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Doctor of Professional Practice

Embodied creativity: Creative play as a catalyst for adult learning, spirituality and a ludic (playful) mindset

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of an institution of higher learning.

Helen Wilderspin

Abstract

In this research, I have explored and investigated the potential of creative play to enrich adult learning, creativity, spirituality, liturgical worship, and ministry formation, in an Anglican theological college setting (2020–2021).

In my experience as an Anglican priest in a parish, and a student in a theological college, I have discovered that the church and theological institutions do not always offer a creative way for adults to learn about or engage with the sacred. Although there is growing evidence that creativity and play can have positive benefits for adult learning, there is less research regarding the effect of creative play on adult spirituality and theological education.

I used a crystallisation qualitative framework (as described by Ellingson, 2009, 2014) and phenomenological methodology to provide a trans-disciplinary perspective and hold in tension a bricolage of relationships, data-collection methods, and artefacts to engage and 'play' with my research. Through my experience-based learning, autoethnographic critical reflection, cycles of action research, poetic inquiry, and a rich and complex range of qualitative data sources I investigated the impact of creative play initiatives at the theological college.

During the three parts of the project, I used creative play strategies to stimulate the imagination and evoke a ludic (playful) mindset. In Part 1, I developed eight creative liturgical services for St John's College students to enrich their sense of the holy/ divine/sacred. In Part 2, I facilitated a series of three workshops (online and face-to-face) to understand the impact of creative play on the students' own learning, imagination, sense of fun, and creativity. In Part 3, I worked with a group (known as a *tārai waka*) at college over 6 months, in planning and leading 4 weeks' worth of worship services (approximately 28) to explore the role of creative play in terms of group dynamics and liturgical worship.

My facilitation of the tārai waka led to the discovery that six conditions are helpful in my practice and context for encouraging a team culture of creativity and an enhanced sense of the holy/divine/sacred to develop. These conditions are:

1. a ludic mindset,
2. a facilitator/guide/role model,
3. the creation of a team culture of creativity,
4. shared learning experiences designed to stimulate imagination,
5. a variety of locations for creative play activities,
6. a reflection/action process.

Through the development of these conditions, I encouraged three main ludic qualities (curiosity, embodied creative expression, and relationality), and a number of sub-qualities, in myself as a priest and in participants. My research revealed the importance of not only a ludic mindset but also an embodied creativity that has a collaborative aspect. Therefore, based on the work of Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) and their 4-C model of creativity (Big-C, Pro-C, mini-c, little-c), I suggest a fifth dimension, collaborative-c, be added, to bring a more embodied, collective, and culturally inclusive dimension to this model.

The research provides an evidence-based study of how creative play methods can be woven into theological formation and training, support participants' confidence and creativity in their ministry and help adults encounter the sacred in their everyday lives through creativity and playfulness.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

In this first chapter, I lay the foundation for my thesis as a whole. I provide the rationale for my research inquiry, a brief overview of the research design, as well as background information on my professional practice. To aid with understanding, I then define the key terms I used - *creative play*, *spirituality*, *holy/divine/sacred,* and *liturgy.* Finally, I note the structure of my thesis. Each piece of this introduction is part of the creative play process, constructing meaning from a bricolage of different perspectives, voices (myself, participants, my poetry), research methodologies and methods.

Creativity and play are increasingly seen as important not only for children's learning and ability to adjust to an ever-changing world but also for adults (Miner, 2017a; K. Robinson, 2011). My research contributes towards a growing understanding of the value of creativity and play strategies for adult learning (for example, James & Brookfield, 2014; Leather et al., 2020; McLellan et al., 2012), and spiritual formation (such as Goto, 2016a, 2016b; Miner, 2017b). This study focuses on the importance of nurturing leaders who are adaptable and creative in their approaches so that they can then use a range of creative and playful approaches to engage people with the holy/divine/sacred. I have observed in my practice as an Anglican priest, curator of worship, and a clown, the positive effect of using creativity in church settings to increase adults' engagement with the sacred. However, creative approaches are not widespread in the church nor in ministry formation within theological institutions. Therefore, I decided to undertake research to investigate the role creative play strategies can have on the learning, creativity, spirituality, and liturgical worship of students at an Anglican theological college in Auckland, New Zealand from 2020–2021.

Shaped by a social constructivist paradigm, I used a range of qualitative methodologies (phenomenology, evocative autoethnography, action research [AR]) within a crystallisation framework (building on the work of Ellingson, 2009, 2014; L. Richardson, 2000) to gain an understanding of the necessary conditions for creativity and playfulness to flourish in the theological

setting. I used creative play methods as the foundation for my research data-collection processes. I discuss my research design more fully in the next section and in Chapter 3 (Methodology).

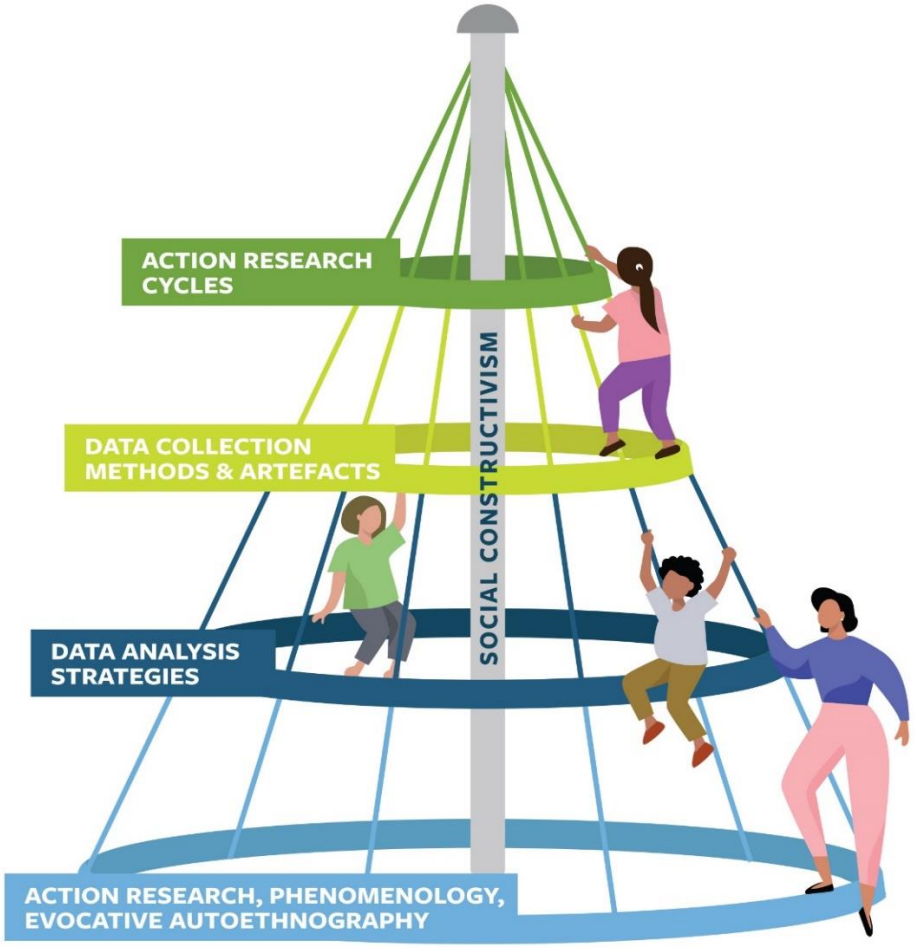
Research Design

I have used my experience-based learning, cycles of Action Research (AR), and a rich and complex range of qualitative data sources to explore and evaluate creative play initiatives. These included creative play workshops, a 6-month study with an established tārai waka at the College, focus group debriefs, my liturgical expression in worship services, autoethnographic critical reflection, and poetic inquiry.

A crystallisation qualitative methodological framework (as described by Ellingson, 2009, 2014; Richardson, 2000) enabled me to have a trans-disciplinary perspective and hold in tension a bricolage of relationships, data-collection methods, AR cycles, data-analysis strategies, and artefacts to engage and 'play' with my research. Inspired by rope-climbing playgrounds, I developed a visual metaphor to capture the rich complexity of my research design with myself in the midst of it all (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Diagram of Crystallisation and Spatial Bricolage Research Design



Designed by Helen Wilderspin, 2022.

During three parts of the project, I used creative play strategies to stimulate the imagination and evoke a playful mindset. In Part 1, I developed eight creative liturgical services for St John's College students to evoke their sense of the holy/divine/sacred. In Part 2, I facilitated three workshops (online and face-to-face) with St John's College students, and I used AR to understand the impact of creative play on the students' own learning, imagination, sense of fun, and creativity. In Part 3, using an AR methodology, I worked with a tārai waka group at college over 6 months, planning and leading

worship services to explore the role of creative play in terms of group dynamics and liturgical worship.

Creative play was an integral part of my research design and arose from not only from my context at St John's College, but also from my professional practice in the Anglican church. In the next section, I explore my background and context more fully.

Professional Practice Background and Context

As a teenager at my local church, I was introduced to clowning and drama in a liturgical setting. Clowning became a way of exploring and embodying my faith in a tactile and kinaesthetic manner. Merriam and Bierema (2014) write that learning can be an embodied intertwining of emotions, intuitive knowing, and spirituality. My learning and embodied faith became a significant part of my creativity and outlook on life. To reflect this outlook, I decided on a happy outgoing clown personality and named her Poe (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

A Photo of Myself in the Guise of My Clown Character (Poe) Miming Playing the Organ

Photo by Photographer unknown, early 2000's

Later, when I was ordained and working in parish ministry, I was fascinated by the positive impact of drama, clowning and play on those attending church. I wondered how creativity engaged people of all ages, and how it could be nurtured in a community.

Creativity Education

Over the years I have both participated in and led many workshops, including on clowning, drama, liturgy, and preaching. I wanted to use my experience to improve the professional practice of others because I saw potential for the church and theological institutions to embrace the known positive learning benefits of creativity and play (as noted by McLellan et al., 2012; Miner, 17b; Power, 2011). My teaching strategies have included exploring theoretical understandings of a subject and what it might look like in practice, and then trialling various methods to see how they work. It is usually the case that I see a need, find a creative solution, and try things out, critiquing and adapting my work as I go along. The piece that is often missing for myself and others in ministry is the critical reflection that assesses whether the practice works in the real world of church ministry, and if one's practice changes in the short, medium, or even long term.

My Liturgical Practice as a Worship Creator/Curator

The title of "worship curator" comes from the work of New Zealander Mark Pierson (2012). He considers that a leader of worship needs to shape and craft the whole event, being aware of both the content and the context for the service. Part of my current liturgical role as worship curator is to create multisensory environments that help people understand themselves and others better and provide space to explore new possibilities. As I create each environment, I think about the room people will gather in, how the seating will be arranged, the lighting that is needed, the sound effects, the types of activities that will engage the senses (taste, touch, smell, sight, hearing), the interaction level between participants, the words and actions that will be used. I also consider any opening reflection I might offer to frame the encounter/gathering.

Principally, these environments are set up to encourage new insights and experiences that will challenge and change a person's or a community's understanding of what holy and sacred means. Underlying this work are my beliefs that the sacred can be made present through ritual and participation (also discussed by Burns, 2018; Hereniko, 1995; S. Phillips, 2006); that creativity and creative learning can play a fundamental role in challenging perceptions, increasing a person's capacity for change and as a basis for life-long learning (noted in the work of James & Brookfield, 2014; Robinson, 2011; Taylor, 2011).

My Role as an Anglican Priest

I am a priest in the Anglican Church (ordained in 2002) and since my ordination I have been working in a variety of roles in the Anglican Church in New Zealand as well as pursuing tertiary study. In 2018, I began studying full time, starting with a Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching at the University of Otago. In 2019 I started the Doctor of Professional Practice.

To provide some context for the role of an Anglican priest, I have noted below the words that a bishop says at an ordination service:

> Priests in the Church are called to build up Christ's congregation, to strengthen the baptised, and to lead them as witnesses to Christ in the world. To do this they are called to be pastors. They are encouraged to share people's joys and sorrows, encourage the faithful, recall those who fall away, heal and help the sick. Above all they are to proclaim God's word and take their part in Christ's prophetic work, to declare forgiveness through Jesus Christ, to baptise, to preside at the Eucharist, to administer Christ's holy sacraments. (Church of the Province of New Zealand, 1989, p. 901)

These words are aspirational in nature and provide a glimpse of the extent of priestly ministry. This ministry is more than a role or an occupation, it is a way of life, you are always a priest.

However, to function in the Anglican Church as an ordained minister (priest or deacon), people need to be licensed. This licence may be to a particular role such as vicar in a church, or chaplain in a hospital, or may be for no set role. It usually depends on whether a stipend, like a salary, is paid. In

my case, I am a full-time student so do not receive a stipend, but I do have a licence to perform the duties of a priest at St John's Theological College, and in the wider church. Therefore, in terms of my professional practice, I am a priest and function as a priest. The number of priests at the college can vary from year to year, so we share the roles/functions outlined in the quote above.

Context at St John's Theological College

St John's Theological College is part of the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Polynesia.[1] The church structure comprises three strands – Tikanga Māori, Tikanga Pākehā[2], and Tikanga Pasifika. When the three-Tikanga concept was originally put forward it came out of a desire to recognise and formalise the bicultural relationship between Māori and Pākehā in Aotearoa New Zealand. In 1992 the General Synod (governing body of the Anglican Church) added a third strand to the model – made up of various Pacific nations (Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands). Each strand is partly about ethnicity, but, at its heart, the structure is based on tikanga (cultural mores and traditional values) and the relationships which hold a group of people together.

The college provides residential scholarships to approximately 50 students from Aotearoa, New Zealand, and the Pacific. These scholarships provide housing for the students and their *whānau* (family) as well as tuition fees for students attending a variety of educational institutions. Students may study theology or education or any other course that the church sees is important for the long-term mission and viability of the students' local context. For example, students may be trained to be deacons and/or priests and do a theology degree, or it may be that Tikanga Māori needs more teachers in their ministry *wānanga* (educational institutions), or Tikanga Pākehā needs to train school chaplains and religious education teachers, so the students do a teaching degree. From 2020 to the present time (2022), the only course taught at St John's College is a 1-year Diploma of

[1] For the rest of the thesis, I will use the word Pasifika instead of Polynesia. "Pasifika" is also used by the Anglican Church to refer to members from various Pacific islands. In Māori, *tikanga* (with a small 't') refers to protocols and customs.

[2] Pākehā is a Māori term that refers to a non-Indigenous white New Zealander usually of European descent.

Christian Studies. Most students who are at the college for ministry formation training will also take this course alongside their theological degrees. Theological degrees are taught through a variety of institutions such as Carey Baptist College, Laidlaw College, and the University of Otago.

All the students (including myself) and faculty at the college are assigned to groups, called tārai waka. The groups have 8–12 members and are from a mix of ethnicities, depending on the college intake for the year, including Pākehā, Māori, Fijian, Samoan, and Tongan. There is a wide age range, 18–65. One of the tasks of the groups is to create and lead services throughout the year (February–November), approximately every 4 weeks. In the services I lead, there may or may not include some of the functions assigned to a priest such as administering Christ's holy sacraments in the form of presiding at the Eucharist, declaring forgiveness, and offering God's blessing. Most of our worship services/liturgies are taken from the *New Zealand Anglican Prayer Book/He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa* (NZPB).

There is some degree of flexibility, creativity, and freedom in the worship services. Often the manner of liturgical exploration is shaped by each person's understanding of Anglican liturgy as well as the liturgical expression favoured by their Tikanga. For example, Tikanga Pasifika is fairly strict about using only the liturgies from the NZPB; whereas Tikanga Pākehā might use all sorts of different resources. Students come to the college with a variety of backgrounds in either leading or designing worship services. Some of the students have a leadership background in church ministry (some Anglican, some not); however, they may have less experience in the worship and the liturgical side of ministry. As far as college training goes, the Diploma of Christian Studies has a liturgy component, but not every student takes this course, so there is a percentage of students who do not participate in a formal liturgy class. There are occasional workshops on creative liturgical methods offered by outside lecturers which are voluntary and may only be held once or twice a year. Primarily though, learning is through participation in liturgical services throughout the year. However, with this limited college formal liturgical education, many students do not know what is available or even the reasons

behind Anglican worship. I have therefore found myself teaching other students the basics in an informal capacity. There is also little if any specific and ongoing critique of worship leadership in services. Occasionally, a debrief may be held in an individual tārai waka at the end of their worship week, but it is not embedded into the general practice of the college.

A significant part of my context is not only the place and professional practice but also the terms that I use to shape my thesis and my argument. In the following section I provide a brief understanding of creative play, spirituality, holy/divine/sacred, and liturgy.

Understandings of Terms Used in My Research Inquiry

I discuss my understanding of creative play in greater detail in Chapter 2 (Literature Review); however, this is my understanding of creative play that has emerged from my research engagement with the literature and my practice-based inquiry:

> Creative play is a way of being and a method of experiential learning that builds on and embodies a person's experience, imagination, and the things around them to create new ideas, ways of seeing, possibilities, and ludic practices for the person and for others.

An important aspect of my research considered the role of creative play for enhancing liturgical worship and connecting participants to the holy/divine/sacred in new and surprising ways. Spirituality is a concept that can have a variety of different meanings and contexts (De Souza & Watson, 2016; Miner, 2017b), often depending on the perspective of the writer or researcher (Roehlkepartain et al., 2006). My perspective comes from a European Pākehā heritage, brought up in New Zealand and influenced by Māori and Pasifika worldviews. This viewpoint fits well with the move in recent years to regard the spiritual and spirituality as an innate part of a person, alongside intellectual, physical, and emotional attributes (De Souza & Watson, 2016; D. Fraser & Grootenboer, 2004; Hyde, 2008). In New Zealand, within *te ao Māori* (the Māori world), the spiritual nature of a person is understood as an integral part of who they are, including their connection to the land and the wider community through relationships and social groupings (Durie, 1994; D. Fraser, 2014). I

would also suggest that a person's *wairua*, or spiritual essence, is reflected through their created and creative natures.

In New Zealand, spirituality and the spiritual are often linked with religion and religious identity, for instance Christianity. Within Pasifika communities, particularly, religion and culture are inextricably linked (O'Donnell, 2014; Pearson, 2014) and play out in a variety of ways, some of which I explore later in this thesis. Like many throughout the world, New Zealanders' spirituality is also tied to the physical environment, especially engaging with activities in nature. Hay and Nye (2006) suggest that spirituality in the broadest sense is about "relational consciousness" with ourselves, others, our world, a connectedness among all things, material and immaterial. This is similar to the Māori cultural concept of *mauri*, a life force/essence that permeates all things including ecosystems and communities. I agree with Hay and Nye's (2006) broad understanding of spirituality as "love of humanity, sensuous affinity for the landscapes and life-forms of this world, awe before the immensity of the universe in which we find ourselves, and awareness of an inter-fusing presence through all of these" (p. 141).

I think that it is also important to consider the connection with the transcendent – the holy and the divine. There are often moments and places that are imbued with awe and respect and as a result they are set aside for specific purposes that are distinct from us. Drane (2017) writes of *mysterion*, the Greek word for mystery, that refers to "that transcendent quality of human life that could most readily be recognised as a connection with the divine" (p. 22). In theological and Christian religious education, the 'sacred' can also refer to an experience of the awe-inspiring nature of the divine/God (Otto, 1950), an otherness that is larger, more complex, and unknowable than, say, the everyday connection between human beings (Boyatzis & Newman, 2004). As an educator and a priest, it is also important to help grow an individual's capacity for wonder and delight in the divine. In my research, the divine can reflect the 'other' as in God or even nature and our environment. God is a name most often used in the multicultural St John's College setting.

The concepts of the holy/divine/sacred are often revealed in a liturgical form (such as in worship services). Liturgy is used to tell the ongoing story of humanity's relationship to God as told through Judaic and Christian scripture. The form a liturgy takes can often be a method for people to make meaning from their sociocultural contexts as well as reflecting their everyday lives. At the same time, liturgy can transcend ordinary life by connecting participants with the sacred and the divine, so that there can be opportunity for exploration, creative expression, and play (Berryman & Hyde, 2010).

For the purposes of my research, I understood spirituality to be our very selves (created and creative) integrated with one another, the land, and our environment, and the transcendent other (the divine or God). Within the Christian faith, the sacred becomes a place, an attitude or an expectation that is anchored in the hope that there will be an increased awareness of the holy and the divine.

I now move from the definitions to a broader perspective and the structure of the thesis.

Structure of the Thesis

In Chapter 2, I explore the literature that has influenced and inspired my thoughts and research approach regarding the research inquiry. In Chapter 3, I discuss the methodology of the research and methods used for data collection and analysis. In Chapter 4, I present a narrative of my research experience when implementing creative play in a number of worship services. In Chapter 5, I consider the impact of creative play in a workshop setting and my role as a teacher, facilitator, and researcher. In Chapter 6, I discuss a tārai waka group process and the conditions of creative play that supported a group of St John's College staff and students. In Chapter 7, I discuss the overall findings, my emerging professional practice, and a framework of practice with the conditions and qualities of creative play. And finally, in Chapter 8, I consider the wider contribution of my practice and implications for further research.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

In this literature review, I explore the role of creative play, imagination, and learning as it relates to my professional context and research inquiry. My exploration of the literature was guided by two questions that have captured the essence of my research intention.

1. What is the role of creative play in the development of adult learning, creativity, spirituality, and liturgical worship?
2. What does creative play look like in my professional practice as a priest and worship curator?

I discuss the literature that has informed my understanding of creative play as it relates to my practice. I consider some of the influences on my overall understanding of creative play: including play and a ludic mindset, creativity, clowning, and different definitions of creative play. I explore creative play in adult learning and group work; in theological institutions; and in contemporary liturgical practice (church worship and leadership). Although I am Pākehā, my project included Māori and Pasifika participants, so throughout the review I consider a range of cultural perspectives on creative play.

Creative Play

I start with some initial comments regarding the concepts of play and creativity and their contribution towards my understanding of the term creative play and its use in my research and practice.

Play

It was a challenge to find a suitable definition for the concept of play. My initial observations were drawn from the influential work of Huizinga (1955) and his key writing – *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. His ideas on play highlight the importance of play as a sacred activity, and a way of making meaning in sociocultural settings such as the church and liturgical ritual. According to

Huizinga, play is a necessary element to keep culture functioning well and to provide a mechanism for human beings' desire to make sense of the world around them:

> It [play] adorns life, amplifies it and is to that extent a necessity both for the individual – as a life function – and for society by reason of the meaning it contains, its significance, its expressive value, its spiritual and social associations, in short, as a culture function (p. 9).

A range of writers understand play as an experience that brings spiritual insight and health to a community and makes present a sense of the sacred otherness or transcendence (Goto, 2016a; Hyde, 2008). I consider play to be a very focused activity, and often the participants are so fully engaged that it seems as if they are outside the normal flow of time and are in a world of their own, a form of what Ackerman (1999) describes as *deep play.* The sense of timelessness can then be a connection to the transcendent and the sacred.

A. Kolb and Kolb (2010) use the term *ludic space* to describe play in its highest form. Players create their own rules and boundaries within which they can engage in experiential learning. They consider that, through play, individuals can experience deep learning and move through all of the experiential learning cycle (D. Kolb, 1984). Other writers argue that play can be embodied imagination, increasing opportunities for learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014) and creativity (Brown, 2009; James & Brookfield, 2014).

Play can have a variety of connotations within different cultures. Leaupepe (2011) writes about Tongan and Samoan early childhood teachers' own values and beliefs regarding the notion of play. The teachers commented that their perceptions of play were enjoyable and fun; however, growing up it was a different story. Leaupepe notes that, in many Pacific islands, doing chores and contributing to the life of the village is often considered more important and necessary than letting children play. Leaupepe also mentions that play was seen by the teachers' students as a group activity and there was little or no concept of individual play, and that most play occurred outdoors.

These findings are important to provide a Pasifika context for the concept of play as my research included students from Tonga and Fiji.

Creativity

Defining creativity is a complicated undertaking, with many thousands of articles on the subject (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009). The definition often depends on the purpose for the creativity, and whether creativity is a means to an end or the end itself. There is often the assumption, stated or otherwise, that there will be a product created that can be assessed by others and has value and novelty within a larger social context (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Plucker et al., 2004). In this thesis, I am reflecting on both the effect of creativity on others as well as the creative person themself.

A helpful concept for considering creativity is Kaufman and Beghetto's (2009) four-C model. This model gives a framework for a more nuanced understanding of the questions around the nature of creativity. The model includes:

- "Big-C" creativity (think of Mozart, for example),
- "little-c" – everyday creativity (think of creating a child's birthday cake),
- "Pro-C," for professional expertise,
- "mini-c," "subjective self-discoveries" (p. 230) which I discuss in more detail below.

The *mini-c* construct was particularly relevant for my research as I was investigating individual creativity that was a novel and "personally meaningful interpretation of experiences, actions, and events" (p. 3). Kaufman and Beghetto differentiate between little-c and mini-c, since mini-c contains developmental aspects of creativity as well as transformational learning. The process itself is the important element and not the end product. Kaufman and Beghetto see mini-c creativity as a precursor to other forms of creativity, a "beginner's mind," an "openness to new experiences, active observation, and willingness to be surprised and explore the unknown" (p. 4). This concept partly comes out of a Vygotskian (1978, 2004) approach to creative development that sees every child as possessing creative potential, which is shaped by imagination, play, and their social and

interpersonal context. His philosophy influenced the development of social constructivism in seeing knowledge as gained within a social environment rather than as a solely individual endeavour. The social-constructivist theory underpins my intent to understand and create conditions that enable play, imagination, and creativity to support learning and a connection with the divine.

Cultural understandings of creativity can vary significantly. Pākehā terms often refer to an individual's creativity, whereas, within cultures such as Māori or those in the Pacific, there is a greater sense of the collective, a group creativity. For example, *haka* (Māori ceremonial war dance), and a *poi* dancing (Māori dance using songs and accompanying actions with a light ball) are interactive and communal forms of creativity. However, the idea of a group creativity can be challenging to fit within Kaufman and Beghetto's (2009) four-C model of creativity. Therefore, I would argue that there is value in considering a broader understanding of creativity, which can take account of cultural differences, an embodied creativity (such as body art), and propose a *collaborative-c*, which I discuss further in Chapter 8.

Another component of my project was the connection between the imagination, creativity, and play. Rasmussen (2019) studies the effect of using imagination as a tool for developing and increasing the skill levels of football players, concluding that imagination becomes "a creative faculty that may result in the formation of new knowledge (i.e., actions)" (p. 157). I was particularly engaged by Rasmussen's use of imaginative prompts throughout the text to encourage the reader to also participate in the imaginative process. For instance, at several points he mentions a person/character (Chaplin, Einstein, and Superman) and asks the reader to imagine the text from their perspective. The playful interaction with the reader is one that I have included within my writing through poetry. The combination of imagination and play can also be found in clowning.

Clowning

My clowning experience in the church has had a major influence on my ideas of creative play and even my evolving concept of a ludic mindset and way of being. Peacock (2009) notes the clowning of

Bain and Forbes (1995), and their emphasis on the playfulness, childlikeness, authenticity, and truthfulness found in the ministry of clowns. Bain and Forbes (1995) suggest that playfulness is important because it "increases trust, excites wonder, simulates questioning" (cited in Peacock, 2009, p. 97) in those interacting with the clowns. There are other areas of clowning that contribute to creative play such as imagination and make-believe (Fleming Drane, 2017; Hereniko, 1995; Shaffer & Sewall, 1984), humour, improvisation, and an openness to encounter the unexpected (Hereniko, 1995; Lecoq, 2020; Peacock, 2009). Entering play is like creating a new space, a world of its own, and in a sense the clown facilitates our engagement with it, inviting us all to join in.

Understandings of Creative Play

A diverse range of opinions exists regarding the connection of play with creativity (Banaji & Burn, 2010) and whether play is a precursor to creativity or an integral part of it. The difficulty with many of the definitions of creativity is that there is a sense that the creative act is focused on the production of an end product, in contrast with play, which might have meaning for those involved but might not have an end product or be reproducible elsewhere. At times, creativity and play can be mutually exclusive.

Another issue is that much of the literature on the concept of creative play comes from children's play-based theory and practice. However, in more recent years, there has been a move to broaden the sphere of creative play to include adults. In particular, creativity is seen as a key component in helping young people and adults adapt and thrive in the knowledge-based economy (British Council, n.d.). The British Council describes creative play as an "as an interactive process that facilitates experimentation and improvisation, risk-taking, reimagining and reusing, and exploring possibilities in a playful manner, where freedom to participate lies with the player(s)" (Section 2, n.d.).

In other research, there are similar ideas for both children's and adult's creative play that include divergent thinking (Mainemelis & Ronson, 2006), imagination (James & Brookfield, 2014; Leather et al., 2020; Power, 2011), risk taking (Nørgård et al., 2017), interaction with others and objects (Power,

2011; West et al., 2016). For Brown (2009), the act of playing can be a fertile ground for creativity and innovation. He uses the example of Einstein conceiving the theory of relativity through fantasy and imagination – "riding on a streetcar traveling at the speed of light" (p. 93). Play and imagination become a precursor to creativity. I find several of Bateson et al.'s (2014) features of play useful in this discussion of creative play. They mention that play can be considered fun and positively rewarding for the individual, as a "generator of novelty" (p. 12) with no specific outcome or goal.

Leather et al. (2020) consider a range of literature linking play with creativity, openness to possibilities, increased learning, and positive emotions. I particularly like their integration of play with an experiential and embodied focus as these fit well with my understanding of creative play. The authors use the term *ludic* to express the full range of their play pedagogy as well as their own teaching mindset. A. Kolb and Kolb (2010) consider that there are two modes of play – epistemic and ludic. They suggest epistemic is more goal-oriented play whereas ludic is the process of playing and "concentrates on means rather than ends" (p. 30). They consider that play does not necessarily end with childhood but that it does need to be encouraged in adults and so they suggest the creation of a ludic learning space.

My Understanding of Creative Play. To gain an understanding of creative play in my practice, I include a ludic attitude (Leather et al., 2020), creativity, imagination, embodiment, and a method that connects the creator (initiator of the creativity) with the viewers and/or participants. Therefore, play, in this research project investigating creative play, is a process rather than an end product, and not play in terms of games or a scripted/theatrical play. My understanding of creative play expanded over the course of the research project, and I discuss this further in the discussion chapter (Chapter 7); however, the following is my initial concept and the one I used when explaining the research project to participants:

> Creative play is using a person's experience, imagination, and the things around them to create new ideas, new ways of seeing and new possibilities for the person and for others.

Creative Play and Adult Learning

In my research, I was interested in exploring the effect of creative play on adult learning. As there has been a great deal written about adult learning and education, I am focusing, in this review, on creative play as the stimulus for adult learning in several key areas – experiential and embodied learning (including multisensory experiences); the influence of a playful mindset; critical reflexivity; group work; and environmental factors such as the interaction between nature, creative play and learning.

Vygotsky and Learning. An important part of my thinking is shaped by the work of Vygotsky and social constructivism. For Vygotsky (1978), an individual's learning is a developmental process that is shaped by both their culture and the social processes of engagement with an adult or within a community of peers (Deulen, 2013; Estep, 2002). For Vygotsky (2004), imagination and play are an integral part of the learning process. Like others (Deulen, 2013; Yarbrough, 2018), I have adapted a core concept of Vygotsky's (1978) – zone of proximal development. For adults, this zone

> is the distance between the [adult's] actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving … guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (p. 131)

Vygotsky also writes of the more knowledgeable other (MKO), an individual "that has greater understanding or a higher skill level than the learner, with respect to a concept, process or task" (Yarbrough, 2018, p. 5). The MKO is the one who creates the environment through which students move from the zone of actual development to the zone of proximal development (Deulen, 2013). Of particular interest to my research process (for example my use of workshops) is the role of the MKO as facilitator rather than teacher to engage learners:

> A facilitator provides guidelines and creates the appropriate environment for the learner to arrive at his or her own answer and conclusions; a teacher mostly gives a monologue; a

> facilitator is in continuous and interactive dialogue with the learners. (Amineh & Asl, 2015, p. 14)

Both the facilitator and the learners construct the learning space through their group social interaction. Creativity also has an important part in the learning process and is a significant factor in my understanding of creative play.

Creativity as a Stimulus for Learning. Ken Robinson is a key proponent of using creativity in teaching and learning. Robinson and Aronica (2015) argue that creativity is the fertile ground from which learning can grow because in using creativity you need imagination "to bring to mind things that aren't present to our senses" (p. 118). Imagination then becomes a vehicle for putting together a range of new ideas, making sense of them, and then using them in different ways. Although their work and an earlier UK report by K. Robinson et al. (1999) refer to school-aged children, other researchers have seen the importance of creativity as significant for life-long learning (James & Brookfield, 2014; Johns, 2017; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Moon, 2004; Scott et al., 2004). Miner (2017a) suggests there is definite value in promoting creativity across multiple levels of higher education, from the individual to the institutional level. Creativity can therefore be seen as integral to education rather than relegated to the arts curriculum. In terms of education, creativity is one element of a larger whole, with other important parts including experiential and embodied learning.

Experiential and Embodied Learning. There is growing acknowledgement that adults learn better when their whole body and lived experience are valued and incorporated in their learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). For example, Johns (2013, 2017) uses multimedia performance narratives as a reflective tool for himself and his students in his nursing programmes. The multimedia elements include prose and poetry read aloud interspersed with projected images and music. Johns (2017) formulated the performance narratives from diary entries and reflective writing (both his and students' diary entries). The performances could include himself and/or his students and provided opportunities for dialogue with the audience, "it enables both performers and audience to feel and

see what is going on, moving beyond cognitive to bodily understanding. It is living or acting out theory" (p. 109). The ability to embody their narratives gives the students an opportunity to reflect on the event/s portrayed in new and refreshing ways and from differing points of view. In a setting such as St John's College, liturgy can also be used as an embodied learning tool as long as it is framed as such and includes opportunities for reflection and discussion.

An important part of embodied and experiential learning is based on multisensory and tactile experiences. Chatterjee et al. (2015) write about an approach called object-based learning (OBL). The concept is that object/s can be used to evoke a creative reaction or at least provide a catalyst that can be harnessed for learning. The premise is that handling an object creates a connection with memory which can be more engaging than, say, reading about a period of time when the object was created. Although educators are starting to use mass-produced human-made objects, OBL seems to be principally aimed at students engaging with galleries, libraries, archives, and museums, rather than with ordinary everyday objects. However, as I discuss later in this section, useful tactile objects can also be nature based.

Lego serious play (LSP) and labyrinths are two kinaesthetic learning methods mentioned by James and Brookfield (2014). One of the fascinating aspects of LSP is the instruction to build first and discuss later. The idea is that you let your fingers construct without doing any planning so that it is the sensory experience that informs your ideas, not vice versa. Recently, at a group art-therapy session run by one of the theological students at college, we were instructed to draw something in response to what we heard the other person describe of their own picture, what Knill et al. (2004) call an *aesthetic response*. I was amazed that, after listening for only a few minutes, the other person had captured the essence of my image so well. It was almost as if the drawing arrived without much thought but plenty of feeling.

Another aspect of embodied learning is experiential knowledge gained through engagement of the senses (Chatterjee et al., 2015; Morrison, 2015). However, using the senses by themselves is not

enough as there also needs to be reflection and, as Hein (1998) suggests, "activities [that] challenge ideas, lead to cognitive uncertainty, and stretch the beliefs held previously" (p. 38). What is it then that helps motivate us to stay with, reflect, learn, and grow from such potentially uncomfortable experiences?

The Influence of a Playful Mindset in Learning. I am fascinated by the role creativity and the imagination can have in developing a ludic mindset (James & Brookfield, 2014) and how it can maximise the ability of students and teachers to be reflective learners (James & Brookfield, 2014; Johns, 2013; Moon, 2004). Through using multiple creative layers, students see things from quite different perspectives providing an opportunity for adjusting, critiquing, and reflecting on the subject at hand (James & Brookfield, 2014). James and Brookfield (2014) equate using an unexpected creative element or method in the classroom, which jolts students out of their normal learning routine and environment, with the "disorienting dilemma"[3] that leads to transformational learning (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). They use several examples including asking students to build a Lego model to express a concept they have learnt or to draw a discussion they have just had. Through changing students' routine learning patterns, the shock value can create an environment that fosters imaginative and innovative thinking (James & Brookfield, 2014).

In his transformational learning theory, Mezirow (2011) discusses the role that disorienting dilemmas play in the learning process along with critical reflection based on experience, planning action(s) to take account of new understandings, trying different things out, and gaining confidence in the learner's newfound abilities. His process encourages learning that shifts individuals from one state into another. Are there other possibilities for assisting people to enjoy the learning process?

Nørgård et al. (2017) undertook research into the factors that assist tertiary-level students to enjoy and remain engaged in learning. The researchers developed two qualitative in-depth interview-based

[3] A change of perspective and a new awareness that can be generated from a challenging personal or learning event (Taylor, 2011).

studies, one in 2012 (range of ages, 39 students) and the other in 2016 (again a range of ages and 47 participants). Of note from the first study are the findings that students enjoyed classes when teaching was stimulating, physically engaging, and had activities that were unusual and surprising; where collaborative learning took place; and where the students felt safe to explore and take risks. The researchers then created a play pedagogy combining their research, gameful learning and the concept of the "magic circle," originally used by Huizinga (1955) and later applied to game theory by Salen and Zimmerman (2004). The magic circle denotes a physical or, as Nørgård et al. (2017) suggest, "a socially constructed liminal space created during play" (p. 274). They offer a pedagogy that resonates with my research inquiry as I consider the role of creative play with theological students so that they can learn in an environment that is safe, playful, encourages imagination, and offers the freedom to fail (Nørgård et al., 2017).

A similar concept to the magic circle pedagogy is a framework presented by A. Kolb and Kolb (2010) that links their own experiential learning theory with play. Their case study was based on an informal American softball league that had been going for 15 years, gathering data from interviews and observations from those who had participated. A. Kolb and Kolb observed that a ludic learning space was created through a broad set of rules (the softball game itself) as well as the "intrinsic motivation" (p. 45) of the players arising from the players feeling that they were in control of how and what they learned. Within the ludic space, learning happened through an integration of D. Kolb's (1984) cyclic experiential learning theory, "feeling, reflection, thinking, and action" (A. Kolb & Kolb, 2010, p. 45). A. Kolb and Kolb (2010) observed that the learning was as much an individual activity as it was a team one. I find it interesting that they note that the supportive, safe, respectful environment/ludic space contributed to people's playful participation and learning. The importance of A. Kolb and Kolb's research for my work is the interconnected nature of play, learning and reflection within a defined context which does not necessarily restrict participants' creative and improvisational skills through a prescriptive set of rules.

Creative Play and Group Work. I was particularly interested in whether play could increase creativity in a group setting with adults. An interesting piece of research by West et al. (2017) explores the impact on creativity of using playful improvisational theatre in an organisational setting. Participants were divided into a control group and an intervention group. The intervention group took part in a series of three improvisational-theatre workshops. Participants were then assessed using quantitative methods including questionnaires with Likert-type scales. Their data showed that there was an increase in playfulness, and individual and group creativity, when compared with the control group. However, they were unable to define how play might contribute to creativity. I also note that this is a quantitative study rather than a qualitative one and lacks a more nuanced understanding of people's motives, interactions between participants, and the influence of others' creativity on an individual.

What Is the Relationship Between Creative Play and Being in Nature? Adults learn in a variety of different ways. E. Phillips (2011), a New Zealand educator, discusses the importance of providing the right setting and the "power of the environment to create learning stimulation, enquiry, conversation, inspiration and discovery" (p. 73). Phillips comes out of an early childhood teaching background and her inspiration comes from a range of educators and approaches such as Steiner and Reggio Emilia. I was inspired by her idea of using a range of objects (such as shells, leaves), music, colour, and photography to enhance adults' learning. There is a playful aspect to how Phillips constructs the learning environment from a small tableau of objects to surround-sound music and coloured walls. Her article, though, is more about presenting ideas for consideration rather than specific research on the effects of the environment on adult learners.

I am interested in the cognitive and spiritual benefits for learners of moving beyond the walls of the classroom into the natural environment, what some researchers refer to as "nature connectedness" (M. Richardson et al., 2019). In their 2013 review of empirical studies, Keniger et al. note a range of benefits from interacting with nature: "including positive effects on physical health, psychological

well-being, cognitive ability and social cohesion" (p. 914) and write of several types of interaction with nature (indirect, incidental, and intentional). E. Phillips's (2011) learning environment/tableau, above, would be what is called indirect, that is, "experiencing nature while not being physically present in it" (Keniger et al., 2013, p. 917), while doing a learning activity outside would be a combination of incidental and intentional: "experiencing nature as a by-product of another activity [and] experiencing or being in nature through direct intention" (Keniger et al., 2013, p. 917). I am also aware of the holistic nature of our connection with nature in New Zealand. In te ao Māori, the wellbeing of a person is connected to their wairua (spirit/spirituality), *whakapapa* (history), *whenua* (land) and the environment (Mark & Lyons, 2010). Education and learning, for an individual, become part of a wider context that is understood as more than an individual's personal experience.

In terms of learning in the natural environment, I was particularly interested in the outdoor seminar space created by students and a local carpenter at the University of Kent (James & Brookfield, 2014). Called Quercus Genius, the area can be booked for classes and is a place for staff and students to socialise in. The concept is more for summer and autumn rather than winter; however, I like the idea of sitting under trees learning about all manner of subjects, not least theology.

As discussed above, there are a number of connections between creative play and adult learning that contribute to my research. The areas of interest include embodied and experiential learning through to the influence of nature. There are some overarching themes throughout this section, such as having a playful mindset, using one's imagination, and critical reflexivity, all of which can have a role in theological institutional learning.

Benefits of Clowning as a Creative Educational Method

At Boston University School of Theology, Goto (2016b) introduced a course on creative pedagogy, including clowning as a creative methodology. She developed the course to assist the students in their theological formation by using clowning to embody and live out the Christian principle of love. The students dressed as clowns and interacted with passers-by on the university campus, "the main

exercise was simply to engage people we met on the school grounds in playing" (p. 404). Prior to the clowning activity, there were lectures and discussions on the theory and theology of clowning, as well as classes on improvisation and performance; after the clowning, there was a time of reflection and analysis.

Goto's (2016b) intention was to use a creative method that was experiential in nature and would deepen the students' awareness and relationship with others. To some extent, this appears successful as the students discussed what it was like to be rejected and misunderstood in their clowning guise:

> Although students felt hurt, disappointed, and frustrated, some were able to mime their feelings of rejection, to which other students responded with empathy and compassion. One student "felt nothing but understanding" toward those who felt uncomfortable being in the midst of clowns or who were too busy to stop and engage us. (p. 409)

However, Goto notes that there was not enough time factored into the exercise for the students to process their experience. I noted her observation and made sure that I included opportunities for feedback and debrief in the individual and group work I undertook in my research project.

There are others who include clowning in their courses. Silfver (2018) discusses trialling clowning workshops with student teachers to assist in their formation as teachers and their self-identity. I was not able to discover more on her work, but it does reflect the wider exploration of creativity and play as a method of formation and learning in a variety of international adult education settings. Reilly (2015) included a number of creative methods alongside traditional teaching in her classes to research the effect they might have on student learning. Half-way through the course, Reilly included clowning as a method for students to work through challenging aspects of their learning and to sort out group issues within their cohort. Reilly's observation is that the creative arts methods provided greater group systemic analysis and individual transformational learning and assisted students to cope with demands of contemporary life better than a traditional lecture-based programme. What is

of interest for my research is how the playful attitude of the clown can be a creative medium for individual learning and development as well as influencing group dynamics.

In another example of an initiative to support arts-based creativity, Betsworth (2012), at Oklahoma City University, uses art and drama in her honours biblical studies classes (16–18 students), as a method of deepening knowledge through providing opportunities for different learning styles. Teachers in this initiative are supported by the university and are therefore not isolated individuals initiating change. A. Kolb and Kolb (2005) conclude that the use of an alternative teaching strategy or even philosophy needs to be intentional and part of a larger systematic process, otherwise its success is limited.

In exploring the use of creativity and play in adult theological education, I have broadened the scope of my literature search beyond traditional theological institutions as this contributes to a wider interdisciplinary understanding of the importance and benefits of creativity across the educational spectrum. Key findings suggest that creativity plays an important part in deepening students' ability to learn and relate to one another.

In theological education, Betsworth (2012) and Goto (2016b) mention a range of benefits of using creativity and, in particular, an arts-based approach. In Betsworth's (2012) course evaluations, many of the students responded that the biblical subjects became more relevant to their life experience, and their style of learning was valued through incorporating different teaching methods (artwork, dramatic presentations). She comments that in classes where students embodied the text through drama, they showed a depth to their understanding that was not as apparent in their assignments or even when responding to a text that was read aloud.

Both Goto (2016b) and Betsworth (2012) were quite deliberate in developing a curriculum that includes creativity and opportunities for students to play that goes beyond the traditional methods of teaching. It is not noted by them, but I wonder what the long-term effects of the creativity were,

did it change the students' perspectives in other areas of their theological study, did it create a desire to pursue creativity in their future ministry endeavours?

However, I am aware that there are challenges introducing a fairly new and nontraditional teaching method such as creativity and play in a theological institution. There can be resistance from the group of learners themselves as well as their teachers. In the end-of-course evaluations, Betsworth (2012), notes the students' nervousness in using new and different methods in traditional areas such as biblical studies. She surmises, from her experience, that honours students consider that creative endeavours are not as academic as more traditional theological/biblical subjects. Goto (2016b) comments in her article, that students' levels of engagement can be dependent on their willingness to try new things, their interaction with one another and levels of trust between students.

The teachers' level of skill and confidence can also be a barrier (Beghetto, 2010). If educators have experienced creative teaching methods either in their teacher formation or in their classrooms growing up this seems to be helpful in terms of teaching later on (Beghetto, 2010). Goto (2016b) notes that there can be challenges around the use of experiential learning itself, especially if the students are unused to this style of learning. I am encouraged though, that challenges can be overcome through appropriate educational tools, for example, Goto suggests risks can be reduced "by providing multiple sources for scaffolding the exercise. Readings, discussions, and other forms of theater improvisation can prepare students to engage, reflect critically, and assimilate what they have learned" (p. 411). I suggest that the benefits of including creativity and play in a curriculum outweigh the resistance or challenges that may occur. It takes training, preparation and support for teachers, and the use of a range of strategies for students, to enable a new educational innovation to be used successfully (Beghetto, 2010; K. Robinson & Aronica, 2015; V. M. Robinson et al., 2009). Part of my research design was to trial strategies that would support the development of others in terms of creative play.

I am interested in the insights Miner (2017a) offers regarding the benefits of creativity for tertiary-level students in nontheological universities and wonder if they might be as relevant for theological students. Miner (2017a) notes the work of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) on creativity and that "creativity is associated with a sense of intrinsic well-being, enhanced psychological functioning, and good health among individuals" (p. 145). The concepts of health and wellbeing seem to be important for all students but particularly for those who seek to be ordained and minister to others. They need to function well themselves before they assist others in their spiritual health.

Creative Play in Church/Liturgical Settings

The Ludic Quality of Liturgy. Gschwandtner (2021) raises some good questions about the extent to which liturgy is ludic. Is liturgy by its very nature ludic or are there some issues around connecting play and liturgy so closely? She argues that liturgy has a more formal quality, an order, and a structure to it, that is not seen in the more improvised and spontaneous nature of play. I would disagree with her assumption, though, that liturgy is real, in the sense that it has import and engages with the holy, and that play is not. I would argue that play has the ability to engage and connect the players in a way that speaks of a spiritual awareness/connection, and that since liturgy and play are social constructs, they are capable of change and development.

I would argue, from my experience, that much of a liturgy's ludic nature is dependent on the mindset and engagement of those who participate. If you are the person who puts the liturgy together (including choosing the music) then the preparatory act can be creative and playful, especially if you are imagining the setting and connecting all the elements with the theme. A preacher can be playful and entice the congregation to imagine a different world from their present reality. The congregant might have ludic moments when they are fully present and open to the divine, particularly through the words and actions of the Eucharist which celebrate the presence of God breaking into the here and now. Ultimately, right from the beginning, the person/s who lead the worship service, in my case

the presider, sets the scene, and can encourage a ludic and engaging frame of mind, or not, in the congregants (Burns, 2018).

I wonder how much of the current Anglican liturgy has become formulaic rather than engaging the whole of a person within the community that gathers to worship. John Drane (2017) argues that in our more contemporary liturgical offerings, we have lost the traditional notion of worship as drama, a transformative mix of the experiential with the transcendent. Instead, we have embraced the "McDonaldized church of efficiency, predictability, calculability and control" (p. 24). An alternative is to either renew the liturgy itself or to find a new expression of church.

In the early 2000s, there was an awareness in the UK that the Anglican Church needed to adapt if it was to introduce Christianity to a less churched society (Croft, 2008). There was a desire to find new ways of making institutional Christianity more relevant and engaging for people who, for a variety of reasons, no longer attended, or had never attended, traditional church. The result was the development of the Fresh Expressions movement. Messy Church is part of this movement and was developed by Lucy Moore in 2004 to find new ways of encouraging people to come to church as they were, in all their messiness and imperfections (hence the name *Messy*). The five facets at the core of Messy Church are: "Christ-centred, creativity, all-age, celebration and hospitality" (Moore, 2017, p. 108). The services are usually held monthly over a 2-hour period and conclude with a meal. Each session has a theme and activities based on biblical references, or other Christian ideals such as prayer and discipleship. There is a great emphasis on the intergenerational aspect of Messy Church (Moore, 2006; J. Roberts, 2017). J. Roberts (2017) notes Erikson's (1995) concept of mutuality, and that different ages can learn from each other. The combination of creativity, play and group work fits well within my definition of creative play. There is imagination, experience, and engagement with the other to create new ways of seeing (in this case, the holy/divine/sacred), and new possibilities enacted in a defined sacred setting: Messy Church.

Along with Messy Church, there are several Christian educational systems that are used in the New Zealand context and include imagination and play. Godly Play (Berryman, 2009) and Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (Cavalletti, 1992) use imagination and physical space to explore Christian ritual and liturgy. Both educational methods have set times of telling Christian stories in a group environment, as well as individual time exploring the theme. Unlike Messy Church though, these educational formats are primarily for children. The children are given opportunities to respond to the stories they have heard, for example, through drawing and craft making, but most of the objects used in the storytelling are selected by the adults. However, an interesting consequence is the development of an adult's own story-making abilities, "the adults act as storytellers and take on different roles and characters within the activity, for example the 'doorperson'" (Berryman, 1995, p. 36). To be authentic and engaging, the adults need to enter the stories and rituals alongside the children. There is still a script to follow and roles to play, though, so I do not think that they are equal partners. The adults need to use their imagination and be able to play a little, but most of the engagement is from the child's perspective.

The similarities between Messy Church, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, and Godly Play include setting aside a time and a place to investigate and being curious about and playful with a particular biblical theme, story, or idea. They are all consciously experiential in that everyone is invited to engage their senses through touch, smell, sight, and, in some cases, taste (Messy Church meals for instance) and respond through actions, conversations, creating and building, in contrast to a traditional church where most of the time people are only listening to a person/s up the front.

A New Zealander who writes and develops innovative worship, Pierson (2012) notes the importance of getting people up and moving and interacting in a way that encourages possibilities of engagement with the holy. For example, Pierson uses prayer stations extensively within his style of worship. The idea behind prayer stations is that they are a place to gather for a specific purpose. Often stations are used at Easter to symbolise the journey of Jesus to the cross and his subsequent

crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. They can be scattered throughout a room, or as part of a walk outside. People are encouraged to move around and stop in front of each one reflecting on what happened. For Pierson, the stations are placed in a room very much like installation art with the congregational members moving around and interacting with what is placed at each site, for instance writing, drawing, building something, or even lighting candles. The aim is for individuals to move at their own pace, choosing where and when to stop, and interacting in a way that involves the senses.

Clowning and the Sacred. The playful nature of clowning can be seen in liturgical and sacred/spiritual terms through both Pākehā clown ministry and different types of Pasifika clowning.

In terms of Pākehā church culture, the combination of clowning and church ministry originated in the United States in the late 1960s through Floyd Shaffer. He went on to co-author a book with Penne Sewell, in 1984, providing a history of the movement and instructions on clowning and setting up clowning ministries. Shaffer and Sewall (1984) write of the theology of clowning. The idea that God is revealed through the actions of the clown in terms of servanthood, vulnerability (giving away your power "in order to raise others to a position of worth", p. 12), being childlike, and unconditional love. They mention that God has a sense of humour, referencing a significant Old Testament character that God named as Isaac which means 'laughter'. In the English environment, many of these themes are continued in the ministry of Roly Bain who co-founded Holy Fools, an association of British clown ministers (Peacock, 2009). Bain and Forbes (1995) understand the Christian clown as representing God's foolishness as well as the life, death, and resurrection of Christ:

> It is a circus tradition that whatever happens to clowns, a bucket of whitewash in the face...an exploding car or a collapsing ladder, the clown always rises again, gets up and continues. For this reason, clowns are rightly seen as resurrection figures. (p. 59)

The clown provides an opportunity for the congregation (participants) to explore these Christ-like areas more fully. The reflections of these writers are significant as they add theological depth to an activity (clowning) that may, on the surface, seem trivial or lightweight.

In terms of the research on clowning in a Pasifika context, a key researcher is Vilsoni Hereniko (1994, 1995). Hereniko was born in Rotuma (a very small island approximately 470 km north of Fiji). Hereniko (1995) researched the traditional and female element of clowning in his culture. The institution of the clown, the *hàn mane'àk su,* was often associated with play in general but the clown also had a particular role in the wedding ritual and in the preparation of culturally significant woven mats. The hàn mane'àk su was performed alongside the placing of the fine white mats during moments of the wedding service that were understood as particularly sacred. Hereniko writes that the white mats "were regarded in the past as woven gods imbued with supernatural powers," and that "both the fine mats and the hàn mane'àk su were conduits through which social and divine power were manifest" (p. 26). What I find significant here is the ritual and sacred role of the clown that goes far beyond a sometimes more secular/Pākehā view of clowning that is associated with informality and entertainment. This takes the idea of clowning and play to a whole new level and can be loosely connected with clowns as holy fools. Hereniko says that the female clown "embodies female and male, human and divine. She fuses ritual and play, stasis and movement, order, and disorder – indeed the forces in society and nature that are essential for life and its regeneration" (p. 133). This highlights the important role of the embodied and sacred nature of clowning as a mode of creativity that brings forth new forms and life.

In Samoan theatre, the clown is less an embodiment and more of a transformed being or *aitu* (spirit) (O'Donnell, 2014). The tradition of ritual and play in Pasifika clowning is seen in both Samoa and New Zealand. O'Donnell (2014) contends that clowning is often used in productions with the lead clown transforming into a spirit aitu in his performance. The clown role is part of an all-male theatrical tradition called *fale aitu*, which is variously defined as a dramatic Samoan clowning genre (O'Donnell,

2014) or carnivalesque-type performance featuring transvestism, “in which normative status can be reversed, caricature performed without consequences, and political critique delivered with relative impunity under the guise of satire” (Pearson, 2014, p. 242). I am intrigued by the notion of the clown in this instance crossing stereotypical gender lines by impersonating women. Are spirits considered female or is it more a matter of crossing traditional boundaries in a playful and humorous way that give permission for the audience to also enter this upside-down world?

From my discussion of the literature there are several themes that reveal a connection with my understanding of creative play: liturgical worship can engage the imagination of participants through interactive activities and storytelling; is intentionally participatory; and provides opportunities for participants to gain new understandings about themselves, others and the holy/divine/sacred. In addition, the literature emphasises well-designed liturgies that engage the whole person (Burns, 2018; Lysaught, 2009; VerEecke, 2009), that take account of the locality and the environment where worship services will take place (Burns, 2018; Giles, 2008; Pierson, 2012), incorporate some form of movement and embodied participation beyond sight and sound (Lysaught, 2009; Pierson, 2012), and are centred within a Christian community of some kind. Much of what I have discussed presupposes a leader/s of some kind who both plans and runs the worship service itself. In the Anglican tradition, more often than not a priest is the one who leads or *presides* at a service especially if there is a Eucharist.

The Priest and Creative Play. I return to the work of Pierson (2012) and his concept of a worship curator rather than the worship leader introduced in Chapter 1. In the context of creative play, I see the worship curator as akin to my roles as designer and presider over worship services and sacramental liturgies. The worship curator is someone who designs and constructs both the overall concept of a worship service and the process. The curator can lead the service or, like an art installation, let people navigate the space themselves. I remember going to a worship event that was based on the Easter story. We moved from one section to the next guided by both signage and

attendants and could participate as much or as little as we wanted to. There was a section where we sat and watched a form of video installation, and another where we ate fish from a barbeque. I experienced the whole event as very evocative, and it stimulated both my senses and my imagination. I found it interesting that there was no leader up the front welcoming and gathering the people to the event. Instead, the worship designer/curator was absent and had, in a sense, devolved the gathering to those who handed out instruction sheets and welcomed us at the start of our journey and those who then guided us along the way. It felt like a very democratic process and slightly foreign to the usual Anglican context of the presider up the front leading the sacred occasion. The absence of the worship curator also left it to participants to decide how they wanted to engage and play, rather than being controlled by a prescriptive liturgical formula. Pierson's (2012) concept is but one idea of leadership and creative play.

Karen Ward (2017) writes of the development of a Fresh Expressions church in the US that sought to use creative rituals to shift people from "thinking about God … to creating the opportunity for people to experience God through forms of ritual action as sacramental worship, to experience God through the heart" (p. 115). Since most of those who joined her church community were not Christians, they were not wedded to any particular expression of worship and explored a range of different liturgical traditions including ancient rites. They were able to unearth treasures (my word) from early Christian liturgies, contextualising them and making them applicable to the people who gathered at the church. Similar to my approach in the research project, the liturgical explorations became a spiritual as well as an educative tool, a method of deepening their theological understanding. Moore (2017), the founder of Messy Church, also sees the possibilities of creative liturgy to be a place for learning. Messy Church is such that it can be quite informal and often communion can happen around the same table as a meal. She mentions that this informality can lend itself to conversations and questions being raised during the service rather than at the end or in another setting. The communion is playful in that it engenders a curiosity and a wondering from the attendees that is permission giving and a result of the messy creativity of the church concept itself.

What about clowning as a liturgical and priestly act? Clowning and clowns within liturgy are not without detractors, as witnessed online, particularly regarding a Roman Catholic-style liturgy called Novus Ordo Clown Mass. Most of the posts I have seen are fairly vitriolic (for example, the Novus Ordo Watch website); however, even in their anger, critics raise good points about whether clowns detract from rather than illuminate the sacred (McClarey, 2014). Others raise questions about the influence of culture in liturgy, "the use of the clown Mass begs important questions regarding inculturation. At what point is a 'line' drawn regarding what elements of the arts, culture, and society are 'acceptable' as material for the 'holy' or not? Who draws that line?" (Harmon, 2014, para. 8). I agree with Harmon's (2014) conclusion that clowning and the arts can have a place in liturgy if they enhance the congregation's sense of the holy and the sacred and are not an unnecessary distraction. Of course, depending on the character and role of the clown themselves, it may be that by their very presence they are alerting the congregation and the ministers to worship that is formulaic and hypocritical rather than joyful and spiritual. I contend that the clown can be a catalyst and provocateur contributing to transformational change in a church as well as an educational context.

I note the reflection by the retired Anglican Bishop John Bluck (2008), that the church is like a circus in that it is free for all and includes all sorts of people with a variety of gifts and talents. I would argue that clowns, by their very nature, do not exist for themselves but, through characterisation and action, reflect something of the community they exist within and help the community move into a more playful space. An example of connecting the local church with wider issues is Fleming Drane's (2017) use of her clown character, a hobo, to demonstrate that all were welcome for communion, even those who might not conform to societal or even church norms such as the homeless. Her character celebrated communion using a loaf of stale bread still in its bag and a bottle of wine which she drank from. Fleming Drane writes that she was not expecting anyone else to take part as it was in the form of a drama/skit and so she was astounded when other members of the church came and joined her, sipping from the same bottle and sharing the bread. What especially appeals to me is the way Fleming Drane used her imagination to create a place of make-believe that invited active

participation by others. I consider that through her actions, the clown character revealed her humanity and vulnerability, encouraging others to join her in a corporate act of sacred play.

Fleming Drane's clown character, the fresh expressions of church, and Pierson's (2012) worship curation share similar aspects of creative play: curiosity, imagination, participation and interaction, context/cultural relevance, authenticity, and a creative connection of diverse ideas.

Conclusion

From my review of the literature, there are several key points with regard to creative play, my practice, and research inquiry. Creative play is a way of making and growing meaning from our interaction with others, the world around us, and the divine, and fits well with my practice as a priest, facilitator, and teacher. Creative play is an important part of an experiential form of learning and is part of an embodied, multisensory perspective. Clowning, and specifically Christian clowning, has a number of insights applicable to creative play such as embodied engagement with others, imagination, and make-believe. Both clowning and creative play can draw out a ludic mindset and approach to learning, spirituality, and liturgical worship. An interesting aspect I found in the literature is that play, and creativity can have different connotations in a variety of cultures and this is of importance in theological institutions with an ethnically diverse student body.

Creative play can be found in church and liturgical renewal especially within the Fresh Expressions movement. The literature on Fresh Expressions and clowning (such as that described in Bain & Forbes, 1995; and Hereniko, 1995), draws out a way of understanding creative play as both a very human and a sacred activity. This integration of creative play as a sacred and spiritual act fits well with theorists such as Huizinga (1955), and Ackerman (1999).

The literature review has contributed to my expanded understanding of creative play as an embodied creativity where the process is as important as an end product. I will return to this idea

and the addition to Kaufman and Beghetto's (2009) 4-C model of an embodied creativity that is collaborative, interactive, and culturally responsive in Chapter 8.

There is more to learn about the place of creative play in developing adult learning and creativity, particularly in relation to spirituality and liturgical worship in an Aotearoa, New Zealand context. I am curious to understand the impact of creative play strategies on the learning, creativity, and worship practices of St John's College students as an evidence-based study. From a teaching/facilitation/ministry formation perspective I wanted to observe how St John's College students responded to play as a creative strategy for invoking their sense of the holy/divine/sacred. As a result, my research inquiry questions expanded in focus to include:

1. What is the place of creative play in developing adult learning, creativity, spirituality, and liturgical worship?
2. What is the impact of creative play strategies on the learning, creativity, and worship practice of St John's College students?
3. How do St John's College students respond to play as a creative strategy for invoking their sense of the holy/divine/sacred?

In the next chapter, I discuss the methodology I used to answer my research questions.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

In this chapter, I describe how the overarching frameworks of crystallisation and spatial bricolage were used to hold the intricate interweaving of my research methodologies (phenomenology, evocative autoethnography, and action research (AR) and data-collection methods (e.g., observation, field notes, journalling, focus group debriefs/interviews). I discuss the role of poetic inquiry, reflection, and critical reflection, as strategies for data collection, analysis, and interpretation; and their contribution to a multilayered thematic analysis that informed the findings. The research, conducted within a social constructivist paradigm, investigated the place of creative play in developing adult learning and creativity, in relation to spirituality and liturgical worship in a New Zealand theological setting (St John's Theological College) and its impact on individuals and groups. The research occurred in three parts:

Part 1 –Role of priest: creative play and liturgical worship, 2020-2021.

Part 2 – Role of teacher: experiential learning in creative play workshops, 2020.

Part 3 – Role of facilitator: college tārai waka, 2021.

The chapter ends with consideration of ethical implications/issues as well as how I ensured the integrity of the crystallisation methodological framework.

At the beginning of my research project, I set out to undertake a series of face-to-face workshops and liturgical events (worship services) exploring the impact of creative play on the learning and spiritual insights of students at St John's College. However, as I was tossed and turned by the effects of COVID-19 in New Zealand, I needed to discover a new way of doing things, hence a kaleidoscope of methodologies and methods emerged to provide flexibility for the rest of the research process. Initially, I could only glimpse momentary fragments of the participants' perspectives intertwined with my autoethnographic narrated self. Yet, the playful engagement of the self with others provided a dynamism that was life giving and contextual. I could bring myself, as a priest, a clown, a worship creator, and an educator, to the research process. Instead of staying with workshops as the

only method of teaching creative play, I also led worship services and facilitated a group (tārai waka) to support their use of creative play. The tārai waka groups were an already an established part of the college structure and lent themselves easily to a creative learning method. The group process meant that I could see an evolving situation (over 6 months) rather than only individual workshop outcomes.

Play and ritual (in my case Christian liturgy and worship services) are interactive spaces within which knowledge and meaning can be constructed, interpreted, and understood. From a social constructivist perspective "all knowledge, and thus all meaningful reality, is contingent upon human practices, and is constructed as the result of the interaction between human beings and their world" (Hyde, 2008, p. 62). Play can be an individual activity, but in the case of my research I was seeking to understand the role of creativity and playfulness within group contexts.

I discovered two helpful methodological frameworks that provided a multifaceted approach and could hold the intricate interweaving of my methodologies and data-collection methods: spatial bricolage and crystallisation. Both frameworks fit within a social constructivist and interpretive milieu that seek to provide multiple ways of seeing and knowing in a three-dimensional way. L. Richardson (2000) created the metaphor of crystallisation to provide a way of constructing research that incorporates a diverse range of methods and methodologies to build a layered and more complex perspective than a single methodology might do. Ellingson (2009, 2014) developed the metaphor further to include greater detail on the practical aspects of crystallisation such as the possibilities for incorporating creative and analytical research methods.

Ellingson (2014) considers five aspects that are needed to ensure a crystallisation research process. One is an overall depth, complexity, and knowledge about a topic. The second aspect is use of a range of qualitative analyses that includes at least one creative approach. For example, Ellingson used a similar process to me in that she "constructed patterns across data from multiple participants" (p. 3) and created poetry by crafting words from the transcript texts. The third aspect

depends upon using a mix of different creative genres. Fourth, the writing needs an autoethnographic component. And finally, the fifth aspect is encapsulating knowledge in different ways.

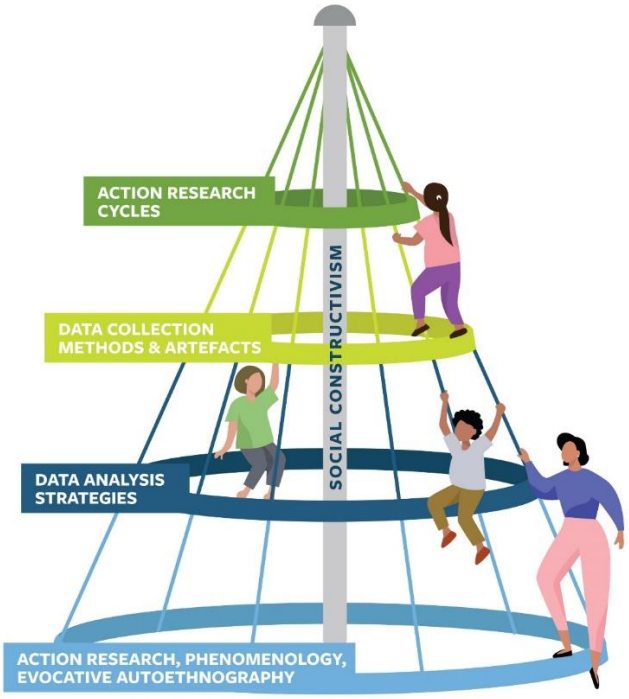
Alongside Ellingson's (2009, 2014) crystallisation framework, I wanted an approach that felt more tactile and sensory, hence, the use of bricolage. The term bricolage was coined by Lévi-Strauss (1966) in his ethnographic studies and developed more extensively in qualitative research by the likes of Denzin and Lincoln (2000), and Kincheloe (2005). In terms of my research, I particularly appreciate Wibberley's (2012) idea that in bricolage the process of crafting the research is as important as the finished product. The organic nature of the bricoleur's art fits well with the reflective practice at the heart of my inquiry, a sense of revelations occurring as the data analysis unfolds and I observe the impact of my practice on others.

As my research progressed, I realised that I needed to acknowledge and take note of the performative aspect of creative play as well as the social dynamic operating in the workshops and liturgical settings. In the literature on bricolage, I discovered the concept of *spatial bricolage*, from the work of L. Roberts (2018). Spatial bricolage has similar principles to bricolage as well as a connection with the geographical term – deep mapping (L. Roberts, 2018). Deep mapping provides a three-dimensionality to geographic maps and landscapes that uses different layers of found materials to give depth. These materials can include multimedia as well as things such as stories and performance. Spatial bricolage also considers the social relationships between people in any given geographical area and how they interact in/with a landscape. In my case, the layering of written artefacts and analysis with the performance aspects of liturgy and creative play provided greater depth and a range of viewpoints from which to consider the results. In an alternative research paradigm, Haseman (2006) offers a third concept alongside quantitative and qualitative methodologies, *performative research.* This concept captures something of my research as an embodied expression of my practice.

I have repeated Figure 1 here as a reminder of my overall methodology (see Figure 3). The figure provides an illustration of the three-dimensionality of the crystallisation framework and the effect of the spatial bricolage in my research inquiry. As a visual metaphor, the climbing playground incorporates my methodologies, data-collection methods, AR cycles, data analysis and strategies, the participants and myself climbing amongst it all. The diagram was inspired by adventure rope-climbing playgrounds (see Figure 4).

Figure 3

Diagram of Crystallisation and Spatial Bricolage Research Design (repeated)



Designed by Helen Wilderspin, 2022

Figure 4

I Am Seated Amongst the Ropes of an Adventure Rope-Climbing Playground

In a wider methodological sense, if I extend out from the product (the workshops) to the process, I, too, used spatial bricolage to create and play with new and unexpected connections to participants and the data I collected. I embodied the creative play that I sought to teach:

> Attention is thrown back on to the researcher in the field, not as an exercise in self-indulgence, but to recognise that the process of "making do" requires the researcher to step in to any given space in ways that her presence – her creativity and performance; her intersubjectivity; her body; her spacing – becomes constitutive of that space. (L. Roberts, 2018, p. 7)

I used my autoethnographic presence and critical reflection as a component of the spatial bricolage process. The learning happened for me and my participants as the imagination was engaged in the socially constructed spaces of the workshops, tārai waka, and the liturgical events.

Over the course of my inquiry, there were three methodologies that fitted well within my two frameworks of spatial bricolage and crystallisation – phenomenology, AR, and evocative autoethnography.

Methodologies

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a way of observing the innate and essential elements that make up the experience as it happens in the moment. As van Manen (2016) suggests, phenomenology asks of everyday life: "What is this or that kind of experience like?" (p. 9), so we can make sense of our experiences and relational interactions. It fits well within Ellingson's (2014) crystallisation framework, as "Relational moments need to be seen, heard, felt, smelled, and tasted, as well as analysed and categorized" (p. 3). Phenomenology was particularly appropriate for activities where participants' involvement was embodied and experienced physically through creative play. Participants' lived experience was expressed in the workshops, college groups (see the chapter on the tārai waka, and worship services). I have included liturgies/worship services as I consider that liturgy is also participatory and demands engagement on the part of the individual and the group. Like creative play, liturgy can be planned but it is lived in the present moment, where the encounter with the divine/transcendent other is enacted in the here and now by the people who are gathered.

Evocative Autoethnography

I am using the term *autoethnography* described by Ellis and Bochner (2000, 2006), as a style of reflective research that has as its base the stories and analysis of the researcher and their response to the research they are undertaking, an "intimate involvement, engagement, and embodied participation" (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, pp. 434–435). They write that it is much more than focusing on the researcher's participation, it is also about drawing the reader into an evocative process "to care, to feel, to empathize, and to do something, to act" (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 433), that is, an

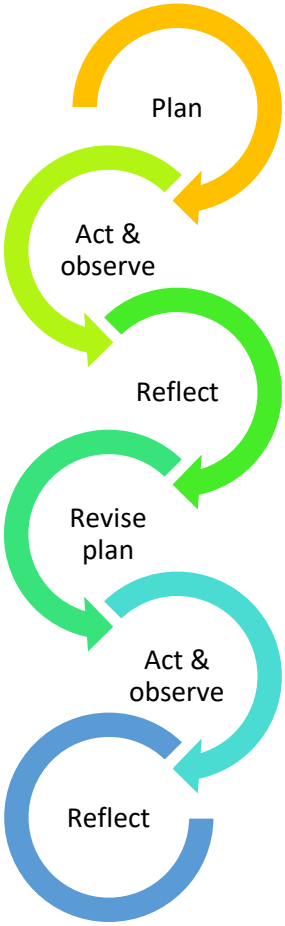
evocative autoethnography. Through my writing, participation in and observation of myself in the workshops, tārai waka, and worship services, I became an intimate part of the research process.

Action Research

I used an AR method based on Kemmis and McTaggart's (2005) AR spiral (see Figure 5). Their method is based on self-reflective cycles of participant practices that seek "a strong and authentic sense of development and evolution in their *practices,* their *understandings* of their practices, and the *situations* in which they practice" (p. 563), with the desire to improve or change a social/ organisational situation. The method is a cyclical and iterative process that involves planning, action, observation, reflection and collecting data all the way through, then feedback and further reflection, followed by assessing the initial strategy, making changes, and then moving the process into a new cycle. Although I did not specifically tell participants the name of the process, they knew that the idea was to reflect on, adjust, and change their liturgical practices as we went along. The AR process enabled me to adapt and change my project as the need arose, particularly in the light of COVID-19 and the necessity of working in new and diverse situations.

Figure 5

Kemmis and McTaggart's (2005) Action Research Spiral



Adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart (2005, p. 564)

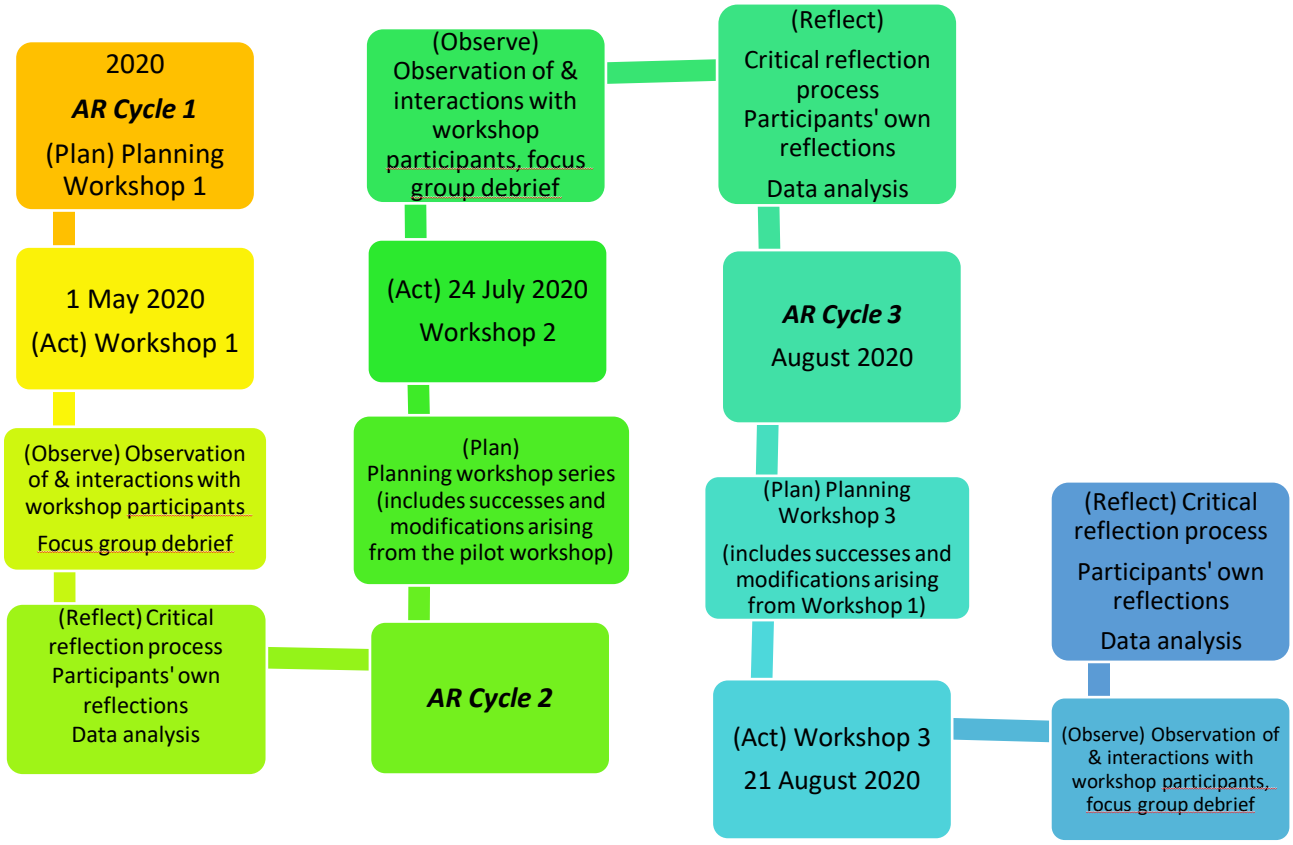
My AR process was a mix of my reflective learning for professional practice as well as a mutual collaboration of individuals and groups (tārai waka and workshop participants). There were times, particularly in our tārai waka planning process, when other members of the group used the ideas generated to construct their individual worship services. We would then gather and debrief. In many ways, the AR process was a collaborative one in which we all took part in the overall AR cycle and yet also initiated our own actions in response to the learning arising. In the end, my thesis comprises my understanding and data analysis of the overall AR cycles I was involved with across a particular period. There are aspects of participants' development and evolution of their practices, and situations in which they will be applying their new understandings of their practices, that are not possible to fully capture in the thesis. However, the overall approach of the research aligns well with

Kemmis and McTaggart's (2005) participatory AR concept. In the next section, I elaborate some key instances of AR in my research project.

2020 AR Cycles. In 2020, I started with an online pilot workshop (AR Cycle 1) and from that designed and facilitated two others (AR Cycle 2 and 3). Each AR cycle contained planning, the act itself (workshop), observation (my field notes, the focus group debriefs/interviews), and a reflection stage (my critical reflection process, participants' reflection and debriefs during the activities, data analysis). From the reflect stage, I moved into the next AR cycle revising/adapting my plans from what I had learned in the previous cycle. Figure 6 demonstrates the AR cycles for 2020.

Figure 6

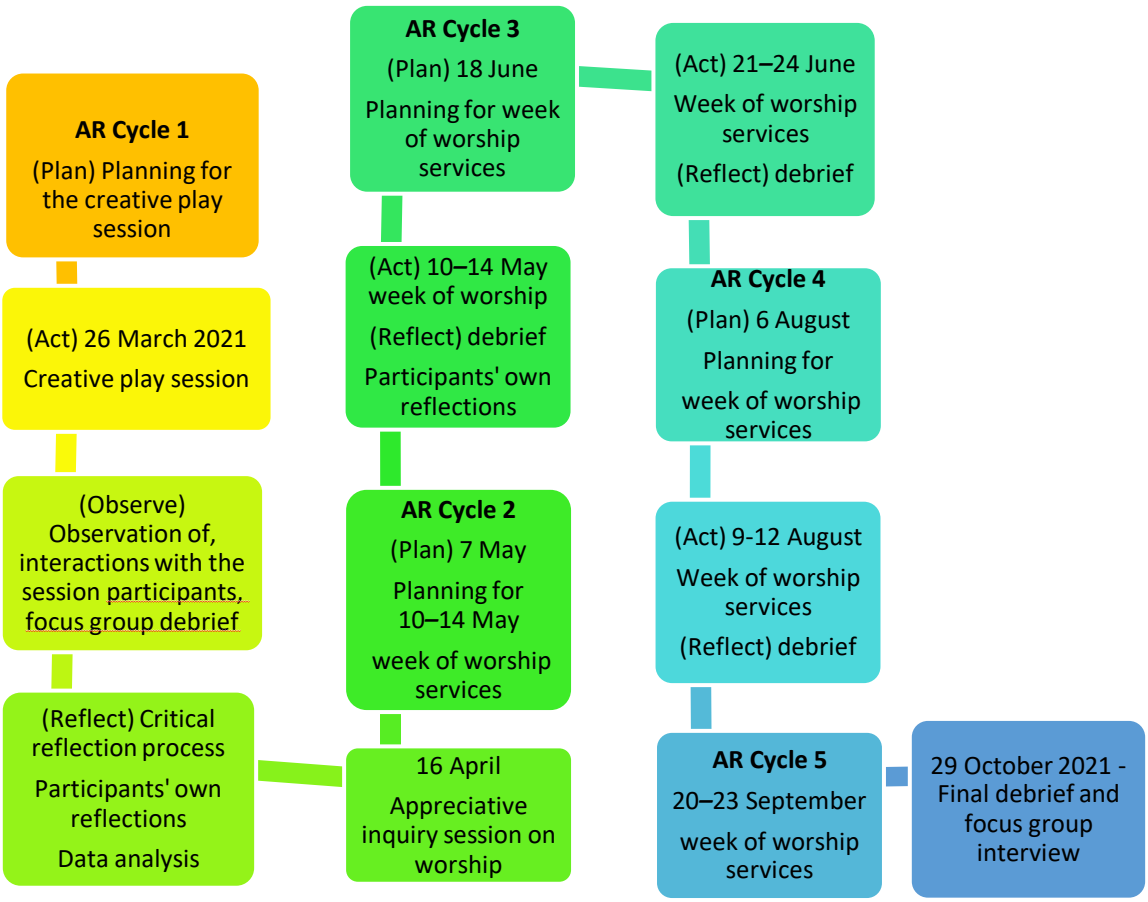
Action Research Cycles 1–3 held in 2020. Includes Workshops 1-3



2021 AR Cycles with Tārai Waka. As I adapted to living within COVID-19 restrictions, I changed direction in 2021 and decided to work with a group I was part of at college – tārai waka. I created an initial creative play workshop to stimulate our imaginations (AR Cycle 1). Although the workshop had well-defined elements of the AR process, the rest of the year was more fluid. However, for each worship service week, there was a planning session, an action of some sort (worship services), my observations (field notes) and a reflection aspect (semistructured short debrief with participants and critical self-reflection notes). I have noted the AR cycles in the Figure 7.

Figure 7

2021 AR Cycles 1–5 for our Tārai Waka



Methodological Process

In this section on my methodological process, I outline the methods used to elicit, understand, and collate the data and artefacts. I used appreciative inquiry, and autoethnographic methods such as journalling, poetic inquiry (including prose poetry), reflection and critical reflection, and observation. Further on, I present an explanation of the process and the data-collection methods I used and their relevance in each the three parts of the research project. Barriers and challenges to data collection are also discussed. I conclude the chapter with an explanation of the data analysis processes I used, the ethical implications of the project as a whole, and a final discussion.

Appreciative Inquiry

Many of the questions I created for the debriefs, focus groups (Appendix 3) as well as for our tārai waka (Appendix 6), came out of the appreciative inquiry philosophy of supporting future improvements through seeking positive stories from experience (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Hammond, 1998). For example, in a session I designed for our tārai waka, I asked the group to discuss their best experience of worship. I made a note of their responses and continued to do this throughout the 6-month process, occasionally using their answers as data to inform the worship we did. In our debriefs at the end of the worship weeks, I asked the group what the best moment was for them and what we might learn from it and take into future planning/worship services.

Journalling

An important source of autoethnographic data was my journal writing. I wrote journal notes using Microsoft Notebook either during an experience or very soon afterwards. These notes also aided in my critical reflection process as I tried to understand my impressions in relation to what I was experiencing and seeing. I agree with Moon (2004) that reflective learning journals are opportunities to critically reflect on experience at greater depth and over a length of time. She notes a range of different possibilities to reflect critically such as self-questioning, considering theory alongside the

experience, including multiple perspectives, assessing assumptions, and underlying values and beliefs, and evaluating prior experience with current behaviour.

The second source of journal data arose from notes I wrote immediately after interactions with participants: in the workshops, from our tārai waka planning meetings, and as I listened to the focus group recordings and wrote up the transcripts. The data gathered were helpful as I was able to note some initial reflections that I might have missed later when immersed in the analysis. It is important to note that the journal was more interpretive and wider in scope than the field notes.

In the next section, I discuss my autoethnographic data in terms of poetic inquiry.

Poetic Inquiry

When reporting on the outcomes of the data analysis, I was frustrated with the dry and often analytical nature of my writing and discovered that by creating prose poetry I could capture the essence of the event/workshop/experience while reflecting on the nature of my interactions and embodied participation. My prose poetry engaged my creative play-self in the data-analysis process. Writing poetry allowed my intuitive self to capture the essence and immediacy of the interaction between myself and the participants, as well as my critical reflection and insights.

I have adopted the term *poetic inquiry* from the work of Faulkner (2017, 2019) and her understanding of poetry "as/in/for inquiry" (Faulkner, 2017, p. 210). The poetry comes out of my autoethnographical insights or what Prendergast (2009) names as belonging to the genre of "vox Autobiographia/Autoethnographia – Researcher-voiced poems" (p. 545). The poetry that I have written can be understood as observational data combined with intuitive insights gleaned from several sources. One of the sources is from the perspective of my clown character as she plays with different contexts and imagery. Other areas that stimulated poetic inquiry include the workshops, focus group interviews, participation in and creation of liturgical services, as well as critical

reflections arising from my journal entries. I used poetry as a layer of the spatial bricolage method to add a performative aspect to the analysis and the communication of my findings.

The poems became a thread that wove aspects of creative play and imagination into the analytical writing. I particularly appreciate the explanation of poetry by Hirschfield (1997) that "each time we enter its word-woven and musical invocation, we give ourselves over to a different mode of knowing: to poetry's knowing, and to the increase of existence it brings, unlike any other" (p. vii). This notion of an "increase of existence" (p. vii) connects well with an embodied phenomenology which invites the reader to be present at the same moment as the researcher's knowing and observations. Often, no matter how hard we try, analytical writing is focused on a past event/s, drawing out and summarising what occurred at a particular time and place.

In writing poetry, I was attempting to create a moment in time that both the reader and I enter as if it is happening right then and there. The moment unfolds and the reader becomes a participant in the lived experience of the clown and of myself as the researcher. My aim was to move the reader into a phenomenological and embodied space rather than remaining at an intellectual level. The following poem is an example of my working ludic mindset.

My notes have lists such as then I…then we…then…

A breathless rush of ideas and impressions and memories,

Like trying to catch butterflies with a wish,

Quite similar actually to the write up of my workshops

And yet,

I want to run and leap and swerve around the jumble of my thoughts and words,

Dig deep, deep into the moist earth and pull out jewels of delight and fascination, curiosity and intrigue

Lean against the wall of an ancient ruin, a methodological cornucopia of light and shadows,

Of warm stone and green moss.

I want to add 2 + 2 together and get 5 or 7 or 9

And not four

Anyway, back to the task at hand…

Reflection and Critical Reflection

I sought to develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of my creative play and priestly practice through analysing my experience in a range of different contexts. I used both reflective and critical reflection methods to examine multiple perspectives so that I could ask questions of the data (including my own) to then generate new insights and knowledge. I consider it is important that critical reflection creates opportunities for personal change as well as systemic change, what Habermas (1974) terms *practice* and *emancipatory* domains. Rolfe et al. (2011) describe the practice domain as concerned with "social interaction and the understanding of meaning," and the emancipatory domain as "knowledge of the self in relation to social and institutional forces of control" (p. 37). As a result, my insights are not only for my practice but also for the broader context of the Anglican Church and the field of adult creative play.

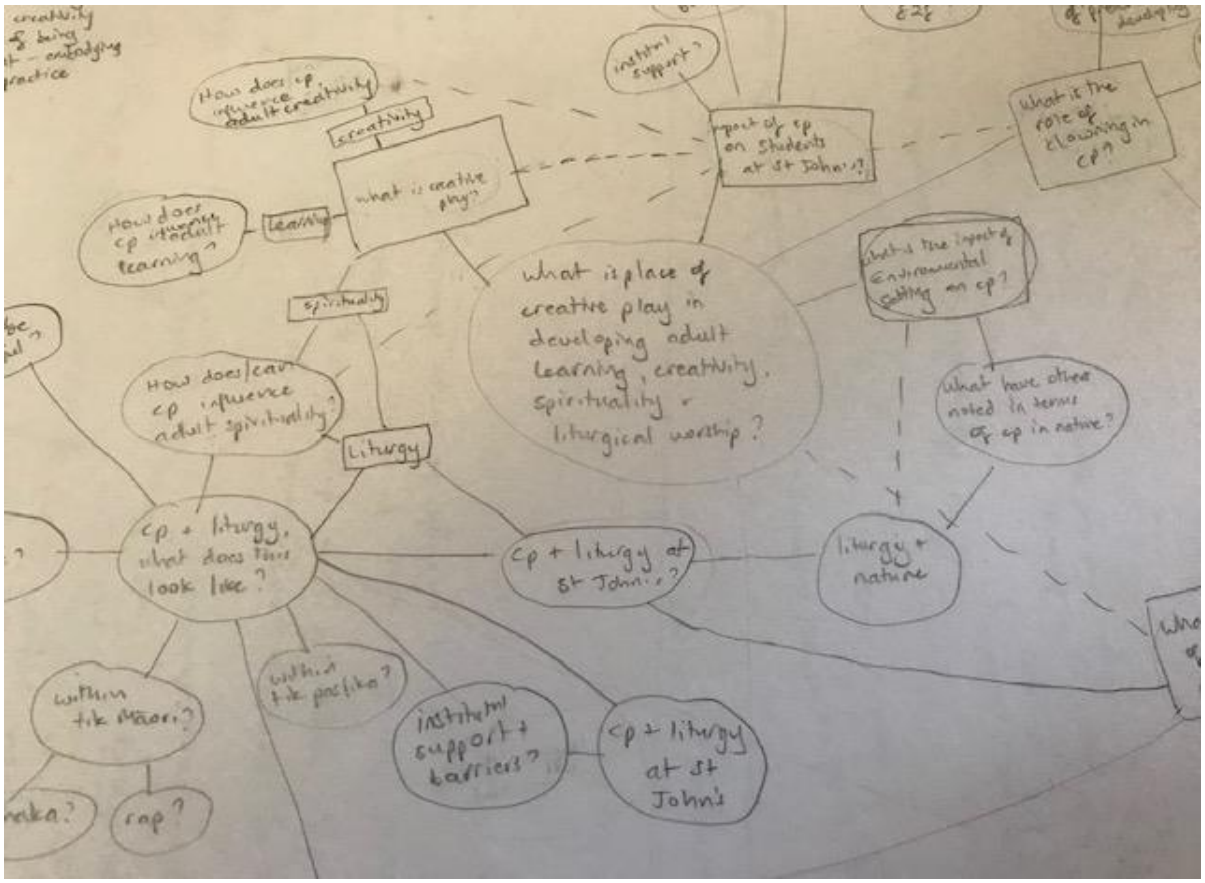
I used a variety of methods for reflection. One of them was Borton's (1970) three question approach – w*hat* (descriptive, where, when etc), s*o what* (theory and knowledge, making meaning of the situation) and n*ow what* (future actions and new understandings in the light of the *so what* question). After noting the *what* of my experience (such as facilitating workshops, conducting worship services), I then used the *so what* question to find the themes and patterns, concluding with a more critical reflection based on the *now what* and the wider implications for my practice. Along the way I used literature to provide a wider context to compare and interrogate my specific research situation. I used autoethnographic methods such as my self-reflective journal and poetry, to ask questions of my creative practice in relation to the worship services/liturgical events, facilitation of the workshops, and tārai waka for greater understanding and development. For example, in a journal post (9 August 2021) I asked myself what worship was and how it related to, say, a group of us

painting a communal kitchen bright blue. This question led me to consider the role creative play can have in illuminating different and unexpected possibilities for worship.

To aid my reflective process I used mind mapping or what M. Davies (2011) would term *concept mapping* to capture and develop the relationships between ideas in a given area such as the methodology section of my thesis (see Figure 8). There was some degree of hierarchy as I put the more significant concept (in this case a question, "what is the place of creative play in developing adult learning, creativity, spirituality and liturgical worship?") in a larger circle. Through drawing the diagrams by hand, I gained a different perspective from writing out my discussion in a Word document. I drew the mind maps in pencil so I could alter them easily if a connection was not as obvious as I originally thought.

Figure 8

My Concept Mind Map of Creative Play Within the Literature (July 2021)



Reflection was an important component in our tārai waka where we did a mixture of quick reflective practices that were not necessarily in great depth. I noted in a preceding section the role of appreciative inquiry in the debrief sessions.

I primarily used Brookfield's (2017) four lenses model as my personal critical reflection approach. The four lenses are: "students' eyes, colleagues' perceptions, theory, and personal experience" (p. 62), although, in my case, my research participants were considered through the lenses of students and colleagues. I considered their responses in the workshops and our tārai waka a form of perception revealing different areas of my practice. My literature review was an aspect of the theoretical lens. In my literature review, I situated my writing and thinking on creative play in a wider context. I used the literature to both critique my analysis and assumptions and to ask questions of others' research. There were occasions when I came across something that was a significant finding or an "aha" moment of insight and these notes were recorded either in my journal or in my reference database. From the point of view of personal experience, my observational notes of my practice, and others' interactions and responses provided an autoethnographic source, critical reflection, and insight into my practice. Each lens provided depth, diversity of perception, and critical reflection to assist me to develop new understandings of my practice.

Critical reflection and reflection were useful for discerning my professional practice from a variety of lenses and were also an integral part of the ongoing shape of the research project. At different times I used critical reflection within an AR method to reflect on what I had done and what the next stage of the research process might be. A key component of my ability to be critically reflective was my use of observation and field notes as a basis for writing up the findings in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Observation

I used observational approaches and techniques from an ethnographic viewpoint as participant observer (as described by Kawulich, 2005), observing people in their natural setting, as well as from an autoethnographic perspective. That is, I was not an independent researcher entering a

community to undertake research, I was already part of the wider St John's College community as a student and priest. I observed others and myself in terms of my practice as well as observing their participation in my practice.

I used several techniques/strategies, as noted by Kawulich (2005), to remember and record my observations. Since I facilitated and led most of the worship services, workshops, and tārai waka, most of my field notes occurred after the event itself. As I made notes of an event, I went through each of the activities in my mind's eye, recalling what we did, people's reactions (physical, emotional, remembered comments), where people were in the space, interactions between all of us, and such details as the number of attendees at a worship service. Each time I wrote a draft of a chapter or even took the viewpoint of my clown character in a prose/poem, I would remember more. As I continued to review and work with my data, my memories were activated, and further observational details were recalled.

The AR process also helped with my observational skills as I needed to have good field notes to then reflect and plan the next iteration of the process.

Research Project

The research project was divided into three parts. In Part 1, I focused on developing my practice as a worship creator and investigated eight worship services that I created and led throughout 2020–2021. In Part 2, I created and facilitated three creative play workshops in 2020, one online and two face-to-face. For Part 3, I facilitated a creative play process with a my tārai waka group throughout 2021. In each part of the project, I collected and analysed the data to assist me to answer three research questions.

Research Questions

1. What is the place of creative play in developing adult learning, creativity, spirituality, and liturgical worship?

2. What is the impact of creative play strategies on the learning, creativity, and worship practice of St John's College students?
3. How do St John's College students respond to play as a creative strategy for invoking their sense of the holy/divine/sacred?

Ethical Approval

I received ethical approval from the Otago Polytechnic Research Ethics Committee (see Supplementary Appendix D, approval number 839). I received written permission to use other people's photographs in my thesis. I am aware of the issues with regard to autoethnographic research, particularly taking advantage of others input for my gain, and not gaining consent from those I include in my observational and field note data (Tolich, 2010). However, I made sure that there were a variety of informal and formal ways in which information was shared and consent given at the college. I asked the principal of the college to review my thesis and check for inaccuracies with regard to my data concerning the college. In terms of Part 1 (my worship services), I talked about my research project and what I would do with my autoethnographic data at the service on 21 February 2020, as well as some of the other services throughout the year. I spoke about my research informally at various college events such as at the community lunches. If I wanted to use worship service attendees' comments in my thesis, I sought their consent first. I also used my prose poetry as a way of providing an impression of a service without identifying those who attended.

In Part 2, I visited each Tikanga at college to explain my creative play research, sharing several examples of creative play, as well as giving them participant information sheets (Appendix 1) and consent forms (Appendix 2) to take away. I then sent out information (Appendix 1) and consent forms (Appendix 2) to all the college via the college administrator. Since there was little take up from this approach I talked with as many people as I could to explain my research inquiry in more depth. I did receive more participants from this method. I describe in Chapter 5 more detail about my process. I received signed consent forms from all the workshop participants.

In Part 3, I gave out information sheets (Appendix 1) at our tārai waka meeting, as well as consent forms to fill out (Appendix 2) for the initial creative play workshop and the rest of the research in 2021. The information sheet and consent form were also emailed to people. All members of our tārai waka consented to both sections of the research inquiry in 2021.

The ongoing management of ethical issues that arose is outlined later in this chapter.

Part 1 – Role of Priest: Creative Play and Liturgical Worship

In Part 1 of the research, I wanted to assess my practice as a priest and worship curator when creating playful worship services for St John's College students. Through using worship services as a data source, I was able to investigate how creative play could be used as a strategy to evoke a sense of the holy/divine/sacred (Research Question 3). The eight worship services (see Table 1) included two online services and a section of the end-of-year valedictory service that involved the wider community of St John's College. Seven out of the eight services had only student and staff participants, whereas pre-COVID-19 there might have been whānau or visitors to the college attending the services. Depending on the service and the day, there were anywhere between 12–60 attendees. Unless stated otherwise, most of the liturgical events were held at St John's College face-to-face in either the chapel or in the Wesley Hall.

Data was primarily generated by autoethnographic means through the observations I made during services, field notes written during and after services, critical self-reflective notes made later in my journal, as well as my prose poetry. Data came directly from participants via informal comments made by four participants, and participants' Facebook posts.

The research process is outlined in Table 1. A number of creative play strategies were used in the worship services to stimulate the imaginations of the worship service attendees. I used experiential techniques and interactive methods to enhance peoples' senses, such as rosemary, oil of anointing on the backs of their hands, handing out feathers for people to play with and different types of

music. I also used clowning methods, for instance, miming actions to elucidate a story and putting red dots on peoples' noses.

Table 1

Part 1: Research Process for Developing My Practice as a Worship Creator

Data sources	Context	Participants	Data-collection methods & sources/artefacts	Creative play strategy
Liturgy 1 21 Feb 2020	Face-to-face (F2F)	Approx. 40 Mix of Tikanga	Observation Critical self-reflective journal notes Informal comments made by attendees (recorded in my journal)	Interactive with some clowning methods used
Liturgy 2 5 May 2020	Online	Approx. 25 Mix of Tikanga	Observation Critical self-reflective journal notes	Interactive Imagination – visual imagery used
Liturgy 3 9 June 2020	F2F	Approx. 25 Mix of Tikanga	Observation Field notes Critical self-reflective journal notes	Imaginative activity Experiential – sensory exploration
Liturgy 4 28 Aug 2020	Online	Approx. 20 Mix of Tikanga	Observation Field notes Critical self-reflective journal notes Attendees' comments in the Zoom Chat box (recorded in my journal)	Imagination – sensory exploration Creativity
Liturgy 5 3 Nov 2020	F2F	Approx. 20 Mix of Tikanga	Observation Field notes Critical self-reflective journal notes	Storytelling Imagination
Liturgy 6 5 Nov 2020	F2F	Approx. 20 Mix of Tikanga	Observation Field notes Critical self-reflective journal notes Prose poetry Informal comments from participants (recorded in my journal)	Sensory exploration and use of an object (feather) – experiential Interactive
Liturgy 7 14 Nov 2020	F2F	Approx. 100 Mix of Tikanga	Observation Field notes Critical self-reflective journal notes Prose poetry Informal comments from participants (recorded in my journal)	Sensory exploration – experiential Interactive
Liturgy 8 6 Aug 2021	F2F	Approx. 35 Mix of Tikanga	Observation Field notes Critical self-reflective journal notes Informal comments from participants (recorded in my journal)	Sensory exploration – imagination

Data Collection for Part 1

Observation. My observations provided an insight into my preparation for the worship services as well as what occurred during the services themselves. I noted the reactions of the attendees (for example, smiling, laughing), and myself as I participated/facilitated the services. I recorded my observations in my journal/field notes.

Field Notes. I recorded my observations of the worship services in a series of field notes, such as what occurred during the service, make-up of attendees, impressions of the service (from reflecting on my observations). As Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggest, I used the field notes to then filter and identify themes, "In writing field notes, the researcher acts as a kind of theme filter, choosing (often subconsciously) what data are important to record and what data are not. In this sense, producing field notes is a process of identifying themes" (p. 100).

Critical Self-Reflective Journal Notes. I recorded critical self-reflective notes in my journal after each worship service. Part of my reflections included any new perspectives I had gained from conversations with others, the literature and reviewing my field notes. On occasions I used mind maps to determine any interrelationship between different concepts such as liturgy, literature, practice as a priest and clowning methods used in my creative play strategies. My reflections were important to provide extra data as I was not able to have any focus group debriefs in this part of the research process.

Prose Poetry. I wrote prose poems to consolidate my observations and give them an immediacy as if I was still in a specific moment/s in time. I reimagined several of the worship services from the perspective of my clown character, Poe. She played with the words and imagery creating something new and fresh which added to the data in Chapter 4.

Informal Comments from Attendees. Attendees occasionally made informal comments at the end of the worship services. I remembered the comments by memorising the key words of the

phrase, repeating them to myself several times, and writing them down as soon as possible in my journal. I copied the informal comments made in the Zoom video-conferencing platform Chat box, into my field notes.

Barriers and Challenges to Data Collection in Part 1. Due to a complex set of circumstances with my worship services (the places I used, the fluid nature of the attendance, the nature of worship itself, the competing aspects of being prayerfully present in services while being critically reflective), it was challenging to record both my own and attendees' impressions of my liturgical practice. Observing a phenomenon for research purposes is trickier than it seems, especially when it involves boundaries around sacred spaces. My original plan to debrief with participants after worship services proved neither culturally appropriate nor feasible as the research context unfolded.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, there were some issues around my ability to preside at services that included a Eucharist both in terms of the changing college timetable and the expectations of COVID-19 alert levels. In the end I went with the services I was able to do and made sure that I used a variety of data-collection methods that did not rely on direct attendee feedback.

Part 2 – Role of Teacher: Experiential Learning in Creative Play Workshops

Data Collection

In Part 2, I designed and facilitated three workshops to explore creative play with participants. The workshops and their associated focus group debriefs enabled me to assess the impact of creative play on the students' learning and creativity (RQ 2), and the value of creative play methods to invoke their sense of the holy/divine/sacred (RQ 3).

I piloted an online workshop in May 2020 (Workshop 1), facilitated one face-to-face (Workshop 2) in July, and one online workshop (Workshop 3) in August (see Table 2). For each of the workshops in 2020, participants were given an information sheet and asked to sign a consent form (see

Appendices 1 and 2). A focus group debrief was recorded at the end of each workshop (either audio if face-to-face or video if online).

The research process is outlined in Table 2. A number of creative play strategies were used in the workshops including using the imagination to connect with the senses; mime actions; food to evoke the sense of taste and memories; using objects in experiential learning activities; storytelling; and creating short interactive dramatic performances.

Table 2

Part 2: Creating and Facilitating Creative Play Workshops (2020)

Data sources	Context	Participants	Data-collection methods	Creative play strategies
Workshop 1 AR Cycle 1	Online on Zoom	4 Tikanga Pākehā 1 Tikanga Pasifika	Observations during and after the session Field notes written after the workshop Zoom session (workshop and focus group debrief) video recorded and transcribed Postworkshop emails with additional focus group questions Critical self-reflective journal notes	Sensory exploration – using imagination Embodied (using mime actions)
Workshop 2 AR Cycle 2	Face-to-face Wesley Hall at college	2 Tikanga Pākehā 2 Tikanga Pasifika	Observations during and after the session Field notes written after the workshop Focus group debrief – audio recorded and transcribed Critical self-reflective journal notes	Experiential Imagination – use of objects Embodied (mime actions) Interactive dramas
Workshop 3 AR Cycle 3	Online on Zoom	2 Tikanga Pākehā 2 Tikanga Pasifika	Observations during and after the session Field notes written after the workshop Zoom session and focus group interview video recorded and transcribed Critical self-reflective journal notes	Storytelling Sensory exploration – using imagination Embodied (using mime actions)

Observations. My observations provided an insight into my preparation for the workshops (such as feelings), reactions of participants, my participation and facilitation, as well as data regarding the overall process (such as where activities flowed, or when participants got confused about an instruction). I recorded my observations in my self-reflective journal/field notes.

Field Notes. Occasionally, I was able to write down quick field notes as something was occurring. However, most of the time my field notes were done on the same day, 2 days later and then several weeks after the event. In the initial field notes, I tried to capture the lived experience within the workshop as close as possible to the experience itself. Although it would have been even more immediate if I had taken notes during the event itself, the challenge of phenomenology is to live the experience as it is happening, to inhabit the experience, as it were, and leave the interpretation and analysis for later. It was very helpful to have both the video and audio of the online workshops as I was reminded of the participants' physical reactions/expressions in response to the activities. I could then add to my initial observations and field notes.

Workshop Video Recording and Transcripts. I prepared a transcript for each of the online workshops from the Zoom video recordings. I decided not to video the face-to-face sessions as I wanted participants to feel relaxed and less like they were performing for an outside observer. I also did not have the resources to set up video cameras in the large room I used.

The transcripts allowed me to undertake thematic analysis to look for patterns and themes.

Focus group Debriefs. The focus group debriefs were semi-structured in that I asked participants the same set of questions at all the sessions (questions are in Appendix 3); however, there was enough flexibility for me to ask further questions for clarification or to expand on remarks made by participants. I used the debrief to gain data on participants' responses to the creative play I offered in the workshop, as well as on my facilitation so I could learn and adapt my practice.

I used Zoom for online focus group debriefs and prepared a transcript for each one from the Zoom recordings. I also used the transcripts as a part of the AR cycle to reflect on the workshop and what I might be able to change in the next one. I used the transcripts for coding and subsequent thematic analysis.

Postworkshop Emails. After Workshop 1, I emailed additional questions (Appendix 3) to all participants as I ran out of time to cover all the focus group debrief questions in the session itself. I added the email responses to my field notes.

Critical Self-Reflective Journal. I recorded critical self-reflective notes in my journal after each workshop and its respective focus group debrief. Part of my reflections included any new perspectives I had gained from the literature and when reviewing my field notes. My journalling helped me to assess what went well, and things that might need adjusting so that I could plan the next AR cycle.

Barriers and Challenges to Data Collection in Part 2. In 2020, I had planned on running at least two series of workshops on creative play. However, due to the extensive lockdown early in the year, I was unable to complete the first series of workshops in April/May. I intended to have only face-to-face workshops; however, I adapted to the changing circumstances and explored a new method of delivery through two online workshops.

Workshops 2 and 3, were held later in the year which meant that students were very busy with classes (online and face-to-face), assignments and other college commitments so it was challenging to interest them in doing something outside of curricula and college requirements. However, despite all the challenges with COVID-19, I did manage to hold workshops in 2020 and adapt my research strategies in 2021 to take advantage of a group already operating at college – tārai waka.

Part 3 – Role of Facilitator: College Tārai Waka

In Part 3, I facilitated a creative play process with a tārai waka group from college (see Table 3). The group met weekly from March–October 2021. Through the research process, I was able to assess the impact of creative play methods on the learning, creativity, spirituality, and liturgical worship of a group of students at college (RQs 1–3).

The research process is outlined in Table 3. Several creative play strategies were used in our tārai waka process to stimulate the imagination, creativity, and playfulness including mime actions, clowning methods including such things as blowing imaginary bubble gum, sharing stories, sensory and experiential activities (for example giving out food at the end of services).

Table 3

Part 3: Tārai Waka Creative Play Process in 2021

Data sources	Context	Participants	Data-collection methods	Creative play strategies
Tārai waka creative play workshop 26 March 2021	Face-to-face (F2F), Sir Paul Reeves Centre at college	3 Tikanga Pākehā 5 Tikanga Māori 1 Tikanga Pasifika	Observations Critical self-reflective journal notes Informal comments made by participants afterwards Field notes written after the workshop Focus group debrief on Zoom – video recorded and transcribed Prose poems 1 emailed response from a Tikanga Pākehā participant to focus group debrief questions	Embodied (using mime actions) Interactive with some clowning methods used Imaginative activity Storytelling
Worship service planning weeks	F2F, Sir Paul Reeves Centre	6–11 tārai waka members depending on the week	Observations Critical self-reflective journal notes Field notes of observations written during the sessions as well as written afterwards	Planning sessions – creativity and imagination
Week/s of worship services	F2F (venues included college	College community,	Observations Critical self-reflective journal notes	Interactive Experiential – for example use of food

Data sources	Context	Participants	Data-collection methods	Creative play strategies
	chapel, Wesley Hall, Sir Paul Reeves Centre, Patterson Centre, college library)	numbers from 15–40	Participant informal comments after the worship services Facebook posts – attendee feedback, informational Field notes written after the services Photographs taken either during the event or afterwards	Visual imagery Embodied participation through moving into different spaces Singing Storytelling Imaginative activities
Tārai waka final debrief 29 October 2021	F2F, Sir Paul Reeves Centre	4 Tikanga Pākehā 2 Tikanga Māori 1 Tikanga Pasifika	Observations Focus group debrief on Zoom – video recorded and transcribed Critical self-reflective journal notes	

Data Collection

Observations. My observations provided an insight into my preparation for our tārai waka creative play workshop, the planning sessions, and what occurred during the sessions (our engagement with the process, energy levels, aspects of my facilitation that did or did not work). I also noted my observations from the services themselves (again what did or did not work, and the effectiveness of the creative play for the worship service attendees and our tārai waka members). I recorded my observations in my journal/field notes.

Field Notes. My observations during the 6 months were written up in a series of field notes. I noted what occurred during the workshop, the appreciative inquiry session, the planning sessions, and the services, to try and gain a sense of the effect of creative play and the ongoing reflection/action process (informal debrief sessions) on our tārai waka.

Critical Self-Reflective Journal Notes. I recorded critical self-reflective notes in my journal throughout the 6 months. My reflections included any new perspectives I had gained from the literature, talking with the tārai waka members and other students and when reviewing my field notes. The journal assisted in the AR cycles as I wrote down what happened in each meeting, and then considered the others' reactions, and what I learned as a result.

Participant Informal Comments After Worship Services. Informal comments were occasionally made by attendees at the end of the tārai waka led worship services. These comments provided initial unsolicited feedback which gave an insight into the attendees' mindset as they left the services and their reaction to our creative play strategies.

Focus group Debriefs. The first focus group debrief (26 March 2021) was held immediately after our tārai waka creative play workshop. I audio recorded and then transcribed it. This debrief helped with some planning for the next AR cycle (tārai waka planning sessions). A second focus group debrief (29 October 2021) was recorded using Zoom and transcribed. The transcripts allowed me to undertake thematic analysis to look for patterns and themes.

The focus group debriefs also provided me and the other group members an opportunity to reflect on their practice and the insights they gained from the reflection process.

Prose Poetry. I wrote prose poems to consolidate my observations and some of the transcript data to provide a more playful exploration of the creative play process and the reactions our tārai waka.

Facebook Posts. The posts were sent to the college community (students and families) Facebook group. On occasion, the worship service attendees would comment on our tārai waka services providing additional insight into their reactions. Our group also used the Facebook community to inform the wider college community of our themes and service content for the worship weeks, using text and photographs. The posts were similar to the method of photo elicitation described by Glaw et al. (2017), in that I asked each member of the group to take photos of what they did at their services and post it on the college community Facebook group page. I could then see what they appreciated or reflected on from the service itself and their reactions to the creative play strategy.

Photographs. These were taken by me and several other tārai waka members and were all centred on the worship services (beforehand, during, after). Photographs gave a visual observational tool to remind me of the visual display we did as well as the reactions of the attendees (emotional cues such as the sense of fun and joy evident in the faces of those eating locusts and honey).

Barriers and Challenges to Data Collection in Part 3. In our tārai waka planning sessions, I wanted to keep my observation low key, so people were more relaxed and did not feel pressured to be creative, as a result I did not audio record people's comments. The lack of recording often meant that I was unable to note either in my journal or fieldnotes all the detail of the conversations. However, I did attempt to capture the nuances through another data source - my prose poetry.

Data Analysis

Part 1 Data Analysis. In Part 1, I analysed the data in several stages, principally using qualitative descriptive analysis (Sandelowski, 2000). I wrote out a brief description in my journal of the 'who', 'what' and 'when' of each worship service. Then, in my first two drafts of Chapter 4, where the process and findings of Part 1 are described, I filled out the description in more depth and included associated journal entries, individual comments, field notes and other sources. Next, I asked a question of the data:

- What does creative play look like in this liturgical context?

From this question, I re-presented the data, as per Sandelowski's (2000) method, under various categories such as creativity, trust building, engagement with the divine, and embodied/experiential methods. My intention was to re-tell the data in narrative form so that I could create meaning from my phenomenological understanding. I used the re-presented data to assess how, as a priest, I used creative play methods in worship services to evoke the holy/divine/sacred for the attendees.

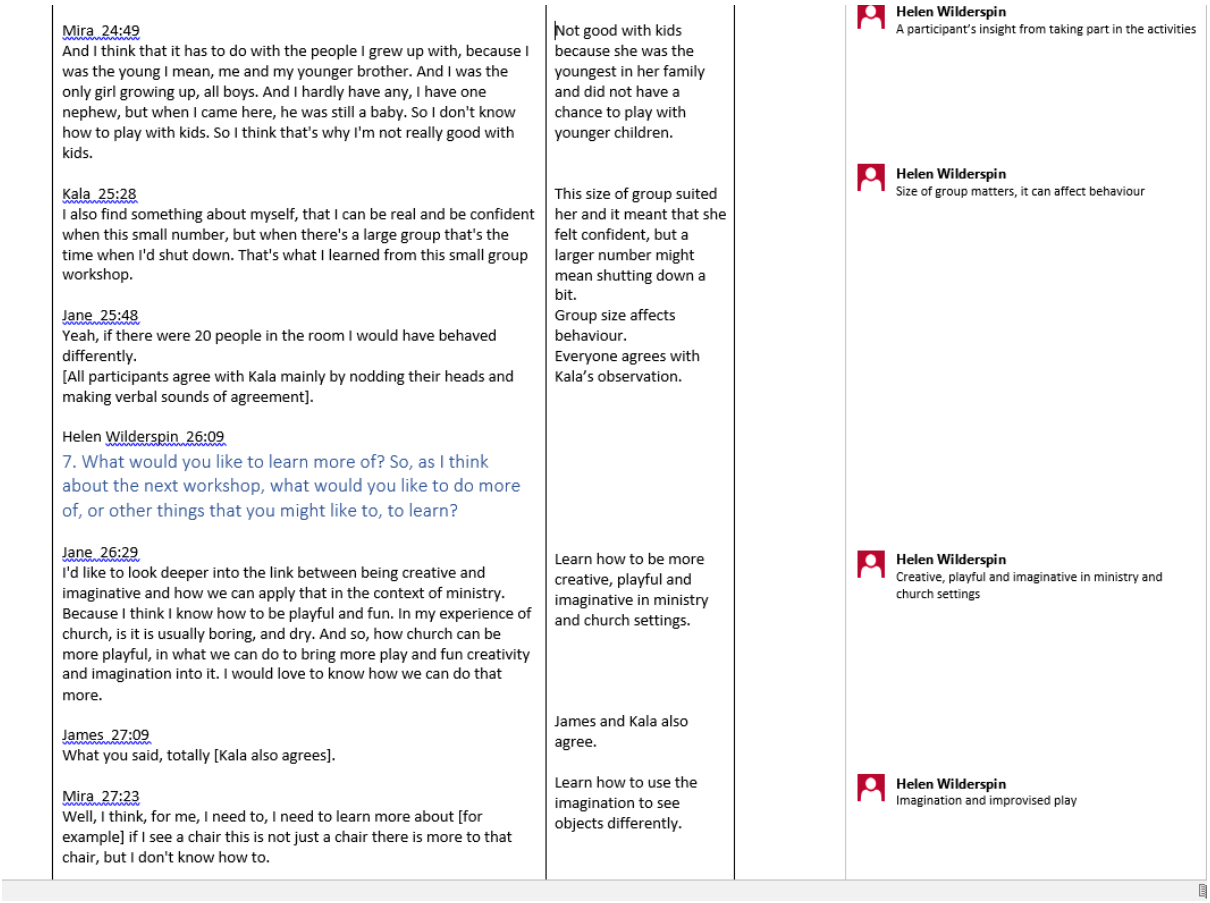
Parts 2 and 3 Data Analysis. I used several different methods of analysis in Part 2 and 3. For example, I found Braun and Clarke's (2020) concept of reflexive thematic analysis useful in their

understanding of "researcher subjectivity as a resource for research" and "knowledge as partial, situated and contextual" (p.39). Ellingson's (2009, 2014) crystallisation approach was also used to identify patterns from the multiple points of view generated through the data sources (such as transcripts, participant comments in the tārai waka planning session, my field notes and observations, and prose poems).

With the transcripts from the online workshops and all the focus group debriefs, I went through each one and created codes and then themes using an approach described by Ryan and Bernard (2003). I devised the codes by looking for repetition of common key words and phrases. On my computer I did my version of cutting and sorting the codes by setting up three columns (see Figure 9). The first column is the actual transcript, the second one is my interpretation, and the third are my codes. I used my computer as it was easier to make sure that the coding remained attached to each individual participant as there were contextual and cultural overlays that I did not want to lose sight of. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym prior to data analysis.

Figure 9

An Example of Initial Coding from One of the Transcripts



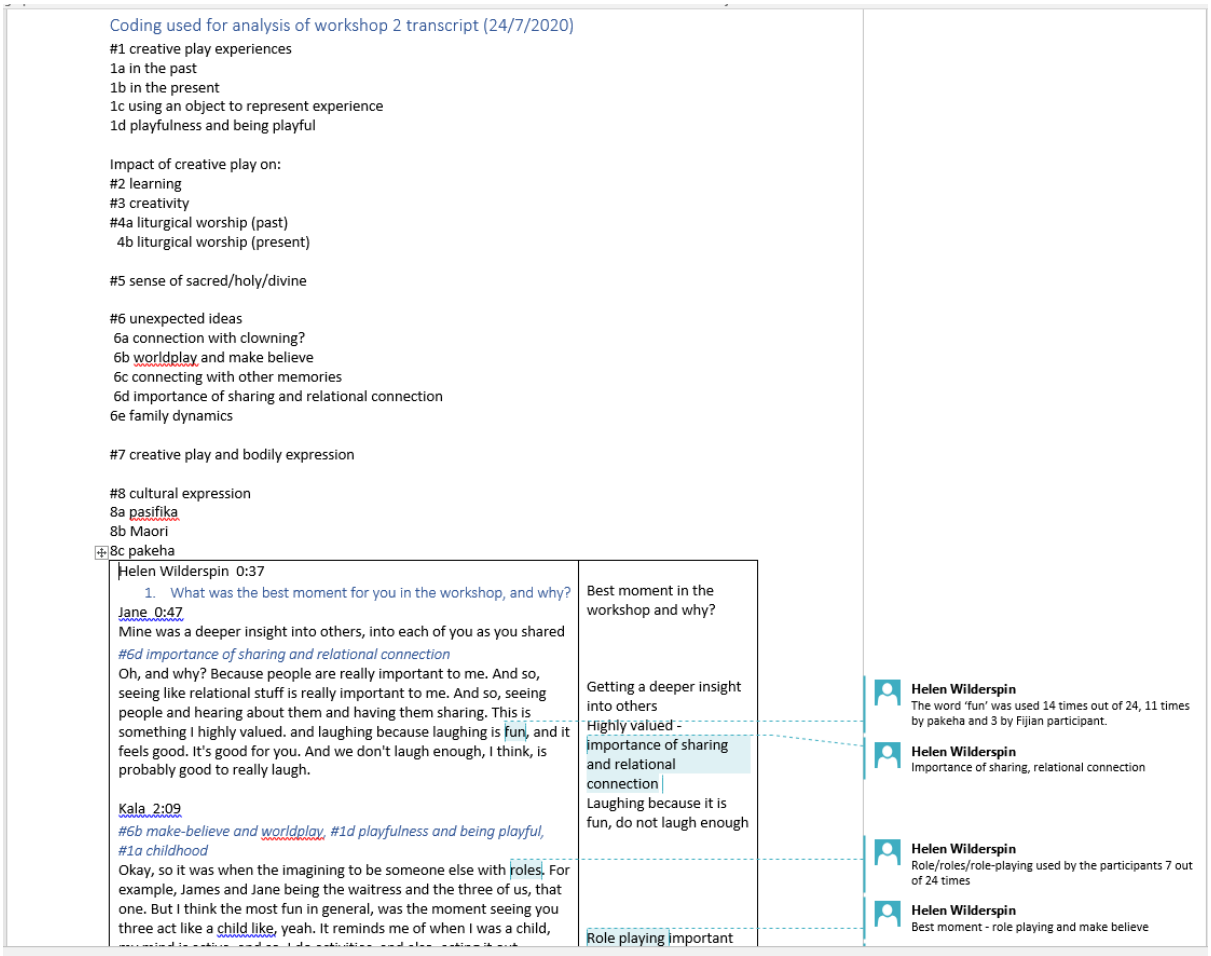
Mira 24:49 And I think that it has to do with the people I grew up with, because I was the young I mean, me and my younger brother. And I was the only girl growing up, all boys. And I hardly have any, I have one nephew, but when I came here, he was still a baby. So I don't know how to play with kids. So I think that's why I'm not really good with kids.	Not good with kids because she was the youngest in her family and did not have a chance to play with younger children.		**Helen Wilderspin** A participant's insight from taking part in the activities
Kala 25:28 I also find something about myself, that I can be real and be confident when this small number, but when there's a large group that's the time when I'd shut down. That's what I learned from this small group workshop.	This size of group suited her and it meant that she felt confident, but a larger number might mean shutting down a bit.		**Helen Wilderspin** Size of group matters, it can affect behaviour
Jane 25:48 Yeah, if there were 20 people in the room I would have behaved differently. [All participants agree with Kala mainly by nodding their heads and making verbal sounds of agreement].	Group size affects behaviour. Everyone agrees with Kala's observation.		
Helen Wilderspin 26:09 7. What would you like to learn more of? So, as I think about the next workshop, what would you like to do more of, or other things that you might like to, to learn?			
Jane 26:29 I'd like to look deeper into the link between being creative and imaginative and how we can apply that in the context of ministry. Because I think I know how to be playful and fun. In my experience of church, is it is usually boring, and dry. And so, how church can be more playful, in what we can do to bring more play and fun creativity and imagination into it. I would love to know how we can do that more.	Learn how to be more creative, playful and imaginative in ministry and church settings.		**Helen Wilderspin** Creative, playful and imaginative in ministry and church settings
James 27:09 What you said, totally [Kala also agrees].	James and Kala also agree.		
Mira 27:23 Well, I think, for me, I need to, I need to learn more about [for example] if I see a chair this is not just a chair there is more to that chair, but I don't know how to.	Learn how to use the imagination to see objects differently.		**Helen Wilderspin** Imagination and improvised play

As the face-to-face workshop was not recorded, I was unable to use a transcript, so I looked for key words and phrases in my field notes and critical self-reflection journal.

Once I established codes, I grouped and numbered them, throughout the transcripts (1st column in Figure 10) and then looked for insights for further development into themes (2nd and 3rd columns in Figure 10).

Figure 10

An Example of Numbered Codes from Workshop 2



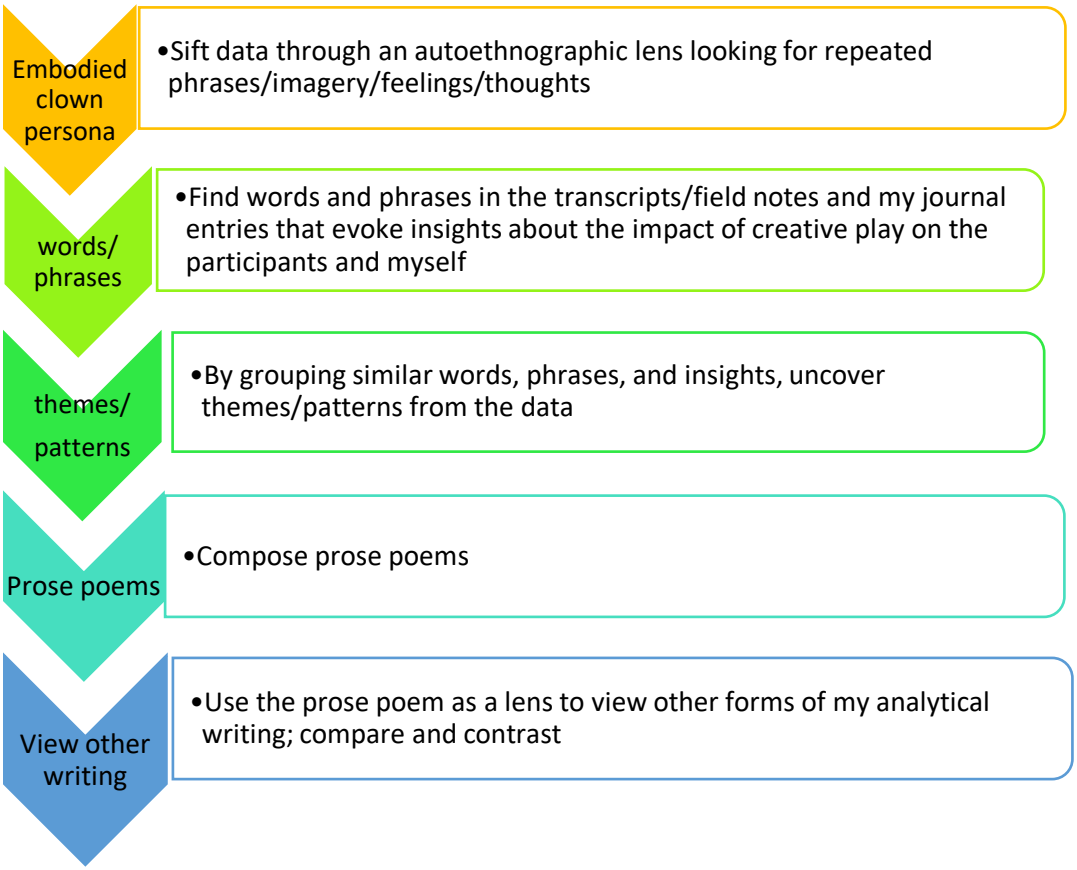
I noted the themes for each workshop in a separate word document, so that I could compare and analyse the data across the workshops as a whole. My analysis included looking for similarities and differences (based on Ryan & Bernard, 2003), as well as identifying patterns from the themes I generated.

Alongside the transcripts, I used poetic inquiry to add another perspective to the analysis. In Part 2, I used the autoethnographic perspective of my clown persona to embody and play with the data (my field notes and journal entries and comments by participants), looking for phrasing and descriptive words that were repeated as well as evocative imagery. I then composed prose poetry to capture the feelings and impressions of myself and participants. I used poetry as a critical reflective method, a

lens through which I could assess the soundness of my arguments in that section of writing (see Figure 11). Galvin and Todres (2009) call this method of poetic inquiry *embodied interpretation.* They are interested in conveying the meanings that are *felt* rather than necessarily *thought* and the movement between texts (such as transcripts) and reader/s.

Figure 11

Poetic Inquiry Process for Data Analysis



Writing as data analysis for Parts 1, 2 & 3. When preparing drafts of Chapters 4 (Role of Priest: Using Creative Play to Evoke the Holy/Divine/Sacred in Liturgical Worship), 5 (Role of Teacher: Experiential Learning in Creative Play Workshops) and 6 (Role of Facilitator: College Tārai Waka), I described the themes, my observations from the field notes, journal reflections, quotes from participants, as well as comments by others (such as the Facebook posts), and added prose poems, and photographs to a draft of each chapter. I then wrote and rewrote the chapters, sifting and looking for patterns. The writing process itself became a method of inquiry similar to that described

by L. Richardson (2000) and helped form the overarching crystalline structure. Each time I did a draft of Chapters 5 & 6, I went back to reread the transcripts to check for accuracy of both quotes and the theme itself so that my bias and enthusiasm were not creating more of the theme than there actually was. In the end, there was an interweaving of multiple creative and analytical perspectives in each chapter. From the crystalline process, I unearthed six major themes which I have presented and discussed in Chapter 7. The themes are:

> curiosity, imagination, creativity, trust building, embodied learning, and engagement with the divine and everyday life.

I explored the interrelationships between the themes by asking how creative play and other factors promoted these observed characteristics.

Ethical Implications/Issues for the Research Project as a Whole

I was aware that I brought my cultural biases as a Pākehā to the research project. These biases included such aspects as my use of language, methodologies, as well as choice of literature to review. I made sure that I sought assistance and asked questions of other students and faculty at the college to ensure my methods were appropriate for all potential participants.

I also used a critical reflection approach based on Brookfield's (2017) four lenses (personal experience, literature, colleagues, students or, in my case, the participants) to explore the relevance, correctness and appropriateness of my research methods. For example, I asked the members of our tārai waka to review Chapter 6, and this provided me with more reflective material. The range of responses was interesting in that a couple of people wanted to clarify what they had said; one noted how much they talked; and another did not realise the scope of the project and wondered if the creative play aspect took over a bit from the rest of the tārai waka sessions. In hindsight, I should have checked in with all the tārai waka members more regularly (every month) to make sure that they were still willing to continue the research process rather than assume that a participant information sheet, consent form, and discussion on two or three occasions would be enough.

A potential ethical issue for participants in the online workshops and focus group debriefs was the use of Zoom to video and audio record the sessions. As I prepared for the sessions, I did consider participants' wellbeing and the potential for participants to feel slightly intimidated or embarrassed by the thought that their actions would be recorded and potentially seen by others. Therefore, at the beginning of each Zoom workshop/debrief, I asked permission of the group to record the session (audio and video). I reassured them at the time that no-one else but me would see the videos. I had assistance with downloading them as they were on the St John's College Zoom account; however, that person has signed a confidentiality agreement and has assured me that he did not watch them. The videos were removed from the main server after I downloaded them. I have stored them on my computer which is password protected. The videos will be deleted in line with my other data, as noted on the consent forms.

I was also aware that, with our tārai waka, there could be some conflict between the voluntary nature of the research and the college expectation that students needed to attend tārai waka and worship services. I tried to alleviate this issue to some extent by not gathering data from all the tārai waka meetings and leaving it for the planning and debrief sessions. I also sought consent at the beginning of the process. The consent form included options to withdraw their data before a certain date (see Appendix 2). Participation in the workshops was less of an issue as the sessions were quite separate from other college activities. However, workshop participants also signed a consent form with the option to withdraw data (see Appendix 2).

D. M. Fraser (1997) notes that research participants can sometimes feel pressured to participate if they know the researcher personally. To alleviate this dynamic to some extent, I asked the college administrator to send out participation information sheets and consent forms to all college students on my behalf. It was helpful having academic mentors from outside my theological setting; however, according to D. M. Fraser, researchers need to avoid selecting data that reflects well on them. I may have tended at times to choose data that reflected well on myself and participants rather than some

of the negatives of my creative play practices. As an insider/practitioner researcher, I found there was a continual tension between using my observational data in an accurate way and appreciating that I had prior relationships with staff and students and received a college scholarship that supported my research inquiry study. Prior to undertaking the project, I did seek approval from both the Otago Polytechnic Ethics Board and the principal and senior staff of the college. I was also honest at the outset regarding the limits of anonymity and confidentiality in a small place like the college, writing on the participant information forms:

> Your name and data will be given a code that only I will have access to so that you cannot be identified in the final documentation. Your responses cannot be connected back to you. However, St John's College is a small community and people may know who is taking part in the research project; even so, they will not have access to the information that is shared and all participants will be asked to maintain confidentiality. (see Appendix 1)

Throughout my writing and when data were collected and analysed, I did de-identify participants and use pseudonyms.

In my research and thesis, I have tried to keep participants' wellbeing and my responsibility to keep them safe at the forefront as recommended by other researchers (such as Cook-Sather, 2002; D. M. Fraser, 1997; Zeni, 1998). Throughout the process, I have asked myself questions such as: Who benefits from this research? Have I captured participants' comments, ideas, and reflections in a truthful manner? Have I reflected critically, acknowledging, even to myself, my biases, and assumptions? And, finally, If/when participants read the final thesis will they see the value of their contribution to the research field as a whole?

Discussion

I have used a complex and eclectic mix of data-collection, analysis, and interpretative methods within an umbrella of research methodologies, to add depth and breadth to my research investigation, revealing a range of insights and creative potential. I thought that it was important to

find an appropriate image to convey the spatial bricolage and crystallisation frameworks in a clear manner. The image I designed (Figure 3), helped convey both the performative element of my research as well as my overall ludic approach to the data analysis and autoethnographic voice.

I was also aware that I needed to engage a range of differing viewpoints, and not only my own, to offer a depth of phenomenological observation. My autoethnography was supported by the transcripts of the focus group interviews as well as entire sessions recorded on Zoom when I had fully online workshops. I also made field notes after the worship services and workshops, as well as occasionally during tārai waka sessions. However, there was a fine line between noting people's responses and then using them as-is for my critical reflection. I note a caveat and reminder in Spry's (2018) analysis of autoethnography, to respect the other(s) in the research process and not merely to use them as a reflection for self-analysis. This is an important reminder that my research was both an opportunity for critical reflection on my practice as well as enabling relational engagement with others in the workshops and liturgies. The participants are individuals, with their own thoughts and reflective processes. To mitigate this to some extent, I have quoted participants in the analysis, and, when this was not possible, I have tried to capture the essence of their "voice" through some of the poetry I wrote.

I found AR a more collaborative approach as it gave me a way of working that could adapt to changing circumstances, particularly in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the tārai waka AR cycles were complex in structure due to multiple participants and worship services, as well as fluctuating group membership across the 6 months (that is, not everyone was able to attend every meeting or debrief). As a result, the crystallisation and bricolage frameworks were very useful for holding the complexity of my data and developing my data analysis.

In terms of ensuring I had a strong crystallisation research process (Ellingson, 2014), I can show how each aspect is developed in my overall set of methods. I ensured depth by including not only literature and critical reflection, but also in the range of data sources I used (workshops, creative

play strategies in worship services, within a group setting over a 6-month period). In terms of Ellingson's (2014) five factors for a robust crystallisation framework, I used a range of qualitative analyses that included different creative approaches as well as a range of genre that blended intuition with analytical thinking (for example, my use of poetry, photographs, narrative, and discussion, woven together to reveal findings). My writing was strongly autoethnographic, reflecting a growing awareness of myself and my practice as the research analysis progressed. And finally, I created a bricolage of contextual/situated knowing (such as theological formation, group experiential learning), through to constructed layers of analytic knowledge and an embodied, experiential knowledge of practice. Ellingson (2014) and Richardson's (2000) crystallisation concepts helped me hold and work with the tension between allowing my creativity to flourish and bring an analytical lens to the process.

In the next three chapters (4–6), I examine in more detail my research project and findings. In Chapter 4, I consider my role of priest with regards to creative play and liturgical worship.

Chapter 4 – Role of Priest: Creative Play and Liturgical Worship

In this chapter, I discuss my research inquiry of using creative play to evoke the holy/divine/sacred in liturgical worship. I include background information on the worship services (also called liturgies) at St John's College, including the challenges and opportunities. I then consider various themes that arose from eight worship services I created and led in 2020 and 2021. In the conclusion I offer several initial comments regarding my practice as a worship creator and a priest when creating playful liturgical events for the college community.

Research Inquiry Overview

In 2020–2021, one of my aims was to give worship service attendees an experience of embodied and experiential creative play methods, to assist them to imagine new possibilities and create new meaning in order that they might encounter the holy/divine/sacred in different ways (Research Questions 2 and 3). The playfulness was less about being silly, and more about being flexible, creative and in a sense messy in worship services. A second aim was to introduce strategies that used activities, everyday objects, storytelling, visual imagery, and oils for anointing, to evoke the senses and audience (attendees') awareness of the holy/divine/sacred. The last aim was to enable me to be vulnerable and take risks in curating environments in which people might encounter God/the divine in the sacred and in everyday life (Research Question 3).

Several themes emerged from my research, including openness, personal vulnerability, and trust building; engaging the imagination and storytelling; creativity; engagement with the divine and everyday life; and objects as a form of physical metaphor. These themes are discussed in this chapter, drawing on data primarily generated from autoethnographic sources such as observation, field notes, journalling, and prose poetry (see Table 1, Chapter 3).

I created and facilitated seven liturgical worship services at the college in 2020. Two of these services were conducted online, using Zoom, to accommodate the restrictions imposed by the New Zealand

government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I worked on the seventh service with other students. The eighth service was held in 2021. I designed and led the service quite independently from our tārai waka process (Chapter 6) so have included a discussion on it here. Table 4 shows the eight creative play worship services, the strategies I used and the resulting themes in more detail.

Table 4

List of Creative play Worship Services I Created and Led in 2020 and 2021

When	Where	Attendees	Creative play strategy	Themes demonstrated
Liturgy 1 21 Feb 2020	Wesley Hall	Approx. 40 students and spouses	Sermon/preaching Clown activity – dotting red lipstick on noses Interactive	Imagination Personal vulnerability Openness Trust building
Liturgy 2 5 May 2020	Online	Approx. 25 students and whānau	Visual imagery associated with a psalm	Imagination Creativity
Liturgy 3 9 Jun 2020	Chapel	Approx. 25 students and spouses	Evoking sense of smell – rosemary Oil for anointing Interactive	Imagination Embodied/experiential Engagement with the divine
Liturgy 4 28 Aug 2020	Online	Approx. 20 students and spouses	Evoking the senses	Imagination Creativity Engagement with the divine
Liturgy 5 3 Nov 2020	Chapel	Approx.20 students and spouses	Storytelling	Imagination
Liturgy 6 5 Nov 2020	Chapel	Approx. 20 students and spouses	Use of an object to tell a story	Embodied/experiential Engagement with the divine
Liturgy 7 14 Nov 2020	Pavilion on the college site	Approx. 100 students and whānau	Evoking the senses – anointing leavers with oil Interactive	Engagement with the divine
Liturgy 8 6 Aug 2021		Approx. 35 students and spouses	Evoking the senses	Embodied/experiential Engagement with the divine Imagination

Worship Services – Challenges and Opportunities

At the beginning of 2020, there were two major challenges that shaped my liturgical exploration at the college. One challenge was the way college ordered its worship services, and the second was the

arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, these changes did create new opportunities which I discuss later.

At the beginning of 2020, the decision was made by the college to reduce the Eucharistic worship services from three to one service a week which would be led by each Tikanga rather than the worship group (tārai waka). As a priest, an important part of my function is to preside at Eucharist-based services. Presiding is an area that I enjoy and holds something of my calling to gather people together to worship the divine/God. This meant I might only get a chance to preside at a Eucharist[4] several times a year rather than the 10 or so opportunities I had prior to 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic also played a part in the reduction of worship possibilities at college. New Zealand, and in particular Auckland, bounced from one level of restriction to another throughout 2020 and 2021. The various restrictions affected whether or not we could meet face-to-face, and the numbers allowed inside at any given time. At college, if face-to-face services were not possible, there were opportunities to offer a daily online worship service via Zoom. Therefore, my opportunities to engage individually in leading and creating worship services were reduced dramatically. However, I still had plenty of opportunities to utilise my creative imagination. In the next section, I set the scene for the worship services as a whole and then move onto a discussion of the emerging themes.

Setting the Scene – Playing with Shadows and Ambiguity

On 28 November 2020, as I stood outside the Anglican Cathedral waiting to process into a worship service, I imagined my clown character moving between the shadows playing with the light and the dark, delighting in the fabulous possibilities of that moment. I wrote the following prose poem to express what I experienced.

[4] The Eucharist is a sacramental part of the Anglican Church and is generally led (presided over) by a priest. Only the priest (or a bishop) can bless the sacramental elements – the bread and wine.

Playing With Shadows

Playing with the shifting breeze as the clergy await the start of the service. Albs[5] billow and shadows flicker on the ground, moving, blending. I peer out between darkened folds, weaving from one shadow to another until I reach the front, taking my place behind the choir. I sing loudly and dance to and fro. I sing joyously and with abandon. I sing until I notice that the Cathedral light will soon dissolve all shadow. I saunter back outside to keep the bishop company, straightening his cope and polishing his cross, adding some sparkle to his mitre and a cheeky red dot on his nose.[6] (December 2020)

I wondered if this act of clowning might have something to teach us about planning and leading liturgical events and worship services. What does it say about the liturgical event itself? The clown plays amongst the shadows but stops short of entering the cathedral. Perhaps the formality of the service, with a liturgy too sharp and well defined, prevented me and others from further imaginative exploration and actual creative practice. Maybe she feared others' response to her playfulness and sense of humour?

The word *shadows* suggest an ambiguity, a sense that anything might happen, and many who lead liturgies do not enjoy this fluidity and openness. Without my clown costume, I, too, prefer some level of restraint or at least a shape to a worship service. However, from my experience and observation of others, clowns have a broad parameter within which they operate. It might be the costume that defines the personality and therefore the actions, although several writers suggest that this is not always the case (Lecoq, 2020; Peacock, 2009). There may be a theme that the clown/s work with, sometimes the broad strokes of a script, and yet, there is always room for surprises and new avenues of development. Could I play with ambiguity and shadows when I am leading worship? What might this look like? Behind the visible costume and actions, what shapes the clown and her contribution?

[5] The alb is a white liturgical vestment mainly worn by clergy in the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches.
[6] The cope is a long cloak worn by bishops and others for special liturgical occasions. The mitre is a form of headgear that bishops also wear on special liturgical occasions.

Emerging Themes

Openness, Personal Vulnerability

At the beginning of 2020, I sought to elicit interest in my creative play research project. The principal of the college suggested that I speak at the first worship service of the year on the 21 February 2020 and talk about the project. I decided that I would both preach (sermon) and demonstrate several aspects of creative play with a little help from my clown persona – Poe.

I was slightly tentative about revealing my full clown persona to the college (especially as she mimes rather than speaks) and using creative play in worship services. In the end, I decided on a compromise; to help me feel relaxed and yet still in character, I painted a red dot on my nose, wore my old clowning hat, and loose colourful trousers (see Figure 12). I was not quite ready to leave the shadows and for my clown to stand centre stage with the makeup and the outfit.

Figure 12

Preaching About the Importance of Play and Clowning in My Life and My Research

For the sermon, I included two specific scripture passages. The first one was Matthew 18:1–5

> At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a child, who he put among them, and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven… Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me." (New Revised Standard Version [NRSV], 1989)

I talked about the characteristics that I perceive as childlike – vulnerability, openness, ability to be truly oneself – and what that might look like when we participate in creativity, play, and clowning.

The second passage was from Mark 8:22–26, the story of the blind man healed by Jesus. It was great fun as I mimed the actions, spitting on my hands and then rubbing them together and putting them on the eyes of the blind man, "I heard the deep intake of breath as the congregation recoiled, ooh yuck" (Journal, 21 February 2020). I adroitly segued into an introduction of Jesus as the improviser and his use of imagination and then I told the story of my involvement in clowning. At this stage I felt confident enough that the congregation was onside and supportive, so I proceeded to put red dots on people throughout the congregation. I started with someone from Fiji as I had primed him ahead of the service (Figure 13), and this generated "hoots of laughter from members of Tikanga Pasifika" (Journal entry, 21 February 2021).

Figure 13

Putting a Red Dot on One of the Worship Service Attendees

Photo by ©Mila Fong Toy, 21 February 2020.

In Research Questions 2 and 3, I sought to discover what role creative play could have in liturgy and the impact on an individual's sense of the holy/divine/sacred. In this liturgy, I used the sermon as a vehicle for expression and engagement, moving amongst the congregation and putting dots on their noses. The purpose was to shift the congregation from being observers to becoming participants, as I wanted them to experience Jesus's parables in a new way as well as learn something of what creative play could look like in a worship service. I was using play as a means to enable the attendees to be "active creators of knowledge" (Leather et al., 2020, p. 17) rather than passive viewers. My playfulness also gave them permission to be a little playful themselves. I knew when people became playful because they laughed at the lipstick on the noses, egging each other on a bit, and they responded to my miming in a visceral manner through a sharp intake of breath and recoiling physically.

As I reflected on the service, I realised that an important aspect of creative play and clowning is to approach people gently, using personal experience as a method of engagement. Through revealing my experience and being vulnerable, they better understood me and the reasons behind the creative play lens. I hoped to encourage students to join me in my creative play workshops and liturgical events and decided the best way to do so was to share my experience.

A teacher of clown and performance, Lecoq (2020) writes that the clown, as essentially alone, shows vulnerability and can be accessible to a range of viewers. In clown ministry, the clown represents the very humanity of God as revealed in Jesus, the one who is at his most vulnerable on the cross (Bain & Forbes, 1995; Peacock, 2009; Shaffer & Sewall, 1984). Therefore, in this liturgy, the vulnerable clown connected people to the cross, and the joy discovered through creative play (lipstick on noses) moved the participants through to the resurrection story. My clowning and creative play represented/revealed the wider Christian story reflected in the words and actions of the Eucharistic prayer.

I kept the hat and red nose on during communion to show that playful actions can be used throughout the whole of a worship service and need not be restricted to only the preaching slot. However, I did note in my journal, “I felt a little awkward giving out communion with a red dot on my nose and a red hat, and one or two might have gone to another person, but basically, I think people were okay about it” (21 February 2020). I was aware that using creative play in a liturgical setting carried a risk that I might cross too many cultural boundaries and offend people. Initially, I countered this risk by being vulnerable and sharing from my perspective. Through telling parts of my life story, as well as wearing parts of it (my clowning hat), I was able to show that it was okay to be open, curious and, in a sense, childlike and playful when facing life’s challenges. I also invited others of another culture to participate, and I sought their advice regarding my clowning actions (for example, the red dot on the nose), to gain an understanding of what was and was not appropriate. However, I discovered in the tārai waka phase of the research (Chapter 6), that there were still questions around

some of my actions. Joseph commented that, for Tikanga Pasifika, creativity in worship services looks like “dance and song and laughter” (Focus group interview, 29 October 2021) rather than the sort of creative play I introduced. As a result, after the February 2020 service, he needed to answer his children’s questions about the significance of dotting people’s noses and the connection with creativity in worship.

Trust Building

In the worship service on 21 February 2020, there were several different aspects to building trust between myself and the worship service attendees. The principal of the college introduced me and talked about the importance of creativity and playfulness in our liturgies and theology. His support conferred a degree of credibility and *mana* (authority) on myself and my creative play project as well as showing others that what I was doing was trustworthy. I then connected with people by sharing my personal story of what clowning and play means to me. Through revealing my experience, they understood me better and the reasons behind the creative play lens. If I was willing to trust them with my story, then they might trust me in the workshops. And finally, the collective act of clowning (the red dot on the nose) created a moment of mutual vulnerability, openness with one another, a sense of being safe, and these contributed further to trust being built between us.

Engaging the Imagination, and Storytelling

A few months later, I returned to the idea of using a story to spark the imagination and as a lead into creative play. However, this time I used someone else’s story. In a worship service on 3 November 2020, I read a story from the book *Does God Have a Big Toe?* by Marc Gellman. The story is based on Gen 3:23 and is called “The Tomato Plant.” I chose this story for several reasons. I wanted to engage people’s imaginations in a creative and humorous way, as well as link the story with what was happening in their everyday lives.

> The story got some laughs which it was supposed to as well as reflective silence when people seemed to be thinking… I tried to convey through the words the characters and relationships in the story using a variety of voices and good pacing. (Journal, 3 November 2020)

The story was intended to be evocative, containing plenty of imagery, and tied in the faithfulness of Adam and Eve and their willingness to hope despite all the odds. This story offered a perspective on the challenges we face especially in the light of COVID-19 lockdowns. One of the attendees commented the next day that she connected the story with a situation in her own life and it resonated with her in a helpful way.

However, during the service there seemed less overt reaction to the story. There were one or two laughs but unlike the service on 21 February 2020, I did not hear or see any obvious physical reactions to what I was reading. I wondered whether I might have piqued people's imaginations more by using a similar method to the February service and combined miming/actions with telling the story rather than only reading it aloud.

In an online worship service on 5 May 2020, I tried another method of engaging the attendees' imaginations through the use of imagery and personal reflection. The reading I chose was from Psalm 87. I used a PowerPoint slide that included the psalm and a corresponding photo of Jerusalem on it. I thought that it was helpful to have words and imagery together so that I was not only catering to one type of learner. To help evoke some connection to the city and the hope contained in the psalm, I talked briefly about my visit to Jerusalem and the impact it had on me. However, due to being a novice with online worship I did not manage to interact with the attendees, nor did I seek specific feedback, so this led to the service feeling very one-dimensional. On another occasion, I might create opportunities for people to engage with the psalm and image in an experiential way and not only through listening and thinking. Later in this chapter, I discuss an online worship service that combined imagination with the senses in a more three-dimensional manner.

There were several key components I used in my worship services to engage the attendees' imaginations. I combined the telling of stories with liturgical actions and mime. I sought to develop common ground by engaging all of us in the storytelling process so that we might then develop a new narrative from our imaginative endeavours. I used my creativity in order to unearth their imaginations. In the next section, I discuss how I used my creativity to unlock others' creativity.

Creativity

I was asked to put together and preside over a liturgical service for a Tikanga Pākehā-led college-wide service on 28 August 2020. I decided to ask the two Pākehā participants from the creative play workshops (May and July 2020) if they would like to take part. Both Jane (all names are pseudonyms) and James agreed enthusiastically. I met with them on 15 August to begin the group planning process.

In the planning session, I used brainstorming as a generative method for gathering ideas to help us to engage our imaginations and creativity. I note in Sternberg (2019) that brainstorming can be a useful device, particularly in a group setting if there are opportunities to evaluate ideas as you go along, or at least before a decision is made, but it is more of a general search device and may not be specific enough for creating detailed ideas. We came up with different suggestions but decided in the end to focus on the sense of taste, based on a line from the psalm for the day, Ps 34:8, "O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in him" (NRSV, 1989). I had also mentioned how inspired I was after I heard someone from the college preach the meaning of the gospel in te reo – *te rongopai* – noting the following in my journal:

> Rongo means to taste, to hear, to smell, to feel, perceive/intuit, basically every sense except sight. So, I wonder what this means for us as we experience and embody the good news of Christ in our Eucharist? How does our Eucharistic liturgy embody the gospel so that we can then live it out? (11 August 2020)

My new understanding created a greater depth to my perception of creative play and its connection with the Christian tradition because I realised how important it was to evoke the senses to encourage creativity in others.

Unfortunately, due to a change in the restrictions regarding COVID-19 and face-to-face gatherings, we were unable to have a Eucharist and instead we needed to lead the service online. As a result, I changed the creative play element from a sensory experience to an imaginative one and led a reflective piece on taste. I spoke the following words to the attendees:

> The sense of taste goes beyond the experience of eating and drinking. The taste of wine can speak to us of joy. The taste of a meal cooked for you can speak of love and friendship. What have you tasted today? Speak with God for a few moments about these taste experiences. When you have come to the end of your prayer I will ring a bell, gently bring yourself back to the room and give thanks, or use words that are familiar, such as the Lord's Prayer – whichever feels right and comfortable. (Adapted from Diocese of Rochester, n.d., UK)

I concluded the reflective piece by ringing a bell. I offered the online attendees the opportunity to turn off their video function for both privacy and to create a prayerful stillness unaffected by the gaze of others as using this device in the workshop seemed to increase participants' prayerful focus. See **Appendix 4** for the Powerpoint slides I used for this online service.

In a conversation after the service, James commented on how well the reflection piece went, "how you got us to have that reflective moment, that worked really well and the feedback that came through at the end (in the Chat box) showed that people really appreciated it, which is nice" (2 September 2020). His observations encouraged me that even though I could not see the attendees' faces this did not mean they were inattentive or not participating in the reflective process.

We also decided to use visual aids and sound to stimulate the senses of sight and hearing. Sight was encouraged by using an atmospheric blue PowerPoint backdrop "Ion," as well as words on the screen and a YouTube music video of children playing and dancing. Hearing was achieved through a

mix of both James's and my voices, music from the YouTube video and the ringing of a bell. However, James observed that online worship is a less effective medium for engaging the senses than in a face-to-face setting. He thought that in a face-to-face setting:

> You could bring in all sorts of props. Smell, touch, taste, see, hear, whereas you can only really hear and see over Zoom, can't you, you can't really touch or smell which are both powerful senses. I think it would change the whole service incredibly, even just going into the chapel and smelling incense, straightaway there's a dynamic for me there. (2 September 2020)

I was very encouraged though that the activities I had used in the workshop, the generation of ideas in preparation for the liturgy, and our conversation, gave James the opportunity to critically reflect on creative play and the possible changes he might make in a different setting.

Several days later, I was talking with one of those present for the service, and she commented that the reflection on the sense of taste led her to consider the connection and value of relationships and community. I think that she was slightly surprised that something so simple could lead to a profound moment of reflection. One of the pieces that contributed to her new awareness and a sense of gratitude was the connection she made between what I said at the beginning of the service and the activity itself. As a way of 'warming up'/priming participants, I asked them to think about the last few days and what had given them joy and made them smile. It was a comment that I threw in at the last minute and was not something that I had planned to do early on. I am not sure quite what encouraged me to do it, perhaps it was partly for myself, to lift my eyes as it were and be less focused on the 'nuts and bolts' of the service itself – to have a more thoughtful gaze and be more playful rather than stay with a script. I was also thinking about a quote I had seen on a Facebook post – "Whatever you must do today... Do it with the confidence of a 4-year-old in a Batman cape." The quote really appealed to my sense of humour and the clown in me. When I consider the impact of the phrase, it speaks of disregarding the normal rules of society and letting your imagination guide you, in a fun and playful way. I also think it gives us permission to be ourselves and not be contained

by society's rules and mores. Therefore, I suggest that it is important to connect people with their personal experience and to where they find meaning in their everyday lives, and to help them use their imaginations in playful ways to evoke a feeling or a moment in time. If spirituality is partly about connection with others and, by extension, the world around us, then it is important in creative play to make sure this happens in a deliberate way.

In the following year, on 6 August 2021, I led a Eucharistic service in the college chapel. A substantial part of the creative aspect to the worship service was in the planning phase. Similar to the service on 28 August 2020, I worked with several others in the development of the worship service. Louise and I spent several hours generating ideas around the theme of the transfiguration. Part of the process was imagining ourselves into the scriptural story and then creating a liturgy that resonated in some way. In the end, we decided to read the piece of scripture several times in the service, followed by a variety of questions to stimulate the attendees' imaginations. I discussed using chants with two musically gifted students and they worked with me on fitting them into the service itself. The sung chants were interspersed throughout the service adding a musical quality to the sacred occasion.

I often associate creativity with the ability to improvise when the occasion demands it. However, as I reflected on the Eucharistic service, the service felt quite structured and left little space for improvisation and a sense of play. Having been ill in the lead-up to the service, I was a bit nervous, so I think that this constrained me a bit. When I mentioned my nervousness beforehand to one of those attending the service, she rightly pointed out that "we should not think of these individual Tikanga services as performances but as opportunities to gather and focus our worship as a three-Tikanga college" (6 August 2021). I found her comments helpful as they encouraged me to alter my perspective and consider worship as performative rather than a performance, and that we worship corporately rather than as individuals. Her words also challenged my ideas of what it means to create and lead worship. What is the purpose of worship? I see a connection with Hay and Nye's (2006) definition of spirituality in that there is a relational connectedness with each other, and an

"awareness of an inter-fusing presence" (p. 141) that takes us beyond ourselves as individuals and connects us with the holy.

I consider liturgy as not only the words spoken aloud but also the movement of people through the worship space. When done well, the sense of flow as people move up to receive communion can be a form of dance and can lend itself to a sense of the holy. However, I do not think that this comes naturally, especially in the tight confines of the chapel. I noted in my journal that, next time, I needed to tell people how to move up to communion so that it was less of a muddle, as due to prolonged lockdown isolation "I had forgotten that our institutional memory has gone a bit" (6 August 2021). I have discovered over the years in my ministry that sometimes it is necessary to explain what needs to happen and not assume people know what to do.

At times, I lack confidence in my ability to be creative. In this particular Eucharistic service, I was aware of my critical voice and the need to prove to the college that I could be creative and offer something useful to other students. Unfortunately, this frame of mind put a block on my creative and improvisational abilities. The irony is that St John's is an educational institution, students are here to learn from coursework and each other, and what I offered was a learning opportunity whether I 'felt' it or not.

In terms of overall creative input, I did most of the work and the service was less participative than I would have liked. I tried for some co-creative planning with others (in this case Louise and the musicians) but the overall community aspect was lacking, and I managed more of a one-off event with people being given tasks to do. Another time I might give people the basic parameters so they can create their own section of the service as they want to, although I think giving people room to move and experiment takes a fair amount of trust, time, and needs to be a community mindset as well as a leadership style. In the following section, I use a couple of examples to discuss how I used everyday practices to encourage attendees to engage with the divine during worship services.

Engagement With the Divine and With Everyday Life

In a worship service on 9 June 2020, I used an object (rosemary) and a traditional action of blessing attendees with holy oil (blessed by a bishop) to help people engage with the holy/ divine in new ways through their sense of smell and touch. As people entered the chapel, I gave them a piece of rosemary. At the beginning of the worship service, I explained that the rosemary was to aid them in remembering those who needed prayer and that, after the song, people could come up and place their rosemary in a bowl on the altar. I added that, if they wanted me to, I could also anoint their hands with oil as a blessing. Most people came up to be anointed with oil and I think this shows how much people needed a tactile reminder of the grace of God, especially after many weeks isolated through COVID-19 restrictions. The anointing of their hands was also a reminder that hands can be a blessing and not only a harbinger of germs. If I used oil every week it might not have had the same impact as it did on that occasion.

In the middle of November every year, there is a liturgical service to farewell all those who are leaving. Since all of college would be in the same space together, I felt inspired to provide a sense of touch using oil in a sacramental manner, given that during 2020 all the things that we normally do in church such as communion (breaking the bread and giving out wafers, sipping wine from one chalice), baptism, sharing the peace (shaking hands, hugging), even being physically present in the same room, were not always possible in the COVID-19 environment. I also wanted to do something as a priest and not only as a student, reflecting “perhaps this was a little selfish, but I knew that the blessing was a tangible, physical sign of a grace-filled God moment” (Journal, 16 November 2020). The blessing of the leavers was held at the very end of the service (14 November 2020). Kesaia and I anointed the leavers and their families during a song of blessing. It was a very special occasion and I observed in my journal:

> As I anointed people and their families, I was aware that more and more people were coming up the front and it felt like being in the middle of a rugby scrum, I did not know who I

had anointed or not anointed. Some of the people had tears in their eyes and it felt very special … I also felt valued as a priest and I was pleased that many people, not only those up the front, appreciated the gesture. (Journal, 16 November 2020).

However, there was one small issue, in the lead up to the service I had forgotten to check if there was enough oil for both of us.

One Small Bottle of Oil.

Oh no, there are two of us and only one very small bottle of oil,

Quick, quick who might have some?

Bishop? Not today,

Priest on staff, no,

Second priest on staff, no,

Third priest on staff, er, maybe, I'll just check my office,

Hurry, hurry only got 5 more minutes until we get started,

Fourth priest, not on staff but in another building, rushes in with a bottle from Jerusalem,

"Will this do, it's not local though"

Phew all sorted…

Now for the moment of truth, stole[7] *around my neck,*

bottle in one hand, tissue for mopping spills in the other,

sign of the cross marked on the forehead (one down, at least seven to go),

bend towards a young child, his eyes wide, expectant look, slight giggle (him not me),

almost done I think, look round, where did they all come from?

All the whānau join in, laughter, tears, prayers, hugs, it seems as if everyone is here,

Sacred never seemed so messy nor so joyful. (25 January 2021)

[7] Liturgical vestment worn over the shoulders and down to the knees or below, denotes a deacon/priest

Through writing the poem, I was reminded that, despite my distracted state and amidst the seeming messiness, God was at work through our actions and our intent. The crazy rugby scrum-like movement and joy (Journal, 16 November 2020) created a sacred occasion for those gathered at the service. I could have reined in the enthusiasm to make it neat and orderly but instead I let the moment unfold; I took a risk and it paid off. Something about risk taking seems important for liturgical creative play not least for supporting and allowing creative play to happen.

The next poem is a slightly different take on the service and arose from conversations with various people in the lead-up to the event as well as with two of the Tikanga deans afterwards.

Oh, We're Leaving

Oh, we're leaving,

I knew it was coming and yet

these are all my friends,

three years we've journeyed together,

three years we've prayed and laughed and

worked very very hard,

three years we've eaten and gossiped over college lunches,

And now

God, will you go with me, look after my family, our future?

Light touch, whispered prayer,

Cool oil soothes my soul,

Tears overflow

"such a gift,"

We will remember this moment for a long time. (25 January 2021)

Through their words (albeit collated by me), I saw the anointing in a new light. The anointing was a simple, tactile act, which made sacred the wide range of emotions expressed by participants – grief,

joy, hope, fear, yearning, and faith. I was also reminded that it is not up to me to determine the outcome but instead provide the vehicle (creative play) to assist people make their own meaning and connect with the divine/God. In the following section, I continue to explore the tactile nature of creative play to evoke an engagement with the holy/divine through our interaction with objects.

Objects as a Form of Physical Metaphor

An aspect of creative play that is important is the use of objects as a form of physical metaphor, that is, the object refers to an idea or image. In the worship service on 5 November 2020, I used a feather to represent what it is to trust in the presence and work of God. The feather stimulated embodied creative play through the sensation of touch and the stirring of emotions.

I gave each person a feather as they entered the chapel at St John's. At a certain point in the service, I talked about the words of an 11th century mystic, musician, poet, church leader, and saint, Hildegard of Bingen (1148), "Then it pleased the king to raise a small feather from the ground and he commanded it to fly. The feather flew, not because of anything in itself but because the air bore it along. Thus am I a feather on the breath of God." (n.p.). I encouraged each person to rest the feather on their palm and imagine that they too were a feather on the breath of God and to blow the feather gently and see where it might go.

The idea of using a feather arose from a session I had conducted earlier in the week at Mainly Music (a Christian music and play group set up for preschool age and their parents/caregivers). Both the children and their accompanying adults were given a feather and they were encouraged to do actions along with the music. This included running the feather over their hands, arms and legs culminating with a tickle on the nose and a resulting sneeze. There was a joyful and fun element to this song that appealed to me, and I wondered what it might be like to incorporate this in a sacred space such as the college chapel. I then connected the physical feather with the metaphorical one mentioned by St Hildegard.

In the following poem, I try to capture the essence of the liturgical event through the form of poetry. The poem is from the perspective of my clown character and reveals something of the delight she felt in playing with the feather. There is the sense that the tactile nature of the feather engaged my clown, leading her from the here and now into a possible future – the feather flying out the door.

Feather on the Breath of God

Oh what delight, a beautiful little feather

softly, gently resting on my palm,

almost nothing,

content

(ah is that a faint sigh I hear?)

Do you tickle I ask, a sneeze brewing inside my nose,

Ah choo,

Better in than out I say,

Oops dripping nose, COVID (!), I look round desperately,

Use a sleeve, any sleeve…

Ah that's better, now where did you go?

Under the seat, no,

above the window, maybe, out the door, almost certainly,

lead on little feather… (4 December 2020)

The poem ties in the experiential and embodied nature of the creative play activity with the imaginings of my clown. The poem adds another layer through which creative play can be understood as creating new ways of seeing and new possibilities that are not necessarily clear cut or obvious at first glance. The poem closes the discussion on my findings, and I now turn to a section focusing on my practice as a worship creator and priest.

My Practice as a Worship Creator and a Priest

In this section, I provide a few interim comments on my practice as a worship creator and a priest when creating playful liturgical events for students at college. I offer a fuller critical reflection on my professional practice in Chapter 7, and future implications in the final chapter (Chapter 8) of this thesis.

Earlier in this chapter, I observed that sometimes I need to provide space for improvisation and flexibility within liturgies as I can overorchestrate the content. Worship services can be tightly curated spaces, “an art installation where the elements of worship are the artifacts” (Pierson, 2012, p. 64). However, Pierson (2012) argues that individuals can have freedom to move and engage with the activities within worship and suggests creating open and fluid opportunities within worship to develop a sense of open-endedness. One of his methods is that of prayer stations. Within a set time period, you move from one area to another, and participate in different actions according to the theme for that space (for example, writing a prayer, lighting a candle). Therefore, in my liturgical curation, I can make sure the content is there; however, I do not need to engineer the outcome for people.

There was a degree of risk on my part when I included creative play in worship services. What if people were offended, or did not understand, or perhaps the creative play was so subtle that it made no difference to people’s engagement with the divine? However, in the end I found it worthwhile taking the chance. I was inspired by clowning and the ability to play, be open to the unexpected, to work with what is and not necessarily what is planned. I was also encouraged by Pierson (2012) that failure is part of the creative endeavour, not all ideas will work as envisaged but it is in reflecting critically that we learn and develop. An example of being flexible and learning as I went was in the need to design and facilitate online worship services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an awareness in church circles of the value of online worship for engaging people in sacred occasions. However, I do find them difficult to lead as I struggle to ‘read’

the room on the screen and pick up all the cues. I have since discovered how to share the PowerPoint and keep people's screens showing (July 2021). Initially though, "I was aware that while the PowerPoint was showing everyone was muted except me, so it felt like I was speaking to the screen and that no one was actually there! Very unnerving" (Journal, 5 May 2020). In other online services, I moved people into what are called *chatrooms* where smaller groups of people can talk together more easily, and this seemed to assist with overall participation. I know some people record the services ahead of time, and although I have attempted this, I feel more engaged when I see people in front of me and can interact with them.

Not only is interaction important to me but also my presence as the leader and facilitator of services. The art of inhabiting and being present is key, I think, to assisting people to be involved in the liturgy more fully. However, I found it a challenge trying to assess the impact of my state of being on those attending the worship services. The main issue was the sacredness of liturgical ritual and the unwillingness of attendees to assess or question a holy occasion. I was even surprised at my reluctance to break into attendees' spiritual moments. Later on, in 2021, I was able to garner insights because I included reflection and debrief into the overall tārai waka process, but this was something I had not considered in 2020.

Summary of Findings

I used creative play in the worship services to assist people to engage with the holy/divine/sacred. On several occasions I anointed people with oil. Although using oil is not uncommon in worship, in my case the action was unexpected and in one service tied in with the ordinary (our hands). I evoked the senses in a way that helped attendees imagine a different possibility and as a result create new meaning. Through my actions, people were given the opportunity to engage with the divine/God and everyday life in a different way. I took risks, trusting in my knowledge and experience as a priest to curate an environment in which people might encounter God/the divine. I was also aware that as an ordained leader I already had the mana to carry out some of the liturgical actions associated with the

sacred in an Anglican context. As well as my sanctioned leadership, the environment was important in setting the scene and providing a suitable container for the creative play action and activities. All of the creative play I used occurred in contexts that the attendees would associate with the sacred such as the chapel, online worship services, the end-of-year valedictory service. The creative play was both embodied and experiential in its focus. In the next chapter, I move from my role as priest in the liturgical setting to that of teacher and facilitator of creative play workshops.

Chapter 5 – Role of Teacher: Experiential Learning in Creative Play Workshops

In this chapter, I consider the role of creative play as an experiential learning method within workshop settings (online and face-to-face). Workshops involve active participation as well as experimentation and provide a helpful way for individuals and groups to learn within a defined context. I primarily used D. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory (ELT) as a base for the learning possibilities in the workshops. The inclusion of periods for discussion as well as focus group debriefs offered an additional reflective component that fitted well with the ELT model and within an AR framework, deepening the learning for myself and the group.

My narrative begins with an explanation of my workshop process and an overview of each of the three workshops I facilitated in 2020. Next, I evaluate my findings in relation to my research questions, that is, the impact of creative play on the participants' (St John's College students) learning and creativity (Research Question 2), as well as their experience of the holy/divine/sacred (Research Question 3). I then reflect on my learning as the teacher and facilitator of the workshops, as well as my developing ludic process. I conclude the chapter with a discussion on the AR process used in the workshops, and a final summing up.

Workshop Process

Initially, my research project was planned with face-to-face (in-person) workshops in mind. However, in 2020, due to the effects of COVID-19 and subsequent government restrictions, I needed to adapt my plans. As a result, I conducted an initial online pilot workshop (Workshop 1), and then a two-part series comprising Workshop 2 (face-to-face) and Workshop 3 (online). I used AR to design and run my workshops (refer to Figure 5 & Figure 6, in Chapter 3). This collaborative and cyclical approach supported participants to engage in a critically reflective process and challenge their existing

practice. AR enabled me to work within a responsive and flexible creative space and influence change.

Designing and Creating the Workshops

I designed a range of activities using resources from several books, including two on clowning techniques (Robertson, 1983; Shaffer & Sewall, 1984), as well as my imagination. I warmed-up my ludic mindset by imagining the activities in my mind's eye, as well as miming the actions to make sure I had a 'feel' for how they would work in practice. In preparation for Workshop 2, I played detective and spent 2 to 3 hours looking at home and in my study at college for objects to use in the activities. As I found each one, I tested it to work out if it could have multiple uses and have lots of 'playing' potential. I enacted the ideas in my mind as well as physically, and my clown character was a part of the process, "Poe was alongside me discovering new ways of using very familiar objects" (Journal, 30 July 2020). I also considered the people who were coming to the workshops and thought about the objects that they might find playful. It was important to use items that would not be offensive for different cultures. For instance, in te ao Māori the head is *tapu* (sacred) and to use a hat as an object that could be used in a variety of ways including as a container for food would not be appropriate.

Each workshop included introductory sections, sharing of stories and experience, and creative play activities. At the end of each workshop, I used a focus group session to debrief with participants. The intention with the focus groups was to encourage participants to reflect on their experiences during the workshops, share ideas and insights, and provide feedback on the sessions from which I could then learn and take into the next iteration. Information on the content of the workshops and those involved is outlined below.

Workshop 1 Process

Workshop 1 was held online (see Table 5). Five participants (theology students) attended the hour-long session, and I led them through a series of creative play activities (see Appendix 5). At the end,

we engaged in a 25-minute focus group debrief discussion. This workshop provided several sources of data (see Table 5), including a video recording of the whole session. I transcribed the full session, not just the focus group debrief, and this allowed a closer examination of participants' reactions and interactions during the session.

Table 5

Outline of Creative Play Workshop 1

Workshop 1: 1 May 2020	
Venue: Online using Zoom web-based platform	**Activities:**
Time: 3.30 – 4.30pm	Introduction to the workshop
Participants:	Sharing childhood experiences of play
Sandra (Tikanga Pākehā)	Evoking the imagination through the senses
Louise (Tikanga Pākehā)	Discussion
Katherine (Tikanga Pākehā)	Using the imagination and mime to connect with scripture – baking bread
James (Tikanga Pākehā)	Discussion
Mira (Tikanga Pasifika)	
Age range: Mid 20s to late 50s	**Focus group debrief:** 4.45–5.20pm (35 min)
	Video recorded using Zoom.
Data sources: My observations. Transcript of the video recording, including the focus group debrief. Post workshop emails (follow-up questions to supplement the debrief). Critical self-reflective journal notes. Field notes written after the workshop.	

Workshop 2 Process

Workshop 2 was held face-to-face (see Table 6). Four participants (theology students) attended the hour and 40-minute-long session, and I led them through a series of creative play activities (see Appendix 5). At the end, we engaged in a 45-minute focus group debrief. This workshop provided several sources of data (see Table 6). Since only the focus group debrief was audio recorded, I had to rely on my memory when writing field notes after the session. Therefore, this data was not as comprehensive as that collected during the online workshops.

Table 6

Outline of Creative Play Workshop 2

Workshop 2: 24 July 2020

Venue: Face-to-face (Wesley Hall at St John's College)	**Activities:** Introduction to the workshop Opening discussion – "If I was a shop what sort of shop would I be?" Sharing creative play experiences Physical warm-up games Improvised play Connecting an imaginary activity with theology and scripture
Time: 2.30–4.10pm	
Participants: Mira (Tikanga Pasifika) Kala (Tikanga Pasifika) Jane (Tikanga Pākehā) James (Tikanga Pākehā)	
Age range: Mid 20s to late 50s	**Focus group debrief:** 4.10–4.55 pm (45 min) Audio recorded.
Data Sources: My observations. Critical self-reflective journal notes. Field notes written after the workshop. Transcript of the audio recording.	

Workshop 3 Process

Workshop 3 was held online (see Table 7). The same four participants from Workshop 2 attended this one. The workshop was 1 hour 15 minutes in length, and I led them through a series of creative play activities (see Appendix 5). At the end, we engaged in a 25-minute focus group debrief discussion. This workshop provided several sources of data (see Table 7).

Table 7

Outline of Creative play Workshop 3

Workshop 3: 21 August 2020	
Venue: Online using Zoom	**Activities:** Introduction to the workshop Sharing personal stories of when we experienced God most fully Discussion Planting an imaginary (magic) seed Discussion Exploring the senses Sharing resources for creativity in worship
Time: 3.30–4.45pm	
Participants: Mira (Tikanga Pasifika) Kala (Tikanga Pasifika) Jane (Tikanga Pākehā) James (Tikanga Pākehā)	
Age range: Mid 20s to late 50s	**Focus group debrief:** 4.45–5.10 pm (25 min) Video recorded using Zoom.
Data Sources: My observations. Zoom video recording and transcripts. Critical self-reflective journal notes. Field notes written after the workshop.	

In this chapter, I will note when the quotes are taken from the focus group debriefs, otherwise they are from the workshop sessions themselves.

Main Objectives for all Workshops

My primary aim, when running Workshops 1–3, was to determine what strategies might stimulate creative play in others and be used by them to develop their own liturgical practice. The objectives of the workshops I constructed in 2020 were to:

1. observe the effect of creative play strategies on participants' learning and creativity;
2. awaken the imagination using creative play strategies that include everyday objects as well as clowning techniques;
3. encourage participants to develop a ludic mindset, be playful with one another and have fun using everyday objects;
4. assist participants to embrace the physical, kinaesthetic aspect of their being (embodied) through using experiential creative play strategies;
5. enable participants to draw a connection between an activity and a piece of scripture and liturgy;
6. observe whether participants made a connection between the creative play strategies and their personal sense of the holy/divine/sacred; and
7. gauge the effectiveness of the online format for facilitating creative play workshops.

Impact of the Creative Play Methods on Participants

In this section, I discuss my findings regarding the impact of the creative play methods on participants. There are eight key themes that emerged from my data analysis:

1. building trust amongst the group in the workshops;
2. stimulating participants' imaginations;
3. drawing out participants' playfulness and ludic mindset;
4. engaging participants' sense of the holy/divine/sacred;

5. impact of creative play strategies on participants' learning;
6. embodied/ experiential learning;
7. discussion as an aid to critical reflective learning;
8. my ludic process, facilitation, and role modelling.

Building Trust Amongst the Group in the Workshops

I intentionally set out to build trust in the group knowing that participants needed to relax sufficiently, feel safe and able to be open with each other and with me, if they were going to engage in activities that required them to be playful (Objective 3). As noted in my literature review, Goto (2016b) comments that students' level of engagement can be dependent on their willingness to try new things and that trust is an important aspect that influences their increased participation in the learning process. To help build trust, I took time at the beginning of each workshop to explain the process for that session, outlining the activities and my expectations regarding the group's participation. I also reviewed the consent forms again, noting the areas around confidentiality and what I would be recording. In the Workshop 2 focus group debrief, James commented that I explained and demonstrated the process well, "so that we could go 'okay I know where you are going with this'" (24 July 2020).

After each introduction, I included a section on sharing our stories based on specific themes, such as childhood reflections on play. The conversation after the stories often led to in-depth discussions and reflection on experience, embracing broader themes in participants' childhood play, such as risk, freedom, and safety. For example, in Workshop 1, I was interested that four out of five participants mentioned the freedom they discovered in their childhood play, "free to be whatever" (Louise). Later, in the workshop, they unpacked what freedom might look like and several of them connected the concept with risk, "a lot of our play as kids was actually quite risky and we were very free range" (Katherine). Sandra took the discussion further, wondering if the fact that they were free and there were no rules encouraged her imagination and meant that anything was then possible. Through their

childhood play there was almost a sense of breaking established norms, doing something a bit daring and pushing the boundaries of the possible. The activity connected the participants with their own positive lived experience of the very qualities I was wanting to evoke in the workshop setting – qualities such as trust, feeling safe enough to take risks, and being playful.

A sense of community and being in a safe place was important for participants. Katherine talked about her experiences at a community event she goes to each year. She observed that she felt safe and could "push myself to do stuff that I wouldn't normally do because I feel really held, and it's a very non-judgmental community." I wondered if this sense of community extended to the workshop itself, as all participants in the workshop knew each other and were part of the college community. Was there already a level of trust in the group that enabled Katherine and the group as a whole to relax and fully engage with activities that may have been outside of their comfort zone? Unfortunately, I did not ask that specific question, so it is my intuitive hunch and not based on their explicit comments. In the online format there was an extra layer of security as everyone had the ability to switch off their camera if they wanted to. In Workshop 1, Katherine mentioned that what "makes this [the whole process] safe for me is that I can turn off my camera."

Group size also appeared to have an effect on the increased levels of trust between the workshop participants. In the July 2020 focus group debrief, several of the participants commented that they appreciated being part of a small group. They felt more relaxed, willing to participate fully and felt less self-conscious than they might otherwise be in a larger group. My observations would also suggest that this helped increase their creativity and active physical interaction. Kala had a significant insight that she "can be real and be confident when this small number, but when there's a large group that's the time I'd shut down" (Workshop 2); the other participants agreed, with Jane saying that "if there were 20 people in the room I would have behaved differently" (Workshop 2). Beforehand, I was slightly concerned that four participants might be too small for the style of

workshop; however, their comments encouraged me to see that smaller numbers can create a positive dynamic.

In the same Workshop (2), I also observed participants learning how to function collaboratively as a team. This aligns with what Siemon et al. (2016) consider as learning by means of a mutual and collective endeavour. In pairs, they created an imaginary scene from a group of miscellaneous objects and then interacted with the other pair using those same objects. The teamwork provided an opportunity for them to assist one another to be playful and develop strategies for differing situations, "what I learned from this workshop is that you cannot be creative on your own, you need others to be involved and to make it more fun" (Mira, focus group). This acknowledgement of being part of a team fits with Siemon et al.'s work (2019) that team collaboration can lead to increased creativity. I also observed that the participants bounced ideas off each other during the periods of discussion which led to greater insights between participants. They were able to move beyond their own personal experience and imagine alternative possibilities in other settings, using what I see as D. Kolb's (1984) abstract conceptualisation (ELT).

The strategies I put in place appeared to support participants as they engaged in creative play and set up a good foundation for my objectives (1–4) to be achieved. Participants were willing to be playful with one another, embrace the physical, kinaesthetic aspect of their being, unlock their creativity, and, as a result, be fully open to the experiential learning possibilities inherent in the activities, the concrete experience phase of Kolb's (1984) ELT. Another contributing factor to the learning process was stimulating their imaginations.

Stimulating Participants' Imagination

The core components of each workshop were creative play activities aimed at stimulating participants' imaginations (Objective 2). Activities ranged from evoking their imaginations through use of the senses (Workshops 1 and 3), using imagination and mime to connect with scripture (Workshops 1 and 2), playing imaginary games (Workshop 2), miming making and baking bread

(Workshop 1), planting an imaginary magic seed (Workshop 3), and acting out various make-believe scenarios (Workshop 2). Some of the creative play included objects, others were action and mime based. They were all intended to assist participants be fully present in the activity and as Merriam and Bierema (2014) state, be more open to learning.

In some activities, I used storytelling as a mechanism to unlock participants' imagination. In Workshop 2, I led a role-playing exercise where they used various objects as a springboard to create a story. The items were a random selection from my house and included plates, hats, spatulas, clothes pegs, and pens. One of the scenarios was based in a classroom setting, another was in a restaurant. James and Jane took on roles of waiters and offered Kala, Mira, and me some food. We entered the world of the restaurant and role-played with them. I would ask a question such as "what is this lovely looking dish of food?"; one of them would say "roast chicken"; and then I would pretend to take it off the plate and eat it, remarking on the taste and texture, while maintaining the illusion created by James and Jane. Not all participants found this activity easy. Jane did not mind the role-playing but found it difficult responding to my questions about the food in an improvisational manner. In a classroom scenario, Kala said she lacked some confidence in standing up front talking. However, Kala also noted that it was her favourite activity in the workshop and that it was the childlike nature and creativity of the exercise that appealed to her, "I think the most fun in general, was the moment seeing you three act like a child... It reminds me of when I was a child" (focus group, Workshop 2).

James appreciated the make-believe aspect and the confidence it gave him:

> [I enjoyed] being someone that I'm not. I tend to be an introvert. So being able to kind of act was fun. And I think not only was it fun but it also, it was useful for me to step out of my comfort zone and try something new, and realising, yeah, I can do this. (Focus group debrief, Workshop 2)

Through the activities, I drew out something unexpected and new for each of them; this appeared to increase their self-confidence; as well as supported their capacity to learn. In addition, I saw part of my facilitative role was to encourage people to step out of their comfort zones, even if this was easier for some people than for others. In the Workshop 1 focus group debrief, Sandra summed up the nature of pretend play well:

> [Play] gets you out of yourself and be or do something completely different. And whether it's playing with fire or jumping off the roof and thinking maybe you might fly when you do that. Or whether it's me thinking I might make something really fantastic with those scraps of fabric or just spending an hour wiling away the time playing with them, and we get to be something else in that moment of play.

These insights and participants' experiential learning, support the value of the magic circle concept (Nørgård et al., 2017) to provide a safe zone in which play can occur and imagination is not restrained by the realities of everyday life. Another example of this concept is from Workshop 3 and comprises the telling of a story about the planting of a magic seed. As I told the story, I encouraged participants to both imagine the plant growing from a small seed (for example, the texture of the seed, the soil it was planted in, the type of leaves the plant had as it grew and so on) and to mime the actions such as planting and picking the fruit. At the end of the activity, I asked what the magic seed represented for them, Jane spoke of "the transformation of the seed to the plant and the amazingness of creation"; Mira talked about "God being at work in the person who does the planting"; Kala mentioned the spreading of the fruits of the tree throughout the whole world. From the activity and their imaginations, each person created a make-believe setting where they planted the seed, and watched it grow as it transformed into something amazing, productive, and life giving.

Kala picked up on the seed discussion later in the second activity and explored the possibility of using the idea in her community back home in the Pacific Islands. She noted her 'aha' moment in the focus group debrief: "I come from a context where a main source of income is farming. And I think that the idea of the seed, the soil, and the tree, I could use that in my context, and they could understand"

(Focus group). Although unplanned, I was delighted that the activity was open enough to give her the opportunity to make a connection with her own cultural context. I am conscious though of Towner et al.'s (2017) comments in their case study on Pacific students, that it is important for learners' cultural identities and backgrounds to be valued and acknowledged. On another occasion I would be more cognisant of the best learning environment for Pacific learners and plan accordingly. As I reflected on Kala's words, and the evocative nature of the activity, I crafted the following poem.

> *Juice dripping down my fingers,*
>
> *Sweet smelling, sticky hands,*
>
> *Warm sun, dark rich earth ripe for planting,*
>
> *The seed settling in my country's embrace,*
>
> *Jesus speaks "there once was a farmer sowing seeds…"* (August 2020)

Even though I was concentrating on facilitating the conversation, I was still surprised at the visual imagery her words conjured up. I suddenly understood the power of Jesus's words and how they could still resonate in a culture 2,000 years removed from his own.

Earlier in Workshop 3, I talked participants through an exercise where they used their senses to engage their imagination (Objective 4). I was interested that their responses were tightly connected with their memories of eating different types of food, Jane commented during the workshop session:

> When I thought about what I had tasted just now … it brought me to my childhood and eating the feijoas every season, and just how much of a joy it is to always get my first one of the season … but actually visualising it and thinking about it brought me to a whole other place and it's amazing the difference.

James also connected the evocative nature of memories with taste, saying: "it's amazing how different foods have different memories … For some reason whenever I get to buy fish and chips, I think of eating them by the seaside." There are a range of writers (such as Merriam & Bierema, 2014) as well as neuroscientists who now consider the possibility that the senses do indeed shape memory and in fact the lack of some senses such as smell, can contribute to memory loss (Growdon et al.,

2015). I would argue that the senses and memory are so integrally tied with experiential learning that if we take the concept of life-long learning seriously, then further research needs to be done in this area. In another activity, I was intrigued to see that it was not only the senses that engaged memory but also miming actions.

In Workshop 1, Sandra observed that as I described holding the warm bowl of yeast she was fully engaged and could smell the yeast frothing away, "I could feel the process of making the bread. It was really strange." Katherine agreed, noting that she could really "feel it and remember the process, watching the yeast bubble up when you add the water and the sugar" (Workshop 1). Katherine then noted the memories that surfaced during the activity, especially remembering making bread with her mother.

Thinking through an imaginative task seemed almost as effective as doing it with real objects such as flour and yeast or seeds and soil. Mira commented in Workshop 3, that they could imagine themselves planting the seed in the soil and watching it grow, and so connected with it better than only listening to the exercise. Jane commented that the activity was "contemplative" and aided her focus and engagement, increasing her imagination. In the next section, I consider other creative play methods that increased their sense of fun and play.

Drawing Out Participants' Playfulness and Ludic Mindset

Objective 3 for the workshops included developing participants' ludic mindset and providing opportunities for them to be playful with one another and have fun using everyday objects. My transcript analysis from the Workshop 2 focus group debrief revealed that the word *fun* was mentioned 14 times and *play* or *playful* were mentioned 26 times by participants. This sense of playfulness and fun was borne out by participants, especially Kala. I had put a tomato-shaped timer in one of the boxes of props and, unbeknown to the rest of us, earlier in the workshop Kala had turned it on to a random setting. Partway through the debrief the alarm went off and she burst into giggles.

Tick tock goes the clock,

10 minutes, 5 minutes, 2 minutes,

Surprise!

The look on everyone's face, brilliant

What else can I do…? (July 2020)

My prose poem captures something of Kala's playful spirit. It was as though the activities gave Kala permission to have fun, so she did.

An activity later in the workshop helped participants to play together. I have mentioned the timer; there were also balloons available. When the participants saw the balloons, they immediately went to blow them up and then play with them, either making noises with them (as the air escaped) or batting them around the room. I noted in my journal that they looked like a group of children at play rather than adult participants at a workshop (25 July 2020). Their spontaneous actions revealed quite clearly to me that play can be fun and freeing for those involved but could be inhibited if restricted by goals or a set of rules. In the focus group debrief, Kala spoke of the value in using playfulness to get into the mind of a child to see how they understand and interact with the world. Kala noted that role-playing could assist others such as Sunday school teachers to "allow them to think like a child" and "see that they [the children] are playful and that's okay" (Workshop 2). She did note that, in the Pacific context, playing is not allowed in church as it is seen as a disrespectful towards God and the sacred nature of the place. However, I am interested in Pasifika writers such as Hereniko (1995), who offer a more nuanced view that suggests play can be a method to reveal the sacred more fully through clowning, ceremony, and weaving. What I appreciated in Kala's case, was that the workshop offered her a new frame of reference and a way of negotiating a complex dynamic by making creative play work within her own context. Others also constructed meaning from the activities and their sense of the holy/divine/sacred.

Engaging Participants' Sense of the Holy/Divine/Sacred

Two of my objectives (5, 6) in the workshops were intended to enable participants to draw a connection between an activity and a piece of scripture/liturgy and to observe whether participants make a connection between the creative play strategies and their personal sense of the holy/divine/sacred (Research Question 3).

In Workshop 1, James and Mira associated the bread-making activity with a piece of scripture that they had been studying in their respective biblical studies papers. James remarked, "It was a fascinating exercise and when you brought that scripture it … made that scripture come alive." Mira also spoke about her culture "back home" in the Pacific where children do not have an active role in the church services. As a result of the activity, Mira said that she would like to use a similar method to help children understand scripture better. James agreed and thought that he wanted to do a similar activity in his placement parish. Sandra took a different tack and observed that usually bread is a significant part of our church life, either through the Eucharist or in terms of hospitality: "how much of our faith is about sharing, sharing food and sharing hospitality?"; however, she noted that COVID-19 has put a stop to this level of community life.

In Workshop 3, I was also quite intentional in asking participants to share their experiences of God either through retelling their own stories or in response to various activities. In the introductory activity, I asked participants to talk about a worship service when they experienced God fully or had a strong sense of God's presence. Jane talked about a worship event that was held outside, observing,

> I think what really stood out was it was in nature … and it involved the senses. It felt peaceful. It wasn't enclosed like being inside a church building and it felt simple and beautiful and really spiritually alive.

James felt God more in specific types of church services (praise and worship) where there was a blend of music and being with like-minded people. Mira and Kala both mentioned worship services

where children and young people were an integral part and listened to with respect, especially "when the young people actually take the leadership and voice their opinion in the church, [this] is God at work" (Kala, Workshop 3). Their experiences emphasised the importance of place, relationships, and emotion to engage their sense of the divine/God.

During the second activity in Workshop 3, there was conversation about the imaginary seed and what it represented for participants. I had deliberately not added a scriptural reference at the end of it because there are many associations of seeds and growth in the Bible, and I thought that one reference might limit their imagination. I am glad that I refrained because James immediately recalled two pieces of scripture, "I was reminded of that scripture verse about how Paul planted the seed and Apollos watered it, but God made it grow [1 Corinthians 3:6 and] … where Jesus says that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a seed and it was planted on the roadside [Matthew 13:1-58]." He was very pleased with his insight, "I have no idea where [the insights came from]. I guess it's just the Holy Spirit prompted me I guess, but there was like oh wow that's a 'so cool' moment." A later activity in the workshop showed that it was not a one-off, as Kala associated the sense of taste with a line from Psalm 34 – "O taste and see that the Lord is good." Through connecting the activity with scripture, James and Kala were able to gain new insights and make meaning from their biblical tradition. Along with the biblical insights participants also had new understandings about the divine/God.

Jane's comments in the Workshop 2 focus group, summarised participants' insights well and offer a wonderful theology of play: "what did we do when we got together as a group, and did these things, we got silly, we were fun, we were playful. We were a bit cheeky, mischievous, and I thought, well, if we are made in the image of God, then God is those things too." This idea of a theology of play is continued in Chapter 6, when I discuss our tārai waka's experience of creative play. For now, I consider other strategies that show the impact of creative play on participants' experiential learning and creativity.

Impact of Creative Play Strategies on Participants' Learning

A key workshop objective (1) was to observe the effect of creative play strategies on participants' learning and creativity. In Workshop 1, the participants' quick replies about how they might use some activities showed me the depth of their learning and their ability to adapt a strategy from one area and see its use in an entirely different context. An example of this flexible thinking, or in ELT terms - abstract conceptualisation, is the hat box activity in Workshop 2. Jane noted in the workshop discussion, that she would use the activity as an icebreaker in a group she facilitates "because it's a great one, it's really creative, and it teaches you so much about people." Kala, James, and Mira talked about the usefulness of the activities in a church setting, from sermons to Sunday school. I was delighted that the sensory activities enabled Kala to see the connection between the sense of taste, her own experience, her thought processes, and a piece of scripture, as this demonstrated both the efficacy of my methods and associated experiential learning.

I was encouraged that near the end of Workshop 2, Jane suggested (unprompted) that perhaps we could do some worship services that included creative play in them, "try it out" as it were. I was pleased that a participant offered it as an idea, so that there would be greater collegiality and the start of a community of practice, rather than the idea coming from me as part of my research. Jane also observed that the value of participating in creative play endeavours was learning from each other and inspiring further ideas/creativity:

> It's amazing what comes from participating in a workshop like this. I feel full of creativity and ideas, whereas if I'd had a quick conversation or I'd read a page and quickly in a rush … [there is no] time taken to really explore it. And then you get all of these aha moments of, "oh, what a great idea, or what a great resource or that's a connection I never thought about." (Jane, Workshop 2)

Several writers suggest that group creativity and play can have a beneficial effect for individual (Paulus, 2000; West et al., 2016) and organisational (Mainemelis & Ronson, 2006; Paulus, 2000)

creativity. Participants also critically reflected on other issues that affected their learning through the lenses of personality type, and family and cultural backgrounds.

In Workshop 2, they discussed the impact of their personality on the activity they enjoyed the most. James associated being an introvert with the role-playing and being someone else, “being able to act was fun.” In terms of personality and creativity, Mira came to a realisation that she was creative in a different way than she thought and that some of the activities suited her better than others. Later, in the debrief, two participants (Tikanga Pākehā) associated the learning they gained from playing with objects to being “tactile learners.” In Workshop 1, Sandra discussed the influence of the Myers Briggs personality indicator and asked whether different types might respond in varying ways to the activities. The creative play methods provided moments for participants to critically reflect on their practice and what was helpful for their own learning.

The influence of culture and family dynamics on their learning was teased out in the conversation between participants in Workshop 2. There were a range of responses with no consensus being drawn. Mira suggested that “in the Pacific we see things as they are” but conceded that parental influence probably played more of a role than the place of birth. In Kala’s case, her parents taught her to be creative, flexible and “think outside the box” as did Jane’s (Pākehā). Jane also mentioned that her parents gave her many opportunities to play and be creative growing up, helping her to fulfil her potential. In the magic seed activity (Workshop 3), Mira talked about the papaya trees back home, and how they are very small seeds that grow into big trees with delicious fruit. As she talked, I suddenly thought about the biblical parable of the small mustard seed growing into a big plant and I wondered if it would have greater impact within Pacific cultures if the image of the papaya seed was used instead. Mira’s comments reflect a larger issue about inculturation and the issues inherent in contextualising a biblical story from the Middle East. As Kala noted, her Pasifika community might understand the parable of the seed and the Sower better if it was sited in a local farming context.

I was interested that some of their critical reflection was self-initiated and observation based, such as personality-types; whereas, on other occasions, I asked specific questions to generate discussion. For example, during the Workshop 2 refreshment break, several participants reflected on the impact of family support in terms of their creative play growing up. As a result, in the focus group, I asked whether learning and creativity was influenced by their culture and family context. Through observation (from myself and the participants), as well as the workshop and focus group transcripts, the discussion periods offered a greater depth of critical reflection and learning than the activity alone. However, discussion was not the only method of critical reflection I used. Several writers consider the importance of including embodied and experiential methods of reflection for increased learning (such as James & Brookfield, 2014; Johns, 2017; A. Kolb & D. Kolb, 2005; Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Embodied/Experiential Learning

I designed activities for the workshops that not only engaged participants' mentally but also encouraged embodied and experiential learning through physical action, sensory experiences, and connecting emotions and memory. In Workshop 1, I asked everyone to bring either an object or an image that represented play for them. I was not sure what the response would be but was impressed by the strong connection between the objects and the range of memories they triggered. Louise and Sandra both mentioned in the focus group debrief that the sharing of childhood stories was the best part of the workshop for them. There were a variety of objects mentioned. Louise remembered a toy lion and associated it with bravery and courage. James talked about puppets and how they were used to present a message in a fun way. Sandra and Mira brought actual objects, scraps of fabric and a lipstick, and connected them with imagination and pretence. Katherine had an image of a campfire. Although each person's object/image appeared simple, they triggered a great deal of individual reflection and diverse conversation in the group. Most of the participants connected the object/image with memories of activities and relationships such as playing dress-up with their sisters or delving into their mother's sewing kit. It was a helpful exercise as it set the scene for the

workshop, gave me a sense of their understanding of creative play, engaged everyone in the process, and encouraged their imagination even before we started the afternoon's session. I observed the high energy levels and a great deal of openness between the members of the group. This aligns with appreciative inquiry and other strengths-based methods that connect positive past experiences with future possibility thinking and actions.

Several participants in Workshop 2 appreciated sharing their stories and insights with one another. Jane commented "seeing people and hearing about them and having them sharing. This is something that I highly valued"; and Mira spoke of "the sharing, because we get to relate what we share to who we are as a person." I observed, at the time of the workshop, a great deal of energy and enthusiasm when participants shared their memories and images of positive expressions of creative play. For example, one of the participants had brought a fly-fishing rod and explained how it worked, he then passed it around so each of us could give it a go. I was surprised at the impact this had on deepening our sharing and bonding as a group. The tactile handling of the object seemed to contribute to a greater connection with both his memory of fishing with his father and our own experiences of fishing. These examples align with several of the workshop objectives to awaken their imagination (Objective 2), help them be playful with one another (Objective 3) and to embrace the kinaesthetic nature of their being (Objective 4). In terms of Objective 1, I definitely observed that creative play had an impact on participants' learning and increasing their creativity in terms of idea generation.

Discussion as an Aid to Critical Reflective Learning

In both Workshop 1 and 2, I decided to include time for reflection between each of the activities. I chose a form of reflection that was closely aligned with Schön's (1983) reflection in action, that is, assessing and being aware of the action taking place as it is happening rather than only after the act has taken place (reflect on action). I decided to assist the participants with undertaking the reflection in action process by pausing throughout the workshop and asking questions such as: "what did you learn," "how did you feel," "what ideas were evoked." I named these times of reflection 'discussion.'

The focus group debriefs provided a more retrospective approach and are aligned with Schön's (1983) concept of reflection on action, reviewing and learning after an event has occurred. I was also inspired by Thomson and Jaque's (2017) research into strategies for improving actors' performance and creativity. Their idea was to have short bursts of free imaginative play, interspersed by more structured performance work. I used the reflection in action pieces as the structured aspect to assist participants to process the activity, ask questions of myself as facilitator, and learn new knowledge from others. Jane noted that it was her best moment of Workshop 3: "thinking about the other stuff after the activity … when we shared and talked about our experiences and our connection or just how God is in that." Kala also thought it was significant, "what I quite like the most is the feedback, hearing your stories or your feedback after every activity. So much wisdom and very inspiring experience and words that comes out from each one of you."

My use of reflection in action and reflection on action (Schön, 1983), helped individuals make their own culturally relevant connections between the activities and scripture. Their sense of divine/God and spirituality was shaped by their own imaginations and not by me as I led the activity/exercise. Discussion also promoted more critical reflection in terms of Brookfield's (2017) four lenses model, specifically the role colleagues' perceptions and personal experience can have on shaping our thinking, values, and beliefs in different areas. Brookfield's model is useful in bringing to light our biases through others' perceptions and ideas. For example, in Workshop 3, my intention was to assist participants to reflect critically on their worship experience and think of ideas for their future liturgical practice. Jane commented:

> I don't really engage with God in a church building and [at] a church service if I'm honest and I engage with God in other ways, but differently, not on Sunday at church usually. And I think "why, why do we not? Why do we run these services and have services that aren't making people come alive and feel the presence of God?"

Jane's questions opened up the conversation, enabling others to be honest as well. Her reflections aided others to think more deeply about their own beliefs and values when it came to worship services. As a result of the conversation, the group wondered about using creative methods of worship more often in the services at college, but, although in the Zoom video the others nodded their heads, there was no specific offer from the rest of the participants. I did think that, at times, we missed the next step in D. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning process which was to put our new understanding into practice through what he called active experimentation. I put this lack of action partly down to COVID restrictions, study pressures, and an inability to initiate new projects above and beyond what we were already expected to do at college. I think that it was also a challenge for participants to take the creative play learning from the workshop environment to new spaces such as worship services. However, I was able to do more with our tārai waka in 2021 (see Chapter 6).

My Ludic Process, Facilitation and Role Modelling

Through designing and participating in the workshops I gained a greater sense of what my ludic self looks like as a teacher and a facilitator. I used my playful imagination to create and design the workshops. In preparation for each activity and its placement in the overall workshop, I acted out the activity so that on the day I was clear with instructions and could led participants through the workshop without too much thought. I often found myself laughing at what participants might make of a spatula or a plastic pudding bowl, imagining paddling a rather unwieldy dinghy with one hand and holding a hat on my head with the other. In the workshops themselves, I was aware of the tension of embodying the instructions so that I could participate in the activity fully while also being the teacher and leading everyone into the next section. I observed in my field notes how much fun I had embodying my teaching practice in the form of my clown character:

> When we were chewing our pretend/imaginary bubble gum, discussing the flavours, seeing how big a bubble we could blow, and then the look on the others faces when I mimed the bursting of the bubble all over my face. From the looks on their faces it seemed as if I had

> mimed it so well they could “see” it. This was great fun and reminded me how much I enjoy miming and engaging my inner clown – Poe. (Workshop 2)

However, there were occasions when I felt a little anxious about conducting the workshops. Workshop 2 is a case in point; I was intending to set up the hall ahead of time, but I was delayed in a meeting and unable to do this. However, three of the workshop participants were also at the same meeting so they helped carry food, boxes of objects and helped set up the room. It felt very rushed and the following prose poem, crafted from self-reflections and field notes, gives expression to my state of mind at the time.

> *Rushing, rushing, don’t want to be late,*
>
> *Um where’s my list,*
>
> *Breathe one … two… three*
>
> *Okay Mira can you? And Kala what about?*
>
> *Thank you*
>
> *Now, feel the ground beneath my feet, deep breath, centre my soul,*
>
> *Off we go.* (24 January 2022)

I was interested that my rushed state of mind did not affect the start of the workshop; instead, the adrenaline, deep breathing, and previous playful preparation helped to focus me. It is a lesson that I used in the rest of my practice – to take a few seconds at the start of a workshop or worship service to centre myself and be present in the moment.

My facilitation style was intentional in that I wanted to provoke playfulness and participate as much as possible in the activities while guiding participants to do the same. A significant benefit of this embodied practice was the impact on participants’ learning. In the focus group debrief, Jane mentioned the importance of my role modelling:

> So, when you set us a task, if you just said “okay, I'd like you to do this,” and then you just waited and watched us do it, I think that would have been a very different experience to when you role modelled it. And also, you participated, and I think that was really helpful, especially for those who, you know, maybe it was a new way of looking at things. (Workshop 2)

Jane’s comments were echoed by the others which encouraged me to continue using this method in other face-to-face workshops such as the one with our tārai waka in 2021. However, in terms of the online workshops, I decided I needed to be less participatory and more facilitative in my approach so that participants could follow the process more easily and know whether we were doing the activity or reflecting on it. It was interesting that participants did not seem to note this as a lack, perhaps because I offered ideas and suggestions throughout the workshop and in the discussion sessions, so contributed in that way.

In the online context, I decided to have a written facilitation script and follow it quite tightly. I had wondered if I was too focused on keeping to time and pushing us along; however, several participants noted in their emails that there was a good flow from one activity to the next, “the session wasn't over facilitated; it flowed from one activity to another without being interrupted by lengthy explanation that it was moving to another activity” (Sandra, Workshop 1). James appreciated my explanations for the tasks as they “made the whole process easier” (Workshop 2).

The mix of online and face-to-face workshops offered a useful contrast and learning opportunity for discerning how creative play could be taught in different settings. All participants felt that the online Workshop 3 was successful because the previous workshop was face-to-face, with Jane observing, “it [Workshop 2] opened up new ways of thinking and exploring, which then lead into this one.” Kala appreciated the ability to “act out and be silly. To be able to see somehow, and [get to] know the person [in a physical space beforehand]” (Workshop 3). Several studies suggest that it is important to

provide opportunities to develop community in some form online if it is not possible to be face-to-face (Gabaree et al., 2020; Norris & Saudelli, 2018).

Kala and Mira both commented that whereas technology is less of an issue in a face-to-face encounter, it did have an effect in an online setting. Throughout Workshop 3, James's internet connection was a bit inadequate, and he kept cutting in and out. Kala noted "now we can't see James, but we can hear him, but the first session we were all there together and enjoying [it]."

A benefit of working online is that there is the ability to turn off the camera view so that there is a degree of privacy. I offered it as an option particularly if a participant felt self-conscious doing a creative play activity or during times of prayer. In one of the activities, I rang a bell to signal the end of the prayer time so that they knew it was time to turn their camera back on and return to the group. In a face-to-face setting, in future, I might suggest that they move to different parts of a room to give themselves some privacy and space to pray.

Of the three workshops, the first one was a standalone pilot workshop; whereas Workshops 2 and 3 were part of a series. I note that participants of Workshop 2 and 3, commented that they appreciated doing the face-to-face workshop first as it was more physical and interactive, and there were greater moments of spontaneity, leading to an increased sense of fun and rapport between members of the group. As a result, there were greater levels of trust in myself as facilitator and the creative play methods so Workshop 3 (online) went very smoothly.

Overall, I felt comfortable facilitating the online workshops. However, I enjoyed the face-to-face workshop more as there were greater possibilities for movement, interaction between myself and the participants, and I could let my clown come out to play to a greater extent. In terms of my facilitation across the three workshops, I appreciated the feedback, and it reassured me that my facilitation style was appropriate for leading the workshops. I felt confident to continue in a similar vein in 2021.

Reflections on the Action Research Process

Although issues around COVID-19 and associated lockdowns affected my planning to a large extent, I am pleased that I managed three workshops. My reflections and observations as well as evidence from participants showed that the workshop setting using an AR approach was helpful for teaching and learning. There were several positive aspects to using an AR process. One was my ability to learn from the previous workshop and adjust for better outcomes in the next one. Further, the process was participatory in that participants of Workshop 2 could reflect on the session as it unfolded and learn new things about creative play and themselves, as well as offer ideas for Workshop 3. The experiential focus supported learning through reflecting on our experiences (A. Kolb & Kolb, 2005; D. Kolb, 1984; Moon, 2004). However, I was unable to assess whether the AR process then assisted participants to embed their creative play learning in creating and leading worship services. As a result, I decided in 2021 to work with the tārai waka that I was already part of, rather than offering workshops to all the students at college. This fundamental shift created a better opportunity to apply the creative play research methods I envisaged at the start of my research inquiry than I had planned.

Summary of Findings

In order to create conditions that encouraged participant imagination and creativity (Objective 1), I designed activities that stimulated the imagination such as sharing stories about childhood play, miming the actions of baking bread, and exploring the senses through food. I also primed people's imaginations by asking them to think of an object or an image that suggested play to them. In effect, this meant that even before the start of the workshops they were using their creativity.

I discovered that it was worthwhile doing kinaesthetic activities (Objective 4), even if participants were 'going through the motions' and did not physically do the activity itself, as it still seemed to help with stimulating their imagination and encouraging make-believe and pretence. The use of

props/objects engaged participants' thinking and encouraged playfulness. On another occasion, I would explore more interactive use of props online.

Periods of discussion threaded throughout the online workshops, provided opportunities for participants to critically reflect on what they did, hear and learn from each other's experience and knowledge, and translate that learning into their own cultural context. In the future, I would also include these opportunities for discussion in face-to-face workshop settings as they enhanced participants' overall learning experience.

Trust-building within the group was supported by exercises such as their sharing memories of creative play. I wanted them to feel safe enough with myself and the group, so that they were willing to engage with activities that pushed them out of their comfort zone. As Workshops 2 and 3 had the same participants, the various activities/exercises appeared to build a group identity and sense of cohesiveness from one workshop to the next. It also seemed to help increase levels of trust that I both facilitated the workshops and role modelled various activities so participants could see that I was engaged in the process as much as they were.

On the whole, I managed to achieve many of my objectives for the workshops. The creative play methods I used stimulated participants' imagination (Objective 2) and creativity (Objective 1), and their playfulness, especially with one another (Objective 3); enabled an embodied and experiential learning approach (Objective 4); connection with scripture, and new awareness of the holy/divine/sacred, through creative play (Objectives 5, 6); as well as building trust amongst the workshop group. As a teacher, I was able to see the value of various creative play methods within a workshop setting. I was able to trial creative play methods in online and face-to-face workshop formats achieving successful outcomes on a number of levels (Objective 7). However, as I only led two online workshops, with a small number of participants known to each other, further research is needed to assess whether and how creative play methods can be effective in online settings with other group contexts.

In the next chapter, I discuss creative play in a different longer-term setting as I consider the impact of working with an established tārai waka at college over a 6-month time frame.

Chapter 6 – Role of Facilitator: College Tārai Waka

In this chapter, I describe and discuss the impact of creative play on a college group (tārai waka) and my role as facilitator of the process. First, I provide the background and context for tārai waka itself as well as the underlying ludic mindset. Next, I evaluate my findings in relation to my research questions, that is, the impact of creative play on our tārai waka, their learning and creativity (Research Question 2), as well as their experience of the holy/divine/sacred (Research Question 3). Last, I discuss the factors that contributed to forming a team from a group of disparate individuals. These factors included facilitation (particularly my role), trust, working as a group, communication, fun and humour, and collaborative tasks (see Figure 15).

Tārai Waka at St John's College – Background and Context

During my time at college, the tārai waka were a significant part of the community life. According to a college booklet, tārai waka "is the process of building a vehicle/canoe to carry the community," and each group provides "a place of prayer, support, connection, service, friendship and fun" (St John's Theological College, 2021, p. 2). Every student and faculty member are placed in a tārai waka and is expected to attend most of the meetings. There are between four and five tārai waka with approximately 10 people in each. The groups gather weekly during term time for about an hour, and each tārai waka is expected to lead college worship services every 5 or so weeks. It is up to each group what they do during their week of worship as long as there are two services a day from Monday to Thursday.

The members of our tārai waka included a mix of Tikanga Māori, Tikanga Pasifika, and Tikanga Pākehā, 11 people in total including two leaders from the faculty/staff. Six out of the 11, including myself, are priests. The age range was 20–60 years. None of our tārai waka were part of my previous workshops; however, seven were at college in 2020 so would have attended some of the worship services that I led. Throughout the chapter, I use pseudonyms for everyone in our tārai waka, apart from myself.

A creative play introductory workshop, on 26 March 2021, set the scene for our tārai waka and provided the wellspring to draw from throughout the year. The workshop offered members of our group an opportunity to play and tap into their imagination. I set up the event as a one-off; however, after seeing the impact of the sessions on the planning of the first worship week I wondered whether it might be worthwhile continuing in a more sustained way over a longer period of time. I mentioned the idea in an email to one of the leaders (David): “I've been encouraged by the group's willingness to explore creativity in worship, even if in small steps, and I would be really keen to use the last three sessions and this last week as a form of case study in my research.” David was very affirming and replied that the sessions so far had been “so uplifting and a blessed journey” (email 13 May 2021). I discussed the idea with our tārai waka as a whole and the group agreed to keep going beyond the three sessions and into the rest of the year.

Our tārai waka met during term time on Fridays, from 1–2 pm. Approximately every third meeting was a planning session for the following worship week. We started with a general catch up, ate our lunch and then discussed the worship week to come. We would often brainstorm ideas, decide on a theme, and make a schedule with individuals leading different services. More detail about how we generated ideas will be discussed later in the chapter. By 1.50–1.55 pm we would stop planning and spend a few minutes praying for each other and the week to come.

In this chapter, I will discuss seven specific sessions of the 20 or so tārai waka gatherings. They include an introductory creative play workshop on 26 March 2021; a meeting on 16 April 2021 when I used appreciative inquiry to assist with our discussions (see Chapter 3 for more detail); four planning sessions where we prepared worship services and had informal debriefs; and a more formal debrief on 29 October 2021, when I conducted a focus group debrief using preprepared questions (see Appendix 3). After the introductory workshop in March, and the appreciative inquiry session in April 2021, I used an AR research cycle of plan, act, observe, and reflect (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005. See Figure 5). (See 2021 AR Cycles with Tārai Waka. Figure 7, Chapter 3.) Data were gathered and

created through observation, journalling, field notes, informal comments made by participants, focus group debriefs (with transcripts), prose poetry, participant emails, Facebook posts, and photographs. Data-collection methods are outlined in Table 3, Chapter 3.

Ludic Mindset/Philosophy

A significant aspect of 2021 was developing my confidence in using a ludic approach in the creative play workshop and tārai waka as well as in the way I interpreted participant data and wrote up the research findings. I first discovered the concept of a ludic perspective or philosophy in the work of Leather et al. (2020). Ludic refers to a playful attitude that pervades the whole of one's life – work, study, and leisure. My ludic voice is expressed through my writing style, using poetry as a method of entering the state of mind of participants as well as capturing my autoethnographic perspective. Throughout the year, I also used creative play to encourage both myself and our tārai waka to be more playful and imaginative when it came to worship services, to let the joy seep through (to paraphrase one of the participant's words). In the next section, I evaluate the impact of the creative play methods on our tārai waka in more depth.

Impact of Creative Play on the Creativity, Spirituality, and Liturgical Worship of Tārai Waka Members

Throughout 2021, as I explored creative play with our tārai waka, I gained a greater insight into the impact creative play had on the members' creativity, spirituality, and liturgical worship. The following section contains my research findings from the 6-month journey.

Creative Play – Awakening Imagination and Creativity

The creative play workshop, on 26 March 2021, started the process of awakening participants' imagination and giving them permission to be playful and creative in new ways. For example, at the beginning, each of us shared our response to the question – "if you were a shop what would you be?" The question triggered a sense of playfulness and fun as we reshaped a memory with our

imagination and use of language. The creative play occurred as we connected disparate ideas together, fleshing out an inanimate object (a shop) with our own personalities and life-giving imagery.

In the following prose poetry, I have captured the essence of our responses arising from a mixture of what I recorded in my field notes and my memories of the delight I heard in their voices.

> *What shop would you be today?*
>
> *A second-hand shop, you know the one, clothing and odds and ends covering every surface, where anyone is welcome, and there are surprises to be found hidden at the very back behind the paperbacks and the well-worn shoes.*
>
> *A shoe shop with blue suede leather boots to die for, delicate red slippers for dancing the night away, and pretty sandals of blue and yellow for those hot summer days.*
>
> *A tea shop with aromas from around the world to tickle any nose with delights and wonders. Cups and saucers of every shape and size and pattern. Sunlight dappled on the wooden floor as you choose your tea and the orange almond cake you can't resist.* (Crafted from the words of Michelle, Diane and Helen, April 2021)

I used the question to set the scene, encouraging our imagination, starting the creative play and team building process. At the end of the workshop, Nicola commented in the focus group debrief that "doing imaginary things is quite liberating," and Tracey added it's "kind of fun." Nicola contrasted the joyful and positive nature of creative play with the words of the sermon that morning – that ministry was hard. Later, I reflected on Nicola's comments and the word *joy* that had been mentioned by others in the session; as a result, I created the next prose poem. The words reveal the importance of creative play in bringing sustenance and hope to several in the group.

> *Pause and listen to what I need, joy, lots of joy. Ministry is hard work and the joy seeps out, leaving me bereft and tired, but if I stop, and listen, I may hear what I need. Joy bubbles up*

> *from the earth of my desire, the place of the creator out in the wind and the sun, how liberating, how freeing.* (April 2021)

The prose poem also reflects my creative response to what we were doing. Their imaginations were fed as much as mine. I was inspired to respond to their words and actions through poetry and my contribution to our tārai waka.

Imaginative ideas and a sense of creative play continued to flow as our tārai waka worked with various different themes. For example, in the first week of worship (10–14 May 2021), the theme was based on ideas of forgiveness and reconciliation. Group members brought symbols to the chapel and during each of their services they spoke of what they meant to them. Figure 14 is an example of a Facebook post noting the collaboration between two of the tārai waka. Nicola brought a piece from the Berlin wall and added it to the display up the front of the chapel, and the other person had connected it with the theme of forgiveness. The Facebook post shows a great juxtaposition of word and image.

Figure 14

A Facebook Commentary and Photo From One of Our Tārai Waka

Continuing with the theme of forgiveness, this morning we reflected on the passage of John 8:1-11. A piece of the Berlin Wall was laid on the table at the altar while Rev'd Paul Reynolds encouraged us to think about about when we are tempted to throw a stone to condemn. And when we use stones to build walls to keep people out. He asked us to focus on forgiveness and think about using stones to rebuild positive things for the Kingdom.

The facilitated intervention in March, set the scene and enabled the group to keep exploring creative play throughout the year. The impact was such that the tārai waka members not only learnt about creative play, but it became an embodied part of their collaborative design and the delivery of creative worship for others. It is interesting to note that, apart from the occasional worship service, none of the other tārai waka did anything remotely similar to what we did in terms of use of imagination and creativity.

Impact of Creative Play on the Tārai Waka Members' Understanding of God and the Wider Church

For one of the tārai waka members in particular, the notion that God might be a God who plays was a totally new concept. It was a source of joy throughout the whole year and Nicola stated early on, "we need more discussion and theology around that aspect of God" (focus group debrief, 26 March 2021). There was a lovely moment when she reflected that creativity and creative play helped her express the joy of the gospel, "God wants us to be joyous, he is joyous" (29 October 2021). I was delighted to hear Nicola's awakening to the power of creative play to reveal the character of God:

> *God is playful, God is fun? What a surprise, what a gift for the church. Can we speak more about this?* (crafted from Nicola's words, April 2021)

My poetry, crafted from Nicola's words, communicates the importance of a theology of play, not only for individuals but also for the wider church.

In the formal focus group debrief on 29 October 2021, there was a great deal of conversation about the impact of the year and the experimentation of creativity (and specifically creative play) in the worship weeks. All the quotes in the rest of this section are from this debrief. David's experience in the tārai waka challenged him to reflect on how we embody faith, be church together and worship in creative ways, "what is it that is doing faith, that is doing church, that is worshipping?" For Tracey, it was important to have creativity happening in the services as we are a creative people and it is a disservice to God if we withhold our creativity; "what does it do to the individual? What does that do to the body, of us all together and how does that withhold something of the real treasures that God has placed in us?" She went on to say that "it's encouraged me in my faith and it's been an encouragement from God, … [that] things are happening here in fresh ways for those [students] coming through." These levels of insight suggest that creative play can provoke questioning and critical reflection leading to changes in behaviour and understanding about God and the church. These impacts on tārai waka members, in turn, had ripple effects on their engagement with creative play in the liturgical worship they led at college.

Creative Play and Liturgy

The Role of Creative Play in Anglican Liturgy. A great deal of discussion and reflection on our tārai waka's experience of and experimentation with creative play in the liturgical worship at college emerged during the formal focus group debrief in October. The general consensus was that the group honoured the Anglican tradition as expressed in the NZPB and yet, through adding creative play, we gave it new life. Michelle summed the discussion up well:

> We've somehow been able to hold I think the newness and the creativity alongside our traditional way of doing morning prayers, midday prayers in the prayer book. So, I think that we've had a really nice mix, we haven't been like a runaway train and gone off and done some random thing that doesn't even have the container of the prayer or the liturgy. We've definitely experimented but we haven't moved too far away from our tradition as well. (29 October 2021)

There was general agreement with Michelle's observation, although Joseph was initially more hesitant about using creative play in services. He was unsure what it might look like in practice:

> you don't know what's going to happen until you get to the place of worship, and it suddenly hits you... Because it's very different from planning and talking about it and when you do turn up it's a whole new ball game for me.

He then reflected that this sometimes led to him holding back and observing the creative play rather than joining in with others. However, Joseph's experience did not put him off, as he was very keen to take his learning into new parish ministry.

Michelle observed the benefits of having periods of silence in services, "those moments of silence in our liturgy, they are probably the moments when the Holy Spirit can be most creative." Her comments remind me that creative play is not necessarily always about doing. Creative play can be making sure there are spaces for God to be and to play, "for people to hear from God and respond to

God" (Michelle). Often if we are present in the moment, we can adapt and give room for what is needed by those attending the services.

There was a sense from several people that college was a reasonably accepting place for creative expression. Tracey observed that the "ground is shifting" and there is a more "welcoming respectful expression" of creativity in the worship services at college than her experience when she was here a few years ago. Others in our tārai waka were very positive about the inclusion of creative expression in services and the discussion suggested to me that even within different Tikanga there is a desire to see creativity at work in Anglican liturgies. As the conversation continued, I wondered what the role of leadership and authority is in the acceptance or not of creativity and creative play in Anglican worship.

Barriers to Including Creative Play in Anglican Liturgy. During the same focus group debrief (29 October 2021), Joseph pointed out that, from a Tikanga Pasifika perspective, creative play is received better from someone who is ordained rather than a lay person. He used the example of another student who tried something that fell flat because they did not have the necessary authority to carry it off. Diane talked about her previous parish where there are some traditional services and others that have creative elements. She noted that often if a service contained something a bit different there would always be a group of parishioners who would go to the more traditional one. Their choice to go to the traditional service may reflect a hesitancy or discomfort with alternative-type services. Joseph wondered if there might be a similar thing happening at college, "whether some students knew that we were doing worship and this group is known for creativity, you know, better miss worship this week." However, from my observation of the services there did not appear to be any significant drop in numbers, although I did not do a head count at every service.

Creative Play Expression in the Worship Services

In this section, I discuss the variety of creative play expressions we used in the worship services. I include observations made by members of our tārai waka regarding the different approaches to

creative play between Tikanga and their response to different faith traditions. At the end, I discuss whether creative play can be too much and get in the way of the message.

Sensory Engagement Within Liturgy. In many of the worship services, we explored creative play in terms of te rongopai, that is, a multisensory approach to understanding the gospel. We had food for tasting (from locusts and chocolate fish to pancakes, croissants, muffins), smell (plunger coffee), praying in a range of places around campus, and different forms of music (from hymns to contemporary Christian music), and visual display of symbols. In particular, I noticed that there was a great deal of energy and laughter when we included food as part of the services, either during or afterwards.

One of our tārai waka members commented, in the formal debrief, that they appreciated engaging the senses and enjoyed doing "creative things that are tactile [for example] when we did that forgiveness thing … and then we did the John the Baptist thing and there were locusts" (Nicola, 29 October 2021). In the May week of worship, we used objects as a visual focal point/display which people could then pick up and look at more closely at the end of the service. Or, in the case of the food, the basket was brought to the front door and the food was distributed outside. I would have liked to give out the food during the service, but we realised that this is inappropriate for a number of people, particularly in Tikanga Māori and Tikanga Pasifika.

There were several benefits of having a curated display of objects at the front of the chapel. Firstly, it gave the group a sense of purpose and a theme for the week that could be developed in a physical way. Secondly, it was fun and engaging to put together at the beginning of the week, for those of us who like doing and not only thinking. Finally, the installation of objects became a visual focal point and could be photographed and shared with our tārai waka as a means of informing people of the plan for the week. The photos and corresponding story were also shared with the wider college community, both by email and posted on the Facebook college whānau page. Through these actions, we took ownership of the week, bonded as a team, and helped to develop a greater sense of

community with the wider college. As well as sensory engagement, the physical environment played a large part in the development of worship services.

Impact of the Environment on Creative Play. I discovered a significant relationship between creative play, spirituality, and the natural environment, "God's creation" (Tracey, focus group debrief, 26 March 2021), almost by accident. I decided to hold the March creative play session in the lounge of the Sir Paul Reeves Centre. The centre is at the college and is based in an old house that is used for postgraduate students. However, I was concerned that there might not be enough room to move around and engage in various activities, so I decided to spend some of the time outside on the lawn. I was very surprised by the positive response I received to being outside. I have paraphrased the focus group responses in the prose poem below.

> *Ah to be in creation, to be free, arms open wide, soaking in the wind and the sun. To imagine, to play, to know God.*

Three of the four participants (Tikanga Pākehā and Tikanga Māori) mentioned in the March focus group debrief how much they enjoyed playing and using their imagination outside in the sunshine, in creation, "the opportunity to imagine and connect it in a free space, space that's not walled in but is in creation" (Tracey). Nicola commented, and this was echoed by the others, that "being in creation itself is quite liberating even if you weren't doing activities." The impact of being in creation filtered through the rest of the conversation as well. Tracey reflected that it was a place "where I get nourished and fed," connecting her imagining with being outside. Later, during the August week, Tracey placed flowers on the pews of the chapel and reflected on where her creativity comes from and where she feels most connected to God – outside in creation.

At the March debrief there was discussion about having a Eucharist outside, "it's just so freeing … that would be joyful, that would be uplifting" (David), and the others agreed straight away. Although an outside Eucharist did not happen due to inclement weather during our June and August worship weeks, the idea of worshipping somewhere different from the usual church-type places on campus

kept reoccurring. In the August week, we decided to experiment a little and play with the places we could worship in.

At the planning meeting for the August worship week, Michelle suggested we have an ordinary week using the NZPB. However, almost immediately, someone else mentioned the possibility of holding worship in different places rather than only in the chapel. From that initial idea, Diane said that she would bring pancakes and coffee, so in the end we had a variety of food each morning along with being in different venues.

Being in different places with food and drink helped everyone relax a bit more as there was a lot more chatting before and after the services, and someone said that the Sir Paul Reeves Centre lounge felt more "homely." Another attendee said that "it was great to gather together in the warm light-filled environment" (Lisa, Facebook post, 8 August 2021). During one of the services I led (12 August 2021), I decided to move from the chapel to the library.

Earlier in that week, I had had my aha moments as I reflected on the questions raised at a tārai waka meeting – where is God and where do we worship? During the service, I talked about where I had felt God most over the previous seven days, as well as one of the more surprising places where I had a worshipful experience. I captured the essence of my comments in the following excerpt from my field notes.

> I think it started last Monday with the powhiri and welcome for the new dean of Tikanga Māori … for me it was the haka…, I felt like the roof was going to lift off and just the power and the spirit and the mana, the two coming together… and I thought oh, God is in our midst, and we're alive with God's spirit… Then on Friday with the Eucharist that we had here, gathering, praying and chanting… a way of gathering us all together as three Tikanga and worshipping through different forms... [Then] some of us came up with the idea of

> [redecorating] … the [Sir Paul Reeves Centre] kitchen. So, we spent all Sunday afternoon evening repainting it, and it's the most outstanding blue, very blue (I felt like I was swimming in the Pacific when I turned up yesterday morning). There were four of us and there was great music, and it felt like…we were bringing the place alive and bringing love back into the place through our painting. And we ate together, and we laughed, and we worked hard. And for me that was a very worshipful experience. (Field notes, 12 August 2021)

At the end of my talk, I demonstrated my new awareness and the subsequent creative possibilities by taking us down to the college library for the rest of the worship service. The library is usually a place for reading and study rather than corporate prayer; and yet, the changed perspective revealed that an interaction with the holy is not restricted to traditionally sacred sites.

Differences Between Tikanga and Faith Traditions. Joseph raised an important point regarding the placement of creative play in a service. Within Tikanga Pasifika and Tikanga Māori, the Anglican liturgy is more formal and the place for any form of creativity is often in the preaching (sermon) and the music. In the first creative play session, Tracey (Tikanga Māori) talked of her earliest memories in church and wondered "why choral singing, [is] in the style and character of the Church of England, instead of including those characteristics of Māori such as the joyful rhythms and singing of kapa haka [Māori cultural group sung performance]" (26 March 2021). I remember a student mentioning that the tapa cloth often worn during religious ceremonies and church services in the Pacific islands, is creativity in a woven form. These comments are a reminder of the diversity to be found in the Anglican Church in terms of different Tikanga and the outward manifestation of creativity and creative play. However, it is not only where creative play happens. Tikanga differences and faith backgrounds can influence what creative play might look like in a worship service.

Our tārai waka was very accepting of diversity and welcomed learning from each other. David observed that there were a range of theological viewpoints and worship styles in our tārai waka; however, each person "brought what they knew to our chapel services within our kaupapa [value

system], within our theme, and they were comfortable with that and confident with that, and that's okay" (29 October 2021). Even though there was a theme for the worship week, it was left up to individuals to discern what would work best within the context of their individual worship services and their own prayer style.

Getting Through Blocks in Creative Expression. Conversation in the formal October focus group debrief led to an exploration of the reasons why creativity sometimes felt blocked. Joseph observed:

> I think you get to a place where you try so hard to be creative it saps the energy out of you and all you got to do is press the pause button on creativity and suddenly there is a creative idea that comes to mind. (29 October 2021)

Michelle wondered if the openness and honesty of saying "nah, we don't have the goods" provided space "to be an empty vessel" and then the ideas would flow. There was an important moment of self-reflection as they acknowledged that there were times when being creative felt too hard. It was a helpful insight for me to understand that sometimes relaxing and not worrying about coming up with a good idea is exactly what is necessary to unblock creative play.

Yet, can creative play be too much and get in the way of the message? I did wonder at one point whether the creative play aspect such as taste was too much; however, from the comments made by attendees during the June week, such as "that made me think," "I appreciated the link between the scripture and the actual food rather than only as a metaphor," I think it enhanced the scripture. I still wonder if there is a fine line though between a good idea that takes over instead of supporting the message. In the final focus group debrief in October, Joseph noted the tension saying,

> I think it was weighing in James's mind, him and I had a conversation and the question that popped up was, "how much creativity do we put into a service that really goes too far?... How much of creativity also may blur out the creativity of God working in that space?"

Tracey's response to Joseph's observation is a helpful focus, "it's not creativity for creativity sake, is it? It's creativity for the glory of the one who we are worshipping." In the end, I think that it is the intention behind the use of the senses, and indeed creative play in general, that is important, rather than using them for the sake of it.

Throughout the year, I was very encouraged by the group's willingness to give things a go and give their imagination free range to play. I also appreciated their reflections and insights in the formal October debrief, including their support for my research on creative play. What I had not realised was the extent to which they understood I was doing something with resonance for the wider church. Tracey used the word "prophetic" to give voice to this insight.

> There is something of the prophetic element, Helen, in what you're doing. Because in terms of the whole creativity and things, it's asking God, "what's on your heart?" It's asking God, "how can I communicate this in such a way that is going to sit with people?" It's kind of that living active thing. And so, I really appreciate being involved and participating, with everybody here in it, and felt really privileged to be part of that prophetic movement, which involves that creativity, that reimagining church.

I think the reimagining of church happens when individuals take what they have learnt and put it into practice in their own or new church settings. Participants were cognisant of the effect creative play had had on them. They discussed their experience of creative play, including taking their learning into future ministry opportunities.

Taking Creative Play Further

During the formal focus group debrief, several insights emerged. For David, there was an awareness of the need to do church differently and he was wondering what this might look like when he goes home:

> because I don't want to do church [this way] just because we do church this way and that's the way you always do it. There are other ways we can do church. There are other ways we

> can celebrate our servanthood in our life, in honour of God and in respect of what we do as a people of faith. (29 October 2021)

The creative play opportunities had reaffirmed for him and for Tracey that there is a definite place for creativity in worship and that it can be inspiring and life giving.

Joseph was encouraged through "witnessing and being part of the creative services that we've all been part of and organised," to take aspects of creativity and creative play to his new parish. He felt resourced to encourage creativity in his congregation, "we want our worship to also be true to our tradition but yet open to creativity to the unchurched and those who turn up for the first time. We want worship that really is joyful: joyful and creative." His positive stance and willingness to take what we had done and then translate it into a new context gave me a sense that what I had done with our tārai waka was indeed transferable and not college specific.

Others had a more personal response. I was delighted to learn that Nicola had developed a newfound interest in art, "to the point where I'd love to do a paper or you know, learn more about it… you've hotwired that little thing in my brain and now I'm actually starting to think a lot about art. Including religious art." Nicola's comment revealed how creative play changed her thinking and led to new ideas outside of the original context. My hope is that for Nicola and the others, creative play helps them bring a ludic frame of mind to all that they do, developing an embedded knowledge of the God who plays.

As well as the impact creative play and a ludic mindset had on our tārai waka, I discerned a pattern emerging from my findings in terms of the group dynamic. Our tārai waka developed from a group of disparate individuals into a team exhibiting distinct features described by researchers such as Katzenbach and Smith (2008), Lencioni (2003), Tarracone and Luca (2002). In the second half of this chapter, I discuss six of the key conditions that shaped a team culture.

Development of our Tārai Waka into a Team

Through exploring creative play in worship services within a structured college group, our tārai waka shared common ground in a community that facilitated learning and sharing of ideas. These traits are very similar to Katzenbach and Smith's (2008) definition of a team as "a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable" (p. 8). Although it was not stated in the college handbook that creating and leading worship is the primary purpose for tārai waka, we collaborated on the task of creating worship services. In essence, the AR process helped shape and define a clear purpose for the tārai waka around the collaborative task of creating worship services. Each member was able to bring their own ideas, resources, and background knowledge to bear on planning of the worship week. Each of us would then lead/participate in various worship services. At the end of the week a facilitator (usually myself), would guide a debrief using our reflections and observations of the worship services themselves. The reflection would then contribute towards planning the next worship week.

The six conditions that developed our tārai waka into a team were: facilitation, trust, working as a group, communication, fun and humour, and collaborative tasks (see Figure 15). I discuss each area more fully beginning with the creative play workshop as it began the initial team formation.

Figure 15

Key Conditions Influencing Development of our Tārai Waka into a Team

Creative Play Shared Team Experience

Team building was a key purpose I had in mind when I first talked with a faculty member attached to our tārai waka regarding the possibility of having a creative play workshop. I thought that as we were a newly formed group and did not know one another particularly well, if at all, an activity to help us get to know each other in a fun way would start the process of developing us from a disparate group of individuals into a team. They agreed and on 26 March 2021 I facilitated a workshop for our tārai waka on creative play. A full list of activities used in the workshop with a brief summary of each can

be found in Appendix 6. Prior to the workshop, I emailed a consent form and information sheet to everyone, providing details of my research project (see Appendices 1 and 2), including my definition of creative play: “creative play is about using a person’s experience, imagination, and the things around them to create new ideas, new ways of seeing and new possibilities for the person and for others.”

I used a similar process in the workshop to the ones I developed in 2020 for theology students (see Chapter 5 for more detail), except this time we went outside for some of the activities. I started with a warm-up question – “what sort of shop would you be?”; then moved everyone outside to undertake imaginary play (playing imaginary ball games); and finally, back inside to share childhood stories based on play, concluding with receiving imaginary gifts from a hatbox. I designed and facilitated the workshop to gently awaken people’s imagination through encouragement, role modelling the activities myself, and having fun. The workshop process was the start of building a culture of trust, creativity and learning by doing.

Since this tārai waka meeting was only the second one of the year, the opening question offered members an opportunity to get to know each other a little better in a light-hearted way. In a relational sense, the conversation and activities helped members to begin the formation process of becoming a cohesive group rather than several individuals gathering over lunch.

Initially my intention was to only run one creative play workshop in March and then participate as a member of our tārai waka in preparing worship services throughout the year. However, the willingness of group members to engage with my research process, as well as support from faculty members in the tārai waka, led me to take on a more facilitative function within the group. Over the six-months, my facilitation played a role in guiding our tārai waka, igniting our creativity in worship services, embedding a sense of playfulness in the planning process and forming us into a team.

My Pivotal Role as a Facilitator

My approach to facilitation has always been one of sensitively guiding a group to discover new possibilities from the ideas and resources that they have within themselves or through activities such as those I used in the March workshop. In the focus group debrief at the end of the March workshop, David commented that he appreciated the facilitation process I had used:

> I just like how you created the space, because you set up the space by sending out an email… before we were even here, and then we came in waiting on your instructions. Then we went outside, which was not what I was expecting, which was good, which is nice.

In the following prose poem, I have tried to capture the essence of my facilitative approach through using some of the words from the workshop focus group debrief.

> *You took us out of the zone we know, comfort and safety, our normal lives, leading us into places of freedom and play and vulnerability. We trusted, we rested, we were present, and you held us gently.* (April 2021)

A significant outcome of the facilitation process was the trust that developed between me and group members. It was a mixture of listening and respecting each person's contribution as well as letting the discussion unfold and moving with it into something unexpected. In a sense, I held the group and created a safe space where they could explore, experiment and be open with one another. After the March workshop, David observed during the focus group debrief, "You had moved us from out there, [back] in here, then to revealing some personal information which I think is because of trust, because of your facilitating and people trusting you in facilitating" (26 March 2021). I consider that trust often comes as a result of individuals sharing something personal and meaningful which is valued and appreciated by others. My process is very much reflected in the peer learning approach of Boud et al. (2013). Their approach is focused on higher education students learning from and with each other through strategies such as group work, mutual facilitation, and debriefing. In my case, I not only

provided creative play content, but I was also a peer learner. I shared the facilitation with others and participated as a student in leading worship services.

Use of Appreciative Inquiry as a Method of Facilitation and Team Building. I continued working with the group to develop a sense of cohesiveness and team building in an appreciative inquiry session on 16 April 2021. I was aware that as a new group we still needed to discover more about each other, especially if we were to plan and develop worship services together. I offered to facilitate a Friday session exploring our different perspectives on worship using an appreciative inquiry approach based on the work of Hammond (2013). The faculty members agreed to me running the session.

At the beginning of the session, I explained the appreciative inquiry process and that the exercise was an opportunity to hear a bit more about each other's background and create a helpful foundation for the year in terms of what we might offer to the wider college in our worship services. To start the process, I asked them to share their best experience of worship. Through further conversation, we discerned those things that worked well and could be carried over into planning the worship weeks. The process was generative in that those same positive aspects of worship could be used throughout the year. In the formal October focus group debrief, David commented that he thought we had managed to include people's ideas and what was important to them in our services.

> I think with our group we all come with different gifts that we have and we've been able to utilise those gifts in different ways… I guess we were able to add to that kaupapa [values] and the theme that we had for the week so I thought [it] was really cool. (29 October 2021)

I consider that it was worthwhile offering the session near the beginning of the tārai waka year for several reasons: so that everyone had an opportunity to hear each other's worship stories; gathering up what people knew worked from their own lived experience; and growing a shared knowledge

base to draw on. I appreciated that faculty members trusted me to lead in this way. This trust helped support my growing leadership mandate.

My Growing Mandate to Facilitate/Exercise Leadership Within our Tārai Waka. I kept in contact with the faculty members using email and conversations to let them know what I was hoping to do and explaining my reasoning. I also sought permission to lead various Friday meetings rather than making the assumption that I could do it anyway. It helped that they knew me as I had been at the college for 4 years and I am ordained. Their trust in me conferred a degree of authority and mana which gave credence to my work with our tārai waka.

In the Friday worship planning sessions, I had a variety of different roles. I participated as a contributor in the planning of worship services, and at times, I facilitated the generation of ideas from the side, a prompt as it were. My prompting included such things as checking (if there were multiple ideas) the idea most people liked the best and fleshing out the concept to understand what might work in practice. At the end of the worship week, I usually encouraged a short debrief of some kind. In the October focus group debrief, Tracey observed that my facilitation assisted people to think in creative ways so that we were tapping into "a whole reservoir of creativity in terms of creative worship." The "prompting" was important so that we maintained momentum both in the planning meetings and between them so that good ideas were not lost.

There was often a sense of mutual and peer-to-peer facilitation rather than a top-down approach. Depending on people's energy levels, mine included, David or one of the others such as Michelle would take on the facilitative role. We worked well as a group and the levels of trust grew week by week so there was a willingness to share leadership. However, there was one aspect that was facilitated mainly by me – debriefing and reflection.

Importance of Debriefing at the End of Our Week of Worship. I have discovered over the years and in this research inquiry that critical reflection is a significant part of learning. Therefore, I

felt it was important for us to spend 10–15 minutes at the end of each of our worship service weeks reflecting on what we had done. I considered the time a good opportunity to process the week as I asked questions regarding the areas that worked well, those that needed more work, and any new learnings. We used the lens of personal experience, the feedback other tārai waka members had received from students, and occasionally theory (such as theology and scripture). I discuss other examples of critical reflection in the section below. I recorded these debriefs as field notes.

The members of the group were hesitant at first and it was not always easy to make time at meetings to debrief. Even in the creative play workshop focus group debrief in March, Tracey reflected on the contrast between being outside and playing and being inside and talking, "It's kind of like the fun stopped, oh we're going inside and now we have to talk again, to pick it apart, but I don't want to pick it apart" (26 March 2021). It was almost as if by evaluating and discussing the activity we might lose something of the "magic." However, I discovered that the debrief enhanced the activity because there was a richness to the discussion as everyone contributed their point of view and ideas.

The debrief also gave us insights as to what we had missed. For example, at the May worship week debrief, it became clear that we needed to communicate the worship theme and ideas better as some people had missed the planning meeting and so did not know what was happening. As a result, we made sure to send detailed emails to the tārai waka ahead of time and to keep the theme broad enough that people could interpret it how they wanted to. The ability to give and receive feedback strengthened the group, leading to an openness to frank discussion and new learning.

There was a moment in the Friday tārai waka meeting on 29 May 2021, when I realised that we had shifted from general conversation into a critically reflective mode. David asked us to think about the Trinity Methodist service that we had attended earlier that day and I wrote the following in my journal:

> It was a good discussion about liturgy and the function of Anglican versus Methodist worship … My observation was that the meeting became a good opportunity for people to reflect well about liturgy and ask about things they were curious about.

Various people discussed their impression of the service, comparing it to Anglican liturgies. In particular, we reflected on our use of language, for example the words used in one of the hymns, "make us no longer colour blind." One of our members from Tikanga Māori felt that this was disrespectful and did not acknowledge that Indigenous people should be valued in their own right. He went on to say that our language needs to reflect our values and Te Tiriti o Waitangi[8]. The discussion was free flowing, respectful and enabled a variety of views to be expressed. Our critical reflection enabled the group dynamics to shift from an individual sharing of ideas to a collective understanding of what is important in terms of Anglican liturgy in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

The shift to a collective understanding underscored the importance of reflection and at times critical reflection, for asking the deeper questions about our liturgical practice. The AR cycle processes, were particularly useful as they enabled observation and reflection on practice. I would argue that there was a greater consolidation of exploration and learning as a result of incorporating reflection into our tārai waka planning process. Without the regular debriefs, I am not sure we would have progressed as far in our creative endeavours.

Debriefing and learning together though is but one aspect in the development of the team; another important part is that the group had a collaborative task to undertake.

[8] Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840 between the Crown and Māori. There were two versions written at the time, the Māori (Te Tiriti o Waitangi) and the English (Treaty of Waitangi), that gave rise to different understandings of bicultural partnership intent in Aotearoa, New Zealand. All New Zealand institutions and individuals continue to grapple with what Te Tiriti means in their lives and practice, and how to address the impacts of colonisation still experienced today.

Collaborative Task

As noted by several authors (such as Lencioni, 2003; Tarracone & Luca, 2002) an important component of developing a team is a clear group purpose and a collaborative task(s). In a case study comparing two teams in an educational design class, Tarracone and Luca (2002) found that one of the teams was more successful than the other partly due to a sense of clarity regarding their purpose and function. In my context, although tārai waka gathered for "prayer, support, connection, service, friendship and fun" (St John's Theological College, 2021, n.p.), in our specific tārai waka the glue that formed us was the collective task of preparing worship services. Planning for the week of worship was a collaborative exercise; however, the individual services were led by one or two people, not the whole team. Mostly we would plan the theme and the services on the Friday prior to our worship week. A significant aspect of the planning was the generation of ideas. I discuss the process in more detail below.

The Process for Generating Ideas Within the Team. Through my findings, I discovered that an important aspect of teamwork is the ability of the group to come up with ideas that they might not have as individuals. Some of this creative dynamic was a result of the diversity of background and theological perspective in our tārai waka, or what Paulus (2000) describes as having a team with "diverse but overlapping domains and skills" (p. 251). Another factor was the process we undertook to generate our ideas. The following is a summary of the method involved, with several examples from the worship weeks.

One of the staff leaders, and occasionally myself, would send emails to our tārai waka reminding us of the dates for our worship week and the planning session. This communication provided a sense of focus and purpose for the meeting. In the planning session itself, we looked at a range of resources such as the scripture readings for the week, and then we would brainstorm some ideas. One of the tārai waka members might say something that would spark an idea, "a little seed" (David, 29 October

2021), and then whoever took on the role of facilitator, not always myself, would check with the others whether we should develop the idea further.

A useful example of the generative process is a particularly memorable week of worship held in June. In the planning phase, we thought about the readings for the week and any special days that might celebrate saints or notable occasions. Nicola mentioned her favourite biblical character (John the Baptist) and her image of him as the one who ate locusts and honey. Straight away someone suggested that perhaps we could have them as our symbol. A long, very funny conversation ensued about what locusts might taste like. In the end, we decided to order New Zealand locusts and include them in a service along with some honey from a college hive. There were quite a few references to food in the other readings for the week, so we decided to incorporate a range of food in the rest of the week's services. Everyone was very energised by the conversation, and this led to the creation of an overall theme as well as the development of a small display of food to be put in the chapel. The idea was to give out some of the items to people as they left each service (see Figure 16).

Figure 16

Food Given Out During the June Week of Worship

Photo by author, June 2021.

The generative process included gathering together, using source materials as a starting point, brainstorming, collaborative planning, and then putting into action the ideas we came up with. The process was playful, energising and engaging for our tārai waka at the planning meetings.

However, there were occasions when we acknowledged how tired we were and that we did not have any ideas and it was almost as if we relaxed and opened the gate to creative play and a great idea would come. We had all noticed this dynamic and remarked on it at the October focus group debrief, with Diane summing it up really well, saying:

> the highlight has been how we began our discussions about our week… that always begins with we don't want to do anything too complicated or anything. And it just kind of evolves and gathers a life of its own and it ends up being something really beautiful and unique.

It was an important learning for everyone, not to put too much pressure on ourselves to come up with something original and stunning, but to trust that whatever happened was fine.

Not everyone was able to come to every single planning session and although this did not affect the team dynamic overall, it did initially lead to some confusion about the detail of the worship weeks and what was expected of individual team members. After the week of 10 May, I noted in my journal that our email communication was not clear enough and this led to some confusion. I resolved that in the future we would communicate better and be more relaxed about individual services. Some of the problem was also that new people at college lacked confidence in what was expected of them in the worship services. The lack of specific training in Anglican liturgy and use of the NZPB was an issue in the wider college community and unfortunately, due to time constraints, we could only do small amounts of training in the tārai waka setting. However, we decided as a group that we would be relaxed about the interpretation of the theme and leave the content up to individuals. People could do what was more familiar if they were not comfortable with using creativity and creative play in their services.

Fun and Humour

Another aspect of our team formation was the fun and humour we experienced. In the planning phase, I was delighted to see that tossing around ideas not only created energy in the group but also brought out laughter and humour in our tārai waka. Michelle commented on the fun aspect and then connected it to God,

> I think about that time we were out on the lawn, and we were throwing imaginary volleyballs to each other. It's just fun and God is fun… I think there's something in the fun-ness of God and him trusting in us as a group to minister on his behalf [that] says something about our relationship with him. (29 October 2021)

Paulus (2000) comments that although it is difficult to determine whether positive emotions such as enjoyment lead to increased idea generation, often members of a team value and enjoy

brainstorming for its own sake. With regards to our team, I certainly observed the positive effects of brainstorming on our sense of fun as well as engagement with the theme/s chosen for the week.

Nicola commented in the October debrief on her sense of joy in the group and that this needs to be reflected in how we present the gospel. Humour lightened the atmosphere in our group and increased overall enjoyment. Fun and humour were an important part of our ludic mindset and helped shape our overall experience, spilling over into the worship services we led.

Communication

I discovered as the year progressed how important good communication and the establishment of clear processes are to the functioning of a team (Lencioni, 2003; Tarracone & Luca, 2002). Early on, we discussed the best way of communicating with each other between meetings and decided to send emails. Creating an email also enabled us to then send it to the whole college community and involve them in the process. We then decided to create Facebook posts on the college whānau page so that everyone felt involved in the services, not only those who could attend them. We used technology to pass on information rather than as a method for generating ideas, which we left to our Friday gatherings. Interestingly, we did attempt to do brainstorming in a Zoom session, but I noted in my journal that this felt very flat and did not have the same energy as our face-to-face or in-person sessions.

Communication was not only important in the planning of worship services but also within the services themselves. There was discussion at the October focus group debrief about the value of "a clear narrative and expectation that is explained" (Joseph). There was agreement that if the leader gave good instructions about the service and what to expect, then attendees would feel more comfortable with creative input that might be different from the NZPB. They would trust in the team's creative ideas and be more willing to participate, since while we might know what was happening, it might not be clear for others.

> It's really important to recognise that while it's been sitting with us for a long time, for our listeners it hasn't and so how we bring it into their realms in a way that they can actually embrace it, get a hold of it, catch it [is important]. (Tracey, 29 October 2021)

There is something about good communication that assists with a sense of cohesiveness in the worship services and in building our tārai waka as a team.

Working as a Group

A significant reflection in the October focus group debrief was that we all preferred working on worship services as a group rather than individually. The idea that play contributes a stimulus for group creative synergy is well recognised in the literature (Mainemelis & Ronson, 2006; Rosso, 2016; Tökkäri, 2015; West et al., 2016, 2017). Mainemelis and Ronson (2006) analyse the role of play as a stimulant for developing creativity in organisational settings. Their discussion on the value of play to foster creativity "because it allows both the positive *and* safe experience and expression of emotion" (p. 97), sheds light on my findings that the increased levels of creativity from our tārai waka came partly because of the creative play environment I set up. The environment provided a safe place to engage with new activities, in a manner that built trust amongst the tārai waka. I commented in the debrief that for me it was more energising and engaging to plan and run the services with the group than on my own:

> something I've appreciated is [that] there have been some weeks I've just had no energy or like some of you our lives are a bit chaotic, but I've come and I've just been and sat and boof, boof, boof, [an idea would come] and then afterwards I'm filled with energy and enthusiasm.

Diane enjoyed the ability to try different things and "be part of a team…because everything [in her previous role] was organised by the vicar so there wasn't a real opportunity to do anything in the main services." She later mentioned that being in a team, "lightens the load and you don't feel solely responsible." For Michelle, it enabled her to try out a variety of ideas and give things a go in a safe space where God is part of the process. She added that the power of the tārai waka is one of faith

formation and discipleship, “I've been able to try some things and be a bit crazy maybe, or even make suggestions and be heard and know that God loves me and trusts me enough to provide a space where we can do that.”

Others in our tārai waka appreciated the diversity within the group especially regarding encouraging creativity, “I've found that it's easier to be creative and offer different worships [services] if you're a group made up of different people from different traditions and different experiences. It's hard when you are the only one that's supposed to be creative” (Joseph). Mainemelis and Ronson (2006) contend that play can provide opportunities for individuals to practise divergent thinking, increase perspective taking, and increase their brain’s plasticity, particularly due to playing in group settings. Tyler (2017) considers that the social dynamic of groups can enable more energy than an individual on their own and therefore foster greater positive emotional affect. A good example is David’s appreciation of the conscious effort we made as a group to give people freedom to be themselves as they led worship services:

> I think what this group was able to do…, and with the encouragement from you Helen, is that it's okay there are all sorts of expressions of how we do worship and how we do service, and we were able to utilise that from our own knowledge and our own gifts within the service we each conducted. (29 October 2021)

I consider that working together on a task that was outside our comfort zones increased our group’s confidence levels and gave us the support needed to try different things. I am aware, though, that not everybody made it to all planning sessions, and I wonder if that negatively affected their overall participation (at most of the meetings there were at least 80-90% of our tārai waka attending). Unfortunately, I was not able to get any clear answers to this question.

When a Team Becomes a Community of Practice

I consider that our tārai waka not only developed into a team but was starting to become a community of practice. In Wenger et al.'s (2002) work, they note the essential structure necessary for a community of practice: "a domain of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a community of people who care about this domain; and the shared practice that they are developing to be effective in their domain" (p. 27). However, a point of differentiation is that the tārai waka groups at the college have a range of goals and are not only involved in the creation and leading of worship services. In the St John's College context, the primary aim of tārai waka is the process of building community. However, it is interesting to note that, in the case of my tārai waka, it was the specific task of creating worship services that helped the group develop into something more than a set of disparate individuals meeting to eat lunch together on a Friday. The group needed a focus to gather around for it to function well.

Concluding Comments

I have deeply appreciated being part of our tārai waka as we engaged with and explored creative play in the worship life at college. There was a sense of shared endeavour in our tārai waka which, along with the AR approach to support ongoing learning from practice, also helped to shape us into a team with the potential to become a community of practice. What is interesting is that although the college handbook does not state that creating and leading worship is the primary purpose, it was through this task that our tārai waka developed into a reasonably cohesive team. There were opportunities to critically reflect on and share insights about creativity, play and worship. The creative play input provided stimulus for the group in its aim to produce interesting, engaging and God-focused liturgy. There was a form of structure to assist our tārai waka to accomplish its goals that encouraged individuals to take the lead in facilitating tārai waka planning sessions as well as leadership in the design of their own services. Staff leaders were open and willing for the group to explore creative play and creativity in worship, and all participants were aware of some of the

barriers to including creativity in worship services. These barriers included different Tikanga perspectives of worship, the authority vested in ordained versus lay leadership, prior Anglican liturgical experience, trying too hard to be creative, and lack of confidence as well as limited experience in using creative play in worship services.

Within a social constructivist philosophy, our tārai waka co-created knowledge about liturgy. We learnt about and used liturgy in new and creative ways; and considered the good news, te rongopai, as expressed through multisensory experiences, to understand God as one who is joyful, creative, and playful. Through the activities and comments made by tārai waka members (particularly at the 29 October 2021 focus group debrief), I discovered that creative play had a definite impact on our creativity and imagination; our sense of connection with the holy/divine/sacred, especially through being in the natural environment; as well as our ability to experiment with and critically reflect on Anglican liturgy. In a sense, I could say that creative play has been the phenomenon we worked with, and yet creative play has also shaped the waka we have travelled in this year. Creative play is both a method and a methodology, a way of being that has formed a team.

The following poem is one that I wrote after our final focus group meeting on 29 October 2021. It encapsulates the delight I discovered as I journeyed with our tārai waka.

> ***Gold dust on the doorstep***
>
> *Such precious moments of conversation,*
>
> *snippets of joy, of wisdom, of delight.*
>
> *What an honour to listen,*
>
> *to have been a part of this group,*
>
> *gold dust shimmering with thoughts and ideas and possibilities.*
>
> *Culmination of the last two years,*
>
> *conversation with purpose and form and content and hope,*
>
> *Tārai waka carried us through the year.*

We formed community, grew together shaped by creativity and playful endeavour,

gold dust on my very own doorstep. (November 2021)

This is the last of the three chapters of findings. In the next chapter, I will draw the thesis together by returning to my research questions, and the impact of this research on myself and participants. I discuss my emerging professional practice as well as sum up the six conditions that support creative play to flourish, and the emerging ludic qualities of participants.

Chapter 7 – My (Emerging) Professional Practice

In this chapter, I discuss more fully my developing ludic mindset, the impact of the research journey on my practice (as priest, teacher, and facilitator), the conditions that supported creative play to flourish, and participants' emerging ludic qualities. In doing so, I address my three core research questions. My first research question is particularly addressed through my commentary on my emerging professional practice presented below. My second and third research questions are addressed through my commentary on the impact on participants. I conclude this chapter with a summary of my revised creative play approach.

RQ 1: What is the place of creative play in developing adult learning, creativity, spirituality, and liturgical worship?

RQ 2: What is the impact of creative play strategies on the learning, creativity, and worship practice of St John's College students?

RQ 3: How do St John's College students respond to play as a creative strategy for invoking their sense of the holy/divine/sacred?

Impact of the Research Journey on My Practice

At the core of my research and teaching practice is learning from experience, similar to an approach described by others as experience-based learning (e.g., Andresen et al., 2000; Johns, 2013, 2017; D. Kolb, 1984). Some of the key aspects of experience-based learning are what Andresen et al. (2000) refer to as intentionality of design, facilitation and reflection, all of which I included in the workshops and tārai waka processes. I would argue that experience-based learning needs to include the teacher's own experiential learning and their ability to be a role model of the very practices they are teaching. My research participants remarked that they valued the role modelling I offered as I not only designed and led creative play activities but participated in them. James and Brookfield's (2014) comments are relevant here as they observe that if learners are expected to do something new and risky in an activity, then the teacher also needs to lead by example. Thus, I was as much engaged in

immersive experiential learning myself as I was simultaneously enabling such learning for others through my roles as priest, teacher, and facilitator.

A Ludic Mindset

At the beginning of my research inquiry, I decided to explore the role my clowning background and clown persona (Poe) might have in the creative play methods I used. I was more concerned about the impact of the clowning technique rather than on my practice as a priest or as a facilitator of creative play. However, even in my first set of draft inquiry questions in early 2020,[9] and the reflections I offered at the service on 20 February 2020, I intuitively understood that clowning could be more than a set of skills. There were two significant moments that changed my perspective and when my clowning skills morphed into a ludic way of being, a more embodied playful practice. The first moment arose from frustration with my writing process and an inability to summon my clown's voice.

I decided to write a prose poem based on my experience of standing outside the Anglican Cathedral (November 2020) and imagining my clown character flitting amongst the shadows.[10] Through the act of writing, it was almost as if I was fully present in the moment and the creative actions of my clown. My imagined performance was creative in itself. Yes, the end product was a prose poem, but it was the act of remembering and being in the moment that became an embodied creativity, an aspect of what I have termed collaborative-c. The symbiotic relationship between writing and imagining increased my levels of creativity and playfulness. My use of an autoethnographic voice aided critical reflection and provided an experiential portal for others to participate in the same creative act as my clown character. The reader could be present and collaborate in the same moment as myself.

My prose poetry was part of a growing awareness that the conditions I used to encourage creative play to flourish in others (during workshops, worship services, tārai waka) needed to flourish in me.

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[9] Second draft inquiry question: "How do St John's College students and their whānau respond to clowning as a creative strategy for invoking their sense of the holy/divine/sacred?", February 2020.
[10] The full prose poem is in Chapter 4 under the heading "Playing With Shadows."

Through the research inquiry process, I have realised that I can be more playful in person than on paper. I have struggled with the writing of the thesis and the more analytical approach that has been necessary at times. Although I have used something of Richardson and St Pierre's (2005) method of writing as narrative inquiry, I have often been confounded by the need for a balance of creativity and analytical critique – two sides of the doctoral coin, as it were, but not particularly easy or life giving for me. Therefore, my prose poetry is scattered throughout illustrating my enjoyment of the workshops themselves as I played alongside participants. Due to COVID-19 protocols, often the workshops and tārai waka were the only place I could embody my practice and preside as a priest as I gathered, led, and facilitated group processes. In a sense, the facilitation became my priestly act in the college. By the end of 2021, my mindset had shifted, and I viewed my priestly role in a different light.

The second insight on the importance of my sense of playfulness arose from reading an article by Leather et al. (2020). They consider it important to not only encourage and support play in higher educational teaching, but to also be playful as the teacher. In other words, to embody the ludic while teaching. Their ludic approach fits well with my experience as a clown and the subsequent techniques I used in the design of the workshops, the liturgies I produced, my engagement with our tārai waka, and overall participation in creative play undertakings.

Several of the activities I used came from books on the ministry of clowning written by Shaffer and Sewall (1984) and Robertson (1983). The books contained practical advice regarding developing a clown character, skits and mini dramas that could be done by a group of clowns, as well as warm up exercises to encourage a ludic attitude through embodied actions. I was also influenced by the work of Lecoq (2020), a well-known performer and educator in the field of theatre performance and clowning. He emphasises the simplicity, presence, and vulnerability of the clown in their interaction with the world around them. Other aspects that came from my background in clowning and contributed to my ludic mindset include a sense of fun, a curiosity and wonder for life and the holy,

and the ability to use objects in unusual and creative ways. My clowning became the basis of my ludic mindset, which then gave form to an embodied creative play in my practice as a priest, teacher, and facilitator.

My Practice as a Priest

Even though I was limited in my ability over 2020–2021 to offer more traditional priestly ministry in the form of presiding at the Eucharist, I was able to embody a similar function in other ways. Much like I did when I presided at the Eucharist, I gathered a group of people (through the workshops and our tārai waka) in an environment and with the tools to engage with the divine.

I was helped in my reflections on the connection between my priestly vocation, my ministry practice, and teaching, by the work of Cahalan (2010) who considers ministry as "leading disciples in the life of discipleship for the sake of God's mission in the world" (p. 50). From this insight on discipleship, I recognise my place as priest and teacher to help form the vocational call of my research participants (theological students in training) and their subsequent ministry in leading others in discipleship. Cahalan's insights about ministry practice being based on "intentional action…[which] takes place with a community and tradition of shared meaning and purpose … [and is] an embodied action" (p. 99), are very aligned with how I now see my priestly practice.

I felt a distinct difference between working by myself to create and lead worship services (Chapter 4) and working in the tārai waka context (Chapter 6). I appreciated the peer learning (Boud, 2013) in our tārai waka and the sense of mutuality I encountered in that setting. The relational interconnectedness within the group dynamic encouraged my liturgical ideas and creativity, and I came away from our gatherings enthused, hopeful, and stimulated. For example, some of my better poetry arose from the creative playful energy of our tārai waka planning meetings. It was enlightening to know that the research on the positive impact of group creativity on an individual's increased creativity (Proyer & Ruch, 2011; West et al., 2017) was reflected in my practice.

I became increasingly aware over 2020–2021 how important my extensive background in creative liturgical work was for my practice and in supporting, teaching, and encouraging the practice of others. Burns (2018) considers it essential that the presider of worship services has the skills to lead worship and a deep understanding of the "long tradition that both informs wide contemporary consensus and inspires and legitimizes rich diversity" (p. 186). If you do not know how Anglican liturgy works, then it is harder to then play around with it in a respectful, creative, and legitimate way. However, given there is relatively little teaching of leading worship services at St John's College, my research has shown a way of enabling learning through a different, and effective, educational approach. Liturgical understanding can be achieved through a mutual, collaborative and peer-to-peer sharing of ideas and resources within a reflection/action process.

As I reflect on my liturgical actions and practice, two articles are particularly significant. In Pilz's (2019) article, she writes about an ethnographic study she undertook with three Jewish communities in New York. In one of the communities, they held services (Lab/Shul) in different locations each time they met. The Lab/Shul community has similarities with Pierson's (2012) installation-type worship, where location and place have a part to play in the overall aesthetic experience and the services are more akin to theatrical events. Pilz (2019) observed: "Lab/Shul spaces express a religiosity in which God does not ask for much other than showing up. Neither the rabbis nor God ask you to feel elevated, approach the sacred, build community … or change yourself" (p. 39). Her comments confirm the parts of my liturgical practice that blend the theatrical with an emotional depth and leave space for attendees to make their own connection with the holy/divine/sacred.

In the second article, Dahill (2019) writes of her experience participating in a pre-Lenten ritual where ashes are placed on the forehead to symbolise death of self and a sense of one's own mortality. This is a traditional service in the Anglican Church and is many centuries old. The action involves the senses and yet often happens in church buildings in a formalised ritual. In Dahill's case, the ritual took place in the ashes of a large forest fire where people had died. The event was very evocative

with strong emotionally embodied actions. The ritual was not constructed for creativity's sake but to assist a grieving community gain some solace with the help of an ancient Christian tradition. I appreciated Dahill's use of the sensate and kinaesthetic which was purposeful, contextually relevant, and appropriately symbolic. I can see her approach reflected in much of what I did in my liturgical work at college (for example, anointing people with holy oil); however, occasionally my practice was not tied to any broader contextual situation.

An important aspect of my practice was based on the te reo Māori meaning for te rongopai. The concept added another level of intentionality in my practice. The words had greater resonance within my multisensory embodied creative play, than the English definition which is more aligned with speech and proclamation (the good news of Christ). A good example is my use of oil for anointing. My anointing comprised touch, on the back of the hand or the sign of the cross on the forehead, and I used an oil that had a delicate fragrance. I would contend that this sense of touch was more profound at that moment than spoken words might have been.

One of the bigger challenges of my practice was to bring a multisensory creativity to leading online worship. There was not much time to consider theological and ecclesiastical implications of online worship when confronted by immediate practical issues such as upskilling in my use of digital media (for example Zoom). I also felt the lack of training from the college as to what might be possible in an online medium. On the whole, the college online services were the same style (read from the NZPB) as the ones in the chapel but on a screen instead of face-to-face. Occasionally, a family would play music or there would be a music video on the screen but there was often little interaction between the leader and attendees. I experimented with a couple of online services, incorporating some alternative creative aspects such as a music video in one and a sensory meditation in another, but I was not entirely happy with the results. I missed the physical presence and interaction with others that I would normally have in a face-to-face setting. In the future, I would be more intentional about practising and playing with different online creative ideas prior to putting worship services together.

My Practice as a Teacher

Teaching is an area that I sought to develop further in Part 2 of my research project. Through my workshops in 2020, I discovered that my teaching involves creating an environment for others to develop their own ludic mindset through an exploration of creative play. I used creative play methods to build trust amongst the workshop group by stimulating imagination, creativity, and playfulness in participants. I also supported them to develop a connection to and awareness of the holy/divine/sacred in a new way.

I could see the value of using a variety of creative play methods for teaching in a workshop setting, both online and face-to-face. The range of approaches also catered to different learners' needs. Several participants observed that they learnt better and could appreciate creative play at a deeper level through some activities and not others. Other successful outcomes were achieved as well. For example, the sharing of personal stories provided an opportunity for participants to see play in a different and, in some cases, more positive light, as they learnt about each other's cultural views of play. The mix of mime, sensory exploration and object play broadened perspectives, so they made connections in new ways between their memories and personal histories, scripture, church tradition, and culture.

Over 2020–2021, I was particularly aware of environmental factors that affected learning. One factor that decreased our levels of focus and engagement was our fatigue as a result of adjusting to new modes of learning via online formats/forums such as Zoom. Another area was the importance of the setting for workshops and worship services. Intuitively, I knew that the setting and location can affect behaviour and learning, but through observing the reaction of participants, and hearing their feedback, I was reminded that an unexpected change of setting can contribute to transformative learning (Mezirow & Associates, 2000) if it creates a disorientation at some level that causes a person to stop, critically reflect, and consider the reasons for their reactions. From my research, I consider it important to create a safe enough environment where people can be vulnerable and

where there is already a degree of trust built up within the group so that learning can happen as a result of a disorienting dilemma.

Creativity in the learning space can occur successfully online. A research group based at the MIT Media Lab developed a short course called *Learning Creative Learning*. The aim of the course was to provide creative learning opportunities online through "projects, passion, peers and play" (Gabaree et al., 2020, p. 656). They emphasised development of community through personal connection such as sharing stories, reflections on an individual's own learning context, small groups, and shared facilitation of sessions. This course is an example of practical ways of teaching others online. Many of their methods for online creative learning are aligned with my own and are transferrable across mediums (online and face-to-face). However, unlike the Media Lab's course, I made less use of break-out rooms as I had only four to six participants and I did not think that it was necessary. For larger numbers, the break-out-room concept would be important to create a more intimate place to aid discussion and dialogue

The processes I used in the workshops and our tārai waka, including experiential learning, building trust with and between participants, use of discussion and critical reflection, are considered important elements of transformative learning practices (Mezirow & Taylor, 2011). My teaching practice is based on the premise that engagement with personal experience through creative play methods or "presentational ways of knowing" (Taylor, 2011, p. 11) is a central element of transformative learning. It is the individual's prior experience or the experiential activities they encounter that provide a catalyst for learning (Taylor, 2011). As a result of the creative play strategies I introduced to students at St John's, there was a definite change in their perceptions around play and the value of engaging in creative play in worship services. However, my research was relatively short term in scope, so it is too early to say if there is evidence of long-term transformational learning. I can say though, that my mindset has shifted, and I see the value in stimulating participants' imagination and creativity to provide an alternative way of thinking and

engaging with spirituality and embodied learning. I have become conscious of the need for my own criticality with regard to my teaching practice; the needs of participants, which may differ from mine; and the context for learning.

My Practice as a Facilitator

One of my roles throughout the research process was a facilitative one. Early on in my research journey, I imagined myself standing outside a room, welcoming individuals, and communities to explore the sacred inside. The inside of the room was not a fixed space but one I created specifically for each context - containing things that provided meaning, hope and transformation for those who entered. By the end of my inquiry, my facilitation had become far more dynamic and inclusive of a peer facilitation approach. My facilitation in the research project occurred during the workshops, our tārai waka planning sessions, and as the leader of worship services.

My role as a facilitator was more participatory than many writers suggest. Hunter (2007) for instance states that facilitators should "guide the process and … not get involved in content" (p. 69). However, as my findings show, my role modelling and participation was appreciated by participants. They trusted the creative play process more because I was willing to be silly, have fun with them, show them how to do creative play activities and, in the case of worship services, introduce new ways of doing various parts of the services, and try things out without knowing the outcome in advance.

To assess my effectiveness as a facilitator, I asked for feedback from participants (2020 workshops and tārai waka) and used my observations and field notes. In terms of Hunter's (2007) three key relational areas, I was cognisant of myself as the facilitator and what I could do differently or better in the next workshop or tārai waka meetings; of group dynamics and how I needed to respond to these in the moment; and of my role helping the whole group to achieve our goals and purpose. In the 2020 workshops, the comments on my facilitation included an appreciation of my gentle, respectful, reflective approach, how I provided helpful explanations for the tasks, and the way in which I created a sense of flow between one activity and the next. My facilitation in our tārai waka

was similar to the workshops in that I guided the group process to achieve certain goals. However, the duration of our tārai waka was such that my facilitation was but one part of a complex group dynamic and became more of a peer–to-peer style of facilitation with others in the group also playing their part. We were fortunate in our tārai waka that the faculty leaders of the group were very encouraging of shared leadership. In our planning sessions, different people took on the facilitation role and guided the group as it sought ideas for creating worship services.

In considering how well I facilitated our tārai waka, I compared it with Lencioni's (2005) five dysfunctions in a team that prevent a group from functioning well: lack of trust, commitment issues, inattention to results, fear of conflict, and avoidance of accountability. My style of facilitation enabled trust to develop, helped create a synergy of ideas that was compelling, and life giving and so encouraged participation in group planning meetings, and the debriefs, albeit brief, contributed to ongoing reflection and adaptation for the next cycle of worship services.

However, I note that there was little overt conflict in the group, and I am unsure if this was a result of my facilitation skills, in that we discussed issues that came up, or whether those who disagreed with what happened at the meetings stayed away because of it. The lack of conflict may have reflected a number of different cultural dynamics such as religion, ethnicity, tradition, and language barriers. St John's College is a Christian organisation and often, in this context, conflict is seen as a negative rather than an important contributor to a healthy system. For Tikanga Pasifika, particularly when the leader is ordained (like me), it is disrespectful to openly disagree with them (a leader) in a public forum, but other methods may be found to discuss the issues. For example, at the 29 October 2021 tārai waka focus group session, one of the Pasifika participants mentioned a conversation they had had with a younger Pasifika student. They thought the younger person talked with them rather than with me or in the group because they felt more comfortable asking questions of an older, ordained Pasifika male. I find it interesting that several of the books I read on facilitation do not mention the impact cultural understandings/assumptions can have on the facilitator's effectiveness

in a group setting. My methodology and the multiple lenses I used to assess my facilitation skills (observation, critical reflection, focus group comments, group conversations and literature), provided a depth of personal learning that I might not have managed through reading facilitation books alone.

My facilitative and teaching approach in the workshops and tārai waka, as well as my priestly practice, provided fertile ground for not only my personal learning but also participants' learning. In the next section, I investigate the conditions that supported creative play to flourish.

Key Findings: Core Conditions That Supported Creative Play to Flourish

Through the research journey and from my findings, I became aware of six core conditions that encouraged creative play in participants and developed their learning, creativity, spirituality, and liturgical formation (see Figure 17Figure). Each of these six conditions – my ludic mindset, a facilitator/guide/role model, the creation of a team culture of creativity, shared learning experiences designed to stimulate imaginations, variety of locations for activities, and reflection/action process, is discussed in more detail in the following sections.

The six conditions laid the foundation for a number of ludic qualities to emerge from participants (see Figure 17). These qualities are grouped as: curiosity, embodied creative expression and relationality.

Figure 17

Framework of Practice – Conditions for Creative Play to Flourish (Outer) and Emerging Ludic Qualities Exhibited by Participants (Inner)

My Ludic Mindset

An innate ludic mindset and a sense of playfulness is embedded in my professional philosophy, and promoted through my clown persona and in the strategies I use as a creative play practitioner. As a result of my professional background and experience I was able to design creative activities for the workshops and facilitate creative endeavours in the tārai waka group.

Leather et al. (2020) contend that an educator's own mindset and behaviour needs to be playful if they want to see the benefits of a ludic approach in learners. Teaching then becomes a form of role modelling to show others the joy and learning that can come from play.

Both the creative play activities that I designed and my participation in the workshops and tārai waka, provided the foundation for participants own ludic selves to come to the fore. Creative play encompassed activities such as: connecting mime and imagination; generation of ideas in a group setting; experiential play with objects; creating visual displays; and using unexpected venues for worship services. However, a ludic mindset was not enough in itself to encourage creative play, there also needed to be someone who would guide and facilitate the process.

Facilitation

I consider that facilitation is a shaping and forming of an environment within which activities can happen and an encounter with the divine can occur. Sometimes facilitation is behind the scenes as it were, for instance in Pierson's (2012) curated services, or it could a specified leader in a Messy Church situation (Moore, 2006), or someone who presides over an Anglican Eucharistic service. Within communities of practice there are coordinators who I would argue act very much like my idea of a facilitator or guide. The coordinator "brings people together and enables the community to find its direction" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 43). An example of the recognition of this type of guidance is the reflective learning that emerged from my facilitation of the tārai waka 29 October 2021 focus group, when one of the participants (Tracey) talked about having someone who could prompt the group through the creative process. Others from both the workshops and tārai waka noted the role of facilitation to define and shape the space within which we would have freedom to explore and be creative.

In our tārai waka, peer-to-peer facilitation enabled group cohesiveness and a greater sense of collective responsibility for achieving our goals. No one person needed to carry the organisational load. Paulus's (2000) research supports the role of facilitation for increasing team creativity as the facilitator manages the "group process effectively [and] … attend[s] carefully to the ideas presented by others" (p. 254). The use of facilitation throughout my research project assisted us to express

ourselves in new ways, engage in experiential and reflective learning, and in terms of our tārai waka, develop a team culture of creativity.

Creation of a Team Culture of Creativity

In my findings from our tārai waka and reading literature on teams and creativity, I realised that there were certain features that encouraged creative play. We shared our experiences and knowledge; we also generated ideas as a group; and there was facilitated and peer-to-peer reflection and learning similar to that described by Boud (2013). These facets supported our learning and depth of creative practice enabling us to function in a different way than we might have done as individuals. Several members of our tārai waka and I reflected in the 29 October 2021 focus group debrief, that we had more energy and ideas than we might have had as individuals. In addition, the ability to discuss how each Tikanga views creativity in Anglican liturgy, the blessings, and the barriers, developed a team culture of openness and respect. The three-Tikanga nature of the college added a cultural depth and diversity to the discussion which increased everyone's learning. I contend that diversity assisted us to be more creative; however, there is some debate in the literature as to whether diversity helps or hinders overall team creativity (see Paulus, 2000). The stimulation of ideas depends to some extent on the blocks that can occur in team processes such as "production blocking, evaluation apprehension and social loafing" (Paulus, 2000, p.254). I did not consider the effect of these blocks to any great extent in my research but am aware that appropriate facilitation can help a team work through these issues (Hunter, 2007; Paulus, 2000).

In the workshops I offered to theological students at St John's College, I worked with groups of four to five participants to develop their understanding of creative play and how they might use such strategies in their practice. Their acquired knowledge may have changed their attitudes to creative play in theological settings and aided in the development of a creative culture at the college.

West et al. (2017) undertook research on the impact of improvisational-theatre training on workplace groups. Although they were not focussed on team development, their project has

similarities with my workshop process in that participants used improvisational methods as a form of experiential-style learning across several sessions. Their participant numbers were higher, at 93, and they used mainly quantitative assessment methods (Likert scales from a range of assessment tools) as well as the distributed creativity in organisational groups assessment, in which participants had 20 minutes to "collectively generate ideas for a new multi-tool" (p. 287). What I find of particular interest is that the improvisational tasks enabled increased individual and group creativity. They showed that it is possible to introduce play in a workplace environment through controlled methods that do not sacrifice spontaneity and playfulness or experiential learning techniques.

Shared Experiences Designed to Stimulate Imagination

An important part of helping creative play to flourish was shared experiences designed to stimulate the imagination. I designed the workshops (2020 and 2021) to provide a range of activities that were fun, embodied, and playful. The idea was to provide an example of what creative play might look like as well as give things a go in a safe and relaxed setting. Fettes (2013) writes of classroom teaching and the importance of imagination as a key component of experiential learning, particularly somatic (or sensory) experience. He blends several educational frameworks to create three modes of learning engagement – imaginative participation, realisation, and implication. I am encouraged by his statement that imaginative participation and imaginative realisation are "fundamental modes we have of engaging with the world, that this engagement necessarily involves the imagination … it engenders kinds of understanding that are both tacit/embodied … and explicit/linguified" (p. 7). He also considers imagination as an integral part of learning for all ages.

My findings reflect the impact of the activities to stimulate participants' imagination in the workshops; however, it was not until 2021 and the ongoing dynamic of our tārai waka, that our shared experiences with creative play ignited our imaginations in terms of preparing and planning worship services. I observed that the mix of group planning sessions (with generation of ideas), and individuals then designing and leading their own services, led to an increased level of creativity. This

observation is borne out by the research of Paulus (2000), who suggests that having different activities with both group and alone time provides opportunities for "incubation" periods which are important for the stimulation of creative ideas and innovation. I also discovered that another factor that enhanced creativity was using different locations for creative play.

Variety of Locations for Creative Play Activities

Through my findings, particularly with regard to our tārai waka and the worship services, I discovered that our experiential and reflective learning component was significantly enhanced by having opportunities and locations where we could experiment and try things out. For example, participants in our tārai waka's focus group session (21 March 2021) commented on the positive effect of being outside and their increased awareness of nature and God. I discovered that the college environment was useful for exploring a range of different locations for worship services and for experiential learning, all it took was a bit of imagination and courage to trial somewhere new or unusual. In the findings from a comprehensive literature review on "creative learning environments in education" (D. Davies et al., 2013), the authors found four research-based articles that support the role creative learning environments can have on the "creative thinking of students, leading to a greater level of originality on open tasks" (D. Davies et al., 2013, p. 87). Although these results were based on work with children and young adults, their analysis is supported in the results of a qualitative study of tertiary level students undertaken by Closs et al. (2022). In addition, Closs et al. (2022) conclude that interactive and collaborative engagement between lecturers and students as well as between students, can enhance learners' experience. They also comment that students' gender, ethnicity, and nationality can alter how spaces are used "as well as the effectiveness (or not) of the learning activities proposed by tutors and lecturers" (p. 283). The key was respecting and being aware of cultural differences rather than assuming that everyone has the same learning experience. Therefore, I would argue that creative play can offer a range of environments that are supportive of creative and experiential encounters between different types of learners and worshippers.

Reflection/Action Process

A significant factor in participants' overall learning across 2020–2021, was having facilitated intentional design of activities to support reflection (workshops) and reflective debriefs (tārai waka). I have titled this process: reflection/action. This process was one aspect of the broader AR cycles.

The reflection/action process in 2020 included discussion sessions in the workshops (held between creative play activities), the focus group debriefs at the end of the workshops, and several informal conversations with participants at other times. In the online workshops (1 and 3) I talked briefly about the activity and what it would entail, then led the group through a creative play process, concluding with a discussion. In the discussion, I asked fairly general questions regarding what they thought of the activity, any new insights, and aspects they might use elsewhere. In the face-to-face workshop (2) I left the questions till the focus group session. In 2021, in our tārai waka group, I wanted to make sure that there was some form of deliberate debrief after each worship service week to encourage reflective learning on an individual level and in terms of the group process as we developed and planned future services. As a result, I facilitated most of the reflection/action discussion, although occasionally one of the faculty leaders led one.

The format of the tārai waka system was very helpful in that we worked as a group to plan the worship services; and yet, individuals could also create and lead their own services. Learning was both individualised and corporate in nature. We assessed the services using a form of appreciative inquiry reflection developed by Hammond (2013): what went well, what needed adjusting or changing another time, and what might be repeated and enlarged on in the next worship week. In addition, our learning was embedded by creating and participating in the services. The reflective learning had an added benefit in that it contributed to the development of our tārai waka into a team.

A benefit of the reflection process I used is that the form of reflection is not only in a written form (my journals), but also takes account of other modes of learning that include experiential and

embodied reflective practices (activities, focus group debriefs, discussion). My approach has similarities with James and Brookfield's (2014) multimodal form of creative reflection. They consider discussion alongside visual, textual, movement-based activities within a broader multimodal reflection process. The aim is for a variety of creative inputs to provide flexibility for a range of learners. These practices combine creativity, imagination, and reflection in playful and flexible ways.

In my creative play research practice, I expanded D. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle and James and Brookfield's (2014) multimodal reflection process, to include experiential learning within a group setting. There were four experiential learning opportunities in our tārai waka group. The first was observation and reflection arising from the experience itself (the concrete experience of the worship services). The second was preparation for the next round of worship services. The third area focused on discussion as a result of further experimentation in later weeks of worship services. Finally, there was an overall reflective learning process in the 29 October 2021 focus group debrief.

I am aware from Brookfield's (2017) work on critical reflection that not all discussion and debriefing is helpful for learning as there can be barriers such as power imbalances or predetermined outcomes on the part of the educator. In my case, I was cognisant of the impact of my role as researcher and tried to mitigate that through the language I used – I mentioned that I was a learner as well, and by reiterating that the participants' details would be kept confidential, and their names would be anonymised. However, there is always the possibility that my role as researcher and a priest affected the participants' willingness to be fully open, particularly when I asked for feedback on my facilitative style. In terms of the faculty tārai waka dynamic, one benefit was that the students' contribution to the worship service week was not part of a formal assessment so there was possibly less of a sense of being judged. Also, the main faculty member who came most weeks was very gentle, unassuming, and completely trustworthy. Overall, I do see the value in group discussion as long as there is trust developed amongst the participants and role modelling on the part of the facilitator that is inclusive, open, non-judgmental, and welcoming of all insights.

Emerging Ludic Qualities in Participants

The conditions that enabled creative play to flourish also supported participants' emerging ludic qualities in participants. Evidence of these qualities came from my observations (recorded as field notes, and journal entries) of participant interactions and engagement in activities, as well as from participants' comments during conversations, workshop discussions, and focus group debriefs. Not all the qualities appeared in each individual nor were they apparent in all worship service attendees, workshop or tārai waka participants. The ludic qualities can be grouped into three categories:

- curiosity – trust, questioning;
- embodied creative expression – playfulness, imagination, light-heartedness, a sense of fun and joy;
- relationality - interconnectedness, group dynamics, communication, ignited relationship with the holy/divine/sacred.

Curiosity. I regard curiosity as an important quality and a precursor to engagement in creative play. Participants would not have taken part in the workshops without an initial sense of curiosity, a willingness to try something new, to take a risk and participate in the creative play process. I also heard inquisitiveness in their questions (during the discussion sections and focus group debriefs), as they wanted to know more about the activities, the creative play process, and other ideas for continuing their creativity outside the workshop and college setting. For example, after one of the worship services I led, an attendee asked me how I thought up such innovative ideas and what my process was. In other situations, I observed their curiosity as they tried to create meaning and stories from such activities as playing with an imaginary ball, growing a magic seed, eating locusts and honey, and in our tārai waka when we gathered to plan the worship services.

An integral part of the curiosity quality was trust. Participants needed to have a degree of faith in themselves and the creative play methods to be able to play, and trust became a central aspect of the workshop and tārai waka process. Trust was both an individual and a group trait. From the trust

that was built in the group I noted the ability of myself and participants to then relax and be creative. I also observed a creative curiosity in the complex interplay of ideas that occurred in the tārai waka planning process and the periods of discussion in the workshops. Participants noted that their creativity increased as a result of the play we did together. It seemed as if the group environments of the workshops and tārai waka were more mutually conducive to creativity and creation of new ideas.

Embodied Creative Expression. This quality was evident in individual participants and groups as a whole (workshops and our tārai waka). As workshop participants engaged in the creative play activities, they learned to understand and express scripture in new ways (such as the make-believe bread-making exercise, the hatbox, and the gifts), and saw themselves in a new light (increased confidence in their creativity, revelations about how they learn, sharing their cultural experiences of play). The benefits of playfulness for developing positive characteristics are supported in the findings of Proyer and Ruch's (2011) research on adult play, as well as in Power's (2011) study on the link between creativity, play and playful qualities. The group dynamic increased the creative output of participants in both the 2020 workshops (such as in Workshop 2, playing with objects to create a make-believe group skit/performance) and our tārai waka as we thought up ideas for worship services that we would not have done on our own.

Participants' curiosity was not only an intellectual exercise, but it was embodied in their creative expression. Their imaginations were engaged through physical playful activities that brought out qualities of light-heartedness, a sense of fun and of joy. For example, I observed in my field notes the giggling and laughter after an episode of an ill-timed tomato-shaped timer (Workshop 2, 2020), and then the hilarity of a tārai waka meeting when we discussed what sort of food we might use in a worship service. In the initial tārai waka creative play session, the four focus group participants noted several times the joy they felt in both the play and being outside. This connection of playfulness with what I call *lightness of being* is supported in the literature in Power's (2011) creative

play characteristic – light-heartedness, and Proyer and Ruch's (2011) concept of a zest for life. Participants' creativity was also expressed through their playful interactions with each other.

Relationality. As I reflected on the playful and creative interplay of ideas and the dynamic nature of the groups I was involved with, I was reminded of Hay and Nye's (2006) concept of spirituality as interconnectedness. I saw this interconnectedness as a quality of relationality. The dynamics within the groups was one factor and the other was the way creative play ignited and refreshed our individual and corporate relationship with the holy/divine/sacred. The interconnectedness not only happened within the group dynamics of the workshops and tārai waka, but also in the case of our tārai waka extended to the wider college community. Communication was another key factor associated with the quality of relationality. During several of the worship service weeks we used Facebook (messages and imagery) and emails to connect with others and draw them into a sense of play even before they came to the services. I remember someone from another tārai waka saying to me that they were always intrigued about what we would do next as the services were interesting and unexpected. I suddenly understood afresh the role playfulness can have in connecting diverse people, activities, places with life in all its fullness, and with the holy and the divine.

The playful qualities I mention were not only reflected in participants' responses and actions but also became part of my practice. The qualities reveal a growing development of the clowning mindset and creative play practice I began with at the start of my research.

My Revised Creative Play Approach

As I mentioned in my literature review (Chapter 2), creative play for adults is a reasonably new field and rather complicated to define. Writers such as Power (2011) focus on the cognitive aspects of adult play and its connection with creativity, whereas I have considered what Merriam and Bierema (2014) identify as a more embodied aspect of play that is experiential and relies on learning by doing. I found Tyler's (2017) work on psycho-social spaces useful as I considered the role of group dynamics

and the wider environmental conditions that affect adult play. The writings of Mainemelis and Ronson (2006) as well as Leather et al. (2020) are significant in that they have helped me see creative play as not only a set of activities but also more a way of being in the world. Our playful behaviour in the worship services, workshops, and tārai waka, created opportunities to develop new understandings of each other, the divine /God, and how the holy/sacred could be expressed. Like playing on the rope gym (see Figure 18), we constructed a complex spatial bricolage of meaning, ideas, embodied actions and interrelationality.

Figure 18

Me in Front of a Rope-Climbing Gym

Photo by ©Lisa Guthrie, 29 April 2022. All rights reserved

As a consequence of my research findings and reviewing the literature, I have broadened my original concept of creative play, to reveal the depth of my educational approach (the changes are noted in blue and italicised). In terms of my practice, creative play is:

> *a way of being and a method of experiential learning that builds on and embodies* a person's experience, imagination, and the things around them to create new ideas, ways of seeing, possibilities, *and ludic practices for the person and for others.*

To sum up, my practice focuses on several conditions that support creative play to flourish. These conditions include my ludic mindset, being a facilitator/guide/role model, the creation of a team culture of creativity, shared experiential learning experiences designed to stimulate imagination, a variety of locations for creative play activities, and a reflection/action process. I found during my research that when creative play was activated by these conditions, three main qualities became evident: curiosity, embodied creative expression, and relationality. Within these qualities, other sub-qualities were observed. Participants engaged in experiential learning demonstrated joy and openness, were imaginative, creative, and light-hearted. Creative play became a sacred act through which we experienced the holy and the divine/God in new and unexpected ways.

In the next chapter (Chapter 8), I move from the implications of creative play for my practice and for those participants at St John's College and consider the wider contribution my research can make.

Chapter 8 – Wider Contribution and Conclusion

In this chapter, I discuss the wider contribution of my practice and implications for further research. I present the value of my research contribution for: adult learning, supporting systemic change, the influence on theoretical understanding, and methodological approaches in qualitative research. My discussion includes:

- the seeds sown for wider systemic change through the AR methods used;
- the value of the tārai waka creative play/AR intervention as a learning approach, aspects of which could readily be embedded at St Johns and other contexts;
- the theoretical contribution of both my framework of practice and the addition of a collaborative-c concept to extend Kaufman and Beghetto's (2009) model; and,
- the methodological use of prose poetry as a poetic inquiry strategy for engaging the reader that evokes the lived experience of this practice.

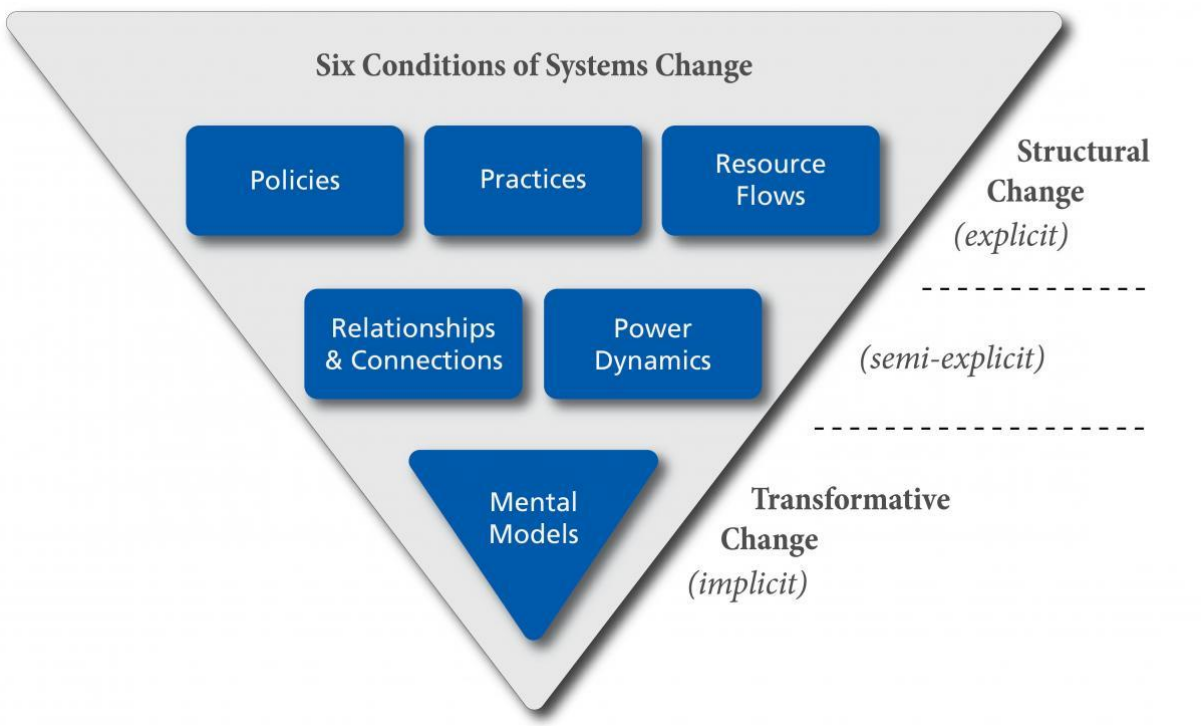
Wider Contribution of My Practice

I am aware that any transformational change in a system is influenced by a variety of factors that can limit the hoped-for change. The Water of Systems Change Framework (Kania et al., 2018) notes that there are six areas that need to be tackled to one degree or another (see Figure 19). There are three areas for structural change – policies, practices, resource flows; two areas for relational change – power dynamics, relationships; and one area for transformational change – mental models and how we think. Over the course of my research project, I have seen a mindset shift and emerging creative play qualities in myself and participants. I am hopeful that this transformational change will be long lasting and affect those we come in contact within our wider spheres of influence. Rosso (2016) writes of the impact a playful attitude within teams can have on their creativity as well as shaping the wider culture of their workplaces. Therefore, it is possible that the experiential creative play practices and the discussions we had will also inform and enthuse others at St John's College, and

participants' church communities. The key to supporting this deeper level of change is to consider what policy and relational areas need to be adjusted at the same time.

Figure 19

Six Conditions of Systems Change



Source: Kania et al., 2018, p. 4. Creative Commons CC BY-ND 4.0 Unported License.

In terms of relational change, I have developed relationships with St John's College students, staff and faculty that span the three Tikanga and include Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga. There is potential to build on these connections for future creative play work. Along with these relationships there need to be policy shifts as well.

At St John's College, there are several possible areas of change. Creative play is still a relatively novel area in adult education, and it would be important to provide resources and training for all faculty to give them the tools and confidence necessary to implement creative play strategies themselves. Another strategy is to focus on the conditions necessary to enable college groups such as tārai waka to flourish and support the learning, engagement, and confidence of students to explore the

holy/divine/sacred in new and innovative ways. The workshops and our tārai waka provided an exploratory study of what might be possible in terms of liturgical formation and reflective learning for ordinands and theological students. Our tārai waka was already part of an existing structure and it would be possible to extend our learning to the other tārai waka in a sustainable way. In the first instance, it would require agreement from faculty to adopt methods similar to those used in my research in their respective tārai waka; then contribute some resourcing, teaching, and modelling of different approaches that can be used; and finally, put into place opportunities for review and adjustment, if necessary, through a reflection/action cycle with reflection being key to the process. AR cycles offer a qualitative method of planning for and learning from an issue/question in an iterative process and are therefore very appropriate for use in educational and theological institutions. The reflection/action component is integral to ongoing and transformational learning, and I would argue is particularly helpful in adult educational settings as it makes sure that learners assess previous actions in the light of future possibilities.

Much of what is required (group formation, structure, and process) is already set out in the tārai waka handbook, and so there is not such a significant resource investment required to implement the changes, rather a mind shift in terms of culture and practice.

I would like to encourage a more ludic approach to ministry formation and the use of creative play methods in liturgical worship. There are cultural nuances between Tikanga in the Anglican Church, and, as I am positioned within Tikanga Pākehā, it makes sense to engage with the people in this context first. One strategy would be to do some training with the diocesan ministry educators so that they experience creative play for themselves and can offer input in their locality and/or encourage regional communities of practice for those who are or who would like to explore creative play in their own context. Again, resources would be needed to support training and develop my workshops into a form that could be disseminated more easily throughout the Tikanga Pākehā networks in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Resources could also be shared online, reducing overall costs and there

would be less if any travel involved. However, to engage people in the sensory process of embodied play in a group setting, ideally an initial face-to-face setting would work better. The face-to-face process enables more physical improvisation and interaction between people than working online. Internet connections can also be variable, and this can sometimes limit a sense of spontaneity between participants. It would be possible to open the workshops to the other Tikanga and work with their equivalent ministry educators to see what creative play might be look like in their own cultural contexts and the best way forward to share insights and resources. Financial support would be needed, and this could be achieved either through charging for the workshops or applying for funding from one of the Anglican Church educational funds.

Implications for Wider Research

The results of my research can be used in a variety of different contexts within adult theological education as well as wider educational practice. Creative play methods that I used embed experiential learning relevant to practice as well as encouraging learners to explore and recognise their own creative potential. My methods tap into moves driven by a number of educators to understand the role creativity can have in engaging learners in new ways (e.g., James & Brookfield, 2014; Leather et al., 2020; K. Robinson, 2011). A key proponent of creative thinking, Ken Robinson (2011) sees the benefits of creativity as a valuable learning method for encouraging flexible thinking and innovation. His thinking is echoed in research done by others such as Miner (2017a), Reilly (2015), and Betsworth (2012), who consider the essential role creativity can have in learning when combined with creative arts methods.

There has been relatively less done to link creative play strategies with spiritual learning experiences in secular settings. My research contributes to this area because spirituality is a part of the whole person and needs to be recognised as an integral part of the learning process. I would contend that creative play encourages an integration of the self through imagination, relationality, and embodied/experiential learning. However, there is potential for more research in the area of

spiritual learning experiences. For example, my original intention was to work more closely with worship service attendees and their whānau to investigate how creative play could stimulate their understanding of the sacred/divine.

In terms of creative play, liturgy and the church, my research provides evidence regarding the creative potential of play as a worship technique within the Fresh Expressions style of worship framework. My research also shows the liturgical potential that is possible within a more traditional Anglican style of worship.

Framework of Practice

The six conditions and subsequent playful qualities (see Figure 17) I developed for encouraging creative play to flourish came out of my specific situation and professional practice. However, some, if not all, of these conditions are likely relevant for other practitioners and contexts. My framework of practice can be a catalyst for others to consider the conditions they might need in the creation of environments in which groups and teams can develop a greater creativity and imaginative capacity, enhanced energy levels, and a more ludic state of being. My research could be used in areas such as the formation stage of teams, especially in contexts where a new, innovative and/or creative, and ongoing project is needed. Other research possibilities include group work in educational/ theological/church contexts where the outcomes are fluid and dynamic.

In my research project, the group environment was also important as it became the groundwork for ludic qualities to emerge from individuals. The qualities not only supported an individual's curiosity and ludic behaviour, but the overall group dynamic offered avenues for them to explore their own embodied creative expression, spirituality, and connection with the sacred. My insights could be used in individual formation and transformational learning settings such as ministry formation in theological and church training programmes.

Contribution to Theory and the 4-C Model

As I considered the role of creative play in worship services, and the impact of clowning techniques on the creativity and imagination of participants, I wondered if there was something more happening in terms of creativity than that offered by Kaufman and Beghetto's (2009) 4-C model. Their model considers four areas of creativity from the more everyday creativity (little-c) to a more developmental approach to creativity (mini-c), to the genius level creativity (Big-C) and professional creativity (Pro-c). However, I question whether their model takes into account the embodied aspect and group dynamic that can be present in creativity. Although their mini-c is concerned with learning from experience and is developmental in approach, it lacks an embodied and collaborative component.

Collaborative-c

To offer more depth to Kaufmann and Beghetto's model, I propose a fifth *c*, that is, a collaborative-c. Collaborative-c recognises the important interaction between an individual's embodied creative process and the wider environment. The value in having this additional level is to provide room for a creativity that is not only improvisational, but is also embodied, experiential and interactive in nature. The act of creativity occurs within an improvisational interaction and collaboration between the initiator/facilitator and the participants. An example of this collaborative creativity is a clown who creates a world of pretence and make-believe with an audience; or, in a ritual, the Eucharistic actions of a priest who brings the gathered community into an encounter with the holy.

Collaborative-c can also take account of different cultural understandings of creativity. The language we use to define creativity can influence our perceptions and understanding. For example, *tā moko* – body art - within tikanga Māori, and the wearing of ceremonial tapa cloth, in tikanga Pasifika, are forms of embodied creativity that incorporate the creative intention of the creator/s with the bearer themselves. In a lecture given at college on 9 February 2022, the Right Reverend Kitohi Pikaahu discussed the response of Māori to hearing the gospel message for the first time. In oral accounts of

the first Christian service in 1814, they mention that the gospel was received with great joy or, in Māori, *hari*. Right Reverend Pikaahu talked about hari as not only an emotion but also a movement, a group *haka* of joy. The creativity came as a response to the preaching of the Christian gospel, in the form of an embodied, emotional and spiritual action, the haka. Collaborative-c can therefore be useful in recognising and validating the important interaction between an individual's/group's creative process and the wider sociocultural and spiritual environment.

Methodological Contribution

I have shown the power of prose poetry as a poetic inquiry strategy for engaging the reader that evokes the lived experience of participants and researcher. I am trying to keep the "aliveness" (Galvin & Todres, 2009, p. 309) of participants' perspectives without losing sight of the need to bring a recognisable analysis to my research interpretation. Through an autoethnographic lens, I sought to capture the evocative nature of various phenomena, as well as creating a sense of immediacy for the reader.

In conclusion, through my research I have learnt the value of creative play for encouraging my ludic mindset and creative practice as priest, teacher, and facilitator. The creative play methods I designed and trialled stimulated others' imagination and their own liturgical creativity. The workshops and tārai waka model provided an important set of evidence for the role experiential learning and reflective learning can play in adult learning and ministry formation. In terms of creativity and play, the embodied nature of much of what I did over 2020–2021 offers a contribution to Kaufman and Beghetto's (2009) 4-C model of creativity in the form of a fifth dimension, collaborative-c. And, finally, I have been reminded that my creative spark comes from the holy one, the Creator of life, who is a God of joy and of play.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Examples of Participant Information Forms

Part 2, Workshop 1

Project title

Impact of play on learning, creativity and spirituality

Introduction

I am fascinated by the role of play in the development of creativity, learning and spirituality. For my Doctor of Professional Practice (Otago Polytechnic), I am undertaking a research project looking at whether play (an imaginative and enjoyable activity), and being playful, can help someone to be more creative in their leading of worship and liturgy. I would also like to understand the impact of play on one's spirituality and engagement with God. Play in this research project is about creative play and not 'play' in terms of games or a scripted/ theatrical play. Creative play is about using a person's experience, imagination, and the things around them to create new ideas, new ways of seeing and new possibilities for the person and for others.

This pilot project will consist of an online workshop and a debrief session. The aim is to discover the effectiveness of using an online medium to conduct workshops on creative play and to gather participants' impressions and ideas going forward.

Who am I looking for?

I am looking for participants who are part of the residential community at St John's College and are over the age of 18.

What will my participation involve?

Should you agree to take part in this pilot project, you will be asked to participate in one workshop followed by one debrief session with a group of others from the College (approximately 7-8 people). There will be one workshop of approximately 45 mins - 1 hour followed by a 15 min break then a 15-30 minute debrief session. The workshop and debrief session will be held using Zoom web-conferencing.

To participate you will need access to a laptop, tablet, or cell phone that has a microphone and webcam built-in or you can use an external webcam and microphone. This is so that we can all hear and see each other during the workshop and debrief session.

All the sessions will be recorded, transcribed by me, and you will have the opportunity to check the transcription afterwards.

How will confidentiality and/or anonymity be protected?

Your name and data will be given a code to which only I will have access so that you cannot be identified in the final documentation. I may use quotes in the research reports so will use pseudonyms, but your responses cannot be connected back to you and the video recording will not be viewed by others. However, St John's College is a small community and people may know,

generally, who is taking part in the research project. Even so, they will not have access to the information that is shared, and all participants will be asked to maintain confidentiality.

What data or information will be collected and how will it be used?

Results of this project will be used towards the preparation of my doctoral thesis and may be published elsewhere. For example, as a journal article or conference paper and presentation. Any data included will in no way be linked to any specific participant without prior consent.

Data Storage

The data collected will be securely stored so that only I will have access to it. This will be retained in secure storage for a period of five years, after which it will be destroyed (unless agreed otherwise on the consent form). Some raw data for example audio recordings may be destroyed once they have been transcribed.

Can participants change their minds and withdraw from the project?

You can decline to participate without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the project at any time, without giving reasons for your withdrawal.

You can also withdraw any information that has already been supplied, until the stage agreed on the consent form. You can also refuse to answer any particular question during the debrief, and during the workshop you may mute your Zoom microphone and blank your video at any stage.

What if participants have any questions?

If you have any questions about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either myself

Or my supervisor, Margy-Jean Malcolm Margaret.Malcolm@op.ac.nz

Rev'd Helen Wilderspin, post graduate student at St John's College.

Part 2, Workshops 2 and 3

This form was given out to interested people prior to workshop 2, and then a copy was available at the beginning of the workshop for participants. Due to changes in COVID-19 restrictions I was not able to hold Workshop 3 until 28 August 2020.

Project title

Impact of play on learning, creativity, and spirituality

Introduction

I am fascinated by the role of play in the development of creativity, learning and spirituality. So, I am undertaking a research project for my Doctor of Professional Practice (Otago Polytechnic). I am looking at whether play (an imaginative and enjoyable activity), and being playful, can help someone to be more creative. I would also like to understand the impact of play on one's spirituality and engagement with God. Play in this research project is about creative play and not 'play' in terms of games or a scripted/theatrical play. Creative play is about using a person's experience, imagination, and the things around them to create new ideas, new ways of seeing and new possibilities for the person and for others.

This phase of the research will consist of two workshops that will explore different aspects of play and creativity. The workshops themselves will be about 1.5 hours, depending on how many people attend. At the end of each session, there will be a short debrief with those attending to share experiences of the workshops. Refreshments will be served at the end of each session. The first workshop will be held on Friday 24 July, and the second will be held on Friday 7 August, both will be from 2.30-5pm. We will be in the Wesley Hall, St John's College.

As a result of the workshops there may be some new insights and methods of creative play that you would like to try out in future worship services. If you would like to continue to explore this more fully, I will make an open invitation at the end of the second workshop for up to two of you from each tikanga to continue in phase 2. This is entirely optional.

Who am I looking for?

I am looking for 5-10 people from all three tikanga to take part in the workshops. The participants need to be involved in some form of worship/liturgy preparation and are over the age of 18. If there are more people than places it will be based on the first people who approach me. To show your interest please fill out a consent form and return to me, via email or on the day of the first workshop. I will also have copies printed out for you to use if that is easier.

What will my participation involve?

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to participate in two workshops and two debrief sessions. Each of these workshops will be approximately 1.5 hours in length with a short debrief session of about thirty minutes at the end. Refreshments will be provided.

At the end of the year, we will gather for a final group conversation to share our experiences and reflections on play, creativity, and worship. This will be for about an hour with refreshments to follow.

All the debrief sessions will be audio recorded, transcribed by me, or if necessary, an independent transcriber, and you will have the opportunity to check the transcription afterwards.

How will confidentiality and/or anonymity be protected?

Your name and data will be given a code that only I will have access to so that you cannot be identified in the final documentation. Your responses cannot be connected back to you. However, St John's College is a small community and people may know who is taking part in the research project, even so they will not have access to the information that is shared, and all participants will be asked to maintain confidentiality.

What data or information will be collected and how will it be used?

Results of this project will be used towards the preparation of my doctoral thesis and may be published elsewhere. For example, as a journal article or conference paper and presentation. Any data included will in no way be linked to any specific participant without prior consent.

Data Storage

The data collected will be securely stored so that only named researchers will have access to it. This will be retained in secure storage for a period of five years, after which it will be destroyed (unless agreed otherwise on the consent form). Some raw data for example audio recordings may be destroyed once they have been transcribed.

Can participants change their minds and withdraw from the project?

You can decline to participate without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the project at any time, without giving reasons for your withdrawal.

You can also withdraw any information that has already been supplied, until the stage agreed on the consent form. You can also refuse to answer any question, and/or ask for the audio to be turned off at any stage.

What if participants have any questions?

If you have any questions about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either: myself

Or my supervisor, Margy-Jean Malcolm Margaret.Malcolm@op.ac.nz

Part 3, Email sent out to our tārai waka group members ahead of the creative play workshop on 26 March 2021

Kia ora tatou,

I have offered to lead the session this week to help us get to know each other in a fun way. I'll be using one or two things from my research on creative play (which I discuss a bit more below). It will be a relaxed session so don't panic! I know some of you like to plan ahead and so if you could think about the question - "If you were a type of shop what would you be?", and then be willing to share that with everyone that would be great.

So that we can use our time together fully can we gather as close to 1pm as possible? The first bit we can do as we are eating lunch.

Also, if any of you are available for 20 mins afterwards (until about 2.20/2.30pm) I'd love to ask you some questions as a group about the session so that I can learn from it for the future and for my research. You can let me know on Friday if you can stay.

Background to the research from my doctoral proposal: "I am fascinated by the role of play in the development of creativity, learning and spirituality. I am undertaking a research project for my Doctor of Professional Practice (Otago Polytechnic). I am looking at whether play (an imaginative and enjoyable activity), and being playful, can help someone to be more creative. I would also like to understand the impact of play on one's spirituality, engagement with God and worship preparation. Play in this research project is about creative play and not 'play' in terms of games or a scripted/theatrical play. Creative play is about using a person's experience, imagination, and the things around them to create new ideas, new ways of seeing and new possibilities for the person and for others."

Ngā mihi nui, Helen

Participant information form for the focus group debrief at the conclusion of the Tārai waka creative play session (26 March 2021)

This information along with a consent form was given out at the beginning of the focus group debrief.

Project title

Impact of play on learning, creativity, and spirituality

Introduction

I am fascinated by the role of play in the development of creativity, learning and spirituality. So, I am undertaking a research project for my Doctor of Professional Practice (Otago Polytechnic). I am looking at whether play (an imaginative and enjoyable activity), and being playful, can help someone to be more creative. I would also like to understand the impact of play on one's spirituality, engagement with God and worship preparation. Play in this research project is about creative play and not 'play' in terms of games or a scripted/theatrical play. Creative play is about using a person's experience, imagination, and the things around them to create new ideas, new ways of seeing and new possibilities for the person and for others.

A debrief session is to be held at the conclusion of the Tārai waka group gathering. The intention is to seek participants' reflections on the content of the gathering.

The session will be between 20-30 minutes long and will be held in a group setting.

The debrief session will be audio recorded, transcribed by me, or if necessary, an independent transcriber, and you will have the opportunity to check the transcription afterwards.

How will confidentiality and/or anonymity be protected?

Your name and data will be given a code that only I will have access to so that you cannot be identified in the final documentation. Your responses cannot be connected back to you. However, St John's College is a small community and people may know who is taking part in the research project, even so they will not have access to the information that is shared and all participants will be asked to maintain confidentiality.

What data or information will be collected and how will it be used?

Results of this project will be used towards the preparation of my doctoral thesis and may be published elsewhere. For example, as a journal article or conference paper and presentation. Any data included will in no way be linked to any specific participant without prior consent.

Data Storage

The data collected will be securely stored so that only named researchers will have access to it. This will be retained in secure storage for a period of five years, after which it will be destroyed (unless agreed otherwise on the consent form). Some raw data for example audio recordings may be destroyed once they have been transcribed.

Can participants change their minds and withdraw from the project?

You can decline to participate without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the project at any time, without giving reasons for your withdrawal.

You can also withdraw any information that has already been supplied, until the stage agreed on the consent form. You can also refuse to answer any question, and/or ask for the audio to be turned off at any stage.

What if participants have any questions?

If you have any questions about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either: myself

Or my supervisor, Margy-Jean Malcolm Margaret.Malcolm@op.ac.nz

Appendix 2: Examples of Consent Forms

Part 2, Workshop 2

Project Title - Impact of play on learning, creativity and spirituality

I have read the information sheet concerning this pilot project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:

- My participation in the project is entirely voluntary and I am free to refuse to answer any particular question.
- I am free to stop participating at any time.
- I can choose to withdraw information provided without giving reasons and without any disadvantage.
- The workshop and debrief session will be held via Zoom and will be video recorded, transcribed by the researcher. The video recording will remain confidential and only viewed by the researcher.
- I cannot withdraw any information I have supplied once the data analysis begins most likely in November 2020 or as otherwise advised.
- I am aware that any information will be de-identified, however I am also aware that St John's College is a small community and people may know who is and is not taking part in the research project.
- My data will be retained in secure storage for five years after which it will be destroyed. If it is to be kept longer than five years, my permission will be sought.
- The results of the project will be used towards my doctoral thesis and may be published elsewhere and/or used at a presentation in an academic conference or Church setting, but my anonymity / confidentiality will be preserved.
- I can ask to receive a copy of the research findings

I agree to take part in this project under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions (2020) it may not be possible to send a copy of the signed form to the researcher so please send an email consenting to your participation and a form can be signed once restrictions are lifted.

…… (signature of participant)

…… (full name of participant – please PRINT)

…… (signature of researcher)

…… (full name of researcher – please PRINT)

…… (date)

This project has been reviewed and approved by OPREC

Part 2, Workshop 2

Project Title - Impact of play on learning, creativity, and spirituality

I have read the information sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage. I know that:

- My participation in the project is entirely voluntary and I am free to refuse to answer any particular question.
- I am free to stop participating at any time.
- I can choose to withdraw information provided without giving reasons and without any disadvantage.
- The debrief sessions and the conversations will be audio recorded, transcribed by the researcher, or if necessary, an independent transcriber (subject to a confidentiality agreement).
- I cannot withdraw any information I have supplied once the data analysis begins most likely in January 2021 or as otherwise advised.
- I am aware that any information will be de-identified, however I am also aware that St John's College is a small community and people may know who is and is not taking part in the research project.
- My data will be retained in secure storage for five years after which it will be destroyed. If it is to be kept longer than five years, my permission will be sought.
- The results of the project will be used towards my doctoral thesis and may be published elsewhere and/or used at a presentation in an academic conference or Church setting, but my anonymity / confidentiality will be preserved.
- I can ask to receive a copy of the research findings

I agree to take part in this project under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

…… (signature of participant)

…… (full name of participant – please PRINT)

…… (signature of researcher)

…… (full name of researcher – please PRINT)

…… (date)

This project has been reviewed and approved by OPREC

Rev'd Helen Wilderspin, post graduate student at St John's College.

Part 3, Consent form for individual participants in the 2021 Tārai waka liturgical exploration

Project Title - Impact of play on learning, creativity, spirituality, and worship

Introduction

I am fascinated by the role of play in the development of creativity, learning and spirituality. As a result, I am undertaking a research project for my Doctor of Professional Practice (Otago Polytechnic). I am looking at whether play (an imaginative and enjoyable activity), and being playful, can help someone to be more creative. I would also like to understand the impact of play on one's spirituality and engagement with God. Play in this research project is about creative play and not 'play' in terms of games or a scripted/theatrical play. Creative play is about using a person's experience, imagination, and the things around them to create new ideas, new ways of seeing and new possibilities for the person and for others.

This phase of the research is an exploration of the ongoing impact of the tārai waka creative play session on the group's liturgical and worship practices. I would like to include observational data (my notes taken after the group sessions and chapel worship, as well as journal entries and some email/Facebook posts) in my dissertation. This data collected will be limited to the tārai waka discussions on preparing for our worship sessions at College, reflections on services (from emails, Facebook posts) as well as any debrief that is held.

I know that:

- My participation in this project is entirely voluntary.
- I am free to stop participating at any time.
- I can choose to withdraw information provided without giving reasons and without any disadvantage.

- Notes (observations and reflections) will be made by the researcher. The sessions will not be recorded.
- I cannot withdraw any information I have supplied once the data analysis begins most likely in June - July 2021 or as otherwise advised.
- I am aware that any information will be de-identified, however I am also aware that St John's College is a small community and people may know who is and is not taking part in the research project.
- My data will be retained in secure storage for five years after which it will be destroyed. If it is to be kept longer than five years, my permission will be sought.
- I will receive a copy of the chapter on this section of the project (tārai waka) to view. I can also ask to receive a copy of the full research findings at the end of the doctorate.
- The results of the project will be used towards Helen's doctoral thesis and may be published elsewhere and/or used at a presentation in an academic conference or Church setting, but my anonymity / confidentiality will be preserved.

I agree to take part in this project under the conditions noted above.

…… (signature of participant)

…… (full name of participant – please PRINT)

…… (signature of researcher)

…… (full name of researcher – please PRINT)

…… (date)

This project has been reviewed and approved by OPREC

Rev'd Helen Wilderspin, post graduate student at St John's College.

Appendix 3: Focus group Debrief Questions

Part 2 - Workshop 1

- What was the best moment for you in the workshop and why?
- What challenged you and why?
- What did you learn about creative play that you might like to use in the future when leading or creating liturgical worship?

Email questions sent after the workshop

- What three words best describe your experience of this online workshop process?
- What aspects of the process worked well for you, and why?
- What suggestions do you have for the facilitation of future online workshops?

Part 2 - Workshop 2

- What was the best moment for you in the workshop, and why?
- What challenged you, and why?
- In terms of creative play, was there anything that we did that you might use elsewhere or that you might use again?
- Were there any new insights about God/ the holy for you in the workshop?
- Was there anything else that you learned or appreciated from the workshop?
- What would you like to learn more of? As I think about the next workshop, what would you like to do more of, or other things that you might like to learn?
- This is about my role as a facilitator. What do you think contributed most for your own learning and creativity? What helped you? What did I do that helped?
- Is there anything different that I could do next time, which would be helpful?

Part 2 - Workshop 3

- What was the best moment in the workshop and why?
- What challenged you and why?
- Were there any God moments? Aha moments in the workshop?

- Are there any of the creative play strategies I used in the workshop that you might use in future worship services and liturgy? Or elsewhere?
- What are some of the advantages of either face-to-face or online workshops and what are some of the disadvantages? What did you like about both and what didn't you like about either of them?

Part 3 - Focus group debrief session at end of Tārai Waka Creative Play Session - 26 March 2021

- What was the best moment for you and why?
- What in the session challenged you?
- What did you learn about yourself today, anything new or was it a reminder?
- What were the things that I did that you might like to learn more of or do more of? Is there anything from that session that you might like to see happen again?
- Anything else you want to offer? Any feedback on how I led it or facilitated the session?

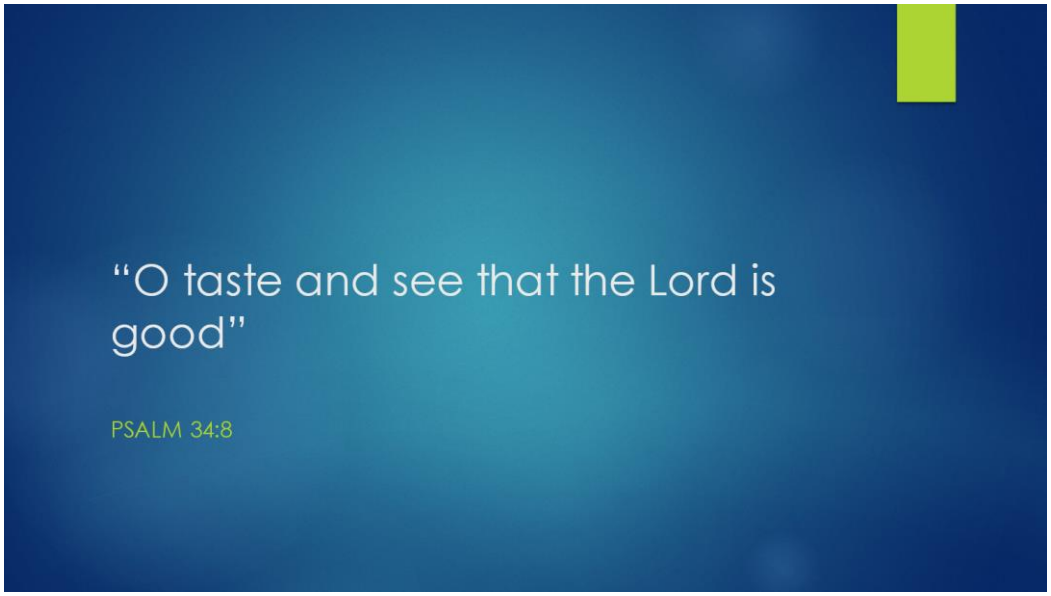
Part 3 - Tārai Waka Final Focus group Debrief - 29 October 2021

- What has been the highlight about our worship and what we've offered the wider College community?
- Has the creativity we experienced as a group, spilled over into other things you've been doing at St. John's college?
- Are there other things that might have got in the way of how the group has functioned and how we've lead worship? What are some of the positives and also some of the barriers?
- How has what we've done and the worship we've offered contributed to your faith and your relationship with God?

Appendix 4: Part 1 – Role of Priest: Creative Play and Liturgical Worship

I created the following PowerPoint slides for an online worship service held on 28 August 2021. I was new to creative play in online worship and as a result I used the slides to represent the action/activity rather than being creative in themselves. The creative play aspects included the imaginative activity and the music YouTube video.

I welcomed everyone to the service and then moved into the PowerPoint presentation. I controlled the timing of the slides but James (the other contributor) would introduce different parts such as the opening sentence (slide 2) and reading Psalm 95 (slide 3). Before the blessing (slide 6) we played a YouTube video (https://youtu.be/FJdFKYZRxcM).



Through Jesus
let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God,
the fruit of lips that acknowledge God's name.

Open our lips, O Lord;
and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

PSALM 95

1 O COME, LET US SING TO THE LORD;
LET US SHOUT WITH JOY TO THE ROCK OF OUR SALVATION!
2 LET US COME INTO GOD'S PRESENCE WITH THANKSGIVING;
AND SING TO THE LORD WITH PSALMS OF TRIUMPH

3 FOR YOU LORD ARE A GREAT GOD,
AND A GREAT KING ABOVE ALL GODS.
4 IN YOUR HAND ARE THE DEPTHS OF THE EARTH;
SO ALSO ARE THE HEIGHTS OF THE MOUNTAINS.
5 THE SEA IS YOURS, AND YOU MADE IT,
AND THE DRY LAND ALSO, WHICH YOU HAVE FASHIONED.

6 O COME, LET US BOW DOWN AND WORSHIP,
LET US KNEEL BEFORE THE LORD OUR MAKER!
7 FOR THE LORD IS OUR GOD,
AND WE ARE THE LORD'S PEOPLE,
THE FLOCK THAT GOD SHEPHERDS.

O taste and see that God is good – reflection using the senses

At the end there will be a minute or so of silence and I'll ring a bell to conclude the period of silence.

(ADAPTED FROM "PRAYING WITH THE FIVE SENSES", DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER)

Music YouTube video– Bethel Music Kids
https://youtu.be/FJdFKYZRxcM

"O taste and see"

Blessing

Go in peace to love and serve Christ and the world.
And may God the Creator go on creating within us,
God in Jesus Christ sit at table in our midst
And the Spirit lead us in the dance of life.
Amen.

Dorothy McRae-McMahon

Appendix 5: Part 2 – Role of Teacher: Experiential Learning in Creative Play Workshops

Workshop 1 session script

In this appendix, I note the activities I created and led in workshop 1. In several of the sections I use my actual wording from the transcripts.

Opening exercise

In preparation for the pilot workshop, I emailed the participants and asked them to consider the following question: what has been a positive experience of play for you? I then asked them to bring an object or an image that represented that experience.

I facilitated a conversation where we talked about the object/image we had selected in response to the above question.

I then asked if there were any new reflections in the light of others comments.

Activity 1 – gift wrapping feelings

"Now, what I would like you to do…is take one of the images that you heard and I'd like you to gift wrap it. Put it in a box of whatever size and cover it with something. Whatever colour it might be, it might have a bow or it mightn't. Take a moment and just think about it because we are going to gift it to each other. So, I'd like you to put it into a box, take a moment to think about the box, and to wrap it up.

[Time for everyone to do the activity]

Imagine you're lifting the box and think about how heavy it might be, what sort of shape it is, is it slippery paper or is it quite firm? Get a sense of it. And I'd like you to pass it to someone else.

[A pause while the participants pass their gifts to one another]

Now I want you to keep them on your desk. And either at the end of the session or during the week if you need a bit of something to help you think about being playful, or imaginative or bit of freedom, I want you to open that box, and I want you to see what's inside. Leave it for the moment and then throughout the week see what might come out of the box."

Activity 2 – attuning our senses

Ahead of time, I asked the participants to bring a piece of food for this activity.

"Now, I'm going to help us get attuned to our senses. Remember I asked you to get either a nut or a piece of dried fruit or something like that.

Take your piece of whatever. And I want you to put it in the palm of your hand. It's probably a good idea not to have chocolate, though, because it might melt and make quite a mess [some laughter is heard].

Okay, I want you to hold it in your hand, if you want to close your eyes, and I'll talk you through a little exercise.

Take a moment to get a sense of what is in the palm of your hand. Is it heavy or light? Is it hard or soft, or in between? What does it feel like, has it got a texture? Is it sticky or …? Basically, feel the object.

Now lift it to your nose and smell it. Has it got a scent or a smell? Is it sweet or savoury?

I'd like you to put it in your mouth. Don't chew or anything, just feel it in your mouth. What is the texture or the taste?

Get a sense of it on the tongue.

Now, I want you to bite into it. And just get a sense of that immediate taste.

[A pause while people eat the piece of food]

Okay, so you can open your eyes and share what that was like, what was it like to do that?"

Discussion

There were a few minutes of discussion about the experience. When I thought that it was time to move on, I ended with an observation, "I guess one of the things that it does is help you pay attention, pay attention differently in more depth than you probably would ordinarily. And one of the things it's supposed to do is help anchor your senses and ground you."

Activity 3 - (pretend) baking bread

In this activity, I led the group in an exercise aimed at increasing the participants' imaginations by miming the baking of bread. I ended this activity with a piece from the bible.

"In this exercise, I'd like to use our imaginations… So, what we're going to do is we're going to use a precious resource, some flour and we are going to make some bread.

I want you to imagine that you've got everything laid out on in front of you. So, you've got your flour and you've got your yeast. And you've got some sugar, water, bit of salt…

I want you to get your bowl. So, imagine the bowl. (Now if some of you need to blank your screens, that's okay, we're focusing on our own stuff so don't feel embarrassed or anything). Put it [the bowl] in front of you and put about three cups of flour in the bowl. So just get some of the flour, as if you were doing it. And try not to sneeze when the flour goes puff [I mime sneezing].

So you've got your three cups of flour in the bowl and just push it to one side. And then in another little bowl put probably have a tablespoon of yeast… a teaspoon of sugar and a little bit of hot water… Have a look and you see the yeast bubble up and you'll get this quite strong scent coming up, strong smell, yeasty, moist. Just let it bubble up, and as you can probably feel it, the bowl is quite warm…

Now what I want you to do is bring back the bowl of flour. Put that yeast in the flour and get a big wooden spoon and I want you to mix it in the bowl [I make the actions as if I am really mixing the flour and yeast]. And then just tap it on the side of the bowl to get rid of some [of the flour], good. Now this is the fun part, you're going to put your hands in it and really move it all around, feel the water and the yeast and flour all mixing up. It's a bit sticky so just watch that you don't touch anything else. Give it a good mix round and then tip it onto a board or a floured board which you've prepared earlier. I want you to knead it, knead it with your knuckles, fold it over and knead it again. Feel how resistant it is, keep folding it over and do it again. Just until the dough starts to smooth, smooth out. So once it is smooth I want you to put it back in the bowl, put it in a warm spot, for a while for it to rise.

You might want to wash your hands as they're quite sticky or wipe them down your jeans (no-one's looking!).

Now turn on the oven and we're going to discover the bread has risen (now I know it's very fast but this is make-believe time). I want you to form the dough into six rolls and put them on the tray and then into the oven. As we let the bread bake I'm going to tell you a little story:

The Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into three measures of flour until all of it was leavened' (Matt 13:3). Now the bread is cooked, take it out of the oven and put it in front of you and take a moment to look at the leavened bread and the rolls that you have created and sit with it and let the bread and the story of what the kingdom of heaven is like sit with you for a moment… break one of the rolls and get that wonderful smell, and then eat some of it… This is what the Kingdom of Heaven is like.

We'll put the bread aside for a moment (and you can have it for afternoon tea). I'll give you a moment to think about the baking of the bread and what the Kingdom of God is like…

Now I know that maybe you felt like you were making real bread but what were your impressions and what was it like to hear that scripture passage? What are your reflections?"

Discussion

I led the group in a discussion reflecting on the activity especially with respect to the verse from scripture (Matt 13:3). At the end we had a few minutes break and then moved into the focus group debrief.

Workshop 2 session script

In this appendix, I have included my script for use in Workshop 2.

Opening activity:

Play an opening game such as “if I was a shop what type of shop would I be and why?”

Image/object of creative play:

Ask them to bring an image or an object that represents a positive experience of creative play for them (similar to what I did in the online pilot).

Think a bit more about that experience, what was it that was important, what are some of the feelings associated with it? Who was involved?

When you think about playfulness what does it mean to you?

Warm up activity

Do some physical warm up games:

Roll shoulders gently, then arms, feet and then legs, stretch up and out, do a circle, shake loose.

Walk around the room while I call out whether it is a slow walk, fast, through mud, hot sand, the sea etc. Taking a dog for a walk…

Magic ball

Ask the participants to close their eyes and imagine that I have placed a ball of some sort on their hands, then I will say what it is, they then use that ball in some way e.g. pretend to play with a tennis ball, basketball/volleyball, balloon, cricket ball, bubble, beach ball, bubble gum, marble, ping pong ball.

[Idea from Hensman, 1984].

Improvised play

Have a number of props available for people to play with one another, and to use them in ways that are not typical e.g. using a shoe as a tennis racquet and that involve them in play with one another e.g. sharing a pot of soup (an empty bucket), using an enormous ladle (an old shoe) to scoop it into plates (hats) (Hensman, 1984, p. 20). They can use noises but cannot speak using words and "you accept each other's fantasy. For example, if someone indicates that the 'phone is for you', you answer it rather than complaining that you 'didn't hear that stupid shoe ringing'" (Hensman, 1984, pp. 20–21).

Divide the group into twos or threes. Ask each group to choose a place e.g. a café or a library, to create an imaginary world within which they then invite the rest of the group to participate in. Each group takes turns in their imaginary world. They can use whatever objects that they would like from within the room.

Invite people to help put the objects away and then to sit in chairs placed in a circle. Explain that there will be an opportunity to debrief and talk about the activity after the break.

Hat box - the kingdom of God is like...

Imagine the most wonderful thing that anybody could give you, now I want you to imagine that it is in this hat box. When it comes to you, look inside the box and show us by your facial expression, your handling of the object what it might be. You don't need to tell us what it is, just take a moment to enjoy it, play with it and then put it back in the box, shut the lid and pass it to the next person. [Once everybody has had a turn get them to be still and sit with all the feelings, experience of that object was for them. Then say:

"...the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it." (Matt 12: 45-46)].

Workshop 3 session script

In this appendix I include the words I used from the transcript and some additional information for clarity

Opening exercise - sharing stories

Prior to the workshop, I asked the participants to think about a worship service where they experienced God most fully or when they had a strong sense of God's presence. As the opening exercise of the workshop we all shared our experiences.

Activity 1 – planting an imaginary (magic) seed

In the first activity, I led the participants' in planting an imaginary seed through miming a variety of actions. I mentioned that this miming technique could be used in the sermon itself or one of the scripture readings.

"I want you to imagine that I'm giving each of you a seed. Now put it [the seed] in your hand. The seed can be any size or shape. Take a moment to look at the seed in your hand.

Is it a tiny seed or a big seed?

Is it soft or is it hard?

What does it look like? What colour is it? Is it a deep dark brown or is it a light brown or is it yellowish or is it green? We'll take a moment to have a look at that seed.

Now this is a seed that we don't know exactly what it might turn into. So, it's a kind of an unknown one. And it's one that you haven't seen before.

I'd like you to put it down for a moment and get out of your chair and go over and imagine that there's a container of soil over to the side and you want to grab the container of soil and bring it over so you can plant the seed.

Take a moment to smell the soil. What sort of aroma has it got, what does it smell like?

What does it feel like? Is it cold, or warm, or is it moist?

Take the seed and plant it in the soil quite deep, so push it right in and then pat the top. Grab some water and you are going to pour it on top of it. Put it somewhere where there's lots of sun.

Now because it's a magic seed, it's going to grow very fast. So I want you to take a moment and watch as it kind of pokes its head out the top of the soil and starts to grow.

What's it like? What are the leaves like? What's the colour, is it a bright green? Is it a dark green?

Are the leaves shiny or slightly furry, sharp or soft and rounded?

So, once it gets to about a foot, is it growing flowers or fruit? Is it a big one [plant]? Is it a giant one, is it big, or is it a kind of delicate one [plant]?

What sort of flowers? Has it got flowers, or it mightn't have any? If it has a bit of fruit, what's the fruit like?

Pick it up and give it a quick smell because plants have a wonderful scent.

And if you're not able to do it now it might be worth finding one next time you're in the garden and give it a bit of a smell.

Take a moment and look at this plant… Where might God be? The garden, the seed or the plant? Or the action of planting, the end result? The flowers or the fruit? Is it [God] the sun or the water? Where do you think God might be?"

[Time for responses to the questions]

Activity 1 Debrief

After the activity ended, I led the group in a time of reflection on the exercise, a short debrief session. I made sure that there was time for discussion as well as the opportunity to ask questions of myself or others.

Activity 2 – praying with the Senses

For the second activity, I used a resource one of the participants had found that focused on using the senses to pray. I intended to use the resource in a worship service the following week, and I mentioned to the group that I thought that I would try it out on them first.

"If you want to you can blank your screens. And then you won't feel like I'm looking at you with your eyes closed… [In this exercise] I'll focus on the sense of taste.

[I read from the prayer resource] 'so the sense of taste goes beyond the experience of eating and drinking. The taste of wine can speak to us of joy. The taste of a meal cooked for you can speak of love and friendship. What have you tasted today? What does that remind you of? Take a few moments and speak with God, about all that you have tasted, and all the memories that have come to you today' (Diocese of Rochester, n.d.).

After a couple of minutes, I'll ring the bell and that will end the time of prayer.

[After five minutes I ring a hand bell]

Thanks be to God, Amen."

Activity 2 debrief

As with activity 1, I lead the group in a reflective session to discuss the exercise and their impressions. I begin with the following observations, "Now the exercise or the activity that Jane sent me does have five senses. So you could do five, … [such as] smell and touch. You could have them on a sheet of paper and people could take the time either outside of the service or during a service. And move around the room, there could be things that they could touch and sit with. There's a whole range of things that you can do with it, but I thought I'd give you that little snippet as another example. And of course, we're online so it's hard for me to set up things throughout the space, but you could then go to or light the candle and all that sort of thing. And in different settings there might be some things that work better than others or might not work at all."

Activity 3 - Sharing of ideas about useful resources for including creativity in worship services

In this third activity, I share some ideas (and key aspects) for including creativity in worship services. Others also contribute either resources they have found or ask questions.

“It's really helpful if in activity like what we've done, it starts with the self. So, the individual or whatever needs to connect and then you go out {from that]. But if you go out too far to start with no-one can connect with it. If you are going to do something creative then either you get people moving around a space where they can pick up things, touch things or they think about an experience or a memory that they've come up with. Because they might not always connect with your own experience or memory, if that makes sense? And keep in mind that the kingdom of God and the good news is not necessarily just what we hear, it's everything else as well. And think about what might the good news be to people outside of the church. Is it the taste thing, smelling, touching, feeling, rather than just listening?

…Every now and again I am inspired from out of the blue, but normally it's when I've read something and then I'll take it that one bit further or I'll think about my own church setting. Is it for children, is it all ages, is it mainly for those over 60-70 years old? And then make it work within that setting with something that they'll understand. I go to places like Google, although that can take you all over the place. But there's a good New Zealand one called STRANDNZ. And they have a section called ‘Connectable’ which they go through each of the Sundays of the year with the lectionary and they have ideas and all age stories, they have some games. So there might be something, and that will just spark you and you think, Oh, I could use that. Another good one are the worship resources from the United Church of Canada. And they are also really interesting, they have a full range of ideas, stories, all age conversations. Yes, that's based on the Lectionary as well… Another one which was really good …it’s called ‘Text this week’. Again, it’s based on the lectionary but you go right to the end of the page and it has children's resources and then that links to other websites and that's where I often get my ideas from… there is the Lectionary Story Bible.

Godly play, I know about it, and I took part in one kind of workshop, but I haven't been able to get to any since. They do have a set way of doing things, it's quite prescriptive, so you go through a whole series. So, it's almost like you need a group of the same children, … week after week that you can do things with. And the adults help the children to learn, rather than it being everyone learning together. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is another one which is supposed to be very good in terms of everyone learning. But again, I'm not sure, culturally, what will be useful when you go back home. And I'm happy to do some more researching and things, or if you find things that might work for you to… Anyway, that's as far as I got really with looking things up.

The other thing I thought, and we've got a little bit of time before all three of you probably go at the end of the year, there will be some worship services. Whether you wanted to get together and plan out maybe a little section of a worship service. So rather than, you don't need to do the whole thing using creativity, but it might be a wonderful part like I did with that prayer or with the seed and give it a go, that's another thing that we could do."

I ended the activities with everyone sharing their worship ideas.

Appendix 6: Part 3 – Role of Facilitator: College Tārai Waka

Tārai waka creative play workshop (26 March 2021) session outline

At the beginning, I gave instructions regarding the overall plan of the session reiterating what I had sent in the email. The first few minutes were an opportunity for people to settle in and eat their lunches. As we ate each of us shared our response to the question – "if you were a shop what would you be?"

Once everyone had had a chance to share and had eaten their lunch we went outside and stood under some trees on a patch of grass. I asked them to make various movements such as moving through sticky gooey mud, on hot sand, and through waves in the sea. We then played some games with imaginary balls, for example a basketball, volleyball, ping pong ball, cricket ball, netball. Following on from this activity, I gave them some imaginary chewing gum, and encouraged them to decide on a flavour and then blow bubbles.

Following on from blowing imaginary bubble gum, I led us back inside to talk about our childhood memories arising from our play. I asked questions facilitating people's positive memories of childhood. I also asked if these good experiences, or at least the essence of them, were still occurring today and what that might be like.

After the remembrance activity, it was almost time to finish so I passed around the hatbox and said that there was an imaginary gift from God in it for them, and for them to take it away as a reminder of today. There was an opportunity to share what their gift was if they wanted to.

Tārai waka Appreciative Inquiry session outline

I asked the group 3 questions:

What was the best moment/experience for you in a worship service?

What was the moment/experience like?

What would you like to see happening in our tārai waka worship services going forward?