivals, many individuals,

¹⁰⁶ Peloschek: “[D]as wollen wir auch den Leuten mitteilen und sagen: ‘Israel ist nicht nur ein Land, von dem wir wissen, wo es liegt. Und wir waren schon mal da und haben Jerusalem besucht, sondern da steckt noch viel, viel mehr darin.’ Und das ist eben Elaia.”

¹⁰⁷ Peloschek: “Und in dem Gedenken ist es auch ein Bedürfnis für mich, für Israel zu beten und Israel zu segnen.”

¹⁰⁸ Peloschek: “Und von dem her ist es auch ein Gottesauftrag an uns als Gemeinde Christi, Israel zu segnen.”

¹⁰⁹ Peloschek: “Das bedeutet nicht, dass wir alles gutheißen, was sie machen, in der Regierung und im Land und in der Politik. Das ist auch klar. Aber wir erkennen, dass hier die Hand Gottes drauf ist.”

¹¹⁰ “Freie Christengemeinde – Pfingstgemeinden: Geschichte,” <<https://fcgoe.at/geschichte.html>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

¹¹¹ “Freie Christengemeinde – Pfingstgemeinde: Gemeinden,” <<https://fcgoe.at/gemeinden.html>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

¹¹² Hinkelmann, *Kirchen, Freikirchen und christliche Gemeinschaften in Österreich*, pp. 161–162.

whether already within the Church or new to it, had what they understood to be a new, experiential understanding of the role and power of the Holy Spirit, expressed in part by the exercise of “spiritual gifts” such as speaking in tongues (glossolalia). As the *FCGÖ* states on their website: “Pentecostal Christians generally emphasize [...] the need for a living relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord”¹¹³ and “the expectation of the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit in both worship and daily life, as well as a belief in a special experience of the Holy Spirit that leads to service that is mature in character, loving towards one’s neighbor, and committed to God.”¹¹⁴

The first Pentecostal church in Vienna was founded in 1919, thanks to the efforts of Swedish Pentecostals who came to Austria as part of relief efforts in the wake of World War I. After World War II (during which cessation of the fledgling church was enforced by the Nazi regime), a new start was possible, and membership dramatically increased thanks to the number of refugees that found their way to Austria. Various distinct associations were founded in the 1990s and early 2000s, eventually contributing to the current make-up of the denomination.¹¹⁵ The goal of this organizational structure is “a common scope for action [...] for congregations with the same theological or cultural character.”¹¹⁶

The vision of the *FCGÖ* – “Autonomous, local church communities want to ‘tick’ according to the pulse of Jesus and, networked in the *FCGÖ*, encourage each other to love God and people more!”¹¹⁷ – informs their goals as a coalition of churches. These goals are 1) “supernatural working of God,” 2) “reaching the next generation,” 3) “empowering leadership,” 4) “being a missional church,” 5) “serving relevantly in the society,” 6) “acting relationally,” 7) “being an attractive church of Jesus.”¹¹⁸ Cultural relevance is a primary emphasis within these goals: “It is our concern to serve the people of Austria and to serve our country by proclaiming and

¹¹³ “Freie Christengemeinde – Pfingstgemeinden: Geschichte”: “Pfingstchristen betonen im Allgemeinen [...] [d]ie Notwendigkeit einer lebendigen Beziehung zu Jesus Christus als Retter und Herrn.”

¹¹⁴ “Freie Christengemeinde – Pfingstgemeinden: Geschichte”: “[...] [d]as Rechnen mit der Kraft und den Gaben des Heiligen Geistes sowohl im Gottesdienst als auch im Alltag sowie den Glauben an eine besondere Erfahrung des Heiligen Geistes, welche zu einem charakterreifen, seinen Nächsten liebenden und für Gott engagierten Dienst führen.”

¹¹⁵ “Freie Christengemeinde – Pfingstgemeinden: Geschichte.”

¹¹⁶ “Freie Christengemeinde – Pfingstgemeinden: Struktur,” <<https://fcgoe.at/struktur.html>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022): “Durch die Organisation in selbständige Verbände, soll gemeinsamer Handlungsspielraum für Gemeinden mit gleicher theologischer oder kultureller Prägung geschaffen werden.”

¹¹⁷ “Freie Christengemeinde – Pfingstgemeinden: Vision,” <<https://fcgoe.at/vision.html>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022): “Autonome, lokale Kirchengemeinschaften wollen nach dem Pulsschlag Jesu ‘ticken’ und sich, vernetzt in der FCGÖ, gegenseitig ermutigen, Gott und Menschen mehr zu lieben!”

¹¹⁸ “Freie Christengemeinde – Pfingstgemeinden: Vision”: 1) “[ü]bernaturliches Wirken Gottes,” 2) “[n]ächste Generation erreichen,” 3) “[b]evollmächtigende Leiterschaft,” 4) “[m]issionale Gemeinde,” 5) “[g]esellschaftsrelevantes Dienen,” 6) “[b]eziehungsorientiert handeln,” 7) “[a]ttraktive Gemeinde Jesu.”

practicing the good news of Jesus Christ in a way that is relevant to society. Through attractive, vibrant local churches, we aim to bring the hope of life to all people. It is important to us to reach the younger generation and to equip them for a viable future. As a church movement, we also see a calling for global social and developmental ministry.”¹¹⁹

Of course, the understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit is particularly central within Pentecostal Christianity. However, the official statement of the *FCGÖ* reflects an understanding that would receive very broad agreement outside of Pentecostal circles: “We believe that the Holy Spirit creates new life in the believer through faith in Jesus Christ, indwells as divine helper, and empowers for a life pleasing to God. In addition, the Holy Spirit equips with power and gifts, enabling believers to proclaim the gospel and serve the Church and the world.”¹²⁰

Retired lead pastor of *Wunderwerk Gemeinde*, Walter Bösch, named as denominational emphases or distinctives “the operations of the Holy Spirit as we read of them in Acts two and in further chapters and also in [other parts of] the New Testament, for example, the concept of baptism in the Spirit – that this did not stop then, but that it continues” (continualist as opposed to cessationist view).¹²¹ “We love working together with the Holy Spirit. We teach that we can be filled. We teach that we can also experience the charismas, the spiritual gifts of grace – prayer for healing, [...] prophecy, and all of the gifts listed there. And these are really the characteristics that shape us.”¹²² Bösch described the charismatic elements of the service as not necessary visibly emphasized. For example, “You can find prophecy among us. You may not notice it so much as a visitor, but someone may come forward and say, ‘I have an inner impression,’ or, ‘I have a picture, and I would like to share it.’ Sometimes we assess it and say,

¹¹⁹ “Freie Christengemeinde – Pfingstgemeinden: Über uns,” <<https://fcgoe.at/ueber-uns/allgemein.html>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022): “Als Freie Christengemeinde – Pfingstgemeinde in Österreich ist es uns ein Anliegen, den Menschen in Österreich und unserem Land zu dienen, indem wir die gute Nachricht von Jesus Christus gesellschaftsrelevant verkündigen und praktizieren. Durch attraktive, lebendige Ortsgemeinden soll allen Menschen die Hoffnung des Lebens nahegebracht werden. Es ist uns wichtig, die junge Generation zu erreichen und sie für eine tragfähige Zukunft auszurüsten. Als Kirchenbewegung sehen wir auch einen Auftrag im weltweiten Sozial- und Entwicklungshilfedienst.”

¹²⁰ “Freie Christengemeinde – Pfingstgemeinden: Geschichte”: “Wir glauben, dass der Heilige Geist durch den Glauben an Jesus Christus im Gläubigen neues Leben schafft, als göttlicher Beistand innewohnt und zu einem Gott wohlgefälligen Leben befähigt. Zudem rüstet der Heilige Geist mit Kraft und Gaben aus, wodurch die Gläubigen zur Verkündigung des Evangeliums und zum Dienst an der Gemeinde und Welt befähigt werden.”

¹²¹ Bösch: “[...] die Wirkungen des Heiligen Geistes, wie wir sie in der Apostelgeschichte zwei und in weiteren Kapiteln und auch im Neuen Testament lesen. Zum Beispiel der Begriff Geistestaufe – dass das damals nicht aufgehört hat, sondern dass das weitergeht.”

¹²² Bösch: “Wir lieben die Zusammenarbeit mit dem Heiligen Geist. Wir lehren, dass wir erfüllt werden können. Wir lehren, dass auch die Charismen, die geistlichen Gnadengaben, dass wir die erleben können und beten um Heilung und um den Glauben an Prophetie. Und alle die Gaben, die da aufgezählt sind. Und das ist eigentlich der Charakter, der uns auch prägt.”

‘This is now an expression of a spiritual gift.’¹²³ In general, there is a certain flexibility woven into services: “We love to say things spontaneously, guided by the Holy Spirit.”¹²⁴ A focus on intercessory prayer is also present.

In terms of structural characteristics, Bösch emphasized the team-driven leadership approach. The pastor works together with the elders (“leadership team”), with the goal of serving the congregation as a whole. The “team” mentality extends beyond the official “leadership team”: Bösch stated, “About half of the members are active in some area of responsibility. Our concept is very team-oriented; we try to work in teams and also to nurture team members.”¹²⁵ This elder-focused, team-focused approach is characteristic of a broad spectrum of *FKÖ* churches.

2.2.3.5. MENNONITISCHE FREIKIRCHE ÖSTERREICH

The early Mennonite movement flourished particularly in the Low Countries, drawing momentum from Anabaptist refugees from other parts of Europe. The Mennonites, taking their name from a leader named Menno Simons (1496–1561), embraced the Anabaptist teachings but not the millenarian or more extreme elements of some groups. Moreover, they were characterized by a pacifist persuasion. Settlements in German-, Frisian-, and Dutch-speaking regions expanded through active missionary efforts. A significant Polish Mennonite community emerged, which, however, then found safe-haven under czarist Russia between the late-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, having been promised exemption from military conscription. When this ruling changed, the next port of call became the United States and Canada. Today Mennonites can be found worldwide, the result of missionary efforts early on, centuries of forced migration, and missionary and humanitarian work continuing to the present. Their presence in Austria dates to the mid-twentieth century and relief efforts for Polish and Russian refugees.¹²⁶ At this time, initiatives from the United States and Canada led to the establishment of congregations in Linz and eventually in several other Austrian cities.¹²⁷

¹²³ Bösch: “Die Prophetie findest du bei uns. Aber wie soll ich sagen, das merkst du vielleicht gar nicht so stark als Besucher, sondern da kommt vielleicht jemand nach vorne und sagt: ‘Ich hab einen inneren Eindruck oder ich habe ein Bild und würde das gerne weitergeben.’ Manchmal erklären wir das und sagen: ‘Das ist jetzt eine Äußerung von einer Geistesgabe.’”

¹²⁴ Bösch: “Da lieben wir es auch, spontan, geführt vom Heiligen Geist Dinge zu sagen.”

¹²⁵ Bösch: “Die Hälfte der Mitglieder sind irgendwie aktiv, in irgendeiner Verantwortung. Wir sind von der Idee her sehr teamorientiert; versuchen, in Teams zu arbeiten und auch die Teammitglieder zu fördern.”

¹²⁶ Hagspiel-Keller, *Evangelische und evangelikale Freikirchen und ihr neuer Aufbruch*, pp. 123, 133–140. See also Walicord, *Staat und Kirche in Österreich*, p. 51.

¹²⁷ Hinkelmann, *Kirchen, Freikirchen und christliche Gemeinschaften in Österreich*, pp. 168–169.

Today, in addition to Vienna, there are Mennonite congregations in Gmunden, Linz, Styer, and Wels.¹²⁸

In terms of theological characteristics, there is a strong emphasis, as is the other *Freikirchen*, on the priesthood of all believers: Barota, an elder in the *Mennonitische Freikirche Wien*, stated, “We believe in the universal priesthood – that is, all who are baptized and born again can function as priests, whether or not they are elders or pastors.”¹²⁹ He also referenced the pacifist tradition, describing the Mennonites as “*eine traditionelle Friedenskirche*” (“a traditional peace church”).

With this summary of the denominations that make up the *FKÖ*, we can hone in on the weekly church service. First, I will explore the content, context, and significance of church services from the perspective of religious aesthetics and then through a liturgical lens, setting the stage for the perspectives of *FKÖ* pastors and musicians on church services as such and specifically on the role of music in the weekly gathering.

3. SYMBOL AND RITUAL IN CHURCH SERVICES

The topic of church services invites analysis from various angles, including both the “inside” member perspective of pastors, musicians, other liturgical participants, and members of the congregation, as well as the “outside” observer perspective of the social and religious scientist. In the following section, I would like to begin by exploring the latter perspective, considering the “what” and “why” of church services from the perspective of the science of religion, focusing in on the realm of religious aesthetics.

Religion is fundamentally connected to symbols and rituals. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz goes so far as to define religion as “a system of symbols which acts to [...] establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by [...] formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and [...] clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that [...] the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.”¹³⁰ Here my intention is not to unpack the entirety of Geertz’s definition, which, it must be noted, is only one of countless attempts to pinpoint the notion of religion. Instead, in the following pages I would like to

¹²⁸ “Mennonitische Freikirche Österreich: Gemeinden,” <http://www.mennoniten.at/?page_id=1128> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

¹²⁹ Barota: “Wir glauben an das allgemeine Priestertum – das heißt, dass alle, die getauft und wiedergeboren sind, als Priester wirken können, egal ob sie Älteste oder Pastoren sind.” This quote and all further quotes attributed to Barota are taken from an interview on 16 December 2021.

¹³⁰ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 90.

explore the realm of symbol and ritual as a backdrop for observations of free-church services and particularly the music incorporated in these services.

3.1. AESTHETICS OF RELIGION

Symbols and rituals are the building blocks of the field of aesthetics. Here it is important to clarify in what sense the word “aesthetics” is being used. Are we talking about artistic sensibilities (“good taste” versus “bad taste”)?¹³¹ Or about classical aesthetic categories (the good, the true, the beautiful)? While either of these lines of exploration suggests insights into understanding or evaluating free-church services and the role of music therein, the primary goal in this particular section is to apply elements of the broad category of “aesthetics of religion.” In this sphere, the focus is primarily on sensory perceptions and awareness and on rituals and gestures – and how these shape and are shaped by religious experiences. First, we will look at the “what” of religious experience (sensory perceptions, rituals, etc.), followed by the “why” (the meaning or significance imbued in these elements and communicated through them).

3.1.1. AESTHETIC ELEMENTS

Symbols are fundamental tools of communication; in fact, anthropologist Mary Douglas states, “All communication depends on use of symbols.”¹³² And, as Lutheran theologian Werner Jetter puts it, “Religion has always been the oldest interested party in everything symbolic.”¹³³ It is necessary to define what exactly is meant by “symbol.” A symbol can be “any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception – the conception is the symbol’s ‘meaning.’”¹³⁴ Of course, symbols can exist in multiple media and can appeal to any of the five senses; they can be word-based or non-verbal; they can be enacted. Enacted symbols are rituals – what Geertz calls “consecrated behavior.”¹³⁵

In *Ritual: Perspective and Dimensions*, Catherine Bell overviews a wide spectrum of thought on the topic of ritual: She discusses the debate as to whether myth or ritual come first (a debate particularly addressing questions of evolutionary and historical development), as well as social-

¹³¹ See, for example, Frank B. Brown, *Good Taste, Bad Taste, and Christian Taste: Aesthetics in Religious Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹³² Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 3rd edn. (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 10.

¹³³ Werner Jetter, *Symbol und Ritual: Anthropologische Elemente im Gottesdienst*, 2nd edn. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), p. 30: “Die Religion war schon immer die älteste Interessentin an allem Symbolischen.”

¹³⁴ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 91.

¹³⁵ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 112.

functional and also social-structural theories (with their comparative rather than historical focus). She also explores religion defined by symbols of communication (with the attendant quasi-linguistic parallels), as well as by concrete ritual practice (both its transformational potential and intrinsic negotiation of authority).¹³⁶

Lutheran theologian and professor Michael Meyer-Blanck defines “ritual” as follows: “A ritual or ritual behavior is an individual or collective habit that relieves one of decision-making and thus frees up one’s attention for other things. In this, habit refers especially to sensory experience and perception.”¹³⁷ And David Plüss, another Lutheran theologian and here referencing anthropologist Victor Turner, includes transcendent and transformational elements in his definition: A ritual is “a repetitive sequence of behavior by a collective, whereby a reference to transcendence is established in a symbolically condensed manner, thereby aspiring to a transformation of the ritual participants.”¹³⁸

Religious symbols and rituals elicit responses, which in turn have their own symbolic significance. Responses can take the form of internal emotions, but of course these can only be observed and described when expressed through any of various verbal or non-verbal forms of communication. In the article “Religionsästhetik” in the *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Begriffe*, Cancik and Mohr state: “The term ‘aesthetics of religion’ is introduced in order to describe and penetrate theoretically, as uniformly as possible, what is sensually perceptible about religions and how religion activates, guides, and restricts the body and the various human sensory organs.”¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Part One (“Theories: The History of Interpretations”): “Myth or Ritual: Questions of Origin and Essence” (pp. 3–22), “Ritual and Society: Questions of Social Function and Structure” (pp. 23–60), and “Ritual Symbols, Syntax, and Praxis: Questions of Cultural Meaning and Interpretation” (pp. 61–89).

¹³⁷ Michael Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), pp. 41–42: “Das Rituelle oder das Ritual eines Handelns ist eine individuelle oder kollektive Handlungsgewohnheit, die von Entscheidungen entlastet und damit für andere Dinge Aufmerksamkeiten freisetzt. Dabei verweist die Gewohnheit besonders auf die sinnliche Erfahrung und Wahrnehmung.”

¹³⁸ David Plüss, “Das Ritual der Antiritualisten,” in *Freie Gottesdienste zwischen Liturgie und Event: Beiträge der Tagung an der Staatsunabhängigen Theologischen Hochschule Basel vom 20. Juni 2011*, ed. by Stefan Schweyer, *Studien zu Theologie und Bibel 7* (Vienna: LIT Verlag, 2012), (pp. 9–22), p. 13: “eine sich wiederholende Verhaltenssequenz eines Kollektivs, wodurch in symbolisch verdichteter Weise ein Transzendenzbezug hergestellt und dadurch eine Transformation der Ritualeilnehmer angestrebt wird.”

¹³⁹ Hubert Cancik and Hubert Mohr, “Religionsästhetik,” in *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe*, ed. by Hubert Cancik, Burkhard Gladigow, and Matthias Laubscher, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1988), (pp. 121–156), pp. 121–122: “Der Ausdruck ‘Religionsästhetik’ wird eingeführt, um das, was an Religionen sinnlich wahrnehmbar ist, wie Religion den Körper und die verschiedenen Sinnesorgane des Menschen aktiviert, leitet und restringiert, möglichst einheitlich zu beschreiben und theoretisch zu durchdringen.”

As they enumerate later in the article, the focus of religious aesthetics is the meaning-imbued concrete elements (“the signs, objects, and actions, insofar as they are perceived in religious communication”¹⁴⁰); the sensory elements (“the work of the senses and the process of perceiving visual signs, colors, smells, and sounds, or the absence of the signs and/or their perception”¹⁴¹); and the stimulated responses (“the sensations and reactions of the perceivers, that is, the [inner] emotions and their expression in gestures, gesticulations, in the production/setting of signs, symbolic actions, narratives [myths], works of art”).¹⁴² And they add: “The human body is the organ of perception, expression, and communication. Communication is linguistic and non-linguistic (non-verbal communication).”¹⁴³ Furthermore, “often several signs and stimuli act simultaneously and produce more or less fixed synesthesiae (e.g., speech – facial expression).”¹⁴⁴ Part of the task of the student of religious aesthetics is not only to observe these responses but also to identify their motivation or purpose: “It is a fundamental task of religious aesthetics to determine which senses are excited in which combination by which stimuli and what information they obtain.”¹⁴⁵

3.1.2. AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

Religious symbols and rituals are not only expressions of or responses to religious feelings or beliefs; they also help shape religious convictions. Geertz sees belief and ritual as symbiotic aspects of religion: “Religious belief and ritual confront and mutually confirm one another; the ethos is made intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life implied by the actual state of affairs which the world view describes, and the world view is made emotionally acceptable by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs of which

¹⁴⁰ Cancik and Mohr, “Religionsäthetik,” p. 122: “[...] die Zeichen, Gegenstände und Handlungen, insofern sie in religiöser Kommunikation wahrgenommen werden.”

¹⁴¹ Cancik and Mohr, “Religionsäthetik,” p. 122: “[...] die Arbeit der Sinne und den Prozess der Wahrnehmung der visuellen Zeichen, der Farben, Gerüche und Töne, bzw. das Fehlen der Zeichen und/oder ihrer Wahrnehmung.”

¹⁴² Cancik and Mohr, “Religionsäthetik,” p. 122: “[...] die Empfindungen und Reaktionen der Wahrnehmenden, also die (inneren) Emotionen und ihren Ausdruck in Gesten, Gebärden, in der Produktion (Setzung) von Zeichen, symbolischen Handlungen, Erzählungen (Mythen), Kunstwerken.”

¹⁴³ Cancik and Mohr, “Religionsäthetik,” p. 136: “Der Körper des Menschen ist Organ für Wahrnehmung, für Ausdruck und Mitteilung. Die Mitteilung ist sprachlicher und nicht-sprachlicher Art (non-verbal communication).”

¹⁴⁴ Cancik and Mohr, “Religionsäthetik,” p. 142: “Oft wirken mehrere Zeichen und Reize gleichzeitig und erzeugen mehr oder weniger feste Synaesthesien (z. B. Sprache – Gesichtsmimik).”

¹⁴⁵ Cancik and Mohr, “Religionsäthetik,” p. 133: “Es ist eine grundlegende Aufgabe der Religionsäthetik festzustellen, welche Sinne in welcher Kombination durch welche Reize erregt werden, welche Information sie gewinnen.”

such a way of life is an authentic expression.”¹⁴⁶ Or, “That which is perceived, performed, and felt in ritual is mutually confirmed and reinforced.”¹⁴⁷

Geertz (referencing fellow anthropologist Milton Singer) describes as ““cultural performances”” those corporate and complex rituals “in which a broad range of moods and motivations on the one hand and of metaphysical conceptions on the other are caught up, which shape the spiritual consciousness of a people.”¹⁴⁸ Here the assumption is that religion is experienced and practiced not (only) in the isolation of individual experience but (especially) in a context of culture and community (“the cultural dimension”), and Geertz is interested in exploring how “sacred symbols function to synthesize a people’s ethos.”¹⁴⁹

That said, over the course of the last fifty years or so, the concept of “ritual” has passed in and out of favor in some circles. In the late twentieth century, rituals came to be widely considered as confining and “empty” – to be avoided in favor of free expression.¹⁵⁰ In this view, which Douglas critiques, ritual is “defined as a routinized act diverted from its normal function” and thus “subtly becomes a despised form of communication.”¹⁵¹ Such a view has been tempered by more recent theories, which acknowledge the ubiquity of rituals and also their ability to provide patterns and structures for either daily life or special events – and in so doing to provide material for sociological analysis.¹⁵²

For example, in her book *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, Bell helpfully describes ritual thus:

[A ritual is] a type of critical juncture wherein some pair of opposing social or cultural forces comes together. Examples include the ritual integration of belief and behavior, tradition and change, order and chaos, the individual and the group, subjectivity and objectivity, nature and culture, the real and the imaginative ideal. Whether it is defined in terms of features of “enthusiasm” (fostering groupism) or “formalism” (fostering the repetition of the traditional), ritual is consistently depicted as a mechanistically discrete and paradigmatic means of sociocultural integration, appropriation, or transformation.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁶ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 127.

¹⁴⁷ Rafael Walthert, *Religiöse Rituale und soziale Ordnung* (Zürich: Springer, 2020), p. 288: “Was im Ritual wahrgenommen, getan und gefühlt wird, bestätigt und stärkt sich gegenseitig.” Of interest for the discussion of music in Chapter 5, see Annette Wilke, “Sonality,” in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of the Cultural and Cognitive Aesthetics of Religion*, ed. by Anne Koch and Katharina Wilkens (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), (pp. 107–116), p. 107: “In many ways, sound (musical and non-musical) or sonality constitutes a central category of analysis in the study of religion and culture, relating to collective and individual social identity formation, moral disposition, behavior, and worldview, as well as direct communication with the (postulated) sacred.”

¹⁴⁸ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 113.

¹⁴⁹ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 89.

¹⁵⁰ Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, pp. 41–42.

¹⁵¹ Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, p. 2.

¹⁵² Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, pp. 42–43.

¹⁵³ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 16.

She then proposes a shift in focus from “ritual” to “ritualization,” the latter being both more specific (“the way in which certain social actions strategically distinguish themselves in relation to other actions”¹⁵⁴) and more dynamic (“a strategy for the construction of certain types of power relationship”¹⁵⁵).

An instance of particularly recent scholarship that explores the dynamic capacity of ritualized behavior for creating social cohesion is found in Rafael Walther’s *Religiöse Rituale und soziale Ordnung*. Using as his example the free-church *International Christian Fellowship (ICF)* of Zurich, Walthert maintains that church services can be understood as culturally embedded “frames” that enable the reinforcement of meaning within a given social context through ritualized “interactions,” particularly when those interactions are emotionally charged collective experiences that contribute to an increased factor of “solidarity.”¹⁵⁶

In a later section, I will discuss some of the sensory perceptions, symbols, rituals, and gestures, as well as atmospheric characteristics, of free-church services, with an eye to discovering what these indicate about the “why” of church services generally and music specifically. First, however, I would like to take a glance at the category of ritual from another perspective.

3.2. LITURGICAL THEORIES: RITUAL THROUGH A THEOLOGICAL LENS

Religious rituals that compose or are incorporated into a church service, when considered from a theological angle, can be described as elements of liturgy. According to the *Collins English dictionary*, “liturgy” can be defined as “prescribed forms or ritual for public worship in any of various religions or churches.”¹⁵⁷ While a thorough exploration of liturgical theory is obviously beyond the scope of this paper, nevertheless in the following paragraphs I would like to briefly

¹⁵⁴ Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, p. 74.

¹⁵⁵ Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, p. 197.

¹⁵⁶ Walthert, *Religiöse Rituale und soziale Ordnung*, pp. 239–246. Here Walthert references Erving Goffman’s concept of “frames,” and builds much of his argument on elements of Émile Durkheim’s theory of religion (especially his concept of “*Effervescenz*” used to describe emotionally charged collective experiences). For another rendition of his study on *ICF*, see Walthert’s article “Tradition und Emotion: Ein evangelikaler Gottesdienst aus der Perspektive der Theorie der Interaktionsrituale,” in *Christliche Rituale im Wandel: Schlaglichter aus theologischer und religionswissenschaftlicher Sicht*, ed. by Hans Gerald Hödl, Johann Pock, and Teresa Schweighofer, Wiener Forum für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft/Vienna Forum for Theology and the Study of Religions 14 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), pp. 21–40. On “frames,” cf. also Claus Ambos and Jan Weinhold, “Rahmen und Rahmungsprozess,” in *Ritual und Ritualdynamik: Schlüsselbegriffe, Theorien, Diskussionen*, ed. by Christiane Brosius, Axel Michaels, and Paula Schrode (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), (pp. 92–99), for instance, p. 96: “Rahmen können je nach den Interessen von Ritualakteuren auch zur Instrumentalisierung, aktiven Situationsumdeutung und Durchsetzung machtpolitischer Interessen verwendet werden.”

¹⁵⁷ *Collins Online Dictionary*: “Liturgy,” <<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/liturgy>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

look at a liturgical definition of a church service, a few liturgical models, and several related liturgical atmospheres. Together, these brief explorations will provide background to the ensuing exploration of church services, including their liturgical elements, in Vienna *Freikirchen*.

3.2.1. LITURGICAL DEFINITIONS

Meyer-Blanck defines a church service as “performance and communication of the gospel in ritual form.”¹⁵⁸ At first reading, this definition may not seem to have much of anything to do with a free-church service. However, it does provide an interesting starting point for segueing from the realm of religious aesthetics to that of theology. The phrase “*darstellende Mitteilung*” (performative communication) comes from the influential German Lutheran theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834). Schleiermacher believed that the church service can be best understood as “art” or “celebration,”¹⁵⁹ admittedly a somewhat different angle to the concept of “aesthetics” provided in the discussion on religious aesthetics above.

For Schleiermacher, the significance or purpose of the church service is bound up in a personal-communal experience that can be transformational: “The purpose of the *cultus* is the performative communication of strongly aroused religious consciousness.”¹⁶⁰ This “strongly aroused religious consciousness” in liturgical contexts is a corporately enacted event: “The church service is a collective act by those gathered.”¹⁶¹ Blanck connects Schleiermacher’s concepts of “religious consciousness” with Ernst Lange’s (1927–1974) “communication of the gospel.”¹⁶² Meyer-Blanck notes that here communication (“*Mitteilung*”) should not be understood in the abstract, as the communication of bare facts, but rather as dynamic and personal: “the sharing of one’s own faith experience, which leads to the experience of community and dialogue, and thus also to the experience of dialogue with God.”¹⁶³ It is a form of communication encompassing and exceeding the gathered congregation: “Christian worship is dialogue with God in the medium of human communication and performance,”¹⁶⁴ and the

¹⁵⁸ Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, p. 40: “*Darstellung und Mitteilung des Evangeliums in ritueller Gestalt.*”

¹⁵⁹ Birgit Weyel, “Der Gottesdienst als Ritual,” in *Kompendium Gottesdienst: Der evangelische Gottesdienst in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. by Hans-Joachim Eckstein, Ulrich Heckel, and Birgit Weyel (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), (pp. 166–184), pp. 173–177.

¹⁶⁰ Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, p. 27, quoting Schleiermacher: “*Der Zweck des Cultus ist die darstellende Mittheilung des stärker erregten religiösen Bewußtseins.*”

¹⁶¹ Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, p. 25: “Gottesdienst ist ein gemeinsames Handeln der Versammelten.”

¹⁶² Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, pp. 34–38: “Kommunikation des Evangeliums.”

¹⁶³ Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, p. 26: “[...] das Anteil-Geben an der eigenen glaubenden Erfahrung, die zur Erfahrung von Gemeinschaft und Dialog und damit auch zur Erfahrung des Dialogs mit Gott werden kann.”

¹⁶⁴ Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, p. 25: “*Christlicher Gottesdienst ist Dialog mit Gott im Medium menschlicher Mitteilung und Darstellung.*”

church service as a whole functions symbolically: “In the divine service, the faith of the people [here the collective plural is important – the faith of the gathered *community*] is displayed; it becomes a sign.”¹⁶⁵ Within this definition, a church service is a personal and especially communal event, in which the gospel is communicated and experienced through ritual form.

3.2.2. LITURGICAL MODELS

Various models can flow out of a definition like the one Meyer-Blanck supplies. One way to think about a church service is as in some way “dramaturgical” or “performative.” Here various “scenes” are thoughtfully fit together to express a narrative or dramaturgical arc. Various roles are assigned. However, the actors in the drama of the church service are not limited to the preacher, the musicians, or others with up-front roles. Rather, the whole gathered community participates liturgically (reflecting the Protestant emphasis on the priestly role of believers, both clergy and laity), and there is a sort of dialogue between all those present.¹⁶⁶ With this model, the dramaturgical nature of the church service is not understood in a derogatory sense, as if the service were mere artifice or sheer entertainment: “Worship services are in any case staged, in that they portray crafted units of performance. However, staging is used here in an analytical sense. For the participant in the service, services are not staged and should not be staged, especially if this is understood to mean something simulated, inauthentic, theatrical, and artificial. The praying liturgist does not stage a prayer, but prays.”¹⁶⁷

Instead, this model acknowledges the artistically planned and dynamic elements of a service: “The terms ‘staging’ and ‘dramaturgy’ emphasize in the liturgical context the interplay of human artistic and divine, salvific action.”¹⁶⁸ Additionally, it recognizes that the church service is in some sense an “interruption,” a special event that offers something the everyday flow of life cannot: “The church service is to be understood and designed as a liturgical space for

¹⁶⁵ Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, p. 27: “Im Gottesdienst tritt der Glaube der Menschen nach außen, er wird zum Zeichen.”

¹⁶⁶ Weyel, “Der Gottesdienst als Ritual,” pp. 176–177.

¹⁶⁷ David Plüss, *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung: Perspektiven einer performativen Ästhetik des Gottesdienstes*, Christentum und Kultur: Basler Studien zu Theologie und Kulturwissenschaft des Christentums 7 (Zürich: Theological Verlag Zürich, 2007), pp. 15–16: “Gottesdienste sind in jedem Fall Inszenierungen, indem sie nämlich gestaltete Vollzugseinheiten darstellen. Inszenierung wird hier allerdings in einem *analytischen* Sinne gebraucht. Für den Gottesdienstteilnehmer sind Gottesdienste keine Inszenierungen und sollen keine sein, zumal wenn darunter etwas Vorgespieltes, Uneigentliches, Theatralisches und Gekünsteltes verstanden wird. Die betende Liturgin inszeniert kein Gebet, sondern sie betet.”

¹⁶⁸ Michael Meyer-Blanck, “Liturgische Rollen,” in *Handbuch der Liturgik: Liturgiewissenschaft in Theologie und Praxis der Kirche*, ed. by Hans-Christoph Schmidt-Lauber, Michael Meyer-Blanck, and Karl-Heinrich Bieritz, 3rd edn. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), (pp. 778–786), pp. 779–780: “[D]ie Begriffe Inszenierung und Dramaturgie betonen im liturgischen Kontext das Ineinander von menschlichem künstlerischen und göttlichem heilsamen Handeln.”

experience, which does not simply carry forward everyday experiences but interrupts them, disturbs salutarily, alters normality. The service becomes a space for imagining, which makes threshold experiences possible.”¹⁶⁹

Another liturgical model depicts the church service as a communication event (“*Kommunikationsgeschehen*”¹⁷⁰). In this interpretive context, a church service essentially involves communication both from God to the gathered community (through his Word, through words of absolution or blessing, etc.), and also back to God from the congregation (in prayer, song, etc.). Furthermore, while human agents may help facilitate this communication, it is important to note that in Protestant theology and practice, no intermediary is required.¹⁷¹ This idea of two-way communication, as well as the specific references to the acts of praying and singing, can be traced back to Martin Luther and what is called the *Torgauer Formel*.¹⁷² However, liturgical communication, or “liturgical language,”¹⁷³ is not only verbal, but also symbolic: “Liturgy speaks its own language. Its most important elements are symbol and ritual: predetermined, well-rehearsed processes and signs that point beyond themselves and represent the reality of God for body and soul, for heart and mind. With symbol and ritual, the mystery becomes accessible.”¹⁷⁴

Closely related to this theme of communication is the relational aspect of the church service. Theologically understood, the triune God is fundamentally a relational Being, and in a church service he communicates with human beings – speaking to and hearing from the gathered community and the individuals of which it is composed, extending restored relationship through the gift of forgiveness, symbolically present in the celebration of the Eucharist, etc. This fundamentally relational aspect of the church service, liturgically understood, focuses first

¹⁶⁹ Weyel, “Der Gottesdienst als Ritual,” p. 181: “Der Gottesdienst ist als ein liturgischer Erfahrungsraum zu verstehen und zu gestalten, der die Alltagserfahrungen nicht einfach fortsetzt, sondern diese unterbricht, der heilsam verstört, der die Normalität alteriert. Der Gottesdienst wird zu einem Imaginationsraum, der Schwellenerfahrungen möglich macht.”

¹⁷⁰ Christopher Schwöbel, “Was ist ein Gottesdienst? Theologische Kriterien zur Angemessenheit der gottesdienstlichen Feier,” in *Kompendium Gottesdienst: Der evangelische Gottesdienst in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. by Hans-Joachim Eckstein, Ulrich Heckel, and Birgit Weyel (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), (pp. 145–165), p. 147, see also pp. 147–154.

¹⁷¹ Schwöbel, “Was ist ein Gottesdienst?” pp. 148–149.

¹⁷² Weyel, “Der Gottesdienst als Ritual,” p. 167 and see there note 2.

¹⁷³ Martin Nicol, *Weg im Geheimnis: Plädoyer für den Evangelischen Gottesdienst* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), see the chapter on “Symbol and Ritual: Für eine Liturgie mit eigener Sprache,” pp. 43–64, and p. 52: “[I]liturgische Sprache.”

¹⁷⁴ Nicol, *Weg im Geheimnis*, p. 43: “Liturgie spricht ihre eigene Sprache. Deren wichtigste Elemente sind Symbol und Ritual: vorgegebene, eingespielte Vollzüge und Zeichen, die über sich selbst hinaus weisen und für Leib und Seele, für Herz und Verstand die Gotteswirklichkeit repräsentieren. Mit Symbol und Ritual wird das Geheimnis begehbar.”

and foremost on the “vertical” relationship between God and the worshiper, but it is also experienced and expressed in the gathered community of the church, representing the “horizontal” relational aspect of services.¹⁷⁵

3.2.3. LITURGICAL ATMOSPHERES

In addition to liturgical models, one can also discuss various liturgical “atmospheres.” In *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung: Perspektiven einer performativen Ästhetik des Gottesdienstes*, Plüss describes four: atmospheres of the “me” or the “us” and atmospheres that emphasize calm/resting/receiving or acting/responding.¹⁷⁶

The first two types of atmospheres are of the individual (“*Atmosphären des Ich*”) and of the community (“*Atmosphären der Wir*”).¹⁷⁷ Regarding the first, Plüss states: “A liturgical atmosphere can be of such a nature that it affects an individual person, detaches him or her from the community of fellow celebrants, challenges him or her, addresses him or her, and places him or her in a relationship with divine transcendence. Despite this focus on the individual, however, the atmosphere does not cease [...] to be supra-individual. It potentially affects all individuals in its field of influence in a similar way.”¹⁷⁸ The second atmosphere type, communal atmospheres, Plüss describes as having the capacity for “integrating individuals into a collective or transforming them into a community.” He mentions corporate readings and prayers, the celebration of the Eucharist, and corporate singing as elements of the service in which “we atmospheres” can be experienced.¹⁷⁹ On the topic of corporate singing, Christa Reich makes similar observations: “Melody enables the commonality of speech and at the same

¹⁷⁵ Schwöbel, “Was ist ein Gottesdienst?” pp. 154–163. Cf. also Karl-Heinrich Bieritz, “Anthropologische Grundlegung,” in *Handbuch der Liturgik: Liturgiewissenschaft in Theologie und Praxis der Kirche*, ed. by Hans-Christoph Schmidt-Lauber, Michael Meyer-Blanck, and Karl-Heinrich Bieritz, 3rd edn. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), (pp. 95–128), pp. 113–119 (“Gottesdienst als Wortgeschehen” and “Gottesdienst als Beziehungsgeschehen,” as well as “Gottesdienst als Sprachhandlung”). Cf. also Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 180–182: “horizontal” and “vertical.”

¹⁷⁶ Plüss, *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung*, pp. 203–206; here part of his much more involved explication of “liturgische Inszenierungstheorie.”

¹⁷⁷ Plüss, *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung*, pp. 203–204.

¹⁷⁸ Plüss, *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung*, p. 203: “Eine liturgische Atmosphäre kann so beschaffen sein, dass sie eine einzelne Person betrifft, sie aus der Gemeinschaft der Mitfeiernden herauslöst, herausfordert, anspricht und sie in ein Verhältnis zur göttlichen Transzendenz stellt. Trotz dieser Fokussierung auf das Individuum hört die Atmosphäre aber nicht auf [...] überindividuell zu sein. Sie betrifft potenziell alle Individuen in ihrem Kraftfeld in ähnlicher Weise.”

¹⁷⁹ Plüss, *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung*, p. 204: “[...] Individuen in ein Kollektiv einzubinden bzw. in eine Gemeinschaft zu verwandeln.”

time causes an intensification of it,”¹⁸⁰ and, referencing Austrian theologian Philipp Harnoncourt, “Singing is the ‘basic form of communal linguistic expression’ in all cultures.”¹⁸¹

In addition to the individual-communal atmospheres, Plüss also describes the “*Atmosphären der Gelassenheit*” (literally, “atmospheres of serenity,” although in the context of a church service perhaps “atmospheres of resting” or even “atmospheres of receiving” would be preferable) and the “*Atmosphären des Tuns*” (“atmospheres of action,” perhaps more loosely “atmospheres of responding”).¹⁸² The former “are characterized by their ability to free people who enter their sphere of influence from a pressure to perform. They make it possible to experience physically and emotionally that a person’s self-worth is not constituted by what he or she does – neither by his or her achievements deserving of recognition nor by his or her social self-presentations – but independently of these and from elsewhere – in Christian terminology: from God.”¹⁸³ The last type of atmosphere stimulates action or response: “Atmospheres of activity motivate, set people in motion, and endow them with thoughtful, responsible energy.”¹⁸⁴ Here, Plüss notes, “Activity is not alien to Christian Protestant religion and piety, even if it is passive in a qualified way, namely through the prominent importance of the doctrine of justification.”¹⁸⁵

In summary of this brief look at liturgical theory, we can describe a church service as an artistically designed, fundamentally communicative event, experienced and expressed by individuals and especially the congregation as a whole through symbolically significant ritualized elements.

¹⁸⁰ Reich, “Das Kirchenlied,” in *Handbuch der Liturgik: Liturgiewissenschaft in Theologie und Praxis der Kirche*, ed. by Hans-Christoph Schmidt-Lauber, Michael Meyer-Blanck, and Karl-Heinrich Bieritz, 3rd edn. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), (pp. 763–777) p. 765: “Die Melodie ermöglicht die Gemeinsamkeit des Sprechens und bewirkt zugleich eine Intensivierung des Sprechens.”

¹⁸¹ Christa Reich, “Das Kirchenlied,” p. 764: “Singen ist in allen Kulturen die ‘Grundform gemeinschaftlicher sprachlicher Äußerung.’”

¹⁸² Plüss, *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung*, pp. 204–205.

¹⁸³ Plüss, *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung*, p. 204: “[...] zeichnen sich dadurch aus, dass sie Menschen, die in ihren Machtbereich eintreten, von einem Leistungsdruck zu befreien vermögen. Sie machen körperlich und emotional erfahrbar, dass sich der Selbstwert eines Menschen nicht durch das konstituiert, was er tut – weder durch seine anerkennungswürdigen Leistungen noch durch seine sozialen Selbstdarstellungen –, sondern unabhängig davon und von anderswo her – in christlicher Terminologie: von Gott her.”

¹⁸⁴ Plüss, *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung*, p. 205: “*Atmosphären des Tuns* motivieren, setzen Menschen in Bewegung und versehen sie mit umsichtig-verantwortlicher Tatkraft.”

¹⁸⁵ Plüss, *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung*, p. 205: “Aktivität ist der christlich-protestantischen Religion und Frömmigkeit nicht fremd, auch wenn sie in einer qualifizierten Weise, nämlich durch die herausgehobene Bedeutung der Rechtfertigungslehre, passivisch geprägt ist.”

3.2.4. LITURGY IN FREE-CHURCH CONCEPTIONS

Schweyer emphasizes that the “church service is the ‘climax’ and ‘starting point’ of Christian practice,” encompassing and transcending elements of the everyday.¹⁸⁶ The question remains how it can be understood liturgically (or not). Very broadly speaking, according to Plüss, three basic liturgical constructs can be named: 1) the “*lateinische Messe*” (Latin Mass), in which the ritual enactment of the service defines it, 2) the “*reformierte Predigtgottesdienst*” (Reformed, sermon-focused service) in which rituals are present but are intended to give structure to the central element of the sermon, and 3) a “*Gruppenform*” (group form) that emphasizes the spontaneous involvement or extemporaneous contributions of multiple individuals.¹⁸⁷ *Freikirchen* are in some sense defined by their disavowal of the first category, but even the strong ritual focus of the above liturgical discussion, from the realm of wider Protestantism, is miles away from most free-church conceptions. As interesting tangent to the dramaturgical model named above, however, is offered in *Wir feiern Gottesdienst: Entwurf einer freikirchlichen Liturgik*, where the dramaturgic celebration is metamorphized into “holy play.”¹⁸⁸

Plüss gives two historical reasons for this widespread free-church (and, actually, wider Protestant) distrust of liturgy, namely, the Anabaptist founders’ antipathy for the ritualized and exclusivist role of the priest in the Catholicism of their times, as well as the later elevation of internalized religious experience promoted by various elements of the Enlightenment and by both the Pietistic and Romantic movements.¹⁸⁹ However, he argues that ritual cannot be avoided. In free-church contexts that might eschew ritual as empty formalism, it is nevertheless present in the gestures and postures of worship, through the typical phraseology used in prayer, through the expected, if flexible, order of song and prayer and sermon, and through the simple recurrence in time and space of the weekly church service. Thus, *Freikirchen* find themselves

¹⁸⁶ Schweyer, “Frei liturgisch,” p. 85: “Gottesdienst ist [...] nicht nur ‘Höhepunkt,’ sondern auch ‘Ausgangspunkt’ christlicher Praxis.”

¹⁸⁷ Plüss, “Das Ritual der Antiritualisten,” p. 18.

¹⁸⁸ Stephan Nösser and Esther Reglin, *Wir feiern Gottesdienst: Entwurf einer freikirchlichen Liturgik* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus Verlag, 2001), pp. 11–29. This definition is embedded in a differentiation of liturgy and liturgics, p. 12: “Unser Thema ist nicht die ‘Liturgie,’ sondern die ‘Liturgik.’ Nicht das Erstellung eines (starren) Reglements ist unser Ziel, sondern seine allmähliche Überwindung!”

¹⁸⁹ Plüss places eighteenth-century Schleiermacher and his emphasis on “religious experience” in this stream of thought – as well as the charismatic movement two centuries later. Plüss, “Das Ritual der Antiritualisten,” p. 11. Plüss references Douglas here; see also note 271 below.

somewhere between the latter two categories (“*reformierte Predigtgottesdienst*” und “*Gruppenform*”) mentioned above.¹⁹⁰

In this context, then, liturgy is not absent, but it is not the focus. From a historical view of Protestantism, Robert Yelle states, “Various aspects of the Protestant aesthetic – such as vernacularization, the stress on reading scripture [...] – suggest a general emphasis on the content of liturgy over its poetic, repetitive, musical, or otherwise sensuous form.”¹⁹¹ That said, the vehicles for communicating content seem to be unavoidably suited to some forms of decoration. For instance, Yelle points to Pentecostalism within broader Protestantism as appreciating the sensory – here he specifically mentions “music and oratory” – as “means for sensing and expressing the Holy Spirit.”¹⁹² Moreover, the place of repetition with regard to music will be discussed below.

Thus, while liturgical aspects are not absent in free-church contexts, variation in their formulation and practice can be seen as part of a bigger picture of various free-church expressions. These can be traced to at least six specific historical and theological developments. First, the inheritors of the Anabaptist tradition, which I have already discussed at length, exemplify the “classic” free-church form, with their strong emphasis on the importance of the separation of church and state. A further characteristic is the prominence given to biblically prescribed modes of worship (keyword: “biblical”). The second expression refers to historical movements such as Pietism, where revival or renewal was experienced within existing church structures and denominations (keyword: “edifying”). The third finds its roots in revival movements that birthed new, independent churches which at least partially defined themselves by their demarcation from the state or mainline church (keyword: “differentiating”). The fourth expression grew out of the strong conversion focus of the Great Awakenings, movements which, it is worth noting, also had an important role in shaping church music (keyword: “mission-minded”). The fifth expression is rooted in the renewal movements with charismatic and Pentecostal elements from the previous century (keyword: “spontaneous”), and the sixth can be traced to late twentieth century models of church growth and the seeker-friendly, megachurch phenomenon (keyword: “contextual”).¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ Plüss, “Das Ritual der Antiritualisten,” pp. 21–22.

¹⁹¹ Robert A. Yelle, “Protestant (An)aesthetics,” in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of the Cultural and Cognitive Aesthetics of Religion*, ed. by Anne Koch and Katharina Wilkens (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), (pp. 241–251), p. 251.

¹⁹² Yelle, “Protestant (An)aesthetics,” p. 244.

¹⁹³ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 40–45. See especially the helpful summarizing chart on p. 44.

4. THE ELEMENTS AND ESSENCE OF *FKÖ* CHURCH SERVICES

In modified and sometimes combined forms, these six variations on the theme of *Freikirchen* are reflected in denominations of the *FKÖ* and their congregations in Vienna. Particularly the concepts of biblical, edifying, missional, and contextual inform the structure and style of church services, even if, as we will see, the essence remains constant.

4.1. SENSORY ELEMENTS

To start, though, having begun to address how church services can be understood from the perspective of religious aesthetic and liturgical theory, I would like now to explore the sensory, symbolic, and ritual elements of church services of Vienna congregations belonging to the *FKÖ*, based especially on my own observations and on feedback from pastors and music leaders. I will begin with a return to the discussion of “atmosphere,” albeit now not in the sense of “liturgical atmospheres” but rather expanding the category to include the overall feel of a church service, shaped by the spatial context, visual elements and symbols, etc.: “The atmospheric in a church service [depends] on various factors: on the movements in the room, on the gestures and voice leading of the participants, on the music and the songs, on the communicated contents, as well as on the lighting conditions and the peculiarities of the church interior.”¹⁹⁴

4.1.1. SPACES FOR WORSHIP

From the vantage point of the social-scientific study of religion, briefly touched on above, the symbolic and ritualist elements of religious gatherings (here, church services) are communal, community-building events. Thus, the physical spaces in which church services take place can contribute to or detract from this community focus and community experience. Also from a theological vantage point, although it can be argued that the heart is the true location of the church service,¹⁹⁵ nevertheless the physical spaces designed for worship play a role in corporate worship. As Lutheran theologian Klaus Raschzok states, “Space and service interact. The service shapes the room, and vice versa the room shapes the service.”¹⁹⁶ Moreover, the space

¹⁹⁴ Plüss, *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung*, pp. 196–197: “[D]as Atmosphärische in einem Gottesdienst [hängt] von verschiedenen Faktoren ab: von den Bewegungen im Raum, von den Gesten und der Stimmführung der Akteure, von der Musik und den Liedern, von den kommunizierten Inhalten sowie von den Lichtverhältnissen und den Eigenheiten des Kirchenraums.”

¹⁹⁵ Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, pp. 9–10.

¹⁹⁶ Klaus Raschzok, “Kirchenbau und Kirchenraum,” in *Handbuch der Liturgik: Litugiewissenschaft in Theologie und Praxis der Kirche*, ed. by Hans-Christoph Schmidt-Lauber, Michael Meyer-Blanck, and Karl-Heinrich

in which a church service is celebrated can itself be understood “as an integral part of the ritual.”¹⁹⁷

If one recurring theme among the *Freikirchen* is diversity, then it should perhaps not come as a surprise that the locations in which congregations meet also vary widely. In the free-church context, Schweyer notes that, overall, “spaces are generally designed to facilitate interpersonal encounters. Spacious entrance areas, coffee bars, and small seating areas invite informal contacts.”¹⁹⁸ Specific spaces, however, are large and small, modern and outmoded, designed to be attractive to outsiders and conceived primarily as community-oriented. In all cases, however, it would be safe to say that there is a strong focus on functionality, as well as a (perhaps unspoken) statement about what the function of the Sunday gathering, or even of the church more broadly, may be. Here I would like to provide a closer look at the spatial characteristics I observed, as well as offering some ruminations on the reasons or motivations behind these physical spaces. However, even those church contexts where the physical space seems more to fulfill a basic necessity than an intentional spatial concept, these spaces still contribute something to what transpires each week; Plüss notes that “church interiors are *always* atmospherically qualified.”¹⁹⁹

Almost none of the churches I visited for this research project look like churches from outside – that is, the steeple or bell tower of stereotypical church architecture is noticeably absent. Aside from signage displaying the name of the church, basic information about services, logo, etc., a passerby would not immediately recognize the space from without as a place of worship. This fact can be easily explained: All but two of the congregations visited inhabit spaces not originally designed as houses of worship: One exception is the *Arabische Christliche Gemeinde*, which meets in a Catholic church on Sunday afternoons; the other is the *Baptistengemeinde Mollardgasse* – the oldest free-church in Vienna²⁰⁰ – and the church displays a simple cross at the top of the building’s façade.

Additionally, even for those congregations which own rather than rent property, it would seem that fulfilling some sort of architectural stereotype for what a church should look like is not the

Bieritz, 3rd edn. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), (pp. 391–412), p. 391: “Raum und Gottesdienst spielen zusammen. Der Gottesdienst gestaltet den Raum und umgekehrt der Raum den Gottesdienst.”

¹⁹⁷ Raschzok, “Kirchenbau und Kirchenraum,” p. 392: “[...] als integrierenden Bestandteil des Rituals.”

¹⁹⁸ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 162: “Freikirchliche Räumlichkeiten sind in der Regel so konzipiert, dass es leicht zu zwischenmenschlichen Begegnungen kommt. Großzügige Eingangsbereiche, Kaffeebars und kleine Sitzgruppen laden zur Pflege informeller Kontakte ein.”

¹⁹⁹ Plüss, *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung*, p. 202: “Kirchenräume sind atmosphärisch *immer* schon qualifiziert.”

²⁰⁰ “MOGA: Geschichte,” <<https://www.moga.at/Geschichte.phtml>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

goal. In fact, looking “churchlike” might actually be seen as counterproductive to the goal of being accessible and attractive to both homegrown Viennese and internationals who may be disinterested in or disillusioned by more formal, traditional, and “stereotypical” Catholic and Protestant concepts of church.

An example here is illustrative: *Wunderwerk Wien* meets in the *Expeditihalle*, part of the complex of the former Anker bread manufacturer in Vienna’s tenth district. The large hall is intended to accommodate both Sunday church services (in the morning *Wunderwerk Wien* and in the afternoon *Four Corners Christian Fellowship*), but also to be rented out for events during the rest of the week. Sound and lighting systems designed for a multi-purpose space that can be transformed into a concert or banquet hall make this an attractive venue and afford – at least outside of pandemic times – a trajectory for *Wunderwerk* to remain financially viable.²⁰¹ An “*Eventhallen-Charakter*” (event location character), as retired senior pastor Walter Bösch called it, aptly describes the space and contributes to the overall feel or atmosphere.

Another unique space is the *Donauhof* – “a partnership between the Austrian Baptist Aid Society and the projekt:gemeinde”²⁰² – in Vienna’s second district. While the entrance would appear to lead to an unspectacular apartment block, looks prove deceiving. What used to be a hotel – complete with a ballroom with parquet-flooring, slightly vaulted ceiling, structural beams decorated with dragon heads, and a massive, once-upon-a-time fireplace – is now home to a Baptist church and its multifaceted vision for the space. At present, most of the building is still a construction zone, but the dilapidated elegance and obvious potential for restoration and repurposing create an extremely attractive and trendy meeting space. Dreams for a fully functioning facility for seminars and events, café, shared work space, etc., connect closely to the church’s vision for community involvement extending beyond Sunday gatherings.²⁰³

While it may be easy to over-emphasize novel examples of service locations, two more unusual locations are worth mentioning. Perhaps the oddest space visited was a church hall located at the end of a labyrinth of hallways in a slightly dilapidated warehouse at the far reaches of Vienna’s twenty-second district. There, however, it was clear that efforts had been made to beautify the space, or at least to soften its industrial contours. Curtains formed a backdrop to

²⁰¹ “Expeditihalle,” <<https://www.expeditihalle.at/>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

²⁰² “Projekt-Gemeinde: Donauhof,” <<https://www.projekt-gemeinde.at/donauhof/>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022): “[...] eine Partnerschaft zwischen dem Hilfsverein der Baptisten Österreichs und der projekt:gemeinde Wien.”

²⁰³ “Projekt-Gemeinde: Donauhof”; see also “Donauhof,” <<https://donauhofwien.at/>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

the stage, and fabric streamers adorned the factory-sized ventilation system running along the ceiling.

A second example is the relatively newly acquired space of *Jesus Zentrum* and *VCC: Latino*. These and additional *Vienna Christian Center* congregations meet in what used to be a casino in the Gasometer shopping and entertainment complex in Vienna's eleventh district. Finding the church on a Saturday afternoon is a challenge – three floors up in an elevator, a stroll past a billiards hall and a bowling alley, up two escalators with a mall restaurant sandwiched between, and finally to the church. Getting lost on the way is certainly a potential hazard, but the location also sends a message about a church being accessible to the surrounding community and, in a very real sense, about taking church to where people are.

The art of repurposing is common to nearly all of the Vienna *Freikirchen*. Many of the facilities in which congregations gather for worship are quite modest spaces. About half of the congregations I visited meet in ground floor (or in a couple cases, half-basement) facilities, and most have a main hall as well as other rooms for children's Sunday school classes, nursery, or perhaps smaller events during the week. A number of congregations share their space; of the churches I visited, more than ten meet in facilities that another congregation uses at another time of day or perhaps for a Saturday service rather than the traditional Sunday gathering.

Size of meeting space varies dramatically – the largest being the hall owned by *Wunderwerk Wien* and rented by *Four Corners*, with about 1000 square meters for the main hall, and the smallest the spaces rented by *Freikirchliches Forum Wien* or *Gute Nachricht Gemeinde*, each perhaps fifty square meters. Of course, size is one thing and the relative use of space something else. The role of proxemics – in the sense of “spatial and temporal bodily arrangements”²⁰⁴ – is of course important to an overall atmosphere of a space. Most churches have some sort of stage, from which the pastor preaches and (usually) from which the musicians play. Depending on the lighting of the room, this area becomes more obviously the visual centerpiece of the space.²⁰⁵ Or, as Schweyer states: “The geography of a church service typifies the difference between a concert setting and a collective setting.”²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Thomas A. Sebeok, *Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics*, 2nd edn. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 22.

²⁰⁵ Cancik and Mohr, “Religionsästhetik,” p. 147, regarding how relative proximity or the use of a raised area – here specifically in context of the remoteness of the deity from the worshiper – enhances the significance of visual symbolism.

²⁰⁶ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 205: “Die Gottesdienstgeografie steht prototypisch für die Differenz zwischen einem *konzertanten* und einem *kollektiven* Setting.”

4.1.2. VISUAL SYMBOLS AND DECORATIVE FEATURES

In general, obvious visual symbols are rare, with the exception of a cross. In about ten of the churches visited, at least one cross was displayed, usually mounted to the wall at the front of the room. In two cases a crucifix was displayed (surprisingly, in the *Freikirchliches Forum Wien*, meeting in facilities belonging to Campus Danubia, a private theological institute,²⁰⁷ and, unsurprisingly, in the Catholic church shared with the *Arabische Christliche Gemeinde*), but in all other cases the cross was empty, reflecting the characteristically Protestant representation that simultaneously communicates both the death and resurrection of Christ.

In one church, a very large menorah adorned one wall; this installation, however, belongs to the *Haus der Begegnung*, from whom the *BEG* congregation rents the space on Sundays. In another, the ΑΩ symbol was also displayed on the pulpit, a symbolic reference to Revelation 22:13. Interestingly, in two congregations, flags were present – in one *FCGÖ* church (*VCC: Jesus Zentrum*) the Vienna and Austrian flags, and also the Israeli flag, and in one *ECG* congregation the Israeli flag (albeit as a PowerPoint background for one of the songs).

In addition to specific visual symbols, another visual element is, of course, the way church spaces are decorated. This sort of artistic, aesthetic appeal is rather minimal, with a greater focus on functionality. Only one congregation has decorated with fine art – in this case, a local artist with pieces on loan to the congregation (*Stadtlicht*). A few smaller halls are adorned with artistic renderings of phrases from the Bible, often accompanied by nature motifs. Two congregations meet (or were meeting the day I visited) in rooms formerly (or typically) used for children's groups – murals declaring “*Gott ist Liebe*” (God is love) or a cartoonish depiction of Jesus as the Good Shepherd indicated the intended audience for whom the rooms were designed.

Two well-thought-out decorative installations, albeit intended either for only one Sunday or for just a short span of Sundays, invite description. First, the week I visited the *Russischsprachige Evangelikale Gemeinde* coincided with an autumn thanksgiving service. Preparations for special music and a shared meal after the service were in motion as I arrived, but already prepared was a tasteful display of “harvest” fruits up front – from lettuce to bananas to pumpkin to watermelon! These were arranged in and around wood crates, along with

²⁰⁷ “Campus Danubia,” <<https://www.campus-danubia.at/en/>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

candles, an artistic rendering of Psalm 144:9, and flowers – together symbolic of abundant reason for giving thanks.

Second, when I visited *International Christian Fellowship Wien (ICF)* in July, the stage was decorated for a summer travel and beach theme: In front of heavy stage curtains, a large VW bus cut-out was accompanied by an oversized, shockingly pink flamingo pool float, as well as additional summery décor. Aside from these couple more striking examples, the most common form of decoration is plants, generally simple greenery or sometimes real or artificial flowers.

4.1.3. LIGHTING AND SOUND TECHNOLOGY

Another visual category of sensory experience relates to lighting in church services. While in about a third of churches visited, natural light is the defining lighting feature and other congregations employ relatively minimalistic stage lighting, in a handful of *FCGÖ* churches, the high-tech lighting and sound system combine to focus attention on stage for the music and preaching that take place there. In a couple congregations this was accentuated strongly by the theater-style low lighting for the congregation, which contributed to a greater sense of anonymity for congregation members – whether this was intended to create an environment where people felt freer for personal expressions of worship or whether it unintentionally contributed to the downplaying of a communal aspect of the service.²⁰⁸ Although those leading these services were not necessarily showy in their presentation, nevertheless these services shared stylistic elements with a concert or similar event.

One example that stands out is *ICF*, mentioned above. Located in Vienna's seventh district, from the outside one can admire the *Jugendstil* façade before entering the church building. The basement floor theater seating, the prominent stage and high-tech lighting, and the disco-style background music before services clearly communicate a non-traditional church vibe. During the service, the musicians on stage were decidedly reserved in their musical expressiveness. Nevertheless, the text projection on a screen with constantly moving abstract background images, the state-of-the-art lighting (both lighting the stage and sending colorful patterns of light across the walls and congregation), and the professional camera equipment with which the service was being filmed for the livestream congregation definitely suggested a concertlike atmosphere.

²⁰⁸ See Walthert, *Religiöse Rituale und soziale Ordnung*, pp. 240–241.

Of course, no less important than the visual elements of a church service are the sound elements. In very general terms, sound amplification is highly valued (used in every context, except the one outdoor service I visited), while intentional absence of sound, that is, silence, is infrequent and general extremely brief. Additionally, musical sound functions in a number of churches as an initial, non-verbal greeting. While in a couple services visited a music rehearsal was still being completed as I arrived, in other contexts a soundtrack of “worship music” was playing as a sort of preparation for the service, contributing to a certain atmospheric setting. One could characterize this pre-service element as a “threshold moment,” together with the greeting and opening song(s) ushering people into the service: “The atmosphere of the building and interior does not immediately put people into a worshipful posture, so it takes considerable effort for the church service participants to collectively orient themselves to the worship event. The opening sequences can be understood as a threshold moment between the everyday world and the worship service.”²⁰⁹

The foregoing descriptions of observed sensory aspects of the service, especially spatial, visual, and auditory aspects, define at least to a limited degree what composes a free-church service from a sensory perspective. Next, I would like to explore the gestures of worship in free-church services, which are not only sensory in nature, but also in some sense rituals (even if informally or spontaneously expressed).

4.1.4. GESTURES OF WORSHIP

As will be discussed more below, freedom of form and expression is in some sense a hallmark of free-church services. This holds true also for the category of gesture, although certain habits and patterns are quickly discernable. Gestures can refer to movements enacted or physical stances assumed by persons leading a service, by the congregation as a whole, or by individuals within the congregation. Gestures (or what one could also call “external postures of worship”) can be both planned and spontaneous, consciously and unconsciously enacted, and they are vehicles for the expression of what I would like to call “internal postures of worship.” Plüss writes of the significance of gestures: “Even closer than to consciousness, the sensory and the emotions are linked to gestures.”²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 180: “Die Gebäude- und Raumatmosphäre versetzt nicht unmittelbar in eine gottesdienstliche Haltung, so dass es beträchtliche Anstrengungen braucht, bis die Gottesdienstteilnehmenden sich gemeinsam auf das gottesdienstliche Geschehen ausgerichtet haben. Die Eröffnungssequenzen lassen sich als Schwellenzeit zwischen Alltagswelt und Gottesdienst verstehen.”

²¹⁰ Plüss, *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung*, p. 175: “Enger noch als das Bewusstsein sind die *Sinnlichkeit* und die *Emotionalität* mit den Gesten verbunden.”

Speaking very generally, the two most basic postures – sitting and standing²¹¹ – correspond to spoken and sung elements of the service, respectively. At least, it was noticeable on those occasions when a congregation more-or-less all remained seated for a song. Admittedly, in especially *FCGÖ* services, although the majority of worshipers stand for singing, a great deal of freedom is exercised in whether individuals choose to sit or stand for any given sung portion of the service. Exceptions to this basic sitting/standing pattern are notable primarily in ethnic congregations. For example, in one Romanian congregation visited, as well as in the Ghanaian and Nigerian congregations, prayer was largely or entirely practiced while standing.

Other postures/gestures of worship – upturned or raised hands, clapping, kneeling, swaying, pacing, jumping, running, dancing, hugging, banner waving, standing ovations, glossolalia (which Cancik and Mohr describe as belonging to “the group of phenomena” that constitute one of “the most expressive forms of body language”²¹²) – each finds a place in congregations within the *FKÖ*, and almost all of these examples are associated with music. However, it would be a mistake to assume that all or even most of this whole list are present in the majority of free-church services observed.

Based on observations, in *BEG* and *BBGÖ* churches, along with the *MFÖ* congregation, worshipers’ individual gestures are generally minimal; closing eyes, bowing the head, raising hands during a song, and perhaps slightly swaying with the music more or less encompass the extent of gestural motion (besides generally corporately enacted postures of sitting and standing). This coincides with questionnaire feedback: Music leaders in *BEG* congregations implied that gestures in (sung) worship tend to be rather limited in scope – primarily closing of eyes and some raising of hands. One participant mentioned that clapping, dancing, and kneeling might also find expression, but rarely. Furthermore, participants from *BBGÖ* congregations likewise stated that gestures tend to be low-key – for instance, in addition to occasional raising of hands, simply “holding hands open in front of you”²¹³ (Rabenau) or “closing eyes to at most raising hands”²¹⁴ (Ardelean). One *ECG* questionnaire participant mentioned similarly subdued gestures such as bowed head or uplifted face. However, especially in congregations of the *FCGÖ*, along with particularly the German-speaking *ECG*

²¹¹ Cf. Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 201.

²¹² Cancik and Mohr, “Religionsästhetik,” p. 140: “Die Gruppe von Phänomenen, die durch Übersteigerung der Motorik [...], rhythmische Bewegungen [...], Halluzinationen, Glossolalie u. a. gekennzeichnet ist, gehört zu den expressivsten Formen der Körpersprache.”

²¹³ Rabenau: “[...] Hände offen vor sich halten.”

²¹⁴ Ardelean: “[...] Augen schließen bis max. Hände heben.”

congregation, a more extensive gestural repertoire is employed: “Each person can feel free”²¹⁵ (Asatrjan, *FCGÖ*) resonates with my observations. Admittedly, however, other *FCGÖ* congregations display a comparable use of gestures as in churches of other *FKÖ* denominations.

In the two African *FCGÖ* services I observed, significant rhythmic motion accompanied the singing (to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the individual). In one congregation, during the prayer time, the prayer leader strode up and down the one aisle. And in the other, the gestures of two elders (kneeling, pacing, etc.) who were present on the stage during the duration of the service, along with the three singers standing in front of the stage, were of course particularly visible.

One other church service stands out for its variety and extent of gestural expression (*Four Corners, FCGÖ*). For instance, during a portion of the singing and while the band played, on stage right a woman contributed an interpretive dance with colorful fabric banners. Off stage, on the outskirts of the seating area, a couple of other women also danced (free-style interpretive dance). Meanwhile, small children were free to run, to sit with a parent on the floor, or to wave colorful streamers provided for the purpose. Those worshipers within the seating area responded with their own variety of gestures. Some sat, not singing but simply listening or perhaps praying, or perhaps lost in their own thoughts. Most stood for the majority of the musical component of the service, some raising hands or swaying, one or two kneeling or jumping. Interestingly, although there was an element of distraction for the visitor unaccustomed to this freedom of expression (and a significant amount of noise from the children present), the service was by no means chaotic. Rather, each form of expressive movement seemed to have its allotted place (physically and temporally), and the community as a whole had evidently extended to its members a sense of permission for creative expression, within certain spoken or unspoken cultural norms.

The predominantly spontaneous gestures (if also contextually patterned) described above each has some sort of symbolic significance. Raising of hands or clapping, for instance, can indicate praise, joy, giving honor. Upraised palms may indicate openness, relinquishment, thanksgiving. Kneeling suggests submission, paying homage. Closed eyes suggest focus on God the Unseen, trust. Dancing expresses freedom and joy. The list could continue.

²¹⁵ Asatrjan: “[J]eder kann sich frei fühlen.”

What might be called “classic” liturgical gestures – standing, kneeling, folding of hands for prayer, to name a few²¹⁶ – are present. (A traditional Christian gesture, the sign of the cross, is by contrast decidedly atypical in free-church practice.) However, these traditional gestures/postures (aside from sitting and standing) tend to be practiced in *Freikirchen* as individual rather than corporate behaviors. For instance, in a few services observed, a couple of people knelt for some portion of the service, but never as part of a formal liturgical structure. (An exception is the Romanian Pentecostal church, where folding of hands was a common gesture for prayer.) In terms of formal gestures from those leading the service, these were rare. In two Baptist services, the classic Lutheran opening of a service (“in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”) was observed. A formal benediction with raised hand(s) was seldom observed.

As the foregoing descriptions suggest, some of the gestures expressed in *Freikirchen* are strongly influenced by the charismatic and Pentecostal movements. Eichinger noted that there have been significant changes “in the external practice – facial expressions, gestures, freedom in the presentation of those singing along.” “In the past it would have been unthinkable, apart from Pentecostal church groups, to clap, to raise one’s hands, and certainly to dance or things like that. Over the decades, these expressive elements have gradually become increasingly prevalent and are now reflected in a variety of practice.”²¹⁷ He also suggested that one reason even the most sedate-seeming gesture – standing for singing – was less common a few decades ago was the desire for “differentiation from the Catholic Church. In the past, there were strong differentiation tendencies. To a great extent, converts came out of the Catholic context and didn’t want to somehow get mixed up in all of the liturgical forms.”²¹⁸

However much free-church gestures are non-ritualized and services non-liturgical – at least defined in comparison to the standard of a Catholic Mass – nevertheless certain basic patterns and components give free-church services characteristic, even if far from uniform, liturgical shape. Schweyer gives a helpful overview of a free-church service, noting general characteristics as well as a host of variations on the theme and insights regarding those

²¹⁶ See Otfried Jordahn, “Das Zeremoniale,” in *Handbuch der Liturgik: Liturgiewissenschaft in Theologie und Praxis der Kirche*, ed. by Hans-Christoph Schmidt-Lauber, Michael Meyer-Blanck, and Karl-Heinrich Bieritz, 3rd edn. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), (pp. 436–459), pp. 438–448.

²¹⁷ Eichinger: “[...] in der äußeren Handhabe – Mimik, Gestik, Freiheit in der Darstellung der Mitsingenden.” “Es wäre früher undenkbar gewesen, also abgesehen jetzt von pfingstkirchlichen Gruppierungen, zu klatschen, die Hände zu erheben und schon gar nicht zu tanzen oder solche Dinge.”

²¹⁸ Eichinger: “[...] Abgrenzung zur Katholischen. Früher waren starke Abgrenzungstendenzen da. Es waren größtenteils Bekehrte aus dem katholischen Raum und man wollte in allen liturgischen Erscheinungsformen irgendwie nicht in Verwechslung kommen.”

differences. Here it should be noted that, whereas in “high church” contexts “liturgy” can be understood as analogous to the service as a whole, in many Protestant contexts the term, when used at all, refers to the structural “elements” that compose the service, terminological usage that reflects both the general informality (apparent non-liturgical nature) of services and also a suspicion of ritual forms.²¹⁹ These “liturgical elements,” then, rather than “liturgy” *per se*, are the focus on the following section.

4.2. LITURGICAL ELEMENTS

In his *Gottesdienstlehre*, Meyer-Blanck states: “According to its own self-understanding, the free-church service is in principle characterized by the fact that fixed form is replaced by free word and free worship.”²²⁰ Such “almost breathtaking freedom”²²¹ does not imply a free-for-all, however, in which order and structure are dismissed. Quite to the contrary, even where the term “liturgy” might be shunned as smacking too much of especially Roman Catholic formalism, services of the Austrian *Freikirchen* are generally characterized by a predictable sequence.²²² Meyer-Blanck continues: “The reality in churches is that, over time, sequences are formed that give those in office predictability of practice and those attending the service predictability of expectation.”²²³ Congregational singing, Scripture reading, and a sermon are key components, as in Lutheran or Calvinist traditions: “Basically, the free-church service is characterized by the elements of song, reading, exegesis, and prayer, and thus follows most closely the Reformed service or devotional form.”²²⁴

Eichinger noted: “Something like a standard liturgy has developed. On average, congregations probably have about five songs on Sunday. More at the beginning, in the ‘worship time,’ as some call it, often three songs, then one song at the end, and another somewhere in between.”

²¹⁹ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 47–50.

²²⁰ Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, p. 333: “Der freikirchliche Gottesdienst ist nach dem eigenen Selbstverständnis zwar prinzipiell dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass in ihm an die Stelle der festen Form das freie Wort und die freie Anbetung gesetzt werden.”

²²¹ Plüss, *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung*, p. 13: “[...] mit einer beinahe atemberaubenden Freiheit.” Admittedly, Plüss uses this phrase to describe the elasticity allowed liturgists in Protestant (Reformed) churches in German-speaking Switzerland, but it can equally (or better) be used of *Freikirchen* in Austria.

²²² Frank Hinkelmann, *Gottesdienst feiern: Geschichte, Theologie und Praxis des christlichen Gottesdienstes: Ein Kompendium*, Theologisches Lehr- und Studienmaterial (Martin Bucer Seminar) 35 (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2015), pp. 104–110.

²²³ Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, p. 333: “[I]n der Realität der Gemeinden bilden sich mit der Zeit auch hier Abfolgen heraus, die den Amtierenden Handlungssicherheit und den Gottesdienstbesuchern Erwartungssicherheit geben.”

²²⁴ Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, p. 333: “Grundsätzlich ist der freikirchliche Gottesdienst von den Elementen Lied, Lesung, Auslegung und Gebet gekennzeichnet und folgt damit am stärksten dem reformierten Gottesdienst bzw. der Andachtsform.”

“We also have a liturgy, but it’s more informal. There’s a more malleable approach here.”²²⁵ As a side note, he suggested this greater flexibility relates, in part, to a departure from the dependence on organ and songbooks, as found in traditional church contexts. But he believes that “in the classical other confessions”²²⁶ similar trends and influences are at work.

The various denominations within the *FKÖ* do indeed display a certain continuity in terms of basic format and structure, the “liturgical elements” which are expected week by week and which form the structure for the spoken and sung content of the service. When questionnaire participants were asked what, if any, overarching structure or storyline (liturgical structure) characterizes the service, various typical outlines were provided. One *BEG* music leader listed: “greeting, worship time, welcoming visitors, announcements, collecting prayer requests and corporate prayer, sermon, (Communion once a month), closing song with offering, blessing/prayer.” Another musician listed: “welcome and opening prayer, praise and worship, important information about upcoming events or church activities, collection of the offering, prayer for current topics, testimonies of people who have experienced something special with God, sermon, closing prayer, closing song”²²⁷ – with the caveat, however, that “structured, prescribed sequences are a guideline, but not ‘set in stone’”²²⁸ (Peloschek, *ECG*). A third listed: “welcome and prayer, Bible reading, worship, sermon, prayer and worship, announcements, blessing”²²⁹ (Rabenau, *BBGÖ*). And a fourth: “welcome, worship (possibly with ‘Ministry Time’/prayer time), ‘Family Time’ (e.g., testimonies, introduction of new ministries, etc.), sermon (usually with ‘Ministry Time’ or prayer time appended), closing/announcements including welcoming of (first-time) visitors”²³⁰ (Schweiger, *FCGÖ*). These responses, representing the four *FKÖ* denominations that participated in the questionnaire, display a remarkable amount of overlap (and my observation would confirm the same characteristics for the *MFÖ*).

²²⁵ Eichinger: “Es hat sich so etwas wie eine Standard-Liturgie entwickelt. Im Schnitt werden wahrscheinlich in den Gemeinden am Sonntag so um die fünf Lieder eingebracht. Am Anfang, im ‘Worship-Teil’ – wie manche das bezeichnen, oft drei Lieder und dann am Ende noch ein Lied und dazwischen irgendwo ein weiteres.” “Wir haben auch eine Liturgie, aber sie ist informeller. Dort geht man plastischer vor.”

²²⁶ Eichinger: “[...] klassischen anderen Konfessionen.”

²²⁷ Peloschek: “Begrüßung und Eröffnungsgebet, Lobpreis und Anbetung, wichtige Informationen über bevorstehende Events oder Gemeindeaktivitäten, Sammlung der Kollekte, Gebet für tagesaktuelle Themen, Erfahrungsberichte von Menschen welche etwas Besonderes mit Gott erlebt haben, Predigt, Abschlussgebet, Abschlusslied.”

²²⁸ Peloschek: “[...] strukturiert festgelegte Abläufe sind eine Richtschnur, aber nicht ‘in Stein gemeißelt.’”

²²⁹ Rabenau: “Begrüßung mit Gebet, Bibelwort; Lobpreis; Predigt; Gebet & Lobpreis; Besonderheiten; Segen.”

²³⁰ Schweiger: “Begrüßung, Lobpreis (evtl mit ‘Ministry Time’/Gebetszeit), ‘Family Time’ (z.B. Zeugnisse, Vorstellung von neuen Diensten, etc.), Predigt (meist mit ‘Ministry Time’ oder Gebetszeit angehängt), Abmoderation/Ankündigungen samt Begrüßung von (Erst-)Besuchern.”

In terms of the actual order of the service, music (usually a set of songs sung as a block) generally immediately follows the initial greeting (and prayer). In the interview, Pelochek expressed his conviction that the musical component of the service is not only important, but also rightly given first place in the order of the service. He referenced the tribe of Judah (“Judah,” literally “thanksgiving” or “praise”) leading the way in the Old Testament wilderness wanderings and also leading the people in the account of the miraculous defeat of Jericho. The other fixed portion of the service is the sermon, always following a musical portion of the service and sometimes followed again by song. Other elements of the service – announcements, welcome of visitors, time for sharing testimonies or Bible verses or prayer requests, open prayer time, Scripture readings, offering – are much more fluid in terms of order, and not all are included in every service. Often a song concludes the service, perhaps along with a prayer/benediction.

It is impossible to establish hard-and-fast differences between the various denominations that comprise the *FKÖ*. Meyer-Blanck describes Pentecostal church services as comprised of three primary elements: “sung worship – sermon – altar ministry.”²³¹ Here music/singing tends to comprise an especially significant portion of the service, and the sermon may be followed by an extended time of prayer, including an invitation to individuals to come forward to the front of the church building in expression of (renewed) commitment to Christ and/or to receive prayer from the pastor(s) and/or lay leaders. He also remarks, “Until today the charismatics see themselves as a ‘liturgical liberation movement,’”²³² but nevertheless claims, “The Pentecostal movement is to be characterized above all by its liturgical features. Foremost among these is speaking in tongues as a recognizable sign of the baptism of the Spirit. [...] In addition to speaking in tongues or other expressions of stimulation of those gathered, there are, secondly, effective (healing) prayer; thirdly, prophecy; and fourthly, Spirit-induced fainting.”²³³

Interestingly, in the Pentecostal and charismatic churches I visited in Vienna, these Pentecostal/charismatic “liturgical features” are not particularly noticeable. I witnessed speaking in tongues only rarely (in one *ECG* congregation and otherwise in only a couple of

²³¹ Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, p. 339: “Lobpreis – Predigt – Altardienst.” For a description of what is meant by “Altardienst,” see p. 339.

²³² Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, p. 341: “Bis heute verstehen sich die Charismatiker als eine ‘liturgische Befreiungsbewegung.’”

²³³ Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, pp. 338–339: “Die Pfingstbewegung ist vor allem durch ihre liturgischen Besonderheiten zu charakterisieren. An *erster* Stelle steht dabei die Zungenrede als erkennbares Zeichen der Geisttaufe. [...] Neben der Zungenrede oder der sich in anderer Weise äußernden Erregung der Versammelten sind *zweitens* das wirksame (heilende) Gebet, *drittens* die Prophetie und *viertens* die durch den Geist ausgelöste Ohnmacht zu nennen.”

FCGÖ congregations) – always brief, by no means practiced by all present, and incorporated into a broader time of prayer and song. Regarding healing prayer, references to or prayers for (or in a couple cases a testimony of) physical healing were part of some services, but again not ubiquitously present. Prophecy (in the sense of sharing a specific “word from the Lord”) was basically absent, although one pastor referenced having been given a “picture” during the congregational singing. In one church I did observe a worshiper who was “slain in the Spirit” (following her baptism), but again this was not a primary feature of the service. Thus, at least in the congregations I visited, these more stereotypical elements of Pentecostal services were largely absent or significantly subdued.

According to Meyer-Blanck, the sermon carries specific importance within Mennonite and Baptist congregation,²³⁴ which can also be equally said for the *BEG* congregations. Moreover, based on my observations, at least if length is a fair indicator of the prioritization of the sermon, churches in all five denominations place a strong emphasis on the sermon.²³⁵ Plüss highlights such characteristic weight being given to the sermon as in part reflecting the non-liturgical or even anti-liturgical potential within Protestantism broadly (and of course including *Freikirchen*) and states provocatively:

Protestant worship – including evangelical worship – is designed around a sermon text or theme. The preacher develops the liturgy at his desk in concentric circles: starting from a theme or the chosen pericope, to the sermon manuscript, to the prayers and the songs. Liturgy is therefore not a relevant subject for us Protestants, because liturgy is to a certain extent absorbed by homiletics. What could be said about the service has already been said in connection with the sermon. This is the center and dramaturgical climax of Reformed and *nota bene* also of many free-church services.²³⁶

4.2.1. TYPICAL LITURGICAL ELEMENTS

Thinking of the *Freikirchen* as a whole, typical elements of the service, appearing in a variety of combinations between a welcome at the beginning of the service and the dismissal/blessing at its conclusion, include singing, prayer, Bible readings, sharing time, and sermon. Together

²³⁴ Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, p. 334.

²³⁵ Regarding sermon and singing together being the most important elements, at least from the amount of time dedicated to each and significance of roles assigned to them, cf. Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 155–162, especially the graphs on p. 157 and p. 161.

²³⁶ Plüss, “Das Ritual der Antiritualisten,” p. 10: “Der protestantische Gottesdienst – auch der evangelikale – ist von *Predigttext* oder einem *Thema* her konzipiert. Der Prediger entwickelt die Liturgie am Schreibtisch in konzentrischen Kreisen: ausgehend von einem Thema oder der gewählten Perikope über das Predigtmanuskript bis hin zu den Gebeten und den Liedern. Liturgie ist darum kein relevanter Gegenstand für uns Protestanten, weil die Liturgik gewissermaßen von der Homiletik absorbiert wird. Was zum Gottesdienst zu sagen wäre, wurde bereits im Zusammenhang mit der Predigt gesagt. Diese ist Mitte und dramaturgischer Höhepunkt reformierter und *nota bene* auch vieler freikirchlicher Gottesdienste.”

these display a certain predictability combined with flexibility: “Constancy grants predictability of expectations and fosters confidence in the worship event; improvisation opens new perspectives and guards against stereotypy.”²³⁷

The following pages will explore these elements – using Schweyer’s study²³⁸ as a basis for general observations, followed by descriptions of Vienna free-church services as experienced through participatory observation and as elucidated by feedback from music leaders and pastors.

4.2.1.1. OPENING OF THE SERVICE

Informal intentionality characterizes the opening of free-church services. Various cues or “signals” indicate that the service is beginning. These can include visual cues of dimmed lighting and a screen with rotating display of a welcome message and announcements of regular or upcoming events, and sometimes a digital countdown for the service. Auditory cues include music (background music, live instrumental music, or an opening song) and the opening spoken element of the service (in the form of a greeting and possibly a Scriptural “call to worship”). The overall informal nature of the opening underscores the “horizontal plane” of interpersonal, communal interaction. Schweyer notes with reference to informal forms of address (*du/ihr/wir* predominating over *Sie*), but certainly applicable more broadly, a characteristic “atmosphere of nearness.”²³⁹ In Vienna *Freikirchen*, this same informal and yet planned start to services is characteristic. Almost no services were preceded by silence, though near-silence was markedly noticeable in one Baptist church, a factor that – along with the general layout and structure of the service (also the only service to provide a printed order of worship and one of two to meet in a hall originally designed as a church) – contributed to a greater sense of formality.

Formal instrumental preludes were absent to my observations, although musicians were in some cases informally playing (or rehearsing) before the service. In one church, I was unsure if the service had begun or whether the music team was practicing; oddly enough, this lack of liturgical clarity was also in one of the only two services that included the formal liturgical

²³⁷ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 508: “Die Konstanz gewährt die Erwartungssicherung und fördert das Vertrauen in das gottesdienstliche Geschehen, die Improvisation eröffnet neue Perspektiven und bewahrt vor Stereotypie”; see pp. 492–512.

²³⁸ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 156–354.

²³⁹ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 162–182; p. 173: “horizontale[] Ebene”; p. 177: “Atmosphäre der Nähe.”

Trinitarian formula as part of the spoken opening of the service. Background music in the form of a playlist of “worship music” was employed in about one third of the congregations visited.

The visual signal of the start of the service in the form of a digital countdown on a screen was less common, although all churches visited made use of a projection system during the service at least for song lyrics (excepting the outdoor service, of course). Changes in general room lighting were not representative – the pre-service lighting, whether bright or dim – characterized the duration of the service. In most contexts, members of the congregation talked informally with one another before the service. In two settings, I was offered a hot drink, in one also cake, before the service began. In the latter, the service time given on the website actually included the assumption of a half hour of visiting beforehand – the music team had yet to arrive, set up, and rehearse when I got there.

Aside from these possible musical or visual cues, the spoken greeting from the podium or stage signifies the clear beginning of the service, usually in the form of a warm welcome to all in attendance, sometimes with special words of greetings to those visiting for the first time. While a Scripture verse or passage may be read or at least referenced, a formal “call to worship” is rare.

4.2.1.2. SINGING

Singing together as a church fulfills a variety of roles. First, it is one of the primary ways believers express their faith and devotion. Closely connected to that, sung worship in the church service context highlights and expresses the community, especially (as Schweyer points out repeatedly) in a context where corporate spoken prayers (or corporately recited Scripture texts, etc.) are generally absent²⁴⁰: “Singing is the primary (and sometimes only) form of corporate prayer in free churches.”²⁴¹

Sung music, according to Schweyer, has four primary functions. The first function is a “gathering” of those present (where the first song “stands on the threshold between everyday life and worship” and invites those present to lay aside distractions and internally, metaphorically “enter in” to the service). Second comes “praise” (or “praise and worship”) where especially the presence of God is celebrated, enjoyed, experienced.²⁴² Third, there is the

²⁴⁰ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 182–184; see also p. 217.

²⁴¹ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 184: Das Singen ist die *vorzügliche (und manchmal einzige Form gemeinsamen Betens* in Freikirchen.”

²⁴² Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 188–196; p. 189: “[...] steht an der Schwelle von Alltag und Gottesdienst.”

“proclamation” of convictions about God, in which the singing community does the proclaiming and also receives the proclaimed message: “Every song sung in worship has a proclamatory dimension. For the congregation hears what is sung and listens to itself.”²⁴³ The direction of address (to God directly, to the gathered community, etc.), as well as the content or style of presentation, can underscore the proclamatory character. Fourth, “devotion” to or “trust” in God is expressed in response to the statements proclaimed about him.²⁴⁴

The manner and degree of emotional expression in response to music varies in free-church settings, as already noted. Schweyer suggests that the range of expression simply reflects “different modes of engaging with emotions,”²⁴⁵ reflecting either an “*internalized* emotionality” or an “*embodied* emotionality.”²⁴⁶ He goes on to discuss two important variations in regard to the social aspect of singing, what he calls a “*kollektives Setting*” (collective setting)²⁴⁷ and a “*konzertantes Setting*” (concertlike setting).²⁴⁸ While these emotional and social elements are variously expressed, church “types” can nonetheless be described as falling in one of four quadrants: collective setting/internally experienced emotion, collective setting/gesturally expressed emotion, concertlike setting/gesturally expressed emotion, and concertlike setting/internally experienced emotion.²⁴⁹ I have already discussed the gestures accompanying singing, and we will return later to the nomenclature of “collective” and “concertlike”; music in church services is the topic of the following chapter.

4.2.1.3. PRAYER

According to Schweyer, prayers in free-church services are usually extemporaneous and informal, lending a strong sense of the relevance of prayer for the individual lives of those gathered. The vocabulary and style of prayer is personal, familiar, familial: “Communication with God in worship uses forms of communication that are familiar from dealing with those one knows well,”²⁵⁰ and, “Prayer conveys the picture of an intimate relationship with God.”²⁵¹ However, the manner of expression in prayer does differ from everyday speech in certain ways

²⁴³ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 196: “Jedes im Gottesdienst gesungene Lied hat eine verkündigende Dimension. Denn die Gemeinde hört, was gesungene wird, sie hört sich selbst zu.”

²⁴⁴ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 196–199.

²⁴⁵ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 204–205; p. 204: “[...] *unterschiedliche Modi im Umgang mit Gefühlen.*”

²⁴⁶ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 204: “*verinnerlichte Emotionalität,*” “*verleiblichte Emotionalität.*”

²⁴⁷ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 206.

²⁴⁸ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 205.

²⁴⁹ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 206–208.

²⁵⁰ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 251: “Die Kommunikation mit Gott im Gottesdienst verwendet Kommunikationsformen, die man aus dem Umgang mit vertrauten Personen kennt.”

²⁵¹ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 252: “Gebete vermitteln das Bild einer intimen Gottesbeziehung.”

– the abundance of Bible references and certain established (and at least sometimes unconscious use of) verbal formulas. Prayers can be led by the pastor, moderator, and/or song leader, but can also be expressed in blocks of time dedicated to spontaneous prayer from members of the congregation. Corporate prayers recited aloud are basically absent, although the corporate element is expressed through invitations to join in prayer, by (inconsistent) use of plural pronouns (for example, “we pray” rather than “I pray”), and by the general consensus that any one person praying is doing so for and with the rest of the congregation (perhaps signaled by “Amen” from the congregation). Praying in tongues may be observed in Pentecostal and charismatic church settings, characteristically embedded in a context of other forms of prayer and of music.²⁵²

Although spoken prayer is, of course, an important part of church services, in most services I observed it was apportioned significantly less time than singing (which, as noted above, can at least to some degree be described as sung prayer²⁵³) and the sermon. Content of prayer reflects an extension of functions of sung worship (praise, adoration, thanksgiving, proclamation of God’s character, and expressions of trust and devotion). The other primary focus of prayer is the church community – frequently for the church service itself and those gathered (with reference to the service as a whole or the sermon specifically), as well as for health and other needs of the congregation (generally or for specific requests). Prayers of confession or time given to silent confession may also be included, but certainly not universally. The same goes for prayers for specific concerns in the wider world, government leaders, etc.

The form of prayer most typical is relatively short, extemporaneous prayers offered by the person or persons leading the services and simultaneously congregational in tone or content. In one Romanian congregation visited, as well as in the Ghanaian and Nigerian congregations, everyone prayed aloud – extemporaneously and simultaneously. In the Ghanaian congregation, one of the music leaders prayed with a microphone, and her voice and what could be called refrain-based prayer led the prayer time as a whole. In three *ECG/FCGÖ* congregations, I observed glossolalia as one optional component of corporate prayer. In a few other churches, an informal time of congregational prayer presented the opportunity for individuals to share prayer requests and/or spontaneously offer prayers of praise or petition. In one small *BEG*

²⁵² See Schweyer’s section on prayer in church services, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 217–253.

²⁵³ See Barota, p. 92 below.

congregation, all the members of the congregation divided into two groups to share prayer requests and pray for each other.

4.2.1.4. INPUT FROM MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION

Another frequent element of free-church services is a block of time set aside for spoken contributions from members of the congregation. The type, length, and level of spontaneity varies according to church size, style of service, etc. Common forms include sharing announcements about upcoming events, requesting prayer for a specific personal need, expressing thanksgiving, giving a testimony of God's provision or grace, and sharing a meaningful Scripture passage. Schweyer describes particularly the way in which such contributions add to the overall sense of the service's relevance for daily life, through the informal style of speech and the connection of theologically held beliefs to the events and details of day-to-day experience. Particularly with regard to testimonies of personal experience, he notes, "Testimonies thus stabilize a worldview shaped by faith, in which solutions to everyday tensions and problems are interpreted as God's miraculous work. By integrating such testimonies into the event of the service and into times of praise, the everyday relevance of the services is strengthened. The testimonies document and intensify the view that the God who is worshiped in the service in song can be experienced in everyday life."²⁵⁴

Based on my observation, sharing of information (in the form of community announcements) or sharing of prayer requests or thanksgiving predominates. In one congregation, where two elderly members shared personal testimonies, at least one seemed to have communicated the desire to do so beforehand with the pastor. In the Ghanaian and Romanian Pentecostal churches, testimonies could take the form of song, planned or spontaneous. All of these "open mic" moments clearly fit into the expected structure of the service in any given church, and the majority of the congregation in each case participated chiefly by listening rather than by actively contributing. Perhaps as a humorous side-note, in both African churches visited, any guests were expected to come forward and introduce themselves. In the Romanian Pentecostal church, I was not only greeted as a guest but also welcomed to share a poem or song – thankfully, it was apparently acceptable to decline the unanticipated invitation.

²⁵⁴ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 310–324; p. 315: "Zeugnisse stabilisieren damit eine von Glauben geprägte Weltsicht, in welcher Lösungen alltäglicher Spannungen und Probleme als wunderhaftes Wirken Gottes interpretiert werden. Indem solche Erlebnisberichte in das gottesdienstliche Geschehen und in Zeiten des Lobpreises integriert werde, wird der *Alltagsbezug der Gottesdienste* verstärkt. Die Zeugnisse dokumentieren und intensivieren die Auffassung, dass derjenige Gott, welcher im Gottesdienst mit Liedern verehrt wird, im Alltagsleben erfahrbar ist."

On spontaneity in services, Peloschek (*ECG*) remarked:

Spontaneous additions and changes are always welcome if they are recognized as inspired by the Holy Spirit. Such can be expected from team members who know the congregation and seek the welfare of the participants, and are thus welcome. If spontaneous requests to speak come from guests, these are usually briefly examined by one of the responsible persons beforehand and only then permitted. Unfortunately, past experience has shown that some visitors simply want to make a name for themselves and impose their convictions on others. For this purpose, God has placed overseers (elders) in the congregation to preserve a godly orderliness.²⁵⁵

In some services, input from congregation members was clearly planned in advance. In the Mennonite church, a woman shared a lengthy (perhaps twenty minutes) testimony, but in the form of a video that was then played for the congregation. In another church, two members were formally recognized and given time to speak briefly about new roles they were entering (either in the local church or as part of an overseas training program). In the service at *Four Corners*, which included several baptisms, each baptismal candidate presented his or her testimony of faith in Christ and reason for desiring baptism.

4.2.1.5. BIBLE READINGS

Biblical excerpts always form a portion of church services. The sermon, as would be expected, includes one or more verses or longer passages, and short Bible readings may be read (or referenced) throughout the service. “*Freikirchen* scarcely practice liturgical readings of biblical texts,”²⁵⁶ says Schweyer, although a semi-formal “call to worship” and Scriptural “benediction” are liturgical elements found in some, but by far not all Vienna *Freikirchen*.²⁵⁷ In one congregation (*BEG*), members of the congregation were given the opportunity to share a favorite Scripture verse from the past week, and in a more formal setting, the pastor of a *BBGÖ* church presented reflections on the ecumenical verse of the year (*Jahreslosung*). In another congregation, children shared a series of verses they had memorized, centered around

²⁵⁵ Peloschek: “Spontane Ergänzungen und Änderungen sind immer willkommen, wenn sie als vom Heiligen Geist inspiriert erkannt werden. Dies kann man von Teammitgliedern, welche die Gemeinde kennen und das Wohl der Teilnehmer suchen, auch erwarten und ist deshalb erwünscht. Wenn spontane Wortmeldungen von Gästen kommen, werden diese in der Regel von einem/r Verantwortlichen vorher kurz geprüft und dann erst zugelassen. Leider hat die Vergangenheit auch gezeigt, dass einige Besucher sich nur profilieren möchten und ihre Überzeugung anderen überstülpen. Dazu hat Gott Aufseher (Älteste) in die Gemeinde gesetzt, um eine göttliche Ordnung zu halten.”

²⁵⁶ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 269: “Freikirchen pflegen kaum liturgische Lesungen von biblischen Texten.”

²⁵⁷ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 253–269.

the Christmas story (*BBGÖ*). Other readings – of a creed, for instance, or communally read prayers – were not employed in the services I observed.

4.2.1.6. SERMON

The sermon often finds its place towards the end of the service, following a time of singing and prayer, etc., structurally forming more or less the culmination of the service. In other traditions, a significant block of music also follows the sermon. Schweyer analyzes the reasons for these contrasting placements:

The location of the sermon correlates to different liturgical functions. [...] The structural embedding of the sermon thus points to two different understandings of the worship service: On the one hand, there is the view that God's work is experienced in the worship service itself and that this is expressed within the service through individual or collective practice. On the other hand, there is the view that worship service practice finds its culmination in the sermon, which is understood as a source of inspiration for "worship in everyday life."²⁵⁸

The sermon, always tied to one or more Bible passages or individual verses, can be either exegetical or thematic.²⁵⁹ It is usually presented from a platform or stage, but the informal speech (and sometimes dress) of the preacher, along with the illustrations from everyday life, "lend the sermons an everyday and informal communication style."²⁶⁰ It may be accompanied by visual elements (such as a PowerPoint presentation) or audiovisual elements (such as a film excerpt), examples Schweyer links to a "design of free-church worship services in line with everyday culture."²⁶¹ Generally, the sermon closes with prayer.

In summary, within the church service, the sermon is considered of great importance (indicated, for instance, by its length – sermons in free-church contexts tend to be longer than in other church settings, especially in comparison to a Catholic Mass, where the high point is clearly the Eucharist) and intended to express significance for everyday life. Additionally, this relevance should be as broad as possible: "The sermon should [...] not only be understandable

²⁵⁸ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 273: "Die Verortung der Predigt korreliert mit unterschiedlichen liturgischen Funktionen. [...] Die strukturelle Einbettung der Predigt weist also auf zwei unterschiedliche Auffassungen des Gottesdienstes hin: einerseits auf die Auffassung, dass im Gottesdienst selbst das Wirken Gottes erfahren und dieses innerhalb des Gottesdienstes durch individuelle oder kollektive Praxis zum Ausdruck gebracht wird, andererseits auf die Auffassung, dass das gottesdienstliche Handeln seinen Höhepunkt in der Predigt findet und diese als Impulsgeber für den 'Gottesdienst im Alltag' verstanden wird."

²⁵⁹ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 256.

²⁶⁰ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 293: "[...] verleihen den Predigten den Stil alltäglicher und informeller Kommunikation."

²⁶¹ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 293: "[...] alltagskulturelle Gestaltung freikirchlicher Gottesdienste."

for insiders, but also appeal to people who are not familiar with church life or have had negative experiences with traditional formats of preaching.”²⁶²

Although structure, themes, styles, volume, and length (usually approximately thirty minutes or more) vary in Vienna free-church services, considerable consensus can be found in terms of the intended take-aways: encouragement towards growth in trust and devotion to God in everyday life (practical, if often generalized, application), deepened understanding of a biblical text or theme, and reinforcement of a strong Christological emphasis. As stated above, Scripture is always referenced. In services visited, sermons were given by local and guest pastors, in three churches women preached, in one church a husband-wife team preached, and the age of preachers ranged by perhaps forty years or more.

A few sermons stood out for some unusual aspect. In one Baptist church, the pastor’s sermon, given around the church’s ten-year anniversary, was delivered in the form of an extended reading from one of her own books, written in the style of a memoir and composed of reflective snapshots from her history with the congregation. This was also the only sermon delivered seated (from a barstool in front of a lectern created from wooden crates – all very “hip”). Another sermon, in one of the *FCGÖ* congregations, was most noteworthy for its volume – an energetic exegesis of a lengthy passage from a Pauline Epistle, delivered in German with notes of a Swedish accent and peppered with the pastor’s own exclamations of “Amen” and “Hallelujah!” In one of the Romanian churches, the service included several sermons (I think three, but it was not entirely clear to someone unfamiliar with the service form and language of delivery!).

Exceptions or exceptional elements aside, most sermons were preached by the pastor or one of the elders of the church and clearly based on a particular Bible passage or theme (in the latter case, the biblical connection could be more or less obvious). The subject of thematic sermons included discipleship, baptism, freedom, finding your life goal, biblical Israel, anointing, God’s sovereignty and human responsibility, dealing with stress, and thanksgiving. Sermon texts, whether exegetical or thematic, were taken from a whole range of biblical books, including both Old Testament (Historical Books and Wisdom Literature – there was little exploration of texts in the Prophetic Books) and New Testament (Gospels, Acts, Epistles, with a strong contingent of texts from the Gospels, perhaps partly due to the fact that my church visits

²⁶² Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 269–294; pp. 293–294: “Die Predigt soll [...] nicht nur für Insider verständlich sein, sondern auch Personen ansprechen, die mit dem kirchlichen Leben nicht vertraut sind oder mit traditionellen Predigtformen negative Erfahrungen gemacht haben.”

overlapped with the season of Advent). The importance of the sermon is highlighted by the fact that most churches make their sermons available online, either in audio or video format or both (via a sermon archive or podcast platform on the church website or on YouTube).

4.2.1.7. OFFERING

The collection of an offering is another element that appears frequently but not always, during free-church services. Schweyer notes three potential conceptions of the collection: as an aspect of community building (that is, providing for the needs and operation of the local church), a form of intercession (for instance, raising money for a specific need within or outside the local congregation), or an act of praise (that is, a response of thanksgiving and worship). The collection tends not to be given great prominence in services, even if it is important for the operation of churches not funded by a church tax.²⁶³ Collections in services I observed were made in a variety of ways – typically a basket passed to congregation members by ushers, but also in the form of a basket (or at VCC, also via ATM) provided at the back of the hall, a procession to an offering basket at the front of the hall (one African congregation), or even the digital era’s option of a QR code projected on a screen.

4.2.1.8. ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS

Two other potential elements that Schweyer mentions are the use of multimedia in the form of video clips and also the incorporation of silence.²⁶⁴ Although services were impressively multimedia and digitally adept, the use of media as a discrete liturgical element was rare. However, a few examples could include the already mentioned video testimony (*MFÖ*), a photo montage (with accompanying Christian rap soundtrack) of a recent church retreat (*BEG*), a report on a church youth activity featuring the children’s short, stop-action Lego films (*BEG*), a video clip from a Pixar film used as a sermon illustration (*BEG*), and an artsy, stop-action sermon series introduction video (*FCGÖ*). The most extensive use of multimedia was in the VCC: *Latino* congregation (*FCGÖ*). I happened to visit on the Saturday afternoon (their usual service time) on which they were celebrating a Christmas service, so it is hard to say how many elements of the service were therefore atypical. However, the extent to which videos were employed was impressive – including both an audience-interactive game and a video accompaniment to a children’s nativity play.

²⁶³ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 325–330.

²⁶⁴ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 157.

The second category, that of silence, is mostly absent. In general, quiet moments are simply transition points in the service, although brief silence may be included either at the beginning of the service or following the sermon. If a slightly longer time of reflection and prayer is incorporated, this pause in spoken or sung elements is likely accompanied by instrumental improvisation. A particular exception to this general rule was the inclusion of four whole minutes of silence devoted to reflection and prayer in one *BEG* congregation – this indeed functioned as a noteworthy and memorable liturgical element.

4.2.1.9. CLOSING OF THE SERVICE

The closing element of a free-church service, like its opening, tends to be rather informal – a blessing (perhaps the classic Aaronic blessing) or farewell, potentially accompanied by the giving of announcements, word of welcome for visitors, invitation to stay for fellowship or receive prayer, a final song, etc., and perhaps followed by background music as people chat or disperse: “The informal farewell and background music give the closing sequences an everyday cultural color and form a threshold moment in transition from worship to everyday life.”²⁶⁵

4.2.2. SPECIAL LITURGICAL ELEMENTS

Before proceeding to a glance at the most important liturgical elements, the topic of the liturgical year, and a summary of liturgical roles, I would like to look briefly at two liturgical elements that are practiced by all *Freikirchen* – and by virtually all churches of whatever confession – but on a less frequent basis than the foregoing elements described.

4.2.2.1. COMMUNION

Communion is celebrated regularly in *Freikirchen*, though only in a minority is it celebrated every week. It is generally understood as open to all Christians present, with an emphasis on personal faith (as described above in Chapter Two) and expectation of accompanying Christian lifestyle (as communicated in other portions of the service and church life). As a symbolically laden liturgical element, it may be placed either in connection with a block of singing or after the sermon. The former placement communicates a particularly “doxological character,”²⁶⁶ whereas placement after the sermon underscores the symbolically “proclamatory character of

²⁶⁵ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 344–354; p. 353: “Die informellen Abschiedsgrüße und die Hintergrundmusik verleihen den Schlussequenzen eine alltagskulturelle Färbung und bilden eine Schwellenzeit im Übergang vom gottesdienstlichen zum alltäglichen Leben.”

²⁶⁶ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 338: “doxologische[r] Charakter.”

Communion.²⁶⁷ Additionally, Communion can be celebrated chiefly with an “individual-spiritual intention”²⁶⁸ (where the ritual enhances the individual’s contemplation of what is understood as a spiritual reality) and/or with a “eucharistic intention”²⁶⁹ (in which individual or communal expressions of thanksgivings are made). Methods of distribution, including understandings of who is permitted to distribute the elements, vary.²⁷⁰

Communion was celebrated in about a quarter of the churches I visited, sometimes before and sometimes after the sermon. Words of institution were generally spoken, but the range of formality/informality was noteworthy, as well as the presence or absence of a period of self-reflection (common from my own church experiences in other settings). In one case, the communal aspect of Communion was highlighted by the sacrament being preceded by a brief “open mic” time (*BBGÖ*). In all but one service, the elements of bread and wine (or, more commonly, grape juice) were distributed to the seated congregation. In one case, this was done during a song (potentially enhancing a sense of community) but in very dim lighting (potentially suggesting an individual, internalized experience) (*FCGÖ*).²⁷¹ In one service, those who wanted to take Communion processed forward – and were encouraged to consider the healing power of the Cross applied to physical or psychological needs, as well as spiritual ones (*FCGÖ*). In my impression, the overarching focus in free-church Communion practice is strongly “individual-spiritual” and “eucharistic.”

4.2.2.2. BAPTISM

While baptism is not a frequent part of free-church services (one to four times per year, based on questionnaire feedback – and, presumably, not automatically taking place in the context of a weekly church service, due in part to the lack of a baptistry in most facilities), it nevertheless *can* be a liturgical element of a church service and certainly *is* one of the two key rituals in free-church or wider Protestant practice, along with Communion. The one baptismal service I observed was a multi-sensory experience²⁷² that deserves a full description, even if it should

²⁶⁷ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 338: “Verkündigungscharakter des Abendmahls.”

²⁶⁸ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 339: “[i]ndividuell-spirituelle Intention.”

²⁶⁹ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 339: “[e]ucharistische Intention.”

²⁷⁰ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 331–344.

²⁷¹ Cf. Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, p. 7 and her remark there about “the private internalizing of religious experience.”

²⁷² No doubt Mohr would describe it as an “accumulative strategy,” in the sense of a “technique [...] to enrich the perceived experience by adding more and more senses, with a climax of total immersion”; cf. Hubert Mohr, “Sensory Strategies,” in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of the Cultural and Cognitive Aesthetics of Religion*, ed. by Anne Koch and Katharina Wilkens (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), (129–141), p. 138.

be noted that it was full of surprises (even for someone who grew up in the general free-church context) and could hardly be called typical of Vienna free-church settings.

The baptism of four young people/adults in the *Four Corners* church was clearly the focus and highlight of the whole service. The drama of the event was heightened by the preparation of the stage, where floor panels were removed to reveal the baptistry pool. Young children were invited to process up on stage with one of their parents, in order to have a front-row view of the baptisms. In fact, anyone who wanted was welcome to gather round, though giving special consideration for a good view for the family members of the baptismal candidates. Each candidate shared his or her testimony of personal faith (accompanied by clapping and even standing ovations) and was then baptized by two of the pastors. Coming out of the baptistry, each individual was welcomed with a commodiously large white towel by a friend or family member – clearly symbolic of spiritual renewal and the spiritual embrace of the gathered church community.

It was undeniably a celebratory environment, in which immediately following the baptism a number of young people danced up front while the band played and sang the extremely energetic “God’s Great Dance Floor.” Then the newly baptized members, who by this time had changed into dry clothes, were welcomed on stage for a prayer of blessing. Pastors and pastoral trainees came up on stage to pray over the new members, while the whole congregation was invited to stretch out their hands in a token of blessing.

4.2.3. LITURGICAL FOCUS AND FRAMEWORK

As far as the high point(s) or emphasis of the regular weekly service, music leaders’ questionnaire responses suggest that the sermon is frequently central (often with other parts of the service planned around it, as discussed in greater detail below); this is true across the questionnaire responses, but most clearly from the *BEG* churches. Additionally, the music/“praise and worship” time can form the high point of the service – or also mentioned are Communion and “Ministry Time” (special prayer time). For some, the question of “focus” or “highpoint” was hard to answer, simply because “preaching and worship” “are each given unique weight”²⁷³ (Chap-Rabenau, *BBGÖ*). From my observations, congregational singing and preaching form by far the two largest blocks of time in the service, with a tendency towards more time given to music in the *FCGÖ* congregations than in the *BBGÖ* or *BEG* churches.

²⁷³ Chap-Rabenau: “Predigt und Lobpreis” “wird individuell unterschiedlich gewichtet.”

Whether the sermons are therefore shorter or whether the services are simply longer could be debated, although in general the services are simply longer.

Of course, the elements that form the structure of a weekly service are just one liturgical manifestation, and “liturgy” relates also to the liturgical calendar, which features so prominently in “high church” contexts. In the *Freikirchen*, the liturgical calendar is not ignored, but less prominent than in other traditions. In general, Advent, Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost were acknowledged as influencing song selections on the respective Sundays. Two questionnaire participants (*BBGÖ*, *ECG*) mentioned also *Erntedank* (an autumn service of thanksgiving), which I also observed in one *BEG* congregation. Interestingly, in one Baptist church, Eternity Sunday (the last Sunday of the church year and in the *Evangelische Kirche* traditionally a day of remembrance for those who have died during the previous church year) is celebrated – Fischer-Dörl made reference to this fact in the interview. Other special occasions that are reflected in liturgical practice include celebration of Communion and baptisms.

4.2.4. LITURGICAL ROLES

The liturgical roles in a free-church service are open-ended. In addition to the “liturgists” who lead significant portions of the service (music leader, preacher, moderator), others may contribute in the various ways already mentioned above, such as sharing announcements, praying, giving a testimony, etc.²⁷⁴ Schweyer notes that from a theological angle, “The congregation as a whole can also be seen as liturgical actors, who by their presence and by joining in prayer, singing, listening, and celebrating, help to shape and mold the worship service.”²⁷⁵ This of course also has sociological significance.

The role of preacher is fairly self-explanatory, and that of the music leader (and music team) is discussed in detail below. Here it remains to briefly describe the role of a moderator. This role is part of the “dramaturgy” of the service and serves various functions. Practical functions include giving announcements and clarifying upcoming elements of the service. Relational functions include recognizing guests and important events in the lives of congregation members. Schweyer states, “The moderation elements that promote relationship can be understood as an expression of an ecclesiology for which *individual faith* and *community experience* are central.” The moderator may also share thoughts connecting songs or reflections

²⁷⁴ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 159–161.

²⁷⁵ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 159: “Auch die Gemeinde insgesamt kann als liturgische Akteurin betrachtet werden, die durch ihre Präsenz und durch das Mitbeten, Mitsingen, Mithören und Mitfeiern den Gottesdienst mitgestaltet und mitprägt.”

in preparation for the sermon; biblical references and quotations are often incorporated.²⁷⁶ In free-church services I visited, the role of moderator can be filled by the person preaching, by the music leader, or by another individual.

4.3. THE ATMOSPHERE OF CHURCH SERVICES

To sum up these aesthetic and liturgical reflections, a certain picture starts to form of the overall feel of free-church services or, better said, the overall atmosphere that characterizes them. “Atmosphere can be defined as ‘a spatially perceptible ambience.’”²⁷⁷ This mood or feel is experienced at an individual and collective level: “An atmosphere is not a feeling limited to an individual. It does indeed elicit such, but only secondarily, in a response to something supra-individual and spatial.”²⁷⁸ “Perhaps the simplest and most apt descriptor of free-church services would be an “informal” atmosphere. Part of this feel is no doubt created by the spatial aspects already described – in many cases multipurpose facilities, and virtually none of the halls being designed to impress upon worshipers the transcendence of the divine. However, other non-architectural elements also contribute to the informal atmosphere – for instance, the mostly informal dress of attendees²⁷⁹ (obvious exceptions being the conservative dress and head coverings worn by women in the Romanian Pentecostal church visited and a few individuals in traditional dress in the African congregations). Furthermore, most *Freikirchen* are multi-generational, with a large contingent of young children. Their presence, even if for only part of the service before being dismissed to a “Sunday school” program, unavoidably encourages an informal atmosphere. Additionally, in some congregations a certain percentage of worshipers arrive after the service has officially begun, and freedom of movement during services in some cases certainly contributes to the informal atmosphere, as does the fairly frequent practice of recognizing birthdays and also visitors.

The flexibility of the elements of the church service also contribute to the generally informal atmosphere. In smaller congregations, time is often allotted to sharing prayer requests or personal testimonies, and corporate prayer may include an “open mic” approach or individuals

²⁷⁶ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 294–310; p. 303: “Die beziehungsfördernden Moderationselemente lassen sich als Ausdruck eine Ekklesiologie verstehen, für die *individueller Glaube* und *Gemeinschaftserfahrung* zentral sind.”

²⁷⁷ Gernot Böhme, “Atmosphäre als Begriff der Ästhetik,” *Studia Phänomenologica* 15 (2014): (pp. 25–28), p. 25: “[...] eine räumlich spürbare Stimmungsqualität.”

²⁷⁸ Plüss, *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung*, p. 196: “Eine Atmosphäre ist kein auf ein Individuum begrenztes Gefühl. Sie löst dies zwar aus, aber erst in zweiter Linie: als Resonanz auf etwas Überindividuelles und Räumliches.”

²⁷⁹ Cf. Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 386–387.

praying from their seats (either prayers of adoration or of supplication). In larger churches, this is less feasible; but one congregation I visited provided a box for prayer requests or expressions of thanksgiving, which were then read aloud later in the service. An informal, inclusive atmosphere is also enhanced by the fact that many people can share the stage or take up a microphone in the course of a service – also when these elements of the service are clearly planned rather than spontaneous.²⁸⁰

This overall informal atmosphere takes two (potentially overlapping) forms.²⁸¹ First, there is what could be called the “familial” atmosphere. This is communicated not only through the presence of many young families (and accompanying movement and noise of small children), but also the coffee and snacks shared before or after the service (admittedly, reduced due to pandemic-related precautions) and the frequent participating of congregation members (extemporaneous prayer, announcements, etc.).

Second, there is what could be named the “trendy” church – likely employing upbeat, pre-service music, extensive use of audio-visual technology during services, and stylishly informal clothing worn by the service leaders (for example, in a *FCGÖ* church, one musician wearing shorts and a t-shirt emblazoned with “YHWH”). In these congregations, the pre- or post-service coffee or tea might be expanded to a range of café offerings.²⁸² This “trendy” atmosphere seems to be aimed especially at young people and expressive of a seeker-friendly approach.

These characteristics of an informal atmosphere have deeper significance than simply a certain church service feel. The familial atmosphere suggests just that – church as “family.” Here the communal aspect is very strong – church is a place to belong, to feel at home. The sense of belonging joined with an inclusiveness that extends beyond physical family ties reinforces a shared identity as the local church, as well as a part of the Church universal. This atmosphere underscores the validity and meaning of what transpires in the church service: the Godward praise, the corporate rehearsing of shared convictions, the reinforcement of personal identity as part of “God’s family” and the local church “family.” At the same time, guests are welcome,

²⁸⁰ Cf. Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 321–323.

²⁸¹ Parallel, to some degree, to Schweyer’s “gemeindeorientierte” and “missionarisch orientierte” church service spectrum or to his “kollektives Setting” and “konzertantes Setting”; see Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 392 and pp. 205–206, respectively.

²⁸² *VCC* runs its own café in the Gasometer complex, and in one Baptist congregation that defies multiple stereotypes and is a complex mix of “familial” and “trendy,” the drinks on offer after the service include beer and wine.

suggesting that there is room for the family to grow. The missional message of the “Good News” is for the individual, but leads to the communal.²⁸³

Members of a more “trendy” church may well also experience a family-like connection to their congregation, but for the visitor, the service communicates its own powerful symbolic message: Church is accessible and contiguous to daily life, work, entertainment. The Christian message expressed in song and spoken word is highly relevant to the challenges and joys of everyday experience. Church services are in this sense both an interruption of the weekday routine and also connected to it.²⁸⁴

These two atmospheres correspond largely to the two categories discussed more below in relation to music – namely, a “familial” atmosphere tends to correspond to a “collective” style of music, and a “trendy” atmosphere may lean towards a “concertlike” style. Additionally, parallels could be drawn to a further mode of differentiation, namely “community-oriented” and “mission-oriented” or, better yet, a spectrum of missional intentions for the service, ranging from “community-oriented” – “guest-friendly” – “guest-sensitive” – “guest-oriented.”²⁸⁵ The “familial” atmosphere leans towards the former two categories, the “trendy” the latter two.

4.4. THE ESSENCE OF CHURCH SERVICES

After having looked at the aesthetic and liturgical make-up of free-church services, I would like to explore the purpose of the services – beginning with the meaning of the phrase “church service” (or “worship service”) itself. In standard English usage, the word “church” in this context clearly refers both to the gathered people (making up a local entity within the Church universal), as well as the physical location (church building). Or, if one prefers the term “worship service,” “worship” here is understood to describe a religious gathering aimed at expressing thanksgiving and other forms of homage to the God of the Christian faith. We will look at this term in greater depth below. The word “service” connotes a posture of humility or of focus on the needs or wants of someone else. The term can also suggest a certain formality, orderliness, or ritual element, and, used in this sense, implies a corporate event rather than an individual activity.

²⁸³ See Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 512–534; p. 533: “[...] [d]er lokale Gottesdienst als Schnittstelle von Individualität, Sozialität und Unversalität.”

²⁸⁴ See Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 430: “Alltag” or “[d]as Verständnis des Gottesdienstes als ‘Unterbrechung des Alltags’”; see also pp. 429–445.

²⁸⁵ See Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 391–408; p. 392: “gemeindeorientierte Gottesdienste” and “missionarisch orientiert[]”; p. 401: “gemeindeorientiert” – “gästefreundlich” – “gästesensitiv” – “gästeorientiert.”

However, to dig deeper to uncover the purpose of the church service, considering the concept from the vantage point of its German equivalent – “*Gottesdienst*,” literally “God’s service” – is helpful. “*Gottesdienst*” – as is pointed out by Christopher Spehr in his essay “Luthers Theologie des Gottesdienstes” – carries multiple layers of meaning.²⁸⁶ From a theological perspective, the Christian’s entire existence is to be dedicated to God’s service; thus the term is much bigger than a formalized pattern of weekly gathering for worship. That said, in a liturgical setting, “*Gottesdienst*” can be read as expressing a key departure of Protestant from Catholic understanding of the purpose of a liturgical service of worship: According to Spehr, Luther’s Reformation theology stood the Catholic Mass on its head. Rather than the human agent in the person of the priest offering acceptable and efficacious sacrifices on behalf of the congregation (in the Eucharist), in Reformation understanding God himself extends the sacramental blessing to the gathered worshipers through the central reality of the Word (supremely in Christ himself as Word incarnate). Thus, the believer’s worship – with Christ-focused faith understood as the essential component of true worship – is a response to God’s gift of salvation rather than a means of achieving divine favor. Here, layperson and clergy are equally recipients of God’s grace and together respond in grateful praise.²⁸⁷ Worship can be understood as a “dynamic event” or “dialogue”: “Through the Word, unfolded in sermon and sacrament, God addresses man, and he responds to him in prayer and songs of praise.”²⁸⁸

Pastor and music leader Maria Kisslinger at VCC: *Jesus Zentrum (FCGÖ)* made a very similar point: “In my opinion, worship goes in two directions; that’s how I see it and understand it. That we serve God is one side of it and that God serves us, that’s the other side. And I think especially in a church service both take place and are infinitely important, because this is especially a place where the Lord reveals himself, where we see him, where we serve him by coming close to him, and especially praising him in worship.”²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ Cf. Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, pp. 9–10.

²⁸⁷ Christopher Spehr, “Luthers Theologie des Gottesdienstes,” in *Kompendium Gottesdienst: Der evangelische Gottesdienst in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. by Hans-Joachim Eckstein, Ulrich Heckel, and Birgit Weyel (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), pp. 85–94. See also Jetter, *Symbol und Ritual*, p. 135.

²⁸⁸ Spehr, “Luthers Theologie des Gottesdienstes,” p. 102: “dynamisches Geschehen”; “Dialog”; “Durch das Wort, entfaltet in Predigt und Sakrament, redet Gott den Menschen an und dieser antwortet ihm in Gebet und Lobgesang.”

²⁸⁹ Kisslinger: “[I]ch glaube Gottesdienst geht in zwei Richtungen. So sehe und verstehe ich das. Dass wir Gott dienen ist die eine Seite davon und dass Gott uns dient, das ist die andere Seite. Und ich glaube, gerade im Gottesdienst ist beides und unendlich wichtig. Denn gerade dort ist ein Ort, wo der Herr sich offenbart, wo wir ihn sehen, wo wir ihm dienen, indem wir ihm näher kommen und vor allem eben auch gerade im Lobpreis loben.” Cf. Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 47–48. Cf also Schwöbel, “Was ist ein Gottesdienst?” pp. 148–149 and Weyel, “Der Gottesdienst als Ritual,” pp. 167–168.

In the questionnaire for music leaders, participants were asked to respond to statements about the purpose of a church service as a whole – whether its chief purpose is a) the spiritual instruction of individual participants, b) individual/communal worship of God, or c) the experience of God’s presence. The question, loaded as it was, understandably proved to be unpopular; in fact, two participants expressed their opinion that the question is really not answerable, emphasizing that the service rests ultimately in God’s hands and that his purposes are individualized and at time mysterious; the congregation’s role is to show up. That said, there was significant agreement among participants that the main point is individual/communal worship of God (even if, for some, not possible to separate from an experiential element). Van Dam (*BEG*) stated succinctly that this worship focus applies to all of life, not just a church service: “This is the main purpose not only of the church service but of the whole life of every Christian.”²⁹⁰

Three participants indicated that while instruction is important, this largely takes place in “small group” settings (Bible studies meeting during the week) and is not the purpose or at least not the chief purpose of the weekly church service (*BEG* and *BBGÖ*). Two others additionally emphasized the central importance of discipleship (“also manifested in the worship gathering”²⁹¹ [Demmer: *BBGÖ*]).

There was a certain degree of reserve regarding the idea of an “experience of God’s presence” being the main point of the church service. For example, one music leader responded, “This is very individual and not possible for me as a human being to create for others. Hopefully, an experience of God’s presence takes place in the church service, but the service is also blessed when this does not occur”²⁹² (Hausensteiner, *ECG*). That said, “experience” is clearly an important element in church services and in relation to music, as will be discussed below – even if there are a range of views on the interplay of human and divine in the realization of such. In an interview, Prokop stated:

I live to create an environment where people can experience the love of Christ in a church family. That’s my whole passion. [...] So whether that’s building the building where they can meet, whether that’s preaching the message that gives the truth that they need, or whether it’s being on the worship team that creates a musical atmosphere, whatever part I

²⁹⁰ van Dam: “Das ist nicht nur der Hauptzweck des Gottesdienstes sondern des ganzen Lebens jedes Christen.” Cf. N. T. Wright, *For All God’s Worth: The Worship and the Calling of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014).

²⁹¹ Demmer: “[...] auch in der gottesdienstliche Zusammenkunft manifestiert.”

²⁹² Hausensteiner: “Das ist individuell sehr unterschiedlich und für mich als Menschen nicht kreierbar für andere. Hoffentlich findet ein Erleben der Gegenwart Gottes im Gottesdienst statt, doch ist der Gottesdienst auch gesegnet, wenn dies nicht vorkommt.”

play – yeah, that’s our purpose – to create a place where people can come and experience the love of Christ in a church family, with everything that belongs to that, you know? Like Rick Warren said, the worship, the fellowship, the discipleship, the ministry, and the mission. So our motto is “come as you are and let the love of God change you.”²⁹³

As this comment suggests, rather than attempting to pinpoint the single purpose of a church service, it is more accurately conceived, in the free-church context, as a holistic event. As discussed above, the word “*Gottesdienst*” itself suggests a “vertical” aspect of the church service – “serving God” and “being served by God.” In a highly individualistic society at large, it is not surprising that there is a strong tendency to think of this vertical interaction as primarily between the individual and the divine. One can argue that the free-church setting, with its strong theological emphasis on the primacy of personal faith, contributes to this individualistic mentality.²⁹⁴ However, the communal nature of the church service emphasizes also a “horizontal” aspect. In the free-church settings being explored here, the community aspect of church – worship services, as well as other venues throughout the week – is extremely important, integral to what Prokop described as a place to “experience the love of Christ in the church family.” Chap-Rabenau (*BBGÖ*) summed up the music leaders’ feedback well: “Worship is encounter with God and encounter with each other, so God meets me/us and teaches me/us; the worship service gives space to worship God in community, as his holy church.”²⁹⁵

5. MUSIC

Having discussed the impressions and expressions, as well as the elements and essence, of free-church services – from the “observer” perspective of religious aesthetics and from both the “member” perspective of theological/liturgical theory and also the practical perspective of leaders in free-church congregations –, the goal of this chapter is to hone in on the role of sung music in services of these same congregations. I will begin by continuing with the foregoing theme of the understood purpose (shifting from the service as a whole to the musical/sung portion) and then will proceed to a closer look at the synthesis of music with other elements of the service, the role of the music leader/music team, and finally the manifold noteworthy

²⁹³ See Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

²⁹⁴ See p. 25 and note 81 above.

²⁹⁵ Chap-Rabenau: “Gottesdienst ist Begegnung mit Gott und Begegnung untereinander, also Gott begegnet mir/uns und lehrt mich/uns; Gottesdienst gibt Raum, Gott in Gemeinschaft anzubeten, als seine heilige Gemeinde.”

characteristics of music in free-church services. This last study will pave the way for a more focused analysis of representative song repertoire in Chapter Six.

5.1. PURPOSE

While within any given service, music may serve a variety of functions (Plüss names “entering in,” “building community,” “accessing transcendence,” and “deepening”²⁹⁶), here I would like to look at the overarching purpose(s) of sung music. Old Testament scholar Allen Ross describes the multidimensional role music plays, the multiple purposes it fulfills: “Music must serve several spiritual purposes: it should enable the worshippers to become articulate in the doctrines and spiritual matters of their faith; it should contribute to the call for commitment and edification of the saints; it should be therapeutically effective in calming troubled spirits [...]; and it should be inspirational so that the worshippers will go away uplifted and encouraged in their lives.”²⁹⁷ The following exploration will draw primarily from comments of Vienna free-church pastors interviewed and music leaders’ questionnaire responses, particularly regarding the ways in which music is seen as for worship, as well as for instruction and for engaging the individual and his or her emotions in the context of community.

5.1.1. WORSHIP

There is no question that the musical and pastoral leaders of *FKÖ* churches are in agreement regarding the purpose of music in the church service being worship. However, it is important to discuss briefly what this “worship” entails, since it can carry different (although overlapping) meanings. We will look at two different ends of this definitional spectrum and then see how the Vienna *Freikirchen* express aspects of both.

The first meaning of worship is very broad. In *For the Glory of God*, Old Testament scholar Daniel Block provides the following definition, functioning as a leitmotif throughout the whole book: “True worship involves reverential human acts of submission and homage before the divine Sovereign in response to his gracious revelation of himself and in accord with his

²⁹⁶ Plüss, *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung*, pp. 218–222: “Einstimmung,” “Gemeinschaftsbildung,” “Tranzendenzeröffnung,” and “Vertiefung.”

²⁹⁷ Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2006), p. 443.

will.”²⁹⁸ This definition clearly relates to the discussion of “*Gottesdienst*” above and the totality of Christian worship.²⁹⁹

A second, narrower meaning can relate to a certain category or style of music or to a certain experience of worship. In a book on musical practice in Protestant services, *Werkbuch Musik im Gottesdienst*, a chapter is even devoted to “Gottesdienst als/mit Lobpreis: “The Heart of Worship” – suggesting, at least superficially, that “praise and worship” belongs to a certain type of church services among many.³⁰⁰ In his *Mehr als nur ein Lied: Lobpreis und Anbetung in der Gemeinde*, songwriter and theologian Guido Baltes calls out an important potential misunderstanding: “Worship is singing songs. Or more precisely: Worship is singing a certain kind of songs.”³⁰¹

In Vienna free-church services, the term “worship” is used with a range of meanings between these two ends of the spectrum. Block’s definition fits well with how Eichinger expressed what for him is the unequivocal purpose of music in church services – “worship” understood broadly:

It’s about praising God, but also about *how*. It’s about obedience and encouraging committed discipleship, which should also be expressed in encouragement in song repertoire. For me, these things belong together. Praising God does not just mean saying “Hallelujah,” but it also has something to do with examining my own soul. It has something to do with repentance and change of heart, with life motivation. And that’s what I’m missing a bit, at the moment, in our musical landscape. [...] It is a one-sided, truncated understanding of worship, a cheap understanding of worship in general, when I compare it historically – because worship can actually only be practiced rightly by a repentant, obedient soul, no matter what words are used. But the well-rounded, the holistic, is missing a bit for me – my personal observation.³⁰²

²⁹⁸ Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), p. 23 and throughout.

²⁹⁹ See p. 77 above.

³⁰⁰ Peter Horst, “Gottesdienst als/mit Lobpreis: ‘The Heart of Worship,’” in *Werkbuch Musik im Gottesdienst*, ed. by Stephan A. Reinke (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2014), pp. 128–135.

³⁰¹ Guido Baltes, *Mehr als nur ein Lied: Lobpreis und Anbetung in der Gemeinde* (Marburg: Verlag der Francke-Buchhandlung, 2014), p. 27: “Ein erstes Missverständnis [...]: Anbetung ist, wenn man Lieder singt. Oder etwas genauer: Anbetung ist, wenn man eine bestimmte Sorte von Liedern singt.”

³⁰² Eichinger: “[E]s geht darum, Gott zu loben. Aber auch um das Wie. Es geht um Gehorsam und um die Ermutigung zu einer verbindlichen Nachfolge, die sich auch in der Ermutigung im Liedgut ausdrücken sollte. Das gehört für mich zusammen. Gott zu loben ist nicht nur zu sagen ‘Halleluja,’ sondern es hat auch etwas damit zu tun, meine eigene Seele zu hinterfragen. Es hat was zu tun mit Buße und Umkehr-Gedanken, mit Lebensermutigung. Und das fehlt mir ein Stückweit, derzeit in unserer Musiklandschaft. [...] Es ist ein einseitiges, verkürztes Verständnis von Anbetung, ein billiges Verständnis von Anbetung überhaupt, wenn ich das im historischen Vergleich betrachte – weil Anbetung kann eigentlich nur eine bußfertige, gehorsame Seele in rechter Weise machen – ganz egal welche Worte man gebraucht. Aber das runde Ganze, das Ganzheitliche fehlt mir ein Stück. Das ist meine persönliche Beobachtung.”

In Vienna free-church usage, “worship” can also relate to a certain musical portion of the church service, where a particular type of music is combined with a particular inner attitude; this attitude and accompanying emotions, moreover, are often gesturally expressed. Here the emphasis is on a certain aspect of worship, involving a unique sort of focus on God himself, on his attributes (goodness, grace, power, etc.), with a consequential experience of being freed from self-preoccupation, freed to experience God’s presence. On this more specific and almost mystical understanding of “worship,” I would like to quote Kisslinger at length:

While I love all kinds of different music, worship is by far my favorite. Why? Because it’s something that is more than just music. It’s not just something that touches my soul, but it’s something that draws me to the Lord. And that makes a difference because it directs my focus away from me. [...] When we shift our focus away from ourselves and our circumstances and where we are right now and towards the Lord, then we see who he really is, what he’s really like. Then we see him in his power and in his might, and the things that concern us right now assume their proper significance. Because it’s not as if these things suddenly go away. It’s just that they become subordinate. They no longer have the importance or the greatness that they had for us before. And we suddenly see what is really great by seeing and recognizing God: He can do everything, he knows everything, and he knows that. [...] And that simply happens; it’s not something that we have to consciously achieve. But it is something that simply happens in worship, in the moment when we turn our eyes upwards. And that’s just where those two sides [the two meanings of “*Gottesdienst*”] come into play. We focus, we look to the Lord, and we give him the praise. [...] Because sometimes it’s a sacrifice to say, “Okay, I’m going to let that go. I’m going to refocus, reorient.” And the moment we do that, the Lord serves us as well. That’s what’s always so fascinating to me: this moment when both things are happening. We serve the Lord. We tell him what he is like, who he is. We marvel at him, and in the end, we give him the glory that he deserves. And when we do that, there’s nothing that is more pleasing to the Lord than his children who give him glory and who praise him, and his attention immediately and inevitably turns to us.³⁰³

³⁰³ Kisslinger: “Mit aller Liebe zu allen möglichen verschiedenen Musikrichtungen, ist Lobpreis ‘by far’ einfach mein Favorit. Warum? Weil das etwas ist, was mehr ist als nur Musik. Es ist nicht nur etwas, was meine Seele berührt, sondern es ist etwas, was mich zum Herrn zieht. Und das macht einen Unterschied, denn es richtet meinen Fokus weg von mir. [...] Wenn wir unseren Blick von uns selber und unseren Umständen und wo wir gerade stehen weg auf den Herrn richten, dann sehen wir, wer er wirklich ist; wie er wirklich ist. Dann sehen wir ihn in seiner Kraft und in seiner Macht, und das, was uns gerade betrifft, bekommt den richtigen Stellenwert. Denn es ist ja so, dass die Dinge dann nicht plötzlich weg sind. Es ist einfach so, dass sie untergeordnet werden. Sie haben nicht mehr diese Wichtigkeit oder diese Größe, die sie vorher für uns hatten. Und die Größe, die sehen wir plötzlich, indem wir Gott sehen und erkennen: Er kann alles, er weiß alles und er weiß das auch. [...] Und das geschieht einfach. Das ist nicht etwas, was wir bewusst hinkriegen müssen. Sondern dass ist etwas, was im Lobpreis einfach passiert und zwar in dem Moment, wo wir unsere Augen nach oben richten. Und das ist genau das, wo eben diese beiden Seiten ins Spiel kommen. Wir fokussieren uns, wir schauen auf den Herrn und wir geben ihm den Lobpreis. [...] Denn manchmal ist es ein Opfer zu sagen: ‘Okay, ich lass das jetzt. Ich fokussiere mich, ich richte mich aus.’ Und in dem Moment, in dem wir es machen, dient der Herr uns auch. Also das ist eben das, was mich immer wieder so fasziniert: dieser Moment, in dem beides passiert. Wir dienen dem Herrn. Wir sagen ihm, wie er ist; wer er ist. Wir bestaunen ihn und geben ihm im Endeffekt die Ehre, die ihm gebührt. Und wenn wir das machen, dann gibt es nichts, was den Herrn mehr anzieht als seine Kinder, die ihm Ehre geben und die ihn loben und seine Aufmerksamkeit richtet sich sofort und unweigerlich auf uns.”

Certainly, these two understandings of “worship” do not have to be mutually exclusive. However, Eichinger’s and Kisslinger’s reflections do represent two tendencies within the *Freikirchen* that have at least practical and stylistic, if not also theological, implications. That said, despite the differing associations with the word “worship,” the topic is certainly one that is being discussed and addressed. Bösch noted with optimism that he believes that there is a growing awareness among church members “that praise and worship is a way of life, and when they [church members] come to the service, [...] they don’t come here to just check off a box on the agenda called ‘worship.’”³⁰⁴

The responses to the member survey, although admittedly limited in number, collaborate the conceptions of worship discussed above. According to church members, worship is clearly and fundamentally about God’s glory – including expressing praise and thanksgiving for God’s attributes and his deeds, as well as articulating one’s own gratitude and love. Worship involves music and singing, but for numerous participants it also relates to a whole way of life. Worship can involve reflection, resting, encountering or enjoying God’s presence, being open to him. Interestingly, only two responses specifically drew out the collective aspect of worship (“Coming together to praise God” and “Singing together and worshiping God”), although many responses seemed to assume the setting of corporate worship (see Appendix 9.3.).

5.1.1.1. INTERNAL POSTURES OF WORSHIP

In the foregoing pages, I discussed gestures in church services as “external postures of worship.” I would like to look now at a range of “internal postures of worship.” Meyer-Blanck claims: “The inner worship is superior to the outer, and the overwhelming of the senses is inferior to the stirring of the heart. [...] It is in the *heart* that true worship resounds.”³⁰⁵ While these “internal postures” are by no means limited to the context of music, I would like to primarily focus on their expression in song. This is largely because the question to music leaders – “How would you order the following list of attitudes/expressions of worship, in terms of the relative emphasis each is given in your congregation?” – came under the rubric of Musical/Liturgical Practice.

³⁰⁴ Bösch: “[...] dass Lobpreis und Anbetung ein Lebensstil ist und wenn sie dann in den Gottesdienst kommen, sie denn einfach weiterleben. Dass sie dann nicht daherkommen, um hier etwas zu machen. Ein Programmpunkt, der Lobpreis heißt.”

³⁰⁵ Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, p. 9: “Der innere Gottesdienst ist dem äußeren überlegen und die Überwältigung der Sinne ist dem Anrühren des Herzens unterlegen. [...] Im *Herzen* klingt der wahre Gottesdienst.”

Music leaders were asked to rank the following attitudes/expressions of worship: adoration, commitment, confession, lament, proclamation, thanksgiving, trust. Not surprisingly, adoration or thanksgiving was listed in first place by thirteen of the fifteen participants. One participant added “*Anbetung und Lobpreis*” (worship and praise) for number one (Peloschek, *ECG*), and one listed “*Lob*” for first place, followed by “*Anbetung*” (Asatrjan, *FCGÖ*).

However, this question was clearly not easy to answer, as two participants noted – either because certain categories overlap significantly or “because we currently have too little focus on these areas”³⁰⁶ (Unterberg, *BBGÖ*). Perhaps most interesting is the place of confession and lament in services. Confession came in on last or second-to-last place ten times – although Peloschek (*ECG*), who listed “confession” as number six out of seven, commented: “Confession is, of course, a significant element, but in song form it can also be ‘demanded’ of a person through the sung text. Confession [...] of sins must always come from the heart. To simply sing along would unfortunately only be lip service. Of course, it can also help to simply sing along. [...] [C]onfession of sins in general is of great importance, but not packaged in a song text.”³⁰⁷ The category of lament came in last or second-to-last fourteen times. In fact, two participants indicated that lament has no place in church services; Peloschek here remarked that “we have every reason to give thanks.”³⁰⁸ In contrast, King (*BEG*) noted regarding confession and lament that these expressions “are of value to our congregation, but as far as songs of worship, we have a difficult time finding good songs and incorporating those regularly into the service.” And Rabenau (*BBGÖ*) indicated a desire for growth in a range of expressions: “A very important topic! Unfortunately, we are not currently pursuing these topics ‘systematically’ or in a manner that facilitates growth in all areas.”³⁰⁹

In an interview with Ewald Ring (*BEG*), he expressed the desire for his congregation to grow in incorporating a greater breadth of postures of worship. He mentioned speaking with the congregation’s “composer in residence” about the need “to find more songs that are actually lament and confession.” He also stated, “We need to have songs where we express our fear,

³⁰⁶ Unterberger: “[...] da wir momentan zu wenig Fokus auf diese Bereiche haben.”

³⁰⁷ Peloschek: “Sündenbekenntnis [...] ist natürlich ein gewichtiger Aussageteil, kann aber in Liedform durch den gesungenen Text einem Menschen dann auch ‘abverlangt’ werden. Sündener- und bekenntnis müssen immer von Herzen kommen. Einfach nur mitgesungen wäre leider nur ein Lippenbekenntnis. Natürlich kann es auch helfen, einfach nur mitzusingen. [...] Sündenbekenntnis [hat] generell einen der höchsten Stellenwerte, aber halt nicht in Liedform in einem Text verpackt.”

³⁰⁸ Peloschek: “[W]ir haben allen Grund zum Danken.”

³⁰⁹ Rabenau: “Ein sehr wichtiges Thema! Leider verfolgen wir derzeit die Themen nicht ‘systematisch’ oder dahingehend, dass wir in allen Bereichen wachsen.”

our doubts, and our longing, and also where we confess our sins,” and noted that “a song of confession” is “in the process” of being written currently.

When asked what might be responsible for this perceived lack, Ring suggested that people may typically attend church in order to “have a good experience and be filled up.” While not denying that this has its place, he proposed that an overemphasis on this sort of experience, expressed in song, is not ideal: “I think if that’s your main diet, that’s not too healthy.” Part of the issue is also, according to Ring, a desire to avoid or disregard what is painful. This tendency reflects the cultural at large: “We don’t want to focus on the ugly things in life,” “we look away from them.” But Ring pointed to the Psalms and the high number of songs given to expressions of grief or distress: “And if we don’t have these songs, we leave people alone with their pain.” He also stated, “We want our songs really to be Christ-centered as well. So we want to sing songs that are full of Scripture.”

These comments represent observations in other church contexts. Swiss pastor and professor of practical theology Jürg Buchegger states, “Singing in worship services is multifaceted: It includes worship songs, praise songs, songs of supplication, songs of lament, songs of proclamation, hymns. [...N]owadays there is a danger that a one-size-fits-all menu is served. There is just ‘worship.’ Most songs are similar in message and melody, and often lack important aspects that also appertain to being a Christian.”³¹⁰ In a similar vein, Jochen Arnold references a German wordplay, which Luther used to describe music as both *Gabe* (“gift”) and *Aufgabe* (“duty”).³¹¹ As gift: “The good news of Jesus Christ is a sensory sound event. That is why the Christian church accepts music as a gift of God and allows itself to be moved by it in its central assembly. As the sonorous word of Christ, church music invites people to faith, comforts, and reassures. Lamenting and praising, supplicating and giving thanks, it gives glory to the triune God.”³¹²

³¹⁰ Buchegger, “Lieder – alt und neu,” p. 85: “Das gottesdienstliche Singen ist vielgestaltig: Dazu gehören Anbetungslieder, Loblieder, Bittgesänge, Klagelieder, Verkündigungslieder, Hymnen. [...H]eute die Gefahr besteht, dass ein Einheitsmenue aufgetischt wird. Es wird nur ‘geworshipt.’ Die meisten Lieder sind in Aussage und Melodie ähnlich und es fehlen oft wichtige Aspekte, die auch zum Christsein gehören.” See also Baltes, *Mehr als nur ein Lied*, pp. 63–65.

³¹¹ Jochen Arnold, “Musik und Gottesdienst – Musik im Gottesdienst,” in *Kompendium Gottesdienst: Der evangelische Gottesdienst in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. by Hans-Joachim Eckstein, Ulrich Heckel, and Birgit Weyel (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), (pp. 224–244), pp. 225–227.

³¹² Arnold, “Musik und Gottesdienst – Musik im Gottesdienst,” pp. 229: “[D]ie frohe Botschaft von Jesus Christus ist ein sinnliches Klangereignis. Deshalb nimmt die christliche Kirche die Musik als Gabe Gottes an und lässt sich durch sie in ihrer zentralen Versammlung bewegen. Als klingendes Wort Christi lädt die Kirchenmusik Menschen zum Glauben ein, tröstet und vergewissert. Klagend du lobend, flehend und dankend gibt sie dem dreieinigen Gott die Ehre.”

All that said, it is hardly surprising to find a clear tendency towards songs of adoration and praise, along with songs proclaiming aspects of God's character and deeds and also worshipers' expressions of commitment to God and trust in him. Furthermore, it is not surprising that the gestures of worship reflect especially these uplifted and uplifting inner attitudes, experiences, and emotions – raised hands being the most obvious example.

5.1.2. INSTRUCTION

Although there could be many companion or secondary purposes of corporate singing in the context of a church service, I would like here to focus on just a couple of main areas and the thoughts gleaned from music leaders in Vienna free-churches, beginning with the goal of “instruction.”³¹³ Admittedly, “instruction” here is not systematic in the same way a spoken, prose portion of the service could be. As Walthert states: “Scholarly theological arguments cannot be delivered in song form, but must be communicated in non-standardized word form, for example, in sermons.”³¹⁴ Interestingly, Schweiger (*FCGÖ*) pointed out that music texts sung as part of services “are more likely to stick than the key message of the sermon.”³¹⁵ That said, whether indirectly or directly, whether poetically or exegetically, an instructive element is unavoidably woven into the various postures of worship described above. As Plüss states, “The contents of the Christian faith usually do not appear in songs as dogmatic sentences or as reflective theology, but as prayer.”³¹⁶

Music sung in churches services is understood by free-church music leaders as having an instructive role. In fact, King (*BEG*) commented that “[m]usic is a key part of theological instruction in our congregation” and noted that this “is one reason we do not select new songs lightly.” Rabenau (*BBGÖ*) acknowledged that the instructive role of music “is not explicitly addressed or practiced,” but that he personally sees “this as a very important building block of the theological focus and instruction of a church!”³¹⁷ Here a further distinction is the different

³¹³ Cf. Schwöbel, “Was ist ein Gottesdienst?” p. 164.

³¹⁴ Walthert, *Religiöse Rituale und soziale Ordnung*, pp. 287–288: “[G]elehrte theologische Argumente [können] nicht in Liedform vorgetragen werden, sondern müssen in nicht-standardisierter Wortform, beispielsweise in Predigten, kommuniziert werden.” Cf. a somewhat milder statement along the same lines in Wilke, “Sonality,” p. 107: “[Sound or sonality] has to do with materiality, i.e., physicality and embodiment, as well as performativity, cognition, and spatiality. While sound can communicate intellectual knowledge, it is primarily related to feeling, emotion, and the senses.”

³¹⁵ Schweiger: “[...] eher hängen bleiben, als die Kernaussage der Predigt.”

³¹⁶ Plüss, *Gottesdienst als Textinszenierung*, p. 218: “Die Inhalte des christlichen Glaubens kommen im Liedgut in der Regel weder als dogmatische Sätze noch als reflektierende Theologie, sondern als Gebete vor.” He continues with various forms: “[...] als Lobgebete, Bittgebete, Klagen, Dankgebete oder Bekenntnisse.”

³¹⁷ Rabenau: “[...] ist nicht explizit thematisiert oder praktiziert”; “[...] dies als sehr wichtigen Baustein der theologischen Ausrichtung und Unterweisung einer Gemeinde!”

roles that characterize singing and preaching: “Music, congregational singing, and worship contribute to theological instruction; they don’t carry the ‘brunt’ of it, but rather support, underscore, provide a focus, etc.”³¹⁸ (Chap-Rabenau, *BBGÖ*).

Even if the instructive role of music is not understood as its chief function, music is certainly seen “as a reinforcement of the ‘Good News’!” and as unavoidably instructive: “That’s in the nature of things”³¹⁹ (Demmer, *BBGÖ*). Pana (*BEG*) stated, “We believe they [song texts] are an expression of an already existing theological perspective, so in essence remind the church what we believe in and tell others who may not know yet.” Of course, these musical texts “should support sound teaching”³²⁰ (Asatrjan, *FCGÖ*) and “should be biblically consistent and solid”³²¹ (Hausensteiner, *ECG*). Somewhat in contrast, however, Gangl (*BEG*) noted that this instructive role is in his opinion “rather subordinate, partly due to the fact that less theology is packed into the lyrics of the songs of the last twenty to thirty years than was common practice in the decades previous.”³²²

Insofar as song texts serve an intentionally instructive role, themes that are highlighted center around Christology, discipleship, and various aspects of God’s character (“God’s majesty, our dependence on him” [Pana, *BEG*], “God’s love, grace, care, omnipotence, justice, redemption from our sins, and God’s wrath,”³²³ “Vaterherz” [father heart] [Gangl, *BEG*], and “the goodness, power, and authority of God”³²⁴ [Schweiger, *FCGÖ*]).

The instructive role of music could also be seen as missional/evangelistic (in the event that visitors come or perhaps in the expectation of visitors on a regular basis). This certainly relates to conceptions about the purpose of the service – whether chiefly for internal edification³²⁵ or for external evangelization or somewhere in between.³²⁶ Flores (*BBGÖ*) stated: “I believe that we are preaching through the songs, that is why it is very important for us to take theological songs that support our beliefs and describe who God is and what he has done for us.” However, in general, an evangelistic focus is not widely reported as strongly influencing song repertoire.

³¹⁸ Chap-Rabenau: “Musik, Gemeindegesang und Lobpreis tragen zu theologischen Unterweisung bei, haben nicht die ‘Hauptlast,’ aber unterstützen, unterstreichen, setzen einen Fokus etc.”

³¹⁹ Demmer: “[...] als Verstärkung der ‘Guten Nachricht!’” “Das liegt ja in der Natur der Sache.”

³²⁰ Asatrjan: “[...] [s]oll gesunde Lehre unterstützen.”

³²¹ Hausensteiner: “[...] sollten biblisch stimmig und fundiert sein.”

³²² Gangl: “[...] [e]her untergeordnet; zum Teil auch deswegen begründet, da inhaltlich weniger Theologie in den Songtexten der Lieder der letzten 20–30 Jahren verpackt wird, als das die Jahrzehnte davor Praxis war.”

³²³ Anonymous: “[...] Gottes Liebe, Gnade, Fürsorge, Allmächtigkeit, Gerechtigkeit, Erlösung von unseren Sünden und Gottes Zorn.”

³²⁴ Schweiger: “[...] [d]ie Güte, Macht und Autorität Gottes.”

³²⁵ Cf. Schwöbel, “Was ist ein Gottesdienst?” pp. 163–164.

³²⁶ See p. 76 and note 285 above.

King (*BEG*) noted, “I guess we just always assume there will always be a mixture of believers and non-believers present, so it does not change our song choices.” What is generally viewed as more important is the “understandability and comprehensibility for both guests and church members in every worship service”³²⁷ (van Dam, *BEG*), including either avoidance of “Christianese” vocabulary (Schweiger, *FCGÖ*) or explanation of phrases that are loaded with biblical vocabulary or imagery.

Interestingly, the reticence expressed about the music in church services being directly evangelistic was complemented by the comments of a couple of music leaders with references to “authenticity.” Peloschek (*ECG*) stated, “I think that ‘non-believers’ come to see how these ‘believers’ celebrate God. To pretend or to make ‘special allowances’ would distort the image and not fulfill the expectation of the visitors. [...] I think that we are ‘real’ only when we live out this love for God even when in public.”³²⁸ Similarly Chap-Rabenau (*BBGÖ*) said, “I think also non-believers get the greatest takeaway when what’s happening is authentic,”³²⁹ and added that the desire is for all in attendance “to feel comfortable and positively engaged.”³³⁰ Similarly, one *BEG* music leader stated that “the worship service is primarily for edification, worship of God, and spiritual growth of believers,”³³¹ but, “of course, everyone is welcome, believers or not.”³³²

In general, it seems that music’s directly evangelistic potential is seen as best exercised in other contexts – street evangelism, for instance, or a community choir. Speaking of the latter, Bösch mentioned the GospelProject choir, which grew out of the *Wunderwerk* church: “They reach so many people with their choir. Even now after Corona, so many people have come forward, some of whom are just interested in gospel music and don’t have much connection with faith, but then begin to open up and really come to a personal, living relationship with God.”³³³

³²⁷ van Dam: “[...] Verständlichkeit und Nachvollziehbarkeit sowohl für Gäste als auch für Gemeindemitglieder in jedem Gottesdienst.”

³²⁸ Peloschek: “Ich denke, dass die ‘Nicht-Gläubigen’ deswegen gekommen sind, zu sehen, wie denn diese ‘Gläubigen’ Gott feiern. Sich dann zu verstellen oder ‘Rücksicht’ zu nehmen, würde das Bild verzerren und die Erwartung der Besucher nicht erfüllen. [...] Ich denke, dass wir nur dann ‘echt’ sind, wenn wir diese Liebe zu Gott auch dann ausleben, wenn wir in der Öffentlichkeit stehen.”

³²⁹ Chap-Rabenau: “Ich denke, auch Nicht-Gläubige nehmen am meisten mit, wenn das was passiert authentisch ist.”

³³⁰ Chap-Rabenau: “[...] ich wohl fühlen und positiv angesprochen sind.”

³³¹ Anonymous: “Gottesdienst dient in erster Linie den Gläubigen zur Erbauung, Verehrung Gottes und geistlichem Wachstum.”

³³² Anonymous: “Natürlich ist jeder willkommen, egal ob gläubig oder nicht.”

³³³ Bösch: “Die erreichen so viele Menschen in ihrem Chor. Auch jetzt nach Corona haben sich so viele Menschen gemeldet, die zum Teil einfach nur an Gospel interessiert sind, mit dem Glauben nicht viel am Hut haben, aber sich dann beginnen zu öffnen und wirklich zu einer persönlich lebendigen Gottesbeziehung kommen.”

5.1.3. INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY, EMOTION AND EXPERIENCE

An important aspect of musical worship in church services relates both to its individual and collective nature. In an interview, Ring expressed his appreciation for the gift and power of music: “God has given us voices, and it touches a chord in us,” and even for those who do not consider themselves to be good at singing, “it lifts our souls.” These remarks parallel a comment in an essay by German church musician and theologian Christa Reich: “[S]inging is [...] experienced as shared self-expression. Praise and lament, petition and hope are voiced. In the process, many different voices, expressions of unique individuals, come together in unison.”³³⁴ Or as Schweyer states, “The worship service is an excellent place for communicating the individuality, sociality, and universality of Christian and church life.”³³⁵ Additionally, Arnold identifies multiple aspects of what music offers to the church community, including its ability to underscore and enhance a sense of community (“community-building, integrative potential”)³³⁶ and its potential for cultural enrichment (“cultural-formative potential”).³³⁷

As mentioned above, singing is a particularly significant communal act in church services not generally characterized by other obviously corporate elements, as well as in a society in which collective singing is not necessarily a high priority. Here it is interesting to note the responses of church members to the survey question regarding corporate singing outside of church services: Six participants (13.6%) indicated that they sing together with others more or less daily, another eighteen (40.9%) more or less weekly. This seems like a fairly high percentage, even if twenty participants (35.5%) indicated singing corporately outside of church services either only approximately once a month or seldom/never. It would be fascinating to explore this topic further; for instance, would a broader survey of free-church congregations reveal

³³⁴ Reich, “Das Kirchenlied,” p. 771: “Zugleich wird Singen aber auch als gemeinsames Sich-Äußern erfahren. Lob und Klage, Bitte und Hoffnung werden laut. Dabei vereinen sich die vielen verschiedenen Stimmen, jede [*sic.*] Ausdruck der je eigenen unverwechselbaren Person, zur Einstimmigkeit.” Experience can be collective, for instance in congregational singing, but “collective” does not mean “uniform.” Cf. Fletcher DuBois and Henrik Jungaberle, “Erfahrungsdynamik,” in *Ritual und Ritualdynamik: Schlüsselbegriffe, Theorien, Diskussionen*, ed. by Christiane Brosius, Axel Michaels, and Paula Schrode (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), (pp. 46–54), p. 48: “Erfahrung im Ritual ist allerdings so vielfältig, wie es neben den Menschen, die an ihnen teilnehmen, auch Ritualtraditionen, -typen und -anlässe, Ritualkulturen und -gruppierungen sind.”

³³⁵ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 533: “Der Gottesdienst ist ein vorzüglicher Ort zur Vermittlung der Individualität, Sozialität und Universalität des christlichen und kirchlichen Lebens.” Cf. Wilke, “Sonality,” p. 107: “Sonality is an effective and ‘natural’ way of communicating, producing, and strengthening ideas about the divine, the ineffable, spiritual, and transcendent, and making them experiential realities.”

³³⁶ Arnold, “Musik und Gottesdienst – Musik im Gottesdienst,” pp. 234: “[d]as gemeindebildend-integrative Potenzial.”

³³⁷ Arnold, “Musik und Gottesdienst – Musik im Gottesdienst,” pp. 235: “[d]as kulturell-bildende Potenzial.”

similar results? What about other Christian denominations in Vienna or Austria-wide? What about a sample of the broader culture, regardless of religious persuasion or practice?³³⁸

Closely related to individual and communal aspects of church services are also emotional and experiential aspects. Reinke states what everyone knows from personal experience, namely, music serves as a mediator of emotions” and an “opener of heart and soul.”³³⁹ In this vein, Fischer-Dörl remarked that in the Baptist tradition “music and song are always a form of expression for feeling, for believing feeling.”³⁴⁰ Here he noted the important role of Pietistic currents within Baptist (and wider) circles, which shaped church music in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century. He also sees the role of music in church services as supplying a conduit for emotional expression: “The main function is very much to give expression to feelings and emotions – in a way that you can’t with other forms. Another function is an aestheticization of worship – that one seeks here a connection to art as a vehicle for expression and for feeling as well. I believe that music is quite simply the bearer of emotions; of faith-inspired or faith-seeking emotions.”³⁴¹ Ring picked up this aesthetic thread (in the sense of sensory expression and especially in terms of artistic beauty): “Music has become very important to me personally and also, I think to us as a church, because music helps us to express what we believe. It is a different thing if you just say something or if you actually sing it. I think music has a lot to do as well with beauty. [...] God has made this world beautiful, and there is something in us that resonates with beauty.”

What music leaders also communicated, however, is the important of avoiding emotional manipulation. Schweiger (*FCGÖ*) stated, for instance, “We are aware of the ‘danger’ of emotional manipulation and try to avoid it as much as possible.”³⁴² Another questionnaire

³³⁸ Not surprisingly, the percentages went up dramatically when participants were presented with the question of how often they listen to Christian music (whether alone or with others) versus singing with others. Thirty-four participants (77.3%) listen to Christian music on either a more or less daily or weekly basis; in fact, only three participants (6.8%) responded with “seldom or never.” Whether these individuals listen to other, “non-Christian” music or whether they simply do not listen to music in general is, of course, not clear.

³³⁹ Stephan A. Reinke, “Musik im Gottesdienst: Bautseine zu ihrem Verständnis,” in *Werkbuch Musik im Gottesdienst*, ed. by Stephan A. Reinke (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2014), (pp. 13–34), p. 26: “Musik als Vermittlerin von Emotionen,” “Musik als Öffnerin von Herz und Seele.”

³⁴⁰ Fischer-Dörl: “Musik und Gesang ist immer auch eine Ausdrucksform des gläubigen Gefühls.”

³⁴¹ Fischer-Dörl: “[D]ie Hauptfunktion ist ganz stark Gefühlen und Emotionen Ausdruck zu verleihen – so wie das mit den anderen Formen nicht geht. Eine andere Funktion ist eine Ästhetisierung des Gottesdienstes – dass man hier sozusagen eine Verbindung zur Kunst als Vehikel für Ausdruck und für Gefühl auch sucht. Ich glaube, dass die Musik einfach Trägerin von Emotionen ist; von glaubengewirkten oder glaubensuchenden Emotionen.”

³⁴² Schweiger: “Wir sind uns der ‘Gefährlichkeit’ von emotionaler Manipulation bewusst und versuchen das so gut wie möglich zu vermeiden.”

responder, from a *BEG* congregation, noted that a certain atmosphere may indeed support worship, but a focus on emotions or creating emotions is of little value.³⁴³

Closely related to emotion, of course, is the concept of “experience,” whether individual or communal. Bösch spoke very positively of changes in church music form and style in the past several decades, which he sees as particularly enhancing a multifaceted, communal experience. He described the music at *Wunderwerk*

[...] as a shared experience, musically, lyrically, with movement, also physically – that you stand up if you want to but don’t have to, that you maybe close your eyes; all of this can be a shared experience. It’s not just about singing a song together. We experience together as much as possible – not everyone always participates internally, but that is our intention. It should be a collective experience that we come before God and simply sing to him – with body, soul, and spirit.³⁴⁴

Schweyer attributes a strong emphasis on “experience” to wider cultural trends:

Late modern expectations of resonance are projected onto the worship service culture in free churches. Free-church believers thus expect that a resonant relationship with God – namely, the experience that God speaks and that one can speak with him – takes place in a similar way as it does in relationships with other people and in relation to the world. It is therefore not coincidental that precisely family and leisure aesthetic patterns are encountered in free-church worship services.³⁴⁵

From a difference angle, this description of music as holistic, communal, and experiential is reminiscent of what philosopher David Martin calls a “complete religious experience,” involving “a deeply felt participative experience wedded to some explicit cognitive understanding of the sacred and an ultimate moral commitment and a community of worship.”³⁴⁶

³⁴³ See Baltes, *Mehr als nur ein Lied*, p. 53: “[...] [n]icht manipulieren, aber Raum für Gefühle schaffen.”

³⁴⁴ Bösch: “[...] als ein gemeinsames Erleben, musikalisch, textlich, mit Bewegung, also auch körperlich, dass man aufsteht, wenn man will, man muss nicht, vielleicht die Augen schließt – das alles insgesamt darf ein gemeinsames Erlebnis sein. Da geht es jetzt nicht nur darum gemeinsam einen Song zu singen. Wir erleben möglichst gemeinsam – nicht alle machen da innerlich immer mit, aber das ist unsere Intention. Das soll ein gemeinsames Erlebnis sein, dass wir vor Gott treten und ihm einfach singen. Mit Leib, Seele und Geist.”

³⁴⁵ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 433–434: “Spätmoderne Resonanzerwartungen werden in Freikirchen auf die Gottesdienstkultur projiziert. Freikirchliche Gläubige erwarte also, dass sich eine resonante Gottesbeziehung – nämlich die Erfahrung, dass Gott spricht und man mit ihm sprechen kann – in ähnlicher Art und Weise vollzieht, wie das in der Beziehung zu anderen Menschen und in der Beziehung zur Welt erfolgt. Es ist daher nicht zufällig, dass gerade familiäre und freizeitästhetische Muster in freikirchlichen Gottesdiensten begegnen.”

³⁴⁶ F. David Martin, *Art and the Religious Experience: The “Language” of the Sacred* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1972), p. 27.

Barota summarized well these concepts of postures of worship, instruction through music, emotion and experience, and individual and communal elements, as understood by leaders in Vienna *Freikirchen*:

I think the role of music is first and foremost to worship God, to praise him, and to come before him. That is important. [...] What we sing is also partly a sung message, or a sung prayer. Music is there to draw the congregation in before the sermon; to draw them out of their everyday life and prepare them to meet God. [...] It is an encounter with God – each one personally and also as a community. [...] With music, you really try to draw everybody in from where they are, that is, whether they have needs, or joy, or whatever. And that’s really the role of music: to draw us in and bring us onto holy ground, so to speak, to encounter God.³⁴⁷

We will return to these themes when we look in Chapter Six at a slice of the song repertoire sung by Vienna *Freikirchen*.

5.2. SYNTHESIS OF SINGING AND SPOKEN WORD

It has been said that “as a whole, music in worship is to be understood not only as a response to the proclamation, but as a figure of communication and presentation of the gospel itself.”³⁴⁸ Regarding the practical, week-by-week relationship between music and spoken word in Vienna *Freikirchen*, the general intention is certainly to achieve a cohesive whole; van Dam (*BEG*) stated that the “the goal is a common thread running through all of the elements,”³⁴⁹ achieved “through precise preparation of the preacher/moderator/musical leader.”³⁵⁰ Gangl (*BEG*) wrote that song choices are made “as much as possible in consultation, as a lead-in or ‘response’ to the sermon, reinforcing the content.”³⁵¹ In some congregations, this is a very intentional process: Flores (*BBGÖ*) mentioned “[l]ots of emails” and that the “pastor always communicates with us about the topics and special services. He sends an email with the topics of the preaching for two months.” Similarly, King (*BEG*) stated, “The sermon usually guides

³⁴⁷ Barota: “Ich denke, die Rolle der Musik ist in erster Linie Gott anzubeten, ihn zu loben und vor ihm zu treten. Das ist wichtig. [...] Was wir singen ist auch zum Teil eine gesungene Botschaft, oder ein gesungenes Gebet. Musik ist dazu da, vor der Predigt die Gemeinde abzuholen; aus dem Alltag zu holen und sie bereit zu machen, Gott zu begegnen. [...] Es ist eine Begegnung mit Gott – jeder für sich persönlich und auch als Gemeinschaft. [...] Mit Musik versucht man wirklich jeden dort abzuholen, wo er ist. Das heißt, ob Not dabei ist, oder Freude oder was auch immer. Und das ist wirklich die Rolle von Musik: Uns abzuholen und sozusagen auf den heiligen Boden zu bringen um Gott zu begegnen.” See Schwyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 188–191, where the “Funktion des Singens” (p. 188) includes “Sammlung; gemeinsame Ausrichtung” and interview keywords “‘Abholen’ und ‘Konzentration auf Gott’” (p. 189).

³⁴⁸ See Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, p. 363: “Insgesamt ist die Musik im Gottesdienst nicht nur als Antwort auf die Verkündigung, sondern als Gestalt der Mitteilung und Darstellung des Evangeliums selbst zu verstehen.”

³⁴⁹ van Dam: “Ziel ist roter Faden durch alle Elemente.”

³⁵⁰ van Dam: “[...] durch genaue Vorbereitung Prediger/Moderator/musikalischer Leiter.”

³⁵¹ Gangl: “[...] [m]öglichst in Absprache als Hinführung bzw. ‘Antwort’ auf die Predigt, Verstärkung der Inhalte.”

the other parts. Once we know the sermon text and/or other elements such as a time of communion or prayer or a missional focus, we select songs to support the Scripture and/or themes. The moderator/service leader or the preacher usually contacts all parties at the beginning of the week to begin an email discussion on the direction of the service.” Chap-Rabenau (*BBGÖ*) commented, “The music leader receives information about the sermon topic and the order of service and designs the music accordingly; he or she communicates the chosen songs to the worship leader, so transitions and connections can also be created in the moderation.”³⁵²

Fischer-Dörl acknowledged the amount of effort involved in this process:

Currently in the church, the music teams choose the songs [...], but they are guided by what the preachers, i.e., the women or men who proclaim [the sermon], have as a theme. That is, they always try to get that [theme] early enough and then align the song selections with these ideas. And that always works out very well. But it is actually a lot of work for the people who lead the music teams to choose the appropriate songs and to enter into this mode of proclamation.³⁵³

Although a majority of the music leaders and pastors indicated at least a general effort to connect music and spoken elements of the service – that is, for word and song to be “intentionally woven together”³⁵⁴ –, with the sermon text or theme providing the starting material, the average visitor is unlikely to be aware of the work going on behind the scenes or even necessarily of a strong thematic linkage. From my visits, I would say I generally did not discern an obvious, close connection between the songs or between songs and sermon, but also no jarring discontinuities in thematic material. This is not surprising – after all, the nature of most songs is not to communicate a single, immediately apparent theme! However, in hindsight, or based on moderation during the service, or perhaps especially in the song text following a sermon, a thematic link may be more easily discernable.

However, while achieving a correlation of song and sermon themes is generally desired, it is by no means deemed essential. For instance, Pana (*BEG*) suggested an informal approach: “We

³⁵² Chap-Rabenau: “Der Musikleiter bekommt Infos zum Predigtthema und Gottesdienstablauf und gestaltet dementsprechend die Musik; er gibt dem Gottesdienstleiter die gewählten Lieder bekannt, so können auch in der Moderation Übergänge und Verbindungen geschaffen werden.”

³⁵³ Fischer-Dörl: “Also in der Gemeinde jetzt ist es so, dass die Musik-Teams die Lieder aussuchen und den Gesang selber bestimmen, aber dass sie sich an dem orientieren, was die Predigenden, also die Frauen oder Männer, die verkündigen, was die sozusagen als Thema haben. Das heißt, sie versuchen immer, das früh genug zu kriegen und dann die Liederauswahl auf diese Gedanken abzustimmen. Und das gelingt immer wieder sehr gut. Aber es gibt eigentlich viel Arbeit für die Leute, die die Musik-Teams leiten, dass sie entsprechend die Lieder aussuchen. Und dass sie versuchen, diesen Duktus der Verkündigung aufzunehmen.”

³⁵⁴ Meyer-Blanck, *Gottesdienstlehre*, p. 354: “[...] spannungsvoll aufeinander bezogen.”

try to have some of the songs to go with the theme of the sermon, but this is not set in stone,” and both Rabenau and Unterberg commented similarly regarding music in their Baptist congregation: “Some select songs around the theme of the sermon or service. Often, however, there is not necessarily a closer connection in terms of content,”³⁵⁵ and, “To the extent possible, song content is adapted to sermon/readings, but is not obligatory.”³⁵⁶

Similarly, in the Mennonite church, the music team contacts the preacher or service leader regarding theme, song requests, etc., the goal being a continuous thread throughout the whole service. However, the preacher may simply give the music leader freedom to choose whatever songs seem best – as Barota put it, “The music is chosen according to the ‘leading of the Spirit.’”³⁵⁷

Kisslinger (*FCGÖ*) acknowledged effort made to connect the music to the sermon theme or sermon series – but not as a first priority. Here she made an intentional differentiation: “Worship” as such is Godward, while the sermon, in some sense at least, is for the congregation instead: “Regarding worship, I must say that it is not really planned around the spoken word. Because worship itself is not for the sermon, but for the Lord.”³⁵⁸ (Peloschek voiced this even more strongly: “The praise and worship portion is a separate block [from the sermon], which affords individual participants a special, intimate time with God.”³⁵⁹) For Kisslinger, more important than having a musical portion of the service that seamlessly fits with the sermon theme is discerning, in preparation during the week, what aspect of worship to focus on, under divine guidance: “I always tell my worship leaders that it’s important to take time during the week to ask the Holy Spirit, ‘Where do you want to lead us and how do you want to lead us there?’ And I’ve never had it happen that the Holy Spirit didn’t then say where he wants to lead us.”³⁶⁰ In contrast, the song preceding the sermon may have more of a congregation-focused message, so to speak, rather than being a “worship” song in the narrower sense.

³⁵⁵ Rabenau: “Manche gestalten die Liedauswahl um das Predigtthema oder Gottesdienstthema herum. Oft besteht aber auch kein zwingend inhaltlicher näherer Zusammenhang.”

³⁵⁶ Unterberg: “Soweit es möglich ist werden Liedinhalte an Predigt/Lesungen angepasst, ist aber keine Pflicht.”

³⁵⁷ Barota: “Je nach dem ‘Geist’ wird die Musik ausgesucht.”

³⁵⁸ Kisslinger: “Und bezüglich des Lobpreises muss ich sagen, dass er nicht wirklich aufs Wort abgestimmt wird. Denn der Lobpreis an sich ist nicht für die Predigt, sondern für den Herrn bestimmt.” Cf. Baltes, *Mehr als nur ein Lied*, p. 49: “Ein zweites Missverständnis [...]: Anbetung ist eine Gefühlssache. [...] Menschen berichten davon, dass sie Gottes Gegenwart in den Anbetungszeiten mehr erleben oder erfahren als in Predigten oder anderen Gebetszeiten. Die Lieder helfen ihnen dabei, ihrer Freude Luft zu machen oder ihre Liebe zu Jesus auszudrücken. Dadurch gibt es schnell diese Zuordnung: Anbetung ist was fürs Gefühl und die Predigt was für den Kopf.”

³⁵⁹ Peloschek: “Der Lobpreis- und Anbetungsteil ist ein separater Block, welcher einzelnen Teilnehmern eine besondere intime Zeit mit Gott ermöglicht.”

³⁶⁰ Kisslinger: “Ich sage meinen Lobpreisleitern immer, dass es wichtig ist uns während der Woche die Zeit zu nehmen, um den Heiligen Geist zu fragen: ‘Wo möchtest du uns hinführen und wie möchtest du uns dorthin

At *CIG*, another *FCGÖ* church, the sheer number of musicians who potentially lead week to week and their different personalities strongly influence both song choices and level of integration with the sermon theme. Prokop described one of the seven music leaders as always choosing “songs searching for God because he’s searching for God.” Another “always wants to know what the message is because he likes to intertwine his songs into the message, which I think is great – if you can do it, but not everybody can do it.” He said, “I’ve been song leading for forty-four years [...], but I’ve never really taken the effort to try to connect my songs to the message. Let’s just sing to the Lord and sing about the Lord to the Lord. Let’s just worship him, honor him, and then somehow, the message connects anyway. Sometimes even if nobody planned it, the last song somehow fit the message perfectly. It’s like, gosh, only God could have done that.”

5.3. LEADERSHIP ROLES

As has hopefully already become clear, music plays an important and valued role in church services of Vienna *Freikirchen*. As noted in the introduction, Schweyer emphasizes this for the churches in his research pool – “The fact that singing is of great importance in free-church services can be seen first of all in the high investments that are made for it” – noting the commitment of time, manpower, and technical equipment.³⁶¹ I would like to look now in greater detail at the individuals who are responsible for leading the congregation in song.

5.3.1. MUSIC LEADER: RESPONSIBILITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The role of the music leader is multi-dimensional. As one author and music leader states, “Leading a worship session in a church service is more than just providing musical accompaniment to congregational singing; it goes well beyond the traditional duties of church music in a worship service.”³⁶² Responsibilities include selecting songs, communicating with pastoral leadership and within the music team and with sound technicians, organizing rehearsals, leading songs during church services, leading moderation (which one *BEG* music leader described as including sharing a Bible passage or personal reflections, highlighting for the congregation the essence and goal of worship, and leading the congregation in prayer),

leiten?’ Und ich habe es noch nie erlebt, dass der Heilige Geist dann nicht gesagt hätte, wo er uns hinführen möchte.”

³⁶¹ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 183: “Dass Singen in freikirchlichen Gottesdiensten einen großen Stellenwert hat, ist zunächst an den hohen Investitionsen erkennbar, die dafür getätigt werden.”

³⁶² Horst, “Gottesdienst als/mit Lobpreis,” p. 132: “Eine Lobpreis-Session im Gottesdienst zu leiten, ist mehr als die musikalische Begleitung von Gemeindegesang, geht in weiten Teilen über die traditionellen Aufgaben der Kirchenmusik im Gottesdienst hinaus.”

thoughtfully recruiting additional music team members, meeting “regularly to consider short and long term goals and topics needing [to be] addressed in regards to the music in the church and the band itself” (King, *BEG*), “informal discipleship [...] with band members” and “support [of] their spiritual growth and musical development” (King, *BEG*), scheduling, preparation of song arrangements and song sheets, acting as a buffer for musical feedback from the congregation, giving “spiritual encouragement and guidance for other members of the worship team”³⁶³ (Hausensteiner, *ECG*), providing and communicating a “vision for worship in the church”³⁶⁴ (Hausensteiner), leading not just the congregation but also “the [music] team into worship” (Flores, *BBGÖ*), serving in a counseling role of sorts for the music team, sharing feedback (“personal feedback to the team after the service [e.g., after a review of the recording]”³⁶⁵ [Schweiger, *FCGÖ*]), being “sensitive to the Holy Spirit [...] (also to play unplanned songs)”³⁶⁶ (Asatrjan, *FCGÖ*). Unterberger (*BBGÖ*) summed up the role as follows: “musical/organizational role: promoting members’ skills, maintaining a certain musical standard, asking how the team is doing, organizing group meetings, fostering community, creating rosters, motivating people to participate.”³⁶⁷

From this extensive list of potential duties, it is clear that the role of music leader is at the same time what Peloschek (*ECG*) called a “*geistliches ‘Amt’*” (spiritual role) and Unterberger (*BBGÖ*) described as a “spiritual role” (“uphold the importance and spiritual posture of worship within the team, motivate, encourage, and exhort as appropriate, implement vision and mission of worship”).³⁶⁸ Chap-Rabenau (*BBGÖ*) commented: “Music leadership is spiritual leadership, i.e., the music leader provides concrete spiritual impulses that open up space for the congregation to enter into God’s presence in community and to worship him.”³⁶⁹ Here, in reference back to the place of emotion or experience in relation to music, there is a certain ambivalence towards the music leader’s role. On the one hand, the surveyed music leaders were shown to be in agreement that their role does not and also should not involve an attempt to manufacture emotions or experiences in the congregations. Yet responses varied in answer to

³⁶³ Hausensteiner: “[...] geistliche Ermutigung und Leitung der anderen Mitglieder im Lobpreisteam.”

³⁶⁴ Hausensteiner: “[...] Vision in der Anbetung der Gemeinde.”

³⁶⁵ Schweiger: “[...] persönliches Feedback an das Team nach dem GD (z.B. nach Review der Aufnahme).”

³⁶⁶ Asatrjan: “[...] sensibel auf den Heiligen Geist [...] (auch ungeplante Lieder zu spielen).”

³⁶⁷ Unterberger: “Musikalische/organisatorische Rolle: Fördern der Fähigkeiten der Mitglieder, einen gewissen musikalischen Standard aufrecht erhalten, nachfragen wie es den Teams geht, Gruppentreffen organisieren, Gemeinschaft pflegen, Dienstpläne erstellen, Menschen motivieren mitzumachen.”

³⁶⁸ Unterberger: “Geistliche Rolle: Die Bedeutung und geistliche Haltung des Lobpreises innerhalb des Teams aufrecht zu erhalten, motivieren, ermutigen und ggf. ermahnen, Vision und Mission des Lobpreises umsetzen.”

³⁶⁹ Chap-Rabenau: “Musikleitung ist geistliche Leitung, d.h. der Musikleiter setzt konkrete geistliche Impulse, die der Gemeinde den Raum öffnen, in Gemeinschaft in Gottes Gegenwart zu treten und ihn anzubeten.”

the query, “To what extent is the music leader/music team responsible for encouraging or stimulating any sort of emotion/emotional experience?” For instance, Ardelean responded with a fairly emphatic “*gar nicht*” (not at all), while fellow Baptist Chap-Rabenau suggested a leading, illustrating role, where the music leader “has the task of creating space that facilitates an encounter with God, and therefore of creating an atmosphere of security and safety; also silence, intimacy, peace, joy are perceptions and emotions that we certainly try to stimulate and express.”³⁷⁰

From this list of responsibilities, the question remains as to what qualifications, either musical or spiritual, are expected or required of those who lead music. Here the answers vary, although general agreement lies in recognized music capability and active pursuit of spiritual health. *BEG* participants named “usually several years of musical training”³⁷¹ (van Dam), “musical talent and gifting and an ability to guide others musically” (King), and “the necessary confidence to lead the band and congregation in worship”³⁷² (Gangl). In one of the Baptist churches, musical qualifications are based on the decision of the church leadership, with the caveat that “the overall leadership is musically trained”³⁷³ (Rabenau). Of the participating music leaders, at least five are professionally trained musicians.

With regard to spiritual qualifications, general characteristics were named: “generally agreement with basic beliefs of our church”³⁷⁴ (van Dam, *BEG*), “a healthy, living relationship with God” (Pana, *BEG*), “an active spiritual life and proven abilities to lead others spiritually through music” (King, *BEG*), “love for Jesus and his church”³⁷⁵ (Gangl, *BEG*). The music leader must be “committed to God and the local church” (Flores, *BBGÖ*) and “must have a personal, committed relationship with God and an understanding of the role of worship in that relationship and also in the congregation’s relationship with God”³⁷⁶ (Hausensteiner, *ECG*).

³⁷⁰ Chap-Rabenau: “[...] hat die Aufgabe, Raum zu schaffen, um Begegnung mit Gott zu ermöglichen und daher eine Atmosphäre der Geborgenheit und Sicherheit herzustellen; auch Stille, Intimität, Frieden, Freude sind Wahrnehmungen und Emotionen, die wir durchaus versuchen anzuregen und auszudrücken.”

³⁷¹ van Dam: “[...] in der Regel mehrjährige musikalische Ausbildung.”

³⁷² Gangl: “[...] die entsprechende Selbstsicherheit mitbringen, die Band und die Gemeinde in den Lobpreis zu führen.”

³⁷³ Rabenau: “Die Gesamtleitung ist musikalisch ausgebildet.”

³⁷⁴ van Dam: “[...] allgemein Zustimmung zu Glaubensgrundlagen unserer Gemeinde.”

³⁷⁵ Gangl: “[...] Jesus und seine Gemeinde lieb haben.”

³⁷⁶ Hausensteiner: “[...] muss eine persönliche Beziehung mit Gott haben, in dieser gefestigt sein und Verständnis für die Rolle der Anbetung in dieser Beziehung, auch in der Beziehung der Gemeinde mit Gott, haben.”

Simply put, “the personal life in the day-to-day is one of the deciding factors as to whether this person is qualified for this role”³⁷⁷ (Peloschek, *ECG*).

At least one congregation’s solution to the multifaceted and extensive role of the music leader is to appoint multiple individuals for various aspects of the role: Ring mentioned that at *Evangeliumsgemeinde* the three music leaders each have distinct roles – one more “pastoral” and “theological,” one “more the musical side,” and “one more the organizational side.” In all churches represented in the questionnaire feedback, the role of music leader is open to both men and women: The response, in various wordings, was “*Natürlich!*” (Of course!).

5.3.2. MUSIC TEAM: COMPOSITION AND QUALIFICATIONS

For a typical service, the music leader (who is usually then also the lead singer) is part of a larger team – even up to eight musicians (vocalists and/or instrumentalists). Some churches have more than one music leader and maybe even several different bands that take turns playing. Applying the same question of qualifications to those who participate on the music teams as to the music leaders, a similar trajectory can be traced – sufficient musical capability and confidence, dependability and readiness to work as part of a team, and personal faith and regular participation in the congregation. In a few churches, music team members do not have to be professing Christians, although generally the expectation is that they are a regular part of the church and at least exploring faith. Just two questionnaire responses dictated that music team members must also be church members, with an exception for someone who is about to join the church or helping out from another congregation.

5.4. SONG PRACTICE: BASIC CHARACTERISTICS

5.4.1. NUMBER OF SONGS AND LENGTH OF SUNG PORTION

According to the questionnaire, the number of songs typically sung varies from three to ten, composing anywhere from approximately 15% to 50% of the service. My observations of services would coincide with this wide range of figures. In at least one church visited, the number of songs must have exceeded ten, but this was also the longest service, lasting three hours. In general, services ranged from approximately seventy-five minutes to two hours, with the longer services generally being *FCGÖ* congregations. It is also worth highlighting the obvious fact that not only do number of songs and length of services vary, but also the duration

³⁷⁷ Peloschek: “[D]as persönliche Leben im Alltag ist mitentscheidend ob diese Person sich für diese Rolle qualifiziert.”

of individual songs – especially in congregations that emphasize a style of music that involves multiple repetitions of song texts.

5.4.2. SONG GENRES

In terms of the proportion of traditional hymns to contemporary compositions, the very clear preference – from the questionnaires, service observations, and song lists – is towards contemporary compositions. In some congregations, hymns are nearly absent, in others sprinkled in, in still others an intentional component, even if not the primary one. One *BEG* church does have services of just hymns a couple times per year. With regard to “contemporary” songs, the term is defined variously by different individuals – songs composed after 1950 (but in practice usually considerably more recently); songs that do not have “a hymn feel” (for instance, incorporate syncopated rhythms) (King, *BEG*) or do have a “Pop/Rock Rhythmus” (Hausensteiner, *ECG*); songs which tend to be familiar not only to the older church population; or songs which are “very pop-oriented, lots of room for new arrangements and ideas; lyrics deal with real-life situations; appeals more to the younger generation”³⁷⁸ Unterberger (*BBGÖ*). Reminiscent of the discussion on “worship” above, Rabenau (*BBGÖ*) noted that “there is a distinct ‘Christian music culture,’ which primarily refers to songs that lead people into praise and worship.”³⁷⁹

While the overriding preference in *Freikirchen* in Vienna is for “contemporary” worship music with general “pop music” characteristics, extremes are generally avoiding. For instance, regarding musical genres such as Heavy Metal, Peloschek said that “for me, that’s not worship,”³⁸⁰ expressing concern that the text may be lost under intense instrumentation or that the showy elements may hinder worship: “I don’t want to generalize, but here true worship can be forfeited or minimized.”³⁸¹

Use of chord charts or lead sheets rather than musical scores is fairly standard procedure. Unison melodic singing characterizes the overall musical style of most if not all churches, although often the primary song leader is joined by one (or perhaps more) harmonizing voice(s). More traditional part-singing is rare (a few ensemble numbers being the exception – these were observed primarily in the Romanian churches visited), and nowhere did I observe

³⁷⁸ Unterberger: “[...] Sehr Pop orientiert, viel Raum für neue Arrangements und Ideen, Texte behandeln lebensnahe Situationen, spricht mehr die junge Generation an.”

³⁷⁹ Rabenau: “[...] Zeitgenössisch: obwohl generell eine eigene ‘christliche Musikkultur’ besteht, betrifft dies vor allem Songs, die Menschen in den Lobpreis und die Anbetung führen.”

³⁸⁰ Peloschek: “[D]as ist für mich kein Lobpreis.”

³⁸¹ Peloschek: “Ich möchte nichts verallgemeinern, aber es kann da die Anbetung verlustig oder reduziert werden.”

congregational part-singing from written scores. In all churches visited, the accompaniment was primarily or entirely live music, although a sound track or drum kit track was used sparingly. Based on church service observations, *a cappella* singing is virtually non-existent.

A fuller discussion of the song repertoire of the *Freikirchen* belongs to its own chapter, but here it is worth noting responses to the church member survey. When asked about favorite genres of music (not limited to church services), the majority of participants – but hardly an overwhelming one – acknowledged that they do indeed have a favorite genre. Since no categories were provided in the survey, the twenty-five responses given showcase an impressive range of preferences – including classical music (with one response specifically for oratorio), gospel, hymns, indie, jazz, rap, and rock –, albeit with a clear statistical trend towards popular music styles (see Appendix 9.3.).

5.4.3. LANGUAGE AND TRANSLATION

The language in which songs are sung might be assumed to reflect the language of the service in general, but this proves on closer examination to be not entirely correct. For instance, in the vast majority of German-speaking churches visited, one or often more songs were sung in English; in one *FCGÖ* church, nearly all of the songs were in English, although the moderation, prayers, and preaching were in German. In either German or English-speaking services, other languages are also occasionally included (even if minimally), including Hebrew, Farsi, and Twi. Additionally, one music leader also mentioned that “[o]nce in a while, a missionary will sing a song in another language. This has happened more recently in Turkish and in Japanese” (King, *BEG*).

When music leaders in German-speaking congregations were asked about the motivation for singing songs in a language which does not reflect the mother tongue of the majority of the members and attendees, the most common reasons given were lack of available or good translations or the fact that the congregation is already more familiar with the English version. One related reason given was the “poetic power of the original language”³⁸² (van Dam, *BEG*). Further reasons included “a desire to continue to connect with all generations in the church,” since “[i]n general, the younger generations at our church connect well with English worship songs” (King, *BEG*) and “input from members of the congregation from other culture and language backgrounds”³⁸³ (Demmer, *BBGÖ*). Lack of official translations is not necessarily a

³⁸² van Dam: “[...] poetische Kraft d. Originalsprache.”

³⁸³ Demmer: “[...] Impulse aus Gemeindeglieder anderer Kulturen und Sprachen.”

hindrance to singing English songs in German: Kisslinger said that she has translated many songs herself, although this poses something of a problem when an official translation is then released and the congregation is already accustomed to another version. In international, English-speaking services, songs in German are sometimes included for the sake of those attending whose first language is German, or “because there is no translation in English” (Flores, *BBGÖ*).

In Romanian and Spanish services visited, all songs were sung in the language of the rest of the service (with the exception of a children’s group singing a couple of songs in German). In the primarily Russian-speaking congregation, at least one song was sung in Ukrainian. From the questionnaire results, in most churches in which songs are sung in more than one language, subtitled translations are provided some or all of the time. From service observations, I would say that subtitles are common but by no means universally used in bilingual song contexts.

5.4.4. INSTRUMENTATION

In terms of instrumentation, in most churches I visited, singing was accompanied by a keyboard and/or guitar, with other instruments commonly including e-bass, e-guitar, and percussion. Percussion included standard drum kit and/or cajon, and in the African congregations additionally conga drums, shakers, wooden blocks, and/or tambourine. In isolated cases, other instruments were also incorporated, including violin, viola, trumpet, flute, clarinet, and accordion. In only three churches visited were acoustic rather than electric pianos played, one of these an upright and the other two a grand piano.³⁸⁴ When music leaders were asked if any instruments are intentionally avoided, the answer was clearly no, although Schweiger (*FCGÖ*) noted that “some instruments just don’t really fit the style,”³⁸⁵ and a *BEG* participant mentioned an attempt to add a brass instrument, which proved unsuccessful.

None of the visited churches have an organ. This absence is easily explained by the fact, already mentioned, that most churches meet in rented buildings not originally designed as houses of worship. Interestingly, two of the pastors interviewed specifically spoke with real appreciation and with a certain nostalgia for this kind of church instruments. Eichinger stated:

One must consider – I say this now as a mechanical engineer – that the organ was for centuries the most outstanding and highest “high-tech commodity,” if I may put it that way, [...] and it was created for the purpose of worshipping God. And this is similar to architecture

³⁸⁴ In two additional locations, a grand piano was present in the hall but for whatever reasons not used for the service.

³⁸⁵ Schweiger: “Manche Instrumente passen einfach nicht wirklich zum Stil.”

or building. It is actually due to Christian motivation that the organ got such a place. And therefore it is understandable that there are discussions about replacing the organ – there are [...] groups where the organ is the only recognized instrument worthy of praising God. Now the *Freikirchen* are a long way from that.³⁸⁶

Fischer-Dörl commented:

What I miss very much is the organ in many churches, in our congregations. There is a congregation in our denomination [...] which has an organ, and it is very rarely played because no one takes care of it. I'm very sorry about that because I'm very open to it myself, but I think that a lot of the tradition in evangelical churches is still just "Hands off: That's the instrument of the established, hierarchical, state-oriented or state-affiliated churches." [...] And that's actually quite unfortunate. There is still a lot of potential in getting back in touch with such an instrument.³⁸⁷

Ring mentioned being glad to see more variety of instruments being employed in free-church worship than in earlier decades – and also that certain ones are not being vilified (for instance, earlier contentions in some churches regarding use of drums). But he thinks that maybe some things have been discarded that could be taken back up as enriching – here again with reference to the organ.

5.4.5. INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Instrumental music – that is, just instruments and no voice – is present, albeit in different forms and to differing degrees. In six questionnaire responses, instrumental music during Communion was named, and a few mentioned instrumental music as sometimes preceding or concluding the service. One participant specifically mentioned instrumental music during the offering, and two as potentially following the sermon, as an accompaniment or aid to personal reflection or prayer. For instance, one *BEG* congregation – with both professional jazz and classical musicians – incorporates instrumental music “one to two times a month, often after the sermon or during Communion” (van Dam).³⁸⁸ That said, aside from simple improvised

³⁸⁶ Eichinger: “Man muss bedenken – das sage ich jetzt als Maschinenbauer, dass die Orgel über Jahrhunderte hinweg das hervorragendste und höchste ‘Hightech-Gut’ war, wenn ich es so sagen darf [...] und sie wurde dazu geschaffen, um Gott anzubeten. Und das ist so ähnlich wie in der Architektur oder bei Bauwerken. Es ist eigentlich christlicher Motivation geschuldet, dass die Orgel so einen Platz bekommen hat. Und von daher wird auch verständlich, dass es Diskussionen darum gibt, die Orgel abzulösen. Denn es gibt ja auch Gruppierungen, bei denen die Orgel das einzige anerkannte Instrument ist, das würdig ist, Gott zu loben. Also von dort sind die Freikirchen weit entfernt.”

³⁸⁷ Fischer-Dörl: “Also was ich in unseren Gemeinden sehr vermisse, ist die Orgel in vielen Kirchen. Es gibt eine Gemeinde in unserem Bund; in unserer Kirche, die hat eine Orgel und die wird sehr selten gespielt, weil sich niemand darum kümmert. Das tut mir sehr leid, weil ich selber diesbezüglich sehr offen bin, aber ich glaube, dass es traditionsgemäß in den evangelikalischen Gemeinden immer noch heißt: ‘Hände weg davon.’ Denn die Orgel ist das Instrument der etablierten, hierarchisch geordneten, staats-orientierten oder staatsnahen Kirchen. [...] Und das ist eigentlich total bedauerlich. Also da gäbe es noch viel Potenzial, auch mit so einem Instrument, zum Beispiel, wieder stärker in Kontakt zu kommen.”

³⁸⁸ van Dam: “[...] 1–2 Mal/Monat, häufig nach Predigt oder beim Abendmahl.”

background music, in none of the thirty-two services I visited were classical or jazz instrumental compositions incorporated in church services. This is, of course, not to say that this is never done, just simply that it is not typical. Speaking of classical music in general, Ring acknowledged that “especially in free churches, that hasn’t always been well-incorporated.” Here it is worth noting that one *BEG* questionnaire participant mentioned that during the pandemic, when singing was not officially permitted, instrumental music played a greater role in the service.

In some *FCGÖ* churches, improvised instrumental music is used to weave together the songs into a seamless unit, acting as a sound carpet for the spoken moderation or prayer between songs. In one *ECG* congregation, instrumental music may also accompany Communion, “as an aid for remembering the meaning of the Lord’s Supper. Here music can help prevent getting distracted by the distribution of the Communion elements or by other sources of noise”³⁸⁹ (Peloschek).

5.4.6. CRITERIA FOR NEW SONGS

One survey question asked about any protocol for incorporating new songs. A few participants mentioned a process for potentially adding a new song to the repertoire – determining if the song is suited to congregational singing (“i.e., not too complex musically speaking” [Pana, *BEG*]), sharing a recording and asking for feedback from the music team before bringing it to a rehearsal, or perhaps practicing a few new songs as a band and choosing just the one or two that seem most suitable. The topic of new songs is important, since the song repertoire of most congregations is heavily weighted towards recent compositions.

With regard to a practical methodology, repetition is key: perhaps singing a new song at both the opening and closing of a service or singing it a few weeks in a row. Peloschek (*ECG*) wrote: “With English lyrics, the message of the text is briefly explained. In the case of a completely unknown songs, the melody is also ‘performed’ in order to familiarize the listener with it.”³⁹⁰ Another option, for churches which typically have a recorded playlist before (and perhaps after) the service, is to gently acquaint the congregation with new songs this way. At *Wunderwerk*, when a song is first introduced for congregational singing, it may be accompanied by a brief reflection on the text or perhaps a story about its context of composition. In the Baptist church

³⁸⁹ Peloschek: “Ja, als Unterstützung, sich der Bedeutung des Abendmahls zu erinnern. Musik kann hier helfen, nicht durch das Austeilen der Abendmahlelemente oder andere Geräuschquellen, abgelenkt zu werden.”

³⁹⁰ Peloschek: “Bei englischen Texten wird die Aussage des Textes kurz erläutert. Bei gänzlich unbekanntem Liedern auch mal ‘vorgespült,’ um die Melodie ins Ohr zu bekommen.”

Mollardgasse, the congregation has what they call a “two-month song,” which is featured in the church newsletter and sung regularly during those weeks.

Of course, when enough new songs are added, the result can be a real shift in music style. This can be a challenging process, with mixed feedback from the congregation. One music leader noted positively, however: “I have seen a very slow, gradual shift to continue to add more recent songs of worship and also holding on to valued traditional and older contemporary songs. I believe the shift is good and right, and the church has seemed to embraced the gradual adapting as time changes” (King, *BEG*).

5.4.7. MUSICAL ACCOMMODATIONS DUE TO COVID-19

Speaking of adaptation, when music leaders were asked if the choice of music changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, answers were mixed. In about half of the congregations surveyed, participants indicated no or no appreciable changes in song choices. Others mentioned specific responses, Pana (*BEG*) noting, for instance, that “we tended to focus more on songs that give hope and focus on victories/battles/struggles.” King (*BEG*) stated: “As our song selection is based on sermons, yes indeed! We have also not introduced new songs during this season. We have wanted to continue to encourage the church to sing, and that has been difficult with pandemic restrictions. We did not want to throw in new songs on top of singing restrictions.” Flores (*BBGÖ*) contributed: “We wanted to encourage the church by adding songs that remind us that our hope is only in Christ and that God is sovereign and holy. Also reminding us to stay true and faithful to him, to be content no matter what the circumstances are because only in him we have true joy and peace.” Schweiger (*FCGÖ*) stated: “Especially in the hard lockdowns, we had more songs that were meant to encourage, strengthen personal relationship with God, declare truths, etc.”³⁹¹ And the Asatrjans (*FCGÖ*) mentioned incorporating a specific song, with text taken from Psalm 91 (which includes a declaration of trust in God’s protection amidst “the deadly pestilence,” verses 3, English Standard Version). However, even where song choices were not affected, other accommodations were required. Many if not all congregations met for a time only online, many reduced the number of songs (at least for in-person services) or the size of the band. One participant mentioned experimenting with more instrumental music, as noted above. For a number of congregations,

³⁹¹ Schweiger: “Besonders in den harten Lockdowns hatten wir mehr Lieder, die Mut machen, die persönliche Beziehung zu Gott stärken sollen, Wahrheiten deklarieren, etc.”

the aspect of streaming services was a new experience, with implications for song production, copyright issues, etc.

5.5. SONG STYLE

Musical style is, of course, a vast topic. While the focus of my research is on understanding music in *FKÖ* congregations in Vienna today, nevertheless understanding the role of music in the churches currently is bound up in historical developments, both within the *Freikirchen* and in society more broadly. When it comes to current musical practice and the changes that have occurred over the past decades, there is an interesting range of opinion within the *FKÖ*, from multifaceted critique to eager reception.

5.5.1. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Eichinger, who has been part of the Austrian free-church scene for nearly half a century, spoke at length about the changes in relation to music which he has observed, beginning with song texts: “My observations span almost fifty years. And there has been a lot of change, change [...] in all areas – fifty years have not passed without a trace – that is, [...] the content of the songs, the thematic focus, etc., has massively shifted, in my opinion.”³⁹² He noted changes in thematic material and complexity, concluding that both have been reduced in scope. Referring not only to his immediate *BEG* context but to the *Freikirchen* in general:

There is a tendency for it to shift more towards or almost exclusively towards “worship.” But the holistic life, how to cope with life, was more present in the older songs. And because I am also very interested in Anabaptist history and thus in the Early Modern Period, I can’t help observing big differences. [...] Our songs have become rather narrower in content. Yes, particularly themes that earlier generations – and now I’m going back to much earlier generations – also expressed in song: that is, suffering, overcoming, encouragement in practical life, the question of personal guilt. This has become very diluted and simplified. And that’s true to some extent for the last fifty years as well. If you now take an old songbook that was part of the standard song material forty years ago, then the content of the repertoire has [since then], I would say, narrowed a bit.³⁹³

³⁹² Eichinger: “Und meine Beobachtungen erstrecken sich über knapp 50 Jahre. Und da hat sich einiges geändert – ich würde sagen in allen Gebieten. 50 Jahre sind nicht spurlos vergangen. Das heißt, der Inhalt des Liedgutes, die Themenschwerpunkte usw. haben sich stärker verlagert, ist mein Eindruck.”

³⁹³ Eichinger: “[E]s gibt die Tendenz, dass es sich mehr oder bis fast ausschließlich in Richtung Anbetung verlagert. Aber das ganzheitliche Leben, die Lebensbewältigung war in den älteren Liedern breiter angesiedelt. Und weil ich mich auch historisch sehr mit der Täufer-Geschichte und mit der Frühen Neuzeit beschäftige, muss ich noch größere Unterschiede beobachten. [...] Unser Liedgut ist inhaltlich eher schmaler geworden. Ja, gerade Themen, die frühere Generation und jetzt bin ich wieder bei ganz früheren Generationen, auch im Liedgut ausgedrückt haben. Da ist Leid, Bewältigung, Ermutigung im praktischen Leben, die Schuldfrage, die persönliche. Das hat sich sehr verdünnt und vereinfacht. Und das gilt ein Stück auch für die letzten 50 Jahre. Wenn man jetzt

Eichinger stated that along with these thematic changes, there has also been a shift towards shorter, less complex texts: “Now a lot more shorter texts and more repetitions appear; it’s become rather simplistic.”³⁹⁴ He drew a rather humorous contrast with historical Anabaptist strophic songs, which he noted were regularly composed of around forty verses – “today that would be unthinkable.”³⁹⁵ He also commented that music in churches reflects changes in the wider society, albeit “with a time delay.”³⁹⁶

While it is clear that he spoke with a certain regret for the losses that have been sustained amid these changes, he was ready to admit that it is “not all negative”³⁹⁷ and also that the song repertoire may be seen as both reflecting and responding to the reality of the modern-day “*Stressgesellschaft*” (high-stress society):

If I consider someone today, living in a high-stress society, who falls into his seat on Sunday as the singing begins and is rather exhausted during the service, this person needs time to really arrive and enter in. I think that the simple lyrics and the constant repetition – it’s become a narrow range of songs – perhaps also reflects to some extent the tattered soul of our high-stress society, where one needs repetition in order to penetrate the soul at all. Maybe that’s one interplay with the reality of society, even if I regret it, actually regret it very much.³⁹⁸

In the Baptist tradition, Fischer-Dörl noted the appeal over the past decades of new music, particularly for young people. In his early years, the use of traditional songbooks was standard, but in his youth new musical currents and newer songs found their way into new editions being published. Although songs from books like *Das gute Land* (The Good Land) are not widely sung today, they pointed in the direction of free-church music to follow: “Here songs appeared that for the first time hinted at today’s worship.”³⁹⁹ The new songs communicated a message

ein altes Liederbuch hernimmt, das eben vor 40 Jahren unser Standard-Liedgut war, dann hat sich das Repertoire inhaltlich, ich würde sagen, ein Stück geschmälert.”

³⁹⁴ Eichinger: “[J]etzt viel mehr kürzere Texte und Wiederholungen vorkommen; [...] es [ist] eher simpel geworden.”

³⁹⁵ Eichinger: “[D]as wäre heute undenkbar.”

³⁹⁶ Eichinger: “[...] mit einer zeitlichen Verzögerung.”

³⁹⁷ Eichinger: “Ich sehe nicht alles negativ.”

³⁹⁸ Eichinger: “Wenn ich jetzt einen heutigen Menschen hernehme, der aus einer Stress-Gesellschaft kommt, der am Sonntag, wenn gesungen wird, irgendwie in den Sessel fällt und im Gottesdienst ein bisserl erschöpft ist, dann braucht er seine Zeit, um einmal richtig zu landen. Ich glaube, dass die simplen Texte und das ständige Wiederholen – es ist ein schmales Liedgut geworden, aber dass das vielleicht auch ein Stück weit die zerfetzte Seele unserer Stress-Gesellschaft widerspiegelt, wo man sich wiederholen muss, um überhaupt in die Seele zu kommen. Vielleicht ist das eine ein Wechselspiel zwischen der Realität der Gesellschaft, auch wenn ich es bedauere und eigentlich sehr bedauere.”

³⁹⁹ Fischer-Dörl: “[D]a kamen zum ersten Mal Lieder, die den heutigen Worship schon ein bisschen angedeutet haben.”

received readily by the younger generation: “This was certainly an important connecting point for many people in my youth: Here is music once again that corresponds to our time.”⁴⁰⁰

For the Baptist musical tradition, which Fischer-Dörl noted as already being shaped by a strong emotional component, the essence of the music has thus not been replaced by the new musical style. He suggested, however, that the emotional element has been strengthened and also the tenor of the desire for emotional experience has shifted:

I think that today we are trying even harder to satisfy this need to immerse ourselves in musical emotions. For many, it’s a feeling that they’re looking for, one that’s associated with particular experiences, perhaps in conferences, in large [concert] halls or in stadiums. And one wants to bring these experiences into the churches, into the local context. But then it has to be of correspondingly high quality. There are, I think, high expectations that worship happens best exactly as I have experienced it at a [...] conference, and attempts to recreate that. So in this respect, I think this need to be able to emotionally enter into a certain vibe, so to speak, has become even stronger. On the other hand, there is ongoing criticism that the content has declined. I think that the expression of feelings has become flatter for some, because they really have the impression that worship today has less content.⁴⁰¹

Here he suggested that the textual situation has improved in recent years, even if some still offer “the criticism that no one comes close to a Paul Gerhardt.”⁴⁰² He also observed, “What is also interesting is that a style, which was perhaps initially associated with the charismatic movements, has moved into the evangelical churches, i.e., in the sense of less openly emotional churches, and is also being attempted there.”⁴⁰³

Bösch offered a parallel description of changes in specifically Pentecostal circles, even if arriving at somewhat different conclusions. Looking back, he named the Jesus Movement (1960s and beyond) as influential in a transition taking place – towards short, simple texts put

⁴⁰⁰ Fischer-Dörl: “Das war für meine Jugendzeit sicher ein wichtiger Anknüpfungspunkt für viele Leute: Hier gibt es wieder Musik da, die unserer Zeit entspricht.”

⁴⁰¹ Fischer-Dörl: “Ich glaube, dass wir heute noch stärker dieses Bedürfnis versuchen zu befriedigen, sich in musikalische Emotionen fallen zu lassen. Also dass das für viele ein Gefühl ist, das sie suchen; das verbunden wird mit bestimmten Einzelerfahrungen, vielleicht in Konferenzen, in großen Hallen oder in Stadien. Und dass man diese Erfahrungen in die Gemeinden, in den lokalen Kontext hineinholen möchte. Dann muss das aber auch entsprechend gut sein. Es gibt da schon, glaube ich, hohe Erwartungen, dass das Worship am besten genauso stattfindet, wie ich es von einem [...] Kongress erlebt habe und Versuche das nachzuvollziehen. Also in der Hinsicht, glaube ich, ist es sogar stärker geworden, dieses Bedürfnis, sich emotional in eine bestimmte Schwingung sozusagen hineinversetzen zu können. Auf der anderen Seite gibt es nach wie vor die Kritik, dass das Inhaltliche abgenommen hat. Ich glaube, dass die die Expression von Gefühlen für manche flacher geworden ist, weil sie eigentlich die Vorstellung haben, dass Worship heute weniger Inhalt hat.”

⁴⁰² Fischer-Dörl: “[...] die Kritik, dass man nicht an einen Paul Gerhardt herankommt.”

⁴⁰³ Fischer-Dörl: “Und das, was auch interessant ist, ist eben, dass hier ein Stil, der vielleicht zunächst mal den charismatischen Bewegungen zugeordnet wurde, in die evangelikalen Gemeinden, also im Sinne von weniger offen emotional geprägten Gemeinden eingezogen ist und dort genauso auch versucht wird zu machen.”

to music, which were not in the existing songbooks. He recalled serving as a music leader in a church in Switzerland at the time and participating in this transition; he described the emotional element growing even as the textual complexity lessened – and also an increase of joy: “So it was more the emotional element that was strengthened, the shared emotional element. And the lyrics? It moved more from the head and from the profound to the heart and to joy; that was the shift.”⁴⁰⁴

Bösch noted that up until the 1980s (he was then in Switzerland), songs were sung from songbooks (he named *Pfingst-Jubel* [Pentecost Jubilation] and *Siegesklänge* [Sounds of Victory]), mostly hymns with multiple verses and reaching back as far as *c.* 300 years. Accompaniment was likely a harmonium, or perhaps a Hammond or Leslie organ or a piano. In addition to the different song format, style, and instrumental accompaniment, the texts also carried a different focus: “The content, that is, the lyrics, of these songs had a Pietistic character. The goodness of God was expressed in them, but also the earnestness of discipleship.”⁴⁰⁵ These songs “were deep, multi-verse songs, which one also sang in this way: profoundly. There was not so much emotion. The emotion was more hidden within the lyrical depth.”⁴⁰⁶

But Bösch clearly welcomes a shift away from Pietistic song texts to texts that emphasize especially the goodness of God. In this context, he gave as an example one of the biggest Christian music producers in the English-speaking world, Bethel Church in Redding, California: “In their theology, Redding has an extremely strong focus on the goodness of God: God is good. We’ve all always said that too, more or less, and in Pietism perhaps also to some degree. But here that focus was so strong that I had to really grapple with it.”⁴⁰⁷ He described being impressed also by the practical outworking of Bethel’s understanding and experience of the power of the Holy Spirit – beyond the walls of the church on Sunday and out into the city – and referred to a decision to “embrace the influence of Redding,”⁴⁰⁸ while at the same time not welcoming some of the practices: “These physical convulsions and certain manifestations

⁴⁰⁴ Bösch: “Also da wurde schon mehr das Emotionale gestärkt; das gemeinsame Emotionale. Und der Text? Es ging mehr vom Kopf und der Tiefsinnigkeit ins Herz und der Freude, das war so der Shift.”

⁴⁰⁵ Bösch: “Diese Lieder hatten inhaltlich, also textlich, eine pietistische Prägung. Also da drinnen kam schon auch die Güte Gottes zum Ausdruck. Aber es kam auch die Ernsthaftigkeit meiner Nachfolge zum Ausdruck.”

⁴⁰⁶ Bösch: “[...] waren tiefsinnige, mehrstrophige Lieder, die [man] auch so gesungen hat: tiefsinnig. Da war jetzt nicht ein, wie soll ich sagen, da war nicht so viel Emotion. Die Emotion war eher versteckt mit den tiefen Texten verbunden.”

⁴⁰⁷ Bösch: “Redding hat in ihrer Theologie einen extrem starken Fokus auf die Güte Gottes: Gott ist gut. Das haben wir alle auch immer gesagt, mehr oder weniger, im Pietismus vielleicht auch ein bisschen. Aber das war dann schon so stark, damit habe ich mich sehr ernsthaft auseinandergesetzt.”

⁴⁰⁸ Bösch: “Und diese Auseinandersetzung hat dann bei mir geendet in der Entscheidung den Einfluss von Redding zu umarmen.”

we don't think are so cool. We've never said anything against them, but we just don't do them. And from that standpoint, we've kept our own character, and we've gladly opened the door to the blessing."⁴⁰⁹ Bösch described a posture of eager openness to this musical input, but said, "[W]e [...] always keep a watchful eye on the content."⁴¹⁰ (Bethel has come under considerable scrutiny from other churches and organizations for some of their controversial theological statements, as well as expressive practices.⁴¹¹) To sum up, the trajectory of this shift, in terms of textual content, Bösch described as a focus on the goodness of God: "And the goodness of God was sung about much more. This became more dominant, and that serious, Pietistic-serious [aspect of] following Jesus was reduced a little bit – and instead the joyful exaltation of worshipping God together."⁴¹²

Kisslinger attributed general changes and developments in the musical scene in a distinctly positive and theological light, that is, to God being at work in his Church: "It is very much related to what the Lord is doing himself. Why? Because those whom God gifts with the talent to write songs very often work out of their sense of how the Lord is moving or what he is doing. [...] Some things are prophetic: 'spoken into.' Some of it is 'spoken into' a local church, some to the whole world. I think that especially music and especially worship always accompany the growth of the church."⁴¹³ She admitted that all developments are not necessarily good ones; she wishes, for one thing, that someone would write some songs in a faster tempo! And she expressed a desire for a return to more songs that "proclaim" (a characteristic she applies to songs from the 1980s):

Jesus is the victor. He is sitting on the throne. He fights [for us]. He goes before us. Stand up, Church of Jesus! There was an incredible amount of "declaring." That's a different kind of praise, of course. But I miss that sometimes. It doesn't have to find a place in every worship time. But it has its importance and its place – because I think that's a moment

⁴⁰⁹ Bsöch: "[D]iese körperlichen Zuckungen und diese Äußerung, die finden wir nicht so cool. Wir haben nie was dagegen gesagt. Aber wir machen es einfach nicht. Und so gesehen haben wir unseren eigenen Charakter behalten und haben diesem Segen gerne die Tür geöffnet."

⁴¹⁰ Bösch: "[W]ir [...] haben immer ein waches Auge auf die Inhalte."

⁴¹¹ See the discussion in Daniel Dangendorf, *Handbuch: Musik im Gottesdienst*, MBS-Ratgeber 3 (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2020), pp. 117–120; see also Joe Carter, "9 Things You Should Know About the Bethel Church Movement," The Gospel Coalition, 29 September 2018, <<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/9-things-you-should-know-about-the-bethel-church-movement/>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

⁴¹² Bösch: "Und die Güte Gottes wurde viel stärker besungen. Das war dominanter und dieses ernsthafte, pietistisch ernsthafte Nachfolgen Jesus ist ein bisschen zurückgedrängt, anstelle der freudigen Erhebung des gemeinsamen Anbeten des Gottes."

⁴¹³ Kisslinger: "Es hängt sehr viel zusammen mit dem, was der Herr an sich tut. Warum? Weil die, die Gott mit dem Talent beschenkt, Lieder zu schreiben, sehr oft aus ihrem Empfinden aus handeln, was der Herr gerade bewegt oder tut. [...] Manche Sachen sind prophetisch. 'Hineinsprechend.' Manches in eine Gemeinde, manches wirklich weltweit 'hinein gesprochen.' Ich glaube, gerade Musik und gerade Lobpreis macht immer die Entwicklung der Gemeinde mit."

when we raise our voice and proclaim the message to the spiritual world. That element is missing for me today.⁴¹⁴

She detects a positive element in the increase in songs sung to God instead of about God, criticizing a collection of songs like *Siegesklänge* as “not very purposefully *to* him, but rather *about* him. [...] In recent years, the focus has shifted completely and concretely to the Lord. There is now a focus on him and singing to him, and not just about him. And that is [...] something I love.”⁴¹⁵ This development she sees as meeting a specific need for the “praise” part of the service, even if songs about God have valuable and important functions in other contexts.

This very welcoming attitude regarding new song material and textual shifts reflects also a conviction about the purpose of music in church services. Returning to Bösch, he described a very conscious decision on the part of the leadership team to determine a clear musical vision for the church and pursue it week in and week out, rather than having different styles on different weeks, depending on which music team might be leading. Part of the motivation was to provide continuity that would be helpful for newcomers. Bösch reflected on this transition as being difficult (“a change that took us five years to achieve”⁴¹⁶) and as being motivated by a desire not to become outdated or irrelevant for the up-and-coming generation:

We said, “If we continue as we are now, then as a congregation we’re also going to age in our worship – every year, because we are getting older. The style of music is also getting older, and we are becoming outdated. And with our music style, we are moving more and more away from the young people.” [...] And that’s when we said, “We don’t want that. We have to make a musical shift down two generations, towards the younger people. And it should be more popular music and more consistent.” That was a tough decision, and it took us a really long time to make it.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁴ Kisslinger: “Jesus ist Sieger. Er sitzt auf dem Thron. Er kämpft. Er geht für uns voran. Steh auf, Gemeinde Jesu! Da gab es wahnsinnig viel ‘Aussprechendes.’ Das ist natürlich eine andere Art von vom Lobpreis. Aber das fehlt mir manchmal. Es muss nicht in jedem Lobpreis seinen Platz haben. Aber es hat seine Wichtigkeit und seinen Platz. Denn ich glaube, das ist ein Moment, in dem wir unsere Stimme erheben und die Botschaft in die geistliche Welt hinein proklamieren. Dieses Element fehlt mir heute.”

⁴¹⁵ Kisslinger: “[...] nicht sehr zielgerichtet auf ihn, sondern über ihn. [...] Und in den letzten Jahren hat sich der Fokus komplett konkret auf den Herrn verlagert. Es wird nun der Blick auf ihn gerichtet und zu ihm gesungen und nicht nur über ihn. Und das ist zum Beispiel etwas, was ich liebe.”

⁴¹⁶ Bösch: “[...] zu einem Change, an dem haben wir sicher fünf Jahre gekämpft.”

⁴¹⁷ Bösch: “Wir haben gesagt, wenn wir so weitermachen wie jetzt, dann werden wir als Gemeinde auch mit unserem Lobpreis viel älter – jedes Jahr, weil wir werden ja auch älter. Der Musikstil bleibt auch älter und wir veralten. Und wir kommen immer mehr weg von den jungen Menschen mit dem Musikstil. [...] Und da haben wir gesagt: ‘Das wollen wir nicht.’ Wir müssen einen Shift von zwei Generationen musikalisch nach unten machen, zu den jüngeren Leuten hin. Und das soll dann eher Populärmusik sein und eher einheitlicher. Das war die stärkste Entscheidung und an der haben wir echt lange gebissen.”

He is excited about the shift towards “younger” music helping draw in more younger people, complementing the existing range of ages in the congregation.

Prokop, in regard to church music style, but certainly also offering insight into *CIG*'s interaction with the wider Christian music scene, remarked with a laugh:

We try to stay contemporary and like one step off cutting edge. [...] So, you know, we're not listening to the latest CD out and doing the absolute latest Hillsong or Bethel. Sometimes the newest song has already been out two years or a year, but we're trying to always bring in the greatest songs out there. Someone will just send, you know, “I Raise a Hallelujah,” and someone says, “It's an incredible song! We've got to learn it,” and you find out it's already six months old. Nobody picked up on it. So I'd say we're like one step off cutting edge.

In contrast, or at least in addition, to this embrace of newer musical forms that reflect cultural trends, Eichinger spoke about the importance of appreciating and acknowledging musical forebears: “We did not arrive here all of a sudden, but rather we draw from the wells of our fathers. And there you notice the breadth and the difference and the depth. And I would say that in our congregations, age-old, well-known songs, for example from Zinzendorf's time and the Pietists and so on, are incorporated to some extent now and then. But I think there could be more of such, and that they must be better introduced, especially with regard to the text.”⁴¹⁸

He also noted a further stylistic and practical change in the relative importance of the music leader(s) up front in contrast to the congregation as a whole, a tendency more apparent in some congregations than others. Eichinger observes this shift over the past several decades critically, stating that “the importance of the music personnel, who are more or less in front, is much higher and more central than the general singing of the whole congregation.”⁴¹⁹ Various factors could have contributed to this shift; he named space constraints, as well as a desire to raise the overall quality of the music and of “*audiovisuellen Aspekten*” (audiovisual aspects):

Too much is offered from the front. [...] If music is supposed to be a response of the whole congregation, then too little attention is given to the congregation and also to fostering the qualities that are necessary for this [congregational response]. And here there have been considerable steps backwards. It is true that up front, the quality is getting better and better – including the acoustics. But you no longer hear yourself as part of the crowd. It also doesn't matter how you sing; it's drowned out and quality is provided from up front. And

⁴¹⁸ Eichinger: “Wir sind nicht plötzlich da, sondern wir schöpfen aus den Quellen unserer Väter. Und da merkt man auch dann die Breite und den Unterschied und den Tiefgang. Und ich finde, das geschieht teilweise in unseren Gemeinden, dass immer wieder auch uralte bekannte Lieder, zum Beispiel von Zinzendorfs Zeiten und den Pietisten und so einfließen. Aber ich glaube, es könnte mehr sein und müsste besser anmoderiert werden, gerade mit Blick auf Text.”

⁴¹⁹ Eichinger: “[D]ie Bedeutung des Musikpersonals, das mehr oder minder vorne ist, wesentlich höher und zentraler ist als der breite Gesang der ganzen Gemeinde.”

I think that comes at a high price, doesn't it? I regret this development, because it is more important to engage more deeply the hearts of the broader community [...]. [T]his has consequences for us: We can hardly sing in two parts; we have great instruments and a band that practices and practices and practices, but the congregation can do less and less and less.⁴²⁰

These observations, although variously evaluated by different pastors and music leaders, lead into the next section on (contrasting) stylistic tendencies.

5.5.2. STYLISTIC TENDENCIES

Peter Horst claims that “music must not push itself into the foreground, but must function as a medium that creates just the right atmosphere in which one can open up and in which prayer is possible.”⁴²¹ In this view, the style of music must reflect something of the style of the church, lest the music become a distraction rather than a vehicle for worship.⁴²² In this same vein, Bösch expressed his appreciation for the bandwidth of styles that various churches embrace:

I don't feel that the way we do music and worship is the only right way. But it is our way; it is the path that many other churches also go with – more popular music, band, etc. I am enthusiastic about it. But if I'm in a Catholic church, for example, and there's something Gregorian happening, then for me that's something beautiful, something I value. Or if I were in a congregation that was more country, then I would be happy, because that's more my style – or jazz. Or there are churches in Switzerland that feature a lot of dialect – I would have a hard time with that, but I think it's cool. I simply want to express that I don't think there is one style that is better than others. Rather, I simply believe that each leadership team has to find its own path with the congregation and then follow it.⁴²³

⁴²⁰ Eichinger: “[E]s wird zu sehr etwas geboten von vorne. [...] Wenn Musik eigentlich eine Antwort der ganzen Gemeinde sein soll, dann wird zu wenig Augenmerk auf die Gemeinde gelegt und auch auf das Fördern von den Qualitäten, die dazu notwendig sind. Und da gibt es erhebliche Rückschritte. Eigentlich ja, vorne wird die Qualität immer besser – auch die Audio-Beschallung des Raumes. Man hört sich selber nicht mehr als Teil der Besucherschar. Es ist auch unwesentlich wie du singst, es wird übertönt und Qualität von vorne geboten. Und ich glaube, das hat einen hohen Preis, oder? Ich bedauere diese Entwicklung, weil es wichtiger wäre, die Herzen der breiten Gemeinde tiefer einzubeziehen [...] [D]as hat dann Folgen für uns. Wir können kaum zweistimmig singen. Wir haben zwar tolle Instrumente und eine Band, die übt und übt und übt, aber die Gemeinde kann immer weniger und weniger und weniger.”

⁴²¹ Horst, “Gottesdienst als/mit Lobpreis,” p. 129: “[D]ie Musik [darf] nicht in den Vordergrund drängen, sondern muss sich als Medium verstehen, das genau die *Atmosphäre schafft*, in der man sich öffnen und Gebete zulassen kann.”

⁴²² Horst, “Gottesdienst als/mit Lobpreis,” pp. 129–130.

⁴²³ Bösch: “Ich empfinde nicht, dass die Art und Weise, wie wir Musik und Lobpreis machen, dass das das einzig Richtige ist. Sondern es ist unser Weg; es ist der Weg, den auch viele Gemeinden gehen mit eher Populärmusik, mit Band und Co. Ich bin begeistert davon. Aber wenn ich zum Beispiel in einer katholischen Kirche bin und da geschieht etwas Gregorianisches, dann ist das für mich etwas Schönes, etwas, was ich wertschätze. Oder wäre ich in einer Gemeinde, die dann, was weiß ich, mehr auf Country, dann wäre ich happy, weil das ist eher meins da lebe ich gerne mit, oder auch Jazz. Oder es gibt Gemeinden in der Schweiz, die extrem auf Mundart funktionieren – da tue ich mir dann ein schwer, aber ich finde das cool. Ich will damit einfach zum Ausdruck bringen: Ich glaube nicht, dass es eine Stilrichtung gibt, die besser ist als andere. Sondern, ich glaube einfach, das jeweilige Leitungsteam muss mit ihrer Gemeinde selber den Weg finden und den dann auch halt gehen.”

With these comments in mind, musical styles in Vienna congregations within the *FKÖ* could be seen as leaning in two general directions, or as characterized along a continuum between two basic tendencies: After considering various terms (“congregational”/“communal”/“collective” and “event-oriented”/“concertlike”), I settled on Schweyer’s “collective” and “concertlike.”⁴²⁴ I use “collective” here to refer to a setting in which the musicians leading the singing are amplified at a rather low volume, their demonstrative gestures are minimal, and hall lighting is comparable to or primarily daylight (that is, no great difference between stage and hall lighting). In contrast, a “concertlike” style incorporates greater amplification, more gestures (e.g., hand-raising, jumping) by music leaders, and more intense stage lighting (perhaps combined with lower lighting for the congregation).

It is important to note, however, that “collective” and “concertlike” do not describe two discrete camps but rather two ends of a spectrum, with the style of music in any given church leaning one way or the other based on multiple factors, including the physical space, personalities of music leaders, musical tastes of band and congregation, etc. Nor does the song repertoire have to be fundamentally different.⁴²⁵ Importantly, music leaders across this spectrum understand church music to be fundamentally “communal” rather than “performance” oriented. This fact was made apparent in part as a result of a poor wording choice in the questionnaire I distributed, in which I pitted “communal” against “event-oriented.” What became clear in the process of research is that the “communal” element is central, regardless of style. That said, “communal” can refer to either a congregational, collective singing style or to a setting conducive to a communal, concertlike experience. Schweiger (*Wunderwerk*) provided further clarification:

Our stylistic orientation is more towards what is called “event” in this questionnaire, which would probably lead some to immediately infer emotional “manipulation” or to assume that we are only interested in “atmosphere” – which is definitely not the case! I understand us to be a team which, through our preparation, gives the congregation an opportunity to worship God and encounter him – and to do so as a “holistic” being, because I see musical worship as a chance to address the person as a whole (intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, physically).⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ See Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 206: “[d]as kollektives Setting”; p. 205: “[d]as konzertante Setting.”

⁴²⁵ See Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 206: “Der Unterschied besteht nicht im Lied selbst, sondern in der Art und Weise, wie das Lied aufgeführt wird.”

⁴²⁶ Schweiger: “[U]nsere stilistische Ausrichtung [ist] eher Richtung was in diesem Fragebogen ‘Event’ genannt wird, womit wahrscheinlich einige sofort auf emotionale ‘Manipulation’ schließen würden oder davon ausgehen, dass es uns nur um ‘Atmosphäre’ geht – was aber definitiv nicht der Fall ist! Ich verstehe uns als Team, das durch unsere Vorbereitung der Gemeinde eine Möglichkeit gibt, Gott anzubeten und Ihm zu begegnen – und das, als ‘ganzheitliches’ Wesen, weil ich im musikalischen Lobpreis die Chance sehe, den Menschen als ganzes anzusprechen (intellektuell, emotional, geistlich, körperlich).”

From these remarks, it is clear that it is important to music leaders to “distinguish between worship and entertainment,”⁴²⁷ although they cannot ultimately determine the mindset of those attending the service.

In more “concertlike” services visited, there is a particularly strong representation of very contemporary songs. Interestingly, though, this song repertoire displays a remarkable adaptability – with many of the same songs⁴²⁸ also being sung in churches leaning more towards the “collective” style, where they are sung with lower amplification of the music team, different lighting, and perhaps with fewer repetitions. That said, there are always exceptions: In probably the most “collective”-style church that I visited (here defined in terms of lively congregational participation in the singing, style, and overall atmosphere), there was a clear preference for a song repertoire from their Romanian Pentecostal context rather than current global trends.

From my own experience as an observer, I would cautiously suggest – at least for some individuals or personalities – an inverse correlation between the volume and demonstrative style of the music leader(s) and the impetus for vocal participation of the congregation. As hinted above (regarding hall lighting), one could ask whether the typical high volume (and lower lighting) of a “concertlike” style also affects singing levels; whereas some members of the congregation may feel freer to sing heartily, do others either withdraw into concert mode or feel isolated from fellow worshipers?⁴²⁹ Comments here, however, about congregational participation must be taken with a grain of salt, since the church visits were made during the pandemic, partially over a time period accompanied by appeals for churches to reduce singing, and where widespread mask-wearing certainly can be blamed for both reduced overall volume and reduced inclination to sing.

From a sociological angle, either the “collective” or “concertlike” environment is important for the reinforcement of meaning within a social context through the type and degree of emotional experience stimulated by certain ritualized interactions. Here a “concertlike” context lends itself particularly well to strong emotional experiences, even if these experiences rely on the power of underlying symbolic meanings to enjoy long-lasting impact.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁷ Block, *For the Glory of God*, p. 244.

⁴²⁸ Cf. Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 206.

⁴²⁹ See p. 52 and note 208 above.

⁴³⁰ Cf. Walthert, *Religiöse Rituale und soziale Ordnung*, pp. 239–246.

5.5.3. STYLISTIC PARAMETERS

With either “collective” or “concertlike” musical styles, spontaneity in sung worship is generally not a significant value, even if not rejected in moderate measure – an extra repetition of a song chorus or maybe a change in order of songs, for instance. Demmer (*BBGÖ*) stated with a measure of humor: “Spontaneity is not practiced so much, nor is it greatly desired – if at all, then only in ‘homeopathic’ doses.”⁴³¹ Where spontaneity is welcome, it is so within certain parameters. For instance, Schweiger commented, “It’s expected that something happens within participants when they gather to worship God – of course, this includes spontaneous testimonies, prophetic impressions, etc. But the worship set is for the most part determined (the exception prove the rule).”⁴³²

Even though the overwhelming majority of music leaders favor carefully planned and thoroughly rehearsed music, there is a certain amount of room for improvisation and what in charismatic contexts can be called “anointing.” Prokop described at length what he means by the term:

We should get the music right, but we should know when the music is not as important as blessing the congregation. [...] We all practice at home. We come together, we try to get it right. And sometimes the practice can be a disaster. [...] And then we just do our best. We say, “Look, let’s all take a deep breath and the Holy Spirit is going to be all over this. Whatever it is, is what it is.” And then we commit it to God, and we just say, “Lord, anoint our fingers, anoint our ears, anoint our lips.” And then suddenly it comes out really great – you think, “How did that happen?” And I’m on guitar, and I just sense, you know – less guitar, just sing, sing that third harmony that’s missing that I didn’t practice in the practice. But I’m just like, “Lord, give me ears, give me eyes. Let me do this, anoint me to do this, fill me with the Holy Spirit. Let me see what I don’t see.” Suddenly, everybody’s thinking like that, and then it just happens. It clicks. And you think, “Well, the Holy Spirit made the difference.”

Despite this decidedly spiritual approach, Prokop is also something of a pragmatist: “I told one song leader, ‘It would be better if you focused on being in tune, rather than being focused on being spiritual.’”

That said, quality of music can be a delicate affair – on the one hand encouraging excellence, on the other maintaining realistic expectations of the available musicians. Peloschek described

⁴³¹ Demmer: “[Spontanität] [w]ird nicht so sehr praktiziert und auch nicht großartig gewünscht. Wenn dann nur im homöopathischen Dosen.”

⁴³² Schweiger: “Erwartet wird, dass sich bei den Teilnehmern etwas tut, wenn sie sich versammeln, um Gott anzubeten – natürlich kommt es dabei auch spontan zu Zeugnissen, prophetischen Eindrücken, etc. Das Set im Lobpreis ist aber allermeistens festgelegt (Ausnahmen bestätigen die Regel).” On spontaneity and preparation in services generally, see Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 408–420.

the ups and downs of musical ministry in a rather small congregation, with musicians coming and going over the years and, of course, the extra challenges in recent times due to the pandemic. He acknowledged that much as he appreciates well-played and well-sung music, this is not of ultimate importance: “When the heart is right, the praise is fitting. God is pleased with your heart – not with what he hears, but with the way it comes from the heart.” In this spirit, he can encourage those in his congregation to hone their skills but also not to forget what he says pleases God: “And so I encourage them and say, ‘Keep at it.’ And whether it sounds good or not so good, if it’s from the heart, for the Lord it is wonderful praise and worship.”⁴³³

Worth noting, however, is the impressive number of trained musicians in Vienna *Freikirchen* – both in terms of music leaders (as mentioned above regarding those who contributed questionnaire feedback), and in terms of (potential) music team members. Fischer-Dörl named the number of church members with musical training as a source of encouragement: “If I think about our denomination currently, we have a very good next generation as far as musical training is concerned. There is now, I think, already a high level [of music] in many congregations. I think it’s encouraging that there are people who very much enjoy making music, that we have now also professional musicians.”⁴³⁴

5.6. SONG SOURCES

With regard to song sources, it is impossible to speak comprehensively. However, a few sources named by free-church musicians and pastors include multiple volumes of both *Feiert Jesus* (Celebrate Jesus) and *Du bist Herr* (You Are Lord) and, in the Mennonite church, *Zum Lob seiner Herrlichkeit* (To the Praise of His Glory). Besides these songbooks (and those from previous decades, such as the Pentecostal volumes *Pfingst-Jubel* [Pentecost Jubilation] or

⁴³³ Peloschek: “[W]enn das Herz stimmt, dann passt der Lobpreis. Gott freut sich über dein Herz, nicht über das, was er hört, sondern über das, wie es kommt, wenn es vom Herzen kommt.” “Und so ermutige ich und sag: Bleib da dran. Und ob es gut klingt oder weniger gut klingt, wenn es von Herzen ist, dann ist es beim Herrn: Wunderbarer Lobpreis und Anbetung.”

⁴³⁴ Fischer-Dörl: “[W]enn ich jetzt an unseren Bund denke, dann haben wir sehr guten Nachwuchs, was musikalische Ausbildung angeht. Es gibt mittlerweile, glaube ich, schon ein hohes Niveau in vielen Gemeinden. Ich finde es ermutigend, dass Leute mit sehr viel Spaß am Musizieren dabei sind, dass wir zwischendurch auch Profis haben.” As a slight aside, the topic of musical quality can also be considered from congregation members’ definition(s) of “good music” in a church service. Here, church members’ survey responses emphasized especially the purpose of music in a church service, as well as its quality. Music should usher members of the congregation into true worship – characterized by biblical content and authentic expression. Additionally, the music should be excellent, beautiful – songs should be singable for the congregation, and the music leaders should avoid a showy style or distractingly poor musicianship. A desire for musical variety is expressed by a few, and one response mentioned songs in the mother tongue of the congregation as a defining characteristic of “good music.”

Siegesklänge [Sounds of Victory]), the majority of sources are current bands (sometimes associated with a particular church) and individual singer-songwriters.

A few of these contemporary singer-songwriters are local. When asked about homegrown musicians – and whether the songs of these composers are sung in church services – eight participants (from seven congregations) indicated that there are composers in their congregation, whose songs (and/or arrangements) are sung in services (even if not necessarily often). Interestingly, one *BEG* music leader mentioned composing songs but admitted he had not yet decided to share them publicly. However, when I visited this congregation some weeks after he submitted his questionnaire feedback, it just so happened that on that very Sunday he shared one of his own compositions in a church service for the first time – without any fanfare, but perhaps a personal milestone nonetheless. In another *BEG* congregation, Ring expressed his appreciation for the in-house composer who serves as one of the music team leaders, saying “that’s very precious to me because it is music that comes out of our church and it’s actually reflecting our values or who we are or how we encounter God.”

That said, the majority of songs come from other sources. Popular bands/song sources include Outbreakband and Gebetshaus Augsburg (Germany) and Bethel, CityAlight, Elevation, Hillsong, Jesus Culture, Sovereign Grace, and Worship Revolution (Australia and the United States). Singer-songwriters include the Germans Albert Frey (b. 1964) and Lothar Kosse (b. 1959) and, from the English-speaking world, Ben Fielding (b. 1988), Keith Getty (b. 1974), Kristyn Getty (b. 1980), Brian Johnson (b. 1978), Matt Redman (b. 1974), Chris Tomlin (b. 1972), Phil Wickham (b. 1984), and many others.

These and literally hundreds of other bands and artists are available through the SongSelect database of Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI). As the name suggests, CCLI handles rights for printing and duplication of music, projecting lyrics, and streaming musical portions of services. CCLI represents a new development for the *Freikirchen*, since only in the past couple of years have CCLI licenses and the song database been made available in Austria. The SongSelect database is vast – the website boasts offering “100,000+ songs of worship at your fingertips.”⁴³⁵ For a large percentage of titles, chord sheets and lead sheets are available and, for many songs, also keyboard scores for accompaniment. Moreover, many songs include multiple official language versions. The ready availability of songs via SongSelect no doubt

⁴³⁵ “CCLI: What We Provide,” <<https://europe.ccli.com/what-we-provide/>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

further accelerates the trend towards new songs and towards the global market of Christian music.

Here, for good or ill, the word “global market” is apt. Although not all bands or artists have bought in equally to the business of Christian music, the commercialization of the Christian music industry is a force to be reckoned with, as a Google, YouTube, or Spotify search will show. Bands and individuals go on tour, lead “worship nights” and perform “worship concerts,” promote new albums, or offer seminars and workshops. For instance, two particularly prolific songwriters in recent decades are Matt Redman⁴³⁶ and Chris Tomlin,⁴³⁷ both Grammy award winners, with websites featuring links to music videos, tour dates, etc.

Two large charismatic churches, Hillsong Church begun in Sydney (but now an international network of churches) and Bethel Church in California, have launched internationally known bands. Bethel’s website states, “Bethel Music is a worship movement that exists to lead people’s hearts into profound experiences with God’s presence that fuels personal, regional and global revival.”⁴³⁸ The musicians of Bethel describe themselves as “a community of worshipers, musicians, singers and writers passionately pursuing the presence of God. It is our privilege to commit our talents and our hearts to give God glory.”⁴³⁹ Their website offers dynamic music videos, tour-themed clothing merchandise, and links to “book a Bethel Music Collective artist”⁴⁴⁰ and for “[a] curated worship experience from Bethel Music on Spotify.”⁴⁴¹ Admittedly, Bethel offers a particularly extreme example of modern worship culture (and was also mentioned specifically and critically by a couple of *FKÖ* pastors or music leaders). Other bands and artists take a less showy, edgy approach, while still making abundant use of platforms like Spotify or YouTube.

When music leaders were asked if there are any song sources their churches intentionally avoid, most expressed no categorical exclusion of certain music courses. However, several added that they do evaluate songs on a theological basis, not welcoming a new song from a Christian band simply based on its popularity or previous output. King, for example, stated: “We are willing to consider any songs which we find to align with our understanding of Biblical truth” (*BEG*). Another *BEG* music leader responded that stylistic and theological concerns contribute to a

⁴³⁶ “Matt Redman,” <<https://mattredman.com/>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

⁴³⁷ “Chris Tomlin,” <<https://www.christomlin.com/>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

⁴³⁸ “Bethel Music,” <<https://bethelmusic.com/>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

⁴³⁹ “Bethel Music: Artists,” <<https://bethelmusic.com/artists/>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

⁴⁴⁰ “Bethel Music: Artists.”

⁴⁴¹ “Bethel Music.”

degree of caution with regards to certain song sources. One *BBGÖ* participant expressed particular caution with regard to songs by Hillsong and Bethel, but based on the song list from the same congregation, the music team does not categorically exclude these sources. Another mentioned avoidance of songs from Catholic sources, at least if Marian in content. Ardelean (*BBGÖ*) commented, “If songs are not referring to God (HE is the Savior, HE is great, etc.) but pointing towards us, they are avoided.”⁴⁴² In general, as long as the texts are deemed theologically compatible, the sources themselves vary widely from charismatic megachurches to a Catholic singer-songwriter.

5.7. GLOBAL AND LOCAL POTENTIAL

As is clear from the foregoing paragraphs, the global impact in terms of song repertoire and style is massive. At the same time, pastors within the *FKÖ* shared intriguing thoughts not only on their concerns about Christian music’s globalization, but also the potential a globalized world holds for the local church. At the same time, they also expressed interest in the potential for a more developed local musical idiom.

5.7.1. GLOBAL MUSIC IN A GLOBAL CITY

Ring, who called the globalization of church music a “mixed bag,” is also grateful for the resources provided in a networked world. He mentioned *Sing! Global*, organized by Getty Music, which offers a yearly conference with talks, interviews, and webinars from dozens of different musicians and other speakers, along with musical tutorials and sheet music for use in churches. The focus is not on new compositions, but rather on a spectrum of historical and stylistic resources. The website advertises: “Join us for year five of the Sing! journey as we examine singing through the ages. From the earliest hymns of Scripture that extolled the Risen Christ to the African-American spirituals that comforted God’s people, from the cries of the Reformation to the anthems of the world missions movement, the hymns of the ages have strengthened the church, propelled global evangelism, and sustained believers throughout the generations.”⁴⁴³ Ring also mentioned his wish for more variety of international and particularly non-Western musical input – “because one day we’ll all be together before the throne and it will be wonderful.”

⁴⁴² Ardelean: “Wenn die Lieder nicht auf Gott bezogen sind (ER ist der Erretter, ER ist groß, etc.) sondern mit dem Finger auf uns gerichtet sind, diese werden vermieden.”

⁴⁴³ “Sing! Global,” <<https://www.singglobal.com/>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

Eichinger is very reserved in awarding particular praise to globalization: “The world is becoming more global and we should take that into account, but I wouldn’t consider everything [about globalization] as an enrichment, or not in its entirety. Depth is important.” At the same time, in the context of a multi-ethnic city like Vienna, Eichinger sees significant integrative and enriching potential through music. He has observed that lack of German-language proficiency can reduce the likelihood of certain otherwise qualified individuals from assuming church leadership roles:

This colorful diversity of ethnic groups, which we now really have [...] evident in almost every congregation in Vienna, should also be celebrated on stage as something beautiful. Why not let the Farsi speakers contribute with a song or make a spoken contribution, even if their German may not be fluent? [...] We have to take more into account the multi-ethnic reality and appreciate it and see it as something positive. It is also a contribution to integration and to heated political discussions. We could actually set an example and in turn win over new people, who rediscover their human dignity in an entirely different manner, precisely in lived practice.⁴⁴⁴

While the majority of *FKÖ* churches are German-speaking, the coalition is impressive multi-cultural and multi-lingual, particularly in Vienna. The international congregations I visited seem to have settled on a fairly homogenous musical style but are perhaps willing to incorporate a broader variety of instruments. For instance, one international congregation has on occasion included in their band banjo, harmonica, and mandolin. One unique international church is *VCC*, which is made up of multiple congregations, based on language groups and each with its own style (although Kisslinger asserted that “the importance of praise in each language group is exactly the same”⁴⁴⁵). Three times per year the multiple congregations gather in three spaces (because they do not fit in just one location) for a joint “Celebration.” Here musicians are drawn from each congregation, and music is sung for these special services approximately half in English (given preference as the most widely shared language in such an international church) and German (reflecting the Austrian context). Sometimes a part of a song

⁴⁴⁴ Eichinger: “[D]ie Welt wird globaler und wir dürfen dem Rechnung tragen, aber ich würde jetzt nicht alles als Bereicherung empfinden oder nur teilweise. Die Tiefe ist wichtig.” “[W]ir sollten auch da diese bunte Vielfalt der Ethnien, die wir mittlerweile wirklich haben, die in Wien fast in jeder Gemeinde deutlich ist, auch ein Stück als etwas Schönes und auch auf der Bühne zelebriert. Also warum nicht einmal die Farsi-Sprechenden mit einem Song, wenn auch holprig, einen Beitrag leisten lassen? [...] Wir müssen der multiethnischen Realität mehr Rechnung tragen und sie mehr würdigen und auch als etwas Positives sehen. Es ist auch ein Beitrag zur Integration und zu heißen Diskussionen, die dann die Politiker haben. Wir könnten das eigentlich vorleben und damit auch wiederum Neue gewinnen, die sich in ihrer Menschenwürde dann ganz anders wiederfinden, eben in der gelebten Praxis.”

⁴⁴⁵ Kisslinger: “[D]ie Wichtigkeit des Preises in jeder Sprachgruppe [ist] genau gleich.”

will be sung in another language, but the goal is to be able to sing together and not exclude anyone.

When asked if the various language groups have quite different musical repertoires, Kisslinger said they indeed do. However, she noted that it is clear from the “Celebration” services that there is general familiarity with popular Christian songs (via YouTube, etc.), and some music leaders also prioritize including a representation of songs from the wider Christian context, outside of their specific linguistic setting. This she sees as part of being welcoming to visitors: “It’s also important that people who come from the outside at least have the chance to sing along. If only unfamiliar songs are sung, it’s just more difficult.”⁴⁴⁶

In addition to a number of international congregations (with either English or German as the common language), there are Vienna congregations with services in at least the following additional languages: Amharic, Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, French, Macedonian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Twi. In the mono-lingual churches I visited, a distinctive ethnic flavor characterized especially the Pentecostal African and Romanian congregations. In the former, this was expressed most especially in the instrumentation and call-and-response style of some songs. In the latter, some of the songs had a definite folk music element – immediately recognizable, even if hard to pin down to certain characteristics (aside from the accordion accompaniment). In especially the Romanian and Ghanian *FCGÖ* churches, particularly noteworthy and intriguing was the improvisational capacity of the instrumentalists; a soloist could announce a song by simply beginning to sing, and the instrumentalists proceeded to find the correct key and support the singer. An emphasis on ensemble singing was unique to the Pentecostal Romanian church visited (with the exceptions of a few “special numbers” in one of the African churches, a *BBGÖ* Romanian church, and the *BEG* Russian-speaking church).

Fischer-Dörl suggested that there is much to be shared from ethnic communities in Austria, naming specifically Afghan, Angolan, Iranian, and Mongolian. In addition to potential in terms of richer ethnomusical variety, he would welcome various new strands of tradition, with either Austrian heritage or international origins. He named, for example, “high church” with organ – or Taizé, “which for some seems a bit archaic, but which is actually incredibly spiritual,

⁴⁴⁶ Kisslinger: “Es ist auch wichtig, dass eben auch Leute, die von außen kommen, zumindest die Chance haben, irgendwo mitzusingen. Denn wenn nur unbekannte Sachen gesungen wird, ist es halt schwieriger.”

spiritually strong.”⁴⁴⁷ Additionally, he sees room for growth as including a reinstating of choral music (also mentioned by Eichinger as a largely lost art).

5.7.2. AUSTRIAN IDIOM

When asked regarding incorporation of songs with a distinctly Austrian musical idiom, the subject of dialect was raised. Two *BEG* questionnaire participants mentioned occasionally singing songs in dialect, as well as one contributor from the Baptist churches. Another Baptist church mentioned having incorporated songs in dialect in the past, but it not being particularly well-received by the congregation. Additionally, one participant from an *ECG* congregation stated that music with a folk element is not sung on Sundays, but would be considered appropriate for outreach purposes outside of the church service context.

In interviews, three pastors contributed their thoughts. First, Fischer-Dörl commented on the potential that Austrian folk music might have: “What I found exciting was a discussion from twenty years ago, namely, that we have a lot of folk music, especially in Austria and Bavaria, and that folk music is also an enormous market. And the question is really whether that couldn’t also serve as a means of evangelization, that more folk music could be incorporated.”⁴⁴⁸ He described an outreach event:

There was someone I know who sang a song that sounded more like a *Heuriger* song, a Viennese song. But it was a sacred song in which God is actually the host who invites us to the *Heuriger* and whose table is richly set and who also wants to fill our glasses. And then there was also an eschatological element, that there is a closing time, that you could be late and have to be there early enough. It was really humorously and touchingly done. So there are a lot of possibilities here. I think the difficult thing in our churches and in our context is that we probably don’t allocate enough resources to develop in this area. We really need more people who say: “I have the opportunity to develop this on a full-time or part-time basis,” so that it can actually bear fruit.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁷ Fischer-Dörl: “[...] die für manche ein bisschen archaisch wirkt, aber die eigentlich unheimlich geistlich, spirituell stark ist.”

⁴⁴⁸ Fischer-Dörl: “Was ich auch spannend fand, das war eine Diskussion, ein Gespräch von vor zwanzig Jahren, dass wir gerade in Österreich und Bayern sehr viel Volksmusik haben und Volksmusik ja auch ein unheimlicher Markt ist. Und eigentlich ist auch die Frage, ob das nicht auch als Mittel zur Evangelisation dienen könnte, dass man mehr Volksmusik aufnimmt.”

⁴⁴⁹ Fischer-Dörl: “Es gab jemand, den ich kenne, der hat ein Lied gesungen, das hat mehr so den Klang von einem Heurigen-Lied gehabt; von einem Wiener-Lied. Aber es war ein geistliches Lied mit dem Duktus, dass Gott eigentlich der Wirt ist, der uns zum Heurigen einlädt und dessen Tisch reich gedeckt ist und der uns auch einschenken will. Und dann gab es aber auch diese eschatologische Ebene, dass es eine Sperrstunde gibt und du auch zu spät sein kannst und früh genug dabei sein musst. Das war schon sehr humorvoll und rührend gemacht. Da gibt es also noch eine Menge an Möglichkeiten. Ich finde, das Schwierige ist in unseren Gemeinden und in unserem Kontext, dass wir wahrscheinlich zu wenig Ressourcen freigeben, auch um hier zu entwickeln. Es bräuchte eigentlich noch mehr Leute, die sagen: ‘Ich hab die Möglichkeit das auch hauptamtlich oder teilzeitlich so zu entwickeln,’ dass es dann auch Früchte trägt.”

Ring mentioned a song written in Styrian dialect (“Summerwind” by Helge Plonner) and said: “It’s really a great gift to the Austrian church, and it talks in a very personal way about a personal relationship to God. [...] And when I sang that the last time, I [...] thought, ‘Wow, that really touches my heart.’ It’s sort of the heart language.” While acknowledging that dialect may not fit every context – “for instance, if you look at Colossians 1, the uniqueness of Christ, who he is [...], I’m not sure whether I would write a song about that [...] in dialect” – he nevertheless mused about how “our music could be more Austrian, you know, reclaim Austrian music for God.” Laughing, he added, “I don’t know how that works yet, but I would like to see an accordion being involved.”

Eichinger would also like to see more Austrian music being produced, but, like Fischer-Dörl, admitted that financial limitations are a big factor. He sees plenty of potential in relation to songs by Austrian composers and songs in Austrian dialects: “If I now compare this with Switzerland, with song repertoire in dialect, then I think we are presented with a [...] reserve that should be promoted more. And because we are just so internationally dependent [...], the Austrian works, which are not inferior, somehow don’t have the same extent of circulation.”⁴⁵⁰

5.7.3. NETWORKING

Interesting, while church musicians, to varying degrees, are well-versed in the international scene, networking on denominational or intra-denominational levels is very much a work in progress. Speaking for the *FKÖ* as a whole, Eichinger admitted that music in general is not a subject that has to date received attention at the level of *FKÖ* leadership; the organization is still young, has had many other pressing matters, and there is little overlap between musical leaders in member churches and coalition leaders. In music leader questionnaire feedback, reference was made to occasional sharing of musicians for special events, for Sundays in summer when fewer musicians are in town to play, or for street evangelism, but not more regular, formal cooperation. For some churches, this seems to be an area of desired growth: “There are ideas on expanding the network”⁴⁵¹ (Unterberger, *BBGÖ*).

For the Baptists, Fischer-Dörl stated that there is no current regular cooperation, but have been various cooperative events in the past – international cooperation with the Foreign Mission

⁴⁵⁰ Eichinger: “[W]enn ich das jetzt vergleiche mit der Schweiz, mit Dialekt, Liedgut und so, dann glaube ich, da stehen wir noch vor einem nicht ausgestopften Reservat, das noch mehr gefördert werden sollte. Und weil wir eben nur so international abhängig sind und alles nur von da und dort kopiert wird, haben diese österreichischen Werke, die nicht schlechter sind, irgendwie nicht den Verbreitungshorizont.”

⁴⁵¹ Unterberger: “Ideen sind vorhanden das Netzwerk auszuweiten.”

Board of the Southern Baptists in the United States or in the context of conferences, a celebration of a church anniversary, or outreach events, including various choirs, professional musicians, etc.

Within the *FCGÖ* congregations, Bösch mentioned that a handful of songs have been written by *Wunderwerk* members (which Schweiger also referenced); these are potentially shared with other churches, but cooperation is on an informal basis. At conferences, there is opportunity for members of multiple congregations to sing together and share ideas or songs, as well as perhaps workshops related to music. Kisslinger named *Praise Camp* as one Europe-wide opportunity for young Pentecostals to grow in their understanding of worship: “To really get younger people excited about worship again, to introduce them to it. Also to explain a little bit more what worship really is – that it’s neither just a show, nor should it be a show, that it really comes out of relationship with the Lord.”⁴⁵² Outside of denominational or coalition circles, *Worship at Votif* was a project she helped plan, which brought together musicians from the Catholic Church, *Evangelische Kirche*, and *Freikirchen* – she noted a greater degree of networking outside of Pentecostal circles than within.

6. SONGS IN FOCUS

Providing an overview of current songs in Vienna *Freikirchen* is nearly impossible, given the expanding universe of song repertoire and the variety of congregations being explored. However, in the following pages, I intend to draw out some of the trends and themes of Vienna free-church music – while by no means claiming to offer a thorough analysis of the songs under discussion. Here, the research approach and insights gleaned from Thull’s analysis of music in selected German Pentecostal churches confirmed and enriched my own observations, even if his timespan (five-and-a-half months), number of services observed (303), method of observation (online recordings), target research group (Pentecostal churches with a large percentage of youth), and depth of analysis (twenty-two songs that form the central pillar of the thesis discussion) all differ from my own parameters.⁴⁵³

As noted in the research methodology summarized in the Introduction, I chose to limit a comparison of songs to a targeted three-month period. In response to my request for song lists,

⁴⁵² Kisslinger: “[...] jüngere Leute wieder wirklich für Lobpreis zu begeistern, dahin einzuführen. Auch ein Stück weit mehr zu erklären, was Lobpreis wirklich ist. Dass es weder nur Show ist, soll nicht Show sein, dass es wirklich aus der Beziehung zum Herrn herauskommt.”

⁴⁵³ Benjamin Thull, “Was singt Generation Lobpreis? Eine Untersuchung gegenwärtiger Lobpreiskultur in deutschen Pfingstgemeinden” (Master’s Thesis: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, 2021).

I received responses from three *BBGÖ*, seven *BEG*, and seven *FCGÖ* churches for a total of seventeen lists. While this is only around a third of the number of *FKÖ* churches in Vienna, I believe the results are nevertheless fairly representative (at least for the German and English-speaking congregations), based on my observations of nearly twice that many services.

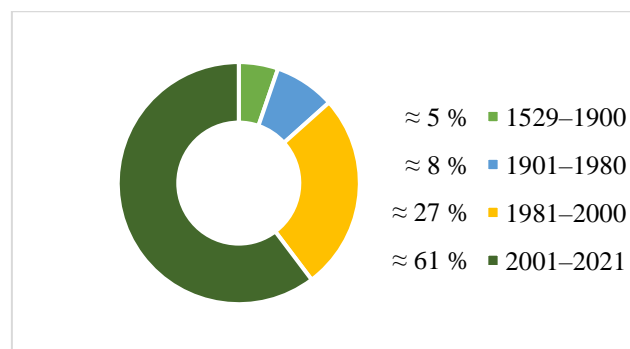
Before discussing my findings, a potential drawback to the method should be mentioned: Churches with CCLI/SongSelect licenses can conveniently generate reporting lists via the database website. Here, however, songs that are old enough to simply be in the public domain appear in the database itself but are automatically excluded from the reporting process and thus do not appear on automatically generated lists. Thus, if song lists were sent to me directly from SongSelect records, any public domain songs would be missing. While this would potentially strongly skew the research results, I have two reasons for not despairing of reasonably accurate lists. First, because I did indeed receive some public domain titles, I can assume that care was taken by some or all music leaders to include older songs no longer under copyright protection. Second, my observations in thirty-one churches correspond to the general outlook of the lists provided, inasmuch as I noted again and again a strong leaning towards more recently composed songs – even if it was via the lists provided that I was made more fully aware of the intensity of this trend.

Before launching into observations gleaned, I would like to reiterate that the following remarks do not attempt to draw a complete picture of songs sung in *FKÖ* congregations in Vienna and instead offer simply a sampling. Here it should be noted that more than a third of the congregations who contributed song lists are English-speaking, bilingual, or with “international” in their church name – which does not proportionately reflect the language demographic of the Vienna *Freikirchen*. Of the remaining ten congregations, eight are German-speaking (at least for the spoken elements of the service), and one church conducts services in Romanian and one in Russian. None of the English-speaking African congregations provided a list, although their musical repertoire certainly would have included some unique contributions. Lastly, three months is a relatively short time-span for such a comparison, and any number of factors could have contributed to uncharacteristic song choices in any given congregation during that period or to slight inconsistencies in lists analyzed.

Disclaimers aside, from the lists received, I gathered around 540 individual song titles, and for around 420 of these I was able to track down further information via the SongSelect database.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵⁴ I am extremely grateful to CCLI for permission to search their database for the requisite information.

(Half of the c. 120 missing songs were Romanian or Russian titles.) Because a detailed analysis of this many songs would dwarf the rest of this paper, I would like to make just a couple overall observations about this group of c. 420 titles, before proceeding to analyses of smaller sections of this repertoire. First, regarding date of composition, the song texts range from 1529 (Luther’s “Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott”) to 2021 (six songs, text and music, all from *ICF Music*, as well as one additional new setting of a nineteenth-century hymn text by a group of German songwriters). The overall trend is strongly towards recent contributions, although it should be noted that the direct or indirect assimilation of older song material makes an accurate and thoughtful dating of certain songs difficult. The following pie chart shows the approximate chronological distribution.



Second, most of the songs were originally written in English – in fact, in the neighborhood of seventy-five percent, although many songs have German translations and may have been sung in translation in the congregations represented. A handful of old German hymns do make an infrequent appearance, attributed to Martin Luther (1483–1546), Johann Crüger (1598–1662), Paul Gerhardt (1607–1676),⁴⁵⁵ Joachim Neander (1650–1680), and others.

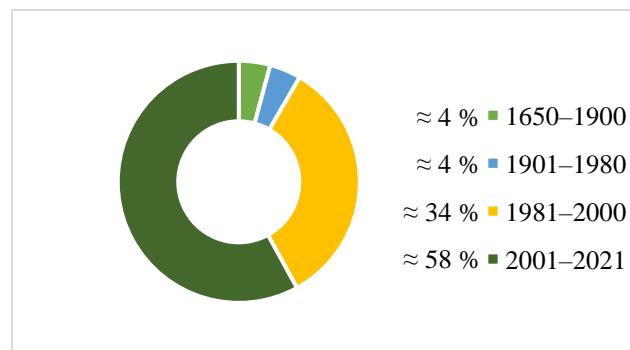
Narrowing the scope of analysis to those songs sung in two or more different congregations (one or multiple times), a considerably shorter list of 119 “songs, hymns, and spiritual songs” (Eph 5:19, Col 3:16) appears.⁴⁵⁶ This list is given in full in Appendix 9.4, along with the composer, year of publication, and number of churches that sang this song.⁴⁵⁷ In terms of the chronological distribution of songs, also in this data set the last two decades are strongly represented – nearly sixty percent. That said, some old favorites, so to speak, do show up in

⁴⁵⁵ As a side note, singer-songwriter Albert Frey made an interesting comment in an interview on the staying power of Gerhardt’s hymns, in “Kein Streit mehr um die Lieder!” *Katholische Nachrichten*, 3 March 2016, <<https://www.kath.net/news/54107>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022): “Seine Lieder kann man immer singen – auch und gerade dann, wenn es einem schlechtgeht. Er denkt nach über Krankheit, Trauer und Tod und über die Frage, warum Gebete nicht erhört werden. Gerhardt macht praktisch alle Lebenssituationen zum Thema.”

⁴⁵⁶ It should be noted that I made no effort to note which songs were sung multiple times in the same congregation in the given time period.

⁴⁵⁷ Again, I am grateful to CCLI/SongSelect for permission to print this information.

this list: “Großer Gott wir loben dich,” “The Lord’s My Shepherd,” “It Is Well,” “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” along with modern settings of older texts (“Before the Throne of Grace”) or beloved hymns (“Amazing Grace”). The following pie chart shows, as above, the general chronological distribution:



With regard to composers, from the German-speaking world, the most widely sung individual songwriter is certainly Albert Frey. From the total of 119 songs sung in at least two congregations, he is the sole composer of eight songs, which were written between 1992 and 2008 (and from the entire database of song titles submitted, the composer of well over twice that number). Frey is Roman Catholic but active in ecumenical circles and obviously widely appreciated in free-church contexts.⁴⁵⁸ His songs stand out for their thoughtful, well-crafted lyrics. Interestingly, in recent years he and his wife, Andrea Adams-Frey (b. 1966), have joined a larger group of musicians in the *Liederschatz-Projekt* (Song Treasury Project), aimed at reviving hymns and chorales from past centuries through new musical settings.⁴⁵⁹ A second German songwriter sung frequently is Lothar Kosse.⁴⁶⁰ In terms of bands, Outbreakband – which in 2013 won the pan-European Award of “‘Evangelical-oriented, modern Christian music scene’ from the ‘German-speaking countries’ category”⁴⁶¹ – stands out as the only German-speaking band to be included in the list (with three songs). In terms of English-speaking bands, the most sung is Hillsong, followed by Bethel. In terms of overall language distribution, songs composed in German number just under twenty percent.

In terms of song content, direct biblical quotations are frequent, drawn especially from the Psalms, for example: “Psalm 19,” “The Lord’s My Shepherd” and “Wunderbarer Hirt” (Ps 23), “As the Deer” (Ps 42), “Better Is One Day” (Ps 84), “Lobe den Herrn meine Seele” (Ps 103).

⁴⁵⁸ “Kein Streit mehr um die Lieder!”

⁴⁵⁹ “Albert Frey: Liederschatz,” <<http://adams-frey.de/liederschatz.html>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

⁴⁶⁰ “Lothar Kosse,” <<https://kosse.de/>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

⁴⁶¹ “Outbreakband, <<https://music.youtube.com/channel/UC8bUu1VQiCESd4jYXfesVwA>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

Old Testament references seem to predominate, perhaps because of the wealth of poetic language found there. Besides the psalms named, these include “Blessed Be Your Name” (Job 1), “Der Herr segne dich” and “The Blessing” (Numbers 6), and “Everlasting God” (Isaiah 40). New Testament thematic material is certainly central to song content, whether or not a specific passage is quoted directly. Some of these themes will be discussed further below.

Narrowing the list still further, I would like to take a closer look at the thirty-six songs that were sung in at least four congregations, that is, in around twenty-five percent of churches polled. All of these were sung in at least two of the three denominations represented in the song list collection (*BBGÖ*, *BEG*, *FCGÖ*). The following analysis will address basic characteristics (date and language), musical characteristics (structural form, melodic features, etc.), poetic/linguistic elements (register, rhyme, repetition, metaphor, forms of address), and recurring textual themes.

6.1. DATE AND LANGUAGE OF COMPOSITION

Two of the thirty-six songs could be classified as “old” or at least relatively old classic hymns. The text of “Be Thou My Vision” is an English translation from 1912 by Eleanor Hull (1860–1935) of an ancient (possibly sixth-century) Old Irish text. The text is typically sung today to the tune “Slane,” a folk melody dating to 1919.⁴⁶² The other classic hymn that made the top list is “How Great Thou Art.” The text was originally written in Swedish; it appeared in print in 1886, and the tune and text were published together in 1891. In 1907, the text was translated into German, but in its most familiar English form not until the 1930s. Perhaps not surprisingly, the German and English texts do not fully match – since the translator of the English version, Stuart K. Hine (1899–1989), made changes and additions to the 1912 Russian translation he first encountered as a missionary in Ukraine.⁴⁶³ The remaining top songs were all written in the 1990s (three songs) and the 2000s (thirty-one songs). Of these thirty-four songs written within approximately the past thirty years, seven were composed in German, the rest in English. As far as translations, three of the German songs have an official, singable translation (“Der Einzige”/“No Other Name”; “Mittelpunkt”/“The Center”; “Wunderbarer Hirt”/“Shepherd of My Soul”), and all of the English songs but one have an official, singable German translation.

⁴⁶² “Be Thou My Vision: Hymn and Lyrics,” 29 August 2016 <<https://www.christianmusicandhymns.com/2016/08/be-thou-my-vision.html>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

⁴⁶³ “Be Thou My Vision: Hymn and Lyrics.”

6.2. MUSICAL STRUCTURE

In terms of musical structure, the majority of songs are composed of verses, a chorus, and a “bridge.” The bridge is often written in a slightly higher register than the rest of the song and lends itself to a higher intensity of singing and accompaniment (for example, “Mittelpunkt,” “This I Believe,” “Mighty to Save”). Sometimes it is preceded by an instrumental interlude (potentially building in intensity) and is usually followed by one or more repetitions of the chorus. Some songs contain just verses and chorus; only a couple are purely strophic (“Be Thou My Vision,” “In Christ Alone”).

In terms of typical melodic lines, one of the first aspects that stands out is the incorporation of a significant degree of syncopation (too many examples to name). This element of complexity is counterbalanced by a clear preference for repetition of short melodic fragments. For instance, in “Build My Life,” the same four-note melodic grouping appears six times in the bridge (in this case the rising bass line contributing momentum harmonically), and similarly in “Everlasting God,”⁴⁶⁴ a six-note grouping appears six times in the chorus (“will wait upon the Lord” / “we wait upon the Lord”) (here the repetition likely intended to reinforce the “waiting”).

Most songs have a melodic range between an interval of an octave and an eleventh, although three have an extended range of a twelfth. This is worth noting, since it is a slightly broader average range than might be found in a typical hymn book; a comparison of the same number of hymns from the opening pages of a standard (English) hymnal revealed no melodic ranges of more than a tenth.⁴⁶⁵ While this is not a great difference, nevertheless one to make just slightly higher demands on the singing congregation in terms of vocal range. The expanded range may also be a factor in a performance practice I repeatedly observed in church services visited, namely, that key selections tend to be very low – with the melody line dipping far below middle C for female voices.⁴⁶⁶ Of course, key selection today is largely up to the music leader, since SongSelect provides instant transcriptions. The tendency towards lower keys underscores that unison singing is widely favored over part-singing. Improvised harmonic lines, either above or below the melody, are indeed often sung by a second (or, less often, a

⁴⁶⁴ “Everlasting God,” Text & Melodie: Ken Riley & Brenton Brown © 2005 Thankyou Music (für D, A, CH: SCM Hänssler, Holzgerlingen).

⁴⁶⁵ *Trinity Hymnal*, rev. edn. (Atlanta: Great Commission Publications, 1990).

⁴⁶⁶ While it is true that in any standard hymn book, the alto line might occasionally dip as low as a G below middle C (two instances in the first thirty-six *Trinity* hymns), in church service visits I was repeatedly surprised by the melody line dropping that low and even lower – based on my sense of my own vocal range, perhaps as low as *Eb*.

third) voice backing up the lead singer, and perhaps also by members of the congregation, but nevertheless the majority of the congregation sings the melody – perhaps having to jump up an octave if the melody line dips too low.

6.3. POETIC AND THEMATIC CHARACTERISTICS

At serious risk of making an over-generalization, textual depth through linguistic artistry is not the hallmark of the majority of contemporary Christian music. As has been pointed out, however, comparing the quality of the plethora of current songs with the body of proven classics is not quite fair; certainly the “classics” only survived after a thorough vetting by previous generations, a process that is sure to weed out some, but of course not all, of today’s “hits.”⁴⁶⁷ While I could try to list exceptions (some of Frey’s songs come first to mind), this statement does not have to be understood as necessarily negative. Instead, the songs typically being sung in *Freikirchen*, including the list of “top songs” discussed here, seek to engage worshipers in a variety of meditative and celebratory settings and moods, for which simpler texts, informal language, and numerous repetitions may be best suited. Of course, the songs being composed by many contemporary Christian artists tend to reflect musical styles popular also in secular music settings.⁴⁶⁸

6.3.1. SIMPLICITY AND INFORMALITY

A somewhat extreme example may provide a helpful illustration: “Way Maker”⁴⁶⁹ by Nigerian songwriter Osinachi Kalu Okoro Egbu (b. 1973). The song text and musical structure are simple, relying heavily on repetition – both with regard to the text and melody of the verses, chorus, and bridge, but also with regard to the performance practice, in which each part is sung multiple times.⁴⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the Gospel Music Association hails Sinach (the artist’s nickname and label name) as “the industry’s top Christian songwriter,” and as having “made a global impact in truly unprecedented ways.” Besides her own music video of this song having

⁴⁶⁷ Thull, “Was singt Generation Lobpreis?” p. 19.

⁴⁶⁸ There seems to be almost a note of dry humor in the words of Susan White, whom I quote here from Thull’s monograph: “[T]he culture to which worship is being adapted is a culture in which precision and dignity in language is fairly low”: Thull, “Was singt Generation Lobpreis?” p. 65.

⁴⁶⁹ “Way Maker,” Text & Melodie: Osinachi Kalu Okoro Egbu © 2016 Integrity Music Europe (für D, A, CH: SCM Hänssler, Holzgerlingen).

⁴⁷⁰ The official video can be found on YouTube: “Sinach: Way Maker – Official Video,” <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4XWfwLHeLM>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

garnered over 150 million views, numerous other popular Christian music artists have recorded “Way Maker,” as well as two American Idol competitors.⁴⁷¹

For Vienna *Freikirchen*, what might be the appeal of this particular song? Two possibilities suggest themselves. First and most obviously, the popularity of “Way Maker” demonstrates the impact of globalized contemporary Christian music. With the song’s soaring in popularity in 2020, especially in the United States, where it was widely received as offering hope both in the face of racial unrest and a global pandemic, it was only a (short) matter of time before it found its way into churches far from either U.S. song chart ratings – or from the songwriter’s native Nigeria.⁴⁷² A second potential factor, prosaic as it may be, is that the song is exceedingly easy to sing. Its simplicity is in some sense a marketing advantage, since it can easily be spread internationally even without or before translations appear. (Currently, the only official translation in SongSelect is into Spanish.) Furthermore, the text appeals to characteristically popular textual elements in the free-church settings surveyed. First, the three verses combine both the *individual* and *communal* (“I”/“our”) elements of worship:

*You are here moving in our midst
I worship You I worship You
You are here working in this place
I worship You I worship You*

*You are here touching ev’ry heart
I worship You I worship You
You are here healing ev’ry heart
I worship You I worship You*

*You are here turning lives around
I worship You I worship You
You are here mending ev’ry heart
I worship You yeah I worship You Lord*

Second, the chorus declares aspects of *God’s character*:

*(You are) Way Maker Miracle Worker Promise Keeper
Light in the darkness my God that is who You are*

⁴⁷¹ “Sinach, Writer Of ‘Way Maker,’ Named Top Songwriter For 12 Weeks In A Row,” <<https://gospelmusic.org/sinach-writer-of-way-maker-named-top-songwriter-for-12-weeks-in-a-row/>>, 10 June 2020, Gospel Music Association (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

⁴⁷² Megan Fowler, “How ‘Way Maker’ Topped the US Worship Charts from Nigeria,” 12 June 2020, *Christianity Today*, <<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/june-web-only/way-maker-worship-song-sinach-leelandmic-hael-w-smith.html>> (Accessed: 23 March 2022).

And, third, the bridge resonates at a *personal, experiential level*, with generalized expressions of trust:

*Even when I don't see it You're working
Even when I don't feel it You're working
You never stop You never stop working
You never stop You never stop working*

One aspect of this extremely simple (some might argue, simplistic) text is its informality. Other songs illustrate this aspect, as well; an example can be found in the second chorus and bridge of “Who You Say I Am”⁴⁷³:

*In my Father's house
There's a place for me
I'm a child of God
Yes I am*

*I am chosen not forsaken
I am who You say I am
You are for me not against me
I am who You say I am*

When compared to the more formal, reverential language of older hymns, the contrast is abundantly evident, as here in the first verse of “Be Thou My Vision”⁴⁷⁴:

*Be Thou my vision
O Lord of my heart
Naught be all else to me
Save that Thou art
Thou my best thought
By day or by night
Waking or sleeping
Thy presence my light*

While this widely cherished hymn text displays a level of wordsmithing not evident in the previous examples, it would be unfair to suggest that the overwhelmingly contemporary song repertoire being sung in *Freikirchen* therefore lacks textual creativity. However, the textual creativity exemplified today is, of course, packaged in contemporary linguistic forms.

⁴⁷³ “Who You Say I Am,” Ben Fielding & Reuben Morgan © 2017 Hillsong Music Publishing Australia (für D, A, CH: Universal Music Publishing, Berlin).

⁴⁷⁴ “Be Thou My Vision,” Eleanor Henrietta Hull & Mary Elizabeth Byrne © Words: Public Domain. Music: Public Domain.

6.3.2. RHYME AND REPETITION

Thinking of songs as poetic expressions, probably the most obvious poetic element is that of rhyme – certainly a standard characteristic of older hymns (“Be Thou My Vision” and “How Great Thou Art” are no exceptions). In the songs from more recent decades, rhyming is still incorporated, but tends to be looser, including more near rhymes, and depends in large part on repetition as either a rhyming or broader poetic effect. One example is the bridge from “How Great Is Our God”⁴⁷⁵:

*The splendor of the King
Clothed in majesty
Let all the earth rejoice
All the earth rejoice
He wraps Himself in light
And darkness tries to hide
And trembles at His voice
And trembles at His voice*

Another example is the song “This Is Amazing Grace,” in which the word “worthy” is repeated ten times in the bridge. A rather more linguistically sophisticated example would be Frey’s “Jesus Erlöser der Welt.”⁴⁷⁶ Here the repetition textually (and also melodically) in both verses highlights a theological statement about the dual natures of Christ (*What a man / What a God*):

*Was für ein Mensch,
dem Wind und Wellen gehorchen.
Was für ein Mensch,
der auf dem Wasser geht.
Was für ein Mensch,
der Wasser in Wein verwandelt,
Brot und Fisch vermehrt.
Was für ein Mensch,
der die Gefangenen frei macht.
Was für ein Mensch,
der selbst den Tod bezwingt.
Was für ein Mensch,
der allen Armen und Schwachen
frohe Botschaft bringt.*

*Was für ein Gott,
der zu uns kommt, um zu dienen.*

⁴⁷⁵ “How Great Is Our God,” Text & Melodie: Chris Tomlin & Jesse Reeves & Ed Cash © 2004 Vamos Publishing / sixsteps Music / worshiptogether.com songs (für D, A, CH: Universal Music Publishing, Berlin) / © 2004 Wondrously Made Songs (für D, A, CH: Small Stone Media Germany, Köln).

⁴⁷⁶ “Jesus Erlöser der Welt,” Albert Frey © 2004 FREYKLANG (Verwaltet von Gerth Medien).

*Was für ein Gott,
der klein wird, wie ein Kind.
Was für ein Gott,
der alle Schuld dieser Erde
für uns auf sich nimmt.
Was für ein Gott,
der mit uns sein neues Reich baut.
Was für ein Gott,
der uns das Erbe gibt.
Was für ein Gott,
der uns als Söhne und Töchter
unbeschreiblich liebt.*

6.3.3. METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE

Probably the most ubiquitous poetic element, besides rhyming and repetition, is the inclusion of metaphoric language. In the songs surveyed, by far the most prominent metaphor is that of light (brilliance, day, shine) and/or darkness (night, shadows) – appearing in at least twenty of the thirty-six songs. Light serves as a metaphor, for instance, for God’s presence (“Be Thou My Vision”) and glory (“Mittelpunkt”), and for the incarnate Christ (“In Christ Alone”⁴⁷⁷: “There in the ground His body lay / Light of the world by darkness slain / Then bursting forth in glorious Day / Up from the grave He rose again”). Darkness can refer to suffering (“Blessed Be Your Name”), Christ’s death (“This I Believe”), or spiritual lostness (“Living Hope”⁴⁷⁸: “In desperation I turned to heaven / And spoke Your name into the night / Then through the darkness Your loving-kindness / Tore through the shadows of my soul”).

Other metaphors refer to familiar biblical imagery from the Psalms and elsewhere – God as Fortress, Tower, Shelter, Rock and Christ as Cornerstone, Lamb, Lion. Additional references include the “dry bones” prophesied over by Ezekiel (chapter 37), the metaphor of eagles’ wings employed by Isaiah (chapter 40), and the ninety-nine sheep of Jesus’ parable in the Gospels (Matthew 18 and Luke 15). While long biblical quotations are generally not to be found, “Shepherd of My Soul” is clearly based on Psalm 23 (and possibly also alludes to Revelation 3:20), and “Psalm 19” is inspired by the last two verses of that psalm.

⁴⁷⁷ “In Christ Alone,” Text & Melodie: Stuart Townend & Keith Getty © 2001 Thankyou Music (für D, A, CH: SCM Hänssler, Holzgerlingen).

⁴⁷⁸ “Living Hope,” Text & Melodie: Phil Wickham & Brian Johnson © 2017 Bethel Music Publishing (für D, A, CH: Small Stone Media Germany, Köln) / © 2017 Phil Wickham Music / Simply Global Songs / Sing My Songs (für D, A, CH: SCM Hänssler, Holzgerlingen).

6.3.4. FORMS OF ADDRESS

Songs, while unavoidably communal in nature when sung in a church service setting, include much vocabulary of the individual⁴⁷⁹: Singular first-person (and possessive) pronouns (“I”/“me”/“my”/“mine”) appear around three hundred times (for instance, “Reckless Love,” in which every line of the two verses ends in “me”), and plural forms considerably less often (“we”/“us”/“our” around one hundred times) in the thirty-six songs under discussion. Sometimes singular and plural pronouns are combined in the same song, for instance, here verse two and the bridge of “Mighty to Save”⁴⁸⁰:

*So take me as You find me
All my fears and failures
Fill my life again
I give my life to follow
Ev’rything I believe in
Now I surrender*

*Shine your light and let the whole world see
We’re singing
For the glory of the risen King
Jesus
Shine your light and let the whole world see
We’re singing
For the glory of the risen King*

Songs can be addressed to oneself (“Bless the Lord O My Soul” is an obvious example), to the gathered congregation (“Come to the Table”), to the created world both natural and supernatural (“Great in Power”), and to God (employing “You”/“Your” vocabulary, for example “Way Maker” discussed above) – although the assumption is that any of these forms of address is a vehicle for Godward worship.

Some song texts talk *about* God rather than being addressed directly *to* him. A prime example is “In Christ Alone”⁴⁸¹; in the first verse, the text extols the character of Christ:

*In Christ alone my hope is found
He is my light my strength my song
This Cornerstone this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love what depths of peace
When fears are stilled when strivings cease
My Comforter my All in All*

⁴⁷⁹ Cf. Thull, “Was singt Generation Lobpreis?” pp. 48–50.

⁴⁸⁰ “Mighty to Save,” Ben Fielding & Reuben Morgan © 2006 Hillsong Music Publishing Australia (für D, A, CH: Universal Music Publishing, Berlin).

⁴⁸¹ “In Christ Alone,” Townend and Getty.

Here in the love of Christ I stand

And the following three verses describe his redemptive work – from his incarnation, to his death, to his resurrection, to his return in the eschaton:

*In Christ alone who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live*

*There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ*

*No guilt in life no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand*

Thus, while nowhere in this song is God (Jesus/Christ) directly addressed, nevertheless the tenor of the song is clearly that of praise to God in the form of declaration/proclamation.

6.3.5. NARRATIVE FORM AND TEXTUAL THEMES

“In Christ Alone” is also a particularly good example of songs that are instructive or explanatory, here through the narrative progression recounting Christ’s salvific deeds and reflecting upon them theologically (for example, “No guilt in life no fear in death / This is the power of Christ in me”). However, a majority of the top songs (and also the longer list in Appendix 9.4.) are not narrative in structure, but rather focus on adoration of God for one or more of his attributes (grace, love, sovereignty, mercy, goodness, etc.) or on one or more aspects of the worshiper’s relationship to God – or both interwoven together).

A prominent theme is God as Creator/Sustainer of the universe, with a focus on his greatness, for example, “Great in Power,” “God and Wonders,” or the verse, pre-chorus, and chorus of “Higher”⁴⁸²:

*Who gives orders to the morning
Tells the sun where to rise
Who speaks life into existence
Tells the dark where to reside
Who chose to love the unloving
Told the crippled to rise up
Who chose to die for my redemption
Came to mend the broken hearts*

*There is no one like our God
None like You*

*You're higher higher higher than the heavens
And Your love Your love deeper than the oceans
Your word Your word true until the end
So I'm holding on to You the Author of life*

Here the theme of God as Creator/Sustainer segues seamlessly to his re-creative work of redemption.⁴⁸³ Another example is found in verses one and three of “How Great Thou Art”⁴⁸⁴ (corresponding to verses one and four of the German version), each verse followed by the chorus:

*O Lord my God when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hand hath made
I see the stars I hear the mighty thunder
Thy pow'r throughout the universe displayed*

*Then sings my soul my Saviour God to Thee
How great Thou art how great Thou art
Then sings my soul my Saviour God to Thee
How great Thou art how great Thou art*

*And when I think that God His Son not sparing
Sent Him to die I scarce can take it in*

⁴⁸² “Higher,” Text & Melodie: Dominik Laim © 2015 ICF Music/Integrity’s Praise! Music (für D, A, CH: SCM Hänssler, Holzgerlingen). (From the composer: Music & Lyrics by Dominik Laim © 2014 Integrity’s Praise! Music & ICF Music [CCLI Number: 7033525].)

⁴⁸³ Cf. “Kein Streit mehr um die Lieder!” and Frey’s reference to Paul Gerhardt: “Er fängt oft mit Naturbeobachtungen an und kommt dann zu den ewigen Dingen.”

⁴⁸⁴ “How Great Thou Art,” Originaltitel: O store Gud, Text: Carl Boberg (1885), Melodie: aus Schweden, Übersetzung: Stuart K. Hine (1899-1989), © (Text) 1953 Stuart K. Hine Trust / Integritymusic.com (für D, A, CH: SCM Hänssler, Holzgerlingen).

*That on the Cross my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin*

Then sings my soul my Saviour God to Thee [...]

Another very prominent theme is that of the name of God/Jesus/Christ – mentioned in a total of thirteen of the thirty-six songs – and featured in several songs, as evidenced by the titles: “Blessed Be Your Name,” “O Praise the Name,” and (here, for instance, in the variations of the chorus) “What a Beautiful Name”⁴⁸⁵:

*What a beautiful Name it is
What a beautiful Name it is
The Name of Jesus Christ my King
What a beautiful Name it is
Nothing compares to this
What a beautiful Name it is
The Name of Jesus*

*What a wonderful Name it is
[...] Nothing compares to this*

*What a powerful Name it is
[...] Nothing can stand against*

A few songs have a Trinitarian element (“How Great Is Our God,” “King of Kings,” and “This I Believe”), but only one other mentions the Spirit directly (“Oceans”) – whereas God/Father and Jesus/Christ are named more frequently.⁴⁸⁶

6.3.6. SUMMARY

Of course, there are many other thematic categories that could be discussed, but instead I would like to conclude this section with brief reference to the purposes of music discussed by music leaders and pastors above – worship, instruction, experience.

Regarding “worship,” it is interesting to glance back at the list of “postures of worship” described earlier: adoration, commitment, confession, lament, proclamation, thanksgiving, trust. In the feedback from music leaders, either adoration/*Anbetung* or thanksgiving/*Danksagung* was almost always ranked first. While the words “thanks,” “thank you,” or “thanksgiving,” do not themselves necessarily appear in the songs discussed, this

⁴⁸⁵ “What a Beautiful Name,” Ben Fielding & Brooke Ligertwood © 2016 Hillsong Music Publishing Australia (für D, A, CH: Universal Music Publishing, Berlin).

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. Thull, “Was singt Generation Lobpreis?” pp. 51–53.

ranking is presumably given because a large contingent of songs are generally expressions of thanksgiving. That said, obvious expressions of adoration (“You’re higher higher higher than the heavens,”⁴⁸⁷ “Blessed be the name of the Lord,”⁴⁸⁸ “My heart will sing / How great is our God”⁴⁸⁹ etc.) or proclamation of God’s character (“You are the everlasting God,”⁴⁹⁰ “Your love Your love deeper than the oceans,”⁴⁹¹ “Great in power / Great in glory / Great in mercy / King of Heaven,”⁴⁹² etc.) appear far more times than could be listed here. Likewise, expressions of commitment and trust are common (“Jesus Christ my living hope / Oh God You are my living hope,”⁴⁹³ “I give my life to follow / Ev’rything I believe in / Now I surrender”⁴⁹⁴). As the questionnaire feedback revealed, themes of “confession” or “lament” are the least represented categories – which the song lists collaborate. Thull also notes this in his research: “the extensive abstinence from themes such as lament, repentance, or mourning, which is characteristic of the contemporary worship culture as a whole.”⁴⁹⁵ From the top thirty-six songs discussed here, the closest wording to “confession” might be “So take me as You find me / All my fears and failures / Fill my life again”⁴⁹⁶ – even if declarations of having been forgiven (past tense, present experience) are frequent.

Regarding instruction, if “instruction” is defined in terms of theological content, then the message communicated is certainly reflective of the theology of the churches surveyed, even if not remotely systematic or comprehensive. References to salvation history, key biblical concepts like the Trinity, and to Christological themes are present but often tangentially addressed or generalized.⁴⁹⁷ The most systematic or thorough song in terms of theological doctrine is “This I Believe,” based on the Apostles’ Creed.⁴⁹⁸ Instruction through song in terms

⁴⁸⁷ “Higher,” Laim.

⁴⁸⁸ “Blessed Be Your Name,” Text & Melodie: Matt Redman & Beth Redman © 2002 Thankyou Music (für D, A, CH: SCM Hänssler, Holzgerlingen).

⁴⁸⁹ “How Great Is Our God,” Tomlin, Reeves, and Cash.

⁴⁹⁰ “Everlasting God,” Riley, Brown.

⁴⁹¹ “Higher,” Laim.

⁴⁹² “Great in Power,” Russell Fragar © 1998 Hillsong MP Songs (für D, A, CH: Universal Music Publishing, Berlin).

⁴⁹³ “Living Hope,” Wickham and Johnson.

⁴⁹⁴ “Mighty to Save,” Fielding and Morgan.

⁴⁹⁵ Thull, “Was singt Generation Lobpreis?” pp. 47–48: “[...] die weitgehende Abstinenz von Themen wie Klage, Buße oder Trauer, die für die gegenwärtige Lobpreiskultur insgesamt charakteristisch ist.”

⁴⁹⁶ “Mighty to Save,” Fielding and Morgan.

⁴⁹⁷ Cf. Thull, “Was singt Generation Lobpreis?” pp. 45–57.

⁴⁹⁸ Somewhat humorously, artistic license has won out here over logical clarity – although the entire content of the creed is woven into the song text, the order is rather jumbled (especially part of the second chorus: “I believe in life eternal / I believe in the virgin birth / I believe in the saints’ communion / And in Your holy Church”). See “This I Believe,” Ben Fielding & Matt Crocker © 2014 Hillsong Music Publishing Australia (für D, A, CH: Universal Music Publishing, Berlin).

of theological content can hardly be a primary intention – unless “instruction” is to be understood in a more experiential mode.

That leads us to the last category of “emotional experience” in the context of singing in free-church services, and it is interesting to note the overall emotional tenor of the lyrics. Thull states regarding the song catalogue he analyzes:

According to an image of God characterized by love and nearness, feelings of positive valence dominate on the part of the worshiper, especially love, trust, gratitude, security, hope, and awe. [...] In contrast, there is not a single instance of interaction with God triggering feelings of negative valence on the part of the worshiper. When negative feelings are addressed, God is not the source, but rather the one to whom the worshiper confidently turns to find relief or resolution or redemption.⁴⁹⁹

Perhaps at one level this observation states the obvious; one would expect singing in the context of a church service to focus on thanksgiving and praise for the beneficent character and works of God (and also to feature humble expressions of dependence). That said, as mentioned already, current song repertoire does not necessarily reflect the breadth and depth of internal postures of worship exhibited, for example, in the biblical Psalms.⁵⁰⁰ Whereas for some this is seen as a loss,⁵⁰¹ others perceive the “shift” more positively, indicative of a stronger focus on joyful themes, particularly on the goodness of God.⁵⁰² That said, a few songs do indeed engage with a lingering sense of dis-ease in the world, even if not in the form of lament *per se*. For instance, Frey’s “Zwischen Himmel und Erde”⁵⁰³ thematizes the tension of current experiences of personal suffering (“Zwischen Himmel und Erde leiden wir / an Zerrissenheit auf dem Weg zu dir”) or failure (“Zwischen Himmel und Erde sind wir noch / und das, was wir nicht wollen, tun wir doch”) – doing so, however, within a theological framework of hope.

7. CONCLUSION

From my study of Vienna congregations belonging to denominations comprising the *FKÖ*, exploration of church services and especially church music suggests the following concluding

⁴⁹⁹ Thull, “Was singt Generation Lobpreis?” pp. 40–41: “Einem von Liebe und Nähe geprägten Gottesbild entsprechend dominieren auf Seiten des Anbetenden Gefühle positiver Valenz, insbesondere Liebe, Vertrauen, Dankbarkeit, Geborgenheit, Hoffnung und Ehrfurcht. [...] Im Gegensatz dazu gibt es keinen einzigen Beleg dafür, dass eine Interaktion mit Gott Gefühle negativer Valenz auf Seiten der Anbetenden auslöst. Wenn negative Gefühle thematisiert werden, ist Gott nicht der Verursacher, sondern derjenige, an den sich die Anbetende vertrauensvoll wendet, um Befreiung oder (Er-)Lösung zu finden.”

⁵⁰⁰ See Ring’s comments above, for instance, p. 85.

⁵⁰¹ For example, Eichinger above, p. 106.

⁵⁰² See Bösch’s comments above, p. 108–109.

⁵⁰³ “Zwischen Himmel und Erde leiden wir / an Zerrissenheit auf dem Weg zu dir,” Albert Frey © 2002 FREYKLANG (Verwaltet von Gerth Medien).

remarks – “concluding” in the sense that they bring this text to a close but by no means a conclusion to exploration of the topic itself.

7.1. RESEARCH FINDINGS: DIVERSITY AND UNITY

Here I would like to touch on five pairs of values, each of which expresses an intrinsic tension within free-church worship and practice. By tension I do not mean to imply a negative element (for example, tension as conflict or stress) – but rather the intense energy required to maintain dynamic poise. In this vein, I want to consider the tension contained in these pairs: 1) form and flexibility, 2) horizontal and vertical, 3) individual and community, 4) experience and edification, and 5) in-reach and out-reach. The various denominations and churches that together compose the *FKÖ* display a consistent emphasis on all of these values, even as they express their diversity through the balancing act these dualities require.

7.1.1. FORM AND FLEXIBILITY

The general tone of free-church services underscores a dynamic poise between form and flexibility. Form, a liturgy of sorts, is evident in every service – and finds extensive consistency across denominational and linguistic contexts: greeting, singing, praying, preaching. However, the relative length of each element, the addition of sharing times (or even multiple sermons), the sometimes inclusion and form of an offering, the possible culmination of the service in time for reflection in the context of music and intercessory prayer – all of these elements are flexible between churches or denominations, even if individual churches likely stick to a fairly standard routine week to week.

Flexibility is also indicated by the range of individuals who may take part in the service – for example, the music leader may be responsible not only for leading the congregation in song, but also for prayer and for reflections that connect songs to each other. Moreover, if a time of sharing or open prayer is included, any member of the congregation can, in some sense, participate in leading the service, inasmuch as his or her contribution is given before and on behalf of the whole congregation. Admittedly, church size and local church culture significantly affect the degree of flexibility of form and spontaneous congregational input, but the strong trend is for multiple people to take some specific leading role in the course of a service (either more or less planned in advance), regardless of denomination or size.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰⁴ Cf. Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienst*, pp. 159–161 and 408–420.

Music in free-church services reflects this dynamic of form and flexibility. The obvious amount of time and attention given to musical and technical preparation and delivery⁵⁰⁵ displays the importance, particularly in some churches, of well-rehearsed procedures. At the same time, the musical form almost ubiquitously employed lends itself to a significant degree of flexibility – in terms of instrumentation (from solo guitar to a multi-member band) and also in terms of semi-spontaneous repetition of song material, in which repetition is already a key element.

7.1.2. HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL

In the context of church service, the terms “horizontal” and “vertical” refer to interpersonal relationships and to relationship with God, respectively. The physical spaces in which free-church services are held significantly emphasize the horizontal aspect. Whether the feel is that of a conference room or a theater, arrangement of chairs, lighting, etc., suggest maximizing the attention and comfort of those in attendance. Furthermore, the informal atmosphere accentuates the personal and interpersonal level – whether in the forms of greetings (such as “Enjoy the service!”), announcement of events for specific age or interest groups, use of media technology familiar to the world of work and entertainment, etc.⁵⁰⁶

That said, the vertical is by no means absent. Especially in the sung portions of the service, at least as much as in the prayers and sermon, the gathered worshipers are invited to lift their gaze, spiritually speaking, to God himself, at the same time expressing (and perhaps experiencing) assurances of his being simultaneously highly exalted and absolutely near. The gestures that accompany singing, especially in many of the charismatic-leaning churches, include a literal vertical aspect – hands outstretched. Although church services have little of the “transcendent” quality one might associate with a Mass celebrated in a lofty cathedral,⁵⁰⁷ the longing for the transcendent can also be symbolized in raising of hands or, conversely, in kneeling.

7.1.3. INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY

The interplay of individual and communal aspects of church services expresses key theological concepts – the necessity and centrality of personal conversion and the intrinsically communal

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienst*, pp. 183–184.

⁵⁰⁶ See Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienst*, pp. 173–178 (informal greetings), pp. 298–300 (announcements), pp. 292–293 (use of multimedia in sermons). Cf. also Thull, “Was singt Generation Lobpreis?” pp. 62–63 and Walthert, *Religiöse Rituale und soziale Ordnung*, pp. 239–246.

⁵⁰⁷ See Raschok, “Kirchenbau und Kirchenraum,” pp. 395–396 and his brief discussion of a church buildings’ capacity to acts as a “Speicher für die Macht des Göttlichen” (p. 396). Cf. also Gernot Böhme, *Architektur und Atmosphäre*, 2nd edn. (Boston: Brill: Paderborn, 2019), pp. 139–150.

nature of the church body or church family.⁵⁰⁸ This interplay is also a key factor from a sociological point of view, namely, reflecting the power of communally practiced ritual for the reinforcement of personal belief and group identity.⁵⁰⁹

Perhaps in no other part of the service are individual and communal aspects more apparent than in singing. As has already been noted, in the general absence of corporately read or recited texts or prayers, singing is the central group element within the service (or *observable* group element – from a theological angle, prayer is equally a group practice). In addition, the singing of an individual is uniquely transformed when incorporated with numerous other voices. Most congregation members would surely prefer not to sing a solo, but their individual voices are given place and value in the context of corporate sung worship.⁵¹⁰

In the more “concertlike” musical settings, the individual-communal element may be affected in two ways. First, the level of amplification and potentially also the hall lighting tend to dampen the sense of the singing community by focusing the auditory and visual attention on the stage. This may result in reduced volume of singing by the congregation but may also contribute to congregation members’ increased participation in alternative forms – in a variety of postures and gestures that reflect internal postures of worship. These highly individualized gestural responses are themselves, however, not unconnected from the group, in the sense that the individual’s expressions fit within parameters of learned or accepted behavior in the context of a church service and in a particular church culture. Additionally, song texts, while a majority employ language of the individual, are at the same time communal expressions by the very nature of their being sung together.⁵¹¹

7.1.4. EXPERIENCE AND EDIFICATION

Of the five pairs of values, experience and edification probably least deserve to be considered as two opposing poles. Thus, what I want to highlight here is a spectrum from, on the one hand, an emphasis on externalized, expressive worship (and on expectancy of an emotional-spiritual experience) and, on the other, an emphasis on internal, emotional-cognitive-spiritual edification (characterized by more reserved emotional expression). Externalized “experience”

⁵⁰⁸ See p. 89 above and footnote 335.

⁵⁰⁹ See the discussion above regarding the “cultural dimension” and the reinforcement of meaning, especially with reference to Geertz and Walthert, pp. 38–39 above.

⁵¹⁰ See Ring, p. 89 above. Cf. also Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, p. 182 and Reich, “Das Kirchenlied,” p. 764: “Aktivität und Rezeptivität sind hier unentwirrbar miteinander verflochten und stehen zudem während des Singens in steter Wechselwirkung.”

⁵¹¹ Cf. Thull, “Was singt Generation Lobpreis?” pp. 48–50.

(during the church service as a whole or any element therein) can certainly take many different forms; but, while ideally having lasting impact, it is nevertheless in some sense tied to a particular moment or portion of the service (often connected with music). Internalized “edification” – for instance, an insight received from the sermon, with implications for concrete consequences – suggests some sort of action beyond the context of the church service.⁵¹² These elements of “experience” and “edification” assuredly inter-relate, but they also suggest, at least to a limited extent, two of the “liturgical atmospheres” described earlier – an “atmosphere of receiving” and an “atmosphere of responding,” respectively.⁵¹³

In regard to music, there seems to be a certain ambivalence in *Freikirchen* towards the concept of “experience.” Music leaders expressed an aversion to trying to create an experience: Across the participating denominations, it was clear that authentic experience of or encounter with the divine is something gifted, not manufactured. That said, based on observations, churches do tend to cultivate atmospheres more or less suited to either externalized or internalized emotional expressions. Or, said differently, they place a varying range of value on an experiential element or on a devotional attitude in sung worship.⁵¹⁴

7.1.5. IN-REACH AND OUT-REACH

The last pair of values reflects the relative emphasis on the building up of the local congregation and the mission to serve or reach the wider community. Here expectations about the presence of visitors plays a role, which in turn relates to estimations of the purpose of the church service as a whole. The feedback from music leaders suggests a strong inclination towards the “in-reach” purpose(s) of the service – believers expressing heartfelt worship and receiving spiritual nourishment through Scriptural input, the gathered community, and perhaps through a special sense of God’s presence. However, this community emphasis does not exclude an “out-reach” element, although variations in church service atmosphere and style present a difference by degree in terms of an “out-reach” component or emphasis.

In churches that are better described by the “familial” atmosphere and also by a “collective” style of music, the visitor may have the sense of stepping into a special environment, in which regularly participating members recognize and cherish a deep sense of community. Of course, size of congregation is a factor here, where a sense of “togetherness” is more accessible than

⁵¹² Cf. Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 359–369.

⁵¹³ See p. 44 and notes 183 and 184 above.

⁵¹⁴ See p. 63 and notes 245 and 246 above.

in a large space or larger congregation (particularly if these latter physical spaces suggest a concertlike feel and present different contours for defining community). In this more intimate context, the presence of guests is not necessarily expected, but nevertheless welcome. These characteristics point towards the “community-oriented” end of the spectrum. On the other hand, churches with more “trendy” atmospheres and often a correspondingly “concertlike” musical style typically represent the more “guest-oriented” church.⁵¹⁵ Most congregations I visited were somewhere in between – clearly regular attenders were well-acquainted with or closely befriended by at least a certain portion of the larger gathering, and guests were welcomed (and not-infrequently given some sort of small gift in recognition of their visiting for the first time). These characteristics spanned both the “familial” and “trendy,” the “collective” and “concertlike,” and various sizes of congregations.

In relation to music, songs that are proclamatory, that is, that tell the message the church community rehearses and celebrates week by week, exemplify both the “in-reach” and “out-reach” components – reaffirming commonly held beliefs and communicating to any visitors these same core affirmations. Internal postures of praise, adoration, and thanksgiving, as well as less frequent expressions of confession or lament, could be characterized as “in-reach,” that is, the building up of the gathered community of believers – as well as, in the eyes of worshipers, “up-reach” towards God himself.

7.1.6. SUMMING UP

Together these dynamic equilibria exemplify the unity and diversity of free-church worship, exemplified in the Vienna congregations of the *FKÖ*. Here it is important to note that these findings are significant not only for better understanding this unique denominational coalition, fascinating as it may be. Rather, the free-church characteristics described in the foregoing pages, including theological, aesthetic/liturgical, and musical characteristics, also display marked similarity with free-church (and even wider Protestant) traditions in many other contexts. The studies by Schweyer and Thull on Swiss *Freikirchen* and selected German Pentecostal churches, respectively, demonstrate strong parallels. Additionally, from my own experience both in Austria and in my home country of the United States, overlap abounds. For instance, in the U.S., I attended for significant periods of time both a non-denominational church and a Presbyterian church, as well as more briefly attending Anglican and Baptist congregations; and in Vienna I am best acquainted with the local congregation of the

⁵¹⁵ Schweyer, *Freikirchliche Gottesdienste*, pp. 401–407.

Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Westminster Bekenntnisses (Evangelical Reformed Church Westminster Confession). Although not all of these churches fit all of the “free-church” criteria of the *FKÖ* (especially with respect to baptismal practice and church governance), they nonetheless share significant characteristics. With regard to aesthetic/liturgical and musical aspects, most could be readily described as having an informal atmosphere and showcasing a fluid liturgical structure, and all of them exemplify adaptation to current musical trends and dependence on common musical sources. Therefore, the findings of this thesis suggest application to a much wider spectrum of Protestant church practice and hint at the breadth and depth of study that remains to be done.

7.2. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The topic of church service practice and the role of music in that context, focusing on the Vienna congregations of the *FKÖ*, is a large topic for exploration and one that merits further research. The process of research for this thesis has also suggested tangential topics of interest, and a few of these I would like to mention here:

Further research related to *FKÖ* churches and to music could be expanded beyond Vienna to focus on current musical practice in one or more *FKÖ* denominations Austria-wide or could involve an in-depth historical study of musical developments within the *FKÖ* member denominations. Honing in on liturgical questions related to music, one could research, for example, the placement of songs in the service.

Studies from a musical and ethnomusicological angle could include searching out Austrian songwriters, exploring the distinctive musical elements of ethnic communities within the *FKÖ* (various African communities and the Romanian community stand out), analyzing the incorporation of classical and jazz genres where they are being successfully incorporated into services, or discussing free-church musical trends as engagement with and/or demarcation from broader cultural ones.

Of course, of great interest would be a study of church music in *FKÖ* congregation from the perspective of church-goers. This exploration could feature feedback on congregation members’ experience of church services and the music therein and could be expanded to musical tastes and practices outside of the church setting. The church member survey conducted as part of this thesis suggests that church members are open to reflecting upon and sharing their diverse musical preferences and practices.

7.3. CLOSING STATEMENT

This thesis, with its focus on the *FKÖ* and on the place of music in the context of liturgical practice and the wider field of aesthetics of religion, symbolizes just a tip of the iceberg of potential research on free-church worship in Austria. Historically, the bulk of scholarly attention has been dedicated, not surprisingly, to the Catholic Church and its complex, multifaceted interaction with Austrian history, culture, and religious experience. However, other Christian traditions, as well as other major religions and also new religious movements, offer a fascinating panorama of Austrian religious expressions, inviting further exploration. It is my hope that this thesis contributes in a small but valuable way to understanding how the Vienna congregations of the *FKÖ* – and especially the role of music in the central aesthetic/liturgical expression of free-church worship, the weekly church service – fit into that broader landscape.

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9. APPENDICES

9.1. SEMI-STRUCTURED EXPERT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (ENGLISH)

BACKGROUND:

1. Could you briefly describe your own personal history with the *Freikirchen* in Austria?
2. How long have you been active in your congregation in the role of pastor/elder?
3. What would you say are the defining characteristics of your congregation/denomination?
 - Theological characteristics?
 - Structural characteristics?

FOCUS:

1. Are there defining musical characteristics of your congregation/denomination?
2. What in your view is the chief function/purpose of music in church services?
3. What in your view is the function/role of music in relation to other typical elements of a service (sermon, prayer, etc.)?
 - How is that function/role worked out practically in your congregation?
4. What changes or developments with regard to music have you witnessed in your years in the church/in church leadership?
5. How do you see your congregation/denomination being impacted (positively or negatively) by global Christendom, particularly with regard to music?
6. Could you describe any encouraging developments with regard to music in your congregation/denomination?
7. What, if any, areas of potential for growth in relation to music could you identify in your congregation/denomination?
8. To what extent is the role of church music and a theology of church music discussed at a denominational level? What kind of musical cooperation, if any, occurs between various congregations within your denomination? What musical enrichment, if any, does your congregational benefit from through cooperation with other congregations within the *Freikirchen in Österreich*?
9. Are there specific resources (particularly books or also conferences, etc.) that have shaped your theology of worship (sung worship and otherwise) in the context of the local church?

9.1.1. SEMI-STRUCTURED EXPERT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (GERMAN)

HINTERGRUND:

1. Können Sie kurz Ihre persönliche Geschichte mit den österreichischen Freikirchen im Allgemeinen beschreiben?
2. Wie lange sind Sie schon als Pastor / Ältester in Ihrer Gemeinde tätig?
3. Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach die prägenden Merkmale Ihrer Gemeinde / Ihres Gemeindebundes?
 - Theologische Merkmale?
 - Strukturelle Merkmale?

SCHWERPUNKT:

1. Gibt es musikalische Merkmale Ihrer Gemeinde / Ihres Gemeindebundes?
2. Was ist aus Ihrer Sicht die Hauptfunktion von Musik in Gottesdiensten?
3. Welche Rolle hat die Musik im Verhältnis zu anderen Elementen des Gottesdienstes (Predigt, Gebet usw.)?
 - Wie wird diese Funktion / Rolle in Ihrer Gemeinde praktisch ausgeübt?
4. Welche Veränderungen oder Entwicklungen in Bezug auf die Musik haben Sie in den Jahren Ihrer Tätigkeit in der Gemeinde / Gemeindeleitung miterlebt?
5. Wie sehen Sie die Auswirkungen (positiv oder negativ) von musikalischen Strömungen in dem globalen Christentum auf Ihre Gemeinde / Ihren Gemeindebund?
6. Können Sie ermutigende Entwicklungen in Bezug auf die Musik in Ihrer Gemeinde / Ihrem Gemeindebund beschreiben?
7. In welchen Bereichen könnten Sie ein Wachstumspotenzial in Bezug auf die Musik in Ihrer Gemeinde / Ihrem Gemeindebund erkennen?
8. Inwieweit wird die Rolle der Kirchenmusik und eine Theologie der Kirchenmusik auf konfessioneller Ebene diskutiert? Oder welche Art der musikalischen Zusammenarbeit / Bereicherung findet gegebenenfalls zwischen verschiedenen Gemeinden innerhalb Ihres Gemeindebundes statt oder innerhalb der *Freikirchen in Österreich*?
9. Gibt es bestimmte Quellen (Bücher, Seminare, usw.), die Ihre Theologie der Anbetung im Kontext der Ortsgemeinde geprägt haben?

9.2. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MUSIC LEADERS (ENGLISH)

SONGS AND MUSICAL STYLE

1. Do you have a database of songs your congregation has sung between 1 August and 31 October 2021 which you could share?
2. How many songs do you sing on a typical Sunday, and what percentage of the worship service is composed of music?
3. If songs are sung in a language other than the mother tongue of most people in the congregation,
 - What is the motivation for doing so (lack of translation, preference, etc.)?
 - Is translation provided (subtitles, for instance)?
4. What are the primary sources (artists/bands, songbooks/hymnals) of the songs you sing?
5. Do you intentionally sing a mixture of “contemporary” songs and “traditional” songs/hymns?
 - If yes, in what ratio?
 - If no, which do you favor?
 - Would you be willing to add how you define either category?
6. Are there any song sources that you intentionally avoid (for their theological emphasis, etc.)?
7. Are there specific songs or clear categories of songs that are most (or least) eagerly sung by the congregation?
8. Are there any elements of your services that you would describe as characterizing a specifically Austrian musical idiom or derived from a specifically Austrian cultural heritage? (If your church is primarily composed of members from a different country/culture, does the music reflect that cultural heritage?)
9. Are there any composers in your congregation, and do you sing their compositions?

MUSIC LEADER / MUSIC TEAM

10. What is entailed in the role of music leader?
11. Who is permitted to lead the music ministry in your congregation?
 - Must this role be filled by someone with any particular musical qualifications?
 - Must this role be filled by someone with any particular spiritual qualities?
 - Is the position open to both men and women?
12. Who leads the music on a given Sunday (an individual, or a lead singer and band, etc.)?
13. What instruments are typically used?
 - Are any instruments intentionally avoided?

14. What if any expectations, either musically or spiritually, are placed on those who want to participate in the music team? (For example, must team members be believers? church members? trained musicians?)
15. To what extent are musical resources shared between congregations in your denomination or with other congregations within the *FKÖ*?
16. How do you handle the use of copyrighted song material (via a CCLI license, for example)?

MUSICAL / LITURGICAL PRACTICE

17. Is there an overarching structure/story line/liturgy that shapes each service?
 - If so, what are the common elements each week?
 - If so, what is the focus or highpoint of the service (in general and/or musically)?
18. Is the musical component of the service planned around other parts of the service (sermon, Scripture readings, etc.), or vice versa – or are the spoken and musical elements relatively independent of each other?
 - If they are interwoven, how is this cooperation between spoken and sung word facilitated?
19. Is there a methodology for introducing new songs?
 - If so, what is it?
20. Do you include purely instrumental music in the service (preludes, postludes, during Communion, etc.)?
21. How would you order the following list of attitudes/expressions of worship, in terms of the relative emphasis each is given in your congregation? (Please order them from greatest-to-least emphasis.) If categories are missing from the list, please feel free to add them.
 - Adoration
 - Commitment
 - Confession
 - Lament
 - Proclamation
 - Thanksgiving
 - Trust
22. What if any gestures of worship are typical in your church services (closing eyes, raising hands, clapping, dancing, kneeling, etc.)?
23. What place (if any) does the liturgical church calendar play (Advent, Christmas, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, etc.) – or what other patterns/seasons shape the structure of services (frequency with which Communion or baptisms are celebrated, calendar year, etc.)?

24. In the past year and a half, has your song repertoire consciously responded to the COVID-19 pandemic?
- If so, in what way(s)?
25. Over the time you have led musical worship or been part of the music team in your church, have there been significant shifts in musical style, repertoire, how the church service is structured, etc.?
- If so, what have these changes been?

PHILOSOPHY OF WORSHIP / THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

26. To what extent does either of the following statements reflect your choice of songs and musical style?
- It is very important to sing songs that the congregation likes and resonates with. (It is most important for the congregation to be brought into a worshipful atmosphere by the music leader/music team, but less important if people actually sing.)
 - It is very important to sing songs that are well-suited to congregational singing. (It is most important for the congregation to sing their worship, not simply be brought into a worshipful atmosphere.)
27. To what extent is the music leader/music team responsible for encouraging or stimulating any sort of emotion/emotional experience?
28. To what extent do you consider the music sung in services as responsible for the theological instruction of the congregation?
- What theological topics/themes are intentionally highlighted in the songs you sing?
29. Can you elaborate on the extent to which you agree or disagree with any of the following statements regarding the church service as a whole?
- The chief purpose of the church service is the spiritual instruction of individual participants.
 - The chief purpose of the church service is individual/communal worship of God.
 - The chief purpose of the church service is the experience of God's presence.
30. Do you prioritize songs that are textually complex, theologically dense, and typically strophic OR textually simple, meditative/atmospheric, chorus-based/repetitive?
31. Could your musical style be described as communal (i.e., 1–2 singers leading the congregation, minimal amplification/lighting; goal: congregational singing) OR as event-oriented (i.e., multi-person band, strong amplification, stage lighting/effects; goal: worship event, worship atmosphere)?
32. To what extent is spontaneity expected or welcomed during services (for example, changes or additions to song selections in response to the sermon or at the request of a

member of the congregation, musical improvisation to accompany prayer, extemporaneous verbal or musical responses from the congregation, etc.)?

33. Does the presence or potential presence of non-believers in services in any way affect your song choices or song style?
 - If not, why not?
 - If so, in what way(s)?
34. Do you face particular tensions or challenges in your role as a music leader, due to conflicting ideas within the church leadership or congregation with regard to musical style or content?
 - If so, are you free to elaborate on these tensions?
35. To what extent is the role of church music and a theology of church music discussed at a denominational level?
36. What specific resources (books, etc.) have shaped your understanding and practice of musical worship in the setting of the local church?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Is there anything you would like to add that was not covered in the questions above?

Would you be willing to meet for a follow-up conversation to discuss a handful of questions in more depth?

9.2.1. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MUSIC LEADERS (GERMAN)

LIEDER UND MUSIKSTIL

1. Haben Sie eine Aufzeichnung über die Lieder, welche zwischen dem 1. August 2021 und dem 31. Oktober 2021 in Ihrer Gemeinde gesungen wurden und könnten Sie diese zur Verfügung stellen?
2. Wie viele Lieder singen Sie an einem typischen Sonntag, und wie viel Prozent des Gottesdienstes besteht aus Musik?
3. Wenn Lieder in einer anderen Sprache als der Muttersprache der meisten Mitglieder / TeilnehmerInnen in der Gemeinde gesungen werden,
 - Was ist die Motivation dafür (fehlende Übersetzung, Präferenz)?
 - Wird eine Übersetzung angeboten (z.B. in Form von Untertiteln)?
4. Was sind die primären Quellen (KünstlerInnen / Bands, Liederbücher / Gesangbücher) der Lieder, die Sie singen?
5. Singen Sie absichtlich eine Mischung aus „zeitgenössischen“ Liedern und „traditionellen“ Liedern / Hymnen?
 - Wenn ja, in welchem Verhältnis?
 - Wenn nein, was bevorzugen Sie?
 - Könnten Sie hinzufügen, wie Sie die beiden Kategorien definieren?
6. Gibt es irgendwelche Liedquellen, die Sie absichtlich vermeiden (wegen ihrer theologischen Betonung usw.)?
7. Gibt es bestimmte Lieder oder klare Kategorien von Liedern, die von der Gemeinde am meisten (oder am wenigsten) gern gesungen werden?
8. Gibt es Elemente in Ihren Gottesdiensten, die eine spezifisch österreichische Musiksprache enthalten oder die Sie als österreichisches Kulturgut bezeichnen würden? (Wenn Ihre Gemeinde hauptsächlich aus Mitgliedern aus einem anderen Land bzw. einer anderen Kultur besteht, spiegelt die Musik dann dieses Kulturgut wider?)
9. Gibt es KomponistInnen in Ihrer Gemeinde und singen Sie deren Lieder?

MUSIKALISCHE LEITUNG / MUSIKTEAM

10. Was beinhaltet die Rolle des musikalischen Leiters?
11. Wer darf den musikalischen Dienst in Ihrer Gemeinde leiten?
 - Muss diese Rolle von jemandem mit besonderen musikalischen Qualifikationen ausgefüllt werden?
 - Muss diese Rolle von jemandem mit besonderen geistlichen Qualitäten ausgefüllt werden?
 - Ist die Position sowohl für Männer als auch für Frauen offen?

12. Wer leitet die Musik an einem gewöhnlichen Sonntag (eine Einzelperson oder ein/e LeadsängerIn und eine Band usw.)?
13. Welche Instrumente werden typischerweise verwendet?
 - Werden bestimmte Instrumente absichtlich vermieden?
14. Welche Erwartungen, ob musikalisch oder geistlich, werden an diejenigen gestellt, die im Musikteam mitmachen wollen? (Zum Beispiel, müssen Teammitglieder gläubig sein? Gemeindemitglieder? ausgebildete Musiker?)
15. Inwieweit werden musikalische Ressourcen zwischen Gemeinden Ihrer Denomination oder mit anderen Gemeinden innerhalb der *FKÖ* geteilt?
16. Wie gehen Sie mit der Verwendung von urheberrechtlich geschütztem Songmaterial um (z.B. über eine CCLI-Lizenz)?

MUSIKALISCHE UND LITURGISCHE PRAXIS

17. Gibt es eine übergreifende Struktur / Storyline / Liturgie, die jeden Gottesdienst prägt?
 - Wenn ja, was sind die gemeinsamen Elemente jeder Woche?
 - Wenn ja, was ist der Schwerpunkt oder Höhepunkt des Gottesdienstes (im Allgemeinen und/oder musikalisch)?
18. Ist die musikalische Komponente des Gottesdienstes um andere Teile des Gottesdienstes herum geplant (Predigt, Lesungen usw.), oder umgekehrt – oder sind die gesprochenen und musikalischen Elemente relativ unabhängig voneinander?
 - Wenn sie miteinander verwoben sind, wie wird diese Zusammenarbeit zwischen gesprochenem und gesungenem Wort ermöglicht?
19. Gibt es eine Methodik für die Einführung neuer Lieder?
 - Wenn ja, wie sieht diese aus?
20. Gibt es im Gottesdienst auch reine Instrumentalmusik (Vor- und Nachspiele, während des Abendmahls usw.)?
21. Wie würden Sie die folgende Liste von Haltungen / Ausdrücken der Anbetung in Hinblick auf ihre relative Betonung in Ihrer Gemeinde anordnen? (Bitte ordnen Sie sie von der größten bis zur geringsten Betonung.) Wenn Kategorien auf der Liste fehlen, können Sie sie gerne hinzufügen.
 - Anbetung
 - Danksagung
 - Hingabe
 - Klage
 - Sündenbekenntnis
 - Verkündigung
 - Vertrauen

22. Welche Gesten der Anbetung sind in Ihren Gottesdiensten typisch, wenn überhaupt (Augen schließen, Hände heben, klatschen, tanzen, knien, usw.)?
23. Welchen Stellenwert hat (wenn überhaupt) der liturgische Kirchenkalender (Advent, Weihnachten, Ostern, Himmelfahrt, Pfingsten usw.) – oder welche anderen Muster / Jahreszeiten prägen die Struktur des Gottesdienstes (Häufigkeit, mit der Abendmahl oder Taufen gefeiert werden, Kalenderjahr usw.)?
24. Hat Ihr Liedrepertoire in den letzten anderthalb Jahren bewusst auf die COVID-19-Pandemie reagiert?
 - Wenn ja, auf welche Weise(n)?
25. Haben sich im Laufe der Zeit, in der Sie musikalische Gottesdienste geleitet haben oder Teil des Musikteams in Ihrer Gemeinde waren, wesentliche Veränderungen im musikalischen Stil, im Repertoire, in der Gestaltung des Gottesdienstes usw. ergeben?
 - Wenn ja, was waren diese Änderungen?

PHILOSOPHIE DER ANBETUNG / THEOLOGISCHE ÜBERLEGUNGEN

26. Inwieweit trifft eine der folgenden Aussagen auf Ihre Liedauswahl und Ihren Musikstil zu?
 - Es ist sehr wichtig, Lieder zu singen, die der Gemeinde gefallen und bei denen sich eine gute Stimmung entwickelt. (Es ist sehr wichtig, dass die Gemeinde durch den/die MusikleiterIn / das Musikteam in eine anbetungsvolle Atmosphäre gebracht wird, aber weniger wichtig, ob die Leute tatsächlich singen.)
 - Es ist sehr wichtig, Lieder zu singen, die für den Gemeindegesang gut geeignet sind. (Es ist am wichtigsten, dass die Gemeinde ihren Lobpreis singt und nicht einfach nur in eine anbetungsvolle Atmosphäre gebracht wird.)
27. Inwieweit ist der/die MusikleiterIn / das Musikteam dafür verantwortlich, irgendeine Art von Emotion oder emotionaler Erfahrung / Wahrnehmung zu ermutigen oder anzuregen?
28. Inwieweit sehen Sie die Musik, die im Gottesdienst gesungen wird, als verantwortlich für die theologische Unterweisung der Gemeinde?
 - Welche theologischen Themen werden in den Liedern, die Sie singen, absichtlich hervorgehoben?
29. Können Sie näher erläutern, inwieweit Sie einer der folgenden Aussagen zum Gottesdienst als Ganzes zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen?
 - Der Hauptzweck des Gottesdienstes ist die geistliche Ausbildung / Erziehung der einzelnen TeilnehmerInnen.
 - Der Hauptzweck des Gottesdienstes ist die individuelle / gemeinsame Anbetung Gottes.
 - Der Hauptzweck des Gottesdienstes ist die Erfahrung / Wahrnehmung der Gegenwart Gottes.

30. Bevorzugen Sie Lieder, die textlich komplex, theologisch dicht und strophisch sind ODER textlich einfach, meditativ / atmosphärisch und refrainbasiert / wiederholend?
31. Könnte man den Musikstil, den Sie bevorzugen als gemeinschaftlich (d.h. 1-2 Sänger, die die Gemeinde anleiten, minimale Verstärkung / Beleuchtung; Ziel: Gemeindegesang) ODER als eventorientiert (d.h. mehrköpfige Band, starke Verstärkung, Bühnenbeleuchtung / Effekte; Ziel: Worship-Event, Worship-Atmosphäre) beschreiben?
32. Inwieweit wird Spontanität während des Gottesdienstes erwartet oder begrüßt (z.B. Änderungen oder Ergänzungen der Liedauswahl als Reaktion auf die Predigt oder auf Wunsch eines Gottesdienstbesuchers, musikalische Improvisationen zur Begleitung des Gebets, extemporäre verbale oder musikalische Antworten von GottesdienstbesucherInnen, usw.)?
33. Beeinflusst die Anwesenheit oder potentielle Anwesenheit von Nicht-Gläubigen im Gottesdienst in irgendeiner Weise Ihre Liedauswahl oder Ihren Liedstil?
 - Wenn nein, warum nicht?
 - Wenn ja, auf welche Weise(n)?
34. Sind Sie in Ihrer Rolle als musikalische/r LeiterIn mit besonderen Spannungen oder Herausforderungen konfrontiert, die auf gegensätzliche Vorstellungen innerhalb der Kirchenleitung oder der Gemeinde in Bezug auf den musikalischen Stil oder Inhalt zurückzuführen sind?
 - Wenn ja, können Sie diese Spannungen näher erläutern?
35. Inwieweit wird die Rolle der Kirchenmusik und eine Theologie der Kirchenmusik auf einer konfessionellen Ebene diskutiert?
36. Welche spezifischen Ressourcen (Bücher usw.) haben Ihr Verständnis und Ihre Praxis des musikalischen Gottesdienstes im Rahmen der Ortsgemeinde geprägt?

ZUSÄTZLICHE KOMMENTARE

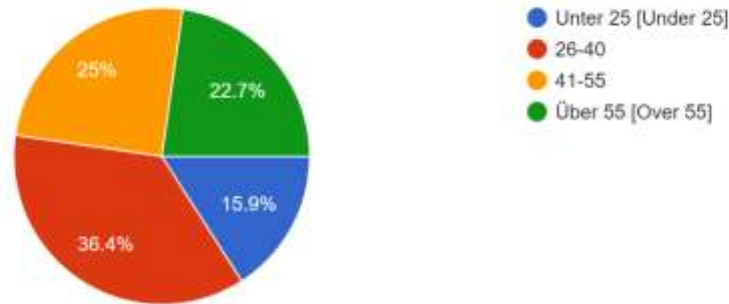
Gibt es etwas, das Sie hinzufügen möchten, das in den obigen Fragen nicht behandelt wurde?

Wären Sie bereit, sich zu einem Folgegespräch zu treffen, um ein paar Fragen ausführlicher zu besprechen?

9.3. CHURCH MEMBER SURVEY

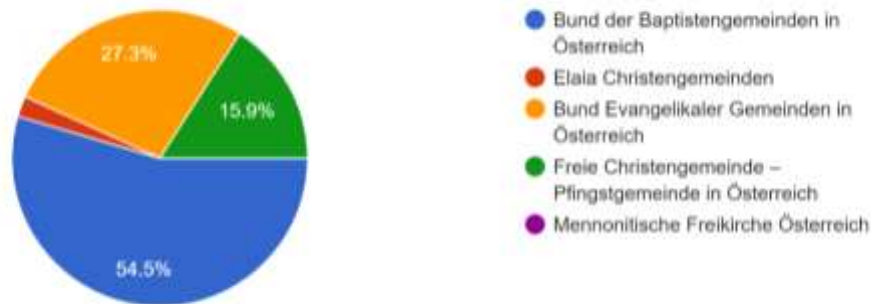
1. Zu welcher Altersgruppe gehören Sie? (What age group do you belong to?)

44 responses



2. Zu welchem Gemeindebund gehört Ihre Gemeinde? (What is your church’s denominational affiliation?)

44 responses



3. Wie würden Sie Anbetung definieren? (max. 10 Wörter) (In up to 10 words, how would you define worship?)⁵¹⁶

Gott die Ehre geben – musikalisch und darüber hinaus (Giving glory to God – musically and beyond.)
Gott loben. sich immer neu seiner Größe / Macht bewusst machen (Praising God, always becoming aware of his greatness/power anew.)
Gott die Ehre geben (Giving God the glory.)
Gott meine Bewunderung und Liebe sagen (Expressing my admiration and love to God.)
Gott loben und preisen und verherrlichen (Praising and glorifying God.)
Verehrung Gottes auf emotionalen Ebene (Worshiping God on an emotional level.)
Gott sagen wie super er ist. (Telling God how awesome he is.)
Musik, Lobpreis, Dank, Innehalten, Ausrichten (Music, praise, thanksgiving, pausing, reorienting.)
It’s an expression of thankfulness and acknowledgement of God’s glory

⁵¹⁶ English translations for German responses given in parentheses after the participant’s statement.

Gott ehren mit allem was wir tun (Honoring God with everything we do.)
Acknowledging God's goodness and truth with our lives and words.
Gott für das zu danken wer er ist und was er getan hat (Thanking God for who he is and what he has done.)
Vor Gott zur Ruhe kommen, mich auf Gott konzentrieren, über ihn staunen (Coming to rest before God, focusing on God, marveling at him.)
sich auf Gott und seine Größe zu besinnen (Reflecting on God and his greatness.)
Ein Lebensstil, in dem Gott die Ehre gegeben wird (A lifestyle of giving glory to God.)
In Gottesgegenwart kommen und sich für Gott öffnen. (Coming into God's presence and opening up to God.)
Wie Gott mit Musik, Worten und Leben gepriesen wird (How God is praised with music, words, and life.)
Gott loben und danken für alles was er gemacht hat (Praising and thanking God for all he has done.)
zusammen kommen um Gott zu preisen (Coming together to praise God.)
Im Denken und Handeln ein Leben führen, das Gott gefällt (Living a life pleasing to God in thought and action.)
Worte die Gott ehren in schöner Musik verpackt (Words that honor God wrapped in beautiful music.)
Auf Gott konzentrieren und mit ihm reden und zuhören (Focusing on God and talking with and listening to him.)
Praise, honor, respect, singing, love, meaning
Anbetung kann in jeder form passieren, durch Musik, Psalmen, Gebet etc. (Worship can happen in any form, through music, psalms, prayer, etc.)
Glorifying God through word/song, example and action/deeds
Leben im Angesicht Gottes (Living in the presence of God.)
Im Bewusstsein Gottes leben und wandeln (Living and walking in the awareness of God.)
bewusst in Gottes Gegenwart, Lobpreis, Dankbarkeit (Being consciously in God's presence, praise, gratitude.)
Meine Zeit mit Gott (My time with God.)
In Geist und Wahrheit vor Gott kommen. Hingabe. Erfüllung. (Coming before God in spirit and truth. Devotion, fulfillment.)
Gemeinsames Singen und Gott anbeten (Singing together and worshiping God.)
Gott viel zutrauen, ihm vertrauen und mich ihm anvertrauen (Placing confidence in God – trusting him and entrusting myself to him.)
Gott in jeder Lebenslage loben und preisen (Praising and glorifying God in every circumstance of life.)
Geben Gott die Ehre, die ihm in unserem ganzen Leben gehört (Giving God the glory that belongs to him in our whole life.)
grundsätzliche Lebenseinstellung, Gottes Willen zu folgen und ihm in allem zu vertrauen. Kann durch Gebet und Lieder ausgedrückt werden. (Basic attitude towards life, following God's will and trusting him in everything. Can be expressed through prayer and songs.)
Ein Leben, das sich an Gott ausrichtet. (A life that is oriented towards God.)
Everything I am rightly responding to all God is
Begegnung mit Gott, Suche nach seiner Herrlichkeit (Meeting with God, seeking his glory.)
Gott als den Höchsten sichtbar-verehren (Visibly worshiping God as the Most High.)
in Gebet und Liedern (In prayer and songs.)

Gott, sein Wesen, seine Taten groß machen, würdigen, meine Liebe ausdrücken (To magnify God, his being, his deeds; to acknowledge him, express my love.)
Lieder zu Gott und Lieder über Gott (Songs to God and songs about God.)
Demut, Dankbarkeit, Lob und Nähe Gottes (Humility, gratitude, praise, and intimacy with God.)

4. Was macht Ihrer Meinung nach “gute Musik” in einem Gottesdienst aus? (max. 10 Wörter) (In up to 10 words, what would you say makes for “good music” in a worship service?)⁵¹⁷

gute Musiker, Lieder und Texte die die Gemeinde “mitnehmen” (Good musicians, songs, and lyrics that “bring along” the congregation.)
Professionelle Musiker (Professional musicians.)
lyrics passen zum Thema und sind dem evangelium treu, musik ist so gut performt, dass sie nicht nur “nicht ablenkt”, sondern selbst Anbetung – das beste, was wir geben können – ist und in die Anbetung und ins Staunen führt (mitreißt) (Lyrics fit the theme and are faithful to the gospel, music is so well performed that it not only “doesn’t distract” but is itself worship – the best we can give – and leads into worship and wonder [captivates].)
wichtig (important)
Dem Zweck dienlich, zur Gemeinde passend (Serving the intended purpose, appropriate for the congregation.)
Musik, die mich zur Anbetung führt (Music that leads me into worship.)
Führt in Anbetung. (Leads into worship.)
Qualität, Nahbarkeit (Quality, approachability.)
God-focused praise that isn’t showy or self-focused
“Ehrliche” Musik, die zum mitsingen und mitbeten einlädt (“Honest” music that invites you to sing along and pray along)
Artistic excellence, sincerity, truthful lyrics, humble and non-showy delivery, not focused on stage
musikalisch gutes Niveau, theologisch ausgewogen, inhaltlich bewusst platziert (Good level musically, theologically balanced, deliberately placed in terms of content.)
mitsingen können, auf Gott zentriert sein, Worte und Musik erheben mich zu Gott (Can sing along, centered on God, words and music lift me to God.)
technisch gut (Technically good.)
Biblische Liedtexte, gute Musiker mit aufrichtigem Herz (Biblical song texts, good musicians with sincere hearts.)
passende Wörter in einer passende musikalische Sprache die in einer gut überlegte und gekonnte weise zum Ausdruck gebracht wird. (Fitting words in a fitting musical language, expressed in a thoughtful and skillful way.)
Gute Theologie, einfach mitzusingen, gut musikalisch gespielt (Good theology, easy to sing along with, well-played musically.)
Die Stimmung (The atmosphere.)
ein schönes und gut eingeteiltes Team (A good and well organized team.)
Biblische Inhalte, musikalisch hohes Niveau, Kombination aus alt und modern (Biblical content, high level musically, combination of old and modern.)
Bibelfundierter Text mit guter Begleitung von schönen Melodien (Bible-based text with good accompaniment of beautiful melodies.)

⁵¹⁷ English translations for German responses given in parentheses after the participant’s statement.

Authentisch, entspannt, gekonnt (Authentic, relaxed, skillful.)
Meaningful words, little repetition, leaders who can sing/lead; community
Musikangebot soll gut eingeübt sein und vielfältig (nicht nur neue Lieder) (Musical offerings should be well rehearsed and varied [not only new songs].)
Music that directs our hearts and minds to worshipping the Lord
Vielfalt und Qualität (ausgebildete Musiker), die sich im Gesamtgeschehen Gottesdienst einordnet. (Variety and quality [trained musicians] that fit into the overall experience of the service.)
Stellt Gott in den Mittelpunkt, lenkt nicht ab (Places God in the center, does not distract.)
Muttersprache; Inhalt: ermutigend, herausfordernd, zurechtweisend, Gebet, Bibeltext; hochwertig, anspruchsvoll, kitschfrei (Native language; content: encouraging, challenging, exhortative, prayer, Bible text; high quality, demanding, not kitsch.)
Zu schwer in 10 Wörter auszudrücken (Too difficult to express in ten words.)
Absprache unter den Musikern. Liebe zur Musik zur Anbetung. (Consultation among musicians. Love for worship music.)
Einfache Melodie und einfache Texte, die ins Ohr gehen. (Simple melody and simple lyrics that grab your ear.)
nachvollziehbare (lesbare oder hörbare) Texte, nicht sehr laut, schöne Melodie (Comprehensible [readable or audible] lyrics, not very loud, nice melody.)
Anleitung zum Lobpreis (Lead-in to worship.)
nicht im Weg stehend, keine Darstellung, einladend (Not getting in the way, not a performance, inviting.)
musikalische Qualität; Songs, die für das Publikum singbar sind; ermutigender, geistlicher Inhalt; gut durchdachte Abfolge von Liedern (Musical quality; songs that are singable for the audience; encouraging, spiritual content; thoughtful sequencing of songs.)
ausreichend musikalisches Niveau, Harmonie zw Inhalt, Form und Zielgruppe (Sufficient musical level, harmony between content, form, and target audience.)
When the musicians can play well and enjoy it
Ich liebe die alte musik und ruhige muzik das verbunden mit Gott (I love the old music and calm music that connected with God.)
Stört nicht durch zu schlechte oder zu hohe Qualität (Does not disturb by the quality being too low or too high.)
Gottes Geist wirken lassen, das Instrument und die Stimme “beherrschen” (Letting God’s Spirit work, “mastering” the instrument and the voice.)
passende Lieder, Qualität der Darbietung (Fitting songs, quality of presentation.)
Instrumente gut gespielt, ansteckende Musiker, Text vorhanden (Instruments played well, contagious musicians, lyrics provided.)
Stimmungsvoll Fröhlich, Feierlich, ausreichendes Können der Musiker (Atmospheric, joyful, celebratory, musicians sufficiently skilled.)
Wenn die Musik und das Wort im Einklang in Reverenz vorbereitet werden (geistig und musikalisch). (When music and word are united in reverence [spiritually and musically].)

5. Wie oft, wenn überhaupt, singen Sie christliche Lieder (egal welchen Genres) in Gruppen außerhalb von Gottesdiensten (im Rahmen von Familie, Mitbewohnern, Bibelkreisen, Jugendtreffen, usw.)? (How often, if at all, do you sing Christian songs [of any genre] in group contexts outside of church services [in the context of family, flatmates, Bible studies, youth gatherings, etc.]?)

44 responses



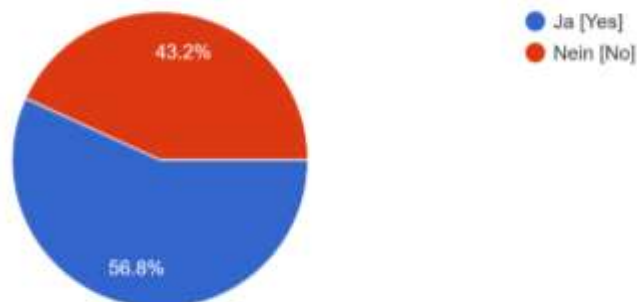
6. Wie oft, wenn überhaupt, hören Sie christliche Musik (Spotify, YouTube, CDs, usw.)? (How often, if at all, do you listen to Christian music [Spotify, YouTube, CDs, etc.]?)

44 responses



7. Haben Sie ein Lieblingsgenre der christlichen Musik? (Do you have a favorite genre of Christian music?)

44 responses

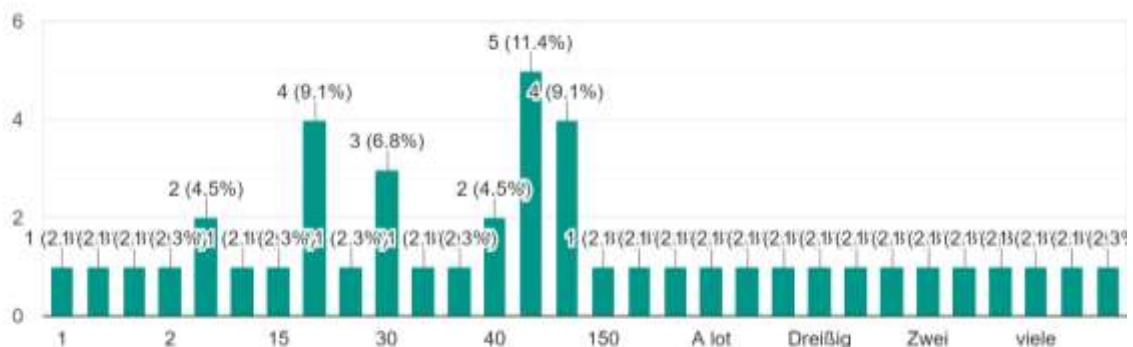


8. Wenn ja, welches Genre? (If yes, what genre?)

Acoustic Pop
Alte Heilslieder (old songs of salvation)
CCM [Contemporary Christian Music]
Classical, pop, rock, jazz
Deutsche und englische Lobpreissongs (German and English worship songs)
Gospel
Gospel
Gospel
Gospel, praise
Hillsong oder Tribl [Australian and American music groups/labels, respectively]
Hymnen (hymns)
Indie folk
Indie Worship und klassische Hymnen (indie worship and classical hymns)
Indie, Folk, Akustic (acoustic)
Klassik (classical)
Klassisch
Modern?
New [Nu?] Gospel
Nu Gospel
Oratorien (oratorios)
Populäre Musik zB bei Radio K-Love (popular music, e.g., on Radio K-Love)
Rock
Rock/rap
Uwe Sauer [German songwriter]
Worship

9. Wie viele christliche Lieder (egal welchen Genres) können Sie ungefähr auswendig singen?
(Approximately how many Christian songs [of any genre] could you sing from memory?)

44 responses



9.4. SONG LIST

Titles are given along with composer(s), composition and/or copyright year for music and/or lyrics, and number of congregations (out of seventeen total) in which they were sung (requested time frame: 1 August to 31 October). German titles are in **bold**.

Title	Text and Music	©	#
10,000 Reasons	Jonas Myrin Matt Redman	2011	8
Above All	Lenny LeBlanc Paul Baloche	1999	3
All Who Are Thirsty	Brenton Brown Glenn Robertson	1998	2
Amazing Grace	Chris Tomlin John Newton Louie Giglio	1779/ 2006	3
Anker in der Zeit	Albert Frey	2000	2
Another in the Fire	Chris Davenport Joel Houston (Hilling)	2018	2
As the Deer	Martin Nystrom	1984	2
Battle Belongs	Brian Johnson Phil Wickham	2020	2
Because He Lives	Gloria Gaither William J. Gaither	1971	2
Before the Throne of God Above	Charitie Lees Bancroft Vikki Cook	1863/ 1997	3
Be the Center	Michael Frye	1999	2
Be Thou My Vision	Eleanor Henrietta Hull Mary Elizabeth Byrne Public Domain	6-8 th c./ 1912	4
Better Is One Day	Matt Redman	1995	2
Bis ans Ende der Welt	Lothar Kosse	1999	2
Blessed Be Your Name	Beth Redman Matt Redman	2002	7
Boldly I Approach	Rend Collective	2014	3
Build My Life	Brett Younker Karl Martin Kirby Kaple Matt Redman Pat Barrett	2016	7
Come to the Table	Claire Cloninger Martin J. Nyström	1991	4
Cornerstone	Edward Mote Eric Liljero Jonas Myrin Reuben Morgan William Batchelder Bradbury	2011	3
Cry of My Heart	Terry Butler	1991	2

Der Einzige	Mia Friesen Stefan Schöpfle	2010	4
Der Herr segne dich	Martin Pepper	2000	3
Die Liebe des Retters	Mia Friesen Stefan Schöpfle	2010	3
Dir gebührt die Ehre	Eva-Lena Hellmark	1992	3
Do It Again	Chris Brown Mack Brock Matt Redman Steven Furtick	2017	2
Du machst alles neu	Jonathan Enns Marco Michalzik Thomas Enns	2015	3
Ever Be	Bobby Strand Chris Greely Gabriel Wilson Kalley Heiligenthal	2014	2
Everlasting God	Brenton Brown Ken Riley	2005	4
Forever	Chris Tomlin	2001	2
Giants Fall	Dave Kull Dominik Laim Sidney Mohede Tamara Fontijn	2020	2
Gnade und Wahrheit	Albert Frey	2001	2
God Is for Us	James Ferguson James Tealy Jesse Reeves Jonny Robinson Michael Farren Rich Thompson Tiarne Tranter	2018	2
God Is Great	Marty Sampson	2001	2
God of Wonders	Marc Byrd Steve Hindalong	2000	4
Good Good Father	Anthony Brown Pat Barrett	2014	4
Goodness of God	Ben Fielding Brian Johnson Ed Cash Jason Ingram Jenn Johnson	2018	5
Great Are You Lord	David Leonard Jason Ingram Leslie Jordan	2012	4
Great in Power	Russell Fragar	1998	5
Great Is the Lord	Steve McEwan	1985	2
Great Is Thy Faithfulness	Thomas Obediah Chisholm William Marion Runyan	1923/ 1951	2
Großer Gott wir loben dich	Heinrich Bone Ignaz Franz	1776	2
Groß ist unser Gott	Lothar Kosse	1995	2
Halleluja	Albert Frey	2008	2
Happy Day	Ben Cantelon Tim Hughes	2006	2
Hear Our Praises	Reuben Morgan	1998	2

Heilig ist der Herr	Albert Frey	1998	3
Here For You	Jesse Reeves Matt Maher Matt Redman Tim	2011	2
Herr ich komme zu dir	Albert Frey	1992	2
Higher	Dominik Laim	2015	5
Hosanna	Carl Tuttle	1985	2
Hosanna	Brooke Ligertwood	2006	3
House of the Lord	Jonathan Smith Phil Wickham	2020	2
How Deep the Father's Love for Us	Stuart Townend	1995	2
How Great Is Our God	Chris Tomlin Ed Cash Jesse Reeves	2004	6
How Great Thou Art	Stuart Wesley Keene Hine	1949/ 1953	6
I Could Sing of Your Love Forever	Martin Smith	1994	3
I Give You My Heart	Reuben Morgan	1995	2
Immer mehr	Lothar Kosse	1991	2
In Christ Alone	Keith Getty Stuart Townend	2001	5
I See the Cross	Brian Doerksen	2000	2
It Is Well with My Soul	Horatio Gates Spafford Philip Paul Bliss	1876	3
Jesus Erlöser der Welt	Albert Frey	2004	4
Jesus Lover of My Soul	Daniel Grul John Ezzy Steve McPherson	1992	2
Jesus Messiah	Chris Tomlin Daniel Carson Ed Cash Jesse Reeves	2008	2
Jesus Name Above All Names	Naida Hearn	1974/ 1978	2
Jesus zu dir kann ich so kommen	Johannes Nitsch Manfred Siebald	1989	2
King of Kings	Brooke Ligertwood Jason Ingram Scott Ligertwood	2019	5
King of My Heart	John Mark McMillan Sarah McMillan	2014	3
Living Hope	Brian Johnson Phil Wickham	2017	6
Lobe den Herrn meine Seele	Albert Frey Andrea Adams-Frey	2004	3
Lord Reign in Me	Brenton Brown	1998	2

Mighty to Save	Ben Fielding Reuben Morgan	2006	8
Mit allem was ich bin	Ben Lütke	2010	2
Mittelpunkt	Juri Friesen Pala Friesen	2012	4
No Longer Slaves	Brian Johnson Joel Case Jonathan David Helser	2014	2
Oceans	Joel Houston Matt Crocker Salomon Ligthelm	2012	4
One Thing Remains	Brian Johnson Christa Black Gifford Jeremy Riddle	2010	2
Open the Eyes of My Heart Lord	Paul Baloche	1997	2
O Praise the Name	Benjamin Hastings Dean Ussher Marty Sampson	2015	4
Our God	Chris Tomlin Jesse Reeves Jonas Myrin Matt Redman	2010	5
Psalm 19	Terry Butler	1995	4
Raise a Hallelujah	Jake Stevens Jonathan David Helser Melissa Helser Molly Skaggs	2018	3
Reckless Love	Caleb Culver Cory Asbury Ran Jackson	2017	4
Revelation Song	Jennie Lee Riddle	2004	3
See a Victory	Ben Fielding Chris Brown Jason Ingram Steven Furtick	2019	2
Shout to the Lord	Darlene Zschech	1993	2
So hoch der Himmel ist	Johannes Hartl	2017	4
Still	Reuben Morgan	2002	2
The Blessing	Chris Brown Cody Carnes Kari Jobe Steven Furtick	2020	4
The Heart of Worship	Matt Redman	1997	3
The Lion and the Lamb	Brenton Brown Brian Johnson Leeland Mooring	2015	2
The Lord's My Shepherd	Francis Rous Jessie Seymour Irvine William Whittingham	1650/ 1872	2
The Potter's Hand	Darlene Zschech	1997	2
This I Believe	Ben Fielding Matt Crocker	2014	5
This Is Amazing Grace	Jeremy Riddle Josh Farro Phil Wickham	2012	5
This Is Our God	Reuben Morgan	2008	2
To Our God	Brian Johnson Jeremy Riddle Joel Taylor	2012	2

Treu	Tobias Gerster	1995	2
Vater, ich komme jetzt zu dir	Daniel Jacobi	1995	2
Victor's Crown	Darlene Zschech Israel Houghton Kari Jobe	2013	2
Vor Dir	Daniela A. Bauer Johanna Schmidt Melanie Schmidt Richard Schmidt	2011	4
Way Maker	Osinachi Kalu Okoro Egbu	2016	4
What a Beautiful Name	Ben Fielding Brooke Ligertwood	2016	8
What A Friend We Have in Jesus	Charles Crozat Converse Joseph Medlicott Scriven	1865/ 1870	2
Who You Same I Am	Ben Fielding Reuben Morgan	2017	6
Wir beten dich an	Albert Frey	1999	2
With All I Am	Reuben Morgan	2003	2
Wohin sonst	Thea Eichholz	2000	2
Wonderful God	Denis Campos	2009	2
Wonderful Merciful Savior	Dawn Rodgers Eric Wyse	1989	2
Worthy	Chris Brown Mack Brock Steven Furtick	2018	2
Worthy of It All	David Brymer Ryan Hall	2012	2
Wunderbarer Hirt	Lothar Kosse	2004	4
Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me	Jonny Robinson Michael Farren Rich Thompson	2018	2
You Are Good	Brian Johnson Jeremy Riddle	2010	2
You Are My All in All	Dennis Jernigan	1989	3
You Are My Hiding Place	Michael Ledner	1981	2
Your Grace Is Enough	Matt Maher	2003	2
Zwischen Himmel und Erde	Albert Frey	2002	4

9.5. CHURCHES VISITED

Church	Denom.	Date visited
Arabische Christliche Gemeinde Asperner Heldenplatz 9, 1220 Wien (Sunday services) Rebhanggasse 3A/6, 1200 Wien (postal address)	<i>FCGÖ</i>	16.01.2022, 16:00
Baptistengemeinde Beheimgasse Beheimgasse 1, 1170 Wien	<i>BBGÖ</i>	26.09.2021, 10:00
Baptistengemeinde Mollardgasse Mollardgasse 35, 1060 Wien	<i>BBGÖ</i>	02.01.2022, 10:00
Baptistengemeinde Wien-Essling Englisch-Feld-Gasse 4, 1220 Wien	<i>BBGÖ</i>	20.02.2022, 10:00
BeOne Evangelikale Gemeinde Burggasse 104, 1070 Wien	<i>BEG</i>	14.11.2021, 17:00
Biserica Filadelfia Viena Van-der-Nüll-Gasse 69, 1100 Wien	<i>FCGÖ</i>	07.11.2021, 10:00
Calvary Chapel Wien Burggasse 104, 1070 Wien	<i>ECG</i>	05.12.2021, 10:30
Christliche Internationale Gemeinde Wien Leebgasse 34, 1100 Wien	<i>FCGÖ</i>	10.10.2021, 17:00
Christliches Zentrum Wien Angerer Straße 14, 1210 Wien	<i>ECG</i>	14.11.2021, 10:00
Emanuel Wien Meiselstraße 70A, 1140 Wien	<i>BBGÖ</i>	26.12.2021, 10:00
Evangelikale Gemeinde Kagran Wagramer Straße 8, 1220 Wien	<i>BEG</i>	19.12.2021, 10:00
Evangelikale Gemeinde Meidling Gertrude-Wondrack-Platz 4, 1120 Wien	<i>BEG</i>	17.10.2021, 09:30
Evangeliumsgemeinde Karl-Popper-Straße 16, 1100 Wien	<i>BEG</i>	18.07.2021, 10:00
Four Corners Christian Fellowship Absberggasse 27, 1100 Wien	<i>FCGÖ</i>	07.11.2021, 17:00
Freikirche Forum Wien Gerhard-Bronner-Straße 1, 1100 Wien	<i>FCGÖ</i>	12.12.2021, 10:00
Grace Church Vienna Kenyongasse 15, 1070 Wien	<i>BEG</i>	03.10.2021, 10:30
Gute Nachricht Gemeinde Rotenmühlgasse 63, 1120 Wien	<i>FCGÖ</i>	17.10.2021, 17:00
International Baptist Church of Vienna Herndl-gasse 6, 1100 Wien	<i>BBGÖ</i>	29.08.2021, 10:30
International Christian Fellowship Wien Lerchenfelder Straße 35, 1070 Wien	<i>FCGÖ</i>	04.07.2021, 11:00 22.08.2021, 11:00
Lakeside Am Heidjöchl 6, 1220 Wien	<i>BEG</i>	10.10.2021, 10:30
Life Church Wien Leebgasse 34, 1100 Wien	<i>FCGÖ</i>	16.10.2021, 16:30
Mennonitische Freikirche Wien Hetzendorfer Straße 98, 1120 Wien	<i>MFÖ</i>	19.09.2021, 10:00
New Life International Church Arbeiterstrandbadstraße 122, 1220 Wien	<i>FCGÖ</i>	09.01.2022, 11:00

Projekt Gemeinde Engerthstraße 141, 1020 Wien (Sunday services) Krummgasse 7/1, 1030 Wien (postal address)	<i>BBGÖ</i>	24.10.2021, 17:00
Russischsprachige Evangelikale Gemeinde Wien Kriehubergasse 3, 1050 Wien	<i>BEG</i>	03.10.2021, 15:00
Stadtlicht Wiedner Hauptstraße 146–148, 1050 Wien	<i>BEG</i>	27.06.2021, 10:30
The Church of Pentecost – Austria Hosnedlgasse 16, 1220 Wien	<i>FCGÖ</i>	28.11.2021, 09:30
The Lord’s Pentecostal Evangelistic Ministry Stuwerstraße 1–3, 1020 Wien	<i>FCGÖ</i>	24.10.2021, 12:00
Vienna Christian Center: Jesus Zentrum Guglgasse 11, 1110 Wien (Sunday services) Baumgasse 72, 1030 Wien (postal address)	<i>FCGÖ</i>	06.11.2021, 16:00
Vienna Christian Center: Latino Guglgasse 11, 1110 Wien (Sunday services) Baumgasse 72, 1030 Wien (postal address)	<i>FCGÖ</i>	11.12.2021, 19:00
Wunderwerk Absberggasse 27, 1100 Wien	<i>FCGÖ</i>	15.08.2021, 10:00

9.6. ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

This master's thesis explores the role of music within broader aesthetic and liturgical practice in church services of congregations of the denominational coalition *Freikirchen in Österreich (FKÖ)* located in Vienna, Austria. Primary research methods were expert interviews conducted with pastors, questionnaires completed by music leaders, participant observation of church services, and analysis of lists of songs sung in congregations over a three-month time period. An anonymous church member survey was also conducted. The *FKÖ* was recognized in 2013 as a *gesetzlich anerkannte Kirche* ("legally recognized church") but traces its roots back to the Anabaptist movement within Protestant Reformation history. The five member denominations are united around key theological doctrines (Jesus as Lord and Savior, the authority and dependability of the Bible, the universal Church united around the Apostles' Creed, the mission of the Church) and classic free-church emphases (personal conversion with believer's baptism, autonomy of the local congregation, separation of church and state). Church services are a central expression of faith and practice and exhibit individual and communal aspects of a multifaceted understanding of Christian worship. Services are generally characterized by an informal atmosphere, falling along a spectrum from "familial" to "trendy." Service elements, with special emphasis given to the music and sermon, are embedded in flexible liturgical forms. Music in church services draws from numerous sources and is especially influenced by current trends in global Christian music. Songs within this contemporary repertoire draw both on core doctrinal content and on vocabulary of individual experience and lend themselves to flexible instrumentation and to unison singing. Diversity at a denominational and congregational level is showcased in varying degrees of emotional and gestural expressiveness and by a continuum of musical styles ranging between "collective" and "concertlike." Nevertheless, congregations share extensive crossover of actual musical repertoire and manifest a consistent emphasis on the primacy of authentic worship. The aesthetic and musical elements of church services of Vienna congregations of the *FKÖ* illustrate historically and theologically rooted characteristics that find resonance in contemporary worship practice of broadly defined free-church Protestantism in German-speaking Europe and beyond.

9.6.1. ABSTRACT (GERMAN)

In dieser Masterarbeit wird die Rolle der Musik im Rahmen der ästhetischen und liturgischen Praxis in den Gottesdiensten der Gemeinden des kirchlichen Zusammenschlusses der *Freikirchen in Österreich (FKÖ)* in Wien, untersucht. Primäre Forschungsmethoden waren ExpertInneninterviews mit PastorInnen, von Musikverantwortlichen ausgefüllte Fragebögen, teilnehmende Beobachtung von Gottesdiensten und die Analyse von Liedern, die in Gemeinden über einen Zeitraum von drei Monaten gesungen wurden. Außerdem wurde eine anonyme Umfrage unter Kirchenmitgliedern durchgeführt. Die *FKÖ* ist seit 2013 eine gesetzlich anerkannte Kirche, hat aber ihre Wurzeln in der Täuferbewegung der protestantischen Reformationsgeschichte. Die fünf angehörenden Gemeindebünde sind in zentralen theologischen Lehren (Jesus als Herr und Erlöser, die Autorität und Verlässlichkeit der Bibel, die im Apostolischen Glaubensbekenntnis geeinte Weltkirche, der Missionsauftrag der Kirche) und klassischen freikirchlichen Schwerpunkten (persönliche Bekehrung mit Glaubenstaufe, Autonomie der Ortsgemeinde, Trennung von Kirche und Staat) geeint. Der Gottesdienst ist ein zentraler Ausdruck des Glaubens und der Praxis und zeigt individuelle und gemeinschaftliche Aspekte eines vielschichtigen Verständnisses der christlichen Anbetung. Die Gottesdienste zeichnen sich grundsätzlich durch eine informelle Atmosphäre aus, die sich in einem Spektrum von „familiär“ bis „trendy“ bewegt. Die gottesdienstlichen Elemente, insbesondere die Musik und die Predigt, sind in flexible liturgische Formen eingebettet. Die Musik in den Gottesdiensten schöpft aus zahlreichen Quellen und ist besonders von den aktuellen Trends in der weltweiten christlichen Musik beeinflusst. Die Lieder dieses zeitgenössischen Repertoires beziehen sich sowohl auf zentrale Glaubensinhalte als auch auf das Vokabular individueller Erfahrungen und eignen sich für eine flexible Instrumentierung und für den Unisono-Gesang. Die Vielfalt auf der Ebene der Gemeindebünde und Gemeinden zeigt sich in einem unterschiedlichen Grad an emotionaler und gestischer Ausdruckskraft und in einem Kontinuum musikalischer Stile, das zwischen „kollektiv“ und „konzertant“ liegt. Allerdings überschneiden sich die musikalischen Repertoires der Gemeinden in hohem Maße und sie betonen übereinstimmend den Vorrang authentischer Anbetung. Die ästhetischen und musikalischen Elemente der Gottesdienste der Wiener Gemeinden der *FKÖ* veranschaulichen historisch und theologisch verwurzelte Merkmale, die in der zeitgenössischen gottesdienstlichen Praxis des weit gefassten freikirchlichen Protestantismus im deutschsprachigen Europa und darüber hinaus Wiederhall finden.