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Cover Page Footnote

I am grateful to the staff of Wild Goose 2017 and the organizers of Beer & Hymns for welcoming my fieldwork inquiries. This article has benefitted from feedback at the Sound and Secularity symposium (Stony Brook, NY, 2019) and the Christian Congregational Music conference (Oxford, UK, 2019), and I thank the organizers for including me. I benefitted from the insights of this journal's anonymous reviewers.

Beer & Hymns and Community

Religious Identity and Participatory Sing-alongs

Andrew Mall

Beer & Hymns is a loose network of local, participatory sing-along events that are independently organized and run throughout the United Kingdom, the United States, and at festivals such as Greenbelt (in the U.K.) and Wild Goose (in the U.S.). Participants gather at bars, breweries, pubs, and churches to sing Christian hymns, spirituals, and other songs together in a group setting. Event leaders welcome both regular churchgoers and those who do not attend church to Beer & Hymns, focusing not on the spiritual or worshipful dimensions of congregational singing but rather on its potential to form community—one that is, following Kay Shelemay, “a social entity, an outcome of a combination of social and musical processes, rendering those who participate in making or listening to music aware of a connection among themselves.”¹ Like other participatory musical contexts, at Beer & Hymns there is little to no emphasis on performing artists; instead, as Thomas Turino notes, “the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role.”² This characteristic stands in stark contrast to the presentational performances that festival-goers typically encounter. Beer & Hymns, however, is not the only form of participatory singing rooted in religious repertoire that has deemphasized its religious connotations in favor of social and musical inclusion. Sacred Harp and shape-note singings in the United States, for example, have welcomed participants from diverse religious and political backgrounds to form community grounded in musical practice since the mid-nineteenth

century.³ In contrast, Beer & Hymns is a relatively new phenomenon, only coalescing under that name in 2006, and thus reflects twenty-first-century tensions surrounding religious identity (in particular, evangelical Christianity), as well as intersections between sacred and secular domains in the contemporary United Kingdom and United States. As such, while studies of Sacred Harp and shape-note communities often emphasize their connectedness *to* tradition, what distinguishes Beer & Hymns is its divergence *from* tradition.

The tradition from which Beer & Hymns diverges is that of Christian congregational singing, which has become intertwined (and conflated, as I discuss below) with worship practice during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Aside from the music itself, Beer & Hymns events lack other formal components common to most Christian worship services: Bible readings, prayer, reflection, and a sermon or lesson. Furthermore, Beer & Hymns leaders, most of whom are regular churchgoers themselves, frame the sing-alongs as events *other than* or *in addition to*, but never *instead of*, worship services.⁴ Building on Monique Ingalls’s definition of “congregation” as “a fluid, contingent social constellation that is actively performed into being through a set of communal practices,” I argue that Beer & Hymns is best understood as congregational singing for three reasons: (1) it is a participatory musical practice; (2) its repertoire is largely comprised of religious hymns, spirituals, and praise and worship songs (see Sidebar 1), and (3)

its practice and significance to individual participants depend on their familiarity with formal Christian worship, even if they are no longer practicing Christians.⁵ In doing so I am not attempting to redefine congregations and congregational singing as areligious phenomena; rather, I am emphasizing their potential for an ambivalent religiosity in postsecular contexts.⁶ That is, I am more interested in describing and analyzing the shifting norms of public culture within the secular than in addressing the transformation of religiosity and/or sacred spaces.

In this article I address three related questions. First, how should we interpret Beer & Hymns' decoupling of congregational singing from Christian worship? Second, how might these events contribute to evolving definitions of congregation and congregating? Finally, in what ways does Beer & Hymns contribute to evangelical Christianity's contested distinction between the sacred and the secular, particularly in the United States, where secularism has only ever been aspirational? I turn to these questions

within the context of Beer & Hymns events at Wild Goose Festival, an annual Christian event that takes place in Hot Springs, North Carolina, and features music, speakers, and workshops. In 2017, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork as a participant-observer at Wild Goose, where I also formally interviewed festival staff and Beer & Hymns leaders. I correlate my observations at Wild Goose with earlier ethnographic fieldwork at several Boston-area churches, whose branding and programming reflected an emphasis on experiencing community. My interpretations are grounded in these necessarily subjective, qualitative data. I address these questions through considering the goals of Beer & Hymns leaders and interpreting my observations of participants, the lived experience of this sing-along as a participant myself, broader sociocultural trends that have been accompanied by increasingly fractured social relations, and the event's sonic environment—all situated within a context (the festival) that, by definition, occurs outside the places and routines of daily life and religious practice.⁷

Sidebar 1: Beer & Hymns Song Lists at Wild Goose 2017

At Wild Goose 2017, the Beer & Hymns leaders provided songbooks for the participants. They were simple, consisting of lyrics to fifty-seven different songs printed double-sided on copy paper, collated, folded in half, and bound with a single staple. The songbooks' cover and repertoire closely resemble those of the songbooks used by the Beer & Hymns group that meets in Chicago's western suburbs; Nate, one of Wild Goose's Beer & Hymns leaders, was an organizer of Beer & Hymns Chicago at the time. No music notation, chord changes, or metrical

indications are printed in the books; to participate successfully, singers either must be familiar with the songs already or have a strong ear for the harmonic and melodic conventions of the genre(s). This distinguishes the Beer & Hymns songbook from traditional hymnals used by many Protestant churches, but it would be familiar to churchgoers who attend contemporary worship services that eschew hymnals in favor of lyrics projected on a screen at the front of the church—a common practice in the twenty-first century, both in the mainline Protestant denominations and in

continued on next page

Sidebar 1 continued

nondenominational evangelical churches. The book's song list is diverse, representing several eras and genres, although songs by white composers clearly outnumber those from Black origins, and a plurality date to the nineteenth century.

Of the fifty-seven songs, over half consist of hymns, largely composed in the 1800s and early 1900s. A handful are older: *Amazing Grace*, for example, was written in the late 1700s, and the origins of *Be Thou My Vision* can be traced to the sixth century or earlier. Five others are praise or praise and worship songs composed by white songwriters, such as Bill and Gloria Gaither's *Because He Lives* (written in 1970) and the more recent *In Christ Alone*, by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend (written in 2001; the songbook also includes Townend's *How Deep the Father's Love for Us*). Songs with African American origins account for almost 23 percent of the repertoire: eight spirituals (including *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* and *Were You There When They Crucified My Lord*) and five gospel pieces. Notably, of those gospel songs, two are by Andraé Crouch (*Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus* and *Soon and Very Soon*) and a third is the arrangement of *Oh Happy Day* popularized by the Edwin Hawkins Singers in 1968–69.

Many songs in the Beer & Hymns songbook—over 12 percent—have circulated

primarily not as religious songs but rather in secular popular culture. These include Leonard Cohen's *Hallelujah*, Hank Williams's *I Saw the Light*, The Beatles' *Let It Be*, and *Wagon Wheel*, first recorded by Old Crow Medicine Show (with verses written to an unreleased Bob Dylan chorus) in 2004 and popularized by Darius Rucker's 2013 recorded version. Such songs are typically not sung in worship services, and their inclusion in the songbook resists normative taxonomies of congregational repertoire. I attended all three nights of Beer & Hymns at Wild Goose 2017, noting the songs we sang on Friday and Saturday nights (see below). We sang seventeen songs on Friday and sixteen on Saturday, of which eleven were repeated. Hymns account for over 56 percent of the songs in the book, and on Friday almost 65 percent of the songs we sang were hymns; on Saturday the ratio was lower, at 56 percent. On each night we sang three songs with African American origins (repeating *Soon and Very Soon*). On both nights we sang *Wagon Wheel* about two-thirds of the way into the set and closed with *All of the Hard Days Are Gone*, a song composed by the U.S. folk singer/songwriter Kevin McKrell but often misattributed as a traditional Irish folk tune.

Beer & Hymns

Beer & Hymns started in 2006 at The Jesus Arms, the pub tent at Greenbelt, an annual “festival of arts, faith and justice” held in England since 1974.⁸ Counting members of the Jesus People Movement counterculture among its founders, in the twenty-first century Greenbelt promotes itself as “energised by a progressive Christian worldview . . . that is inclusive,

open-minded, participatory and generous in spirit.”⁹ Greenbelt attendees returning home to the United States were inspired to launch their own Beer & Hymns events. In Denver, Colorado, the House for All Sinners and Saints, a Lutheran congregation founded by Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber, has held Beer & Carols since at least 2009 and continues to host regular Beer & Hymns gatherings at a local Irish pub.¹⁰ In Portland,

Oregon, Rev. Karen Ward started holding Beer & Hymns gatherings in 2012 with the assistance of Todd and Angie Fadel, although they later divided their energies: Reverend Ward continued at the Portland Abbey and the Fadels at the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in downtown Portland for several years. But it was Todd and Angie Fadel bringing Beer & Hymns to the first Wild Goose Festival in North Carolina in 2011, where Todd was “curator of sound,” and leading it for three years that catalyzed the growth of Beer & Hymns throughout the United States.

Today, there are dozens of Beer & Hymns organized throughout the United States, including regular gatherings (monthly, bimonthly, or quarterly) in Atlanta, Georgia; Charlotte, North Carolina; Chicago, Illinois; Nashville, Tennessee; Orange County, California; Raleigh, North Carolina; Washington, D.C.; and elsewhere. Although several are sponsored by a local church or even take place at a church (but usually not in the sanctuary), most are not affiliated with a church or Christian

denomination at all, instead relying on the organizational energy (and musicianship) of independent local volunteers. Beer & Hymns events are not worship services, Bible studies, or religious retreats. The events’ leaders do not normally preach or pray, nor do they witness to attendees in an attempt to convert them or invite them to church. Instead, the focus of Beer & Hymns—like most gatherings at bars and pubs—is primarily social: creating and sustaining community while providing something fun for people to do. As participants, we raise our pint glasses and lift our voices to sing hymns, spirituals, praise songs, and folk songs together. Leaders accompany on whatever instruments are available, provide songbooks, and lead the singing, but are quickly subsumed by the larger group: the sonic emphasis is on the participatory nature of the sing-along, and not necessarily on proper intonation, rhythmic precision, or vocal blend (see Sidebar 2). At Wild Goose Festival it takes place every night: starting at 11 P.M., we gather in the pub tent, beers in hand, ready to sing (see Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Beer & Hymns at Wild Goose Festival 2017. Photograph by the author.

First Ethnographic Encounter at Wild Goose 2017

Thursday evening, July 13, 2017: Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber's talk on the opening night of Wild Goose Festival 2017 is highly anticipated. As the Main Stage speaker this first evening, she sets the festival's tone for the entire weekend. Bolz-Weber holds the entire audience's attention for about an hour, delivering an empowering and well-received message of finding the grace to know that God accepts us as we are—that choosing faith and coming to God is not conditional on perfecting oneself first. After she finishes, Jeff Clark, the festival's director and Main Stage emcee, announces that Bolz-Weber is heading to the bookstore tent to sign books. Clark then introduces the night's headline band: Big Ray and Chicago's Most Wanted, with special guest Melissa Greene. From where I am standing, in the rear of the audience on the right side of the stage, I see many attendees streaming toward the bookstore tent on the opposite side, and only a fraction of the audience stays to listen to this energetic Chicago blues band.

Because the town of Hot Springs, North Carolina, where Wild Goose takes place, has a strict 11 P.M. noise curfew, the amplified Main Stage music ends precisely on time. As Big Ray and Chicago's Most Wanted leave the stage and the remaining audience members pack up their camp chairs, Beer & Hymns starts almost immediately in the nearby pub tent. I buy an IPA from the beer tent to the right of the Main Stage; on my way to the pub tent I pass someone headed in the opposite direction who exclaims enthusiastically about Beer & Hymns, "This is how church should be!" I am surprised to see the very excited crowd; I had expected a small gathering, like most of the festival's workshops and sessions throughout the day, but the tent is full and more people continue to arrive. The leaders,

not on a stage or otherwise in front of the crowd but centrally located inside the tent, include two or three guys on acoustic guitar, two more on banjo and mandolin, another playing a single snare drum with brushes, and a woman playing tambourine. None are amplified and there are no microphones; the whole thing feels somewhat haphazard, guerilla, almost disorganized—as if we have repurposed an official festival venue for a spontaneous sing-along gathering whose size snowballs as curious passersby drop in.

But Beer & Hymns is not a guerilla event; rather, it is a planned Wild Goose session, an officially scheduled component since the festival's founding in 2011, and an expected highlight of many attendees' experience. I learn later that in 2017, the event's nightly leaders include members of teams who lead Beer & Hymns events in California's Orange County, Nashville, and the Chicago suburbs. They circulate a box of songbooks from which we sing over the next hour or so. The songs are a varied mix of Christian hymns, spirituals, and a few more contemporary pieces (see Sidebar 1). The whole crowd sings loudly enough that the leaders' voices are barely audible. The guitarists dance around the center of the tent, pausing only between songs to field shouted requests and decide what to play next. I spy festival director Jeff Clark shaking a maraca and nipping off of a flask. Many others, but definitely not all, are also openly drinking alcohol, either purchased at the beer tent (like my IPA) or brought with them (like Clark's flask). These people are clearly having fun singing together, and I find this participatory event to be very moving.

Congregational Singing and/as Worship

At Wild Goose 2017, Beer & Hymns is clearly a time of congregational singing—perhaps the only such formal singing—

together on the festival's program. But if it is congregational singing, then what is its congregation's purpose, and how does singing (and socializing, including drinking alcohol) contribute to its efficacy? I suggest that Beer & Hymns events exemplify "modes of congregating," a term that Ingalls has coined to describe "the active creation of various evangelical social formations that have gathered for the express purpose of worship."¹¹ She examines congregational singing in church but also at concerts, praise marches, worship conferences, and online. In her study of contemporary worship music repertoire and practice, Ingalls shows how the expectations, meanings, and salience of congregating and worship vary in these several different modes. Congregating, singing, worshipping—each of these actions is simultaneously distinct from and interrelated to the others in Ingalls's modes of congregating.

For many evangelical Christians, congregational singing and worship have become inextricably conflated; events such as Beer & Hymns contend with this association and thus risk offending some as contradictions in terms. As Joshua Busman notes, over the last several decades "worship became a category of experience that was increasingly indistinguishable from music."¹² Within religious institutions and contexts, this conflation presents a challenge for worship leaders and ministers; as Ingalls explains, "the felt need of so many leaders to insist continually that 'worship is more than singing' evidences how widespread the conflation is."¹³ This conflation often extends to musical style, in which certain musical characteristics and sonic elements are more appropriate for worship contexts

than others. For example, in my own research at the Anchor Fellowship, a small nondenominational evangelical church in Nashville, the worship pastor found that his congregants tended to experience fewer moments of spiritual transcendence in worship services when he consciously changed the worship band's style by programming new songs or altering how his musicians approached dynamics or modulations.¹⁴ If worship and congregational singing have become synonymous for many evangelical Christians, then modes of worship are learned and conditioned responses to particular song repertoires and musical styles in specific contexts, as the Anchor's worship pastor discovered.

But what happens when we decouple modes of congregating from singing from worshipping? To put it another way, what do we make of congregational singing that is not worship, or of modes of congregating that are less about singing worship songs together than they are about creating congregational cohesion and community, or of congregations that are ephemeral by nature? If worship is taken out of the equation, what distinguishes congregational singing from other forms of participatory musicking?¹⁵ As we try to disentangle these components, what does doing so reveal about the concept of worship itself? It is important to note that worship has purposes other than the spiritual transcendence that the Anchor's congregation craved and expected through their encounter with and participation in congregational singing. Worship facilitates the God-encounter, but it also (re)inscribes ritual and tradition, enables participants to stake both individual and collective claims to (religious)

identity, and strengthens congregational cohesion. Importantly, these objectives usually take place within the structure of a religious belief system shared by participants, whether formalized within a religious institution or not. Thus, shared beliefs structure most congregational formations; at churches and other places of worship, the congregants' faith and their embodiment of that faith constitute shared beliefs.

At Wild Goose's Beer & Hymns, however, I found that a shared *frustration* with evangelicalism, not a shared *faith*, provided participants pathways to rapprochement: attendees experienced a unity through congregational singing similar to that experienced in church and at other worship events—rooted, indeed, in the experience of worship, even if only as memory—but which was not grounded in a shared religious identity or belief system. (Importantly, attendees also do not share an antibelief faith, as many do indeed identify as Christians and/or continue to attend church regularly.) As I discovered, Beer & Hymns is a mode of congregating in which the spiritual transcendence of worship does not figure but which nonetheless fulfills other objectives of congregations, particularly that of community. In short, community, not worship, explains the salience of Beer & Hymns to its leaders and participants at Wild Goose Festival.

Wild Goose Festival: Context

Wild Goose Festival takes place in Hot Springs, located in the Appalachians of western North Carolina, northwest of Asheville. Elsewhere, I have discussed how the festival's organizers (like Greenbelt's)

describe their emphasis as “progressive Christianity”: a Bible-centered and faith-inspired commitment to social justice and compassion for the marginalized and oppressed.¹⁶ Inasmuch as this approach aligns with progressive politics and causes in the United States, the mainstream of white U.S. evangelicalism perceives it to be in diametric opposition; progressive Christianity, they argue, reflects ethics of cultural pluralism and secular humanism that are at odds with evangelicalism's faith-centered moral universalism and belief in absolute truth.¹⁷ In the United States, progressive Christianity overlaps and intersects with what observers have called the “Evangelical Left,” a movement that predates the rise of Trumpism but has been increasingly visible and vocal since 2016, and is also often more multicultural and diverse in makeup than white conservative evangelicalism. According to the event's organizers, Wild Goose's audience is diverse in several respects: gender identity, race and ethnicity, religious affiliation (including the unaffiliated, agnostics, and atheists), sexuality, and many other characteristics. Progressive Christian speakers like Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber resonate very strongly among Wild Goose's diverse crowd. Bolz-Weber is an ordained Evangelical Lutheran minister who writes and speaks of Christians' ability to shame fellow believers and nonbelievers alike for their human imperfections, outright sin, or divergent lifestyle choices—for being both *in* the world and *of* the world. In doing so she is shifting the conversation within evangelical Christianity from perceiving opposition everywhere to practicing convergence.

The Sound of Beer & Hymns (Second Encounter)

Friday evening, July 14, 2017: The second late-night Beer & Hymns session of Wild Goose 2017 begins shortly after Saturday's final artist, The Collection, leaves the Main Stage. About 200 people crowd the pub tent area directly behind the lawn seating, about twice as many people as last night. Last night's song leaders are joined halfway into the set by a random attendee who brought his string bass to Wild Goose (see Fig. 1). The sing-along starts up-tempo: we sing Do Lord, Soon and Very Soon, and Nothing But the Blood in the first seven minutes; the slower song Holy, Holy, Holy takes up the next four minutes. This is not an elaborate production: songs start with the leaders strumming a few chords unamplified and singing the opening verses unmiked; the song then ripples through the crowd from its center to the periphery as singers gradually find their place and join in. This is also not proper "church" singing: it is sloppy and fun and messy and not particularly precious; the choir (if you can call us that) reveals a broad spectrum of intonation as well as rhythmic asynchronization; and throughout, people are talking and drinking and sometimes even singing the wrong lyrics altogether. During pauses between each piece, participants shout out requests by page number from the songbooks while the musicians retune, reset their capos, and agree on the chord changes before announcing and then launching into the next selection.

As the sing-along progresses, it ebbs and flows, with the leaders demonstrating a strong feel for moving from energetic songs to more reflective pieces and back. Singing like this is fun—there is no judgment, and the transitions can be surprising and also very satisfying. It Is Well with My Soul, the most affecting song of the night, transitions almost immediately into Wagon Wheel (see Sidebar 2). Amazing Grace starts off slowly enough, but halfway

through it kicks into a double-time feel that similarly doubles the energy in the tent. I'll Fly Away segues directly into When the Saints Go Marching In, and then—after a flubbed start—into I've Got Peace Like a River. The night ends with the Irish folk song All of the Hard Days Are Gone sung through wide grins, as this community of singers anticipates one more evening together tomorrow night.

Beer & Hymns and Resilience

On Saturday afternoon at Wild Goose, following my second encounter with Beer & Hymns, I shared a lunchtime picnic table with a woman named Julie, an amateur filmmaker from Charlotte, North Carolina; she had stood near me at Beer & Hymns the night before and had even offered to help hold my recording equipment. At lunch she asked me why I was recording, and I told her about my fieldwork researching Christian music festivals. Julie told me that she is Catholic, listens to contemporary Christian music, and attends Christian rock concerts; her husband is from an evangelical background, but as an adult has distanced himself from evangelical Christianity. I told her that one of the things I was finding meaningful about Beer & Hymns was that, as a participatory event, it empowers attendees to lay claim over their festival experiences, both individually and collectively. Julie agreed, replying that she found last night's rendition of *It Is Well with My Soul* especially moving: no matter how much the church and organized religion might exclude or minimize us and our concerns—no matter the damage to our faith perpetrated by other Christians—we remain strong in, and at peace with, our beliefs and values. In this context, the hymn and its participatory singing are a communal expression of resilience and resistance.

Sidebar 2: Sound and Singing *It Is Well with My Soul* at Beer & Hymns

Even though the emphasis at Beer & Hymns is on participatory singing, not everyone sings the entire time. Much like at concerts, attendees chat with each other, interject loudly, shout out requests, and applaud and cheer in addition to singing along. This distinguishes Beer & Hymns from many other congregational contexts in which communal and individual acts of worship command attendees' attention. At Beer & Hymns, the chatting and crowd noise, however distracting it is to the production of musical sound, evinces a central goal of welcoming, building, and sustaining community, even at ephemeral events like Wild Goose Festival.¹⁸ In other words, sounds other than music itself contribute significantly to the sonic realms in which music-making takes place, and paying attention to the sounds of social spaces for participatory practices like Beer & Hymns is essential to comprehending their effectiveness and affect for leaders and attendees. Examining the sounds of participatory musicking goes beyond an analysis of the song, its lyrics, layers of accompaniment, and the voice, but also demands an awareness of (for example) the audible cues for the work of leading a sing-along (exhortations, lined-out key lyrics to orient the singers) and clues to the work that singing along accomplishes for those participants who choose to be there—that is, in articulating congregational belonging.¹⁹ If, through decoupling the practice of congregational singing from that of Christian worshipping, Beer & Hymns contributes to evolving definitions of congregation and congregating, then in its material practices we can hear traces of these trajectories and better understand individuals' relationships to religion via participatory musicking.

As an example, listen to a performance of the Christian hymn *It Is Well with My*

Soul, as sung during Friday evening's Beer & Hymns at Wild Goose 2017, excerpted from my field recording (see AV Ex. 1 on article download page). There is no conductor at Beer & Hymns directing the singers. As such, not everyone is aware that the song has started: at the beginning of the clip the singers are drowned out by the crowd noise following the previous song (*In the Sweet By and By*), but that gradually dissipates and is largely overtaken by the singing of the first refrain (at 0:51). The song starts accompanied with strummed acoustic guitar, bowed string bass (doubling the vocal melody), and slow tambourine, but the guitar and tambourine mostly drop out after the first verse and refrain. Throughout the four verses over six minutes, the singing of *It Is Well* gradually becomes more intense and affective. Because the Beer & Hymns songbook lacks musical notation, successful participation depends on singers' familiarity with these songs, especially those with responsorial sections, heard during each refrain in this example. The applause after the final verse and refrain (5:50) is the loudest of the evening, and I interpret it as celebrating the participatory, affective, and ultimately resistant nature of the song's performance. Following *It Is Well*, the song leaders transition almost immediately into the secular rock song *Wagon Wheel* (6:25). They take up this song without lengthy negotiation, uniquely for the evening as the interstitial time between songs is typically filled with participants shouting requests to the leaders. The flow from one song to the other feels natural, but it is a clearly divergent moment, as the singers shift from an emotionally affective song to the most playful and fun selection of the evening.

0:00: Verse 1 ("When peace, like a river, attendeth my way . . ."); the singing is practically inaudible under the crowd noise until around 0:12.

continued on next page

Sidebar 2 continued

0:26: It is not until partway through verse 1 that the singing is finally louder than the crowd noise; the bowed string bass is prominent, doubling the vocal melody.

0:51: The refrain (“It is well / With my soul”) is sung responsorially but is not notated as such in the songbook that the leaders have distributed to participants; nor is there a conductor to direct the singers’ entrances. The responsorial singing here reflects the participants’ familiarity with the song and their enjoyment of its appropriate performance.

1:21: Verse 2 (“Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come . . .”) is introduced by one of the song leaders shouting out “Though Satan.”

2:19: Participants’ cheers announce the second responsorial refrain (“It is well . . .”).

2:50: Verse 3 (“My sin, o the bliss of this glorious thought . . .”), like verse 2, is introduced by a different song leader shouting out “My sin.”

3:49: During the third refrain (“It is well . . .”), the absence of the guitar accompaniment and percussion is particularly noticeable, although the bass is still present.

4:20: One of the song leaders shouts out “And Lord, haste the day” to introduce Verse 4 (“And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight . . .”). During this

verse, the singing is at its loudest and most sincere, particularly leading up to and during the third line (4:49): “The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend.” We can also clearly hear the singers harmonizing in this verse.

5:19: We can hear attention given to dynamic variation clearly: after the singing reaches its loudest during verse 4, it gradually becomes softer; the fourth and final refrain (“It is well . . .”) starts softly but gradually builds. Loud cheers and applause follow the end of the song; importantly, this is not applause directed outward toward presentational performers, as at a concert, but rather inward toward the participants themselves.

6:10: Light guitar strumming, barely audible underneath the interstitial crowd noise, indicates the next song.

6:25: Verse 1 of *Wagon Wheel* (“Heading down south to the land of the pines . . .”), like *It Is Well*, starts quietly, but singers gradually recognize the song and join in. The guitar accompaniment is joined by string bass (plucked, not bowed), tambourine, and maracas.

6:54: *Wagon Wheel*’s first chorus (“So rock me momma like a wagon wheel . . .”) elicits cheers and the crowd noise dissipates almost fully.

White U.S. Evangelicalism and the Secular

At Wild Goose, Beer & Hymns is meaningful to its leaders and participants in part because the singing-together recalls both a common repertoire and a shared (or similar) history of enjoying singing these songs in seemingly simpler times, before doing so was complicated by ambivalent or even negative experiences with churches or Christian communities. As Julie pointed

out over lunch, however, leaders and participants do not use the sing-alongs to nostalgize and return to those simpler times. Instead, song leaders and singers alike articulate resistance through Beer & Hymns: they reclaim and recontextualize the songs for their present-day selves and beliefs, which are increasingly lived in social realms more identified with the secular than with the sacred. Contextualized within a longer history of white U.S. evangelicalism’s

relationships with the secular, the salience of Beer & Hymns carries added weight, indexing recurring processes of convergence and divergence between the secular and sacred realms.

Jeffers Engelhardt describes “the secular” as “the conditions of modernity in which religion is a limited, differentiated realm of belief and spiritual practice distinct from other realms of social life, experience, and knowledge.”²⁰ Relationships between the sacred and the secular realms are necessarily plural: the intersections between white U.S. evangelicalism and the secular over the last 100 years or so are complicated by differing theological interpretations and orientations, which in turn reflect understandings of the sacred that shift between being rooted in institutions and centered within individualized religious practices. The dominant narrative of these intersections positions white U.S. evangelicals in opposition to an increasingly secular public culture throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.²¹ In some contexts, evangelicals have practiced their faith (or lived faith-based lives) in moments and spaces distinct, discrete, and divergent from the secular; in others, evangelicals have exerted control and claimed power over the secular in an attempt to shape it in their image—a process of convergence that presumes an a priori differentiation. In the United States, this differentiation correlated with the rise of Christian fundamentalism in the late nineteenth century, followed by its acceleration and formalization starting in the 1920s. These periods—themselves dovetailing with successive periods of religious revival in the United States, as well as reactions against social and cultural changes—laid the groundwork for a separatist fundamentalist theology of

retreating or otherwise disengaging both from public culture and also from mainline Protestant denominations, which were more liberal and navigated between distinct sacred and secular spheres more fluidly, integrating the two.

The emergence of what religious scholars have called “new evangelicalism” in the 1940s paved the way for a mediating position between separatist fundamentalism and integrational mainline white Protestantism.²² Although it was certainly more culturally accommodating than fundamentalism, new evangelicalism attracted theological conservatives who disapproved of an increasing liberalism and hierarchism within the mainline denominations. The emergence of new evangelicalism was followed, among other things, by the rise of youth and campus ministries and other parachurch organizations in the 1940s and 1950s, the growth of nondenominational and new paradigm churches in the 1950s and 1960s, the stylistic mediations of the Jesus People Movement in the 1960s and 1970s, and the integration of these elements back into mainline U.S. Protestantism in the 1970s.²³ By the 1970s, the choice between cultural separation or integration within white U.S. evangelicalism, represented by the division between Christian fundamentalism and mainline Protestantism in the 1920s and 1930s, had become overshadowed by a theology of transformation in both private and public spheres.²⁴ In private domains, transformational evangelicals increasingly approached all aspects of their daily lives with religious intent and meaning, instead of distinguishing between the religious and the nonreligious. And in public domains, white U.S. evangelicals increasingly organized to seek political and cultural influence.

Engelhardt observes that “the secular is made and remade relative to religion,” and during and following the 1970s, secular public culture and discourse in the United States increasingly reflected the concerns and values of politically and socially conservative white U.S. evangelicals who subscribed to this transformational theology.²⁵ But such a transformational approach presumes differentiation: evangelicals can only be motivated to transform the secular if they believe it does not already represent and reflect their individual and collective needs and values. And indeed, from the 1980s, white U.S. evangelicalism increasingly resembled a classic Hebdigian subculture, explicitly opposing dominant (secular) culture and repurposing elements of style, communication, and material culture to suit its own needs and articulate resistance.²⁶ As with other subcultures, evangelicalism’s opposition is significant and meaningful to individual participants who find belongingness (and sometimes affinity) in the shared experiences of resisting and persevering in the face of encroaching secularism.²⁷ The evangelicalism-as-subculture narrative is thus one way to explain the accelerating growth of Christian media industries and infrastructures in the 1980s and 1990s: during those decades, the long-established U.S. Christian publishing and bookstore sectors were joined by profitable businesses producing and selling (for example) Christian music, which today’s listeners can hear on local affiliates of Christian radio conglomerates K-LOVE and Salem, and Christian films and television series, which viewers today can stream on Pureflix, the Christian equivalent to Netflix.²⁸

Theories of the postsecular argue that, in the United States and other “secular”

societies, public culture and social life increasingly (and implicitly) include religion and religious values. Today, in other words, Christianity cannot be understood as a category of difference separate from the secular in the United States, if it ever could have been. Nonetheless, one interpretation of the subculturalization of white U.S. evangelicalism is that it is a result of evangelical leaders seeking to establish and maintain power over their members by perpetuating and strengthening a *perception* of oppositionality from (or persecution by) the secular, no matter the *actual* degree of differentiation between Christian beliefs and secular values. This problem, a kind of manufactured crisis, has only worsened as many evangelical leaders in the United States appear to be more concerned with maintaining a stable membership base than with reaching those who do not already share the same beliefs in an era of intensely polarized electoral politics and a constituency of regular churchgoers that is declining relative to the overall U.S. population.²⁹ Within the white U.S. evangelical (sub)culture, as in U.S. politics, moderating and mediating voices and initiatives are loudly denounced (by both the political Right and the Left) for undermining absolute, intractable, or unmovable values. When everything is in opposition, there is no appetite for cooperation. The secular remains so because it strengthens the sacred.

Urban Evangelical Churches and Community in the United States

The Beer & Hymns movement and Wild Goose Festival complicate these narratives, partly by illustrating that they conflate what is in fact a more diverse set of evangelical orientations to the secular,

and partly by demonstrating that white U.S. evangelicalism itself is being remade through its participants' engagement with—and passion and concern for—the secular. In other words, the secular is not (only) some distant, distinct realm in opposition to the sacred that can either be avoided or conquered; rather, it is also a (postsecular) construct within which evangelicals define their theology and practice their faith. For many evangelicals, especially those who identify with progressive Christianity or the Evangelical Left, aligning themselves with social justice issues that have become associated with political progressivism and liberalism reflects their theology. For others from an evangelical background but who have since dissociated from Christianity, *Beer & Hymns* is a source of fun, nostalgia, and reflection. It is also a very clear example of how congregational singing can facilitate community based on shared experiences, which I explore further below. Indeed, given the diverse faith identities of *Beer & Hymns* participants (at Wild Goose and elsewhere), I argue that community through singing is the events' central feature.³⁰ This observation aligns *Beer & Hymns* with many evangelical churches whose leaders emphasize the value of their churches' communities as constituent components (and benefits) of congregating, on par with that of their religious identities (which are never erased). To illustrate this I return to church, which has become a primary site of community in urban areas such as Boston, Massachusetts, where I live, and where the middle class is increasingly comprised of transient students and workers as well as more permanent residents who have relocated from elsewhere.

During four successive weeks in the spring of 2016, I attended Sunday morning

worship services at several Boston-area (mostly white) evangelical churches as an ethnographic participant-observer. My main goal was to form an initial understanding of evangelical Christianity and worship practice in Boston, a northeastern U.S. city steeped in history and known for its thriving health care, higher education, and technology sectors. These visits were, in many ways, entirely unremarkable and yielded what I expected to find: contemporary worship songs, live bands, culturally relevant and aware sermons, and welcome committees eager to chat with newcomers. But I had not anticipated just how integral the concept of community would be to these churches' identities: I was repeatedly struck by ministers, leaders, and congregants speaking of their church as a place to connect not only to God but also to each other. At times, the latter seemed to supersede the former; as a first-time visitor, one could easily mistake these churches principally as places of social encounter and networking and not as houses of worship. I did not return to any of the four churches I visited, but I nonetheless received several follow-up emails and phone calls from pastors and welcome committees encouraging me not only to return to worship but also to meet up with other churchgoers in my neighborhood informally and learn more about what their church community has to offer.

Online, through their websites and Facebook accounts, these churches utilize photography, text, and graphic design to present themselves as cosmopolitan, inclusive, responsive, and unique. Their positioning statements do this explicitly: "For Boston. Connecting Boston to Christ." "A community to call home." "Gospel. Community. Mission." "Discovering the love of God, the joy of living, and the gift of

community.” In addition to formal worship services and Bible studies, they plan small group meetings at members’ homes and social events at bars, baseball games, restaurants, and playgrounds. Elsewhere I have argued that individual churches invest in worship capital to attract and retain members, but in this targeted fieldwork I found that many churches are intentionally investing in their social capital as well.³¹ If, as Ingalls and others show, Christians can worship God in a variety of nonchurch modes, then church leaders must articulate other *raison d’être* if they are to remain relevant and useful to congregants; in Boston, I learned that many churches frame their importance largely as a locus of community and social relations.

This trajectory is due not only to the increasingly varied modes of congregating and worshipping available to Christians but also to the nature of social relations in Boston and other urban areas in the United States in the early twenty-first century, which is changing rapidly as a result of the increasing precarity of labor and employment.³² The nature and conditions of work for working-class laborers in the United States have been changing for decades. In the last forty years, regions that have relied on factories and manufacturing industries have experienced declining employment prospects for workers, due in part to globalized supply chains and automation. The deindustrialization of the U.S. Midwest has prompted many communities and individuals to invest in retraining programs that enable laborers to switch careers. Natural resource extraction industries, such as mining and oil, are by nature cyclical as older reserves and mines are exhausted and new ones exploited. What few full-time jobs remain for these workers are less stable due to

the gradual erosion of labor unions’ power and influence. The on-demand “gig economy” has surged in the 2010s and beyond: this includes both workers stringing together multiple “jobs” through websites and mobile apps such as Uber and TaskRabbit, and also workers using online social networking to solicit freelance work (for which they might have been employed full-time in the past). Middle-class laborers and artists have worked as entrepreneurs and independent contractors for generations, running their own businesses; the newer gig economy resembles this older model on its surface only, as it lacks a level of financial compensation high enough to outweigh the inherent risks and instability of entrepreneurship.

Like many parts of the United States, eastern Massachusetts is home to many residents whose families have lived in their towns and neighborhoods for generations. But because higher education and other white-collar industries have long been central to the region’s economy, the Boston area is also home to many individuals and families who move here from elsewhere for school or work. Some relocate more or less permanently, while others move for what are, by nature, temporary periods of their lives: for example, for college or graduate study; term-limited, nonrenewable teaching or research positions; medical residencies, fellowship programs, work co-ops, or internships; or jobs at entrepreneurial startups. While working-class and blue-collar workers have experienced changes to the nature and types of employment readily available to them, the conditions facing college graduates and white-collar workers have also changed dramatically, especially following the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–21. In short, “permanent” full-time

jobs for college graduates and white-collar workers are declining. This is partly because of the changing economic conditions of white-collar industries (including automation, corporate consolidation, and globalization). But it also reflects the fact that many younger workers now enter the workforce not expecting to stay at a single company, firm, or institution for their entire careers. Employers both compel and expect worker turnover; employees anticipate and thus reinforce this condition. In industries such as health care, higher education, and technology in the United States, these employees comprise a class of highly compensated migrant workers. U.S. cities that have been growing in the second and third decades of the twenty-first century, including Boston, are growing partly because of an influx of these workers, of which I am one: relatively highly educated, well paid, and without an existing local community or support network.

In his book *Bowling Alone*, published in 2000, the political scientist Robert Putnam bemoaned the decline of social life in the United States at the end of the twentieth century, particularly those relationships undergirded by participating in civic, fraternal, hereditary, and social organizations, such as American Legion posts and bowling leagues.³³ In the decades since the book appeared, many observers have rightly pointed to new technologies that connect individuals and communities, building and reinforcing relationships and social networks in ways that Putnam did not foresee. But the cheerleaders of these new technologies – many of them futurists, technocrats, and technologists themselves – failed to foresee that technologically mediated relationships could not fully supplant live, in-person communities for

many people, a condition further clarified by the isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the nature of employment has become less stable, many laborers (no matter their class) choose not to move elsewhere to look for work, opting for the stability of family and existing community over the instability and uncertainty of a new town or region, where the stress of precarious labor conditions would be compounded by the lack of community and family support. But not everyone can afford to make that choice, or sometimes the incentives a new job offers outweigh the disincentives (including the material, emotional, and social costs) of moving. In these cases, the precarity of labor correlates to the weakening of real-life social ties and networks that online connectivity to friends and loved ones cannot fully ameliorate.

Regular church attendance in the United States may be declining, but many churches that are thriving are doing so because they have reoriented their missions to prioritize strong social relations, partly in response to these broader trends. If Boston-area white evangelical churches publicize their communities as strongly as, or stronger than, their abilities to foster religious edification and spiritual growth, then this is partly because they are catering to a population of churchgoers and potential attendees for whom community formation and cohesion are just as important as – or more important than – growing in their faith. Community and congregational cohesion have certainly been important components of what churches provided to their members and attendees in the past. In prior generations, these components served the larger purpose of worshipping God and pursuing God's calling. What is new, however, is that community is often what

sets these churches apart from other modes of congregating when worship itself is no longer the exclusive domain of churches.

Beer & Hymns and the Secular

Some Beer & Hymns groups are affiliated with churches whose leaders promote it as yet another ministry meant to attract and retain younger or newer members to their churches. Like services with contemporary worship music, Bible studies and small group meetings held at local bars, or incorporating secular rock and pop music into worship services, at these churches Beer & Hymns is one of many initiatives meant to make individual churches more culturally relevant—and thus more comfortable and attractive—to newcomers.³⁴ There is indeed a subset of Beer & Hymns chapters that strategically promote belongingness to a church and hip evangelicalism, and, for better or worse, these initiatives are the ones that attract media attention.³⁵ Many unfamiliar with Beer & Hymns might associate it with these initiatives and think “church in a bar” (or even “bar in a church”), which certainly exists. But this is not the objective of most Beer & Hymns leaders and groups. At the “How to Do Beer & Hymns” roundtable session at Wild Goose 2017, the speakers—each of whom leads Beer & Hymns events around the country—explained that most groups are not affiliated with a church and hope to recontextualize congregational singing as a participatory event not necessarily tied to worship contexts. Instead of imposing the sacred onto the secular, their goal is to make these events as welcoming as possible, and in doing so to recognize that faith identities are multivalent and problematic, and that no matter your religious beliefs, baggage, or lack thereof, singing hymns can be fun—that is, that social relations rooted in congregating

and singing can provide sustenance and support for individuals who otherwise feel unmoored from a local community.

Not everyone finds singing Christian songs to be fun or meaningful, of course. Many people who might stumble across Beer & Hymns in a public venue by happenstance do not have a Christian background and would not be familiar with the songs. Others might have a negative or critical perspective of Christianity and take offense at religious songs invading secular spaces. Beer & Hymns helps to reinforce a casual acceptance of Christianity as the public religion and faith identity in the postsecular United States and United Kingdom, displacing other identities in what many idealize as religiously plural, secular societies. Even though Beer & Hymns leaders do their best to strip the religious connotations from their events’ contexts, they cannot strip the religious connotations or individuals’ associations from the songs themselves. One effect of Beer & Hymns then, intentional or not, is to normalize the presence of Christian congregational singing outside of explicitly religious contexts. At Wild Goose, however, that process is inverted. If white U.S. evangelical culture has emphasized the potential to transform the secular with the sacred, at Wild Goose I observed a progressive Christianity in which organizers and participants used secular values of affirming disparate identities and beliefs to transform the sacred. Beer & Hymns is a constituent part of this process, in which religion is made and remade relative to the secular. Its leaders enable sing-along participants to reimagine and reclaim their religious identities on their own terms, choosing to position faith as a practice that can both improve and be improved by being both *in* the world and *of* it.

Closing Beer & Hymns (Third Encounter)

Saturday evening, July 15, 2017: The third and final Beer & Hymns session of Wild Goose 2017 starts as soon as the headline act, John Mark McMillan, leaves the Main Stage with his band. The pub tent is packed. The Beer & Hymns leaders have moved the picnic tables from the center of the tent to its periphery; participants crowd the ground and tables alike. There is little in the way of setup – unamplified acoustic guitars, banjo, snare drum, string bass, and vocals are all the accompaniment this crowd needs. Tonight we need little encouragement to join in the singing. I recognize many faces from the two previous nights' sessions, and few of us are reading from the songbooks as we all sing Be Thou My Vision, even as McMillan's last song hangs in the air.³⁶ After four songs, McMillan himself joins us for a rendition of his song How He Loves.³⁷

Nate, a Beer & Hymns leader whom I interviewed earlier that afternoon at the beer tent, catches my eye after How Great Thou Art: he palms me a \$5 bill, shouts "IPA," and gestures with his head to the beer tent. When I return with his beer we are halfway through Wagon Wheel. Throughout the rest of the night we cheer, we drink, we clap, we hug; and we sing, ending with a moving unaccompanied rendition of It Is Well with My Soul that segues into Old Hundred, followed by All of the Hard Days Are Gone sung shoulder-to-shoulder. No one seems ready to leave and let the energy dissipate; many participants stick around to chat, while others peel off in small groups, heading to the late-night silent disco, drum circle, or smaller campfire sing-alongs back at their tents.

If my excursions to white evangelical churches revealed the degree to which Boston-area church leaders have reoriented their goals for congregating toward

community, then my research into Beer & Hymns and fieldwork at Wild Goose Festival complicate and expand this narrative, partly by illustrating that ephemeral spaces and places can be just as significant to shared identities as the permanent structures and institutionalized social formations of churches and their congregations, and partly by demonstrating that Christian festivals celebrate shared community when celebrating a shared faith is fraught or problematic. Ingalls writes about worship concerts at Creation Festival and worship festivals such as Passion and Urbana as modes of congregating, in which worship is an express purpose of the events.³⁸ At Beer & Hymns, however, what I found is that the absence of worship from congregating and congregational singing does not diminish the significance of such singing for leaders and participants. How should we interpret Beer & Hymns' decoupling of congregational singing from Christian worship? If congregational singing is conceived as worship here, it may be that the object of worship is something other than God. Ingalls writes that congregating often becomes its own purpose – participants worshipping worship itself – which can be fulfilling but also empty. Ari Kelman, in his recent book on contemporary worship music, writes of worship leaders and songwriters who are concerned with becoming the object of their congregants' worship as being in a position of celebrity.³⁹ If the express purpose of modes of congregating is to worship God, then of course the shifting of attention in these ways is heretical. But when we decouple these activities, we make space for other purposes of congregating that are nonetheless rooted in belief and religious experience.

Beer & Hymns contributes to white U.S. evangelical Christianity's contested distinction between the sacred and the secular. As a loose network of events, Beer & Hymns participates in the normalization of Christianity in postsecular contexts, refusing and resisting the sacred/secular dichotomy, and thus staking a claim for a public religious identity. At the local level, however, it enables individual leaders and participants to reimagine and reclaim their individual religious identities, navigating and negotiating a relationship with Christianity—indexed by its songs and the act of participatory singing—that reflects and substantiates their own values, goals, and objectives. The events also contribute to evolving definitions of congregation and congregating, both for individual leaders and participants and for communities. Some participants (such as Julie, for example) are regular churchgoers, self-identifying Christians, and welcome the opportunity to express and perform their religious identities in quotidian, banal

environments; Beer & Hymns extends their religious practices and enables them to encounter God in a manner that other modes of congregating do not offer, potentially enriching that relationship. Certainly, a subset of these participants find the prospect of doing so at a bar or pub to be somewhat thrilling. For others, however (including Julie's husband), Christianity plays a diminished role in their lives. The songs may be familiar from childhood, for example, but the faith of which they speak has been damaged or has diminished over time. For these participants, Beer & Hymns is both a source of fun and a moment of resistance, where the participatory musicking of congregational singing is simultaneously a bonding experience and a period of reflection on shared belief systems past and present. Beer & Hymns provides participants the opportunity—and tacitly grants them the permission—to reclaim and redeem these songs despite their affiliation with Christianity.

NOTES

1 Kay Kaufman Shelemay, “Musical Communities: Rethinking the Collective in Music,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64/2 (2011): 349–90.

2 Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 26.

3 The first edition of *The Sacred Harp* songbook was published in 1844. On shape-note singing communities in the United States, see Kiri Miller, *Traveling Home: Sacred Harp Singing and American Pluralism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

4 In this respect, Beer & Hymns is different from other forms of Christian popular music in which concert events can also function as church services. See, e.g., Amy D. McDowell, “Christian But Not Religious’: Being Church as Christian Hardcore Punk,” *Sociology of Religion* 79/1 (2018): 58–77 on Christian hardcore; and Alisha Lola Jones, *Flaming?: The Peculiar Theopolitics of Fire and Desire in Black Male Gospel Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020) on gospel go-go.

5 Monique M. Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation: How Contemporary Worship Music Forms Evangelical Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 5.

6 On secular and postsecular, see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

7 On music festivals as coherent, interdependent scenes, see Andrew Mall, “Music Festivals, Ephemeral Places, and Scenes: Interdependence at Cornerstone Festival,” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 14/1 (2020): 51–69.

8 Via <https://beerandhymns.org/index.php/what/where-it-all-began/> (accessed Feb. 16, 2020).

9 Via <https://www.greenbelt.org.uk/greenbelt-festival/> (accessed March 20, 2019).

10 On Bolz-Weber and House for All, see Maren Freudenberg, “Half-Ass Faith? Popular Culture in Denver’s House for All Sinners and Saints,” *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 30/1 (2018): 62–73.

11 Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation*, 22.

12 Joshua Kalin Busman, “(Re)Sounding Passion: Listening to American Evangelical Worship Music, 1997–2015” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2015), 46; cited in Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation*, 18.

13 Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation*, 18.

14 David Lim, interview with the author, May 26, 2012; Andrew Mall, “We Can Be Renewed’:

Resistance, Renewal, and Worship at the Anchor Fellowship,” in *The Spirit of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity*, ed. Monique M. Ingalls and Amos Yong (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), 163–78.

15 Christopher Small defines “musicking” as taking part in a musical performance in any capacity, “whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing.” For Small, musical meaning lies not in the musical object but in the set of relationships that the act of musicking brings into being. Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998), 9, 13.

16 Andrew Mall, “Music Business, Ethics, and Christian Festivals: Progressive Christianity at Wild Goose Festival,” in *Ethics and Christian Musicking*, ed. Nathan Myrick and Mark Porter (New York: Routledge, 2021), 110–12.

17 There is also a “red scare” moral panic component to this discourse, as conservative political commentators link progressivism to socialism.

18 In Mall, “Music Festivals, Ephemeral Places, and Scenes,” I argue that interdependence is key to this process of constructing and participating in an ephemeral yet sustainable festival community year after year.

19 In addition to these characteristics, Joshua Busman, drawing from Mark Butler’s analysis of DJ sets in electronic dance music, argues for the potential that a set-level analysis of worship music performances has to reveal “larger musical and spiritual trajectories”: “attention to the ways that a multi-song set creates opportunities for an emergent, continuous, and dynamic musical whole,” he writes, “is crucial to understanding parishioners’ worship experiences.” Joshua Kalin Busman, “Worshipping ‘With Everything’: Musical Analysis and Congregational Worship,” in *Studying Congregational Music: Key Issues, Methods, and Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. Andrew Mall, Jeffers Engelhardt, and Monique M. Ingalls (New York: Routledge, 2021), 36. See also Mark J. Butler, *Unlocking the Groove: Rhythm, Meter, and Musical Design in Electronic Dance Music*, Profiles in Popular Music (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 49.

20 Jeffers Engelhardt, *Singing the Right Way: Orthodox Christians and Secular Enchantment in Estonia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 14.

21 See, e.g., Preston Shires, *Hippies of the Religious Right: From the Countercultures of Jerry Garcia to the Subculture of Jerry Falwell* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007).

22 Writers disagree on terminology, alternately referring to “new evangelicalism” as “neoevangelicalism” or “establishment evangelicalism.” See Shires, *Hippies of the Religious Right*, 47.

23 Donald E. Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Shires, *Hippies of the Religious Right*; Larry Eskridge, *God’s Forever Family: The Jesus People Movement in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

24 In distinguishing among these three different evangelical approaches to navigating between spiritual and sacred realms, I am indebted to Howard and Streck’s categorization of Christian music as separational, integrational, and transformational. See Jay R. Howard and John M. Streck, *Apostles of Rock: The Splintered World of Contemporary Christian Music* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999).

25 Engelhardt, *Singing the Right Way*, 14; see also Shires, *Hippies of the Religious Right*.

26 Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979); see also Randall Herbert Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America*, 25th anniversary ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

27 See, e.g., Peter Magolda and Kelsey Ebben Gross, *It’s All about Jesus!: Faith as an Oppositional Collegiate Subculture* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2009).

28 Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); Heather Hendershot, *Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelical Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Eileen Luhr, *Witnessing Suburbia: Conservatives and Christian Youth Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

29 Surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center show a steady decline both in the number of U.S. residents who held a specific religious identity and in the number who attended church on a weekly basis in the years 2007–19. During this same period, greater numbers identified as religiously unaffiliated (what the report labels “religious nones”). See Pew Research Center, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” May 12, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2015/05/RLS-08-26-full-report.pdf>; Pew Research Center, “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace: An Update on America’s

Changing Religious Landscape,” Oct. 17, 2019, <https://www.pewforum.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2019/10/Trends-in-Religious-Identity-and-Attendance-FOR-WEB-1.pdf>.

30 Cf. Shelemay, “Musical Communities.”

31 Andrew Mall, “Worship Capital: On the Political Economy of Worship Music,” *American Music* 36/3 (2018): 303–26.

32 Andrew Ross, *Nice Work If You Can Get It: Life and Labor in Precarious Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Alexandra J. Ravenelle, *Hustle and Gig: Struggling and Surviving in the Sharing Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019).

33 Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

34 On incorporating pop music into evangelical worship services, see April Stace, *Secular Music, Sacred Space: Evangelical Worship and Popular Music* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017).

35 See, e.g., the National Public Radio report “To Stave Off Decline, Churches Attract New Members with Beer,” *Weekend Edition Sunday* (National Public Radio, Nov. 3, 2013), <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2013/11/03/242301642/to-stave-off-decline-churches-attract-new-members-with-beer>. On hip evangelicalism, see Brett McCracken, *Hipster Christianity: When Church and Cool Collide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010).

36 McMillan’s last song on Saturday evening was *Heart Won’t Stop*, which he performed as a medley with the first verse and chorus of Ben E. King’s *Stand By Me* (cowritten with Jerry Lieber and Mike Stoller).

37 The modern worship songwriter and artist David Crowder covered *How He Loves* on his 2009 album *Church Music*, introducing it to and popularizing it among a large audience. In doing so, Crowder sanitized one phrase in McMillan’s lyrics, replacing the line “Heaven meets Earth like a sloppy wet kiss” with “Heaven meets Earth like an unforeseen kiss.” On Saturday night, when we get to that line in the sing-along, the whole crowd shouts “SLOPPY WET KISS” with exuberance.

38 Ingalls, *Singing the Congregation*.

39 Ari Y. Kelman, *Shout to the Lord: Making Worship Music in Evangelical America* (New York: New York University Press, 2018).