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Exploring Intergenerational Worship of Interdependence in a Korean American Context

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Abstract: Formed alongside the arrival of the first Korean immigrants in Hawaii in 1903, the Korean American Protestant Church has played a significant role in the social, political, and religious lives of Koreans in the United States. However today, membership is declining and the newer generations represent a smaller part of the movement leading the Korean American Protestant Church to review and reform its current respective practices of ministry in terms of language, teaching, preaching, worship, and theological orientation. This article focuses on the critical issues that the Korean American Protestant Church is facing and examines the current common practice of Korean American worship. Additionally, this article proposes theological and liturgical suggestions that could be utilized to help realize the goal of Korean American intergenerational worship. These suggestions are formed against the background of five notable characteristics of the Trinity—flexibility (innovation), communication (sharing and empathy), interconnection, ubiquity, and holistic artistry—which are essential to achieving intergenerational worship and its design. As a sample liturgy, worship combined with a meal invites children and young adults, born and raised in the United States, to participate in leadership roles with first-generation adults, which directly correlates with the aforementioned characteristics. As such, in essence, liturgies like these will lead worshippers to experience the embodied theology of intergenerational worship, based on a practical and theological concept of interdependence and awareness.



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1. Introduction

1.1. Understanding Korean Immigration History

There have been three waves of Korean immigration into the United States. The first wave of Korean immigration occurred from 1903 to 1905. During this period, Japan made Korea a protectorate in 1905 and officially colonized Korea in 1910, a situation that lasted until the end of World War II in 1945. Thus, between 1910 and 1945, it was impossible for Koreans to migrate to the United States as Korean citizens. Koreans were also forcibly moved to Japan during World War II because Japan faced a severe labor shortage. Consequently, the first wave of Korean immigrants in the United States was significantly concerned with the oppression of their home country. This concern led to a high number of Korean immigrants to be actively involved in the Korean Independence Movement. Through their participation, the immigrants were able to raise a large sum of money that was sent to Korea for further liberation movement support (Kwon 2003, pp. 22–31).

The second wave of Korean immigration was directly tied to the Korean War. When Japan was defeated in World War II in 1945, Japan lost control of its colonies, including Korea. However, Korea was immediately occupied by the U.S. (1945–1948). Eventually, the original Korea was divided into two countries (North and South Korea) along the 38th parallel. This division took place because of the escalating Cold War tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States. After five years of division, the Korean War then

broke out between North and South Korea, lasting from 1950 to 1953. This war took place because of conflicting societal ideals. Korea has now been divided for more than seventy years (Kwon 2003, pp. 31–37).

As a result of this war, the second wave of Korean immigration to the United States occurred. Initially, the Immigration Act of 1924 banned immigration from Asia. However, after the Korean War, Koreans fulfilling certain requirements were allowed to enter the United States. Thus, between 1953 and 1965, approximately 28,000 Korean military brides (Rhee 2009, p. 253), 13,000 Korean and mixed-race adoptees (Kwon 2003, p. 33) (who were the children of Korean women and U.S. servicemen), and six thousand students came to the United States to study abroad.¹ Many of the students remained in the United States (Yoon 1997, p. 230).²

The third (and largest) wave of Korean immigration differs in that it did not result from conflict in the homeland. Instead, it resulted due to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which allowed Koreans to freely enter the United States. Thus, today more than 95% of current Korean Americans consist of post-1965 immigrants and their children (Min 2011a, p. 1), due in large part to a consistent welcoming environment for immigrants that allowed family reunification and occupational immigration.³

There are many other reasons why Koreans decided to come to the United States after 1965, such as low standard of living, lack of job opportunities, political insecurity, and lack of political freedom. Additional motives that led Koreans to immigrate to the United States included access to better education and better job opportunities by escaping highly competitive education systems and the lack of safe or stable job positions. Furthermore, media images of the United States (which were advertised as a stepping stone for wealth and lifetime success) acted as a motive for Koreans to come to the United States. In sum, we might say that Korean immigrants came to the United States seeking a common goal: a better life (Kwon 2003, pp. 37–41; Min 2011b).

1.2. Korean American Christianity, Generational Conflict, and Purpose of this Article

From a religious perspective, Korean Protestants moved to the United States because of their belief that the Christian God blesses the United States through its material abundance and scientific advancements. Essentially, Korean Protestant immigrants saw the United States as a land of opportunity; indeed, a promised land. Additionally, Protestant Christianity urged Korean Protestant immigrants to feel a religious homogeneity and spiritual unity with Americans, due to the shared religious experience of Christianity. Many Korean American Protestant churches have rented American church facilities for worship and education before constructing their own church buildings. As a result, Korean American Protestant Christianity has often had the most rapid religious growth in the United States (Shin 2002, p. 128). However, today the growth of the Korean American Protestant Church has begun to decline. For example, as of August 2019, 3514 Korean American Protestant churches had been established throughout the United States, but as of October 2021, that number had declined to 2798.⁴ This decline was not solely due to intergenerational conflict, but due to several complex reasons. And this decline is based only on first-generation Korean immigrant churches.

Even though its total membership is currently declining, the percentage of Christians among Korean immigrants of Korean Americans in the United States is still higher than the percentage of Christians among Euro-Americans. For instance, by 2010, 71% of Korean immigrants are Christians: Protestant (61%) and Catholic (10%).⁵ These statistics show an unprecedented phenomenon. Among Korean immigrants, Korean American Protestant churches play a significant role in creating an extended family, offering religious and social gatherings and providing direct sources of help. These churches also function as places for information about how to live as immigrants and what business types can be successful in the United States (Min 1992, p. 1370).

The rapid growth in Korean American churches can be viewed as a success, but there is a phenomenon to be considered from a critical perspective. The Korean American Protestant

church, as an ethnic–religious community in the United States, is mostly characterized by the fact that it is for the first generation, by the first generation, and of the first generation. In this regard, it can be said that the growth or the success of Korean American Protestant churches has been due to the first generation of Koreans. This is an issue, as members of the 1.5 and 2nd generations have begun to drift apart from their parents in terms of language, religious ideals, and societal perspectives, and little effort has been made to make the church more relevant to members of these generations.

There are issues on both sides of the generations of Korean Americans. For example, issues that 1.5- and 2nd-generation Korean Americans associate with their parents in the church include a male-dominated church management (patriarchy and gender hierarchy), frequent division and conflict, inconsistency in action and belief, exclusion from policymaking, lack of engagement with the wider community, and deprivation of autonomy (Kim 1999; Hong 2021). On the other hand, the first-generation parents have concerns about their children in the church, such as a loss of family solidarity, severance from Korean tradition and culture, a decrease in same-ethnicity marriage, a shortage of bilingual pastors who understand both cultures, and teachers for second-generation education (Kim 2010, pp. 21–49).

Because of these profound and complicated issues, Korean American Protestant churches are constantly challenged to review and reconsider the current pattern and style of the Korean Christian ministry in terms of language, education, content, the type of sermon, the form of worship, and the theological perspectives being conveyed through their actions. To address one of these challenges, this article critically examines the current common form of traditional Korean American Protestant worship and theologies in worship.

There are many types of case studies and suggestions about intergenerational worship among scholars in South Korea and the United States. Overall, they focus on biblical validity and Christian educational effectiveness of intergenerational worship (Yoon 2021, pp. 15–23). Thus, it is difficult to find studies dealing with justice issues or intergenerational liturgies.

I propose research to design communal intergenerational worship that is rooted in God’s call for doing justice as a way to resolve conflicts, which could be the bridge between the division of generations. This article suggests the five characteristics of the Triune God’s relationship as the core of the theology of intergenerational worship services. These are flexibility (innovation), communication (sharing and empathy), interconnection, ubiquity, and holistic artistry. These characteristics provide a rationale for designing intergenerational worship and will be the core elements in an intergenerational worship service.

This article articulates the idea that worship combined with a meal, such as a church dinner, is an effective Christian practice to embody this theology of intergenerational worship (Schmemmann 1973, pp. 14–16). Traditionally, in the Korean church, an important value has been for each age-group to listen to the language, music, and sermons appropriate for their age. Consequently, this tendency has stimulated conflicts and divisions among generations in churches. To overcome this situation, this article suggests that intergenerational worship is possible in which all can joyfully participate by conversely implementing the liturgy of worship combined with a meal.

It is hoped that this research can articulate a theology of intergenerational worship that addresses its nature, purpose, and character appropriate to intergenerational congregations. It is also expected that this research project can propose creative liturgical ideas and strategies for intergenerational worship practices in particular liturgical contexts.

2. Theological Framework of Intergenerational Worship in Korean American Congregational Contexts

2.1. Some Critical Aspects of Common Form of Worship and Sermons within the Traditional Korean American Immigrant Church

The purpose of intergenerational worship is not to grow the church, but to heal relationships among the separate Korean generations. Thus, this article illumines three critical aspects of common worship and sermons within the traditional Korean American

immigrant church that need to be reconsidered. These three critical aspects can be generally observed in the Korean American Protestant congregational contexts, regardless of their denominational differences.

Firstly, shamanistic faith, individual spiritual blessings, and a limited understanding of pneumatology tend to be aimed towards church growth rather than healing and reconciling relational conflicts. Shamanism has had an influence on the Korean American Protestant congregational context and church worship.

As Jung Young Lee points out, most Korean people who seek shamanistic faith almost always have a one-dimensional desire such as physical health, material blessing, blessings for descendants, or Han-resolving (Lee 1997, pp. 54, 73). Additionally, shamanistic and capitalistic elements combine and give birth to a prosperity-centered/materialistic worship of success. This materialistic success worship is one of the fundamental influences on the history of Korean American Protestant churches and congregations. Even to this day, it affects growth, construction of ever-larger facilities, and the mindsets of church members to show both success and blessing as interpreted through shamanism. These values are then passed on to the congregation in worship and the preaching of a prosperity gospel message.

Korean sermons have influenced the faith, theology, and way of thinking of the older and younger Korean American generations (Smith 2008, pp. 98–115). The combination of the doctrine of church growth and the shamanistic blessing orientation and individual spiritual blessings significantly contributes to Korean American Protestant preaching and worship that are oriented toward church growth. This type of worship and preaching tends to bless the “haves,” rather than the “have-nots,” and the individuals of vested rights, rather than the marginalized (Aycock 2000, p. 32).

This kind of worship and preaching that focuses on the individual spiritual life also justifies and supports the present political and economic structure rather than focusing on community transformation and progression. It also consciously or unconsciously compels the Korean American Protestant congregations to adapt to the current political and economic system. This kind of worship and preaching does not contribute to reconciliation and peace in the church and human society. Such worship and preaching justify the status quo by intentionally or unintentionally joining the oppressive/dominant structure (De La Torre 2004, p. 96). Girim Jung reveals in his empirical research that these aspects shape “1.5 and second generations consider themselves no longer Christians; they leave both the Korean American and Korean immigrant churches to attend other Christian churches” (Jung 2020, pp. 52–77).

Secondly, worship in Korean American Protestant congregational contexts is rooted in the key tenets of Fundamentalism established in the United States in 1904. One of those tenets is that the authority of the Bible is paramount. Essentially, the Bible is inerrant and is to be interpreted through a lens of strict literalism. In worship and preaching, this biblical perspective results in a separation of the Bible and the context of the worshipping community. The content of worship and sermons does not consider the context of the lives of the members, such as Asian hate crimes, the Black Lives Matter movement, solidarity with Native Americans, discrimination against Islamic people, or other discriminatory viewpoints and behaviors. Rather, worship and sermons generally have a dismissive attitude regarding the practical issues related to their context’s cultural, socioeconomic, and political dimensions.

Interestingly, pneumatology and the Pentecostal movement in the context of Korean American Protestant churches today contribute to the enlargement of secular materialism. However, the issue becomes serious when this materialistic behavior turns in the direction of the nonhistorical, and anti-social consumption-oriented economic system of capitalism. The Holy Spirit is seen as a means of church growth. Therefore, the Pentecostal movement, blessing-oriented behavior, and church growth are interwoven. However, the younger generations’ disappointment in the public sphere with the Church’s inaction means that the number of members is still decreasing. One of the main reasons for this issue is the restricted understanding of pneumatology of the Korean American Protestant congrega-

tions. This version of the popular understanding of the Holy Spirit follows the teachings and sermons of the preachers from the Korean American Protestant churches (Anderson 2004, pp. 136–56).

A third contributing factor and perhaps the most crucial characteristic of the Korean American Protestant Church is that the theology of worship pursues “the Prefabricated Colonial Method” (England 1984, p. 206). Liturgical imperialism (Aghahowa 2001, pp. 357–59) produced Christian supremacy.⁶ It promoted exclusivity, arrogance, and closed-mindedness. The Western-oriented value system, as a privileged/superior culture, has formed the basis of many Korean American Protestant churches today. Furthermore, Western notions on church structure and physical objects such as church buildings, pulpits, robes, stoles, hymns, musical instruments, liturgies, choirs, the structure of preaching, and Western scientific language, have greatly propagated Western values among Korean American Protestant churches. As a result, Korean American Protestant churches have fostered the cultural imperialism of the West and devalued the Korean and Asian cultures.

Transmitting Korean cultural traditions and heritage through Christian faith is difficult for Korean Protestant immigrants. It is not only because there is a great dissociation between Korean Protestantism and Korean secular culture, but it is also because second-generation Korean American evangelical Protestants have embraced the white American evangelical subculture (Min and Kim 2005, p. 263). This embrace of Western culture without Koreanization shows there is no enduring link between the Christian faith and Korean culture, so Korean American Christian youth, inspired by evangelical zeal, may assert that Christianity is the only true religion and may fail to understand and fail to respect other cultures and religions. This attitude is consistent with the colonial and imperialistic mission: to propagate the Gospel to all non-Christians in an attempt to convert them to Christianity. The result is that the youth are growing up with a dualistic worldview about religion and culture; perhaps a dichotomy that may be characterized as black and white. This worldview can be intolerant toward other cultures/religions and gives a false sense of superiority, making the second-generation Korean Americans colonizers attempting to conquer the world in the name of Jesus Christ (Choi 2015, pp. 46–64).

The Korean American Protestant church is largely ignorant about Korean culture and history, and except for the Korean language and food, still considers learning about Korean culture or other religions as irrelevant. Additionally, many Korean Protestant immigrants, for instance, are more knowledgeable about the history of the Hebrew Scripture and New Testament than knowing about their Korean history and religious heritage. Ultimately, the issue here is whether the Christian faith and Korean culture are to be in a dialectical dichotomy in terms of an either/or choice.

2.2. Theological Framework of Intergenerational Worship: Communal and Interdependence

It is important for Korean American Protestant churches today to review their theology of worship, theologies in worship, and various practices in worship as they move toward God’s call for doing justice and healing conflicts. When one interprets the current culture in the United States from a critical perspective, one can say that various forms of conflict and discrimination are deeply woven into the current culture in many ways, such as ideological conflicts, class conflicts, gender conflicts, conflicts of sexual preferences, ethnic conflicts, church division, the destruction of the ecosystem, sexism, classism, ageism, racism, and other tensions. One can also observe that hate and discrimination, exclusion, indifference, and aggressive hostility, as well as segregation, are also the sources of conflict in the culture of contemporary society that one must overcome.

Korean American Protestant churches are continuously experiencing conflicts in their current culture and context as well, such as the patriarchal system resulting from Confucianism, neo-capitalism and the consequent focus on materialism, prosperity-centered shamanism, and aggressive militarism, due to the partition of the Korean peninsula, ethno-phobia, and other matters. These churches are also breaking down because communal experiences are not taking place in positive ways between generations.

To overcome various conflicts deeply rooted in the culture that impact their daily lives in many ways, communal intergenerational worship could be one possible place to start reforming and transforming generational conflict. To accomplish this goal, emphasis needs to be placed on the communal worshipping experience between generations in intergenerational worship. By embracing these goals, one can critically think, judge, and act in the quest to reform and transform these conflictual and discriminatory cultures within the limited bounds of a local congregation and in large settings and can lead to the design of desirable intergenerational worship in a Korean American Protestant congregational context.

In the New Testament, the word *koinonia* speaks of fellowship and solidarity (Yoon 2021, pp. 29–32). To be a Christian means to have a relationship with others and to be in solidarity with God's will and vision. The Bible refers to the Church as the body of Christ, and worship is a time and space to remember and experience the sacred communal spirit together as the body of Christ. Acts 2:42–47, Matthew 18:20, and Matthew 18: 15, each characterize Christian identity with the community and describe the characteristics of communal worship.

Worship has a communal character that means that all are interconnected and interdependent in God's love. Love is a good metaphor and one that the Bible best expresses. It repeatedly refers to the fact that worship was the time and place in which all generations experienced and learned how to love their neighbors and the world, like themselves, and how to love God.⁷ In this respect, the theology of intergenerational worship, theologies in intergenerational worship, and various practices in worship, such as prayer, congregational songs, preaching, and holy communion, are all interconnected and interdependent so that we can experience and learn how to love each other, our neighbors, and the world like ourselves, and how to love God. Kathy Black sets out a theology of interdependence that helps inform the essence of intergenerational worship:

A theology of interdependence honors the value of all individuals, not by what they do, but by who they are, recognizing that each and every person contributes to the community by being, not by doing. Interdependence acknowledges not only our dependence on God and one another, but also God's dependence on us to be agents of God's healing compassion in the world (Black 1996, p. 42).

3. Communal Christian Identity and Trinitarian Understandings for Intergenerational Worship Design in Korean American Congregational Contexts

As one tries to identify who they are in terms of all the generations as a worshipping community in intergenerational worship, there are five features to consider: *anamnesis*, *prolepsis*, *epiclesis*, *rex vivendi*, and *egeiro*. These characteristics of worshipping communities can be helpful for intergenerational worshipping communities. One characteristic of a worshipping community is *anamnesis* (remembrance). A worshipping community remembers what God did in the past, what God is doing now, and what God will do in the future. Past, present, and future are interconnected and interdependent when younger and old generations worship together. Intergenerational worship honors the spiritual lives of the older generation, respects those who are in the active years of their lives, and intentionally nurtures the children among them who will carry the faith into the future. All ages are connected in God's time and interdependent upon each other in God's love (Stookey 2010, pp. 28, 31, 41).

Another characteristic of intergenerational worship is *prolepsis* (anticipation), that is, a worshipping community that foretastes and experiences the justice, love, peace, and feast of God's realm. This foretaste occurs in the present (Stookey 2010, pp. 31, 98). A third characteristic is *epiclesis* (invocation). Joel 2:28–32, one of the scriptures, speaks of a worshipping community where younger generations see the vision, where older generations dream, and where all generations experience freedom, liberation, and salvation (Stookey 2010, pp. 46, 56, 102, 117, 120). Fourth, *rex vivendi* (so we live) is a feature of intergenerational worship where the acts of worship and preaching are interconnected with

life itself (Martineau et al. 2008, pp. 28–29). Finally, one needs to think of a worshipping community as *egeiro* (to raise), that is, as a community of resurrection and as a worshipping community rising from the dead. Intergenerational worship seeks to transform all forms of discrimination and all dehumanizing powers (Malia 2013, p. 179), especially those that exist between generations. These five features can be essentially intergenerational Christian identities for Korean American Protestant churches that can help reform and transform their generational conflict and beyond.

Aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity can also be helpful in developing a theology of intergenerational worship and as guidelines for the design of these services. The Trinitarian aspects helpful to this discussion include flexibility (innovation), communication (sharing and empathy), interconnection, ubiquity, and holistic artistry (Stookey 2001, pp. 87–91; Segler and Bradley 2006, pp. 91–102).

Flexibility and Innovation: The Triune God is flexible and innovative. God is transformed into Jesus. Jesus is God. The Holy Spirit is God. God was present to Moses in a burning bush. God met the prophet Elijah in a small voice. The Holy Spirit was present like a raging fire, like a dove, and like a wind. Jesus came into a human body, lived with people on earth, and ate and drank with people. The Triune God coexists everywhere and is present in tangible and intangible ways. This points to the characteristics of flexibility and innovation in intergenerational worship that includes a meal.

Communication, Sharing, and Empathy: The three persons of the Trinity are distinct and yet, one in their communion. Communication and intimate sharing are such that the three persons function as one. The members of the Triune God empathize, resonate, and coordinate with each other. The key to this sharing is a compassionate heart and love. The Triune God's compassion and communication are not limited to the three persons within the Trinity. The Triune God also communicates with people in various ways and reveals God's revelation differently and desires our communication with God openly. Being empathetic and sharing with one another are important characteristics of intergenerational worship.

Interconnection: The three persons of the Trinity are organically connected to each other, but the Triune God also connects heaven and earth, men and women, children and seniors, human beings and nature, and individuals and communities. I Corinthians 12 speaks clearly about the interconnection that is essential to the body of Christ:

As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. (NIV: 1 Cor. 12: pp. 20–25)

Likewise, all ages have different gifts and abilities, but they are all organically connected and interdependent. In the Gospel of John, Jesus himself is the vine and his disciples are branches, namely they are an interconnected community. Because of the differences in generations and the so-called generation gap, there is positive value in emphasizing the interconnections present among the various generations.

Ubiquity: The presence of the Triune God is ubiquitous. Times are interconnected. Place and space are also interconnected. God is omnipresent in all things. God's compassion and love are not limited by any particular time, place, space, or age. Valuing the presence of God in the youngest and oldest within the communities of faith is a theological foundation for intergenerational worship.

Holistic Artistry: God created existence out of nonexistence which is, itself, an awesome work of art. How wonderful is the holistic artistry of the invisible Word becoming a visible body! The fact that the Bible is the subject of works of art from Genesis to Revelation is

related to the fact that the Bible, itself, has an artful dimension and the Triune God, likewise, inspires artistic creation and the reception of artistic expressions. Thus preaching, worship and ministry are sacramental and special interconnected holistic forms of art. The Triune God's holistic artistry uses everything possible as material for revelation.

Here, the word "holistic" is an integrated concept encompassing all the senses. Holistic artistry is about beauty and emotion and feeling more so than informational thoughts/knowledge. Holistic artistry is a catalyst that helps one think deeply and feel intensely, experience wonder, and be inspired. One's senses of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting come alive in an integrated way when holistic artistry is employed effectively. Intergenerational worship, combined with a meal, needs to be designed with the characteristics of holistic artistry in view. Such a service can have an artful dimension (Duck 2013, pp. 77–96).

4. A Sample Liturgy with Annotations

4.1. Description of the Liturgical Context, Theme, and Uniqueness of a Sample Liturgy

The early Christian love feast, or agape meal, was conjoined to the Eucharistic celebration. The early Eucharistic meal was celebrated in the context of a common meal through to the fourth century. Nowadays we could see churches that practice various services in which the meal is the main part of the service and is accompanied by testimonies, praises, prayer, teaching, and Eucharist. The intergenerational worship retains the universal practice of having the Eucharist when all generations meet, and it tries to bring back the love feast into the Eucharistic celebration, but the sample liturgy does not indicate that all international worship should include a meal.

The liturgical context for intergenerational worship can come to life in any congregation where it is possible to prepare a meal or to have a meal provided.⁸ One must refrain from assuming that one can receive God's revelation only in certain places and times. It need not take place on Sunday morning or in the church building. The purpose of intergenerational worship is to remember that God is with us always and everywhere.⁹ Worship that includes a meal has no boundaries between the sacred and the secular. Thus, by celebrating the Eucharist or any meal at an ordinary table, all generations can encounter Christ, whether or not they have been baptized.¹⁰ In intergenerational worship with a meal, people of all ages tell stories about Jesus from the past and explain how Jesus is currently present in the ordinary aspects of their lives, not just those marked as sacred or holy (Elkins 2006, pp. 11–16, 103–12).

The theme is intended to do justice and heal conflict. All generations today hope to live in a world of healing, peace, and reconciliation. The Bible calls this whole value "justice" (Allen et al. 2011, p. ix). The biblical concepts of healing, peace, and reconciliation embrace personal relationships with God, in human relations, among nations, and with God's creation. Justice, healing, peace, and reconciliation belong together since the right relationship involves them. That is a reason for the special concern for the poor and the oppressed that is evident in the Bible (Deut. 24:10–22; Matt. 20:1–16; James 2:5).

The heart of the Bible and Christian tradition embodies God's desire and vision. The key in intergenerational worship, combined with a meal, is to design and experience acts of worship and preaching that participate in God's vision, that can be expressed as justice: as we are fed by God, so we feed others. God's vision, not only for the church community, but for the whole of the national community, and, indeed, the world is that all communities and individuals heal each other, reconcile, and live together in love and peace (Allen et al. 2011, pp. ix–xxv).

This justice-oriented direction can be the purpose of intergenerational worship and preaching. If this justice-centered goal is clear, the worshipping community of the local church can design intergenerational worship and preaching in creative ways and methods. The role of all generations is to help construct an entire life lived in harmony with each other. Loving, healing, reconciling, and living with each other represent the core and central

direction of intergenerational preaching and worship. Preaching and worship convey what it means to love one another, heal, and bless each other.

As James F. White articulates in his book *The Sacraments in Protestant Practice and Faith*, the Eucharist, that is, “remembering the death and resurrection of Jesus in the context of a ritual meal, sharing communion or fellowship in the body of Christ as a sign of unity, and saying grace, have been recognized as one of the primary liturgies of Christianity and as the Sacrament of the Church’s life” (White 1999, pp. 97–118). The church has practiced the Eucharist using various expressions, such as Holy Communion, the Great Thanksgiving, the Lord’s Supper, and the Sacred Meal, for two millennia.

Christians in the early church gathered around a meal. A meal is sacramental in nature. A meal reminds us of remembrance, celebration, fellowship, and thanksgiving. The table, set with food and drink, is filled with the story of God, the story of Jesus, the story of the Holy Spirit, as well as all generations’ life stories and faith. All ages’ stories are about human suffering, joy, and celebration.

The natural rhythms of life and the crises which each age-group is going through will meet the story of the gospel in intergenerational worship combined with a meal around the table (Evans 2004). Don Saliers posits that there is “an encounter between human story and God’s story” (Saliers 1994, pp. 21–38). For instance, although human sufferings (pathos) do not go away, human story meets God’ story, which is God’s ethos, which brings hope to overcome sufferings through the story of the gospel at the table. There are various seasons of the life cycle as well as during times of personal and community crisis. The expected or unexpected stories about different seasons of life and the different times of crisis of each age-group will encounter God’s story around the table.

However, worship often lacks expressions of lament, including stories of suffering and conflict. Human suffering and conflict, individual and collective suffering and conflict today, and the memories of the past, have an important part in worship. The suffering and conflict that took place in history and that take place in life today can be the beginning of worship and preaching with a meal. For example, Jesus began to lament at the Last Supper when Judas betrayed him, and then later Peter denied him. He finally experienced his suffering on the cross. One can connect the Last Supper as a meal of the disciples when a story of betrayal/suffering is shared, stories around family dinner tables, where the joys and struggles of the day are shared, and how it is appropriate for those stories of suffering and conflict to have a formative place in intergenerational worship that is combined with a meal. When stories of suffering and conflict meet the story of the gospel, there will be a better chance that human beings can experience joy, celebration, hope, courage, healing, recovery, reconciliation, unity, and transformation.

As Andrea Bieler notes, “the body is at the heart of the Eucharistic celebration” (Bieler and Schottroff 2007, p. 131). Participants come to the table with bodies of persons who are of multiple ages and generations. They cannot separate themselves, their minds, or their spiritual lives from their bodily existence. In the intergenerational worship combined with a meal, these aspects of life can be all immersed in the narrative of Christ’s body, and they can be united in the body of Christ.

4.2. The Full Manuscript of the Liturgy with Annotations That Call Attention to Distinctive Liturgical Characteristics

LOVE FEAST (AGAPE MEAL) AND PRAISE IN THE EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION: LIFE STORIES AND ARTS¹¹

(Ecumenical)

(Flexibility and Holistic Artistry: All generations are included in the planning process. All ages are invited to cook and bring the meal, set the table, and clean up afterward.¹² All ages should naturally gather and welcome each other: children (12 and under), teens (13–18), and adults of various generations. A name tag with a colored dot will guide them to their designated table. As part of the liturgy, the people wash their hands as they come in, and each will bring a candle to the table.¹³ They will join the praise(singing/music) that is already happening. An ordinary table is set with food and drink. Because all are interconnected and interdependent in God's love and all are made in the image of God. Someone from each generation can be the leader in this liturgy. They can choose one song that would be well-known and comfortable for the children, one for the adults, one for the youth, etc. This is an in-person liturgy, but some might meet online, and this setting can be flexible for both in-person and online participation. In this liturgy, the five characteristics of the Triune God will be applied as the core of the theology in intergenerational worship and as basic guidelines for intergenerational worship design: flexibility (innovation), communication (sharing and empathy), interconnection, ubiquity, and holistic artistry. The format can be customized to any cultural and generational context. Possible language translation can be applied.)

GATHERING OF ALL GENERATIONS

Leader: Welcome! Those who already believe and those who seek faith.

People: We welcome those who live in hope and all who need it!

Leader: We welcome the joyful and strong and the mourning and fragile all!

People: Welcome to those who know Christ and all who want to know Christ!

Leader: We believe that God's grace comes to all generations.

People: We want to tell all who have not been welcomed or rejected elsewhere. We all welcome you with open arms and hearts! (Cheer together!)

OPENING PRAYER:

ALL: O God, you who desire our healing and transformation, be with us at this table as we seek your will and your vision for ourselves and for one another and for our church and world. Soften the hard places in our hearts as we are fed by your love. Strengthen our resolve to let go of hurt and anger as we feed each other. Open us to the energy of your compassion and hospitality. We count on your grace and mercy. Amen.

OPENING PRAISE: Songs and Prayers from Taizé¹⁴

(Sharing: Congregational songs need to be easy and simple to sing together. Global music such as Taizé and other international music such as Korean or African traditional song is recommended. I chose Taizé for this liturgy because that music is short, easy to remember, and comfortable to sing with others due to its repetitive nature.)

Bless the Lord (Songs & Prayers from Taizé #9)

Laudate Dominum (Taizé Chant: Songs & Prayers from Taizé #35)

Magnificat (Songs & Prayers from Taizé #45)

WORD I: Eucharistic Blessing of the Meal and the Meal Community

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

(Flexibility: The prayer continues on the basis of the liturgical theme related to God's justice and healing conflict. It would be desirable for persons of all generations to prepare prayers in advance as that will help them develop materials that relate directly to the theme.)

Children and Teens:

We are grateful because God is always with us.

From the beginning, God made the world and all its creatures.

God made us to live for God's justice and for one another.

Adults:

Jesus came as one of us,

first an infant, then a child,

later a youth, then an adult.

He rejoiced with those who rejoice and wept with those who wept.

To the despairing, he spoke a word of hope.

To the sick, he gave healing.

To the suffering, he was a friend.

Still, people turned away from him.

They betrayed Jesus and nailed him to a cross.

But you lifted him from the grave and restored him to life,

that he might be with us and we with him, alive forevermore!

Therefore, we join our voices

with the whole creation to praise the glory of Your name:

ALL: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

(The Word of Institution for Bread: If the church by its rules or tradition designates certain persons such as ordained people to only preside the administration of the Word of Institution, participants, who belong to that tradition, need to respect that arrangement. If the church is free from such regulations, any generation can read it as a story.)

We gather at this table to remember that on the night before he died, Jesus ate with his friends, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it, he broke it and gave it to them, saying: "Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Each time you do this, remember me."

PRAISE: "Eat This Bread/Drink This Cup" UMH 628

(While signing, the first course of the meal, bread, and salad, is served family-style)¹⁵

MEAL SERVED ABD EAT

WORD II: Sharing and Holistic Artistry: *The congregation will engage this part of the service after eating. The pastor and/or persons of any generation can freely share the meaning of eating and drinking from the Bible. There are great stories of God's justice and healing from conflicted relationships related to eating and drinking in the Bible, such as the story of Manna and Quail, the*

tale of the two fish and five loaves, the wedding at Cana, the Last Supper, eating with tax collectors, and sinners, or eating with Zacchaeus. The pastor and/or people of any generation can share its meanings and life applications with images, music, films, poetry, dance, body language, or any other visual arts. People can share any real-life stories, local and global news, related to the issue of eating and drinking with participants (Byars 2011, pp. 183–307).¹⁶

PRAISE: *Confitemini Domino (Give Glory to the Lord: Songs & Prayers from Taizé #28)*

(While signing, the main course of the meal is served, family-style)

MEAL SERVED ABD EAT

WORD III:

(Ubiquity and Sharing: *This part of the service will take place while the congregation eats. All generations share their reflections, feelings, and thoughts/concerns with one another at each table on the particular liturgical theme of the day¹⁷ and they may suggest the life applications with each other. They can talk freely while they eat.)*

PRAISE: *Ubi Caritas (Songs & Prayers from Taizé #49)*

(While signing, the last course of the meal, tea and dessert, is served)

CONTINUING WORD

(The Word of Institution for the cup: *If the church by its rules or tradition designates ordained people to only preside the administration of the Word of Institution, participants, who belong to that tradition, need to respect that policy. If the church is free from such regulations, any generation can read it as a story.)*

That same night, Jesus also took a cup, and after giving thanks, passed it to his friends, saying: “Drink. This cup, poured out for you, is the promise of God. Whenever you drink it, remember me.”

A small serving of grape juice can be placed in their cups for the blessing and sharing of the cup.

CELEBRATING THE FAITH

(The group drinks the cup at this point and proclaims the mystery of faith)¹⁸

Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again!

INTERCESSORY PRAYER WITH PRAISE

(Flexibility: *Any prayer types, forms, modes, traditions, and structures with responsive song and/or praise can be used for the intercessory prayers, such as “O, Lord hear our prayer when we call answer us” or “Lord, have mercy.” Each generation can pray for a particular context and subject related to God’s justice and healing conflict with eyes wide open.)*

GRAND SILENCE *(The leader introduces the purpose of the grand silence that will last at least 30 s)*

PEACE *(Leader introduces the purpose of the passing of the Peace and how to share peace with each other.)*

SERVANT MINISTRY OF CLEAN UP WITH PRAISE

Sing Praises (Songs & Prayers from Taizé #48)

(Interconnection: *As an integrated part of the liturgy, the meal is the holistic process of the people’s work, which literally means liturgy. This liturgy emphasizes the sense of unity that results from communal worship. In this regard, liturgy has a deeper meaning as communal worship created by the community rather than simply a typical formal written ritual.)*

RE-GATHERING PRAISE

Laudate Dominum (Songs & Prayers from Taizé #35)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CLOSING PRAISE *“The Lord’s Prayer by Albert Hay Malotte”*¹⁹

BENEDICTION

(Flexibility and Sharing: The Benediction can be led by a person from any generation or the ordained pastor, if only ordained people can give the benediction. This depends on each church’s regulations. It would probably be advisable to have one member prepare the benediction ahead of the service to ensure that the benediction is appropriate and clear. So, if there is a written benediction with parts to be read/said by different generations, there will be a chance that the people from the varying generations will bless one another.)

4.3. Evaluation of the Liturgy with Its Benefit and Challenges

Eucharistic agape meal worship services have been practiced as “a primary form of worship by various Christian denominations in the world through the centuries” (Taussig 2009).²⁰ This liturgy with a meal encourages worship leadership that includes all generations, especially the younger generations. It advocates intergenerational worship in which people of all ages are equally important. This liturgy illuminates that each generation has the same significance and value as members of the body of Christ in God’s love and in the worshipping community. All generations are considered to have an active role in planning each particular part of the worship service. It pays attention to inclusive language and vocabulary that all ages can understand to make them feel included, not excluded. Storytelling and narratives related to eating and drinking illustrate appropriate references to all generations, including children and youth so that they can comprehend.

This liturgy includes each generation within its prayer elements. By utilizing a clear intergenerational planning process, the liturgy includes visual images, symbols, and any nonlinguistic elements for each generation to experience God from their own perspective. It equips parents and adults to help their children experience God. This liturgy gives the opportunity to all generations to share their continuing stories of faith and life at each table. It helps one to consider the younger generations worthy leadership in the worshipping community by asking them to be prayer leaders, scripture readers, witnesses to share their stories of faith and life, and as part of a creative worship planning team offering music, drama, dance, worship set up, clean up, and benediction. This intergenerational liturgy continues to ask: (1) Which generations are here? (2) Which generations are not here? (3) How can worship express that all generations are equally important to the planning and leading of worship? (4) Can all ages in worship experience God’s presence in various and flexible ways? (5) Who will prepare the meal? (6) Who will pay for the meal? (7) Whose preferred food will be served? and (8) How will the intergenerational worship with a meal be designed taking into consideration real existing tensions/differences between the generations?

As we have noted, many elements of conflict and division exist in the cultures in which one lives. Generational conflicts, class conflicts, gender conflicts, ethnic conflicts, church divisions, and ecosystem destruction are all factors generating conflict today. There are also real divisions among the generations in theology and music styles. Therefore, restoration as a worshipping community and the various acts of worship that seek to engage justice and heal conflicts need to be the essential purpose and mission of intergenerational worship that includes a meal. But without clear leadership roles for the younger generations, younger people might feel intimidated by the older generations and may not speak up or offer their opinions. If that happens, then justice and healing might not be experienced.

As concluded, some components of the sample liturgy will need to be evaluated with its challenges and limitations: music, communal experience, and the sharing of stories. In the sample liturgy, Taizé music might be unfamiliar to Korean American congregants, or the use of the entire Western music in Korean American worship can be criticized from the perspective of Western colonialism and imperialism. Thus, if any person/group can create

lyrics with a familiar tune such as Korean folk songs or foreign and international gospel songs in advance, before the actual intergenerational liturgy, it will be desirable from the perspective of inclusivity. In addition, three questions are needed to choose the appropriate music: (1) Is the music familiar to all generations? (2) Do all generations know this music? (3) Is the music well-known to and comfortable for the children, for the youth, and for the adults?

To experience communal worship that feels equal and fair with the sample intergenerational liturgy, pastors or worship design committee members need to help the community create the liturgy, rather than doing nothing more than following a formal written ritual. The planners need to support the intergenerational groups or have people volunteer to participate in the intergenerational groups, determine who will establish a theme, choose scripture texts/stories, create the artistic expressions of the theme/text(s), prepare questions for conversation at the tables, cook the meal, set the table, and clean up. Or they can construct three intergenerational groups: one that will choose the theme and work with the text and prepare the artistic expressions, one that will prepare the space (table, candles, visual art, etc.), and one that will cook the meal and clean up, or they can ask the various tasks to be done by different generations (one generation group will pick the theme/text/questions for conversation/artistic expressions, one generation will set the space, one will cook, etc.).

The pastors or worship design committee members could assign a specific generation for each part of the worship in advance. Otherwise, they have to interrupt the liturgy in order to decide which generation or which persons will do it. As such, the following questions need to be considered as a sample liturgy is designed: (1) Will one of the adults take control and make the decision? (2) Will it be dependent on someone from the younger generation speaking out and volunteering to do it? and (3) How will these decisions be made and by whom and when?

Sharing stories in each age-group needs to take place. In ordinary circumstances, the sharing will most likely be an adult who knows the Bible fairly well. The pastor and worship planners need to broaden participation. It is doubtful that the younger generations will freely share their opinions without someone asking them questions such as What Bible stories do you know that involve food? Thus, it is possible for youth groups in the church to study the given texts of this service in advance and prepare artistic expressions of these texts to share in the service. They can also do this on the spot, but the liturgy will likely be better if they know in advance and can prepare a specific contribution to the worship and bring it to the worship service.

A major challenge is how conservative Korean American Protestant congregations can respond to issues of social justice in a way that is acceptable to the community. Intergenerational worship that includes a meal can be designed to be more tolerant, inclusive, less dogmatic, less judgmental, and more open-minded by respecting each generation's leadership. Hopefully, intergenerational worship can instill a sense of respect for other cultures, traditions, religions, and religious practices. As Procter-Smith articulates, the liturgy is "a humanly created form in a particular but ever-changing historical context, not made in a vacuum and, therefore, critical questions must be continually asked of the liturgy and its claims to truth" (Procter-Smith 1990, pp. 117–18). This continues to be a concern and challenge.

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Notes

- ¹ Rhee (2009, p. 253): "The social impact of the U.S. military on Korean life can be seen in that approximately 28,000 Korean women who married U.S. G.I.s between 1950 and 1972 and became the largest group of Koreans to emigrate to the United States."

- 2 Yoon (1997, p. 230): “Between 1945 and 1965, about 6000 Korean students came to the United States to seek higher education at colleges and universities. Many of them, however, settled in the United States after finishing their studies and laid the foundation for chain migration from their homeland.”
- 3 Gebeloff, Robert, Denise Lu and Miriam Jordan. 2021. Inside the Diverse and Growing Asian Population in the U.S. Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/08/21/us/asians-census-us.html> (accessed on 1 December 2021).
- 4 Available online: <http://koreatimeshi.com/?p=10418> (accessed on 1 February 2022); Oh, John J. 2022. From “Silent Exodus” to “Silent Divergence”: How Immigration is Changing the Unchanging Immigrant Church. Available online: <https://sola.network/article/from-silent-exodus-to-silent-divergence/> (accessed on 1 March 2022); Oh also articulates that “Along with decreasing church attendance, the number of Korean churches has decreased from 4500 in 2017 to only 2800 in 2021 for a precipitous decline.”
- 5 Munoz, Anabel. 2021. Korean American Churches, in Los Angeles since 1906, continue to shape the community’s story. Available online: <https://abc7chicago.com/koreantown-la-korean-christians-american-churches-koreans-in-los-angeles/10557685/> (accessed on 1 June 2021): “By 2010, 71% of Korean Americans living in the U.S. identified as Christian, including 61% who are Protestant and 10% who are Catholic, according to Pew.” Available online: <https://www.asianstudies.org/publications/ea/archives/religious-diversity-in-korea/> (accessed on 7 February 2022): “A 2012 survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that 61% of Korean–Americans are Protestant Christians. Another 10% are Catholic.”
- 6 Aghahowa (2001, p. 357): “For African Americans to affirm their own distinctiveness in no way constitutes a denial of others. On the contrary, to deny the uniqueness of Black worship constitutes a kind of liturgical imperialism.” Aghahowa defines liturgical imperialism as a paradigm that states that the worship of Black people should be similar to the worship of a prevailing culture. This definition suggests that those of another culture who currently possess greater power and privilege may enforce a type of worship practice that diminishes the diversity of their individual relationship with God. I would expand this definition to encompass any denomination that creates legalistic regulations that limit and exclude the meaningful worship of any other members of the Body of Christ—the Church. Any person or group of persons that claim their worship style is superior to another commits liturgical imperialism.
- 7 e.g., in Matthew 14:13–15, 19–21, 19:13–15, 22:35–40; Mark 5:19; John 8:9; 1 John 4:7–11; Acts 16:15, 33–34; and 1 Corinthians 12:13, 13:4–7.
- 8 e.g., Dinner Church: <https://dinnerchurch.com>; St. Lydia: <https://stlydias.org/> (accessed on 7 May 2022).
- 9 e.g., in Joshua 1:9; Exodus 3:12; Matt. 1:23.
- 10 There are still debates and conflicts about open and closed tables in Korean American Protestant churches.
- 11 This sample liturgy combines the Eucharist and the Love Feast. According to the Last Supper, the very first Eucharist was instituted in the context of a meal. The first book of Corinthians (11:20–34) indicates that the Eucharist was celebrated at the end of the love feast. In the *Didache* (which illustrates the conditions of the early church around A.D. 100), there is, yet, no sign of separation between the Eucharist and Love Feast. As a whole, the Eucharist and Love Feast were the core of early Christian communities’ life and worship. This sample liturgy is intended to experience both so participants can understand the Triune God’s stories through the Eucharistic Blessing and the Word of the Institution. Additionally, this liturgy is intended to show how to love each other through an Agape meal as early Christians experienced.
- 12 The language of invitation is very appealing, but it may occur that few may accept the invitation to cook, set the table, or choose to clean up, etc. Thus, some will have to sign up in advance to cook, set the table, and clean up unless there is a committee within the church that will do that for this service to take place.
- 13 For this liturgy, each participant can find a place to wash their hands. However, there could alternately be a washing station in which people could either pour water on their hands or another’s. Each person can bring a candle with them from home, which can be placed on each table in advance. All the candles can be the same or they can be, for example, different colors, different sizes, and different shapes. Someone can hand them a candle, or each participant can choose their candle.
- 14 Berthier, Jacques. 1991. *Songs & Prayers from Taizé*. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc.
- 15 The first, main, and last courses are not already on the table. The decision needs to be made about who will be doing the serving, because either way, it will be served in the end.
- 16 Byars (2011, p. 18): He provides the readers with various biblical implications, imaginations, associations, and connections on Eucharist from both Testaments, even though they “may not immediately appear to have anything to do with the sacraments.” It encourages all ages to pay attention to other biblical texts that may have informed or influenced the passage or to be sensitive to other passages that may simply come to mind amidst the process of storytelling, related to eating and drinking in the Bible.
- 17 Questions, such as: how many people will take, who would attend, how we invite people, what food should be served, when the meeting time should be, and what the liturgical themes related to doing justice and healing conflict are needed, will be considered as this liturgy is designed. There can be given questions that will guide the conversations in Word III.
- 18 In this liturgy, there will be an introduction to the mystery of our faith. Throughout this liturgy, there will be transitions from one section to the next. Instructions by the pastor or anyone in the congregation could provide leadership.

- ¹⁹ *The Lord's Prayer* was composed by Albert Hay Malotte in 1935. It is a well-known musical setting of the biblical Lord's Prayer, on the basis of the book of Matthew 6:9–13 (KJV). It was also translated into Korean, and it is included in *Korean New Hymns #635*, published by the Hymn Society of Korea in 1962.
- ²⁰ His book title, *In the Beginning Was the Meal*, reminds us of the origin and essence of Christian worship.

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