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ENGAGING SACRED SPACE AND EXPERIENCING GOD IN THE MOUNTAINS: A STUDY OF THE NON- TRADITIONAL WORSHIP ENVIRONMENT OF MOUNTAIN CATHEDRALS, AN ECUMENICAL MEETUP GROUP BASED IN ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

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by

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**B.A., PHILOSOPHY AND GEOGRAPHY, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO,
2014**

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the non-traditional Christian worship site of Mountain Cathedrals in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I argue that affectual and emotional responses are elicited from the congregants of Mountain Cathedrals through the process of sacralization. It is shown that Christian worship in a non-traditional outdoor setting affects the ways in which the congregants engage with, participate in, and create sacred space. I survey current literatures of sacred space, the contemporary Christian church, and non-traditional worship spaces. Using the literature as a backdrop, I utilize Mountain Cathedrals as a case study for understanding the ways in which sacred space is created in a non-traditional Christian worship environment. Through this research, the voice of geography is brought into conversations of sacred space. The study is centered upon the voices of the congregants and their worship experiences with Mountain Cathedrals. This in contrast to many studies that had focused on the clergy, architecture, or history of the Christian church. I utilized observation, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews to

collect data and found that the sacred space of Mountain Cathedrals is sacralized via practice, shared experience, sensuous experience, and sacred fusion.

Keywords: affect, emotion, religious geography, sacred space, Christianity

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1. Introduction:

When entering the contemporary American church, you, as the entrant, are confronted with a barrage of sensations. Whether it be a Presbyterian church, a Roman Catholic church, a Greek Orthodox church, or an evangelical “megachurch”, one’s senses are engulfed: from music [loud or soft, rock or traditional], to a maze of intricately organized seating [chairs, pews, stadium seats], bright lighting [spotlight, fluorescents, candles], active texts and their mediums [screens, brochures, bulletins, lyrics], church branding and logos, smells [of incense and moisture from fog machines], or even extraneous features that have come to be associated with the church, such as the courtyards, sanctuaries, baptismals, to the modern bookstores, restaurants, coffee shops, play areas, skate parks, rock walls, fountains, and the like. These symbols, features, and mediums are all efforts to make the church and Christian spirituality relevant, common, comfortable, and exciting.

Christian churches are complex and offer rich insight into the way’s society is structured, into how personal values and worldviews are manifested on a daily basis, as well as connect the material world to the transcendent. Christian church buildings have a deep history and have been studied for over a millennium. However, buildings are not the only means by which the material world and transcendent are bridged. What happens when you take the building away? What happens when the service is stripped to the bare necessities of scripture, prayer, and communion? What happens when the congregation meets at a new location every gathering? What happens when a congregant engages with God and makes a connection to a worship community that utilizes a non-human built environment? More recently, scholars have begun to study ways in which spaces are

sacralized or made sacred via their use; monuments, grave sites, and pilgrimages are spaces that have been studied as sacralized locations.

In contemporary academia, the Christian church is an often-overlooked aspect of culture and society. Christian churches of all denominations are active influencers of society and must be studied as such. Within the space of a church, regardless of location or denomination, space inherently creates and communicates a set of beliefs and values to the congregants, which in turn affects how the congregants relate to and function in society. As pointed out by Yorgason and della Dora (2009), geographers of religion have faced challenges and complexities when studying Christianity. Over the past thirty years, studies of Christianity and the positionalities of researchers within Christianity have been critiqued as being part of a dominant group (Yorgason and della Dora 2009). In the wake of postmodernism and feminism, an emphasis was placed on hearing and understanding previously marginalized and unheard voices. This work has been most needed and significant, yet at the same time has caused Christian identity and research into Christianity to shift to the periphery (Yorgason and della Dora 2009). As a result, in contemporary academia, many current phenomenon and knowledge about an important aspect of society are missed, creating a gap in knowledge. In the past twenty years, a small number of scholars have studied how space is sacralized in the Christian church and how Christian churches fit in with and affect the modern society they are within. However, much more needs to be done.

1.1 Project Description:

To address the current phenomenon, I seek to understand the ways in which people interact with and sacralize non-traditional and non-human built church space. To do this, I engaged interviews and observations at Mountain Cathedrals, a meetup group that conducts worship services on hikes throughout New Mexico. Research focused on the ways in which the space of a service affects congregants and, in turn, how congregants and liturgical aspects of a hike sacralize the space. The significance of this is to understand ways in which non-traditional church space is sacralized through a confluence between the non-human built environment and the congregants themselves.

1.2 Research Question(s):

In studying these spaces, the questions I sought to answer were: How does Christian worship in a non-traditional outdoor setting affect the ways in which the congregants engage with, participate in, and create sacred space? What emotional and affectual responses are elicited from the congregants through this process of sacralization? The following sub-question will be answered: How do the experiences at a non-traditional Christian worship environment compare to the traditional worship environments of human built worship spaces?

2. Background:

The Christian church throughout history has been marked by its buildings. From the early meeting homes, catacombs, grand cathedrals, steeples, and the modern-day stadium crusade, the space of the church has had a large impact on congregants, as well as surrounding communities (Wilford 2013; Sharma 2012). In the 1st and 2nd century CE, early Christians held their meetings in the homes of Christian patrons who were church members that had an available space that could be utilized for Christian gatherings. The 1st and 2nd century churches existed within the Roman Empire and thus, their spaces followed the architectural trends of their time. The common house in the Roman Empire had an entryway, a shop, a collection pool for rainwater, a courtyard, and a dining room (Kilde 2008). By the 3rd century, Christian churches were being converted into sole purpose buildings, used only for church services, as opposed to the dual nature of the Roman house. Since churchgoers were familiar with the house setting, they carried over their traditions and structuring of space to their new church buildings. Many features seen in early Christian churches (e.g. Dura Europos) (Seasolz 2012) have a direct correlation to modern churches today, containing a courtyard, assembly hall, and baptismal. Since the 3rd century CE, it has thus been the norm to hold worship in a human-built environment but prior to this, there was no specific building for worship. Even Jesus himself met at various locations, including the non-human built environment of the outdoors. Although contemporary Christianity has adopted the traditional structured space of the human-built church, such as a cathedral, or more recently, renovated shopping malls and theaters, there are times when the traditional and structured aspects of the church are set aside and instead congregants gather to worship together in

“non-traditional” spaces (Holloway 2003, 2006; Woods 2013; Finlayson 2017). These have not been adequately studied by scholars of sacred space.

2.1 Christianity and the Worship Centers of Albuquerque, New Mexico:

Albuquerque, as well as New Mexico at large, is home to many different and varying faiths. From Buddhist temples, to mosques and cathedrals, Albuquerque contains many formal places of worship. In Figure 1 (below), the variety of religious institutions within the city limits of Albuquerque are shown by the amount of acreage owned by the institution. In total there are over 400 religious institutions established in their own buildings. Some institutions are larger than others, but as a whole, Albuquerque holds many religious opportunities for its inhabitants. Owing to this diversity, Albuquerque, like many cities, is highly impacted by the presence of the churches i.e. politically, economically, socially, and spiritually.

Focusing in on traditional Christian churches, of the over 400 religious institutions, approximately 280 of them are Christian churches. Albuquerque has a rich history of Christianity in a relatively diverse population of Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches (see Figure 2).

The Christian churches themselves vary in size from five congregants to over 10,000 congregants who attend services weekly. The churches utilize various languages from Spanish to Vietnamese and are situated within vastly different cultural and geographic contexts within the city

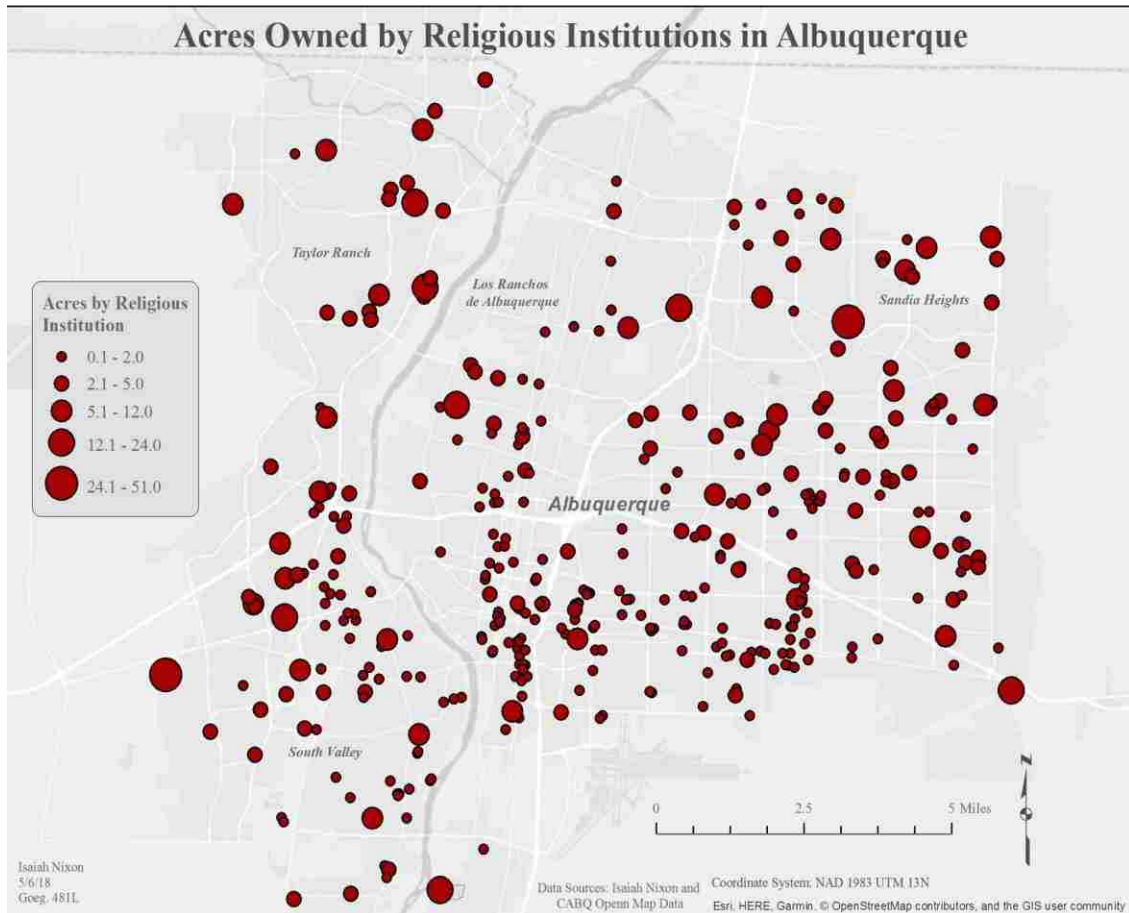


Figure 1: Acres Owned by Religious Institutions

One absent institution in these maps is non-traditional church sites that do not have buildings. Many of them are not known to the larger public, and have not yet been mapped, thus are unable to appear on the map. However, these institutions, create unique religious and spiritual experiences for people of Albuquerque and the surrounding areas to encounter the divine.

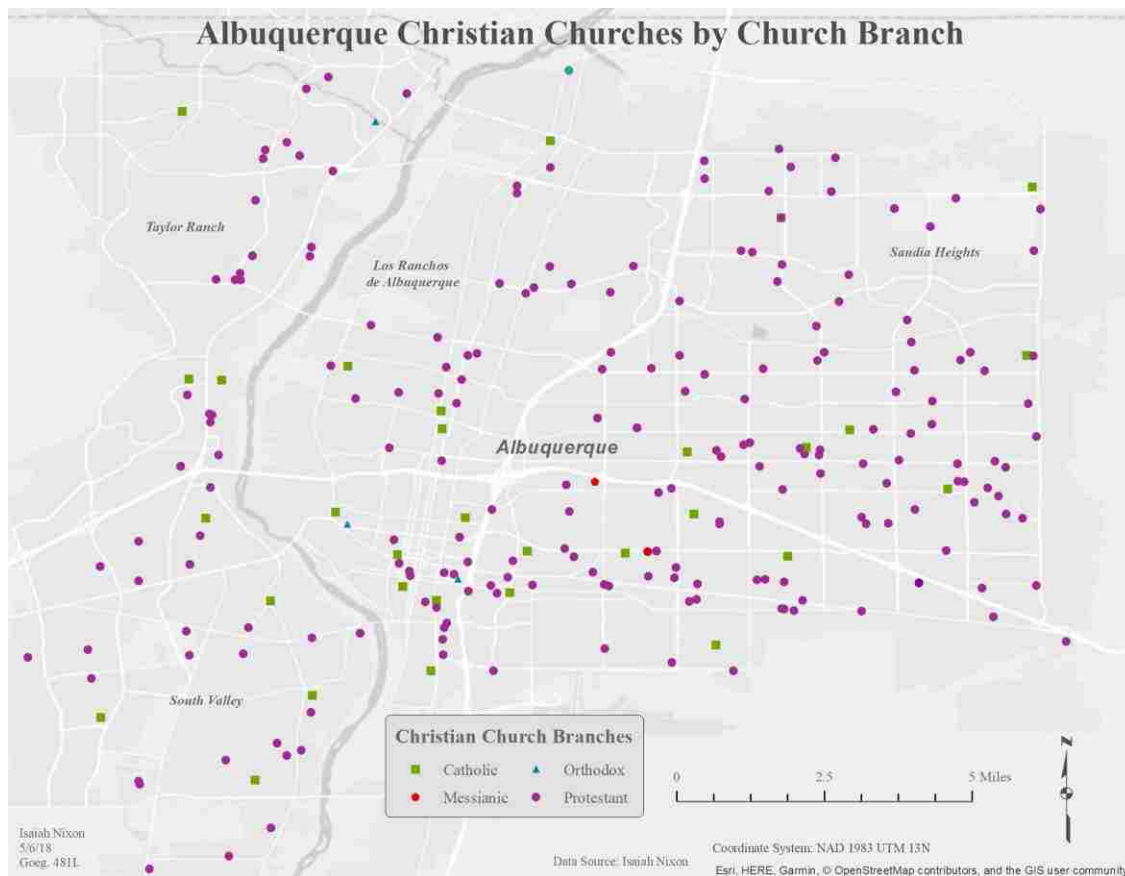


Figure 2: Albuquerque Christian Churches by Church Branch

2.2 Mountain Cathedrals:

To explore non-traditional Christian worship sites, I partnered with “Mountain Cathedrals”, an ecumenical group that meets in the greater Albuquerque area. Of the vast worship centers in Albuquerque, Mountain Cathedrals has situated itself, not in a building, but on meetup.com, as a fluid ecumenical body of worshippers who venture on monthly hikes to experience and draw closer to God whilst in the outdoors. Anyone is welcome, no matter the denomination or faith community, and, as a result, congregants from varying denominations and faith communities join together to experience God in a

unique way that can be seen as both similar to yet also in contrast to their weekly worship services.

Mountain Cathedrals, formed by Rev. Melissa Madara, began as partner group to an Episcopal liturgical hiking group based in Santa Fe. As explained by Rev. Madara, their goal was to bring the liturgical aspects of the church service to outdoors so that it might be experienced in a new and unique way. From this, she started the partner group Worship in the Wilderness, the predecessor to Mountain Cathedrals. Worship in the Wilderness had a similar goal; however, it was ecumenical in nature and often had Baptists, Unitarians, and other faith communities attend their hikes and worship. After several years, Worship in the Wilderness took a brief hiatus and was reconvened in the form of Mountain Cathedrals.

The purpose of Mountain Cathedrals is to foster a space where people can encounter God and experience community with one another. Currently, Mountain Cathedrals is based at St. John's United Methodist; however, the group still holds its ecumenical stance and regularly has congregants from many different denominations and faiths. The group meets on the third Saturday at a new location each month. From full moon hikes, river wading, and casual walks, Mountain Cathedrals attempts to provide a space in which the congregants can worship God. In order to better facilitate this, liturgical aspects, typical of a traditional church service i.e. scripture reading, prayer, and communion are employed throughout the hike. However, beyond the liturgical aspects, Mountain Cathedrals utilizes the non-human built space of the outdoors to facilitate worship and encounters with God. Harnessing beauty and silence, the outdoors, as

expressed by Rev. Melissa Madara, is a special place where unique experiences and encounters with God can take place.

When discussing Mountain Cathedrals and my interactions with it, I refer to Mountain Cathedrals as a singular site. Although Mountain Cathedrals is appropriately named a meetup group and though the group travels from location to location throughout New Mexico, the usage of “site” is more apt to address my research goals. Thus, I refer to Mountain Cathedrals as a research and study site. This reference is in concordance with della Dora’s, *Taking Sacred Space out of Place: From Mount Sinai to Mount Getty Through Travelling Icons* (2009), in which she dislocates the traditional view of sacred space as being tied to place. In contrast to the view that sacred space is inextricably tied to a specific and set physical location, della Dora challenges this and identifies the ways that sacred space is fluid and demonstrates how the movement of physical objects renders a once singularly placed sacred space, which was tied to one specific location, mobile. Building off this research, I refer to the group of Mountain Cathedrals as a set of congregants creating fluid sacred space, similar to travelling icons, demonstrating that sacred space is not intrinsically tied to one set location.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the demographics of Mountain Cathedrals are made up of varying ages, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds. However, looking at Mountain Cathedrals consistently, the demographics favor predominately Caucasian congregants over the age of fifty. These are the primary, though not exclusive, demographics, of whom, volunteered to participate in the study. Throughout the study, I utilize the terms “non-traditional Christian worship environment”, as well as “non-human built environment”. Given the demographics, as well as the current geographic research, I

use these terms and define them as such: A non-traditional Christian worship environment is a location where structured Christian worship is taking place; however, is in contrast to Christian worship that occurs within a church building, cathedral, or other physical structure. Thus, an office or store front that has been converted into a church is not a non-traditional worship environment (Finlayson 2017), as this occurrence is common, and in many of these cases, the church officials simply attempt to replicate that of a traditional church or cathedral. It could be argued that an outdoor worship environment is in fact traditional, as Christ himself taught and worshipped outside of the built environment. However, my own usage refers to the history of the church buildings and cathedrals and their manifestation and normalization (Kilde 2008).

Secondly, I utilize the term “non-human built environment”. This term stands in as a substitute for terms such as: nature or wilderness. The terms “nature” and “wilderness” or other similar terms are complex and carry manifold meanings depending upon the context and user. Nature, in fact could be used to refer to an ecosystem, environment, race, genetics, and can also refer to a physical thing, the essence of something, a physical or supernatural force (Castree 2017). Nature is amorphous and is often interpreted in varying ways. Wilderness functions in a similar way, there are multiple contexts, meanings, histories, and politics within the usage. Specifically, I recognize that wilderness has historically served as a dichotomy for Anglo-audiences and users. It has been something to tame, yet at the same time a place to find spirituality. Today, it has both given and denied access to specific ethnicities, socio-economic groups, and genders. In many cases cultures and identities have been erased under the guise and titles of nature, wilderness, and preservation (Jacoby 2001). I recognize the political,

social, and religious weight these terms carry and because of this they are problematic. As a response, I have chosen to use the term “non-human-built environment”. By utilizing this term, I seek to decenter the role of the human and to avoid vast claims of anthropocentrism. The term further recognizes the amorphous state of the word “nature” and carries less political and social weight than “wilderness”. However, the term “non-human built environment” is not absent from its own critiques. It can be argued that all environments have been human built, as humans are a key influencer upon the Earth, nor should the human be separated from the environment. This is so, yet, I utilize the words in recognition of the multiple species that take part in creating the spaces, and in context of Mountain Cathedrals, to describe the outdoor environment that the congregants and hikers find themselves in while worshipping with Mountain Cathedrals. Lastly, this term reflects the own sentiments of the hikers, as they described the outdoors as being created by God, not by man. Thus, given these various contexts, the term non-human built environment is utilized.

3. Literature Review:

Recent research into the geography of contemporary Christian church space has been interdisciplinary and has branched out into fields of sociology, psychology, anthropology, architecture, religious studies, and geography. However, geography has not contributed to the conversation as deeply as it could (Finlayson 2012; Hovland 2016). This review addresses the broader trends in scholarship on the creation of space in the environment of the contemporary Christian church, focusing on the sacralization of non-traditional church space. There are three primary areas of literature covered—the creation of sacred space: emotional and affectual geography in regard to sacred space and places of worship, current phenomena in traditional Christian spaces of worship, and non-traditional spaces of worship. The purpose of this three-turn series of literatures is to: 1) lay the foundations of the theories on how sacred space is created by looking at the role of emotional and affectual geography in the sacralization of space. 2) to provide a backdrop of examples for how the contemporary Christian church builds its environments across denominations, thus giving a brief history of where the congregants of Mountain Cathedrals past experiences lie and further to demonstrate a contrast to non-traditional worship space. 3) to identify and analyze the scholarship engaged in studying the sacralization of non-traditional worship spaces and identifying the means at which they do so.

Prior to the three-turn series of literatures, I address the general calls for interdisciplinary approaches and studies between religion and geography. Much of the research that has been conducted on the geography of contemporary Christian church space has focused on descriptions of churches, instead of explanatory methodological

approaches into why church spaces have been created in the ways that they are. Original calls for the need to study the intersection of geography and religion arose in the mid-1990's. Kong recognized that religion is inherently intersectional, seeing that sacred and secular forces create place. The sacred and secular relationship in religion is much more fluid than was thought. Noting that geography has neglected the spiritual natures of space and affect in spaces of worship (Kong 1990; 2001, Holloway 2006), Kong and Holloway prompted a small wave of researchers that took up the task.

Kong's survey of research themes, arguments, and debates on religious geography identified a distinction between two themes: politics and poetics. This intersectionality of religion and geography explores the relationship between religion and place, the themes of poetics and politics, and community and identity. The politics of religion deals with notions of power. Authors from within this field note that sacred space is situational and that "nothing is inherently sacred" (Chidester and Linenthal 1995). If spaces aren't sacred by nature, then the field of politics must look at the ways in which the sacred is sacralized. In contrast, yet complimentary to the politics of place, is the poetics of place. Scholars who deal in the poetics of place look at instances where community and identity come together to create experiences of the religious. However, again, it is noted that sacred space is normal and ordinary, and it must be made sacred. Sacred place is also tied to states of consciousness. Many scholars in this field attempt to look at folklore, symbols, rituals, and food to understand the poetics of place. Kong noted that religious place is an intersection of the two. By extending the study site beyond the "officially sacred", religion, class, and race cannot be taken as a priori, but as specific to history and

place, meaning that religion must be studied at different scales e.g. the global, local, and the body (Kong 2001).

Yorgason & della Dora (2009) address the intersection of religion and geography as filling a void in understanding space. They claim that religion allows geography to use and explain aspects of life that are “more-than-representational” and to create a new vocabulary that expresses the ineffable (Yorgason & della Dora 2009). When combined with geography, religion blends categories that are often seen as mutually exclusive, such as the sacred and secular, as well as the transcendent and mundane. However, the intersections of spirituality and space creates problems within the field of geography, as common assumptions and spatialities are blurred and problematized (Yorgason and della Dora 2009). Geography has historically had clear distinctions between the local and universal, and the public and the private, but when dealing with spirituality these are broken down, as religion ultimately undermines the status quo (Yorgason and della Dora 2009). Other scholars such as Ivankiv (2006), Kort (2007), Tse (2014) challenge the dichotomies and assumptions that there are clear distinctions between the “sacred” and “secular”.

3.1 The Creation of Sacred Space: Emotional and Affectual Geography in Regard to Sacred Space and Places of Worship:

The intersection between geography and spirituality creates tensions between common assumptions. Much of this tension lies in the understanding, creation, and interaction with sacred space. Sacred space goes above our common understanding of the material world and claims that there is something more: a confluence of visible and

invisible reality, immanence and transcendence (Yorgason & della Dora 2009). It often escapes our understanding, yet is pivotal in our understanding of the world and the way in which it operates (Yorgason & della Dora 2009).

The study of sacred space has evolved in three stages: the structuralist approach, the postmodern approach, and the more-than-representational approach. The birth of the structuralist approach has often been marked with Mircea Eliade's book, published in 1959, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Eliade set forth the idea that sacred space can be conceived of by understanding two mutually exclusive spaces: sacred space and profane space. Sacred space is a space that is full of meaning, transcendent, powerful, and connected to experiences with the divine. In contrast, profane space is without structure and lacks meaning. These structuralist views of sacred space are attributed to Eliade (1959) and Otto (1958).

The dichotomy between the sacred and the profane was prevalent for many years. However, many of these assumptions have been challenged. The second stage of understanding sacred space came via postmodernism. The postmodern critiques were that the structuralist approaches to and understanding of sacred space neglected the profane as a space that was void of meaning. The profane was seen to lack power to impact people and society in meaningful ways. Thus, (Eade and Sallnow 1991; Holloway 2003; Gökariksel 2009; Durkheim 1995; Chidester and Linenthal 1995) react against the binary approach to sacred space. They argue that there is not a dichotomy between the two spaces, but in fact, space can undergo a process of sacralization (Chidester and Linenthal 1995). Sacred spaces and profane spaces are not static. In the postmodern view, the sacred and profane divide is fluid. Space, as conceived of as sacred, is a product of

various social relations, in which sacred space is created and constructed by people. Ultimately, it is situational. Overall, this view advanced the understanding, although it has been critiqued as neglecting the “wonder” and ineffable aspects of sacred space (Finlayson 2012; Tse 2014; Yorgason and della Dora 2009). The postmodern view of sacred space takes a complex and transcendent experience and turns it into a social construction created by social force. In the postmodern light and under the situational approach, any space can become sacred. This view errs in a similar manner as Eliade, but in contrast, writes off the nature of the sacred as having unique meaningful qualities separate from that of the profane.

The third turn in the study of sacred space is the more-than-representational approach. This new wave of viewing sacred space neglects both the structuralist and postmodern approaches by attempting to reconcile their differences. In this research, sacred space is unique and set apart from the mundane. It is ineffable and gets at a complex feeling of the transcendent. However, it also recognizes that space can be sacralized. The process of sacralization takes the form of affect, emotion, and performance (della Dora 2011, 2018; Dewsbury 2009; Dewsbury and Cloke 2009; Finlayson 2012, 2015, 2016, 2017; Pile 2010; Woods 2013; Yorgason and della Dora 2009). Thus, spaces such as churches, memorials, tourist sites, pilgrim sites, and even museums can be turned into sacred spaces. della Dora (2009) addresses the ways in which sacred space is not static or fixed but is fluid. It is neither purely constructed nor ontologically established.

Beyond studying affectual and emotional relationships to sacred space, scholars have attempted to deal with and understand sacred space in other ways, but still utilizing

more-than-representationalism. Scholars of psychology, religious studies, and culture have attempted to address these similar issues. Meagher (2016; 2018) investigates the ways congregants perceive and are attracted to sacred space. He looks at the ways the natural and built environments of the sacred space of the contemporary Christian church bring out the spiritual experiences of the congregants and visitors of the spaces. Meagher relies heavily on Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) and Allport and Ross (1967) for the foundations of his research. Meagher recognizes that humans have two needs: they must make sense of their environment, while at the same time be able to explore and learn in it. Furthermore, he operates on the tenet that there are three types of religious sentiment expressed by believers: intrinsic (belief as an end unto itself), extrinsic (belief as a means to an end), and quest (belief is questioned or doubted) (Allport and Ross 1967). Using these categories as a psychological foundation, Meagher conducts surveys and interviews of congregants to see how sacred space and the built environment of churches brings about and affects religious experiences (Meagher 2016). He also hypothesizes that the variances in the design of spaces will guide cognitive and emotional experiences of worshippers and visitors (Meagher 2017). Meagher notes that there are variances in experiences and preferences of churches that are dependent on the categories of (Allport and Ross 1967). Furthermore, the studies by Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2004) reflect on sacred space from the realm of sociology. They address the ways in which sacred space creates a sense of attachment in people that help encourage devotion. Ultimately, the space of the church functions as a space for socializing and religious experience.

In another vein, sacred space has been sought to be understood via religious studies of ecclesiology. Examples of such are Effa (2015), who asserts that the church has

historically been too focused on buildings, clergy, and liturgy, and has neglected the prioritization of essential beliefs in the Christian faith. In this, he calls the contemporary Christian church to simplify and come up with new ways of living the gospel. Muster (2017) looks at how churches are taking new forms by converting entertainment spaces into spaces of worship. He notes that the new church spaces function, and in essence create sacred space through a shared past, experiences, and their churches history. Furthermore, Thiessen and McAlpine (2013) view sacred space through the lenses of sociology and theology, arguing that sacred space allows congregants to center themselves, sociologically, around meaning and transformation in life. Church leaders; however, create the space of the church theologically to account for the congregants' own personal past experiences and their current transformations.

Beyond the academic literature, a majority of the conversation on sacred space takes place within the grey literature of the contemporary Christian church. Two such examples are Lang (2014) and Mahrt (2016) who are active in their own communities of faith. In their works, they argue for the importance of sacred space and its role in bringing about beauty and theology. They clearly show that sacred space debates permeate into non-academic realms. They also propose a return to building churches based on theology. However, though these conversations lend themselves to the discussion, they do not address current issues regarding sacred space and the current geographic trends toward addressing affect and emotion. Thus, there are gaps in the conversation between academia and the church professionals.

Affectual and emotional geographies have taken precedence in the studying of spaces of worship in human geography. Anderson and Smith (2001) called for

geographers to take emotion seriously, arguing that the world in which we live in is ultimately built on, constructed, and lived through emotion. Thus, emotion should take center stage when viewing how space is created and perceived. Building from their original argument, Anderson and Smith (2006) relayed a similar call, but in regard to affect and the importance that affect plays in understanding place. Geographers have begun to address space and place in regard to emotion and affect in recent years (Brace et al. 2006; Duff 2010; Pile 2010; Finlayson 2012). Pile (2010) traces this move in human geography towards these two facets. Emotional geography looks into the ways in which we utilize emotion to build and view our world. Fear, anger, joy, care, awe, and other emotions are representations of the cognitive states we use to construct the world. Scholars can use these outward representations as a lens into the ways in which people express their emotional experiences and how space and place is created in light of emotion (Thrift 2004; Thrift and Dewsbury 2000).

In contrast to emotion, affect is beyond cognition. Emotion can be seen as cognitive representations of how we feel; however, affect is inexpressible and cannot be represented. Affect takes place before cognition and cannot be known or expressed, as emotion can (Pile 2010). I recognize that there is a great debate between emotional and affectual geography, as there is much disagreement as to what can and cannot be represented. Yet, it is often regarded that the more-than-representational approach attempts to reconcile the differences by looking into individual performativity (Finlayson 2012). Affect can be expressed as a precognitive “pushing and pulling... lifting us to think, feel, and act” (Kraftl and Adey 2008). This intrapersonal push and pull towards action occur via relations between people, space, and events.

Affect and emotion are pivotal in the conceptualization of space. This process is actualized via performance. Performance can be seen as the individual's engagement with a space/site. Performance is the lived religious experience (Finlayson 2012). The tangible material experience shapes and influences individuals in a sacred space. Ultimately, performance occurs as a "reiteration of norms assumed through repetition" (Finlayson 2012). Sacred space is then created and established through performance (della Dora 2009). The following section reviews various studies that have been conducted on places of worship and ultimately shows how space is sacralized through affect, emotion, and performance.

Caitlin Finlayson deals with the sacralization of space and has studied many different human-built places of worship. From St. Peter's Basilica, Tai Chi centers, unitarian churches, temples and churches of the Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter-day Saints (LDS), and contemporary protestant Christian churches, Finlayson prioritizes the ways in which emotion, affect, and performance manifest themselves in these spaces. Finlayson primarily conducts in-depth interviews and engages in participant observations. Finlayson (2014) found that in the case of the LDS church, the simplicity of the chapels, the multiplicity of sacred space, and the transcendent nature of the space created transformation within the congregants. Sacred space was seen as both in the world yet separate from it. In her study of performativity and Tai Chi (Finlayson 2015), it was found that Tai Chi, when conducted at the center for Tai Chi, had unique transformative qualities. The physical and mental states of the participants would, in effect, change as a result of their interactions with the space. Through the individual and emotional experiences that occurred, as well as the rituals, via performance, the space received its

meaning as sacred (Finlayson 2015). Building off of her previous studies, Finlayson turned to visual portrayals of affect and experience, and sought to look into how visitors of St. Peter's Basilica experienced the church space. In this, she looked at photographs taken by visitors and the central focus of the pictures and perspectives they were taken at. The study concluded that the photographs attempted to capture the affective qualities of the space i.e. light from windows, high ceilings, etc. in contrast to the symbols explicitly shown in the church i.e. saints, paintings, etc.

Building off of her prior research, Finlayson turned her focus to understanding how a space that was never intended to be sacred, becomes sacralized. She focused on Unity Church in Virginia (Finlayson 2017). Churches, like Unity Church, occupy storefronts, schools, and other buildings not originally intended for church use and attempt to transform them into sacred space. Unity Church utilizes an office space for their meetings. She argues that the process of sacralization is a combination of emotional and shared experiences that make the space sacred. She notes that categorizing a church as traditional or non-traditional problematizes the church space. She found that the members of the church did not desire to move to a traditional location and that their relationship to the space is dynamic. Finally, she notes that the ideas of sacredness are not directly tied to the space, but are fluid and ultimately dependent on the performance, affect, and emotion that takes place within the space. (Finlayson 2017).

In a similar manner, Sharma (2012) identifies this interrelation and looks at three aspects found within the intersection, specifically of how women are connected to a church. First, a church provides a family-like structure in that member's functions like brothers, sisters, or parents. Secondly, their relationship is gendered. Gendered spaces

overlap in both church and home settings. Third, the family-like structure becomes a chosen family or kin. However, race and class differences exist. In this analysis, there are many emotional aspects in the creation of the space.

Apart from affect in sacred space studies, the field of architecture speaks to the affectual and emotional nature of buildings in general. This research has particular relevance in that it addresses buildings and how architects design for affect. Churches fall into this category. Amongst these studies, there is research into how space is created with the intent of bringing out affect. Kraftl and Adey (2008), look into how a kindergarten and airport create the affectual senses of welcome and being at home. Furthermore, Bissell (2010) and Jacobs & Merriman (2011) study how affect and non-representational forms are transmitted in daily encounters with architecture and the built environment.

The fields of architecture and affect need continued research. Kraftl and Adey (2008), in their architectural analysis of affect, call for more studies that explore different architectures and inhabitation, specifically centered around individual buildings and how they create affect (Kraftl and Adey 2008). Much of the research in this vein has been completed at the scale of the city, but not at the scale of unique and individual buildings, let alone worship spaces in the non-human built environment of the outdoors.

Furthermore, Jacobs and Merriman (2011) claim that many geographers do not engage with the architect's creation process in studying buildings. In turn, geographers need to spend more time engaged in conversation, talking-back with them, and recognizing that architects are just one piece—that planners, landscapers, carpenters, and others play a part in designing the spaces (Jacobs and Merriman 2011). Geographers need

to listen and engage with architects and the entirety of the creation and design process rather than simply analyzing spaces from the user's point of view.

When researching Unity church, Finlayson (2017) noted that there still needs to be much more research on spaces that are deemed “non-traditional” church spaces. As spaces that were not originally intended to be worship spaces are converted and sacralized, more research needs to take place to understand the ways in which the process takes place. Furthermore, Finlayson (2017) calls for a reassessment of how scholars have dealt with Eliade (1959), and questions whether or not we can use his theory in more dynamic ways instead of rejecting it.

Overall, what can be seen are heightened awareness's and in-depth studies of the ways in which emotion, affect, and performance create sacred space. It is through individual relationships, interaction, and experience that space becomes sacred and affect is elicited. It is important to note that the more-than-representational approach, as demonstrated through affect and performance, recognizes the uniqueness and set-apartness that sacred space holds in contrast to socially-constructed sacred space. Moving forward, I look into the ways the human-built environment of the contemporary Christian church is being created. This is to provide a background for the congregants of Mountain Cathedrals, as well as to provide a contrast between traditional and non-traditional Christian worship spaces.

3.2 Current Phenomena in Traditional Human-Built Christian Spaces of Worship:

As a whole, the contemporary Christian church has not engaged in the academic conceptual studies of affect and performance. Conversations do exist amongst

parishioners and clergy, but it is primarily expressed in grey literatures on culture. The vast majority of research on the Christian church has focused on its history, architecture, cultural and social impacts on society. Much of this writing has neglected methodical spatial analysis and the conversations on affect and sacred space. I portray various studies that take into consideration the building of the spaces and environments of the contemporary Christian church.

The Christian church, from the 1st century CE to the contemporary church, has been significantly studied. There are, of course, certain time periods with a heavier weight of scholarship than others, e.g. gothic cathedrals have been studied more than contemporary megachurches. However, the descriptive research is extensive. Though this research is extensive, it is needed in order to grasp the context of church space, as churches pull from their own past histories, theologies, and experiences. Historical scholars trace the roots of Christian churches and view them through the eyes of modern discourse and discussions of power relations. Understanding historic space is essential to understanding contemporary space. J. H. Kilde, a scholar of religious studies, is of significant note. Kilde's chronology leads from the 1st century to today, spanning across denominations. While examining church history, she continuously keeps in mind that "sacred space is powerful space" and that space, inherently, creates power relations within the church (Kilde 2002; 2008). In the work, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space*, Kilde's main argument and focus is on power and power relations within the church. She traces the concept of power through each period in church architectural history, delineating three types of power: divine, social, and personal (Kilde 2008). Each of these categories are manifested within the church and serve particular roles. These categories, in effect,

are both experienced by the congregants and clergy of the church, as well as created by them. Understanding this relation helps put the Christian church, in all its forms, into place by understanding the power a church or sacred space has to communicate both implicitly and explicitly.

In a similar line, Seasoltz, a liturgist and church scholar, takes a historical approach laced with a history of theology and liturgy. His work, *A Sense of the Sacred*, begins by looking at the cultural contexts in which churches exist. He categorizes human culture into four categories: primal culture (homo sapiens-2000 BCE), classical culture (3000 BCE-1500 CE), modern culture (1500 CE-1900 CE), and postmodern culture (1900-present). These eras are of specific interest to scholars of the church, such as Seasoltz, because the Christian church has both been influenced by cultural shifts, as well as responded to the creation of new cultures. Obtaining an understanding of these contexts is important, as greater depth of the historical trends lead to a more robust understanding and a foundation for insight into contemporary Christian churches.

As an example, Kieckhefer (2004) looks into different traditions of church building. He addresses the ways in which different churches are designed and looks at how they facilitate worship, center the congregants focus, promote aesthetics, and how the space serves a symbol. His analysis takes into account churches that are traditional sacramental spaces and those that are modern. In line with this, Lane (2001) deals with how symbols are made and place is understood in Christianity, specifically tracing the landscapes of American churches.

Beyond scholars that deal with the historical creation of the Christian church, much scholarship draws from spatial and placemaking theorists, Eliade (1959), Lefebvre

(1974) and Soja (1996). Lefebvre, with Soja building off of his work, identified three separate spatial realms that consistently interact: physical space/firstspace, mental/secondspace, and lived space/thirdspace. Each category of space describes and explains the types of space we encounter and the ways in which they are related to each other. An example of each, as given by Schreiner (2016) is: physical/firstspace - the chair you are sitting on in a room, mental/secondspace - associations you may have with the space/sitting in the chair e.g. fear or freedom, and social/thirdspace - alteration of space e.g. how the space changes if you choose to speak or not speak while sitting.

Building off of these ideas, scholars have moved beyond describing and categorizing church space and instead provide insight into how to create Christian sacred space in a church. Frey (1963) and Daelemans (2015) fall into camp with Lang and Mahrt. They have both witnessed the modernization and desacralization of churches and, instead of simply describing the state of the church, have attempted to do something about the issue. Frey, of whom was a previous Executive Secretary of the Department of Church Architecture of the United Lutheran Church in America, believed that there is a lack of theological understanding within the clergy/congregants, as well as an inability to see the impact that church space/architecture has on its congregants. Frey pleads that “what we believe should determine what we build.” (Frey 1963). In his argument, he notes theology should inform the “whys” which direct the architecture and creation of space. Frey, though a grey literature, provides insight into the ongoing debate of sacred space. Continuing this debate in the contemporary world is Bert Daelemans. In this work, *Spiritus Loci: A Theological Method for Contemporary Church Architecture*, he assesses contemporary church architecture. In a climate of desacralization, Daelemans seeks to

provide a method for building and creating space. As discussed previously, in the modern, as well as the postmodern world, churches have been constructed to be contemporary and universal, yet ineffable. The ineffability reaches back to the construction of cathedrals, as to which the human subject is intended to be small and feel the presence of God in a sacred space (Daelemans 2015). However, in Daelemans' model, he aims at transcendence. Daelemans wants to join to two worlds, in order that he might bring architecture to the world of theology and theology to the world of architecture. (Daelemans 2015). In line with geographic scholarship, he recognizes that humans are placed beings and that when creating churches, one must keep that in mind. How does one do this? Daelemans creates criteria for this. He presents a three-fold method for the assessment of church architecture. In this, he begins by attempting to find limits to space, so that the building blocks can be made for understanding space and place of the church. His three-fold method includes: 1) Synaesthetic space - the spirit and creation of a space, that when entering a space, one enters a meaningful story that points to Christ. 2) Kerygmatic space - Christ and the incarnation. 3) Eucharistic space - father and the redemption (Daelemans 2015). His work is an attempt to provide a theoretical framework that allows for churches to engage with the sacred and create sacred space.

The aforementioned scholarship has centered on the debate regarding the dichotomy of sacred space and it has addressed attempts at creating models to sacralize space. One such model of churches that engages in active sacralization is the megachurch. Megachurches, but not exclusively, have tended to fall in line with Finlayson's study that a space is not inherently sacred due to architecture, but in turn it is sacralized by the emotion, affect, and performance within the space. Thus, megachurches,

along with being a topic of geographic, urban, and religious scholarship, fall into both the history of church architecture and the current debates. In this, there are several academic scholars from the fields of geography, sociology, and religious studies that have dealt with the current trends of megachurches.

I trace the scholarship of the creation of megachurches by looking at their impact on society and analyses of their presence. Ellingson, a contemporary sociologist of religion, provides an excellent survey of the literature on megachurches. He notes that since the 1970's megachurches have risen in numbers creating architectural, ritual, and marketing change. Ellingson builds off of Thumma and Travis (2007), of whom described four types of megachurches: 1) Old Line/Program based churches. 2) Seeker churches. 3) Charismatic/pastor focused. 4) New Wave/Re Envisioned. Evangelical megachurches have grown in size, and in some cases, exponentially. Ellingson attempts to explain the reasons for growth. There are three identified reasons for growth: 1) A market driven model - in order to create religious products (Religion became achieved rather than ascribed after WWII, a focus on consumerism as a tool to convert the unsaved). 2) An offering of superior products - they offer a profound experience and attempt to purge the twenty first-century model of religious institutionalism. 3) A changing in the model of a church service, in order to stay relevant (Ellingson 2009). Ellingson claims that megachurches have, in effect, restructured American religion.

Furthering the discussion, Chaves (2006) researches and looks into the history and creation of the megachurch. As a part of his research, primarily focusing on descriptive factors, he studies the size of the church and the distributions of the people within it. Chaves (2006) identifies why megachurches have become a dominant part of society.

Historically, he claims that there have been many churches with small amounts of people and fewer churches with large amounts (Chaves 2006). However, this has changed. More recently, the people who attend protestant churches have been concentrated in fewer churches with greater numbers. The explanation of the phenomena, Chaves points out, is because of amounting costs, such as rising salaries and prices of facilities, which make it harder for small churches to stay open. Thus, the small churches conglomerate overtime to create larger churches (Chaves 2006). Though Chaves has written large amounts of academic scholarship since 2006, his research is often descriptive and is heavily weighted towards social explanations. Along with Chaves, Warf and Winsberg (2010) also have studied the reasons for megachurch growth and distribution.

Furthering the analysis and research on the changes that megachurches have had on society, Aleksic (2007) looks at the megachurch campus and has found that these megachurches have begun to take on the role of the secular realm. They often have schools, parks, and other amenities not often associated with churches. This, in effect has impacted the larger communities around these churches by creating patterns of segregation and enclave development (secluded and isolated groupings) (Aleksic 2007). Her study highlights the ways in which churches, in light of the modern and postmodern trends, have abandoned the traditional views that hold church space as sacred space, which reflects the trends in sacred space studies.

Geographers Wade and Hynes (2013) draw in contemporary trends of affect and emotion, as they focus on on affective labor in Hillsong church in Sydney, Australia. Their study strictly demonstrates and adds to the discussion in two ways: they exemplify the movement away from traditional sacred space to that of experiential and emotional

creations of “sacredness” and they exhibit megachurches as being involved with capitalist enterprises of design and labor (Wade and Hynes 2013). Their analysis of space is that megachurches, specifically Hillsong church, create emotionally driven services that are devised using capitalist models of merchandising and franchising across the globe. In all, Wade and Hynes demonstrate, in many ways, the antithesis of what figures like Mahrt and Lang propose.

Other scholars have attempted to characterize the contemporary Christian church beyond pure descriptions, and, as Wade and Hynes (2013), move into an analysis of the space, as related to affect, transformation, and societal impact (Dyck et al. 2005; Gallagher 2005; Manning et al. 2009; Wilford 2013; Williams 2015). There is a large breadth of research that still needs to be done, especially in geographic work. In 2009, sociologist Ellingson put forth the call that there needs to be more “systematic and robust explanations” of megachurches that ties the current phenomena that are occurring with the relevant trends in scholarly research (Ellingson 2009). I would extend this also beyond that of the megachurch to all contemporary Christian churches in general. Secondly, Ellingson (2009) notes that much of the work that has been done reflects the position of pastors and leaders, but not of the congregants and their role. Thus, studies into how congregants experience worship and theology, why they attend and what attracts them to the space, needs to be done (Ellingson 2009). Though these problems are beginning to be addressed, much work still needs to be completed. Finlayson (2012) claimed that interviews with architects, designers, and leaders of churches need to be conducted in order to see how “affective responses are engendered, and to the degree the intended response is elicited” (Finlayson 2012). Though this may seem contradictory to

Ellingson's claim, their foundations differ. Ellingson discusses the role of megachurches in society and their impact on the congregants, thus the congregants view is needed. In regard to Finlayson, she refers to affective responses and perceptions in churches in general to see if the designs intent is being actualized and validated. Finally, in the scholarship addressing traditional Christian church space there has not been a contrasting study of the sacralization of non-human built environments. Though there are very small movements that hold their worship in the outdoors and do not have a building, there has not been research on them that bring them into the conversation.

3.3 Non-traditional Worship Spaces:

The tradition of Christianity is vast and nearly all-encompassing. However, many Christian non-traditional worship spaces have not been dealt with by current geography scholars. The purpose of relaying information regarding traditional Christian worship space is to provide a contrast to non-traditional spaces and to highlight the roles that affect and emotion play within the current trend of megachurches. Non-traditional spaces often do not fit into the categories described above. They are often hidden and unbeknownst to the public. They are often small in number. Yet, they provide an alternative and unique way to experience the divine, bringing to life an experience that is different from and cannot be had within a traditional worship environment. However, geographic scholarship of non-traditional worship space has yet to investigate non-traditional Christian worship spaces. Thus, in my own research, I seek to address the non-traditional Christian worship space of Mountain Cathedrals. Considering my own work, I look to various scholars work on non-traditional worship space to see the ways in which

the spaces have been analyzed for the process of sacralization. I highlight and briefly analyze key components within the current research, in order that I might identify the methods used by the scholars to understand the ways in which sacred space is created within the geography of affectual and emotional sacralizations of space.

In beginning to understand the complexities of the sacralization of space, Holloway (2003) addresses the ways in which the everyday/ordinary (profane) world is made sacred. In doing so, he looks into a group of New Age seekers that partake in meditation and various other spiritual acts of living in and with the world. Holloway centers on the ways that the seekers become enlightened through reconfiguring the space around them (Holloway 2003). Holloway argues that the everyday does not always necessitate the profane and unspiritual. Historically, the concept of hierophany (the revelation of the divine in space) has come to distinguish the sacred and profane. Holloway uses this concept throughout his theory and does not reject it.

In setting forth his argument, he focuses in on the role of the body. He does not look into a symbol or a text, but looks at how the body makes sense of the space and creates meaning within it. An example of this is when people feel the sense of peace or holiness at an apparition site. The feeling is an embodied feeling that is physically felt and sensed as sacred (Holloway 2003). Furthermore, when reading through the journals of seekers, Holloway noticed many bodily movements—preparing a mantel, lighting candles, burning incense, sitting, kneeling. These movements are active and create the space in which the seeker can gain knowledge and insight from a deity (Holloway 2003). The knowledge is not gained through the body, but through “embodied appropriation of the world” (Holloway 2003). Thus, Holloway concludes by finding

that, in these instances, belief and spirituality do not come directly through symbols or texts, but come from the bodily practices—the “body makes belief” instead of being “made to believe” (Holloway 2003).

Ultimately, the key is that the making of the sacred (including hierophanic experience) “involves interaction, connection, articulation of the profane objects into their spiritual potential” (Holloway 2003). Thus, sacred space is made through movements that join actor and object as co-conductors of the space. Sacred space is practiced with profane objects i.e. mantels, candles, or other such physical objects (Holloway 2003).

Not only do inanimate objects become changed, but also space itself. Holloway points to the example of a train trip that becomes sacred/enchanted. In his analysis, he found that a seeker closing his eyes and sitting still on a train, along with his senses, objects, and affectual experiences, creates an event that reconfigures the space through sanctification (Holloway 2003). Through this, Holloway argues that the active arrangement of the experiences on the train create an embodied action with the environment around the seeker, which creates the capacity and possibility for hierophany (Holloway 2003).

In accordance with non-representational theory and affect, the experiences and examples Holloway uses are embodied experiences. They cannot fully be represented or described. In this case, the sacred is non-representational. In illustrating this, Holloway gives the example of a seekers friend who coincidentally shows up on the street at an ironic time. The seeker attributes this to a deity. Holloway’s analysis of this shows that this interruption broke down the everyday and ordinary act of walking down the street

(Holloway 2003). Thus, the practice, at the moment of interruption became different. The everyday was not monotonous or rote, but instead, the instant heightened the seekers awareness of the spiritual. The act allowed for the sacred to be revealed (Holloway 2003).

Viewing Holloway's analysis of the sacralization of ordinary space, three trends could be noticed. 1) He addressed and looked in to the physical movements and interactions with non-spiritual objects. 2) He recognized that the amalgamation of sensuous experiences and active engagement with the affectual experiences allowed for divine interaction and space to be transformed into the sacred. 3) He pointed to instances wherein there was a breakdown and shift between the ordinary and the sacred. At the moment of shift, the awareness of the sacred was made. It is important to note here that these affectual experiences fuse the subject and object together. The current predominant paradigm and discourse views the subject and object as separate entities. Emotion speaks to the subject and object divide, but affectual experience undermines it and enables the sacred, by breaking down the mind-body divide.

In a further study, Holloway (2006) looks to the space of the 19th century *séance* to highlight the significance of affectual research, as well as to show the ways in which affect is embodied and actualized. Holloway recognized that affect and emotion are often left out of religious geographic discourse and attempts to bring them into the discussion. *Enchanted Spaces* (2006) describes the performance that takes place in a *séance* as such: a *séance* begins with a prayer and song. The room in which it takes place is intentionally created to include low and dim lighting, to be well-ventilated, and to encompass 3-12 people. Throughout the *séance*, the group links hands and is asked to be

still. The medium is tied to a chair (to ensure that no tricks are being played) and enters a trance state (Holloway 2006). Those involved in the séance reported feelings of wonder, awe, delight, and horror, as well as feelings that they were physically touched or spoken to by a spirit.

Holloway identifies two key takeaways from these experiences: 1) there was an attempt to discipline the bodies of both the medium and partakers during the séance. 2) Those partaking experienced and felt other bodies. Holloway argues that it is through these experiences, affect and sensation are actualized. As a result, the actualization of affect is important as it creates an “enchanted” space (Holloway 2006). When trying to tie this work to geography, Holloway recognizes that many would attempt to know the cause of the spirits or ghosts and he recognizes that they are entities that are non-material and when studying these spirits, one can react in two ways—out of faith and belief or see the séance as a social response to the secularization of the 19th century. Holloway does not take either side, but in turn, leaves the discussion open and argues for the enchantment of space. According to Holloway, enchantment occurs within religious and sacred space. It is an experience and affect that cannot be viewed in light of mere societal norms, structures, or belief (Holloway 2006). In turn, enchanted space dislocates the need for a cause and recognizes that the affectual experience has a real effect on people and society.

Veronica della Dora researches the fluidity of sacred space in a study (della Dora 2009) of how traditional Greek Orthodox icons travelled to the Getty Museum in Los Angeles. During the exhibit at the Getty, sacred space was created through performance. As the icons were displayed, they gave a glimpse of paradise, they quieted the viewers,

and gave direct access to sacred space. The viewing of the icons inherently became a two way conversation. The visitors' experience at the museum was an active notion to bring the "there" here (della Dora 2009). Thus, sacred space is not territorially fixed, but dependent on and created via performance. Regarding mobile sacred space, Maddrell and della Dora (2013) look into ecumenical pilgrimage sites where performances, ritual, senses, and texts reflect and the mobility of sacred space. In this, she communicates a more-than-representational approach to understanding sacred space. Recently, della Dora (2018) has found that space is often infrasecular and embodies both belief and unbelief. She has begun to understand space that is beyond the "officially sacred". Oftentimes, spaces undergo sacralization and desacralization and in turn, sacred space is always being unmade and remade (della Dora 2018).

In a like manner, Woods (2013) pinpoints house churches in Sri Lanka as being able to camouflage their sacred space as secular space. By conducting in-depth interviews with church leaders and congregants, he focuses on the networks of relations that exist within the house churches. In the spaces themselves, owing to the oppressive nature of the Sri Lankan government, the churches must remain as house churches. Thus, they create their own sacred environment. He found that the churches viewed the Christian people as the church, not the buildings, as the sacredness of the space is dependent on the relations that arise during worship gatherings, prayer, and bible study (Woods 2013).

The scholarship above has dealt with sites of religion and spirituality, as is relevant to the site of my own study Mountain Cathedrals. In order to further situate Mountain Cathedrals, I briefly address the connection between place and spirituality, as linked to Mountain Cathedrals lack of a building and physical structure. I am unable to

address all literature devoted to studies of the non-human built environment, the outdoors, or spirituality in the non-human built environment. It must be noted that humans often make close connections to non-human built environments and are many times emotional, spiritually, and physically attached to them. *Mountain Cathedrals* is no exception. *Mountain Cathedrals* uses the non-human environment of the outdoors as its worship environment and the spirituality of the site is directly connected to place. I engage three works to communicate the connection humans have to the non-human built environment.

Indigenous scholar and author, Jeanette Armstrong (1995) identifies four parts of the human self: the physical, the emotional, the intellect, and the spiritual. Each one of these four selves work together to connect the human to a community and place. She states, “we are everything that surrounds us...we are our land” (Armstrong 1995). Armstrong’s clear communication that people are tied to place and land is evident and is a resounding theme through much of this branch of literature. One such example of this inextricable link between humans, spirituality, and place is in Taos, New Mexico. Arellano (2017) discusses the deep connection to land and place, focused on Taos. He utilizes the term “querencia” to describe the connection. “Querencia”, to Arellano, is the deep connection that humans have to place. Engulfed in a “querencia” are feelings of home, happiness, safety, and longing. Through analyzing the history of the area surrounding Taos, he focuses on the varying ways people are connected to and view the land. The connection to home and land, in this case are in many ways spiritual. To this end, and similarly, *Mountain Cathedrals* operates in an environment that can easily resonate as a hiker’s “querencia”. Whether the hiker has grown up their whole life in the

local area and are in a sense a part of the landscape, or they are simply beginning the process of becoming safe and at home, Mountain Cathedrals facilitates this relationship via the confluence of place and spirituality.

Each of the above scholars focus on the deep ties that people have to place, especially places considered to be one's home. In contrast to this, Milstein and Krolokke (2012) look into ecotourism and attempt to understand the happenings and connections to the non-human in ecotourism. In their studies of orcas in the Pacific Northwest, they found that there are aspects of performance, as the tourist becomes a spectator to sensuous experience. Tourists, through the naming of objects and "orgasmic" experiences (Milstein and Krolokke (2012) of 'ooh's and awe's', are connected, albeit in a wholly othering way, to the non-human built environment. This can also be seen in the site of Mountain Cathedrals. As the eco-tourists begin to connect to the more-than-human, albeit in a construed way, so too does the Mountain Cathedral hiker—by looking at new and wonderful sites with "oohs" and "awe's" that function as performance, while at the same time, allow the hikers to recognize their creator's handiwork in the beauty they awe at. These experiences draw the human, the place, and spirituality together in a unique way.

These three brief examples and literatures give a glimpse into the ways in which humans connect to the non-human built environment by ultimately situating the sites of Mountain Cathedrals by demonstrating the ways in which place and spirituality are linked. Furthermore, the significance stands out as hikers might connect to the non-human built environment prior to their own experiences with the group of Mountain Cathedrals.

3.4 Gaps and Shortcomings within the Literature and Conversation:

There are many areas to build on and many gaps that have been identified from within the literatures. These gaps do not represent the entirety of gaps held in the literature. There are ample amounts of areas of research that can be studied. These specific gaps pertain to the areas in which I seek to add to the knowledge base. I have found that there is a lack of coherence between disciplines. Returning to Kong (2010), geographers must lend their voice to the studying of these spaces. As seen, geography has not had a significant voice at the table that is dominated by other disciplines. The geographic and spatial perspective is central and pivotal to understanding these spaces, as geography has the unique lens to view spaces that are often only viewed as mental, theological, emotional, and analyze the inherent role of the physical space and the ways in which meaning, and place is created in accordance with physical space. Geographers must attempt to make an impact in this field, one that goes beyond the discipline and into other disciplines (Kong 2010). Though there is an explicit need to investigate the ways that the design of traditional built environments affects the congregants, there is no mention of non-traditional worship spaces in the academia. The gap is significant. Finlayson identified the need to study more non-traditional worship sites, yet even the non-traditional sites she highlighted still fall in the category of traditional, as they still function within the human-built environment. Research needs to look into the ways in which congregants find meaning in the spaces, how the individual spaces bring out affectual and emotional responses, as well as see if there are discrepancies between the two groups, how they are manifested, and what their effects are. In my study of Mountain Cathedrals, I demonstrate the ways in which non-traditional worship environments are

sacralized and bring out significant affectual and emotional responses to the congregants of Mountain Cathedrals, thus providing an alternate view of the creation of and engagement with contemporary Christian worship space.

4. Research Design:

4.1 Research Questions:

In addressing the literatures and gaps, the questions I answered were: How does Christian worship in a non-traditional outdoor setting affect the ways in which the congregants engage with, participate in, and create sacred space? What affectual and emotional responses are elicited from the congregants through this process of sacralization? The following sub-question was answered: How do the experiences at a non-traditional Christian worship environment compare to the traditional worship environments of human built worship spaces?

4.2 Resources and Resource Access:

In order to conduct this research, I joined Mountain Cathedrals and scouted the site by participating in preliminary hikes prior to the beginning of the study. I contacted and met with Rev. Melissa Madara and gained permission to interview and conduct research at this site. In doing so, the project was IRB approved in the Fall 2018, at which the research study began. Ultimately, the study is useful and beneficial to her, as well as to Mountain Cathedrals as a whole; we worked together to create meaningful and useful surveys, and questions to provide feedback for her use, as will be seen below.

In choosing participants to interview, I used purposeful sampling that began at each individual hike. Throughout the hikes, I talked to and got to know the congregants that I hiked with. After establishing relationships with them, I asked if they would be willing to be further interviewed after the hike. It was made known that the interview

would be via volunteers and that their responses would be kept anonymous, complying with the set IRB regulations for the project.

4.3 Data Collection:

In pursuing the answers to the research questions, my primary methods for data collection were observation, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews, supplemented with surveys. I attended Mountain Cathedrals for a series of seven months and participated as an observer and participant observer. The number of hikers at each gathering ranged from around 4-15, often having repeat congregants join at each hike. From this, ten congregants were interviewed for the study. Beyond this, I conducted two interviews with Rev. Melissa Madara, the director of the hike, once before the study took place and a final one at the conclusion of the study. In total, there were five men and six women interviewed.

Each interview took place at an interviewee chosen location post-hike. In beginning each interview, I began with an open-ended question that allowed for the hiker's own experiences, stories, and interpretations of the hike to be communicated. The question I began with is as follows: "Where and how does God meet you in the space of Mountain Cathedrals?" This question allowed the interviewees to guide me in the space and areas that were significant to them, as well as to narrate and explain their experience in the different spaces. During the interview, I asked a series of follow-up questions that spoke to aspects of their experiences, the liturgy of the hike, as well as their experiences in traditional Christian worship spaces.

To fill in potential gaps in data, I created and utilized a survey to gain further information and to increase my sources for analysis. The survey's purpose was to fill any gaps in data and get a better representative sample. The survey responses were gathered at the conclusion of the study of Mountain Cathedrals. In total, I collected eight surveys, totaling 18 participants in the study.

4.4 Data Analysis:

After collecting data from my observational notes, interviews, and survey responses, I had a series of observational notes, pictures, recorded interviews, and handwritten survey responses. The audio recordings were transcribed by the online application "iTranscribe 3.8.1" on the Iphone iOS 12.1.2. Any mistranslated data via the transcription software was corrected via relistening to the interviews and correcting the mistakes by hand.

The data was compiled together to be compared and analyzed. The data analysis process is as follows: I looked for saturated data to see if I had enough information to answer my question. I identified saturated data by listening to and reading through my transcripts while looking for instances of repetition of responses and significant meaningful experiences with Mountain Cathedrals. Once the data was saturated, I used a grounded theory approach to identify significant and overlapping themes amongst the interviews and observations. This was so that I might view the phenomena take place, analyze it, and the draw conclusions based on what I saw and heard, before tying the results to theories. I did not begin with a theory, but observations. I read through my text and looked for key ideas that stood out as answering my questions, as well as findings

that occurred often. Once I identified and marked these instances in my text, I wrote down the themes that arose from the data. I developed a code, in which I sorted my significant information into a categorization of themes. I created categories that could, in one way or another, encapsulate all my significant data and answer my research question. As an example, if it was found that a congregant experienced God more during the silent meditation on the hike than in the scripture reading, this was noted as significant. This information has been presented in the form of charts, as well as a written narrative relaying the experiences of the clergy and congregants in the space.

Specifically, I looked for instances where congregants pointed an aspect of the service or space out as significant and meaningful to them. I noted instances that centered on the themes: relations with the non-human built environment, relations with liturgy, and affective and emotional experiences at Mountain Cathedrals. When conducting the spatial analysis, I attempted to see if my data fit in with current analyses of sacred space and existing affectual studies.

4.5 Statement of Ethics:

In working with human participants, I communicated that their involvement was not mandatory, but voluntary. Each participant that opted to participate in the study was given a consent form, and no names or signatures were solicited, via IRB regulations. Participants throughout the study remain anonymous and have been given pseudonyms. Each participant has been offered the final draft, should they desire to have a copy.

5. Results:

In moving forward and turning to address my own research and study within Mountain Cathedrals, I analyzed my collected data by looking for affectual and emotional experiences at my study site that aligned with the criteria for the creation of sacred space as set-forth within my literature review. The analysis utilizes the scholarship addressed above to characterize affect, as related to the more-than-human world. In addressing my own studies of Mountain Cathedrals, I specifically look at three significant trends that stood out to me within my own interactions with the site and interviews and argue that they are a series of experiences that build upon each other and create a unique sacred space. First, I show the ways hikers at Mountain Cathedrals relate to the non-human built environment. Secondly, I show the ways that the hikers relate to the liturgical aspects of the hike. Third, I argue that by including liturgical elements on the hike and through affectual and emotional experiences, the more-than-human space of the hike becomes sacred and is valued in a deeper and more meaningful way than when absent of the liturgical elements and affectual and emotional experiences.

In situating myself and my own experiences within my research site, I have attended the hikes and have become an observer and participant observer within the group. Each hike, although taking place in a different location, includes liturgical elements, such as prayer, scripture reading, communion, and personal space for worship as each individual sees fit. These elements allow Mountain Cathedrals to be set apart from other Christian hiking groups that simply meet to hangout and form community. In this respect, Mountain Cathedrals serves as an outdoor worship space, complementary to a traditional worship setting. My own experience with Mountain Cathedrals consists of

both observing hikes and conducting post-hike interviews with ten hikers who opted to participate in the study. Both the conversations and observations from hikes and interviews inform this study. Quotes from the interviews serve to relay the experiences of the hikers.

In order to frame the three-part analysis, I highlight quotes from the hikers, centered upon their relations to the non-human built environment beyond Mountain Cathedrals, their relations to the liturgy within a traditional church environment, and finally to their affectual and emotional experiences in regard to their worship in the non-human built environment of Mountain Cathedrals.

The following sites, seen via images, have functioned as the non-human built environments of Mountain Cathedrals. I visited each of these sites with the group and the figures below provide a visual aid and backdrop when analyzing and discussing the experiences of the hikers:



Figure 3: Los Lunas Open Space, Los Lunas, NM (Photo credit: Isaiah Nixon)



Figure 4: Los Lunas Open Space, Los Lunas, NM (Photo credit: Isaiah Nixon)



Figure 5: Mount Taylor, Gooseberry Springs Trail, Grants, NM (Photo credit: Isaiah Nixon)



Figure 6: Bosque Del Apache, Antonio, NM (Photo credit: Isaiah Nixon)



Figure 7: Rinconada Canyon, Albuquerque NM (Photo credit: Anonymous hiker)



Figure 8: Eye of the Sandia's, Albuquerque, NM (Photo credit: Isaiah Nixon)



Figure 9: Ellis Trail, Sandia Peak, NM (Photo credit: Isaiah Nixon)

Each image portrays each of the seven hikes that I partook in with Mountain Cathedrals. I now turn to the interviews with Rev. Melissa Madara to express the ways in which she forms each hike and structures the liturgy of Mountain Cathedrals.

First, in choosing the location of the hike, Rev. Madara stated that the choice for the locations of the hikes are driven by three primary considerations: the weather, seasons, and accessibility. In regard to the weather, she claimed that she chooses locations of higher elevations in the summer and lower elevations in the winter. Beyond this, Rev. Madara noted that the seasons also aid in the decision making process. She stated, “some of it is to experience the fullness of beauty the season can offer e.g. Fourth of July Trail, Hawk Watch, Bosque Del Apache. Finally she attempts to locate “trails that would be accessible to most, while still offer a range of physical requirements...that are reasonable to do in a day and within a days drive...[being] longer on the trail than in the car”. In forming a hike with Mountain Cathedrals, Rev. Madara first selects the location and then moves towards the planning of the liturgy.

When choosing the liturgy, her decisions are also driven by two considerations: the specific monthly trail and the larger church calendar. In discussing her methods, she noted that,

“Sometimes something about the trail itself will spark a memory or inspiration about a scripture, as an example, the snowshoe hike sparked Psalm 51’s, ‘white as snow’. Sometimes I will pick a trail for a liturgical reason. The burn scars in the Jemez Valles Caldera. In the hike we start with death and destruction, and over the course of the hike find our way back to resurrection.”

Beyond the specific trail that prompts a scriptural idea, she also looks to the church calendar. She stated that sometimes,

“I look at the lectionary, especially one I will use on Sunday. It prepares them for their own spiritual journey. For example, the Petroglyphs hike, the focus has been recognizing the saints who had gone before, and it’s good to do around All Saints Day.”

While discussing the goals of Mountain Cathedrals with Rev. Madara, she expressed the way she creates and structures the hikes, but in light of this, she is hopeful that the hikes themselves have an impact on the congregants. She noted that the outdoor environment is in a sense a “practical theology”, in which God interacts with human life and in turn, the trail becomes a metaphor for life. In light of this, she hopes that the congregants walk away with

“a deeper connection with other people, a deeper connection with God, and a deeper awareness of God’s hand in everyday life; that the parallel/metaphor can be transferred to everyday; to become and incubator for the everyday. The separation between sacred and secular is not just bridged on the hike, but in everyday life as well.”

As seen, Rev. Madara has intentionally formed and structured Mountain Cathedrals so that the congregants, in the end, walk away with a new lens and are changed. Rev. Madara’s expressions are substantiated and affirmed via the congregants statements, and her goal and hopes for Mountain Cathedrals reached. From here, I turn to congregant interviews and the analysis of the responses.

5.1 Relations with Non-Human Built Environments:

The non-human built environment, the more-than-human, or “nature” as it is often referred to (Castree 2017), has a deep connection with humanity (Armstrong 1995; Milstein & Krolokke 2012; Arellano 2013). The hikers that join Mountain Cathedrals are no different. Each of them brings to Mountain Cathedrals their own prior perceptions of

and relations to the more-than-human world. This prior perception helps frame their own experiences of Mountain Cathedrals, but also creates a unique platform for Mountain Cathedrals to affect their own prior perceptions. The hikers that were interviewed shared the following sentiments regarding their own relations to the non-human built environment (* quotes will be further expounded on below):

Figure 10: Statements related to the non-human built environment (All data presented below refers to relations to the non-human built environment – no further sub-themes are present)

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>* “you are feeling kinda down or lost, you need to have some time to think. I go out by myself, usually in Joshua Tree National Park and lay down my sleeping bag...I just need some time...it’s very quiet and there’s nobody around...I always come back [home] and [say] it’s okay, I am ready to tackle this now.”</p> | <p>* “when I am out in nature on my own and when it is not there for a specific spiritual purpose, I feel that connection...when I hike, I am not doing it so much for fitness, I am a mindful hiker. I am never in a hurry...I stop to take pictures, I look at plants, and I look at rocks...I am mindful of God’s presence”</p> | <p>*“The wonder of it all and the quiet peace, those are things that I look for in a connection to God. God is in a way unknowable, so the best we can do is to learn from what he has done. It seems to me that the closer we get to his creation, as opposed to what man has done, the closer we get to learning a little bit about the definition of God.”</p> |
| <p>“In my view, the outdoors is just a part of that universal search to know what this entity is like that did this [created].”</p> | <p>*“I don’t go outdoors just to go out, I’m either fishing or I’m doing photography...I’ve got a goal.”</p> | <p>“The religious connection is maybe not so conscious...I’m not having communion, but I still appreciate what God is all about.”</p> |
| <p>“I don’t particularly like to do it [hike] alone...[it’s] a dangerous thing to do, and that kind of got me started [with Mountain Cathedrals], first it was just somebody to hike with.”</p> | <p>*“Even if we are doing something in the outdoors with some people, you don’t have a spiritual connection necessarily, you just got a common interest in fishing.”</p> | <p>“I don’t think that man makes any closer connection to God than what God did [created].”</p> |
| <p>*“It’s just enjoyable, I like being in nature, I’ve always enjoyed hunting, fishing, camping, backpacking. It is just a connection I think we...need to have as modern people...the connection with nature.”</p> | <p>*It is fun, it’s relaxing, you get out of the busyness of everything you do...it is the busyness of what you want to do, not what is required of you.”</p> | <p>*“The apex of the outdoors was when I was ten years old...my dad took us...to go backpacking...To this day, I take my kids to that same river, it is a majestic place for me because I got to go there as a young man and I have taken each one of my children... It is a tradition now to go back to the Black River...that is majestic, a</p> |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| | | life of memory, and I hope to pass that on to my children, so someday they will do the same.” |
| “It is time to just be with yourselves.” | “When I am at work today, I know exactly what I’m doing. When you are in the woods, you know what you’re doing, but anything can happen.” | “When you get out in the woods like that, when you’re away from everything, it just makes you appreciate what God has given us in this creation...and you take care of each other.” |
| “It is focused.” | “It is a great time with my daughter.” | *“I [went] to go hiking.” |

Of these statements, I will note and further comment on a few of them, in order to illuminate the distinct relations between the hikers and the non-human built environment.

Mark, a regular participant with Mountain Cathedrals for the past year, stated that he often views the non-human built environment in light of God being the Creator and when,

“you are feeling kinda down or lost, you need to have some time to think. I go out by myself, usually in Joshua Tree National Park and lay down my sleeping bag...I just need some time...it’s very quiet and there’s nobody around...I always come back [home] and [say] it’s okay, I am ready to tackle this now”.

Another prior sentiment expressed of the non-human built environment was stated by Julia, a first-time hiker with Mountain Cathedrals. She shared that,

“when I am out in nature on my own and when it is not there for a specific spiritual purpose, I feel that connection...when I hike, I am not doing it so much for fitness, I am a mindful hiker. I am never in a hurry...I stop to take pictures, I look at plants, and I look at rocks...I am mindful of God’s presence”.

As was the case for many of the hikers, they had a prior connection to the more-than-human world before attending Mountain Cathedrals—giving reason to why they have

been predisposed to attend the hike. This can further be seen when Christopher, a regular Mountain Cathedrals attendee stated,

“I don’t go outdoors just to go out, I’m either fishing or I’m doing photography...I’ve got a goal...Even if we are doing something in the outdoors with some people, you don’t have a spiritual connection necessarily, you just got a common interest in fishing”.

A similar sentiment was also expressed by Joseph and Milly, when they discussed their ability to enjoy the outdoors.

“It’s just enjoyable, I like being in nature, I’ve always enjoyed hunting, fishing, camping, backpacking. It is just a connection I think we...need to have as modern people...the connection with nature.”

“It is fun, it’s relaxing, you get out of the busyness of everything you do...it is the busyness of what you want to do, not what is required of you.”

However, this predisposition does not take away from the experiences with Mountain Cathedrals, but only enhances them and gives them further credence. This can be seen directly in the way in which, the non-human built environment of the outdoors can be non-spiritual, yet still be impacting. The outdoors, for many of the hikers was rooted in memory and tradition. This was most explicitly expressed by Joseph’s prior experiences with the non-human built environment.

“The apex of the outdoors was when I was ten years old...my dad took us...to go backpacking...To this day, I take my kids to that same river, it is a majestic place for me because I got to go there as a young man, and I have taken each one of my children... It is a tradition now to go back to the Black River...that is majestic, a life of memory, and I hope to pass that on to my children, so someday they will do the same.”

Finally, although the non-human built environment has unique properties i.e. of memory, of enjoyment, of focus, it also provides a bridge and is a stepping stone into the spiritual

for the hikers of Mountain Cathedrals. This sentiment is best noted by Christopher when he stated that,

“The wonder of it all and the quiet peace, those are things that I look for in a connection to God. God is in a way unknowable, so the best we can do is to learn from what he has done. It seems to me that the closer we get to his creation, as opposed to what man has done, the closer we get to learning a little bit about the definition of God”.

As seen, many of the statements from the hikers demonstrated a prior connection or predisposition to the non-human built environment of the outdoors. Although this may be the initial pull and attraction to participate in the hike, as expressed by Joseph, “I [went] to go hiking.”, it did not simply end there. Instead because of this predisposition, many of the hikers had a heightened sensitivity to the non-human built environment around them. They took care in viewing the outdoor spaces around them and reflected upon the effect that the non-human built environment has upon them. Ultimately, the non-human built environment, for the hikers interviewed, provided a means and connection to the spirituality that they married with the various outdoor environments. Specifically, it should be noted that many of the connections they drew were centered around their belief, and the central belief of Christianity (Gen. 1-3), that the non-human built environment, although not created by humans, was in fact created by God, and that the non-human built environment is thus an extension of God and his work i.e. general revelation. Thus, by engaging with the non-human built environment of the outdoors, they are in fact able to engage with God through his creation. According to the statements presented above, this is sometimes expressed explicitly and other times, not expressed at all, thus serving as an undertone. The statements serve to express the ways in which the

hikers view the non-human built environment apart from the structured liturgy of Mountain Cathedrals.

5.2 Relations with Liturgy and the Human Built Environment of the Christian Church:

In a similar manner, each hiker, regardless of their religious background, brought with them preconceived notions about worship and religion in traditional Christian church environments. On the hikes that I attended, the majority of the participants came from a Christian background; however, some did not. Of the people who volunteered to be interviewed, each came from a Christian background and are professing Christians. Although this was the case, each came from their own different backgrounds and attend various churches. Thus, each hiker has varying viewpoints on the liturgy and practices present in a typical worship service. Though there are differences in many churches, the vast majority of Christian churches include scripture reading, prayer, and communion in their services, similar to the liturgical elements that Mountain Cathedrals includes. Prayer, scripture reading, and communion are the primary liturgical elements utilized on the hikes.

Each participant shared their own experiences and perceptions of the liturgical elements that they have regularly engaged with in their own past traditional church experiences. These prior experiences will serve to frame their own past experiences and will help illuminate the significance of the liturgy of the hikes with Mountain Cathedrals. In response to the traditional environment of the church and the liturgy, the hikers expressed the following sentiments (* quotes will be further expounded on below):

Figure 11: Statements Related to Liturgy and the Human Built Environment of the Christian Church (All data presented below refers to relations to liturgy – no further sub-themes are present)

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>*“the church feels more confining to me, because there are more rules—I have to sit in this pew and I have to get this hymnal out, or I have to kneel. There is all that structure. Some of the structure is from the building and the way they use it. We have to have the choir here, because there is the choir loft, and the minister has to stand here, because there is the pulpit. I don’t like that rigidity.”</p> | <p>*“when you are in the formality of the church, it is very structured, and in the Baptist church, the deacons carry the things down and you get the wine, and you get to interact with the minister, but not the other people.”</p> | <p>*“I have never really been a fan of communion, but I love the bread. I have been to a lot of regular church services and usually you’re there, sitting, being lectured to...it is a one-way street. When the communion comes around, it is like an assembly line—it’s the cafeteria.”</p> |
| <p>*“in church, my mind begins to wander...just trying to make it through the hour-long service.”</p> | <p>*“In church you are just sitting...there is not much of a connection and you don’t really learn anything about those people, you are really just sitting here by yourself...sitting in church, it is sort of participation, but it’s much more of an isolated one.”</p> | <p>*“The closest connections I made in traditional churches have been when I am doing church volunteer work, or working at the church with people. Again, it is this connection that is meaningful to me.”</p> |
| <p>“The church service, per se, doesn’t do a lot for me, and frankly, it really doesn’t. But the Sunday school class, if you have a really good class, I think that’s meaningful.... You make connections with people...you are working together with other Christians to do something. I get more out of that than I do out of a traditional church service.”</p> | <p>*“I grew to love the liturgy because it did focus you down, I mean once you got to understand why you were doing things. I will also say that after years and years of doing it it became so rote that I had to remember why we were doing it, not just spouting off the Apostles Creed because I had memorized it... I wish there was more liturgy now because I am missing that focus time.”</p> | <p>*“It focuses you in on what you believe, in the holiness of God and what Jesus did for us—that he is our savior, and what we truly believe. But it is like anything else, I mean you say the Lord’s Prayer over and over...and never think about what you’re saying.”</p> |
| <p>“I still think literature is very important, I think scripture is the focus...In the Anglican Episcopal church, they did everything by rote...When you read the same one [scripture] every week it loses its synthesis and when you do the same prayers every week, it is no longer a prayer.”</p> | <p>“If you engage, it’ll either confirm what you believe or confirm that you got a problem and that you got to reevaluate and do some more studying.”</p> | <p>*“You don’t join a building, you join people.”</p> |
| <p>*“There’s many times at the service that helps me get into understanding who and</p> | <p>“Church has the ability to bring you God, if you got to do it every week, it</p> | <p>“I think that they [the outdoors and</p> |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>what God was, there was also a time when I got tired of it...I do remember a time when going to the service was a moment and a time to worship...I wasn't happy with this, when we were no longer worshipping God, but it was ritual."</p> | <p>does get tough. When you go outdoors, it is something different...I can appreciate God in the outdoors, I can appreciate God in the building, it is two different experiences."</p> | <p>the church] complement each other. Different seasonings, you know putting a little salt on your chocolate."</p> |
|---|--|--|

In accordance with the statements above, there were several running sub-themes that are addressed below. In dealing with the rigidity of the traditional church space, Julia stated that,

"the church feels more confining to me, because there are more rules—I have to sit in this pew and I have to get this hymnal out, or I have to kneel. There is all that structure. Some of the structure is from the building and the way they use it. We have to have the choir here, because there is the choir loft, and the minister has to stand here, because there is the pulpit. I don't like that rigidity".

Furthermore, Julia addressed attitudes towards communion as,

"when you are in the formality of the church, it is very structured, and in the Baptist church, the deacons carry the things down and you get the wine, and you get to interact with the minister, but not the other people".

In a similar manner, Mark expressed another sentiment regarding communion.

"I have never really been a fan of communion, but I love the bread. I have been to a lot of regular church services and usually you're there, sitting, being lectured to...it is a one-way street. When the communion comes around, it is like an assembly line—it's the cafeteria."

Finally, Debra, when discussing her past church experiences, noted that,

"in church, my mind begins to wander...just trying to make it through the hour-long service".

Each of these sentiments express a feeling of discontent or awkwardness that is involved in a traditional church service. Much of the time, traditional Christian churches, as it was expressed, consist of structure and rigidity that ultimately seems to impede the worship of the congregants.

However, a second sub-theme arises, in that the traditional Christian church functions as a place for people to make connections with other people and build relationship. The notion of connection and relationability is unbalanced, as can be seen in Christopher's claim that,

“In church you are just sitting...there is not much of a connection and you don't really learn anything about those people, you are really just sitting here by yourself...sitting in church, it is sort of participation, but it's much more of an isolated one”.

This imbalance is further highlighted when Christopher went on to express the ways in which he has been able to build connections.

“The closest connections I made in traditional churches have been when I am doing church volunteer work or working at the church with people. Again, it is this connection that is meaningful to me.”

Although seemingly unbalanced, the liturgy and congregants of the church are further complexed in a third sub-theme that highlights the imbalanced nature of the meaning behind the liturgy and the rote and ritualistic form it can take within a service. Milly points this phenomenon out in her experience of attending a new church.

“I grew to love the liturgy because it did focus you down, I mean once you got to understand why you were doing things. I will also say that after years and years of doing it became so rote that I had to remember why we were doing it, not just spouting off the Apostles Creed because I had memorized it... I wish there was more liturgy now because I am missing that focus time.”

In a similar manner, Joseph claimed that,

“It focuses you in on what you believe, in the holiness of God and what Jesus did for us--that he is our savior, and what we truly believe. But it is like anything else, I mean you say the Lord's Prayer over and over...and never think about what you're saying”.

“There's many times at the service that helps me get into understanding who and what God was, there was also a time when I got tired of it...I do remember a time when going to the service was a moment and a time to worship...I wasn't happy with this, when we were no longer worshipping God, but it was ritual.”

These statements demonstrate the ways in which the traditional Christian church can be rigid, liturgically unbalanced, yet offer a unique connection between people by providing a place where relationships can happen, although maybe not as significantly during the liturgy and worship elements of the service.

Overall, each of the hikers shared similar sentiments regarding the liturgy and order of the services that they have attended in traditional church services. This is to show, not the shortcomings of the traditional Christian church, but to serve as a springboard in order to highlight the ways in which liturgy at Mountain Cathedrals enhances and creates new and affective experiences for the congregants. Mountain Cathedrals, in its essence is a unique and different experience than a traditional service. In its formation, it is not intended to be an alternate, but a complimentary experience. However, what will be seen is that in many instances, it provides the missing elements, and succeeds in many ways that the traditional Christian church is unable to do, according to the hiker's sentiments.

5.3 Affective and Emotional Experiences with Mountain Cathedrals:

Building off the prior experiences and perceptions of the non-human built environment and traditional church liturgy, the hikers that were interviewed told of how they were impacted by their experiences on the hikes with Mountain Cathedrals. In this section, I highlight affectual and emotional experiences that the hikers expressed. These experiences bring together the hiker's prior experiences of the non-human built environment and their traditional church experiences, by displaying the significance of the worship that occurs at Mountain Cathedrals. Thus, Mountain Cathedrals ultimately

functions as a complimentary site that addresses and rectifies many of the issues and challenges, as stated by the hikers, as well as demonstrated by the literature, within the traditional contemporary Christian church. I draw from theories of affect and emotion by further analyzing them and applying them to the hikers claims and experiences. Affectual and emotional experiences of the hike were the most significant, impactful, and most transforming features discussed by the hikers. I have selected a few of the significant statements regarding personal affectual and emotional experiences. In addressing the statements, I will not parse out and categorize the statements based on their affectual and emotional qualities. Although, this may render a clear approach, affect and emotion are inherently tied together, so that in parsing out the statements, I would be undermining the connection. However, as I highlight the significant statements, I look at both affectual and emotional experiences, and identify the key elements of the statements. I move to categorize the affectual and emotional experiences by sub-themes. The sub-themes center upon the central topic, idea, or experience that the affect or emotion is centered upon. The sub-themes have been selected based upon the identified phenomena and experiences expressed by the hiker, as well as aligning with the process of sacralization as discussed by prominent scholars.

The sub-themes are as follows: practice, shared experience, sensuous experience, and sacred fusion. Prior to the categorization of the sub-themes, I explain each theme, as well as their points of origin and significance—centered upon my own rationale for selecting and identifying these themes. First, statements that fall under practice reflect the hiker’s active “doing”. In tying it to literature, it is in essence performance—an active and intentional bodily engagement and ritual performed by the hiker, physically or

symbolically, with the space and its features. The idea of practice is evident in the process of sacralization as pointed out by Holloway (2003); della Dora (2009); Finlayson (2017). The second category is that of shared experience. Statements that have been categorized under the guise of shared experience center upon instances in which the hikers relate to, interact with, commune with one-another. This is substantiated by Holloway (2006); Woods (2013); Finlayson (2017). Third, sensuous experience looks to direct affectual and emotional experiences that engage the senses. Holloway (2003); Kraftl & Adey (2008); Finlayson (2015, 2017) significantly note the role that the senses play in the creation of sacred space. Finally, the most complex and unique manifestation of affect comes in the form of sacred fusion. Though not as explicit as the prior categories, sacred fusion is as such: when a subject is acted upon or affected by an “object” (though the object may be animate or conscious), when this interaction takes place, a two-fold experience occurs. First, the realms of the ordinary and sacred are broken down, thus creating a fission between the two seemingly distinct spaces. As a result, the subject and object are then fused and are no longer separate. There is a sense of oneness, an ephemeral connection between the two that ultimately causes the subject to act based off the experience. This sacred fusion is highlighted and expressed in Holloway (2003, 2006) and Lockwood (2016). From here, the statements are as follows (* quotes will be further expounded on below):

Figure 12: Statements Related to Affective and Emotional Experiences with Mountain Cathedrals (All data presented below refer to affective and emotional experiences and have been further categorized by sub-theme)

| Practice | Shared Experience | Sensuous Experience | Sacred Fission/Fusion |
|--|--|--|-------------------------------|
| “scripture reading is significant for me, it | “[The hikes] meant a lot more to me than before. | “being outside expands the walls [of the | *“I went into the cave...I am |

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| <p>is a meditation—powerful.”</p> | <p>It was at first just somebody to hike with...it is a lot more than that now--a connection to people and a connection to God....It combines two things that really mean a lot to me, getting in the outdoors and developing some connections to people...so it's done a lot for me, I really appreciate it is there.”</p> | <p>church] and inside you are blindfolded to the beauty.”</p> | <p>in there and, not just clowning around and taking pictures, but I am thinking. You have Christ in the tomb and I am imagining how the people felt when they came and found the tomb empty. I am putting myself in their place...I was sitting there lost in thought...The solidity of the space. It was a solid space. It was cold. It was dark. It was a good way to put myself in the situation.”</p> |
| <p>*“This weekend reinforced it and [we] may bring it on some of our own hikes to do. Something, read scripture...to bring out worship outside the Sunday morning, the church building type thing.”</p> | <p>“A church is not a building, but the people.”</p> | <p>“[Mountain Cathedrals] is a powerful experience—a meditation, I always come away renewed, relaxed, and focused—recentering myself.”</p> | <p>*“A lady [we were hiking with], it was the year loss of her daughter. We were watching the wind in the pine trees—powerful. So we sat down and right when we did, a breeze came in and moved the pine needles in the light. We all thought it was for her.”</p> |
| <p>On liturgy with Mountain Cathedrals – “She [the hike leader] gives us more tools to work with.”</p> | <p>On communion – “The way Melissa, [the hike leader], does it where we have to go around the circle [taking communion] and it connects you to the next person...You have to really think</p> | <p>“When you come over a crest, when you drop into a valley, when you do whatever it is that you’re doing, you get these moments of beauty.”</p> | <p>*“When we got to the Eye of the Sandias, it was much more meaningful because we kind of had to work to get there...we had to work to</p> |

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| | about what you are saying—‘this is Christ’s body broken for you and this is the blood of Christ shed for you’...I think it means a lot more.” | | meet God, and now we’re wrapped in his warmth and his shelter.” |
| “The communion just really ties all of that together and it makes the connection more meaningful, that you have a relationship with these other folks.” | “Yes we have a leader, but we are all human beings here in the church—I like that sort of equality.” | “I believe I had to open myself up for God to reach me, because I was cold, the wind was blowing, and I am thinking I truly had to go, ‘Okay, we are worshipping now’, I had to bring myself beyond that...I had to make myself ‘look up to the hills’ and meaningfully I could bring that scripture to life.” | *On slipping into a river - “Being in the water and being out in nature, it was almost like the river was trying to get me baptized...in life, you never know what is going to be around the corner...at those points in the river, at the turn, you have to keep praying, ‘show me which way to go’, ‘which job to get’...at that point on the trail, you just need divine intervention on some of these things.” |
| “The scripture reading was more participatory...she would read it, or have us read it and elicit conversation.” | *“It is almost more of a spiritual experience than the church because, in church, you are not just sitting...but doing something with people.” | *“You see the power of God, I mean it’s right in front of you---you see that thunderstorm coming. It makes you think about things...I mean a hundred million volts, its powerful, it just makes obvious man’s insignificance.” | “So to me, when I am doing something like that that puts me in a place that I think God’s works are more visible or His presence more felt, I am going there because of that I am building a connection.” |
| *“I make a parallel thing when we read scripture and do communion...we’re | “The most significant impact...is communion among a group that has | *“When I came up over that ridge and we saw the valley and the snow in the | “A pilgrim’s journey...In the midst of life’s |

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| <p>connecting consciously to God through what we are doing...In this active doing...I am doing this because I feel that it is my way to connect to God.”</p> | <p>more in connections than just being in church on Sunday.”</p> | <p>Manzanos, the majesticness, that was where God was.”</p> | <p>unsurety [there is] a wavering ‘Yes’--we can push on.”</p> |
| <p>*“When we did the communion...it felt more natural, there was a small circle of us, we were sharing this and we literally passed it from one another and it went around the group...this was like we were all one body...you to me, me to you. Because the church is the people, it feels more connected.”</p> | <p>“I think the Mountain Cathedrals thing adds a bit to the outdoors thing, it adds a human connection to the hike, because most of my other experiences in the outdoors has been alone. I see religion as a mostly connections thing, it’s about connecting with other people. Spirituality, in my view is the connection to God. So if you bring those two together, and I think Mountain Cathedrals has done that in a really unique way. I appreciate that.”</p> | <p>“Sometimes you have to fight with yourself, to say ‘I will meet God’. God is there, and it’s me, I have to go beyond.”</p> | <p>“hiking is a metaphor for life.”</p> |
| <p>“I think it was true communion of the saints.”</p> | <p>“I had not done communion where you passed from one to the other...I thought it was a great connection. I guess it was a godly connection, but it also was a human one.”</p> | <p>“On top of Mt. Taylor, I was really glad I made it... I felt close to God...it was a hard walk to get there...it makes you feel better in the sense that you have achieved something that’s tough.”</p> | <p>“Worry comes when we have an image of what life should be like.”</p> |
| <p>“I have mentally gone back to that space since we’ve been there. I have thought about it a lot and...the communion...it really felt like communion.”</p> | <p>“I did a five mile hike last October and only made it because of the encouragement of another.”</p> | <p>“I didn’t go on the hike for a liturgical experience, I went to go hiking...I came away with a liturgical experience.”</p> | <p>“Usually worry about little things.”</p> |
| <p>“We all broke bread, that’s what Christ did, sat down with his buddies and told them what they were going to do.”</p> | <p>“A sense of peace, and a sense of community, and a sense of shared experience, which is the spiritual one.”</p> | <p>*“Space and silence is beautiful.” “If we listen to him, God will help.”</p> | <p>“Going through a career change and I do not worry about things.”</p> |
| <p>“Communion in the</p> | <p>“We got to know each</p> | <p>“Moment to pause and say</p> | <p>“Don’t worry</p> |

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| outdoors is the best sanctuary of all, better than a building.” | other a little bit, that’s what the space gave us.” | ‘wow,’ I’ve never seen that before.” | about what is next.” |
| “Scripture sticks out - ‘do not worry.’” | “When three or more are gathered, that’s what makes it sacred.” | “The uncertainty of the outdoors—darkness, lightning...grounds you. There are so many things that aren’t important in the big scheme of things.” | “Outside is very cleansing and purifying.” |
| “God will listen if we listen” | “I think people feel freer to participate.” | “‘Lift up my eyes to the hills’, it’s what I have been doing with the Sandia’s.” | “When we stopped to do communion, I sensed angelic presences gathering there with us. And watching the splendid colors of the sunset it’s hard not to know something awesome created it.” |
| “Scripture reading and prayer helps remind me of the wonders of nature and be thankful to God who created the world to sustain us and for us to enjoy.” | “Communion [is significant]. But not sure why. Maybe communion is more meaningful since I have a relationship with all those participating.” | “hiking opens your eyes to nature’s wonders, and you can see the hand of God wherever you look.” | “There is something to take away with me after the excursion. Something I can take into my life with Christ. That doesn’t necessarily happen in a leisure hike.” |
| “I was most impacted by scripture reading and taking communion with Christians outside my home church.” | “To worship with other Christians outside my immediate church community...” | “The beauty and stillness of nature in the outdoors brings me a sense of peace and relaxation and an escape from the pressures of everyday life.” | |
| [The most meaningful aspect] “hearing the scripture read several times, then hearing the | “Working together as a group to achieve our goal. I’m not always a “group” person, so group | “Mountain Cathedrals is full of sounds of nature and conversation amongst church members.” | |

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| responses.” | success is encouraging to me. “ | | |
| “I liked the slow pace, scripture, and reflection.” | <p>“I enjoy the variety of people that attend and differing perspectives on life and faith...</p> <p>I appreciate how the hike itself creates community.”</p> | “The beauty of nature in the landscapes and the wildlife brings me closer to God.” | |

In analyzing and pulling out significant statements, I highlight two significant quotes from each category. The analysis conducted on each statement serve as a proxy for the categories and demonstrate the ways in which the categories and quotes are significant and come together to sacralize the spaces of Mountain Cathedrals.

Beginning with practice, Christopher discussed the ways in which the specific liturgies of communion and scripture reading that typically take place within the traditional human-built environment take on the forms of practice, in a similar sense to that of performance, as expressed by Finlayson (2012) and Pile (2010). Active and embodied “doing” begins the process of creating a sacred space. In this, Christopher made the connection to Buddhists of Bhutan that he spent time with, relating their prayer flags to the Christian practices of scripture and communion. He states,

“I make a parallel thing when we read scripture and do communion...we’re connecting consciously to God through what we are doing...In this active doing...I am doing this because I feel that it is my way to connect to God.”

This active doing that he identifies, ultimately allows him to participate and experience God. In a way, the actions he takes is the medium in which he can connect to the sacred, and thus the practice that occurs engages him with the sacred.

The experience centered on active practice, comes in the form of affectual and emotional experience. Not only is the practice realized and felt, but it is actualized. On communion, one hiker noted that,

“The most significant impact...is communion among a group that has more in connections than just being in church on Sunday”.

In this case, the practice of communion in the outdoors has a unique effect, of which we will see momentarily. However, what can be seen here is that the act and practice of communion, in a new and significant way specific to Mountain Cathedrals, allowed for affectual and emotional experiences. From what has been demonstrated in the literature, affectual experiences cause one to “think, feel, and act” (Kraftl and Adey 2008). One hiker noted that this was the exact effect that the experience had upon her. Milly claimed that,

“This weekend reinforced it and [we] may bring it on some of our own hikes to do. Something like, read scripture...to bring out worship outside the Sunday morning church building type thing”.

What can be seen here is that, through the active engagement with the liturgy, scripture reading, and communion the hiker was moved to action. This statement was a reflection upon the affectual experiences she had during the hike. This is but one example of the role practice plays in affectual experience.

To bring it together, Milly also noted that,

“When we got to the Eye of the Sandia’s, it was much more meaningful because we kind of had to work to get there...we had to work to meet God, and now we’re wrapped in his warmth and his shelter”.

Though this is an example of sensuous experience and sacred fusion, as will be discussed below, it shows that there were other affectual experiences at work in this instance. Through the communion and scripture (practice) and the relations between

people (the hikers), and space (the warmth of God's presence), she was ultimately lifted to action. Brought together, Milly was caused to act via her affectual experience, and the action was that she would, because of her experience in that moment, begin to apply and bring liturgical elements into her own personal hikes.

Moving towards shared experience, many of the hikers claimed that a significant aspect of the hike was the relationships and community they engage in. In the interviews, many hikers expressed the fact that they initially joined the hike because they wanted other people to hike with. However, after experiencing the hike, they walked away with much more. Although they were seeking a connection to people, the connections they made were much deeper and meaningful than they originally thought they would be. This came as a result of the affectual and emotional experiences they had when hiking and relating with people.

The relational and shared experience aspects of the hike are not isolated from the other aspects of practice, senses, and fusion/fission. They are complimentary and all come together to create a sacred space. However, each one is a minute manifestation of affectual experience at work. This is evidenced in the claims of one of the hikers,

“It is almost more of a spiritual experience than the church because, in church, you are not just sitting...but doing something with people”.

In making this statement, the hiker noted that not only was the spiritual experience more heightened than in a church service, but the spirituality and heightening came from a shared experience. Each hiker came together with a common, mental, physical, and spiritual goal—to hike. Throughout the hike, hikers must aid one another, and as another hiker claimed,

“I did a five-mile hike last October and only made it because of the encouragement of another [hiker]”.

Although not specifically spiritual, this statement demonstrates the fact that hikers aid each other, and through this process build a unique connection with one another.

Furthermore, on a personal note, I myself even caught falls and stabilized hikers on several of the hikes. This, along with the discussion, begins to foster a unique relationship, one that does not often happen within the built environment of the church. Beyond this, the shared experience became most meaningful to the hikers, when after they worked together to get to the peak of the hikes, they sat and took communion together. In this, Julia claimed that,

“When we did the communion...it felt more natural, there was a small circle of us, we were sharing this and we literally passed it from one another and it went around the group...this was like we were all one body...you to me, me to you. Because the church is the people, it feels more connected”.

Julia’s statement highlights several aspects of shared experience. First, she noted the human connection of passing the bread and cup from one person to another (this was also expressed by other hikers). She then noted that the bodies became one. There was ultimately a unity of body and spirit, as each hiker partook in communion, once again a shared experience. Finally, she noted that in this moment, the people became the church. The church in this case was not a building, it was not an environment built by humans, but something more-than-human, similar to that of Woods (2013).

These statements are similar to and reflect the many other sentiments expressed by the hikers. Many hikers during the interviews recalled the names of other hikers, mentioning by name. Some of them they had known, but others were entirely new

relationships fostered. This further evidences the significance behind the relationally shared experiences that occur at Mountain Cathedrals.

In a third turn, I now look to affectual and emotional experiences that manifest themselves as sensuous experiences. Sensuous experiences are those which primarily engage the senses, via sounds, smell, touch, taste, and sight. Each one has played a unique role in at Mountain Cathedrals. Hikers have mentioned the taste of bread at communion, the touch of warmth and cold, the sounds of thunder and wind, the beautiful sights, etc. Sensuous experience, as an extension and sub-category of affectual and emotional experience plays a major role in the creation of sacred space. Of the many hikers who pointed out their sensuous experiences, only a few will be highlighted. Debra, a hiker who has participated with Mountain Cathedrals for about a year, relayed many impactful experiences that she has had with the group. In speaking about a full moon hike in Los Lunas, she stated that the,

“full moon, it was elusive—the way it revealed itself. It was glorious and the lightning storm—impressive visually”.

In another comment on the lightning, Christopher noted,

“You see the power of God, I mean it’s right in front of you—you see that thunderstorm coming. It makes you think about things...I mean a hundred million volts, its powerful, it just makes obvious man’s insignificance”.

Finally, once again when discussing the role of sight, Joseph expressed,

“When I came up over that ridge and we saw the valley and the snow in the Manzanos, the majesticness, that was where God was”.

In these three specific instances, the sense of sight played the main role. Through seeing the non-human built environment, the hikers experienced unique revelations from the environment that they would extend as the work of God. Feelings of glory, power,

insignificance, and majesty were communicated through the non-human built environment. Each hiker experienced these images in a unique way; however, in each instance, the hiker was impacted. From these visuals, it was made known that God's presence was with them in the non-human built environment, and elicited feelings that God is much greater than man.

One final way in which beauty was communicated were through touch and sound, or the lack thereof. One hiker claimed that,

“Space and silence is beautiful”.

In this short but significant statement, the hiker notes two key elements. One, is that it is not just the presence of a sense that has an effect, but the absence of it can be just as meaningful. This also can serve to heighten and focus other senses. Two, in this case, it was the absence of touch and sound, specifically, in silence. Silence was the key to beauty for the hiker. This further demonstrates the ability the senses have in impacting a person and inciting emotional and affectual experiences, and specifically in this case, the experience of beauty.

In the final exploration of sub-themes within the affectual and emotional experiences had on Mountain Cathedrals, I look into the complex, yet unique experience of sacred fusion. Sacred fusion is the moment when the boundaries of the sacred and ordinary are broken down. Through this breakdown of space, the subject and object are allowed to fuse together. This fusion allows the subject to see from a unique perspective—to see to the sacred. This experience causes the subject to change and act in a new way, as a response to the experience that was just had. I point out and explain specific instances of this by analyzing the statements of the hikers of Mountain

Cathedrals. In the analysis, I pull from the works of prominent scholars to substantiate my claims and select four statements from the hikers to analyze.

In Debra's experiences on Mountain Cathedrals, she stated the following:

“A lady [we were hiking with], it was the year loss of her daughter. We were watching the wind in the pine trees—powerful. So we sat down and right when we did, a breeze came in and moved the pine needles in the light. We all thought it was for her.”

This statement elicits much of the same ideas and aspects as pointed out by Holloway (2003) of an affectual moment that interrupted the monotonous. In a similar manner to Holloway's example of a seeker whose friend coincidentally showed up on the street at an ironic time, Debra attributes this situation to a deity. Considering Holloway's previous analysis, this shows that the interruption of the pine needles broke down the everyday and ordinary act of sitting looking at trees (Holloway 2003). Thus, the instance, at the moment of interruption and realization became different. It was not an everyday moment, but instead the instant heightened the hiker's awareness of the spiritual. Ultimately, as seen in Holloway's example, the act allowed for the sacred to be revealed (Holloway 2003).

A further instance of affectual significance was when Mark stated,

“Being in the water and being out in nature, it was almost like the river was trying to get me baptized...in life, you never know what is going to be around the corner...at those points in the river, at the turn, you have to keep praying, show me which way to go, which job to get...at that point on the trail, you just need divine intervention on some of these things...I had no clue my daughter was going to be moving out this week”.

First, it should be noted that in this instance, Mark gave the river autonomy and the ability to act. His categories of which entities have power were shifted. The more-than-human was recognized. This is a form of listening, communicating, and ordering in life, as portrayed by Carbaugh and Boromisza-Habashi (2011). Secondly, in this

moment, the divide between the individual and environment, the subject and object was deconstructed. At this point in time, Mark, through his experience, was joined with the river and the river was not only able to speak to him, through divine intervention, but at that moment, prior to the relation of the two, the subject and object were fused together. The subject, Mark, was unable to be disconnected from the affectual experience (Lockwood 2016). In turn, this experience had the ability to be manifested and represented, but also had the ability to incite change in physical behavior, in both the literal steps that Mark took through the river and in actual life changes.

Another striking experience that was had by Mark was on a hike in a cave. He stated,

“I went into the cave...I am in there and, not just clowning around and taking pictures, but I am thinking. You have Christ in the tomb and I am imagining how the people felt when they came and found the tomb empty. I am putting myself in their place...I was sitting there lost in thought...The solidity of the space. It was a solid space. It was cold. It was dark. It was a good way to put myself in the situation”.

This unique experience not only elicits sensuous experiences of the cold and solidity (touch) and darkness (sight), but in this, again the sacred and ordinary is broken down. The ordinary state of the cave becomes sacred as Mark is able to see the biblical and sacred narrative of Christ in the tomb and the visitors to the tomb, prior to Christ's death. In this case, the cave is no longer the Sandia Man Cave, but the tomb of Christ, a sacred space (Holloway 2003). Furthermore, in this instance, Mark himself was placed into the narrative. It was not the disciples visiting the tomb, but he himself. This is a fusion of the subject and object. Mark is now a part of the narrative of Christ and is within the sacralized cave, the subject and object are fused (Lockwood 2016). As a result of this

situation, Mark noted that this was a significant moment for him and caused him to view the space differently, ultimately moving him to change and action in thought.

The last instance I will highlight is regarding the liturgy. The following statement has been analyzed from the point of the view of shared experience, but will now be seen from the aspect of sacred fusion. This double analysis, once again, goes to show that these affectual and emotional experiences are not isolated instances, but are amalgamations of various features (sub-themes) that work together to sacralize a space. While reflecting on the communion that took place at Mountain Cathedrals, Julia noted,

“it felt more natural, there was a small circle of us, we were sharing this, and we literally passed it from one another and it went around the group...this was like we were all one body...you to me, me to you. Because the church is the people, it feels more connected”.

During this moment, Julia felt a deep connection to the community around her and felt as one body with them, undivided. This relates to Holloways’ observation (2006), that bodily connection actualizes sensation in an affectual moment. Furthermore, this connection to the hikers was accentuated and further enhanced the moment and created an affectual sense of equality that would not have been sensed without the medium of the communion at that specific location.

Each sub-theme works together to sacralize the various spaces of Mountain Cathedrals. The sacredness is fluid (della Dora 2009). The hikers experienced the spaces in different ways, yet in many significant ways. Thus, through affectual and emotional experiences of practice, shared experience, the senses, and sacred fusion, the spaces of Mountain Cathedrals were sacralized. The addition of liturgy to the non-human built environment further heightened the sacredness of the spaces and was a medium that cultivated and fostered the affectual and emotional experiences of Mountain Cathedrals.

5.4 Weaknesses and Limitations:

There are two main weaknesses and limitations. First, the number of interviews were less than expected. It was initially intended to have a minimum of 15 interviews. I was unable to secure this number, and in the end had a total of 11 interviews, 10 congregant interviews and 1 clergy interview. Since the attendance of Mountain Cathedrals varies greatly from month to month (sometimes 5 and others 15) and worship is often a personal topic not often shared, my numbers of interviews were lower than expected. However, I do believe that the survey responses were adequate substitutions in content, and that my own lengthy participation with the congregants on the hike was able to supplement as needed. Nevertheless, in the future, I would attempt to study the site for a longer period of time so that I might solicit more interviews. These interviews would add depth to the study and allow me to highlight aspects of the sacralization process that were not addressed or seen in my own results.

Secondly, I would note that the research of sacred space is very expansive and historically rich. Due to this fact, I was unable to delve into the many years of grey literature. Academic disciplines such as geography, sociology, psychology, or anthropology have their own views and theories of sacred space, but have largely neglected or overlooked grey literatures. In my own study of Mountain Cathedrals, I too did not address grey literatures. Furthermore, varying denominations of churches also have their own views with their own pastors, priests, and theologians addressing the topic. I was unable to include all of these relevant works. I did; however, attempt to include brief exposés of each, as seen in the literature review. As a result, I chose to primarily focus on the current geographic trends within the creation of sacred space. This was a

limitation, that in part, may have caused me to miss information and to neglect significant viewpoints and studies of sacred space happening within the Christian church, both past and present. However, within the scope of the project, I felt the literature to be adequate. In the future, I would expound upon this research by including grey literatures, various historic and current Indigenous perspectives of sacred space in the non-human built environment, as well as other historic Christian views i.e. Celtic thin space.

Each of these weaknesses and limitations would be addressed in future research to create a more robust set of data and analysis to lead to greater implications of the study reaching beyond the realm of geography.

6. Discussion:

Each of these instances brought about affectual and emotional experiences from within the hikers, experiences that can and have been supported by recent scholarship. I have shown that through the amalgamation of both the more-than-human environment of the outdoors, as well as the liturgical worship that took place during the hikes, a unique and affectual experience was created. In many ways, this experience was able to enhance the hikers' value of the more-than-human world, bring them closer to the God, the earth, and each other. Through each of these experiences, as expressed via the hikers, according to Holloway and Finlayson, sacred space was both created and entered into. The moments of affect allowed for a unique and set apart space to be fashioned, causing and inciting both forms of revelation and change within the hikers. Whether it be through images of awe and wonder of lightning storms, equality and oneness with community, or listening to and being acted upon by a river, the human was, in fact, affected and acted upon by the more-than human. From here, I highlight the uniqueness of the sacred space of Mountain Cathedrals as well as the ramifications of this research and argue that Mountain Cathedrals is a significant site at which two variations of sacred space (hierophanic and monumental) come together.

6.1 Ramifications of the Study:

The site and research that has taken place at Mountain Cathedrals is significant. The research site, as well as the general nature of the research is unique and fills various gaps. The study of Mountain Cathedrals addressed Kong's (2010) call, of which stated that geographers must lend their voices to the current discussions revolving around

religious and sacred spaces. This study accomplishes this goal by utilizing the current trends from within the discipline of geography to analyze the non-human built environments of Mountain Cathedrals. I did not and do not speak from other such fields such as religious studies, psychology, sociology, or anthropology. I do; however, use some of the current research in those fields as a backing, yet, this study primarily brings the current voice of geography into the discussions of sacred space. Geography should not be the only voice; however, this geographic study, in coherence with other recent psychological studies, sociological, or the like (Hovland 2016; Meagher 2018), will be able to add to the ability to better understand the creation and essence of sacred space.

The research site of Mountain Cathedrals in comparison to the recent geographic studies of Christian sacred space, is a unique site. Much of the current geographic research is situated on the traditional human built environment of the Christian church, centering on the rise, distribution, etc. of megachurches (Chaves 2006; Aleksic 2007; Wade, M., & Hynes, M. 2013; Warf, B., & Winsberg, M. 2010), or the creation of interior space (Kilde 2008; Daelemans 2015; Effa 2015). There is a small burgeoning area of research centered upon the fluidity of Christian sacred space. However, its focus is on either non-church sites i.e. pilgrimage sites and museums (Eade, J. & Sallnow, M. 1991; della Dora 2009, 2018) or has taken place within semi-non-traditional worship sites, but these sites could still be categorized as traditional. Finlayson (2015, 2017) looked into a Tai Chi center, as well as a church that met in an office complex. However, these sites are still not truly non-traditional. In response to this, Finlayson identified the need to study more non-traditional worship sites, sites of the variety that are truly non-traditional. Thus, the study of Mountain Cathedrals fulfills this call. There has not yet

been a geographic study of a Christian church site that is truly non-traditional in its worship space. Mountain Cathedrals utilizes the elements of a traditional worship service and holds them at a changing monthly hiking location. In accordance with this, the closest research to a non-traditional site like this is that of Holloway (2003, 2006) and della Dora (2009, 2018). However, these sites and other scholarship do not address either consistent worship environments comparable to a traditional Christian church, nor do they address the Christian church. Mountain Cathedrals fills this gap.

Finally, it may be found that the research study of Mountain Cathedrals has broader ramifications and implications for future research studies. The creation of sacred space is significant and research such as this can lend itself to arguments regarding current environmental crises, as well as current increases of youth that do not identify with any religious beliefs—religious nones. Although this research has not yet been done, the sacralization of space has the unique ability to connect people to the physical environment in a meaningful way, as seen at Mountain Cathedrals. Using this research, while paired with current environmental affectual research (Armstrong 1995; Greenhough 2014; Lockwood 2018; Kim, Kim, and Thapa 2018), sacred space could be argued as a means of combating and culling the current environmental crises, that in effect, the more affectual experiences are had with the non-human built environment, the more sacred space is created, the greater connection humanity has to the earth, the more their actions and mindsets are changed positively towards the earth. On top of this, sites like Mountain Cathedrals may have the ability to speak to the rise of religious nones and could lend to the discussion posed by Bartolini (2017). Overall, the implications of

sacred space and the research conducted at Mountain Cathedrals has great potential ramifications.

6.2 The Sacred Space of Mountain Cathedrals:

It should be noted that the academic, as well as grey area research is vast. Within this area of research, there are two types of spaces. Holloway (2003) addresses this and describes hierophanic space as being the historic division between the sacred and the profane. A hierophany, in general, is a direct encounter with the divine. Thus, hierophanic space is space that is directly related to the presence of the divine. In contrast, some studies of sacred space do not address encounters with the divine, and in turn discuss the monumental nature of sacred space as a place of significance, memory, or reverence, but not necessarily in direct connection with the divine. Sacred space, as such, can be seen as both types of space, both monumental space and hierophanic space, depending on the context, yet all under the umbrella of sacred space.

Mountain Cathedrals is a site, which upon studying it, has evidenced itself as being both monumental and hierophanic. This can be seen in many of the statements from the hikers (Figures: 10, 11, 12). However, I would argue that of all the experiences had at Mountain Cathedrals, the most significant experience was that of communion (the Eucharist). Through communion, the two types of spaces i.e. monumental and hierophanic are joined together to create one holistic sacred space.

Communion, as it was referenced by the hikers, or the Eucharist among the larger Christian faith community, is the moment at which the divine, God incarnated as Christ, is taken in, remembered, and recognized as sacrificing himself for humanity. Through

the act of communion (the Eucharist), God becomes literally present, in the form of a hierophanic experience. However, not only is it a hierophanic experience for the hikers, it was often noted that communion, after hiking together for the day, brought them closer together as people and added further meaning to communion. In a third layer, communion in the outdoors allowed the congregants to be connected to God's creation of the physical environment. What then is significant at this moment is that at the confluence of these three connections—God, humanity, and space become one. They are internalized within one another and become connected and intertwined. According to the congregants, God created the physical environment, whilst on the hike, the congregants were encompassed in the “beauty” and “power” of their surroundings. As a result, God is internalized in man via communion, while man is internalized in the non-human built environment, and the non-human built environment is internalized within God. Thus, there is a symbiosis of space that unites and connects God, man, and the non-human built environment. Therefore, a unique and set-apart, monumental and the hierophanic sacred space is created in the non-traditional worship environment of Mountain Cathedrals.

7. Conclusion:

Mountain Cathedrals serves as a significant site that engenders affectual and emotional experiences to create sacred space. Through this research, the voice of geography has been brought into the conversation of sacred space in a meaningful way by addressing a truly non-traditional worship. In this, it has been shown that sacred space at Mountain Cathedrals is a joining of monumental and hierophanic space that enacts change within its congregants. Through liturgy and the utilization of the non-human built environment, affective and emotional experiences were elicited. This study has centered upon the voices of the congregants, in contrast to many studies that had focused on the clergy, architecture, or history of the Christian church. The implications of sacred space, exemplified through Mountain Cathedrals, has potentially broader ramifications beyond geographic academia and could be used to speak into many other current fields and issues.

The research question has been answered through demonstrating that affectual and emotional responses are elicited from the congregants through the process of sacralization and it has been shown that Christian worship in a non-traditional outdoor setting affects the ways in which the congregants engage with, participate in, and create sacred space.

8. Appendices:**8.1 Appendix A: Interview Questions for Clergy/Leaders and Designers:**

Guiding Question for study - 1) Where and how did/does God meet you in this space?

Supplemental Questions -

- 1) How did you select the location and liturgy for this gathering? Why?
- 2) How does the physical space of the outdoors communicate theology, if at all?
- 3) What do you hope congregants gain from the spaces and experiences?
- 4) Which aspects of the space/service are the most meaningful to you?
- 5) How do you create the hiking experience around Church goal(s)?

8.2 Appendix B: Questions for Congregants:

Guiding Question - 1) Where and how did/does God meet you in this space?

Supplemental Questions -

- 1) How did/does the space make you feel? What responses arise from interacting with the space? How does nature make you feel vs. how does this space make you feel?
- 2) What responses arise from your encounter/interaction with the liturgy in this space?
- 3) Why did you choose to worship in this space?
- 4) What is the difference in your experience and encounter with God in the outdoor space versus at a traditional church service? Why does this difference occur?
- 5) Which aspects of the space and group do you find most meaningful to you?
- 6) How is the experience at Mountain Cathedrals compare to a leisure hike, absent of liturgy?

5) Which experience with Mountain Cathedrals was most meaningful and impactful?
What impacted you and why?

6) Which aspect of worship has been most meaningful on these experiences? Scripture Reading? Communion? Prayer? Etc.

8.4 Appendix D: Mountain Cathedrals Pamphlets and Scriptures

Psalm 139:1-14

O Lord, you have searched me
and known me.

You know when I sit down
and when I rise up;
You discern my thoughts
from far away.



You search out my path and my lying down,
And are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue,

O Lord, you know it completely.

You hem me in, behind and before,

And lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;

It is so high that I cannot attain it.

Where can I go from your spirit?

Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there;

If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning

And settle at the farthest limits of the

sea,

even there your hand shall lead me,

and your right hand shall hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,

and the light around me become night,"

even the darkness is not dark to you;

the night is as bright as the day,

for darkness is as light to you.

For it was you who formed my inward parts;

you knit me together in my mother's

womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and

wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works;

that I know very well.

Psalm 8



O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your
name in all the
earth!

You have set your glory
above the heavens.

Out of the mouths of babes and
infants

you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honor.

You have given them dominion over the works of your
hands;

you have put all things under their feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Psalm 121

from Psalms for a Pilgrim People by Jim Cotter

I look towards the mountain ranges,
and fear their lurking terrors.
The pilgrim path takes me through them,
by rocks and ravines, ambush and vultures.
Stormy winds swirl round the summits,
avalanches threaten across trackless scree.
The hills themselves give no courage or strength,
and I turn once again to my God.

Tempted to slide back into mud,
down to the bliss of oblivion,
yet I hear the lure of my Lover,
whispering through my story's confusion.
The God who draws me is urging me on,
and I discover my faltering Yes.
I stumble along the rough pathways,
surprised by a hand that is grasping my own.

To and fro, back and forth,
on the twists of the journey,
courage moves me onwards,
faith trusts in the future;
wisdom makes me pause,
I rest by the stream;
taking time to delve deep,
I listen for the Voice.

I reach for the unknown mountain,
to the summit where God speaks anew,
on the boundary of earth and heaven,
the frontier of time and eternity,
the place of a special revealing,
marked by the stones of a cairn.
As I ponder the codes of my dreaming,
I am surprised by the mystery of God.

The hills themselves slowly change,
never as firm as they seem;
shrouded, brooding, and dark,
their rocks splintered by frost,
worn away the lashing of storms,
no strength in themselves to support me,
only from God comes my help.

With the wind of the Spirit empower me,
stirring the substance of earth,
moving my innermost being,
yet keeping me from all lasting harm.
Keep watch, do not slumber,
Guardian of your people,
shade from the heat, healer and guide.
Nourish the life of my truest self,
from this moment on and for ever.

Matthew 6:25-34

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

²⁷ And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸ And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you— you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we

wear?’ ³² For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.



³⁴ “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

Poetry for Reflection



Hope Is the Thing with Feathers

by Emily Dickinson

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chilliest land
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

The Peace of Wild Things

by Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives
may be,

I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water,
and the great heron feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Lectio Divina in Nature

from *50 Ways to Pray* by Teresa A. Blythe.

Silencio

Become present to your surroundings in nature by sitting in silence for a few minutes. Ask God to address you in this prayer through nature.

Lectio

Look around you. Take some time to walk around and survey the piece of creation that surrounds you. As you do this, notice when something draws your attention. It could be something attractive or something that repulses or upsets you. Just look for something that has some significance for you. As you gaze on it, imagine God also gazing on it.

Meditatio

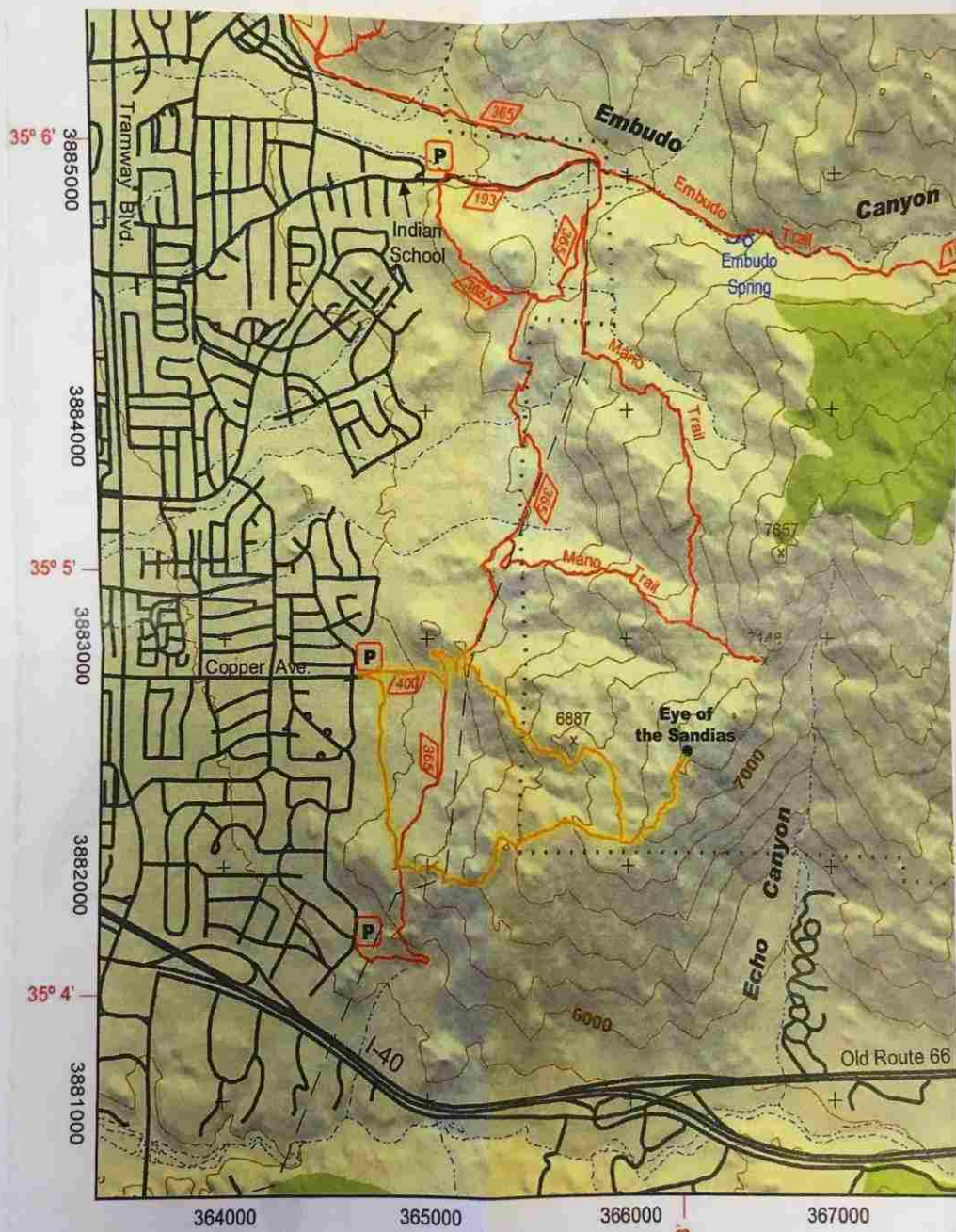
Continue to be with this part of nature that has drawn your attention. Think about what you know about this part of nature. What are the connections you might make with your life right now? Be aware of your feelings as well as your thoughts. What is God saying to you in this encounter with nature?

Oratio

Express yourself in some way to God. Respond to God's gift in nature in some way. Express your experience to God—your feelings, bodily sensations, and thoughts. Resist editing them. Simply communicate with God.

Contemplatio

Rest with God in what you notice, and reflect on how that awareness speaks to your life. Open your whole self to God by moving beyond words and images. Bask in what God has done in you during this prayer. Bask in how your human nature has communed with the rest of nature and also with God.



Base map information is derived from 1:24,000 USGS source data and reflect the accuracy of the original source information.

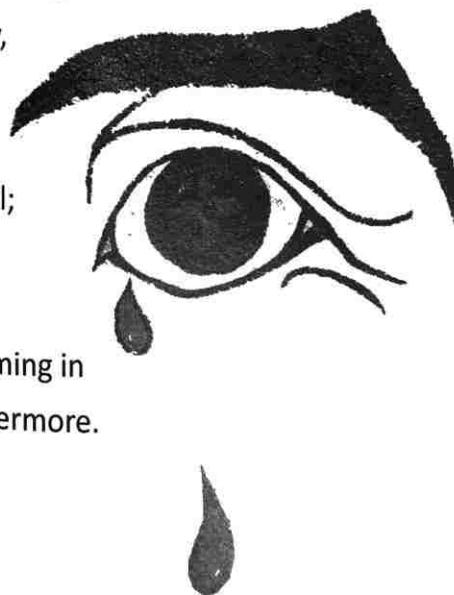
Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.



Enduring Blessing

from *The Cure for Sorrow* by Jan Richardson

What I really want to tell you
is to just lay this blessing
on your forehead,
on your heart;
let it rest
in the palm of your hand,
because there is hardly anything
this blessing could say,
any word it could offer
to fill the hollow.

Let this blessing
work its way
into you
with its lines
that hold nearly
unspeakable lament.

Let this blessing
settle into you
with its hope
more ancient
than knowing.

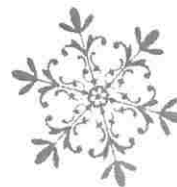
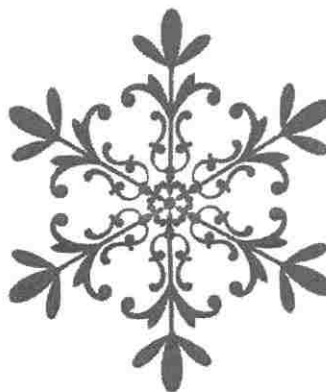
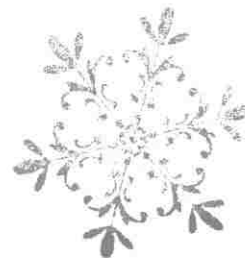
Hear how this blessing
has not come alone—
how it echoes with
the voices of those
who accompany you,
who attend you in every moment,
who continually whisper
this blessing to you.

Hear how they
do not cease
to walk with you,
even when the dark
is deepest.

Hear how they
encompass you always—
breathing this blessing to you,
bearing this blessing to you
still.

Psalm 51:1-12

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
³For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
⁴Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.
⁵Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
⁶You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom
in my secret heart.
⁷Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
⁸Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
⁹Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
¹¹Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.



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