THEATRE AND CHURCH: REESTABLISHING AND REDEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP

Amanda M. Aldrich
B.S., University of South Carolina, 1994

THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THEATRE ARTS

at

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

SUMMER
2010
Student: Amanda M. Aldrich

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this thesis is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit is to be awarded for the thesis.

__________________________, Graduate Coordinator
Melinda Wilson, Ph.D.             __________________________

Date

Department of Theatre and Dance
Abstract

of

THEATRE AND CHURCH: REESTABLISHING AND REDEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP

by

Amanda M. Aldrich

In America, there is currently the beginning of a movement among many churches to launch in-house theatres. This is largely an attempt by both parties to more comprehensively address perceived needs within the surrounding community. By and large, these theatres select and produce secular material for production and often resultanty experience conflict with their housing churches over content. Additionally, in sharing resources of space, manpower and finances, there is often further dissonance within the relationship. In the following Master’s thesis, I present three examples of the theatre/church relationship and argue that much of the strife is a natural outflow of a passively instilled relationship model of Patriarchal marriage. I purpose that the churches, theatres and surrounding communities would be better served in adapting a model of equitable reciprocity under the constructs of New Feminism. Moreover, I provide evidence that supports the benefits of undertaking the adaptation of such a model.

______________________, Committee Chair
Melinda Wilson, Ph.D.

______________________
Date
In 1999, I acted on a long held desire of trying my hand at acting. At the time, I had been consistently attending services at Oak Hills Church in Folsom, CA, for approximately four and a half years. The church regularly staged dramatic vignettes as part of its weekend programming. And, on a weekend in December, I decided to inquire of one of the drama team members as to whether the team ever held auditions. Promptly, I was invited to come to an upcoming meeting, where I was introduced to Drama Team Leader Kelly Archer. Thus began both an artistic partnership and a beautiful friendship that I count among my most precious. So also began a wonderful journey that has ultimately led me here. In making that first inquiry, I opened the door to a world of personal fulfillment through acting, writing, directing and academics, both within and outside of the walls of the Church. In my life as a Woman, a Christian and an Artist, I have discovered that it is not always easy to fully embrace any one of these identities without compromise to one or both of the others. The moments in which I am simultaneously and completely each of these things are Divine and all too fleeting. The gap that too often stands between faith and the arts has now long been a source of frustration, fascination and discourse in my life. In this study, I have sought out others like myself and have learned from them as they also seek to bridge the gap between Art and Faith, or more specifically, Theatre and Church.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to all the hard-working and sometimes under-appreciated pastoral staff, artisans and craftspersons that are forging new ground by continuing to stand in the gap with steadfastness.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to offer my deep and heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Melinda Wilson who has walked alongside me, and sometimes pushed from behind, throughout the entirety of my graduate career. Her dedication, insight, support and wealth of knowledge were invaluable as I sought to distill, clarify, refine and advance my understanding of my area of interest. Her skills as a teacher have been instrumental in cultivating my education and I will remain in her debt. In the same vein, Dr. Roberto Pomo has never failed in his graciousness as he has consistently challenged me to push myself towards my best efforts in the world of academia. The analytic skills that I have garnered in the process of researching and supporting this work I owe largely to him. For his kindness and his contribution to my education I offer a special note of appreciation.

Many individuals contributed their time, thoughts and support to fully cultivating my understanding of the relationships they share with one another as theatre and church. I owe a great deal of thanks to my friends, Kelly Archer of Imprint Theatre Company and Pastors Kent Carlson and Mike Lueken of Oak Hills Church, who not only helped in this process but continue as pivotal in my growth. I am also tremendously thankful to new friends Steve Schlichter and Joy Eaton of Crystal Springs Players, Crystal Springs United Methodist Church. Steve went above and beyond in helping me to learn all the ins and outs of their wonderful theatre. A special thanks also to fellow artisan Donald Shenk and the wise and warm Rev. Dr. Art Cribbs of Stillspeaking Theatre and United Church of Christ, San Marino. Donald, your work ethic astounds me!
And finally, and most importantly, I am profoundly grateful to my family. To my parents and sister who were always ready at moment’s notice to watch my children so that I could continue to pursue my academic goals. And to my children, Zach and Jordan, who heard, “Mom’s working right now,” far too many times throughout this process. And to Keith. I simply do not have the words. Thank you.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface ................................................................. v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication ............................................................. vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments ................................................... vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures ....................................................... x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION ......................................................... 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “GENESIS”: REESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEATRE AND CHURCH .................................................. 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. “LAMENTATIONS”: TRIALS OF RELATIONSHIP UNDER A PATRIARCHAL MODEL OF MARRIAGE ........................................ 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. “ACTS”: ACCOMPLISHING MISSION THROUGH RECIPROCAL TRIUNE RELATIONSHIP ........................................ 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CONCLUSION ............................................................. 111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A. An Overview of the Churches and Theatres .................. 119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B. Church/Theatre Mission Statements .......................... 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Cited ........................................................................ 121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

“[Imprint’s production] was not the kind of play you’d expect to see in a church...”

~Dave Jacobson, Village Life

In the spring of 2008, I directed a production of Alfred Uhry’s 1997 Tony Award winning play, *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*, for Sacramento’s Imprint Theatre Company (Imprint). The production ran a total of nine performances to an average audience of seventy-five patrons per performance, received overwhelmingly positive audience response and was ultimately nominated for five regional Elly awards, including Best Directing and Best Overall Production.¹ These facts, when coupled with an exploration of Imprint’s production history and the increased growth in attendance for each sequential show, leads me to surmise that the theatre is attaining a degree of validity in the field of performance art within the community. However, what has proven to be unique about this particular theatre are the auspices under which it has operated since its inception.

Imprint is housed within the walls of a 700 member Baptist church in Folsom, California, an upper-middle class suburb of Sacramento. This relationship – theatre and Church – is not a new one.² Yet the way that the relationship is currently being expressed is new.

The culture in which this new theatre/church relationship is taking place is completely new.

¹ Reviews of past Imprint productions include comments such as, “fine acting all around [...], sharp directing” (Jacobson, *Southerners* 21) and, “it’s a lovely, thoughtful, semi-autobiographical script [...], well-served in Imprint Theatre’s cleanly executed little production, with nicely built sets and clever costumes” (Hudson).

² In order to distinguish between the Christian Church as a whole versus the local community church, I use capitalized “Church” for the former and lower-cased “church” for the latter.
Journeying within and alongside Imprint throughout its tenure and witnessing the consistency and pervasiveness of the varied benefits and difficulties surrounding its affiliation with a church prompted me to seek out and understand the motivations, means, and results of such an endeavor. This has led me to explore various intricacies of similarly conceived theatres. Theatres born within the church, out of the hearts of artists practicing Christian spirituality, and producing material selected for its universal spiritual themes (regardless of whether the plays fit within contemporary Christian constructs) find themselves at the forefront of bridging the chasm between a frenetic and increasingly godless culture and a monolithic institutional religious establishment. In addition to this, these companies often face the daunting realities of being misunderstood and mistrusted by those on either side of the chasm.

This thesis presents an in-depth exploration and comparative analysis of three similarly conceived California theatres to argue that the reestablishment of the church/theatre relationship under old constructs is fraught with potential pitfalls and that the use of a new model is essential to the longevity of both the church/theatre relationship and their mutual relationship with the community. Pivotal benefits in the use of the model proposed herein take shape in several forms: the growth and relevancy of the church within postmodern America, the provision of greater stability and support to the in-house theatres, and positive change in the lives of individuals who partake of what the theatre offers. I argue that an outdated model of Patriarchy exists between church and theatre and that in this model the theatre has been subjugated to the church in a manner analogous to a non-egalitarian marriage with theatre playing servant to church. I contend
that the churches, the theatres and their surrounding communities would be better served by abrogating patriarchal constructs in their relationship and adopting of a new model of partnership.\footnote{I contend that a model based upon the tenets of New Feminist Christianity is best applied in navigating a new framework for relationship. New Feminism is the predominantly Christian response to dualistic Feminism and Patriarchy. This philosophy espouses the equal and complementary nature of man and woman. New Feminism is discussed in later in this chapter and in detail in Chapter 4.} This thesis will demonstrate that the successful implementation and application of this alternative model results in relational, material and spiritual benefits to the church, the theatre and the surrounding community.

To prove my argument I first make clear how and why each selected theatre came to be; the founding principles that each was established upon; the objectives and mission it set forth as its goals and the degree to which it has met or failed to meet each of these. I also expose the nature of the relationship that each theatre shares with both its housing church and its community; what challenges have been faced and overcome in these relationships, and those that have yet to be surmounted; what benefits each entity derives from their association with the others and what negative impacts said associations render. I also demonstrate through production analysis how each theatre is successfully supporting the mission of its housing church by providing an avenue for the spiritual growth and positive development of its participants and patrons.

**Church and Theatre in the Middle Ages**

In studying the history of the relationship shared between theatre and religion, one can look as far back as Ancient times and religious ritual that took place in worship of the gods. In investigating the history of the relationship between theatre and the Christian
Church, one need look no further than Europe during the Middle Ages and the beginnings of the Modern theatre (post classic), as this was a time when the two were more closely linked than they have been in anytime since. So it is to this era that I look in drawing correlation and contrast between the contemporary relationship shared by theatre and the Church.

The preface to the advent of kinship between theatre and Church is actually the subjugation and attempted abolishment of its practice in Ancient Rome on the part of the Church. Despite persecution, a remnant of traveling entertainers, along with layman’s dramas and ritual performance carried the art and craft of theatre forward through to the early Middle Ages (Greenwald 410). Pagan ritual of the years just prior to the Middle Ages evolved into a litany of festivals that regularly took place throughout Western Europe. In time, the Church appropriated many of these rituals in an attempt to spread Christianity and thwart Paganism (Brockett 72-73).

The evolution of theatre within the church began in the ritualistic nature of service. The “scripting” of all of the requisite elements of Mass likens to rehearsal and performance. Additionally, the myriad daily Hours services and the regularly occurring Church holy days offered opportunity for the incorporation of dramatic elements for the relaying of story and teaching. Each of these lent themselves to the evolution of the Liturgical Drama, religious stories most often deliver in Latin song and performed within the monasteries. In time, and by the central years of the Middle Ages (1200 – 1350 AD) the Church began to move performance outside and to deliver them in the common language (vernacular) of the people, as opposed to in Latin. In this way the Church was
able to reach laymen with the Christian message, relay biblical stories through performance, and teach lessons in morality, often under the theme of characters facing death (Brockett 79-81, Greenwald 411). These performances known collectively as the Mystery, Morality and Miracle plays grew to be immensely popular in Western Europe and came to occlude liturgical drama within the Church.

The parallels of this history to that of the contemporary relationship between Church and theatre begs interest. As will be shown, the Church and the theatre are once again seeking one another out. Much like in the Middle Ages, theatre has continued to survive outside the walls of the Church. And, once again, Church has sought to incorporate theatre elements into its services in an effort to relate its teaching to the congregation in alternative ways. As will be shown, and similar to the former era, this takes form first in small ways. Many American churches now regularly have “drama ministries” and include some degree of drama within their regular services. Further, and as I contend throughout this thesis, theatre is once again outgrowing the small role the Church wishes to assign to it. Throughout the country there are select theatres growing up within the Church, choosing to produce material in keeping with the vernacular of the community as opposed to the prescribed dialog of the Church. These theatres are producing their own versions of Morality plays, still giving voice to Christian themes of hope, well-examined living, redemption and the power of love. The churches to which they are linked have boldly chosen to partner with them in a relationship that is sometimes volatile and ever in need of continued growth, refinement and compromise.

In essence, theatre left the church to spread the gospel to the larger community. Theatre
The contemporary status of the relationship between theatre and church predominantly exists as pods of well-intentioned drama ministries tucked away within well-intentioned churches. These drama “teams” typically exist to perform five to seven minute vignettes that introduce the (oft-deemed more important) sermon delivered by the church’s pastor. Dramatic vignettes, while they may have their place, are not indicative of the artistry that theatre in its glory is capable of manifesting. This version of “Christian theatre” is often weak in artistry, largely didactic and a poor representation of the powerful relationship that can exist between the Church and theatre arts. Manuel Luz, Pastor of Creative Arts at Oak Hills, gives further definition to the cultural distinction of “Christian art” in general in his book Imagine That:

This sectarianism [Christianization of art] marginalizes art by labeling it and valuing it according to its apparent spirituality rather than its artistry. Unfortunately, in the worst case, you end up with religious platitudes wrapped in watered-down art. (62)

This idea of promoting any “apparent spirituality” or perceived message over artistry is the very thing that compromises not only the value of the art itself but also the earnestness of the intended message. To hijack art and manipulate it, to reduce it to “religious platitudes” subjects the artist, the art and the message to skepticism and wariness from a culture grown weary of propaganda and modern religion (Gibbs and
Bolger 234). With specific regard to the motivations of contemporary Christian contributors to the arts in general, there is no lack of condemning commentary, particularly from within its own ranks. In the article, *Stealing Beauty*, Gene Edward Veith argues that “today's Christians often remain impoverished when it comes to the arts, buying into the same hedonism, commercialism, and subjectivism of their nonbelieving (sic) neighbors.” Much like art born of didacticism, Veith’s argument that art born of self-serving, profit-rendering, and pluralistic origins connotes a strong departure from the self-sacrificing and God-edifying tenets of Christianity. Furthermore, this commentary points to passivity on the part of Christian consumers. Failure to demand and support art born of higher ideals from artists within the church is compounded by a lack of judiciousness in supporting “artistic” endeavors of lesser aims (i.e. – hedonism, commercialism and subjectivism).

Franky Schaeffer, son of the late Francis Schaeffer, a noted Christian theologian, philosopher, author of *Art and the Bible* and founder of the L’Abri community in Switzerland, in his book *Addicted to Mediocrity* furthers the indictment against the contemporary state of the relationship between the Church and the arts stating that “one could sum up by saying that the [post]modern Christian world [. . . ] is marked, in the area of the arts and cultural endeavor, by one outstanding feature, and that is its addiction to mediocrity” (22-23).

Schaeffer’s argument that postmodern Christians not only accept but are addicted to mediocrity speaks to the need for reformation of the

---

4 The L’Abri (French for shelter) Community was founded in 1955 in order to provide a place where people could for a time live and work away from the pressures of modern life while furthering their own understanding, knowledge and experience of Christian living. There are currently eleven communities in ten countries.
relationship between the Church and the arts. Mediocrity in art, or an unwillingness to push people’s boundaries through artistic expression, whether within the Church culture or in society at large, yields an artist or artistic enterprise obsolete. Each of these strong accusations that “Christian art” is largely proselytizing, self-oriented or lacking in true artistry are not without foundation, particularly when one considers the proliferation of Christian consumer goods juxtaposed against an inverse lack of Christian morality reflected in our society.  

As it is contemporarily marketed to the masses, Christian art seems to be no more born of a true desire to effect spiritual growth than any other trendy and ultimately ineffectual trinkets of the day. Like so many pithy rubber bangles encouraging people to “Just Do It,” to “LiveStrong” or to ponder “WWJD?” (What Would Jesus Do?), Christian art, while perhaps encouraging, pleasant and not overtly offensive, concurrently lacks strength and relevancy to the changing culture. Contemporary culture presents a climate rife with pluralism, moral relativism and increasing suspicion and dismissal of any one particular metanarrative claim to truth. In such a climate, the drive to create any type of high art as a manifestation of any one particular religious faith can be deemed an out-dated and ultimately ineffectual anomaly; quaint perhaps, but lacking in any real artistic and intellectual relevance or integrity.

It is my belief that a critical truth exists in these negative assessments of the relationship between the Christian Church and the arts. It is also my contention,

5 In this concept, “Christian art” defines art made for Christians with an emphasis towards platitudes or didacticism.
however, that to hold wholly to a negative view is to remain ignorant of the efforts of those that are standing strongly in the gap with integrity, intentionality and excellence. I argue that there is a current movement to restore the relationship among the Church and theatre, and that this movement offers a renewed vibrancy and significance to the lagging bond between the arts, religion and contemporary society. While it certainly may be argued that the link between theatre and Church was at its Judeo-Christian pinnacle during the Middle Ages, the beginnings of the resurgence and redefinition of this bond is currently afoot.

THE CONTEMPORARY STATE OF THE CHURCH IN AMERICA

The Christian Church is in a state tremendous transition. This is largely in response to a constantly and rapidly changing culture. Old models and methods of “doing Church” are increasingly ineffective and irrelevant to a culture ever more discontent to passively sit and receive ritual spiritual training. Evaluation of the postmodern evolution of the church sees the increasing trend of an “Emerging” church in response to cultural shifts:

Church leaders are realizing that changes in our culture can no longer be ignored. Perhaps we’ve been awakened by the diminishing number of people from younger generations in our churches. Perhaps the Spirit of God is stirring among us, giving us an unsettling feeling that church the way we know it must change. (Kimball 13)

The absence of youth within the Church speaks to the impending demise of the local congregational church if there is no response on the part of Church leadership. The call
for the Church to adapt to an increasingly sophisticated, incredibly complex and rapidly changing culture correlates with its need to redefine its relationship with theatre. Seeking to restore and reform the Church’s relationship to theatre alongside a mutual effort to redefine and enhance their shared relationship with the community benefits all. In deconstructing subjugate models of Patriarchy in the Church’s relationship with theatre, the theatre is allowed to flourish in its quest to produce art that significantly and beneficially impacts the surrounding community and thus supports the mission of the Church. I contend that New Feminist theory provides the best model for redefining the theatre/Church marriage.

New Feminist theory is one of many strains of identity theory that has emerged under the umbrella of Third Wave Feminism. New Feminism is a predominantly Christian based theory that is in large part a response and middle ground to the dualism of the early Feminist movements and the constructs of subjugation found in Patriarchy. Arising in the mid 1990s, the theory finds substantial roots in the late Pope John Paul II’s *Letter to Women*. In part the letter states:

There is an urgent need to achieve real equality in every area: equal pay for equal work, protection for working mothers, fairness in career advancements, equality of spouses with regard to family rights and the recognition of everything that is part of the rights and duties of citizens in a democratic State.

---

6 Third Wave Feminism “describe[s] a loosely related set of beliefs about the contemporary scope and role of feminism as well as the sites and possibilities for the development and deployment of political agency. [. . . and is a response] to dissatisfactions with liberal, socialist, and radical forms of second-wave feminist theory” (Showden 166-167).
This concept of “real equality” speaks to the recognition that both men and women have completely equal worth and rights, while possessing unique and differing skills, talents and capabilities. This reformed view of man and woman’s equal but complementary status provides a good basis for analyzing the theatre/church bond as a partnership with both rights and duties toward the community in which they exist. To this end, in Chapter Three, I apply the analogy of marriage to the theatre/church relationship.

Further in this regard, and specific to theatre’s role as (woman) artist in the marriage, New Feminist Christianity espouses “the embodied belief that the Christian tradition contains with it, alongside the story of repression and denial of women, the power of transformation that is essential to making the world a place where women can live and thrive. Feminist Christian [. . . ] artistic life affirms that belief when it claims women’s [. . . ] creative agency in the world” (Procter-Smith 222). It is a natural outflow of this belief in the transformative aspects of Christianity that shapes my contention that the Church can be shifted from its patriarchal stance towards its partner theatre. In Chapter Three, I present the ways in which Patriarchy remains entrenched between the church and “his” partner, theatre. In Chapter Four, I offer antithetical examples in which the church supports the “creative agency” of the theatre.

Theatres and churches that endeavor to form a harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship with one another face many challenges in addition to the current pervasiveness of Patriarchy in their relationship. The obstacles that they encounter as they attempt to redefine themselves, navigate their renewed relationship with one another, and connect with their evolving communities are myriad. These include not
only overcoming contemporary perceptions held about the Church and Christian art while tearing down old paradigms and embracing new ones, but also encompass the difficulty of learning how to broach a distracted and apathetic culture. Theatre/church partnerships have their work cut out for them in this regard. Indeed, the very survival of each, to varying degrees, is dependent upon a clear understanding of the community in which they exist and the deep-seated desire and deft ability to interact with and serve that community as partner (Gibbs and Bolger 17, 88).

I consider the damage that mediocre art as defined above, and specifically mediocre theatre art laced with commiserate religious platitudes, can do to the Christian message and to the reputation of a church/theatre relationship with gravity. Any compromise in material choice or production values will only serve to further poor opinion of the Church and any “art” linked with it. The high valuation of art and the degree to which the values of the theatre and the church coalesce go a long way toward determining: 1) success of the relationship, 2) the level of esteem that each partner is regarded with by the community, and 3) the relationship’s positive effect in shaping that community.

The theatres examined herein each hold to a high standard of art and adhere to high production values, making use of innovative theatrical lighting, sound, costume and set design.7 Each is linked with a church that understands and highly values the inherent

---

7 For example, in a review of Stillspeaking’s 2008 production of The Runner Stumbles, by Milan Stitt, it is noted that “[Stillspeaking has] not skimped on making this a quality theatre experience. Believe me when I say that plenty of [other] theaters would love this space” (Van Horsen, emphasis added). Also of note is a review of a 2007 Crystal Springs Players’ production that states, “this small players group, performing in the sanctuary of the Crystal Springs United Methodist Church, always surprises with the high quality of its [...] productions” (Kreitman, emphasis added).
worth of art. Each of the theatres selected for this study are defined by several common parameters. Most importantly, each is specifically housed within a Christian church. The choice to narrow the focus to one religious faith limits scriptural influence within the relationship to one holy text and one common history versus the number that would be represented in a multi-faith study. This commonality provides for a stronger comparative base among the theatres and churches because guiding principles are of common origin.

The second criterion in theatre selection is that while each theatre is linked with a Christian church, none bear the name “Christian theatre.”^8 This parameter enables me to avoid evaluating theatres whose inherent and primary goal is to promote the relaying of a specific didactic message to its audience in the hopes of eliciting a quantifiable and predetermined response. Instead, each of the selected theatres produces predominantly, if not exclusively, secular material. In choosing secular material over “Christian” material the theatres are better able to emphasize the sacred to be found within the secular, the spiritual within the mundane. Additionally, the theatres present questions about the meaning and truths of human existence while respecting the religious and cultural diversity represented in their audiences. In choosing to principally refrain from production of didactic work, the theatres distinguish themselves from traditionally recognized Christian theatre.

Third, each church/theatre exists in a suburban area of a metropolitan California city. In choosing California as a locale, I am intentionality seeking to pull samples from

---

^8 As with “Christian art,” this denotes an intentional distinction in the motivation and content of production. The theatres do not specifically seek or produce material that has an overtly Christian message or agenda. On the contrary, these theatres produce secular plays that present universal questions about life and death and the meaning of each.
what is widely considered a forward thinking demographic, meaning a liberal climate
known for political trend setting (McNamara). I further this particular value of
progressiveness in choosing large communities near major cities (Sacramento, San
Francisco and Los Angeles) versus smaller towns that might be insulated from cultural
trends. Lastly, each of the theatres reside within upper-middle class neighborhoods (City
of Folsom, City of San Mateo, and “Welcome” San Marino).

This decision provides two components key to this study: a) in general, people in
each community have the fiscal means to attend performances, so money is precluded as
a major limiting factor in attendance (versus the theatre’s affiliation with the church as
chief limiting factor), and b) the theatres and churches share the ideal of reaching an
audience that is often too preoccupied and distracted to contemplate life’s meaning. In
other words, patrons’ socioeconomic status affords them many of the activities and
devices that lead to both a fractured state of mind and the absence of contemplative
practices, such that theatre provides.

Finally, each of the theatres shares the trait of being intent upon serving an
audience that includes, but is no way limited to, the congregation of the church in which
the theatre is housed. Each theatre has a strong desire to market to those who might not
otherwise set foot within a church, as well as an appetite to bring theatre to those within
the church who may have no previous experience in this realm of the arts. In
ac accordance with the above criteria, the theatres chosen include the aforementioned

---

9 The aspiration to effect positive change within persons from both categories is a critical component of this
thesis and is further explored in Chapter Four.
Imprint Theatre Company in Folsom, located near Sacramento; Crystal Springs Players of San Mateo, located near San Francisco; and Stillspeaking Theatre, located near Los Angeles. Of these, both Imprint and Crystal Springs Players are non-equity. As the only equity house represented herein, Stillspeaking operates under the 99-Seat Plan (formerly known as the Equity Waver). This allows them to use both non-union actors and to pay only a small stipend to union actors.

**Churches Standing in the Gap**

It is critical to grasp understanding of the identity of each of the churches through which the theatres have been launched. Interestingly, while each of the churches is Christian in nature and follows a form of Protestantism, they are each representative of a different denomination within the Christian faith. This fact speaks to the reality that it is from no one particular sect that the movement to reestablish the theatre/church relationship stems. A cross-denominational movement for the advancement of artistic and culturally beneficial theatre is taking place within the Christian church.

Imprint’s home, Oak Hills Church, belongs to the North American Baptist Conference of Churches, an affiliation of over 400 member churches. While predominantly non-denominational in its style of services, the church does adhere to the

---

10 Stillspeaking and Imprint pay stipends of varying amounts to hired professional cast and crew, while Crystal Springs relies upon talented amateur actors to fulfill these roles. In this facet, I consider the former two theatres as professional and the latter as community. However, effecting positive change within their respective communities remains priority for each of the theatres regardless of this particular delineation. See Appendix A for a comparative overview of the three churches and their respective theatres.

11 This code is an addendum to the rules of Equity so as to allow actors to work in small houses that might not be able to afford to meet union standards of pay. Actors are given $7-15 payments for each performance, as well as free parking for the run of the show. Only if the show goes on to become a hit, running more than 80 performances, must producers negotiate regular union contracts.
The basic tenets of the Baptist denomination. The North American Baptist Conference states that these include the beliefs that salvation is found through faith in Jesus rather than through good works, baptism is for the believer and should be through water immersion, and the assertion that the Bible is the infallible word of God.

Oak Hills was founded in Folsom in 1984 by Pastor Kent Carlson and his wife, Diane. Originally, the small congregation met in a strip mall, then in a high school, followed by within another local church. The church purchased property, where it still currently resides, in 1993. The church’s website notes that portable buildings were used for the first seven years on the sixteen acre campus, before the church built a permanent facility in 2000.

In the early and mid 2000s, Oak Hills experienced unique challenges. It was at this time that the church switched from the popular “seeker model” of services prevalent in many Christian churches of the 1990s. This model often included an emphasis in appealing to those individuals either not accustomed to or disenfranchised with the long-held American traditional style of liturgical Christian services. With upbeat music and messages, featured song specials and vignette type dramas, the seeker-model centers around a desire to make the church relatable in order to welcome a generation disinclined to engage with the perceived stagnancy of rote religion (Warren 251). Oak Hills employed this model to great success for a number of years and saw its attendance steadily rise for nearly a decade, peaking at over 2,000 people attending weekly services.

The decision to abandon the successful seeker model and embrace a more reflective, contemplative and “worshipful” style of services came about with what the
church’s leadership felt was a divine prompting. There was general consensus of feeling called to rely less heavily upon human capability and creativity and to explore and reemphasize reliance upon the felt presence of God within services. This resulted in a severe decline of the presence of the arts during services. As a result of the ensuing shift, the church eventually saw its number of committed members and the overall attendance at weekend services plummet. Since that time, while numbers have not climbed to what they once were, there has been a leveling off of committed attendees at around 700 per weekend. Oak Hills currently holds two weekly services, is involved in numerous social justice endeavors, sponsors missionaries all over the world and supports a wealth of various in-house ministries. These span everything from women’s groups, men’s groups, and youth clubs and camps to community care, cancer support, various sports ministries and a number of other delineations.

Much like Oak Hills, Crystal Springs United Methodist Church (CSUMC) also has a history of including dramatic elements in its services over the years. In addition to the Crystal Springs Players theatre, the church has an active drama ministry that provides vignette style performances during services.12 CSUMC has placed so high a value upon theatre that it sometimes replaces entire sermons with lengthy theatrical pieces. This stems from a desire to communicate messages through alternative and artistic methods in order to impart spiritual understanding in and among the congregation at a different level.

---

12 According to the Crystal Springs Players Briefing Book, the CSUMC drama group is referred to as the Chancel Drama Program. The program “intend[s] to put on a chancel drama once a month in coordination with the pastor. It also [provides] an opportunity to have more people in [their] congregation experience the stage” (4).
CSUMC belongs to the greater United Methodist Church. This denomination, formed in 1968, was born of the convergence of two other Christian traditions, the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church, with roots dating back to 1736. The church currently boasts 11 million followers worldwide. As per the United Methodist church’s website, the Church holds to the beliefs that salvation is found in faith in Jesus rather than through good works, holiness is found through sanctification, the Bible is the inspired word of God, and baptism and communion are holy sacraments.

The Crystal Springs branch of the church was founded in 1959. Initial service took place in the garage of the parsonage that once sat upon the church’s four acre parcel. Erected and first used for services in 1962, the current church building seats 125. Ten different pastors have sequentially shepherded the congregation since then. The most current of these, arriving in 2009, is the Reverend Nancy Landauer.

The congregation has continued to remain small over the years. Irrespective of its diminutive size, the church body’s ability to launch and maintain a theatre comes largely from the depth of commitment to and within the church, as noted on their “About Us” page on their website:

To support each other – physically and spiritually. [They] also promise to support [their] church community to the best of [their] ability with [their] prayers, presence, gifts and volunteer service. [They] have found that [their] community worship, work, and play provide opportunities for nurture and challenge – sometimes in the most surprising and delightful ways.
This thesis shows that this promise to support one another, and by proxy those primarily responsible for the theatre, is vital to the theatre's longevity and mission fulfillment. These values of volunteer service, work and play prove to be key components to the continued vitality of such an endeavor. “Surprising and delightful” are assessments of the theatrical process that are proffered regularly from volunteers within the church body.

Similar in size to CSUMC is the church that partners with Stillspeaking Theatre. This theatre works alongside and within the United Church of Christ San Marino (UCCSM). The greater United Church of Christ as a whole exceeds one million members. It is a predominantly liberal denomination within the Christian faith and actively engages in many issues of civil liberties. They ascribe to the basic tenets that Christ alone is the head of the church and that members should seek a balance between freedom of conscience and accountability to the apostolic faith. In keeping with the postmodern cultural shift towards the celebration of identity uniqueness and the integration of all people groups, of the three churches the United Church of Christ is the most intentional in acknowledging welcome of all people groups. Their web literature states that, “no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome [in the church]. We believe in extravagant welcome. This is why we insist that God's communion table is open, not closed.” This assertion that all are welcome reflects the Church’s outspoken commitment to the gay, lesbian, and transgender populations, a value not as well promoted or accepted among other denominations.

UCCSM launched in August 1948, when a young Reverend Crist from Rhode Island arrived on the property previously purchased by the larger United Church of
Christ. The church covenanted in the fall of that year with seventy people present. By
the following April, their number increased to 190. The original demographic of the
area, predominantly white upper-middle class, vastly differs from its current and
increasingly ethnically diverse population. The journey of the church has been impacted
greatly by this diversity. The early 2000s marked a timed of intentional transition as the
church leadership sought to develop ways to welcome and receive a population now
largely comprised of Mandarin, Armenian, Mexican, European and several other cultures.
This transition took place at a time when UCCSM was also undergoing the two year
process of becoming an ONA recognized congregation by conceiving and adopting an
Open and Affirming Statement. At the time of this transition less than thirty people
comprised the congregation at this time. Currently, weekend services are led by the Rev.
Dr. Art Cribbs and typically see 60-75 people in attendance.

The church maintains a high level of outreach effort within its community, much
of which takes form in the arts. Rev. Dr. Cribbs strongly supports the arts in general, and
Stillspeaking theatre in particular because:

as a post-modern theologian, [he is] intrigued by the Living Word
of God that offers lessons in compassion, mercy, forgiveness,
fidelity, affection, pacification, salvation and liberation. [He
believes that] the theater offers opportunities to bring ancient
wisdom to an awaiting [post]modern audience.

---

ONA is the acronym for Open and Affirming, a UCC movement to put into place a statement of welcome
to people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.
http://www.ucccoalition.org/programs/ona/start/
Cribbs’ assertion of the power of theatre to effect positive change and creatively communicate beauty and wisdom within her community, the very tenets of the mission of the Church itself, is an unequivocal argument in support of reestablishing the theatre/Church marriage.

**METHODOLOGY AND THESIS GUIDE**

Research methods employed in this study include a wide variety of approaches. This study is fundamentally about human interaction, relationship and growth through the means of an alliance between theatre and Church. Additionally, both church services and theatre performances, being in their very natures forms of interaction and shared experience among people, are best experienced and studied in person. Due to this I felt it extremely important to the integrity of this work that as much personal contact as possible take place in my research. To that end, I conducted one initial personal on-site interview with each Artistic Director, an Advisory Board Member from CSUMC and the two head Pastors of Oak Hills. Each of these interviews was followed by on-going email communications. In addition, I conducted a four part interview with the Pastor of UCCSM, consisting of three emails and one follow-on phone call. Supplementary to this, I made a point of attending at least one performance produced by each of the theatres, as well as a Sunday morning worship service at each of the churches. This was critical to gaining a fuller understanding of the environment in which the studied relationships take place. From this I was able to replicate to a degree the experience that a first-time attendee might have to the facility in the context of both theatre patron and church visitor. To this end, I attended Crystal Springs Players’ Spring 2010 production of *The*
Additionally, I was an audience member for Stillspeaking’s Fall 2009 production of *Secrets of A Soccer Mom*. In the case of Imprint, I have either attended or participated in every production the theatre has staged to date, whether in an acting, directing or advising capacity. I have analyzed the production scripts, marketing materials, and reviews of each theatre in order to more fully comprehend how their respective production histories aligned or misaligned with the stated missions of the theatres and churches. Supplementary to this and in an effort to better understand the guidelines under which each theatre and church performs its tasks, I reviewed the governing by-laws and mission statements of each. This proved critical to gleaning an understanding of how the theatres and churches both relate to and clash with one another.

In addition, I read and referenced the works of both popular and scholarly authors in the fields of Religious Studies, New Feminist Theory and Sociology. The writing of Christian Apologists Francis Schaeffer, C.S. Lewis and Dallas Willard well complemented the work of emerging church theorists Graham Ward, Dan Kimball, Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger in illuminating the cultural relevance of both the modern and postmodern Christian Church. Michele Schumacher’s *Women in Christ* and Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu’s *New Feminist Christianity: Many Voices, Many Views* provided numerous scholarly and popular essays exploring New Feminist Theory. A survey of theatre history includes *Theatre Histories: An Introduction*, *The Longman Anthology of Drama and Theatre*, Oscar Brockett’s *History of the Theatre* and Films Media Group’s *Medieval Drama: From Sanctuary to Stage*. Other vital reading includes sociologist Wendy Griswold’s *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*. 
In the following chapters, I present each of the theatres, their partner churches and the trials, benefits and transformation experienced in navigating this new attempt at relationship. Each title borrows its name from a book of the Christian Bible. Chapter Two is entitled “Genesis,” referring to beginnings, and introduces and details each theatre. It provides background on each Artistic Director, their motivations for initiating the launch of a new theatre, and an analysis of the beginnings of each theatre’s relationship with their respective churches.

Chapter Three’s title, “Lamentations,” refers to the problems experienced between the theatres and their respective churches. This chapter argues that a model of Patriarchal marriage exists in the current theatre/church relationship and argues for the necessity of a complete reimagining of this relational paradigm. This chapter unveils the numerous complications and difficulties that each theatre and church has faced in operating under this non-egalitarian marriage model of relationship under old Patriarchal constructs. These trials primarily take shape in the form of disputes over shared resources, church censorship of production content, and disagreements over the sacred versus secular nature of performance space.

Chapter Four, entitled “Acts” takes its name from the benefits gleaned in reimagining the relationship between the church and theatre. This chapter uses Griswold’s work to establish a model for best navigating the myriad associations represented in the theatre/church relationship; these being the theatre/church, theatre/community and church/community relationships. In utilizing this model, I argue for a New Feministic approach to renewed relationship between Church and theatre and
expose the various benefits, both those tangible and those more abstract, of this approach to the church, theatre and community. Chapter Four begins with a comparative analysis of the mission statements of each theatre and its housing church. I evaluate each partner’s mission fulfillment through script and production analysis to prove the benefit that the church/theatre relationship provides to the community, in keeping with the cultural model presented in the chapter.
Chapter 2

“GENESIS”:

REESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEATRE AND CHURCH

_We need many things from the culture in which we swim; language, religion, and theatre are three of our basic cultural needs._


_So the church and the arts are estranged, yet we do not fully know ourselves or God without art. How do we, who are called to it, intercede in the gap?_

~Lauralee Farrer, *This Impossible Life: Artist As Intecessor*, 9

_The Crystal Springs Players is a unique organization. We are a theater group which is supported by the Crystal Springs United Methodist Church and, therefore, we have a strong commitment to our church community. However, we are also committed to providing excellent theatrical entertainment for the community at large and take pride in the high quality of our productions and our reputation for receiving excellent reviews in the local newspapers. Meeting this dual commitment can be very challenging, but also very rewarding._

~CSP Mission and House Rules

The drive to redeem and reestablish the relationship between theatre and church predominantly stems from the theatre side of the equation. In each of the church/theatre relationships examined herein, artists within the church, gifted in one or many of the disciplines of theatre and cognizant of the power that theatre wields in matters concerning the human heart, approached the leadership of the church with the idea of starting a theatre. These artists are passionate, driven and dynamic individuals that envision enthusiastic and supportive response to their proposal, foresee full houses and imagine transformed lives. I contend that the reality of the endeavor is an experience quite different. The contemporary standing of the relationships that exist between these
theatres and their churches are the results of years of learning to work with one another.

These theatres do slowly take off, but only in tandem with a lengthy process of learning to understand, communicate with and negotiate a relationship alongside their housing churches. This chapter examines the creative, faith driven and/or practical impetus to the launch of three such theatres and assesses the initial logistical establishment of the relationship between these theatres and their respective housing churches.

MAKING AN IMPRINT IN FOLSOM

Imprint Theatre Company (Imprint) launched in 2005 under the direction of Kelly Archer. Archer, who holds a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Arts from the University of Northern Colorado with an emphasis in directing and a minor in dance, became a member of the congregation at Oak Hills Church in Folsom, California when she was still a teenager. While currently employed as a choreographer and dance instructor at Northern California Dance Conservatory, she and her husband both previously held full-time positions as Oak Hills’ staff members, Archer as Drama Director and as Service Programming Director, her husband as a Youth Minister. Her inspiration for launching Imprint is multi-faceted. She credits the origin of the initial idea to the culmination of several veins of development in her personal journey, from her inborn love of the art and the need to make manifest that love through production, to her personal frustrations with a perceived lack of meaningful and thought provoking theatre within her community. At the time of Imprint’s conception, the Sacramento area could boast of many active community theatres, yet none specific to the city in which Archer found herself. She
remains firm and consistent in her belief that the idea came to her at God’s gentle behest, as noted in Imprint’s Vision Statement:

My heart burns with a new vision to begin to create here in Folsom a professional Theater [sic] Company that goes beyond people just coming to a show but actually leaves an imprint on people’s souls [. . . ] Imagine with me a Theatre Company who [sic] presents works that are thought-provoking, soul-stirring, and moving, that leaves room to let God move in whatever way He chooses in people. This is the vision that I feel God burning in my soul lately. (2, emphasis added)

Archer’s passion to create theatre that “leaves room to let God move” as opposed to feeding her audience a prefabricated Christian message is divergent from traditional models of “Christian theatre.” Her desire to leave a positive “imprint” upon the “souls” of her audience is a foundational premise that girds each of the theatres in this study. Her desire to create theatre that beneficially impacts the community through life change.

When Archer approached the pastoral staff with her concept, Oak Hills was only beginning to reach a somewhat recovered state from this sharp decline in membership that it had experienced in the early part of the new millennium. At this time, the component of the dramatic arts, whilst a prominent, valued and regular feature in services under the previous model, had not in any substantial way been returned to weekend services under the new model, despite the church’s fervent declaration of the value of the
arts in its literature and web presence. While Oak Hills had yet to develop a methodology or theology surrounding the arts in the services themselves, they had substantiated their claim of the value of art with a long record of support in various other ways. Imprint’s Marketing Director, Betsy Murray touts the church’s commitment to the arts, stating that “Oak Hills Church has long treasured and been a huge supporter of the arts in our community. It's not something [they] simply talk about; it is in [their] DNA, and something [they] invest heavily in” [sic]. To invest heavily into an endeavor communicates the high value placed upon it. Oak Hills’ commitment to the arts was demonstrated when Archer approached the pastoral staff and elder board with her proposal to revive the value of the theatrical arts within the church through the establishment of a theatre. Her proposition was met with general enthusiasm and support from a large contingent of the leadership, including Pastor Mike Lueken. Pastor Lueken states:

There were several reasons why [Oak Hills] chose to support [Archer] in her endeavor. Having been out of the seeker model for several years, art had not been as integral a factor week to week. [Imprint] was a way to ‘outsource’ our value of art. Another major reason why is because it was something new, something risky, uncharted territory. [Archer] comes along and she’s not going for numbers. [. . . ] She’s less about results and

---

14 For instance, Oak Hills has long supported the Folsom Lake Symphony by providing a venue and in-house marketing for concerts. The church also hosted Friday night Jazz Concerts at their in-house Schlopp House Café for a number of years. Barking Dog School of the Arts was launched within Oak Hills in an effort to provide affordable music lessons to community children. Additionally, the church annually provides a low-cost, week-long summer Arts Camp for several hundred children. Most recently, and for several years, the church has maintained a rotating exhibit of visual art in its Art and Soul Gallery, housed within the church lobby.
more about content and the message of the play. It felt good and right to get behind an artistic endeavor that’s not another contemporary worship band and not another sanitized and benign Christian thing.

The fact that the church suffered losses in response to the shift away from the seeker-model of services and that it desired to continue to prioritize art by supporting Archer reveals an important fact. While the church may have been noble in its desire to rely less heavily upon entertainment-type utilities to keep seats filled (i.e., a contemporary style of music in worship or the use of featured dramatic vignettes), the reality is that these devices, these forms of art, naturally draw human interest.

Theatre perfects the example of an art that can be risky, that engages people and that communicates ideas in ways that no other experience can. Pastor Lueken asserts “[that] art is invaluable because it provides a hard to ignore vehicle…it picks locks and gets behind people’s defenses.” This unique capability as circumventor of defenses is a critical asset when considering the marriage between a church and a theatre. Our culture prizes free-thinking and individualism. Churches adhere to rules, carry unspoken expectations and create their own unique subcultures. Because of this, people that have little to no exposure to an actual church experience may feel defensive or resistant to the concept of church attendance. Conversely, a visit to the theatre does not elicit the same response. The only expectation that both theatre and audience member hold is that patrons allow themselves to experience the production. A theatre that espouses to the same values as its husband church can serve as a less threatening conduit between the church and the community. The benefit that Archer’s envisioned theatre would provide
to Oak Hills in its efforts at connecting with the surrounding community shined apparent. All key parties involved in the decision unanimously agreed.

Imprint was thus begun under the mission of “serving Folsom and surrounding communities with soul-stirring, thought-provoking and transcendent theatre” (Elder Board Meeting 2). The creation of Imprint was the natural outflow of both Oak Hills’ professed appreciation of the power of the arts, and Archer’s personal conviction and drive to launch a theatre.

Logistically, the church verbally agreed to provide a venue for Imprint’s rehearsals and productions, funding for the first production (to be repaid post-production), access to technical support, use of church administrative staff for marketing and ticket sales, and promotion for both volunteerism and patronage from the pulpit and within church literature. In return, the church expected Imprint to produce material in keeping with its mission statement and to gradually (over a two year time period) transition to a position of paying facility and staff fees, at a reduced rate, to help off-set the expense borne by the church’s support of the company.

Stillspeaking in San Marino

The Stillspeaking Theatre of San Marino launched in 2007 under Artistic Director Donald Shenk. Shenk graduated from Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) with a minor in theatre, then studied in London and interned at Playwright’s Horizons theatre in Manhattan. Following this he returned to EMU as Artistic Director of the university’s theatre program prior to moving to New York and then the Los Angeles area to pursue an acting career. He worked in the entertainment industry for fifteen years prior to joining
the United Church of Christ of San Marino as their Choir Director in 2001. He acted in this capacity for several years and, in time and at the encouragement of then pastor Reverend Marcia Hoffman, eventually helped to form a drama ministry within the church, acting much in the capacity as Archer had at Oak Hills, preparing and participating in sketches as supplement to or in place of weekend services. In addition to these roles, he also currently serves as Pastoral Assistant.

Much like Archer, it had been a decades-long journey of both Shenk’s faith and his love for the performance arts that eventually led toward the concept of a theatre within the church. In a personal interview he states, “It was [ . . . ] my dream forever to have a theatre company. Theatre, it’s connected to your spirit and there’s joy that comes through it. And also your faith can come through your art. And you can combine these two.” The combination between theatre and spirit that Shenk references is a reflection of the millennial long connection between theatre and the larger Church. It is a connection that arises naturally from within an individual, whether practitioner or patron. To its great shame, the Church has tried to subjugate this relationship in eras past. Shenk’s is merely one voice among many arguing for the continued redefinition of the relationship.

Shenk’s desire to fulfill his dreams of launching a theatre was increasingly fueled by the knowledge that the church had a largely unused endowment. As Shenk recalls, a congregational friend, aware of Shenk’s vision, encouraged him in this vein, “they don’t really know what to do with [the endowment], we’re just kind of hanging out with this

---

15 The church has been the primary funder of the theatre. Beginning in 2006, they budgeted $25,000 towards the theatre. The following year the theatre was granted $20,000. In 2008, it was allocated $30,000 and in 2009, $24,500.
money, we’re just kind of living off it, but we’re not funding [any] programs or anything.” Heartened by this knowledge in 2006, Shenk drafted a proposal for the launch of an in-house company that he subsequently presented before the church council. Like Archer’s sentiments regarding the lack of meaningful theatre within her community, Shenk furthers the argument. He credits a felt lack of enough kinship between the church and theatre as rationale towards the formation of Stillspeaking. He cites information gleaned in a previous poll:

When asked by pollsters in San Marino what they would want from a church, 45% responded that they want THE ARTS. The church’s most well attended events during the past three years have been a theatrical presentation of one-acts [. . . ], the 2005 Fall Art Exhibit & Concert [ . . . ], and the 2005 reader’s theatre presentation of The Best Christmas Pageant Ever.”

This again harkens back to my observation that much like Oak Hills’ experience with moving away from the seeker model of services and losing members as a result, the contemporary hunger for a return to connection between spirituality and the arts is great. Despite the fact that Shenk desired an increase in the church’s commitment to theatre arts, the church did and continues to have a noteworthy appreciation of and commitment to the arts in general. Shenk is quick to note former Reverend Hoffman’s comment that this particular church “[is] a springboard for artists.” He also points out that, “We have watercolor classes, dance, all kinds of things happening. We have a Suzuki group that meets every Monday night…So it’s always been an artistic kind of place.” This art
friendly environment was not, however, well reflected in response to Shenk’s proposal to open a theatre.

Unlike the reception that the idea of launching a theatre received at Oak Hills, UCC’s reaction to Shenk’s proposal was unexpectedly negative. Shenk contends that this fact was due in great part to a variety of miscommunications surrounding a perceived shift in Shenk’s role and artistic priorities within the church, as well as fear of the resultant loss of established ministry values. He explained:

For some reason the word got around, on one of those bad church things that happens, [that] we were going to ditch the choir to promote the theatre…So we very naively took this proposal to church council and…people were there with full barrels, ready to shoot [our proposal] down. We were shocked by that. We didn’t know quite what had happened.

This was not the reception for which Shenk had hoped. The immediate division within the church and the resistance to the theatre demonstrates that there was a lack of understanding of the value that the theatre would provide. While the ensuing conflict over church priorities is now looked upon as a strong period of mutual growth by both the church and the emerging theatre, resolution of the conflict at the time required many prolonged conversations, engagement of an outside mediator to facilitate communication, and eventual personnel changes. The theatre’s launch forced staff and volunteers to refine their individual and conglomerate understanding and vision for the arts within the
church. This involved prioritizing outreach through theatre whilst also still maintaining a viable choir ministry.

The Stillspeaking Theatre finally launched in 2007 under the mission of “provid[ing] a quality, live theatrical experience that challenges, informs, entertains, inspires, and stimulates [its] audiences” (Siefert). In choosing a name for the theatre, Shenk and staff borrowed upon the branding efforts of the larger United Church of Christ and its “God is Still Speaking” slogan.16 A 2008 UCC article states that “the UCC's identity theme had become a part of [Shenk’s] dream [of launching a theatre]” (Seifert). Shenk and Stillspeaking began the fulfillment of their mission prior to ever opening the doors by successfully bridging the gaps and divisions that were faced in gaining approval for the theatre’s launch and establishing it in alignment with the larger Church’s objectives.

Logistically, the church supported the theatre at its beginning by providing a rehearsal and performance space in the form of a room used previously both as a sanctuary (prior to a church remodel in 1960) and then a fellowship hall. The church also gave Shenk access to the aforementioned endowment to purchase tech equipment and make various improvements to the staging area. The other theatres in this study rely predominantly upon volunteer resources, as does Stillspeaking for a multitude of necessities. However, the theatre does choose to hire out all the technical roles as it has the means to do so.

16 The Stillspeaking Slogan was conceived by the United Church of Christ in 2004, in response to a belief that there was a need to express welcome, openness and acceptance to all. The slogan is accepted and promoted by over 2,500 UCC congregations. States that “No matter who you are, or where you are on life’s journey, you’re welcome here.”
CRYSTAL SPRINGS IN SAN MATEO

Unique in tenure among the three theatres, Crystal Springs Players, founded in 1993, boasts a sixteen-year production history. The company also differs from both Imprint and Stillspeaking in the fact that the concept of launching a theatre was not the vision of any one particular individual within the congregation of its housing church, Crystal Springs United Methodist Church of San Mateo (CSUMC). However, in keeping with the two prior-examined church-theatre relationships, CSUMC also first started using the theatre arts in the form of dramatic skits within services to supplement pastoral sermons during the latter portion of the 1980’s and early 1990’s. Each church, in its own unique interpretation, employed this element of dramatic vignettes as an integral tool in presenting and interpreting various tenets of faith and furthering the use of the attractional model of the Christian church. The presentation of drama within the CSUMC aroused a latent interest within many of the parishioners. The theatre was conceived when “a number of people [within the congregation] got together and basically used the line from the old Rooney and Garland films, ‘Let’s put on a show’” (Crystal Springs Players Briefing Book, 2). This sentiment speaks largely to the establishment of the theatre based upon the “fun” of crafting and staging productions. However, in his “A Philosophy for Drama in the Context of Church,” Reverend Paul Sweet, the pastor presiding over the congregation at the time of Crystal Springs Players’ conception, attempted to make clear a guiding belief that theatre can be born of a desire to please God. He asserts that theatre can be born of faith because:
The difference between worship and drama is one of focus – who (or Who) is the recipient of our efforts. In worship, we create for God. In drama, we create for other people. Thus, it is possible, and surely desirable at Crystal Springs, to create drama for the sake of God… That doesn't mean our plays have to be "holy" or "moral." It does mean that we ask, "How will this play help us all – players as well as audience – learn more about God.” [sic]

Imprint, Stillspeaking and Crystal Springs each emphasize this desire to reach out and to create thought-provoking theatre for the community with the hopes of bettering people’s lives. With Sweet’s philosophical contribution, Crystal Springs clarifies the definition of their objectives with an acknowledged emphasis that this specifically involves learning more about God.

Both Imprint and Stillspeaking staged their opening productions within the walls of the church buildings themselves. Crystal Springs Players’ first two productions instead ran at neighboring Hillsdale High School auditorium. Additionally, contrary to having a dedicated artistic director from the outset of the launch of the company, Crystal Springs ran without one until the beginning of its second season when current Artistic Director Joy Eaton volunteered to direct the company’s third production. Eaton holds her Masters degree in Theatre from the University of the Pacific, but is quick to point out that her

17 In 1993, the founding members of Crystal Springs Players petitioned the Peninsula United Methodist Association with the idea that the church would benefit from starting an in-house theatre. The church was granted $2,500 to begin the process of launching the theatre’s first production.
previous theatrical experience was largely comprised of acting and that she had indeed only taken one directing class prior to directing a full production with Crystal Springs.

The mission of Crystal Springs Players differs from those of Imprint and Stillspeaking in that while there is an emphasis on affecting those that would come to a performance as observers, there is a more heavily emphasized value placed upon those that participate in crafting the production. Their mission professes that Crystal Springs Players exists:

To provide our community with the opportunity to discover and develop gifts and talents through drama. It is our purpose to encourage people to take risks and build confidence in Life (work, personal, family, spiritual) by being a group that encourages:

Spiritual Growth, Positive Role Modeling, Teamwork, Being Supportive of One Another, Fun, Commitment. (Crystal Springs Players Briefing Book, 1)

Logistically, the church provides to the theatre company a wide volunteer base, the use of the sanctuary as theatre facility, access to church staff for ticket sales and use of the volunteer network within the church to fill all aspects of production. Additionally, as in the case of Stillspeaking with the United Church of Christ, the larger United Methodist organization (in the form of the Peninsula United Methodist Association) donated grant money to the company when it was in its fledgling stage. The theatre, in return, provides to the church periodical financial and material contributions.
Each of the three theatres chose as their partner the Church. Each theatre thus experiences the complexities of relationship with their church. The theatre also experiences relationship with the surrounding community, both as an individual establishment and as a partner of the church. In the following chapter I present the difficulties experienced in these relationships and liken the church/theatre relationship as analogous to a Patriarchal model of marriage. In this two item hierarchical model, I demonstrate the ways in which the church acts as husband and the theatre as subjugated wife. Further, I argue that in this model the targeted community exists in the capacity of child to the church/theatre relationship, such as would be represented in a schematic family tree. I contend that in each of the three theatre/church relationships examined, the church and theatre rely predominantly, if not always solely, upon this Patriarchal model in navigating their association. It is my argument that it is the reliance upon this outdated model that predicates and exacerbates conflict within the liaison.
Chapter 3

“LAMENTATIONS”:

TRIALS OF RELATIONSHIP UNDER A PATRIARCHAL MODEL OF MARRIAGE

The church has a certain connotation associated with it. That [the play] is going to be one of “those” plays; one of “those” shows. I think that perception is out there enough…I think people are afraid that they are going to [be] bait and switched.

~Kelly Archer, Imprint Theatre Company

If you’re going to show somebody on stage that is a twelve-year-old kid growing up in the ghetto, he’s going to talk in a different way. You can’t censor all that and still remain true to the artist’s vision. As a church, are we saying, “Oh no, I would put a fig leaf over that? You can’t do that.”

~Donald Shenk, Stillspeaking Theatre

The next issue was to pull in more audience. That meant more publicity, especially through the newspapers. We made many attempts to entice them with the fact that we were unique, without too much success...

~Crystal Springs Players’ Briefing Book, 3

There is a naiveté with which each of the theatres and churches establish relationship with one another. I liken the initiation of the bond to that of many newlyweds. Well intentioned and enthused at what appears to be a mutually beneficial endeavor, both entities move forward in committing to one another, each unaware of the imminence of future clashes. What inevitably ensues as the theatres and churches forge their relationship is myriad conflict over contradictory expectations surrounding roles and responsibilities, rights and restrictions. In each theatre/church relationship examined, the church, whether intentionally or not, assumes a patriarchal role in the relationship that subjugates the theatre to a position of limited agency. While this certainly does not transpire with any apparent malevolent intent on the part of the church, the results are the
same. I argue that in these relationships the theatre must continually struggle against a persistent lack of autonomy and that the resultant dichotomy is akin to a wife who desires self-actualization but remains cast in a submissive role to her husband.\textsuperscript{18} I submit that “patriarchal marriage is a perversion of the meaning of marriage” and that this model is no more beneficial in the church/theater relationship than it is to the husband/wife relationship (Bergoffen 18). Patriarchal marriage perverts marriage in that, as opposed to a committed alliance between two equal and complementary partners, one partner is compromised to the will of the other. In this circumstance, each of the theatres and churches abrades against their partner and against the limitations of the old patriarchal exemplar in navigating the nuanced intricacies of their relationship. This misguided approach to establishing an operational framework between theatre and church is an utterly futile ground from which to launch a healthy and long lasting alliance.

In keeping with the analogy of marriage, in this chapter I refer to theatre as subjugated wife, the church as patriarchal husband and to their relationship as a marriage.

\textsuperscript{18} The patriarchal model of marriage is often defended by fundamentalist Christians as a biblical mandate. The verse most often quoted to substantiate this viewpoint reads, “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything” (\textit{New International Bible}, Eph. 5.22-24). I contend that this verse is often taken out of context. The passage continues beyond this introductory precept of marriage by addressing the role of husband in relation to his wife. The scripture states, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband” (Eph. 5.25-33). When the text is approached as a cohesive passage, a relationship model of reciprocity, mutual respect and love emerges. This model of relationship will be addressed in Chapter Four.
nature of its connection with the church that the theatre is able to interact with the community. The problems in the contemporary paradigm are that: 1) the Church is slow
In this construct, the community is subjugated to both the theatre and the church, as in a schematic family tree (figure 1). In this representation, it is only through the patriarchal
to reform its approach to navigating the demands of the marriage and continues to operate under old constructs while the theatre continues to fight against this in order to
experience equal and complementary standing, and 2) the communities that the churches and theatres are attempting to positively affect are resistant to their advances because of the Church’s long history of patriarchal abuse and hypocrisy (Shupe, Stacey and Darnell 114, Kimball 158). I present the specific difficulties faced in forging the marriages of each theatre and her respective husband church and demonstrate the ways in which each partner abstains from or sustains the corrupt model in traversing these challenges.
Additionally, I present the community that each partner strives to serve as child to the marriage. Further, I evaluate the problems that the theatre faces in reaching her target demographic as a result of her marriage to the church.

**SETTING UP HOUSE**

A theatre chiefly needs a space in which to rehearse and perform. A theatre housed within a church reaps tremendous fiscal savings by negating the need for rental space, as the procurement of a space for rehearsal and performance is often the costliest line item in a theatre’s meager budget. By providing a space in which the theatre can hone and present her craft, the church adheres to the husband role, provider, in a more egalitarian form of the marriage model, loving his wife as he loves himself. This facet of
Fig. 1. The Patriarchal Model of the Church/Theatre Relationship.
marriage is best represented in the Bible book of Ephesians that states that “husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies,” and that “he who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church” (NIV, Ephesians 5:33). In the provision of space, the husband church welcomes his theatre bride into his home, thus loving her as he loves himself. Each of the churches provides this space for their theatres in the form of various rooms for rehearsal and the sanctuary for performances. However, a return to the patriarchal stance in marriage takes place when this provision is not made with graciousness and a view towards the equal value of the theatres’ contributions to the community.

The space provided to each of the theatres varies with each church. The Crystal Springs United Methodist Church San Mateo (CSUMC) is housed within a small, architecturally pleasing facility that is tucked into a wooded hillside (figure 2). The interior of the sanctuary has rows of wooden pews situated around what resembles a thrust stage (figure 3). The pinnacled ceiling is comprised of triangular windows facing out to the sky in each direction and supports a hanging wooden cross covered with large burnished nails (figure 4). Completing the facility are a few auxiliary rooms and offices located within the same building, as well as a portable building used by the Crystal Springs Players for storage. Aside from the theatre’s first production that took place at a local high school, all rehearsals and performances have taken place within the sanctuary.

In the case of the United Church of Christ San Marino (UCCSM), the church is snugly ensconced on the corner of a main thoroughfare in a neighborhood whose median
Fig. 2. Exterior of Crystal Springs United Methodist Church, San Mateo, CA.
Fig. 3. Side angle view of the Stage at Crystal Springs United Methodist Church, San Mateo, CA. Stage is set for Crystal Springs Players’ performance of Larry Shue’s *The Foreigner*. Photo taken 19 Mar. 2010.
Fig. 4. Wooden Cross with Burnished Nails and Pinnacled Ceiling of Crystal Springs United Methodist Church, San Mateo, CA. Photo taken 19 Mar. 2010.
home prices are $1.8 million. The wealth of the community and its proximity to the
theatre rich Los Angeles region infers a demographic that has the means and the savvy to
appreciate fine theatre, a fact that should lend to an ease of procuring an audience. The
building itself is modestly reminiscent of surrounding early mission architecture and went
through a remodel and expansion that included the 1960 addition of new sanctuary and
freed the former sanctuary for other uses (figure 5). As detailed on their website,
Stillspeaking found her home in 2006, [when Shenk] submitted a proposal for the
creation of a small professional theatre to be housed in the large hall which had been the
original sanctuary for the church.” The room has since been updated with added theatre
lighting, the removal of church pulpits and the curtaining of windows in an effort to
create a black box theatre in which to stage performances (figure 6).

Oak Hills Church of Folsom is the largest of the three churches in terms of not
only its congregation size but its facility as well. The church sits upon a sixteen acre
campus in the midst of upper-middle class suburban housing developments and is
comprised of a large central building and several portable buildings housing multiple
offices, classrooms, a large sanctuary that seats 1,100 and a smaller youth auditorium that
seats 200. Given these circumstances, there is ample opportunity to hold all rehearsals
inspaces separate from that which houses the performance itself. Additionally, the fact
that the church has two stage space for both church services and theatre productions,
gives Imprint some degree of artistic choice regarding which space they will use to mount
productions (figures 7 and 8).
Fig. 5. The exterior of Stillspeaking Theatre and the United Church of Christ, San Marino, CA.
Fig. 6. The interior of Stillspeaking Theatre, as set for Kathleen Clark’s *Secrets of a Soccer Mom*. Photo taken 10 Oct. 2009.
Fig. 7. The larger Stage at Oak Hills Church, Folsom, CA, as set for Imprint Theatre Company’s 2008 production of Alfred Uhry’s *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*. From left to right are Alyce (née Hartman) Rogers, Stephen Miller and Tyler Thompson. Reprinted with permission.
Fig. 8. The smaller Stage at Oak Hills Church, Folsom, CA, as set for Imprint Theatre Company’s 2008 production of Morris Panych’s *Lawrence and Holloman*. On the left is James Gilbreath (Holloman) and on the right is Stephen Miller (Lawrence). Reprinted with permission.
set of inherent difficulties associated with the use of space offered by a church under the patriarchal paradigm. While there are certainly cross-themes with regard to each of the following, most difficulties typically tend to present themselves as scheduling conflicts in the use of space, confrontation over the presence of various physical elements within the space or arguments over the sacred versus secular nature of the space.

Religious services are in their own right a form of theatre, with a production of sorts taking place at specified times and before a live and participating audience. Thus, the needs placed upon space by the church are remarkably similar, if not always congruent with, the needs of the theatre company. Both need a stage, ambient lighting, and room for parishioners/patrons. Both have need of varying physical elements, whether that be a piano and risers for a choir, or flats and furniture for a play. However, difficulties often arise when there is a lack of understanding on behalf of either party as to the requirements inherent with either type of production. Additionally, church activity is rarely limited to mere weekend scheduled services. Mid-week services, a litany of meetings, common interest group get-togethers, outreach programs, and special events such as weddings and funerals are also regularly present and can present unique challenges as it pertains to the demands placed upon the commonly occupied space. It is in these scenarios that the theatre is forced to take a submissive role and bend her needs to the perceived higher needs of her husband church.

**MERGING CALENDARS AND AGREEING ABOUT WHERE TO PUT THE FURNITURE**

In each of the cases examined, the church was in existence for many years prior to receiving his theatre bride. As such, like an aging bachelor long settled into his own
apartment, many routines had long been established with regard to the use of available space for “production” related activities (i.e. rehearsal times for choir practice, technical run-throughs of services, various artistic element preparations), scheduled “performances” (mid-week and weekend services as well as other special events throughout the week), and other ministry needs (i.e. – women’s groups, men’s groups, teen clubs, classes, etc.). Each of these individual elements places increasing demands upon the space in which the theatre company is also to produce her work. Unless a given space is dedicated primarily to the needs of the theatre, there will be the inherent potential for scheduling conflicts. Shenk of Stillspeaking states that “one of the most difficult aspects of putting on a show in [their] theatre is coordinating the schedule with all of the other groups who use that space and the adjoining spaces for their ongoing activities” (Shenk 1). These competing demands demonstrate the need for pre-emptive planning, meticulous attention to scheduling and constant communication with facility managers to ensure that double bookings do not occur. Early on in their tenure, the Crystal Springs Players learned to fit themselves in amidst the other activities taking place within the sanctuary. Theatre staff note that, “we’ve got orchestra in there, we’ve got choir, once in a while there’s something else. We just build it into the schedule” (Schlicter). In this circumstance of recognizing the myriad demands placed upon the church, the Crystal Springs Players have identified the need to compare calendars and to schedule in accordance with one another’s needs. The husband church recognizes that his wife theatre needs time and space in which to nurture their children, i.e. the congregation and larger community, through the theatrical arts. Reciprocally, the wife theatre respects the
need of her husband church to protect and strengthen their children through moral teaching, a practice that also takes time and space. If not anticipated and handled with mutual respect of the value that each partner brings to the table, in antithesis to a patriarchal model, these conflicts can often predicate heated conversations surrounding a perceived competition of values within the church home. Ultimately this has the potential to lead to animosity and a “him-versus-her” mentality. Deconstructing the old paradigm and the degree to which the resultant shift is manifested to the staff and volunteers of the church and the theatre will largely determine the success of the relationship.

Navigating the nuances of sharing a living space is not exclusive to determining who has access to that space and when. There are issues surrounding the physical elements of both church and theatre that often create points of contention. These include things such as seating configuration, the placement and movement of sets, and the presence of sacred or liturgical objects within the shared space.

One such component that proves to be critical evidence in demonstrating the existence of the patriarchal nature of the relationship pertains to seating. Crystal Springs Players experiences no contention in this regard as pews are affixed around the thrust stage/platform and thus all performances are blocked in a way such as to conform to this limitation. This is not the case as it relates to Imprint and Stillspeaking.

Imprint has the luxury of choosing between the larger venue of the Oak Hills’ main auditorium and the more intimate setting of its youth auditorium, but both of these venues are consistently used by the church. In either situation, the theatre has historically
been required to convene a large crew of volunteers to reset the seating within the production space between theatre rehearsals and performances and the church’s services. In a performance weekend these seating changes can involve the reconfiguration of over 500 chairs arranged for Sunday services to a different arrangement of up to 200 chairs for theatre performances on Friday and Saturday nights. This is then followed by the resetting of chairs before Sunday morning church services as well as after services for Sunday matinee performances. This model is hardly sustainable and continues to define the theatre as a guest within her own home. Shenk of Stillspeaking laments:

> During our first year of production, we were exhausting ourselves by having to remove all of the theatre chairs to another part of the campus for a daytime activity and then having to move them all back in (and arrange them properly) before the evening's performance.

The divergent configuration of the chairs presents a construct of strain and potential fracture in the marriage. That the theatre was “exhausted” in the fulfillment of her mission demonstrates the subjugate nature of wife inherent in a patriarchal paradigm. In a healthy and complementary relational model, the two parties would seek to design a seating arrangement that promotes the well-being and agenda of both partners simultaneously.

Further example that the theatre is contemporarily viewed as less than in her relationship with her church, as it relates to objects within the shared space, is demonstrated in how she is treated in contrast to various church ministries. Keith Aldrich, Executive Producer of Imprint Theatre Company, notes that:
[Church staff] would never make a big deal about the mess left by the men’s basketball group. But let Imprint leave a light on or neglect to put a couple of chairs back and [a given staff member] would be certain to let us hear about it. Again and again, [Imprint] had to be on [their] toes. Men’s basketball doesn’t have to prove itself as [a vital part of the church] and yet emails are fired off for any infringement on the part of Imprint.

The necessity of having to be “on her toes” with regard to housekeeping in comparison to a men’s sports league communicates that Imprint is deemed less as a partner bride and more as chastisable housewife. In addition, the male gendered aspect of the basketball team, in light of the allowances made on its behalf by the church, reinforces a model of patriarchy.

Set pieces similarly provoke argument in a relational model that values one partner over the other. These can be defined on the theatre side of the equation as walls, floors, backdrops, furniture, lighting placement and the like. On the church end these are altars, podiums, candles and other ambient décor, communion elements, lighting and sacred symbols such as crosses could be considered set pieces. The degree to which the presence of any of these elements conflicts with the objectives of either party must be addressed and mutually resolved for a peaceful and equitable marriage. Incorporating the differing elements of each partner’s work into one another’s lives is representative of positive reform. The degree to which this takes place communicates the growth or lack thereof towards a healthier model of relationship.
Crystal Springs Players has gone through varying stages of development as it relates to addressing the presence of theatre elements within church services. The theatre has experienced a variety of responses to the presence of her props and set pieces. Artistic Director Joy Eaton notes that, “Anne Dilenschneider [a former pastor of CSUMC] was very comfortable with having the set there and using it to preach. When [another pastor] came, he was very sensitive of trying to make it look more like a worship space, so [we] strung up curtains.” The former of these examples demonstrates the church’s comfort with his wife’s belongings and the latter communicates the wife’s respect for her husband’s desires. In both of these scenarios the patriarchal model of male dominance is overcome and a better functioning and more equitable model of relationship is favored. Both examples present circumstances in which the individual needs of each partner is equally valued. Collaboration and complementarianism are easily identifiable.

Most reflective of the ideology of complementarianism are instances in which husband and wife blend the use of their belongings. For example, in the theatres 2010 production of Larry Shue’s, *The Foreigner*, “the [church’s] altar is actually [the theatre’s] bar. [The church has] a huge altar that gets in the way. It’s on wheels, but it’s hard to move…so [the church] decided to use the [theatre’s] bar as an altar [during services]” (Schlicter). In addressing the needs of both the theatre and the church simultaneously through a shared use of material resource (the altar/bar) and the easing of labor for each partner (in moving set/service pieces), the relationship is advanced beyond the limits of patriarchy. A model based upon these ideals subscribes to the basic tenets of New
Feminist theory, in which “all have a right to share equally in the common good, but rights and duties are reciprocal and interdependent” (Cahill 41). Reciprocity of care towards one another and acknowledging interdependence promotes a cohesive and mutually beneficially relationship.

The antithesis to this is the old model of patriarchy in which the theatre is continually subject to the needs of the more highly valued husband church. Oak Hills has both reciprocated and fought efforts at harmony with Imprint when productions have taken place in their primary and larger auditorium:

For most of our early productions, [Oak Hills] was okay with the set pieces as backdrop to the services. This might have been because of the short run of the productions [two to three weeks]. In our latter productions, it seems like [Imprint] became more and more of a burden. That’s when [the church] started wanting [the theatre] to build the sets so as to be hidden behind the curtain. (Archer, Personal Interview)

As opposed to the dynamics of the space that Crystal Springs uses, the stage that Oak Hills and Imprint share is large and elevated. This creates an inherent distance between players and audience. To increase this distance by building sets behind curtain level creates an undesirable distance between player and audience. Archer goes on to note that it was due to her perception of Oak Hills’ frustration with the theatre set’s encroachment upon church service space that she actively sought out the potentially less controversial use of the youth auditorium. This move on her part demonstrates the theatres’ attempt at

19 New Feminism is a movement within Third Wave Feminism that espouses the tenets of male and female equality and complementarianism and will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.
embracing a different model of relationship by looking at the needs and resources of both parties and comprising. Conversely, the church’s lack of recognition of the need for the theatre to have set pieces in closer proximity to the audience harkens to the old model. By prioritizing his own aesthetic desires over hers with lack of compromise the old hierarchy remains in place.  

**Establishing Household Rules**

Most unique to the shared space aspect of the marriage between theatre and church space is the controversy over the sacred versus secular nature of that space. This delineation between sacred and secular is a breeding ground for impassioned conflict. Consequently it is one of the primary concerns in navigating a marriage between a religious institution and the secular-material-producing theatre housed within its walls. In an era defined by cries against religious hypocrisy, perhaps nowhere else can one best experience the heated battle between the expansive nature of art and the limiting nature of holdover religious constructs than as represented by this relationship.

The production of secular plays in what many consider consecrated space has given rise to recurrent hurdles for each of the theatres and churches. The debate over whether theatre should be performed at all within a space that many consider sacred leads to the need to establish a working definition of what sacred implies. Paul Woodruff, in

---

20 Similar to Crystal Springs Players’ attempts to blend the use of elements was Imprint’s use of existing service objects during its 2008 production of Morris Panych’s two man show *Lawrence and Holloman*. The only one of Imprint’s productions to date to have been staged within the Oak Hills’ youth auditorium, media elements were introduced as segues between scenes. This was done both in order to enhance the production, as well as to incorporate the use of three conspicuously placed television monitors located on and above the stage.

21 The argument over the production of secular plays in particular is addressed later in this chapter.
what many consider to be his opus work *The Necessity of Theatre: The Art of Watching and Being Watched*, writes that “Sacred” is a word we have almost lost in modern times, like ‘reverence,’ to which it is related in meaning. Sacred things and places call us to reverence.” (Woodruff 111). In this argument, sacred places and things are those in which and by which we are stilled, in which we have the potential to transcend the effluvium of life and experience something greater than ourselves. With this definition of sacred, the question then becomes less about whether the space is sacred and more about whether the work of the theatre is sacred. Therein lies the crux.

Is the theatre regarded as a bride of the church or is it, in a manner of speaking, viewed as an interloper to the higher objectives of the church? The church and the theatre must give definition to whether or not that which is sacred can be found within that which is secular. Can a theatre production be defined as a sacred event? Can it be considered any more or less secular than the aforementioned basketball ministry that shares the use of the worship space at Oak Hills? Increasingly there is a movement to “tear down the church practices that foster a secular mind-set, namely, that there are secular spaces, times or activities. [In this movement] all of life must be made sacred” (Gibbs and Bolger 66). What must then be considered of primary interest for any church or theatre considering this relationship is the sacred aspect of theatre and its potential to effect change in the human heart. I contend that when this is the objective of

---

22 The Emergent Church Movement is a shift in Christian theology as it relates to the definition of church. In Dan Kimball’s *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*, the Emergent Church is defined as “primarily a people, not simply a place to meet. It is a movement and not an institution. Drawing on the understanding that secular space no longer exists, church is a seven-day-a-week identification, not a once-a-week, ninety-minute respite from the real world. The church lives as a committed community in this world” (Gibbs and Bolger 90).
a theatre and when that objective is in keeping with the missional doctrine of the church, the work of the theatre is sacred and is an extenuation of the sacred nature of the church.

If the objectives of the church and the objectives of the theatre are not mutually exclusive of one another or better, are in many ways synonymous with one another, then the use of a common space for each should not be preclusive based upon an argument of sacred versus secular. In this vein the paramount marriage between the objectives of the church and the objectives of the theatre is perhaps best summarized by the Reverend Dr. Art Cribbs of StillSpeaking’s housing church, UCCSM:

There are not many venues that take faith seriously and provide actual experiences to practice models of divine-human moments. A church theatre company can make that happen. Theatre that changes lives is a true ministry and the expectation of people who attend such performances. Rev. Dr. Cribbs’ assertion that theatre is a ministry of the church and that she has the power to change lives is evidence that work she does is sacred. In referring to the theatre both as a “company” and as a “ministry of the church” Dr. Cribbs brings up another interesting paradox. Is the theatre an autonomous resident company that aids in the mission of the church or is she a subjugate ministry within the church? The answer to this question is paramount and lays less in semantics than in how the relationship actually manifests. In the patriarchal circumstances presented throughout this chapter, I continue to contend that the church views the theatre as subjugate while the theatre fights for autonomy and complementarianism.
In addition to a space in which to perform, one of the principal resources needed on the part of both the church and the theatre is manpower. It takes a wealth of individuals to bring a theatre production to fruition. To someone unfamiliar with the theatre arts, it may seem that a production is comprised of the actors upon the stage and a hazy composition of a few other behind-the-scenes contributors. It is a grave misconception on the part of any who would endeavor to begin a company or to support a company to believe this to be the case. Shenk, of Stillspeaking Theatre, addresses his own experience with this false impression:

My thing in coming from Virginia was feeling like everybody in Los Angeles is of course theatrically knowledgeable. [And it turns out that] no, there’s a little community of people that do theatre, but everybody else goes to the theatre the same way as anybody else around the country goes to the theatre. They have no idea what it takes to put on a show.

As Shenk’s experience teaches, to the uninitiated, such as the leaders and laypersons within a church may be, the idea of supporting a theatre varies greatly from the actuality of supporting one. Such as they have evolved, production for each of the three theatres examined herein entails a need for actors and directors, lighting, sound and set designers, costumers and make-up artists. Also needed is help in marketing, telephone and/or computer ticket sales, ushering, backstage crew, props management, potential refreshment sales, website management, a host of administrative minutia and, in ideal circumstance, a governing board. At the outset of the relationship, it is therefore once
more dictated that a clear understanding be arrived upon as to what type of and how much support the church will provide towards the practical maintenance of the theatre in their relationship. The status of theatre as subjugate ministry versus complimentary partner predicates the ease with which the theatre is able to meet production values through the use of staff and volunteerism.

The degree to which the theatre/church marriage is promoted as valuable to staff and volunteers is indicated by the zeal with which they do or do not support the theatre. In the patriarchal model, the theatre is not promoted and valued as equal partner and is instead viewed as an additional and non-valued burden. In his experience of church support in the practical sense, Shenk of again notes that:

Each [show] has been a learning experience [with regard to] bringing more people into it. The greatest frustration is that [while] the advisory board is really into [helping], [i.e.] they do the housework, the ushering, some of the concessions stuff and help read plays, [it still] takes a lot of push to get them to do that and it’s like, ‘Wow, we are giving so much.’ They don’t see the days and days and hours and hours and weeks...[all] that time, that exhausting work that you’re putting into all the rehearsals and everything.

This responsibility of fully communicating to the church the extent of work and commitment that is required in supporting the launch of a theatre company lies with the Artistic Director, who should from the beginning be theatre’s ambassador to the church. The failure of both parties to completely outline roles and responsibilities at the outset of
the partnership only serves to handicap this individual as he or she is inevitably forced to seek resources and support further on in the artistic process. The lack of defining these needs in the initial stages of the relationship has the potential to exponentially foster and further a perception of the theatre as a tax upon the church.

At Imprint, Archer shares Shenk’s lament regarding a perceived lack of church buy-in to the theatre as complement to the church. Her frustrations lie predominantly in her experiences with non-supportive staff members, for she states:

The drawbacks, the negatives [to the relationship] are that I’ve never felt that I had the church’s support behind me. It felt like I had [one of the pastor’s] support…The rest of the staff was definitely a negative… When you give comp tickets to the whole staff and they don’t show up [for a show], that says something. That’s a signal that there’s not value to what you’re doing.

This sentiment once again exemplifies the potential danger in failing to clearly define the varying attributes of the relationship between the church and the theatre.

Of the three companies and assumedly due to its longevity, Crystal Springs Players has perhaps best established the roles and responsibilities of both the church and the theatre as it relates to the theatre’s well-being. They still experience challenges in this regard in that “it’s a little tough because the same people tend to get the same jobs” (Schlicter). Artistic Director Joy Eaton acknowledges that:

It does take a lot of work from the church, the ticket takers, people [to] put on the galas, the food, people to do the tickets [sic] and run the register.
Sometimes it’s one of us. Sometimes it’s someone who’s not as involved, someone from the board running ticket sales…people that help work on the set…all of those take a lot of work, so we kind of try to rotate and find some new blood.

There is a sense of peace and resolve surrounding issues of personnel and volunteerism that is likely resultant of having navigated the meeting of these needs for near two decades. This comfort in sharing the workload was arrived at gradually and through the occurrence of many of the growing pains that Stillspeaking and Imprint continue to undergo.

Crystal Springs Players and housing CSUMC have made strides towards deconstructing the patriarchal model. In addition to having successfully garnered the support of volunteers and staff within the church over the years, there has been cultivation of common and cross leadership between the church and the theatre. Now members of the church board also serve on the theatre advisory board:

We decided we needed to have a member of the Players Board to be a member of the Administrative Board so there’s always that open line of communication, not them talking about us and us hearing stuff…We want to make sure that we’re not The Church and The Players, [but rather that] the Players are part of the church. We try to foster that. (Eaton)

This organizational transformation didn’t take place until the company had already been in existence for six years. Given that Imprint has only had four seasons of production and that Stillspeaking is merely two years into its journey, it can be assumed that, of
necessity and in due course, either similar results will follow or the theatres will fail to thrive.

In the case of Stillspeaking, progress is already being made at expanding the governance of the theatre company, although in a differing fashion from that of Crystal Springs. Further, in this particular marriage the importance of incorporating the community as a vital third party for which the marriage exists to serve is introduced. UCCSM’s Rev. Dr. Cribbs states that:

Currently, and, unfortunately, the theatre advisory board is comprised almost exclusively of members and friends of the congregation. A greater effort to involve members of the wider community is needed. This, of course, will complicate the process as more and possibly differing values will surface; but, the non-group-think leadership will help us broaden and strengthen our appeal to the audience.

This intentionality towards inclusion of members from the community outside the church on the theatre advisory board is key to arriving at the fullness of the theatre/church marriage. In inviting the community is as a valued third party, in the capacity of cherished neighbor as opposed to subjugate child, further deconstruction of patriarchy occurs. The church is no longer cast as paternal authority with both theatre and community as hierarchical subjects.

**INVITING THE NEIGHBORS OVER**

A further and necessary human resource that may not at first appearance lend itself to this definition are the individuals who make up the attending congregation at
church services and the patrons who attend theatre performances. While this may not initially present itself to be an area of resource competition between the church and the theatre, closer inspection proves that it has the potential to be a cause of contention. Both the church as an organizational structure and the theatre as an individual entity are ultimately and completely dependent upon attendees for their unique survival. When these two establishments rely upon the same pool of individuals for their continued existence, there exists the possibility for the deferment of attendance at one event for another. As Mike Lueken, a co-pastor at Oak Hills Church, notes, “It doesn’t take long before you’ve so saturated the market [with church sponsored activities] that there’s no more market. As much as Oak Hills provides a natural pool to draw from, there’s a limit to what people are available to do with their time.” While Pastor Lueken’s comment infers that there may be a limited market for those who would regularly attend both church services and theatre performances, what he fails to address is what the theatre provides in its relationship to the church.

The audience at a theatre production often varies from that of the regular church congregation. As is the case for each of the three theatres, “…we get a lot of friends of the cast, so the bigger the cast, the bigger the audience [and]…we get a fair number of our actors who have been here before” (Schlicter). These individuals from the larger community are often associated only with the theatre at the outset. However, due to the marriage that she shares with the church, there is a resultant potential for the church to reach a new demographic. This harkens back to UCCSM and Stillspeaking’s desire to reach out to and involve the community in the relationship through advisory board
inclusion. The mere opportunity for the community to participate as valued theatre audience within the church venue begins to break down patriarchy and creates the beginnings of a preferred triune relationship among church/theatre/community.²³

Conversely, each of the theatres attributes their relationship with the church to having a negative impact upon attendance. Each has employed remarkably similar tactics in trying to navigate around people’s apparent aversion to the church. For example, all three theatres opt not to put the name of their housing church upon their marketing materials. Steve Schlichter, Crystal Springs Players’ advisory board president notes, “We sort of hide it... [On] some of our advertisements we’ll put Crystal Springs Theatre...so when people drive in...they probably say ‘Whoa! This is a church!’” The aspirations of each theatre are well encapsulated in the sentiment that “we want people to judge us by the play and not by the fact that we’re a church or not” (Schlichter). The fact that the theatres feel the need to “hide” their relationship with the church communicates a lack of confidence in their choice of partner as valued by the community.

Given these challenges, it is not so surprising then that it is not only difficult to attract the non-churched to attend performances, but also to establish theatre as a value among established members of the church. Both Imprint and Stillspeaking have expressed frustration with the congregations of their sponsoring churches. Shenk of Stillspeaking shares, “The people [of UCCSM] feel like they’re doing a lot to come to a show and not even everybody comes. Even in a small congregation, not everybody

²³ I contend that a three part reciprocal relationship is the prescribed solution to the inequalities experienced under the patriarchal paradigm for the church/theatre marriage. The triune aspect of relationship is reflective of the Holy Trinity of the Christian faith. I present this alternative model in great detail in the next chapter.
comes to a show” (Shenk). If the theatre company is not promoted as value of the church and thus worthy of patronage as well as support, then the church is failing to uphold the theatre as an equal and vital partner. This dichotomous model of marriage can only have negative consequences for the long term survival of the theatre.

TELLING ME WHAT I CAN AND CANNOT SAY

Specific and unique challenges arise with regard to making choices about what types of material to stage within the auspices of a church. There is a constant need to navigate the divide between what is perceived to be permissible to produce within a church and what is contemporary and intellectually relevant to the surrounding community. Given that much of what is available for production today will have some degree of questionable language, sexual content, or violence in some form, the church is often forced to contend with pushing boundaries. Concurrently, the theatre is faced with feeling restricted in her artistic freedom. Much in keeping with the debate over the sacred versus secular aspects of mutually supporting religious activities (such as worship and scriptural teaching), while also housing an on-campus theatre, the issues surrounding material selection for production are fraught with tension.

24 Last among the primary frustrations of theatre companies housed within churches is the difficulty not only in securing an audience to attend performances, but the tremendous amount of lobbying that is required to get reviewers to attend as well. Much as with potential audience members who are disinclined to attend a church sponsored event, it is likely that the theatre companies’ relationship with the church is what keeps reviewers away. As the only equity house of the three companies, and given its proximity to the theatre saturated area of Los Angeles, Stillspeaking has had less difficulty in procuring the attendance and review of critics in its relatively short existence. These two factors, in conjunction with the fact that Stillspeaking options not to advertise the church’s name upon its marketing materials, may serve to obscure its association with the church and thereby help to circumvent any resistance that might otherwise occur.
Preeminent in material selection is what often proves to be a very volatile topic between those who lead the church and those who lead the theatre. This is, of course, censorship. In exploring the issue of censorship and how it is representative of a patriarchal paradigm, it is important to first present a working definition. Censorship has historically taken place in theatre when, as “human relationships on stage that powerful others have interpreted as questioning or even undermining their authority” predicates change to production material (McConachie 199). In each of the theatre/church marriages, the churches have sought to control production material content in order to “uphold conventional morality and/or to protect their images and interests” (199). The power of the church to deny or alter theatre production choices is often in an effort to avoid conflict as it relates to the church’s projected morality. In this dichotomy the church has the power to suppress the theatre’s license to produce contemporary and relevant scripts unedited. In the theatre/church marriage censorship predominantly takes shape in two forms: 1) the over-riding authority of the church leaders to veto scripts that they deem unacceptable for production within the church, and 2) line-item changes to or deletion of content within plays selected for production.

While none of the artistic directors have ever presented the pastoral staff or governing boards with any scripts that have been consummately denied production, there is an acknowledged recognition from each that the church is ultimately reserves this power. This, in the case of Imprint, Archer conveys a feeling of mistrust of her intentions on the part of the church. She relates her frustration in this vein when she states, “I’m not going to pick something that is way out there. Having to count the swear words and send
[the pastor] an email stating the number of curse words, like ‘there are eight damns’…it just felt [sic] weird” (Archer, Personal Interview). Her frustration in this regard is something that she has had to contend with on several occasions. Chiefly this has taken shape in the form of replacing curse words with similar but less confrontational words. For example, in the case of Imprint’s 2006 production of Tom Griffin’s *The Boys Next Door*, the word “shit” was replaced with “crap.” This sort of deletion censorship takes place in nearly all of Imprint’s productions.

Of particular note, however, is the aforementioned 2008 Imprint production of *Lawrence and Holloman*. In this circumstance, the script underwent significant editing prior to production.\(^{25}\) Pastor Kent Carlson addresses the obvious tension this provides with regard to artistic freedom and the integrity of preserving a playwright’s work as written in saying, “It was just hilarious, the script. But I can’t imagine what those actors were thinking as they looked at the original script and had to change all that; what their experience was, but it had to be weird.” This area of censorship has yet to be addressed with an agreed upon protocol between Imprint and Oak Hills and as such remains a fluid and therefore potentially divisive facet of the relationship.

Crystal Springs Players went through a pivotal time in its evolution around this topic when the company staged its 1998 production of Neil Simon’s *California Suite*. The play is a two act bittersweet comedy about five dysfunctional married couples and

\(^{25}\) Script editing of *Lawrence and Holloman* largely involved language substitutions. However, a large portion of dialog was simply cut due to the anticipated offense that many congregants would take towards crude sexual references contained therein. It was deemed by church staff, and subsequently agreed to by theatre staff that this content was not necessary towards furthering the storyline. In this circumstance, Imprint was greatly compromised as it relates to potential litigation resultant from broken copyright and production laws that prohibit changes to the script.
the trials they face with one another during a hotel stay. The play is an exploration of the human condition from many angles and thus well fits the desires of the theatre for its audience in the capacity of provoking introspective thought. However, the script contains many profanities. It was heavily debated whether to censor some of the language of the script in order to “sanitize it for the sanctuary” (Eaton). Anne Dilenschneider, the CSUMC pastor at the time, researched the mystery, miracle and morality plays of the Middle Ages in an effort to gain a further understanding of the symbiotic nature of the relationship between theatre and religion. As mentioned previously, theatre and the Church were very closely linked. The Church was able to share biblical and moral stories with the community through the use of theatre and vernacular language. In using contemporary language, the Church was better able to fulfill its objective of enlightenment. From Dilenschneider’s research, she formulated the following personal philosophy of theatre as it relates to faith:

The life of faith is about transformation and the recognition of grace. Transformation always begins where we really are. The people of the Middle Ages knew this. They knew that characters had to be believable; they knew that faith had to connect to real life…Believable characters allow the plot to move us. And, ultimately, the question of the morality plays was, "Is the play edifying?" The criterion for this was whether or not the play ended with "caritas"…a graced condition of heart…Each of the four vignettes in California Suite meets this requirement…For these reasons, the rough language of Neil Simon's play is not extraneous; it's
necessary to the portrayal of believable people moving from crisis to caritas.

This manifesto of sorts was included as The Pastor’s Note upon the program for the show and thus set a precedent for all productions following *California Suite*. In response to the production, the theatre solicited audience response to the inclusion of questionable language within the church sanctuary, most of which was positive. While the theatre thus defined its stance on character developing material, it still “[leaves] out language…where we [think] it [is] gratuitous, even though the play [is] good” (Schlicter 10). To this end, the theatre stages productions that adhere to the church’s stated values and remain relevant and relatable to a contemporary audience.

In similar fashion to Crystal Springs Players *California Suite*, Stillspeaking’s 2009 production of Kathleen Clark’s three-woman comedy *Secrets of a Soccer Mom* included the use of the oft-considered brash word “fuck.” Shenk notes, however, that this freedom of the use of questionable language within the church is the result of hours of prior discussion in the sacred versus secular vein of thought. His perception of the hypocrisy of congregational members who would feel comfortable with experiencing the same play or similar text in another venue, but who raise argument when such things are brought to the stage within the church, raises a strong point of contention for him. It also gives rise to a similar and equally complex area of difficulty in material selection.

The sensitivity that the church has towards material selected for production is not without foundation. In a broader sense, there is a multi-sided scrutiny that both the
church and the theatre company endure. Rev. Dr. Cribbs of UCCSM speaks of some of the further difficulties inherent to this relationship:

There are several constituency groups that must be given special attention and consideration, include[s] the congregation, surrounding community, and members of the theatre advisory board…One of the potential traps is coming up with materials that satisfy a particular interest but fails to appeal to a wider audience. We are constantly navigating rough currents of tastes, relevance, and entertainment value.

There is a balancing act between acknowledging the expectations of the often disparate voices that the Rev. Dr. Cribbs points out. There is also a resultant milieu ensured by staging a production that does not necessarily seek to conform to these expectations. This is something to be predicted in the relationship between church and a theatre company producing secular work. However, the prediction of the difficulty associated with standing in the gap between congregational expectations and community expectations does not necessarily make the satisfying of both factions any easier or more desirable a goal. Such arguments as the congregation expressing that “you can’t do this [in a church]” is yet another manifestation of quarrel of the sacred versus secular nature of the partnership (Carlson). This debate becomes a moot point if the primary objectives of both organizations are not only synonymous but acknowledged as such and approached as mutual objectives.

This concept of standing in this gap is a linchpin in the idea of theatre as partner in ministry. If the theatre, through its relationship with the church can defy and
ultimately supersede the expectations of both the secular audience and the congregational audience, negating the trifles of curse words in light of a superb production and the presentation of universal and provocative questions, then something unique and tremendous has happened. A banner cry of this stand in the gap relationship could certainly best be summarized in the words of documentary filmmaker, Lauralee Farrer:

You are not paying attention if you think that “edgy” is any longer the sordid, the shocking, the jaw-droppingly vain, the vapid or the ironic and self-loathing. The dark underbelly of pretty much anything is quite frankly, cliché. What’s really maverick, the truly uncharted territory of our time, is a radical artistic exploration into God. Into whatsoever things are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy.

Farrer’s concept of “radical artistic exploration into God” is something than be fully realized in the theatre/church relationship. The reality of a theatre that pushes the community’s boundaries towards exploring the spiritual, the transcendent, the life and death questions of our times is maverick. The reality of a church linking arms with such a theatre and supporting them is largely uncharted territory in contemporary America. Old style patriarchy is neither maverick nor uncharted. The outdated model of relationship upon which each of the theatres and churches base much of their interaction stands in the way of fully realizing the potential they mutually have to positively impact their communities. In the next chapter I expand upon the previously mentioned triune nature of the relationship between theatre, church and community. In contrast to the hierarchal premise of the patriarchal paradigm, I present a model of reciprocal
relationship and argue that it is in the employ of this model that the theatre, church and community experience the most benefit.
Chapter 4

“ACTS”:

ACCOMPLISHING MISSION THROUGH RECIPROCAL TRIUNE RELATIONSHIP

I do invite the actors to be part of what I call an "energy circle" before every performance. I strive to make this a time when each person can call on whatever belief they may have. Early on, I wondered if this was an appropriate thing to do, but when I decided to see if it was meaningful to the actors by purposefully skipping it one night, they hunted me down in some distress and said they needed it. I was joyful for that. I was even happier to see them starting the circle on their own when I was late one night. That connection between the Spirit and theatre is what has always pressed me forward.

~Donald Shenk, Stillspeaking Theatre

I’m not sure how she does it, but (Archer of Imprint Theatre Company) always picks really challenging plays. They’re not your run of the mill “safe” plays, but edgy plays. That takes a lot of courage.

~Richard D., Audience Member, seeaplay

People didn’t know we had given all of these things to the church. A lot of these things are from the Players...nice tablecloths, this television, all kinds of stuff...That’s not our mission, to make money for the church, we’re just able to do it, so we do it.

~Steve Schlichter, Crystal Springs Players

Given the litany of challenges that are presented in defining and navigating a relationship between a church and an in-house theatre, it would seem that the venture could easily be deemed not worth the effort. However, to make such a summation would be to neglect the myriad benefits that this unique relationship has the potential to yield, both those easily quantifiable and those inherently less tangible. The partnering of a church that seeks to address the spiritual needs of its members and the surrounding community, with a theatre that works to awaken its patrons to oft-easily neglected spiritually oriented questions, holds the promise of evoking a wealth of opportunity for
inter- and intra-personal growth among the church, the theatre and the surrounding community. This duality of purpose when coupled with equitably shared resources, lends itself to an increase in the missional fortitude of each establishment. The flaw in the partnership lies in the construct by which it operates. A patriarchal marriage model of the theatre/church relationship, by design, limits the development and potential of the lesser valued partner. The relationship functions best and is most powerful when each partner is equally valued and supported by the other and when their missions are complimentary.

In this chapter, I contend that a vital third party to the theatre/church relationship is the surrounding community. Based upon concepts outlined by sociologist Wendy Griswold in her book *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*, I address the relationships as a three item reciprocal model. I argue that the application and effectiveness of this model is best realized through adherence to the principles espoused by New Feminist theory. I further argue that the mission statement of each of the theatres is in complete alignment with that of its partner church and that the community is benefited through the theatre/church affiliation.\(^{26}\) I present script analysis and audience response to that end.

**A NEW MODEL**

In developing *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*, Wendy Griswold sets forth a model for understanding the interplay among created cultural objects, their creators, those that receive them and the social world that comprises the context in which the object exists. She defines this as “an accounting device intended to encourage a fuller

---

\(^{26}\) See Appendix B for the housing churches and their respective theatres’ mission statements.
understanding of any cultural object’s relationship to the social world” and calls this device “The Cultural Diamond” (Griswold 15-16). This “device” is simply a visual tool comprised of a diamond shape with one of the identifiers located at each of the diamond’s four points (figure 9). The lines that make up the outside of the diamond, as well as the two lines that intersect through the center, are called links (figure 8).

I believe that a modification of this device is useful for understanding the triad relationship represented in the theatre/church/community paradigm. Theatre performance and church service are created for the community and are both cultural objects. However, both performance and church service are created specifically to be received by the community while in the process of being created. In attending a performance, recipients directly interact with one of two creators as well as the cultural object presented. It is what takes place in the relationship, through the medium of the cultural object, which is most of interest. For this reason, I modify Griswold’s model from a diamond to a triangle, and refer to it as The Reciprocal Triangle (figure 10). A triangular model serves to demonstrate several things in the theatre/church/community relationship: 1) the three items are equal in value respective to one another, 2) each of the three items shares a direct relationship with each of the other items independently, 3) that the strongest configuration of relationship takes shape when all three components are present and given equal status and 4) there is reciprocity among elements.

A NEW THEORY

New Feminism is not entirely antithetical to First or Second Wave Feminism but rather looks at the basic constructs of Feminism through a lens of Christianity and thus
Fig. 9. A Representation of Wendy Griswold’s Cultural Diamond Device.
Fig. 10. The Reciprocal Triune Model of Relationship.
distills reformed theory.27 Within the theory there is consistently great emphasis placed upon the equality that God bestows between man and woman. It is stated in the Christian Bible that “in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (New Living Bible, Gen. 1:27). This equality is not defined as sameness, but rather as “equal in dignity” (Elshtain 290). In this spirit, I present the church and theatre as equal in the Reciprocal Triangle. This premise of the divine equality of men and women is foundational to both New Feminism and to the analogy used previously in the theatre/church relationship. In arguing against the construct presented in the previous chapter I am not advocating dissolving the marriage construct between the theatre and church, but rather the experienced inequality in dignity inherent to Patriarchy.

In the Triangle model, I view the theatre and church as equal partners in ministering and relating to the community, and thus another foundational tenet of New Feminism is realized. The theatre and church, as shown later in this chapter, operate under tandem missions of effecting positive change within the community. How they effect this change as individual partners within the relationship varies greatly. There is no precise delineation between the practice of theatre and that of religious teaching and worship in the realms of artistry and spirituality, as each of these elements is common to both theatre and church. Yet, in choosing to equitably partner, what each is able to uniquely offer is complemented by the uniqueness of what the other offers. The benefit to community resultantly increases. Herein lies the second main tenet of New Feminism:

27 Neither is New Feminism comprised of merely one resonant and cohesive political voice. There is a range of discourse from either side of the political spectrum as it relates to hot button topics such as abortion, homosexuality and body politics. For expansive scholarly discourse on these and a host of other issues, please refer to Women In Christ: Toward a New Feminism, an anthology of scholarly articles edited by Michele M. Schumacher.
male and female are complementary in relation to one another. In their pairing there is synergism. Inherent to the female (whether she chooses to access or not) in Pope John Paul II’s “genius of woman,” a concept presented in his 1995 *Letter to Women*, are the attributes of creativity, openness to others and nurturance (Allen 93-104). In applying New Feminist theory to theatre, these qualities each prove to be tremendous assets in the navigation of the Reciprocal Triangle.

**MISSION STATEMENTS: FORECASTERS OF HARMONY OR DISSONANCE**

A harmonious partnership is one in which both partners are equally valued and supported by one another. A *powerful* partnership is one that is driven by two individuals not only dedicated to one another but fully committed to the dual pursuit of positively influencing others through their alliance. In the Reciprocal Triangle the third point exists as the community in which the theatre and church operate. When the two points of the theatre and the church are equally united in their mission to positively benefit the community around them the entire framework is strengthened. In order to accomplish this there must be a reference point from which each partner is able to understand and assess the degree to which they are each committed to the same agenda. This takes shape in both church and theatre as mission statements. I argue that in each of the cases studied, the theatre’s mission is not only in keeping with the mission of its housing church but furthers the church’s capability of fulfilling its specific mission. Further, because of this overlap, the theatre should not be subjugated in the relationship but instead revered as a valued “helper suitable” in the relationship (*New International Bible*, Gen. 2.18).
As advertised on its website, Oak Hills Church’s mission is “to invite people to experience the reality of life in the Kingdom of God.” While this statement leaves much to interpretation as to what that reality might look like, the claim that follows, found in the church’s marketing literature, is much less prone to subjectivity in definition:

We have no desire to be the biggest, the fanciest or the most attractive. We're not really into all the bells and whistles of church life. But we are borderline fanatical about introducing people to a life of abundance in Christ and when you get right down to it, *this is the desperate cry of our culture.* (emphasis added)

The church makes no apologies in its claim that there is a hunger within both the immediate congregation and larger community, whether acknowledged or not, for *more,* for life abundant and meaningful. A sentiment echoed throughout the Emerging Church movement is that in the secularization of contemporary culture there is a resultant “spiritual vacuum and deep desire for integration [of the sacred and the secular]” (Gibbs and Bolger 65). In the Reciprocal Triangle, both the theatre and the church exist to address this cultural phenomenon within their community. Imprint advertises to website visitors that the theatre exists to fulfill its mission of providing art that is “thought provoking, soul-stirring and transcendent.” Given these phrases it is surmised that Imprint’s primary objective is to use theatre as a tool to stir the consciousness of its patrons towards matters of a spiritual nature; this can be interpreted to mean towards an increased personal awareness of this “desperate cry of the culture,” to which Oak Hills speaks.
Spirituality is a facet of living that can easily remain neglected and underdeveloped in the midst of suburban affluence and activity. Imprint was established to use theatre art to counter the distractions and busyness of contemporary existence and to turn people’s minds towards questioning universal truths regarding human existence. Oak Hills was established to support those seeking or already tuned in to their own questions in this regard. While the two missions are not strictly synonymous they are complementary; they are each equally valuable and necessary to the strengthening of the cultural triangle.

Archer supports this understanding of Imprint whilst also being certain to clarify that she has no any interest in producing didactic works or providing canned answers to life’s bigger questions. Getting people thinking, getting people tuned in to their own questions is far more important to her than proselytizing because she feels that “the other way [didactic theatre] is manipulative” (Archer, Personal Interview; Gibbs and Bolger 126-127). In avoiding material that is evangelistically contrived, Imprint is not compromising its ideals. On the contrary, the theatre is not deigning to treat the community as target but rather as equal and trusting that “art invites people into a godly encounter” of its own accord (Gibbs and Bolger 177). While Oak Hills exists to support both the individual and the larger community in their search for specific understanding of the Christian faith, and Imprint serves as a stepping stone towards the exploration of broader questions in the spiritual realm, the two objectives are not in opposition to one another. On the contrary, these foci have the ability to work in tandem with one another as it relates to an individual who would attend a theatre performance. The exposure to
the church one receives while attending a production may begin to remove any preconceived mystique and create a sense of comfort with the church that would not exist during a more traditional visit to the facility. As the theatre company has the potential to serve as a conduit to the church for those who may have questions of a spiritual nature, the missions of the two establishments are complementary of one another and the relationship is thus beneficial to the church in this regard.

Additionally, one of the primary challenges that a fledgling theatre faces from the outset is the cultivation of an audience. While, as noted in the previous chapter, there can often be inherent conflict in navigating the continuum of opinions surrounding what type of material should or should not be produced within the walls of a church, the theatre company that finds its start in a church also finds the beginnings of its audience there. When tempered with a healthy respect for the differing moral compasses represented, the education of and dialog with the congregation as to the power, value and purpose of theatre can go a long way towards cultivating a supportive and enthusiastic audience. The necessity of the church’s role in presenting the theatre’s mission as supportive of and necessary to its own cannot be underestimated. When handled well, the church’s support hugely benefits the theatre in its quest to grow an audience.

Wisdom in adopting a more fully realized New Feminist approach to navigating the theatre/church link in the cultural triangle is modeled in the relationship between CSUMC and the Crystal Springs Players. In their web presence, CSUMC succinctly states that its purpose is “to be a caring church family that nurtures creative spiritual growth within ourselves and the community.” What is striking in this statement is that
the operative word, as it would relate to a church’s understanding and support of a theatre, is “creative.” The less subtle nuance of the statement is where this word is placed within the sentence.  

In the phrase “creatively nurtures spiritual growth” the word configuration speaks to the means while the phrase “nurtures creative spiritual growth” speaks to the ends. With a church dedicated to “creative spiritual growth,” there is an emphasis on how creativity, experienced by being a participant in versus a consumer of the arts, can enhance the spiritual growth of the individual. This is an important distinction to this particular theatre company/church relationship. The importance is further reflected in the mission statement of the Crystal Springs Players, that states that the company exists “to provide our community with the opportunity to discover and develop gifts and talents through drama. It is our purpose to encourage people to take risks and build confidence in Life” (Crystal Springs Players Briefing Book, 1). The emphasis in this statement puts less focus on the finished product of a production, and any potential spiritual effects upon a theoretical audience, in favor of a much greater concern with the individual performers and technicians and the resultant growth in their own lives as a result of participation in production.

When navigated successfully, this emphasis on the technicians and artisans of the theatre presents a microcosmic example within CSUMC of the experiential fulfillment of its stated mission. In the process of bringing a production to life, there is ripe opportunity for spiritual growth, often a by-product of well-met adversity. “People have been helped

---

28 The mission, if stated as “creatively nurtures spiritual growth” versus “nurtures creative spiritual growth,” the mission would have much more in common with the relationship that both Imprint and Stillspeaking share with their partner churches.
personally,” states Crystal Springs Advisory Board President Steve Schlichter, “There’s one lady that has [had] a lot of trouble in her life. [The Artistic Director] has worked with her and I have worked with her and I think we’ve done some good.” This careful and intentional nurturance and attending to the individual whilst in the process of producing a play is equally a manifestation of the missions of both the theatre and the church and an example of the Reciprocal Triangle aptly applied. The missions are in tandem with one another, the theatre is supporting not only its own purposes but those of its partner church. The community, as represented by the lady whose needs were acknowledged and addressed, was both giving to the theatre through her participation and receiving from the theatre/church staff. As such, in a redeemed model of relationship between the three parties, the theatre should expect nothing less than the church’s full support of its mission.

Lest it be thought that there is a lack of similarity in trajectory of purpose between the Crystal Springs Players/CSUMC relationship and that of Oak Hills/Imprint, in keeping with my earlier assertion that there is a wider movement afoot, I point out that Crystal Springs also promotes the fact that it seeks to “positively affect our audience with quality productions that are: thought-provoking, entertaining and inspiring,” on their website (emphasis added). The goal of being “thought-provoking” is a value expressed by all three theatres. Thought-provoking is key terminology because it communicates a belief that in the cultural climate there is a general lack of thought about matters of spiritual consequence taking place. In Christian theology, Christ is an attractive figure to the people that followed him because He loved them, met their needs and He “taught
them in interesting and practical ways” (Warren 208). Each of these tenets of Christian spirituality are met in the Reciprocal Triangle. CSUMC’s website elaboration of their mission statement further clarifies that:

The primary purpose of the Church is to reflect God's presence in the world. But in our modern time, God's presence often goes unnoticed and unappreciated. We at Crystal Springs want to foster God's presence in our own lives, and then share that presence with others.

This notion of an “unnoticed and unappreciated” presence of God harkens back to the point that Oak Hills makes regarding the “desperate cry of our culture.” The churches both make strong arguments that ours is a culture that currently finds itself spiritually impoverished. This sentiment was shared by the late Mother Teresa in a 1975 interview, republished in 2009:

The spiritual poverty of the Western World is much greater than the physical poverty of our people [of India]. You, in the West, have millions of people who suffer such terrible loneliness and emptiness. They feel unloved and unwanted. These people are not hungry in the physical sense, but they are in another way. They know they need something more than money, yet they don’t know what it is. What they are missing, really, is a living relationship with God. (Wooding)

In her assertion that the West is filled with lonely, empty, God-deprived people, Mother Teresa pinpoints a critical byproduct of postmodernism. While we experience more freedoms, more self-identification, and more access to knowledge than ever before, we
are also more scheduled, more electronically plugged in and more heavily medicated than ever before.\textsuperscript{29} The pervasive technology, the heightened pace with which we move and the triple-tasking nature of contemporary life often serves to isolate us from one another, to foster loneliness and to keep us disconnected from experiencing dynamic living relationship (Brown 1090). The American population is spiritually starving.

The hunger for spirituality that Mother Teresa addresses is not an indictment against postmodernism but merely a recognition that contemporary culture leaves little space for contemplative practices. Spirituality is a casualty of contemporary excess.

Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, both Professors at Fuller Seminary state:

\textit{Spirituality} is something of a buzzword throughout the Western world. In part, it represents a reaction to the soul-starved secularization that has permeated culture. It represents a longing to experience both the transcendent and the immanent in all realms and to give a sense of intrinsic worth and cosmic significance to the individual. It also serves to integrate body and soul, the internal and the external world. In a society characterized by fast-paced living, increasing uncertainty, growing demands in the workplace, and family pressures, spirituality [should be] valued as providing coping mechanisms. (218)

Any genuine concern for the community in this regard will manifest itself in efforts at addressing the ailments of feeding the individual and collective soul. Theatre

\textsuperscript{29} According to the August 2009 issue of Archives of General Psychiatry, the percentage of Americans being treated with antidepressant prescriptions has increased from five percent in 1996 to over ten percent in 2005.
productions and church services, unlike movies, computers, iGadgets and the like, are filled with living, breathing people intent upon best serving the spiritual needs of their community. This sense of awareness, this attentiveness that both Imprint/Oak Hills and Crystal Springs Players/CSUMC share regarding the abyss between postmodern, busy and affluent living and authentic spiritual well-being, drives each of their missions in serving the community. In this sense, they ring synonymous with one another, regardless of the specific target demographic of their acts, be it for player or for audience member. Within the Reciprocal Triangle, each organization serves to awaken members of the community to the spiritual questions and hunger within them and, when merited, provides paths to sustenance for that hunger. The fact that the theatre and the church approach this objective from different perspectives only serves to further the mission of each when they operate collaboratively. This speaks to the Egalitarianism/Complementarianism compromise represented in New Feminism.

Stillspeaking and UCCSM exemplify a healthy application of the Reciprocal Triangle under the tenets of New Feminism as it relates to mission complementarianism. They each address the priority of serving the community in equal fashion. The mission statement internet-promoted by United Church of Christ San Marino (UCCSM) calls its members to action:

In response to God's all-encompassing presence and unconditional love, we at San Marino Congregational Church a worship-centered community, are spreading the Good News of God's Love to all, working to heal human divisions, and striving for justice and peace.
The high value placed upon justice in this mission and reconciliation oriented nature of the content reflects the decades-long held values of the United Church of Christ (UCC) as an organization.

The Stillspeaking Theatre, housed within UCCSM, goes so far as to borrow some of the phraseology from the stated mission of the church for the sentiments expressed within its own mission statement. Stillspeaking’s “About Us” page on their internet site proclaims that the theatre exists:

To provide a quality live theatrical experience that challenges, informs entertains inspires and stimulates our audience. Our productions create a vibrant understanding of the human condition and explore ways in which God still speaks to contemporary society. With thought-provoking, edgy, yet accessible productions, we strive to bridge gaps and heal human divisions. (emphasis added)

This overlap in the two mission statements shows a strong connection between the objectives of the two organizations that cannot be underestimated. The more the theatre is recognized as a manifestation of the church’s mission in process, the more vested in the theatre’s success the church becomes. In addition, this statement also uses the term “thought-provoking,” as previously noted as a commonality among each of the theatres. This once again connotes a cross-sectarian movement on the part or the theatres partnered with churches to stir the community towards a common end.

If the theatre were to simply declare the same or a similar mission as its housing church, that decision would surely not be enough on its own to garner the backing of the
congregational body of the church. However, the more closely the two partners commit to one another and market their mutual commitment to the church body, the better the chance of viability for the theatre. The support of the staff and congregation in the form of volunteerism, as noted previously, proves critical in this regard. Complementary mission statements, such that even some the verbiage of each overlaps, can only serve to help in this effort.

Similar to the premises upon which both Imprint/Oak Hills and Crystal Springs Players/CSUMC launched, Stillspeaking launched out of desire to positively impact its community. The theatre expounds upon its mission statement in their web presence by providing a brief explanation of the beliefs under which the theatre found genesis:

We created The Stillspeaking Theatre because we believe God is Stillspeaking through the works of poets and playwrights. They educate, stimulate, inspire, and empower us to embrace pertinent issues in the world today. They encourage us to seek greater understanding of the human condition so that we may become more conscientious and compassionate people. (emphasis added)

Among the pertinent issues in the world today that the theatre presents in this statement, as it relates to the immediate needs of parishioners/patrons, are postmodern isolation and spiritual poverty, as stated earlier. The intentionality with which the theatre strives for and promotes contemporary relevancy to its community is equitable with that of any politically minded theatre. A defining delineation is made in the emphasis of the spiritual

---

30 Script analysis, later in this chapter, presents consistent themes in this regard.
presence of God in the work. Additionally, much like that of Imprint and Crystal Springs, in the word “become” a significant amount of attention is given to the concept of spiritual growth within the community in response to experiencing theatre from either side of the curtain.

Finally, and more so than either of the two other companies and their respective churches, Stillspeaking makes known its identification with and alliance to the mission of UCCSM. Their internet site declares clearly:

The Stillspeaking Theatre was formed to support and enhance the mission of the San Marino Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, to spread the Good News of God’s love, heal human divisions, and seek peace with justice.

Given the stated specificity of supporting the church’s mission, there is no mistaking that the mission that the theatre sets forth is in complete harmony with the mission identified by its partner church. The two partners are equal in this regard as they seek to benefit their surrounding community.

When analyzing the declarations of the mission statements of these theatres juxtaposed against those of their home churches, it is apparent that they each in their own fashion strive toward roughly the same end: transcendence, thought-provocation, enlightenment, the promotion of healing, encouragement, and the building up of community and the individual. If the theatre and church equitably support one another in fulfilling their stated missions, then the synergistic aspect of their New Feministic approach furthers the goals and aspirations of each organization. This is not only
mutually beneficial, but it also serves to strengthen the community and, by proxy, the Reciprocal Triangle.

**MANIFESTING THE MISSION: MATERIAL SELECTION AND COMMUNITY RESPONSE**

Each of theatres studied manifests and furthers the mission of its partner church through the production process. Each approaches material selection with a remarkably similar style. Given the degree to which the values reflected within each of their mission statements are analogous, this is not so surprising. In this section I argue that through production the theatre excellently fulfills the mission of the church, thus further proving the necessity of abandoning the former patriarchal model of marriage and fully adopting a New Feministic approach. I also offer analytical proof of the cultural benefit experienced in the understanding and implementation of this theory within the relationship. It is my contention that through their partnership the theatre and church play a vital role in enlightening members of the community to their own spiritually oriented questions.

Cross analysis of material selection yields the identification of corollary values among the theatres. Commonalities between theatres in the material selection process tend to fall within the following broad categories: 1) each is given to choosing material that does not necessarily lend itself to being compartmentalized merely to the realm of entertainment, 2) each strives to produce material that *provokes thought* and has universal themes, and 3) each makes great effort to produce material that best supports their stated mission and, by proxy, the mission of their church. The distinctions between each of the theatres as it relates to their mission statements (i.e. – Imprint’s primary concern with
matters transcendent of any given set of social divisions, Crystal Springs’ focus upon the individuals staging the production versus upon the production itself as catalyst to audience change; and Stillspeaking’s concern with drawing attention to righting social wrongs) are apparent within individual pieces selected and produced.

Since its launch in late 2005, Imprint has staged six productions. These are, in order of production, *Unpublished Letters* by Jonathan C. Levine (2005), *The Boys Next Door* by Tom Griffin (2006), *The Last Time I Saw Timmy Boggs* by Catherine Butterfield (2006), *Marvin’s Room* by Scott McPherson (2007), *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* by Alfred Uhry (2008) and *Lawrence and Holloman* by Morris Panych (2008). Remaining true to their mission of producing theatre that is thought-provoking, soul-stirring and transcendent, each of these plays explores a thematic through-line of human isolation.\(^{31}\) This is fitting for a theatre that seeks to provoke thought as to existential issues and is in keeping with addressing the postmodern loneliness identified earlier. In each of Imprint’s production choices, spiritual enlightenment and growth is initiated through human connection. Through varying situations, these topics are found in each of Imprint’s selections. Of the six productions that Imprint has run, five are very similar in that they are largely based in realism and end on hopeful and redemptive notes as it relates to enlightenment and spiritual growth.\(^{32}\) In making this choice, Archer adheres to the Reciprocal Triangle and prioritizes the community’s need for spiritually relevant theatre.

---

\(^{31}\) Transcendence indicates a preference for material that addresses issues beyond cultural delineations, typically pertaining to living a well examined life.

\(^{32}\) *The Boys Next Door* contains scenes of magic realism in which various mentally challenged characters pause to address the audience. They do so with intellectual coherence in order to communicate what their given limitations otherwise prohibit.
The remaining piece, *Lawrence and Holloman*, is the sole production that veers from this style, although it still remains true to Imprint’s mission. An analysis of this play in particular renders proof that the theatre well complements the mission of Oak Hills.

*Lawrence and Holloman* is a two character absurdist black comedy. It features an affable and aloof, albeit often offensive, character, Lawrence, and an apparent milquetoast, Holloman. The two characters meet in an elevator and pursuant to this, Holloman begins to secretly and systematically destroy everything good in Lawrence’s life. Holloman is a nihilistic who, by play’s end, has been challenged by Lawrence’s unflappable optimism. He begins to questions his own perspective when he is accidently shot by Lawrence.

A far cry from any of the other pieces that Imprint produces with regard to tone and style, the play is minimalist in nature and presents fundamentally existentialist questions surrounding life, its purpose or lack thereof and the degree to which any of us experience free will. The material keeps to the thought-provoking and transcendent aspects of Imprint’s mission. A scene that best captures the bent of Imprint’s mission-oriented tendencies in material selection takes place after Lawrence, through Holloman’s doing, sequentially loses his fiancé, suffers leg amputation and experiences the loss of his eyesight. In the following dream sequence Lawrence believes he has regained all that has been taken from him:

HOLLOMAN. It’s a miracle.

LAWRENCE. A miracle? Are you kidding me? This is – No, you’re right. It is. It’s a miracle. Actually, it’s prodigious is what it is.
Prodigious.

HOLLOMAN. I’m just amazed she took you back. Everything. It’s… it’s…

LAWRENCE. Why does good in the world always take you by surprise, Holloman? (Panych 96)

Holloman’s word choice in “miracle,” played sarcastically in Imprint’s staging, followed by non-commitance to the word on the part of Lawrence, non-didactically introduces the potential of a higher power at work in the lives of the characters. The concept of miracles, whether believed in by an audience or not, are in keeping with biblical accounts of history and thus also in keeping with the doctrine of the Church. Lawrence’s query regarding the goodness in the world reflects belief in a benevolent higher power, regardless of present circumstance testifying otherwise. Both of these examples introduce issues of transcendence. The scene continues:

HOLLOMAN. How can you be so lucky? And the eye surgery.

LAWRENCE. Lucky? This is you call this-? This is providence. Do you know what that means, Holloman?

HOLLOMAN. I’m beginning to.

LAWRENCE. God is looking out for me, is what it means.

HOLLOMAN. I thought you didn’t believe in God.

LAWRENCE. That doesn’t mean He isn’t out there, somewhere.

HOLLOMAN. What makes you so special, I wonder?

LAWRENCE. Huh?
HOLLOMAN. I mean, why should God, if He’s out there, somewhere, care about you any more than, say, a gazillion other gangrenous, blind, self-absorbed, smelly people?

LAWRENCE: You should never doubt your own importance, Holloman, even for a second. (Panych 97-98)

Lawrence’s assurance that God is “looking out” for him and his admonition that one should never doubt his own importance delivers on Imprint’s mission to provide fodder to stir the souls of its audience. Lawrence’s claim that his lack of belief in God does not dictate God’s absence comically introduces an argument against atheism. This non-didactically presents opportunity for post-production existential discourse and introspection amongst audience members. Jim Carnes, a reviewer for the Sacramento Bee writes that “Canadian actor, director and playwright Morris Panych wrote this dark, existential comedy, which asks a lot of questions and offers only one answer – an answer that itself raises even more questions” (D2, emphasis added). To this end, Imprint successfully fulfills its mission tenets of providing the community with transcendent and thought-provoking theatre.

Despite the fact that Lawrence wakes from this sequence to find that his circumstances remain dismal, he remains true to his assurance that there is meaning and purpose in life and that all will ultimately be well, regardless. This is key to Imprint’s mission of provoking its audience toward seeking understanding of their own approaches to life’s simple troubles and ultimate questions. Even to the darkly humorous end of the play, when Lawrence unwittingly shoots Holloman and seals his own fate of drowning
alone in a bathtub, the character remains optimistic and resolute in his conviction of the purpose and goodness of life as he states:

Life – I’ve come to realize, has a brilliant kind of logic. A brilliant and complex kind of logic. We may not understand the logic of it at times but that doesn’t mean it doesn’t – doesn’t something doesn’t – what’s the– what’s the – word I’m looking for?

(Panych 127)

Lawrence’s postulation that life is brilliant and complex is a statement with which an audience can either argue or agree. Only an impassive and apathetic audience does not recognize the existential quandary presented. Upon leaving the performance, I heard several members of the audience debating whether they like the show or not. Most claimed that they do not yet know and that they would have to think about it. Imprint accomplishes its mission of provoking thought in this particular scenario.

In all of Imprint’s plays, individuals struggle particularly with finding meaning in the challenge of everyday living. These themes of troubled introspection are complementary with the hope of transformation offered by the Christian faith. The themes are specifically reflective of Oak Hills’ assertion that there is a desperate cry within contemporary culture for a life of abundance. This through-line emerges again and again in each of Archer’s material selections. While none of the pieces can be individually labeled as “Christian” in its message or specific content, the above example serves as proof of the overlap between Imprint’s product and Oak Hills’ mission.
Crystal Springs Players’ example also serves as further evidence of the aptitude with which the theatre serves as equal in partnership with the church. Similar to the other theatres, play selection is typically based upon isolating material that moves the community towards positive growth. With sixteen years of tenure under their belt, the Crystal Springs Players’ boasts a lengthy production history. Notable productions include, but are not limited to, *You Can't Take It With You* by Moss Hart (2000), *I Remember Mama* by John Van Druten (2001), *The Shadow Box* by Michal Cristofer (2001), *A Piece of My Heart* by Shirley Lauro (2003), *The Boys Next Door* by Tom Griffin (2004), *California Suite* by Neil Simon (2008), *The Laramie Project* and *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later* by Moisés Kaufman and members of the Tectonic Theatre Project (2009) and *The Foreigner* by Larry Shue (2010). This production history showcases themes of family, death, homophobia, war and social isolation. Collectively these plays represent issues relevant to contemporary culture and in choosing them for production, Crystal Springs Players prioritize the needs of the community. By adhering to this value in play selection, Crystal Springs Players reinforces the strength of the Triangle model.

Additionally, the theatre remains true to its mission of providing the community with “the opportunity to discover and develop gifts and talents through drama” (Crystal Springs Players Briefing Book, 1). In keeping with this agenda, “[Crystal Springs Players has] tried to use many people…that are untrained [in theatre arts. The key Players] spend a lot of time with the [new] individuals, training people. So what it turns into is a very supportive group” (Schlicter 3). Additionally, given this emphasis placed
upon relationship between the individuals within production, the purpose of UMCSM “to be a caring church family that nurtures creative spiritual growth within [themselves] and [their] community” is also met (Our Purpose). Artistic Director Joy Eaton shares that the “whole experience to me [is] very spiritual really. You know, the whole connection and the joy of helping people find gifts that maybe they thought about but never tried. Giving them an avenue to do that, it’s just a real joy” (Eaton 1). In this scenario, the theatre and church work in complementary fashion to equally value and serve their community.

While some of Crystal Springs’ productions lend themselves more toward entertaining versus sparking spiritually transformative conversations among audience members, all still meet the outlines of the theatre’s mission. The theatre uses any of its chosen scripts as a basis to form dynamic opportunities for the growth of cast and crew. This takes form through: 1) the interpersonal experience of working closely with intentionality towards meaningful moments of interaction, and 2) the intrapersonal challenges faced by those new to theatrical experience.

While the growth and care of the individuals that participate in their productions is a preeminent consideration, as per the church’s mission, it is never to the neglect of the Crystal Springs audience. Usually disposed towards producing comedies, the theatre does note:

We try to get a play that says something to people or makes people think and that’s part of our mission and sometimes [. . . we get] a two-for-one. [As in the case of The Foreigner,] it’s a comedy but it’s got a message.
That’s what we’re always looking for, but that’s a hard thing to find [...]

we do want to minister to the community. (Schlichter)

This concept of ministering to the community through the medium of theatre is reflective of the New Feminism aforementioned tenet of nurture. When navigating the Reciprocal Triangle model under this theory, the theatre is able to compatibly nurture the community through art with its partner church nurturing through teaching and worship.

The dual desire to both capture and positively provoke an audience and to cultivate growth within the ranks of cast and crew, coupled with the difficulty of finding material best tailored to this purpose, is a complexity that Crystal Springs Players must continually face. However, there exist many instances that speak to the theatre’s capability of successfully meeting both objectives. In crafting theatre that is thought-provoking, Crystal Springs shares commonalities with both Imprint and Stillspeaking.

While neither theatre should be fully compartmentalized in the following regards, Imprint greatly concerns itself with bringing up questions of the inter-connected nature of human existence and its impact upon spiritual growth, and Stillspeaking often speaks to the healing of social injustices. While there is crossover in thematic emphasis between these two theatres, Crystal Springs, largely due to their longer production history, has staged several plays that address both emphases.

In keeping with the similar themes of Stillspeaking Theatre, Crystal Springs runs productions that draw attention to political and ultimately human issues of injustice.

These include the production of *A Piece of My Heart*, the 1988 play that brings to the fore the long neglected ways in which women served and suffered in the Vietnam war effort.
In common with Imprint, Crystal Springs Players also staged their own version of a production of *The Boys Next Door*, a play that depicts the joys and trials of four young men of limited mental capability. The play strives to both touch the audience and to confront it with the preconceptions carried towards others that are deemed largely different from us.

There is however a play in Crystal Springs’ production history that, given its theme of the brevity and importance of life, shares in common Imprint’s penchant towards matters transcendent and Stillspeaking’s mission of exploring the nature of the human condition. *The Shadow Box* is a Pulitzer Prize winning drama that deals with three terminally ill cancer patients, Joe, Felicity and Brian. In the beginning we are introduced to these characters at their individual cottages upon the grounds of a hospital. Each is subsequently visited by varied family members and spoken to by an off-stage Interviewer. Joe, a blue collar worker is visited by his wife and son; Felicity by her lesser favored daughter; and Brian by his ex-wife, Beverly, and his gay lover, Mark. Each character, to the degree they are able, processes their relationships and their mortality throughout the play.

The degree to which the text of this play is confrontational about putting matters of life and death before the audience is not subtle. The following scene takes place near the conclusion of the play. Each of the characters is in the process of coming to grips with their own mortality or that of their loved one:

BRIAN. You don’t expect it to happen to you.

JOE. But it happens anyway, doesn’t it? It doesn’t matter what you do,
you can’t stop it [...]

JOE. You want to say no.

MAGGIE. …no…

MARK. …no…

BRIAN. Your whole life goes by – it feels like it was only a minute.

BEVERLY. You try to remember what it was that you believed in [...]

JOE. You want to shout, ‘Not me!’

BRIAN. Not me!

MAGGIE. Not me! [...]

BRIAN. Someone should have said, this living…

MARK. …this life…

BEVERLY. …this lifetime…

BRIAN. It doesn’t last forever.

MAGGIE. A few days, a few minutes…that’s all.

BRIAN. It has an end. (Cristofer 84-85)

The repeated “you” in this excerpt blatantly invites the audience to identify themselves with one or more of the characters as each reacts with anger and disbelief. In presenting these responses to living and dying, the playwright directly confronts any members of the community that have not yet contemplated their own mortality. When skillfully rendered, productions based upon scripts of this content precede conversations that involve topics beyond kids’ soccer schedules, recent iPhone updates and impending home remodeling projects. A review of the 2009 run of this particular play in Austin contends that, “you
might conclude that [The Shadow Box] is not about death but rather life and the difficult choices we all must make, living and soon-to-be-dying, when forced to accept the idea that all our lives must eventually end” (Pineo). Scripts of this nature spark a response that each of the theatres and their partner churches argues is vital to fanning the flame of spiritual growth.

Stillspeaking is additionally successful in partnering with the church and serving the community when it comes to production. A final piece of evidence that speaks to the theatres’ manifest success in complementing their churches’ missions, and proof of the wisdom of fully adopting the New Feminist model, derives from the example of Stillspeaking. The youngest of the three theatres, Stillspeaking boasts the run of six full-length productions since starting in the spring of 2008. These include, in chronological production order, The Runner Stumbles by Milan Stitt (2008), Facing East by Carol Lynn Pearson (2008), The Mystery Plays by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa (2008), And the Winner Is... by Mitch Albom (2009), and Secrets of a Soccer Mom by Kathleen Clark (2009). Collectively these plays explore the diverse themes of God, homosexuality, suicide, murder, repentance, social isolation, death, and the afterlife – each and all very much in keeping with the theatre’s mission of producing edgy and thought-provoking material. The relevance of these types of productions to the benefit of the spiritual development of the community should not be undervalued.

Most illustrative of Stillspeaking and UCCSM’s combined mission of addressing and healing human divisions is the theatre’s production of the one act play, Facing East. This is a play that explores the suicide of a young Mormon man rejected by his family...
after revealing his homosexuality. The characters consist of Alex and Ruth, parents of the now deceased Andrew, and Marcus, Andrew’s lover. Shenk chose this script due to its central message and its strong parallels to his own journey:

It was an incredibly personal show for me as it dealt with the ramifications of a young Mormon man's suicide. It is revealed through the play that he was gay and was not accepted by his parents due to their religion. I come from a strict Mennonite background and dealt with many of the same issues as I came to terms with my own homosexuality. I had seen a production of *Facing East* in San Francisco and was so taken with the show and its themes that I knew it was a piece we had to do at our theatre.

The Board was excited about it as well as it affirmed our Open and Affirming stance as a church.\(^\text{33}\) I [let each of the actors] know how important this play was to me and how important I thought it was to convey its message of love and acceptance to people who may feel there is no possibility to be both gay and Christian. ("Re: Hello")

In choosing to stage a sensitive play dealing with themes of suicide in response to homosexually-targeted out-casting on the part of the religious establishment,

Stillspeaking tackles head-on the mission of the church to promote justice and heal societal divisions.

\(^{33}\) ONA is the acronym for Open and Affirming, a UCC movement to put into place a statement of welcome to people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions ("ONA").
The entire play takes place at Andrew’s gravesite. The following scene takes place near the end of the play and follows the realization that Ruth’s manipulate nature and her refusal to accept her son as he was has had profound implications in his death:

RUTH. [ . . . ] I gave up everything for my family. And God knows we did every possible thing. He [God] is the only one who can help Andrew repair his broken [Mormon] temple covenants.

ALEX. Covenants? Do you know what covenants you and I have broken, Ruth? Covenants we made every Sunday as we sat on that bench and took the sacrament –

RUTH. No!

ALEX. – to bear one another’s burdens – to comfort –

RUTH. We did that!

ALEX. – those that stand in need of comfort. Always to remember him –

RUTH. We did that! [ . . . ]

ALEX. We stand guilty, Ruth. I was the priest and you were the Levite, and we came upon the Jewish man who had been beaten and left by the side of the road. Our son.34

RUTH. No!

ALEX. We were the thieves that stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

34 This refers to the Biblical New Testament story of the Good Samaritan that illustrates mercy as virtue (NIV, Luke 10.29-37). This line can also be interpreted as a reference to Matthew Shepard, a young homosexual man tortured in and left roadside to die in 1998 (Matthew Shepard Foundation).
RUTH. I will not hear –

ALEX. The only binder of wounds I see standing here is this despicable, outcast, unclean, homosexual Samaritan – friend, who saw nothing but God in our son! We crossed the road and let him suffer. And the awful thing, the truly awful this is – we are better than that! (Pearson 51-52)

In this scene audience members must confront their own stance as it relates to the issue of homosexuality and religious taboos. Alex’s acknowledgment that he and Ruth are culpable in their son’s death and Ruth’s subsequent denial presents a delineation in which a patron must choose sides. Alex, by likening himself and Ruth to the callous thieves in the Bible parable, as opposed to the Good Samaritan represented by Marcus, presents a conservative audience with an intellectual and moral dilemma. Personal beliefs about the immorality of homosexuality are juxtaposed against convictions of compassion. In this dichotomy, thinking is provoked, inclusive love is esteemed, and the seeds of healing division are planted. This production, in all facets, is a shining example of the theatre working in tandem with the church to artistically challenge the community towards growth. As a result of this piece, Shenk proclaims:

I truly felt God's hand at work as the play came off beautifully and spoke to so many people. It was through that play, in fact, that a number of gay and transgendered people found out about us and began attending our church and are still doing so today. (“Re: Hello”)

The example of a disenfranchised group of people hearing about Stillspeaking’s choice in production, visiting the church as a result and now considering that church home is the
healthiest representation possible of the cultural triangle model at work in benefitting community.

Stillspeaking, Crystal Springs Players and Imprint, through the equitable aspects of relationship that they share with their respective partner churches, all successfully offer these benefits to the community. Through mission alignment between theatre and church, and the application of an ideology of complementarianism, each is stronger and better equipped to meet their common aspirations of serving the community. By ensuring that material selection and production adheres to the objectives set forth in their complementary missions, they further their efficacy in this capacity. In deconstructing Patriarchy and applying New Feminist tenets of nurture, openness to others and creativity the theatre and its church present a powerfully impactful and reciprocally beneficial triune relationship among themselves and their community.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Since earliest recorded history, the art of theatre and the practice of religion have shared both a harmonious and volatile relationship with one another. This relationship has manifested in various forms throughout both Eastern and Western history. At no time in Western history has theatre art and religion been more closely linked than it was in the Mystery, Miracle and Morality plays of the Christian Church during the Middle Ages. This symbiotic connection between the arts and religion has undergone countless interpretations, glories and trials. It is to no lesser a degree in contemporary context that theatricality abounds in religion. It can be found anywhere from the liturgy and pomp of a traditional Catholic mass to the bump and pop of many contemporary Protestant worship services. Church and theatre have long been interwoven and connected with one another, for better or worse, and most often with the theatre sitting in deference to its partner the Church under a model of Patriarchy. Times are, however, changing.

In garnering a deeper understanding of the intricacies and nuances of this relationship within the context of contemporary American Christianity, it becomes increasingly apparent that a movement to reestablish relationship is afoot. It is, however, a different era. Contrary to the paradigm at work during the Middle Ages, such that the Church sought to employ theatre as a tool for bestowing enlightenment, the theatre is now the initiator in the relationship. Throughout the nation there is a growing movement toward a new interpretation of the kinship that has long existed between theatre and religion. This movement is taking shape in the coupling of emerging theatres with and
within neighborhood churches. In California, three such companies and their partner
churches have lent themselves perfectly to gaining a better understanding of the nature of
this latest attempt at reconciliation in the theatre/church relationship.

Imprint Theatre Company of Folsom, Crystal Springs Players of San Mateo, and
Stillspeaking Theatre of San Marino are partnering respectively with Oak Hills Church,
Crystal Springs United Methodist Church (CSUMC) and United Church of Christ San
Marino (UCCSM). These theatres and churches share in common many defining
parameters, chief among them their committed fidelity to understanding and preserving
the relationship between the Church and theatre arts, and, to no less a degree, well-
serving the spiritual needs of the community through the medium of theatre. Additional
similarities include the fact that each theatre predominantly produces material that is
secular in nature as opposed to the perceived lesser “Christian” material (often deemed
didactic, simplistic and lacking in artistic integrity by the artistic directors represented
herein); each hopes to stir its audience towards contemplation of higher truths through the
conventions of theatre production. More prosaic crossover lies in the fact that each
theatre and its church is located in an outlying area of one of three metropolitan
California hubs (Sacramento, San Francisco and Los Angeles, respectively) and caters to
a predominantly busy and often otherwise distracted suburban demographic.

These theatres, by and large, aspire to produce plays that push audiences towards
the contemplation of topics that rise above the push, grind and constancy of postmodern
busyness. In the currently emerging redefinition of this relationship there is again a sense
of redeeming theatre for a higher purpose. Those that run each of these theatres argue
that one of the preeminent forms in which this redemption takes place is in the intention, scrutiny and diligence with which material is chosen and produced for the community. Plays selected are most often chosen both for thought-provoking and soul-stirring content and for their latent power to effect spiritual change in an audience. To varying degrees this priority of preserving theatre as a revered catalyst to change in the human heart is manifest with each theatre. Given the fact that each theatre is so closely affiliated with a church and that the church as a whole is traditionally devoted to the area of heart transformation, it would seem that this new take on the relationship would be a perfect dovetailing of common aspirations.

The reality is that in the bond among the theatre, its housing church and their surrounding community, in its current state, there is both a realization of fruitfulness in the efforts and a pervasiveness of relational difficulties. Old hierarchical constructs of Patriarchy linger pervasively in the new alliance, hampering the autonomy, artistic license and agency of the theatre in its relationship with the community. The chief contentions that arise (and there can be several) are largely attributed to a lack of foresight on the part of both the church and the theatre to clearly define the nature of their liaison. All of the most pressing issues stem from a lack of personal clarity and skilled communication in ascertaining the needs, rights and responsibilities of each partner in the relationship. In preemptively determining and defining equitable constructs by which to navigate the relationship, many trying moments of conflict can be avoided.

The most important conversation to be had and about which to reach consensus prior to moving forward in the reestablishment of this relationship encompasses whether
the theatre is viewed as a ministry of the church or as a fully realized and complementary
partner invited as equal in relationship to the church. The latter of these two scenarios is
best should a priority be to allow the theatre company to grow, flourish and best meet the
goals set forth in its mission statement as it pertains to the community. It is, of course,
necessary in this circumstance that a strong degree of trust exist between representative
parties from both the church and the theatre, and that the mission of the theatre be very
much in keeping with the mission of the church. In maintaining complementary equality,
the theatre is less subject to what can sometimes be the fluctuating drives of the church,
or the dissonance of too many governing voices of varying opinions. A theatre that is
labeled as a ministry of its housing church and thereby governed by church leadership
versus its own theatre advisory board (with overlap from church leadership) will often
find itself stifled, hemmed in and forced to compromise on artistic ideals. Again, trust
and mutual respect are key elements that must be present, recognized and fostered.

Trust on the part of the church towards the theatre means that while there may be
language that confronts the values of church members in certain material selections, there
is a belief that the artist will use the language and the arc of her character to communicate
a truth that is more important than mere words. Trust on the part of the theatre means
that when she lays before her audience a story that may rend their hearts and tickle their
minds, she knows that the church will provide a soft, open and understanding place upon
which her charges may land with no demands placed upon them and great support offered
up to them.
Mutual respect covers a multitude of issues that can and will arise. The church and the theatre practice their disciplines side by side with one another. There is tremendous value in each. As such, both need access to resources – human, logistical and financial. Respect warrants an understanding of this mutual need and takes into account the cost of duplicate demands on resources. It means taking the extra time to confirm schedules, to aim to be as self-supporting within the relationship as possible and to value the needs of each partner equally. It means to defer to one another’s best interests as much as possible when conflict arises. It means to do so in an effort toward creating a peaceful and mutually beneficial relationship. If both church and theatre operate from this not-so-ironically biblical and simplistic stance of “do to others as you would have them do to you,” the propensity towards success in the relationship that they share with one another and those that they share with the community multiplies (*New International Bible*, Luke 6.31).

While the difficulties that often present themselves in this relationship are myriad and sometimes sizable, they are not insurmountable and therefore should not preclude the reformation of this mutually beneficial bond. On the contrary, with foresight, objectivity, frankness and a mindfulness of mutual goals, much unnecessary fracas can be avoided. And with a mind towards building a successful relationship, those issues that are not dealt with pursuant to moving forward with the relationship, rather than being divisive, can instead provide ripe opportunity for growth and the honing of the ideals and practices of both the theatre and her church. The benefits of a healthy relationship between church
and theatre – to the church, to the theatre and to the surrounding community – far outweigh the start-up and maintenance costs of reinventing the relationship.

The relationship is one that is mutually beneficial in multiple capacities, not merely in those that one would first assume. With a strong emphasis toward selecting production material best suited for sparking meaningful dialog in the realm of transcendent issues, there is great potential for cultivating cast and audience growth. The affirmation of this fact is chronicled in relational anecdotes and periodic audience, cast and crew (community) assimilation into the church family, as well as in critical response. Added to this particular positive aspect of the rekindled affiliation, there is also a lengthy laundry list of infrastructural and social benefits to both the church and the theatre, as well as the community of persons that make up and surround each.

An emerging theatre requires a small army to assist in its efforts to grow and stand tall in the community. The committed body of a thriving local church provides a rich pool from which to find volunteers needed to aid in such efforts. Not only does this reliance upon the body of the church benefit the theatre, but it often brings about a sense of blessing in the life of the volunteer as they discover (or rediscover) passions and talents through the art and craft of theatre. Many individuals, such as was the case in my circumstance, find their heart’s fulfillment in the opportunity for crafting meaningful story, such that a healthy relationship between the church and the theatre can provide. This renewed and/or newly discovered passion can often mean an increase in artistry for the church and its ministries as well. Theatrical contributions, crafted with the same integrity and diligence that the theatre applies to its own productions, are often resultantly
found in Sunday morning and Special services. In keeping, the churches’ increasingly obvious commitment to the arts through theatre communicates cultural relevance to the community. Further, the church’s growing comfort in supporting the use of material that pushes boundaries but connects to heart of an audience communicates a relevance to contemporary intellectual dialectics and cultural challenges.

When the theatre and church step out from under the inequitable constructs of Patriarchy and embrace a New Feministic approach to relationship, positive results follow. When the theatre is freed to produce works of importance that operate in tandem with the mission of her church, lives are changed. People who would not otherwise set foot in a church bridge the chasm as audience members and a doorway that was once closed is now slivered open. Congregations and church leaders are challenged to define what it is they believe about the arts and to grapple with the ways in which their narrow or broad views either close or open doors with the community. Artists are likewise challenged to define, seek and produce work of the highest artistic and spiritual value and to grow in their discovery of what it means to support the mission of their partner church. Traditionally migratory actors and crew members who have long been familiar with the replaceable nature of their existence find a haven for their craft in which not only their skills but their personhood is valued. There is tremendous opportunity within an egalitarian triune relationship, among theatre, church and community, for human growth and development.
APPENDIX A

An Overview of the Churches and Theatres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSING CHURCH</th>
<th>CITY</th>
<th>CHURCH SIZE</th>
<th>THEATRE</th>
<th>ARTISTIC DIRECTOR</th>
<th>EQUITY STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oak Hills Baptist (Oak Hills)</td>
<td>Folsom, CA</td>
<td>700 members</td>
<td>Imprint Theatre Company</td>
<td>Kelly Archer</td>
<td>Non-Equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Springs United Methodist (CSUMC)</td>
<td>San Mateo, CA</td>
<td>80 members</td>
<td>Crystal Springs Players</td>
<td>Joy Eaton</td>
<td>Non-Equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Church of Christ (UCCSM)</td>
<td>San Marino, CA</td>
<td>70 members</td>
<td>StillSpeaking Theatre</td>
<td>Donald Shenk</td>
<td>Equity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX B

Church/Theatre Mission Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSING CHURCH/THEATRE</th>
<th>CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT</th>
<th>THEATRE MISSION STATEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oak Hills Church</td>
<td>Oak Hills Church exists to invite people to experience the reality of life in the Kingdom of God.</td>
<td>To serve the communities of Sacramento through the medium of theater, by providing art that is thought-provoking, soul-stirring and transcendent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imprint Theatre Company (Folsom, CA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Springs United Methodist</td>
<td>To be a caring church family that nurtures creative spiritual growth within ourselves and the community.</td>
<td>To provide our community with the opportunity to discover and develop gifts and talents through drama.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Springs Players (San Mateo, CA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Church of Christ StillSpeaking Theatre (San Marino, CA)</td>
<td>In response to God's all-encompassing presence and unconditional love, we at San Marino Congregational Church a worship-centered community, are spreading the Good News of God's Love to all, working to heal human divisions, and striving for justice and peace.</td>
<td>To provide a quality live theatrical experience that challenges, informs entertains inspires and stimulates our audience. Our productions create a vibrant understanding of the human condition and explore ways in which God still speaks to contemporary society. With thought-provoking, edgy, yet accessible productions, we strive to bridge gaps and heal human divisions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WORKS CITED


Archer, Kelly. Personal Interview. 19 Feb. 2010


Dilenschneider, Anne. Pastor’s Note. N.d. TS. Crystal Springs Players, United Methodist Church, San Mateo, CA. Print.


---“Jewish Southerners.” Rev. of The Last Night of Ballyhoo, by Alfred Uhry.


Slide Program.


