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Covid-19, Virtual Church Services and a new Temporary Geography of Home

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown measures implemented by the United Kingdom government from 23 March 2020 led to unprecedent adaptations from individuals and communities including places of worship, their clergy and congregations. This paper through a multi-disciplinary dialogue between human geography and theology explores the interrelations between place, space and the spiritual. It identifies the bricolage mechanisms that were developed rapidly by churches to shift towards providing virtual church services. This was an uncommon practice by Christian denominations in the UK. Covid-19 changed the rules requiring new practices to emerge resulting in a new form of infrasecular space to emerge. Such rapid transformations through the provision of online services and virtual embeddedness blurred the lines between sacred and secular spaces. During virtual services, the minister's home is temporally linked to the homes of congregants forming an intersacred space. Homes and spaces within homes are transformed into temporary sacred spaces.

Key words: Covid-19, churches, virtual services, geography of religion, intersacred space, infrasecular space.

By the end of March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic had forced one in five people around the globe to stay home. In the United Kingdom, these lockdown measures included the closure of churches, chapels, mosques and synagogues. Christianity is an incredibly diverse religion, but for almost all Christian traditions, Church attendance is one of the foundations of spiritual life associated with worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry and mission (Warren 1995). The word church has multiple meanings – buildings, institutions and congregations. For the congregations, lockdown prevented them from engaging in shared worship, pastoral care and other congregational activities through being copresent in the same place of worship. Pastoral care continued building on established practices including regular telephone calls and the use of social media (e.g WhatApp care groups). Live streaming, and recording church services, as part of everyday practice was uncommon in the United Kingdom until Covid-19 lockdown compared to the United States or Australia. Most English places of worship, their clergy and congregations had no experience of live streaming, or recording services, and this paper focuses on exploring their ability to respond rapidly to closure of church buildings.

The function, status, role, use and representation of religious spaces has changed significantly over time reflecting major socio-economic, demographics and urban changes (Dwyer 2016; Vincent and Warf 2002). What is not always appreciated is how such moves are driven by theological understandings of the nature and goals of worship and the Church. Mediaeval churches were designed to take worshippers on a journey to the heavenlies, leaving behind the secular world at the lychgate and ascending step by step to the High Altar (Duffy 1992). The classic British 18th-19th century nonconformist chapel design prioritises the pulpit rather than the altar as the centrepiece of the worship experience, whereas the much more utilitarian new churches often feel rather unadorned, often featuring large stage areas to accommodate a worship band. These protestant nonconformist 'new churches' which emerged since the 1980s are often based around relational networks rather than denominational structures (Kay 2007), and many started out in homes before expanding into school or community halls. In some ways sacred spaces have become less distinctive over time. These theological imperatives connect well to insights from human geography.

Recently, della Dora (2018) has argued for a shift from postsecular narratives to the development of "infrasecular' geographies. This is a multifaceted argument, part of which concerns the transformation of 'sacred space' to "incorporate both religious and secular functions, thus calling our attention to the third, interstitial and fluid, dimension of the infrasecular (whereby 'infra-' is conflicted with 'intra')" (2018, p.59). In this account, an 'infrasecular space' blends the secular and the sacred, with churches operating as social centres as well as sites for the performance of their religious functions. This paper engages with della Dora's call for a new infrasecular geography, but in the context of Covid-19 with a focus on virtual services led by ministers with no prior experience of on-line worship.

Religious buildings act as physical, social and cultural symbols within urban and rural landscapes (Jones 2000). But, what happens when they are closed by state intervention? From 23 March 2020, religious buildings have become liminal, in-between spaces, sometimes open for private prayer but closed for public worship. As a result, religious denominations have been transitioning towards widespread adoption of telemediated virtual worship forms, very different from professionally broadcast Sunday services. For virtual services severed from church buildings, worshipers are present together in experience, and, potentially, in time, but not in place. Virtual services can be livestreamed or recorded, edited and delivered as real time experiences, but are digitally stored and open to all. Such an approach de-temporalizes the

service and sustains its purpose beyond a specific time and date, being in principle more spatially and socially inclusive. Covid-19 prompted rapid shifts in practice testifying to the ability of church leaders to innovate, improvise and adopt processes of bricolage (Miner *et al*. 2001). It transformed homes, via telemediated worship, into infrasecular 'places' or more precisely intersacred 'places' in which homes become linked together to share in common worship.

Our methodology reflects our interest in researching a topic during a time of national emergency when all those involved were locked down in their homes. The research design is based on a comparative case study analysis of adaptation strategies of individual congregations and their on-line services during the UK Covid-19 lockdown leading to a range of spatio-temporal impermanent transformations. The method was desk-based research and participant observation of 35 virtual services (Church of England, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Pentecostal). These services were available on open social media platforms, including Facebook, and were often extensively promoted by their host churches. The method included searching social media and sampling lists of virtual services collated by central church authorities, identifying examples of experimentation or innovative practice, and following through on developments in a number of congregations from Sunday 15 March to 12 April 2020 (Easter Sunday). Sampling was based on exploring different denominations, small and large congregations and urban and rural churches. We selected one church in a small town for more detailed analysis. This case is representative of thousands of other cases in which domestic settings have been incorporated into virtual services and new practices emerged as Covid-19 changed the rules of everyday worship.

This is the first paper on virtual services during Covid-19. We here call for a deeper dialogue to emerge between debates in theology and human geography and for further research on virtual services. We argue that what emerged is a new time-space geography of telemediated worship which is challenging the pre-Covid-19 separation between spaces set aside for worship and homes. New temporary geographies of home have emerged linking congregants' domestic setting to worship spaces (often the vicar or priest's home) creating temporary 'infrasecular spaces' blurring the boundaries between sacred and secular spaces. To do so, we first engage with the interface between religion and geography to discuss the embeddedness of worship within place and space. Drawing upon Bourdieu's work on field and habitus we develop a new concept of 'intersacred' space. We then move to deconstructing how telemediated virtual services resonate with sacred and infrasecular places and how rapid bricolage mechanisms led to blend the secular and the sacred in domestic settings. We identify and discuss bricolage strategies in various settings including different adaptative mechanisms. We conclude by focussing on one case before drawing broader conclusions.

Embedding Worship in Place and Space

The religious and the spiritual have long been considered by geographers to be an important part of the everyday experiences, emotions and routines of individuals (Sopher 1967; Holloway and Valins 2002; Tuan 2010). These contributions have focused on positioning the geography of the religious as part of the sub-discipline of cultural (Hollowy and Valins 2002; Dewsbury and Cloke 2009; Yorgason & della Dora 2009) and historical geography (Gay 1971). Christian theology has long acknowledged the importance of place, recognising purposefully-consecrated ground and buildings, and, indeed, the very concept of pilgrimage that is so important to many Christian traditions reflects a prioritisation of particular physical locations as distinctively holy, perhaps because of miraculous experiences or visions that had occurred

there, or because they housed important relics, but sometimes simply because of their antiquity as a place of worship (Davies 1994). However, theologians have most frequently emphasised the importance of *space* rather than *place*, working often from the assumption that sacred *space* is preferable conceptually as "more abstract than 'place'" (Inge 2003, p.1), less associated purely with physical locality, accommodating of the temporal, and more open to recognition of the primary importance of the religious experience which occurs there. Bittarello (2009) notes the additional complexity that the internet brings to the appreciation of the sacred, arguing that full appreciation of the capacity of the internet to generate sacred space depends first on the creation of appropriate digital sacred places. Thousands of such places have been created during the Covid-19 crisis.

The interface between geography and religion "yields an immensely large and varied set of questions' and yet there was a "reluctance to venture into what are considered more tangential areas" (King 1990, p.367-368). Within geography there have been "various attempts at finding new vocabularies to describe the spatialities of contemporary religious practices and 'grounded theologies'" (della Dora 2018, p.44). The focus of della Dora's analysis is partly on historic church structures and the adoption of new functions and meanings, collective remembering and forgetting for exploring 'multi-functional' churches "that captures simultaneity and fluidity, while retaining focus on material specificities" (2018, p.65). The emphasis is placed on everyday experiences. There are two challenges to consider here: first, to distinguish between formally consecrated places (churches or chapels) and their congregants; second, to differentiate between such consecrated places and other sites where religious and spiritual activities occur. Christianity, in common with most major religious traditions, has its 'holy places' that are set apart for worship, yet most Christian traditions recognise the inherent sacredness of the worship experience over the location where it occurs. Worship can happen anywhere – street, workplace, home. Although these transitory locations, or interplaces (Phelps 2017), are set aside only momentarily compared to consecrated buildings, they can still be temporary holy places when used for worship.

A religious service brings people together to engage in shared worship, generally including the shared singing of hymns or psalms, scripture reading and its exposition in sermons, shared and individual prayer and often participation in the Eucharist or Holy Communion. Whilst in some contexts, it is the *continuity* of worship that is so significant (that is, the thought that worship has continued uninterrupted at a location for over a thousand years, even if this has been through the solitary private prayers of a single priest), it is important for most Christians that such rituals proceed in the context of a supportive fellowship of co-believers. Attending and participating in shared worship is a central pillar of religious life based on close intertwining between individuals. Fellowship shapes the relationships between people and place through the development of relationships that are centred in shared worship. These principles have been disrupted by social distancing measures and lockdown.

A church is embedded within a place whilst facilitating or enhancing the local embeddedness of members around their shared identity (Arguile 2011). Membership of a church involves religious observance but also a form of investment in a particular place of worship and in its people. The latter includes contributing to enhancing local social infrastructure through "not only Sunday Services and life-cycle events of baptism, marriage and burial, but also many midweek social and educational activities" (Dennis and Daniels 1981, p.18). This contribution to local embeddedness includes pastoral counselling and support. Embeddedness has a long history in the social sciences (Granovetter 1974, 1985) emphasising the importance of socio-spatial embeddedness combining notions of social capital and networks (Scott 2006, p.57). In

this sociologically-informed analysis, individuals are social agents within wider social structures. This literature has made valuable contributions to understanding people and organisations in place, but it offers "only limited insight in identifying embeddedness as a continual process of adaptation" (Salder and Bryson 2019). This is a key point. Individuals and organisations continually adapt to alterations in their external environment and to technological innovation. Firms can adopt innovative bricolage processes to rapidly adjust to sudden changes ensuring survival (Miner *et al*. 2001). Covid-19 and the shift to telemediated religious services across small to large-size congregations reflects such a form of adaptation based on established localised relationships. Embeddedness may involve relationships that stretch across space linking different places. Alternatively, localised embeddedness is fixed in place as it is established on distinctive place-based social relationships, territorial capital and modes of asset mobilisation which "are deeply embedded in the local social structure and reflect a very particular history" (Hamdouch *et al*. 2017, p.470).

The theological literature has explored the relationships between religion, social embeddedness and trust. This debate has considered congregational social embeddedness as "a major factor associated with multiple dimensions of religiosity" (Stroope 2012, p.290) building upon Durkheim's ([1912], 1995) analysis of social immersion within a community of worshippers A key issue is the relationship between church membership and wider engagement with a local community through church activities that "both directly and indirectly foster social outreach through civic engagement, generating bridging social capital that connects them to the wider society" (Welsh *et al*. 2007, p.39). This engages with some of the more recent theological literature exploring "the 'geographical turn' in social theory" and the "renewed appreciation of locality and 'place' within Christian theology" (Rumsey 2017, p.11). The recent work of Andrew Rumsey is interesting in this regard. Rumsey was appointed Bishop of Ramsbury, Diocese of Salisbury, in 2018 and in 2017 he developed "an Anglican theology of place"; a "pastoral or theological geography of the Anglican parish - in effect, to begin answering the question of *what kind of place is it*?" (2017, p.4).

Through his reading of Massey (2005) and Soja (1996), Rumsey appreciates that "space is always being reproduced, ever 'under construction'" and is open to multiple possibilities (Rumsey 2017, p.71). This aligns with della Dora's discussion of fluid "infrasecular places", both spiritual and secular, in effect acting as "…'third spaces' constantly open to processes of hybridization, to the re-negotiation of boundaries and of cultural (and religious) identity" (2018, p.62). These infrasecular worship spaces continually negotiate and re-negotiate their relationships with place and between spiritual and secular geography. Rumsey's engagement with a theology of place is part of an on-going debate on the relationship between the spiritual and place (Sheldrake 2001; Inge 2003). This literature engages with on-going debates in human geography but has been largely ignored in geographical debates. This is unfortunate as the theological literature can inform the geographical debate on the place, sacred space and spiritual plexus.

For Covid-19, Rumsey's theological geography is important as it highlights the links between home, parish and worship. In this analysis he quotes Sibley's observation that "geography tends to stop at the garden gate" (Sibley 1995; Rumsey 2017, p.74). A geography of the home has emerged that takes the analysis past the garden gate (Jarvis 2005). This includes three cross-cutting components in which the home is "simultaneously material and imaginative; the nexus between home, power and identity; and home as multi-scalar" (Blunt and Dowling 2006, p.22). In 2012, Brickell called for further research on critical geographies of homes to explore "theoretical paths from the sensory to the temporal" (2012, p.238). What is absent from this

critical geography is a focus on homes, faith, religion, theology and temporary configurations. It is this nexus that is the focus of this paper including exploring new geographies of home which emerged with Covid-19.

Rumsey is very aware that homes can be another form of della Dora's "infrasecular places" (2018) in which:

> "'Private' interior landscapes, therefore, spill out into the 'public' spatial patterns and social encounters that map the wider community, just as the latter currents flow directly into the home. Parish ministry patrols this threshold between home and community" (Rumsey 2017, p.75).

A home is a multi-scaler nexus in which there are opportunities to combine the spiritual and the secular (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Participation in a virtual service from home represents a moment in which the home is given another meaning as it is temporarily transformed into another form of infrasecular place incorporating religious and secular functions; home linked to home as a shared set of linked infrasecular places. It is this linkage here that matters. This is a complex process including intersections between theological belief and space. A distinction is made by della Dora between infrasecular space and 'intra-' with the latter highlighting "clashes, and intersections between different forms of belief and non-belief" (2018, p.49) that are combined within church buildings that blend the sacred with the secular. There is one important omission from this argument – the 'inter-'. This term is used only once by della Dora to refer to inter-religious relations (2018, p.60).

For virtual services, two homes are linked together through shared worship and a temporary 'intersacred' space is created. Place matters here as these homes are embedded locally including embeddedness in the localisation of shared worship. Bourdieu's concepts of 'fields' and 'habitus' are important for understanding the nature and role of both intersacred and infrasecular spaces. A 'field' is a setting, a social space or arena where activities and practices occur, while 'habitus' "is a system of dispositions, that is of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking. A habitus concerns the regulation of behaviour and is a system of long-lasting (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception, conception and action" (Bourdieu 1990, p.53). Habitus links different 'fields' together. For virtual services, an intersacred space is created in which different places, generally homes, are transformed into inter-linked 'fields' through the application of 'habitus' based on rules, conventions and expectation linked to worship.

Rumsey argues that during extreme conditions "we behave differently when deluged: familiar territory is transfigured, new routes are taken; the myth of independence thawing instantly. Different places: different rules" (2017, p.65). Covid-19 has changed places; the rules and everyday routines and some of these changes will be temporary and some permanent. One change is the widespread adoption of telemediated or virtual services. Open access, on-line intersacred space that emerges during a virtual service provides opportunities for members of congregations in lockdown at home to share in worship as well as for visitors to participate. These might be 'dislocated' visitors who were previously locally embedded but have relocated, or they may be 'strangers from without' who have no direct connection with the congregation.

Telemediated, Virtual services, Sacred and Infrasecular Places

Covid-19 forced all denominations across the UK to experiment with new forms of service delivery. The introduction of telemediated virtual services supports and enhances existing

relationships between church and congregation. This is about maintaining local embeddedness whilst widening access to dislocated worship participants

The service literature emphasises that a service produces a change in an individual or thing that is often co-produced at the same time and in the same place (Hill 1977). Technological innovation has enabled some types of services to be stored and experienced from afar. A key question concerns the difference between participation in a live service encounter compared to one that is stored. There are important differences and many of these reflect an individual's participation within a wider group of people – a shared co-created experience.

The introduction of virtual church services alters the relationship between the individual and the wider fellowship of the congregation. There is a change in the religious experience. But there is also the temporary creation of worship spaces within homes leading to the production of new and temporary geographies of home. Adaptable and a-spatial worship practices have emerged with a new role for domestic space, as materialised spaces for worship or as spaces offering tools to access virtual services. There are two points to make here. First, participating in a virtual service is about setting aside time and space at home for worship. The home becomes part of the worship experience and becomes, for a time, intertwined with a more formal worship space represented online. The interrelationships between family and church reveal how intimate practices and family spaces are permeable, expanding the church into the household and vice versa (Sharma 2012). Second, there have been other times in history when the home became the formal site for religious worship. The meeting spaces for nonconformist worship were open-air spaces and houses in the 17th century (Bagshaw 1851). These house churches were 'sacred spaces', or temporary spaces, set aside through practices and sacred networks resulting in assemblages made and dissolved as part of an on-going process (Woods 2013). The domestic became an unofficial sacred space (Kong 2002) and the boundaries between domestic and worship spaces were blurred.

From a theological perspective, the nature of the sacred provokes many questions regarding place and space. Is it the place, the physical building itself, or the space, the opportunity for encounter and engagement in that location, that should be considered sacred? Why are buildings important to the worshippers who meet in them? How does physical location transform the experience of those who gather there? For Eliade, the profane can be sanctified and transformed by divine engagement. The significance of a physical place of worship comes not from its architectural beauty or its long history as a place of prayer, but more fundamentally because it is a space where God is encountered, where God 'irrupts' or breaks into human society (Eliade 1957). Perhaps this can be true of buildings and homes linked by 'bits and bytes' as well as those built of brick or stone. We are not suggesting that places of worship are now superfluous, but that their boundaries will henceforth prove to be a little more porous. Rapid bricolage has created a new form of temporary infrasecular space blending the secular and the sacred in domestic settings.

Mechanisms and Features of Telemediation and Virtual Worship

Covid-19 transformed formal worship, forcing religious denominations to adapt to the British government's lockdown strategy that created pastoral, theological and logistical challenges. Churches responded with bricolage adaptation mechanisms. First, temporary sacred spaces emerged. The homes of ordained ministers became temporary churches, their libraries or living rooms turned into new form of infrasecular space where remote streaming of services occurred, virtually connecting church members and non-members. Second, the very rapid and sudden

substitution of services held within consecrated buildings by remote streaming has been informed by informal boundary spanning mechanisms in which church learns from other churches through friendship and personal networks; local actions and initiatives translated into educational resources at national level. For example, the Church of England published a beginner's guide to live streaming services on 11 March. It also developed a website to link people with live streamed services. On 10 April, 3209 services were being streamed from across England: 204 in the London diocese, 43 in Worcester, 103 in Hereford and 68 in Newcastle. A key issue is the scale of this process. Each parish, each minister, developed local adaptation strategies.

Building upon those adaptation mechanisms, there are two important points to develop before exploring different approaches to the delivery of telemediated virtual services. First, the clergy involved in developing virtual services and related content are engaged in a rapid learning journey. Not all congregations shared the technical skills to develop online services immediately. For these congregations, the initial response was that services would still be celebrated by ministers in private on behalf of the congregation. The priest of St Wulstan's Catholic Church, Little Malvern, for example, stated in the parish news-sheet for the 29 March 2020 that "Although there will be no public liturgies for the time being, I shall continue to celebrate Mass for the Parish at 9.30am on weekdays in the house and on Sundays at 10.30am in the church". Congregants were provided with the web addresses of two churches that were live streaming Sunday Mass. We identified a range of examples where more technically-able ministers engaged in a continual process of re-inventing service patterns weekly. This highlights an unusual ability to respond to rapidly changing circumstances including developing, testing and delivering new approaches to worship practices. One medium-sized Pentecostal church in the Midlands started broadcasting evening 'homegroups' on Facebook Live straight from its pastor's lounge, offering informal sung worship and a dialogic approach to preaching (answering questions sent in over the internet), which has quickly developed an international attendance well into the hundreds. Attendance, of course, does not in itself mean participation, and is certainly no indicator of commitment to Christianity in itself, let alone to a particular church. Different Christian traditions have different expectations; there are models of corporate worship which require the active participation and engagement of all individual attenders, but equally others more focussed on ritual performance which can happily proceed unobserved in any way, if need be. Those joining online services may often be observers rather than participants, but clearly the churches will hope they can become worshipers.

Second, liturgical religious observance is only one part of the weekly activities undertaken by ministers to support their communities. These activities continued during lockdown, but in a different form including organising food deliveries, collecting prescriptions, providing support for the bereaved, counselling couples whose weddings have been deferred and providing care to the most vulnerable and the isolated. A key role is the important task of conducting pastoral counselling and support online and over the telephone. These are the daily and minute-by-minute activities that reflect the relationships between clergy and place. For some ministers this includes creating new telephone and WhatsApp networks providing support for their congregations and ensuring that their more vulnerable congregants are supported. These everyday activities resonate with the emphasis placed by Massey on the importance of appreciating the "intimately tiny" interrelations and interactions that shape space (2005, p.9). This has much in common with Perec who distinguishes between the emphasis placed in the media on crisis and scandal and the neglect of everyday activity. Thus, the media's focus is on "everything except the daily" (Perec 1973) ignoring Massey's intimately tiny interactions or what Perec terms the 'infra-ordinary'. Perhaps the most important adaptations being developed

by ministers are more about developing alternatives to everyday face-to-face interactions with congregants and members of the local community. This highlights that a church is a group of people who share in common worship, but also support one another; the material space of the church buildings is less important than the social embeddedness they create.

Moving our discussion further, in the earliest days of lockdown, most churches adopted a 'path of least resistance' approach, simply seeking to find a way to get online providing support for their communities. Over a four-week period, ministers used a combination of intuition, creativity and bricolage to enhance the quality, professionalism and variety of on-line outputs. This included adaptation, temporal compression, and innovation within the boundaries of improvisation (Miner *et al*. 2001). This involved experimenting with how the virtual can reflect congregational needs and the skills of those creating online services. In choosing precisely 'how' to go online, churches were confronted with a variety of choices.

The first of these choices was driven theologically as well as pragmatically, and that is, what kind of service should be offered? Options range from a single person conducting a service, through 'living room' worship led from a vicarage or minister's home with informal prayer and some singing accompanied perhaps by a home keyboard or guitar, to (pre-lockdown at least) a fully-fledged service with the minister and musicians still based in the church building, appropriately socially distanced. Churches sought to retain as much as possible of the individual character and stylistic elements that make them distinctive, not least since otherwise there might perhaps be seen as very little added value in each congregation offering its own services rather than joining a single national service. Whether the service was liturgical or more informal was largely determined by denominational and ecclesial tradition. These newly created 'infrasecular spaces' were thus tailored with specific features blending the sacred with a projection of a church and its congregation's identity. This projection included inclusion of congregational members into the virtual service and images from around the parish including church buildings. Each church developed and evolved a distinctive style of virtual service reflecting both the identity of the congregation, the ability to apply technological solutions and improvisation. In one case, the minister was in lockdown with his teenage daughter who was able to play the piano and sing in the virtual service whilst not maintaining social distance.

A second group of choices confronting churches was much more technological and practical. These questions include whether a service should be live or prerecorded; whether it should be interactive, and what any interaction should look like; and whether the services should be made available to the public or kept private for congregational members only. Prerecorded, especially sung, worship encouraging online participants to join in and sing or pray in their own homes, can at its worst seem 'canned' and artificial, but delivering excellent audio and musical quality live can be very challenging without comprehensive broadcast facilities and a fast internet connection. Furthermore, without significant technical expertise, going live restricts the service to a single physical location, whereas prerecording facilitates wider participation. Nevertheless, the sense of synchronicity, of the church gathering at the same time, if not in the same place, is often seen as important reflecting the theological importance of a congregation coming together in shared worship. Thus, during a virtual service's live streaming there is a continual stream of comments made by congregational members who are copresent during the service and able to engage with one another. The dominant current trend as the crisis evolved was for prerecorded worship to be streamed interactively at a particular time as if it were live, thereby retaining the improved production quality from prerecording and the limited sense of continuity developed by continuing to hold worship at the congregation's usual service times, whilst maximising the benefit accrued by a congregation worshipping together contemporaneously

from their homes. Again, this highlights specific attention given to social embeddedness within 'homes' and to the new geographies of home hereby created and linked together in a process of translating the materialities of the service to the newly created and temporary infrasecular space including linking clergy homes with those of congregants. This practice highlights the importance of maintaining spiritual routines to connect congregants together.

As to whether a worship experience should be interactive or more presentational, perhaps here the kind of service and the style of church influences practical decisions. A traditional service and a band-led contemporary service can both be delivered without too much congregational intervention, and most sermons are not interactively delivered. In prayer meetings or informal home group Bible studies, however, the atmosphere is often much more dialogic. Of course, in a prerecorded service it is impossible for the worship leader to respond to any feedback, but this is very easy in live services, depending upon the platform selected. Facebook Live and Instagram's IGTV, for example, facilitate rapid text reactions from congregational members who are viewing the service, allowing them to type brief comments or post emoji (the 'prayer' emoji being a commonly-occurring one), but do not enable participants' voices to be heard or faces to be seen. Fully interactive services facilitated with platforms such as Zoom and GoToMeeting, designed for professional-level advanced collaboration or webinar presentations, do allow visual interaction.

The choice of delivery platforms was inevitably dependent upon the technical capabilities of those involved in deciding on delivery modes and their hopes for online provision, but again often influenced by the kind of service. Different activities require different platforms. A congregation in Sheffield prerecorded its main Sunday service (editing together contributions from a variety of people working from their own homes) for synchronous viewing via its website, but used interactive videoconferencing for its home groups and prayer meetings and asynchronous interactions through Facebook to share inspirational messages and short videos throughout the week. Such bespoke models have the advantage of offering some events which can be accessed by a wider public but keeping others more private and in-house to meet the needs of the congregation itself. This reflects the emergence of pick-and-choose bricolage mechanisms where the needs to deliver the range of expected services relies on the ability to embrace various technological tools (Garud & Karnøe 2003).

As well as provoking a series of rapid bricolage-based adaptations before or from the introduction of lockdown, the shift towards the provision of virtual services raises the issue of alterations in domestic space and the development of a new form of *intersacred space*. This concept highlights that three transformations occur within virtual services – within the minister's home, in the congregant's home and a process of linkage. An intersacred space is another form of interspace (Hulme and Truch 2006) or "a 'space/time' environment in itself which consists of highly complex processes which are primarily concerned with the organisation of and negotiation between the boundaries of surrounding fields" (Hulme and Truch 2006, p.140). In an intersacred space, temporary sacred spaces are created in domestic settings through a linkage process, hence framing new geographies of home and temporarily transforming both spaces. The identification of this new form of intersacred space emerged from the analysis of churches that had developed virtual services. We now illustrate this concept though the analysis of one parish in a small town – Malvern Link with Cowleigh (ML&C).

ML&C parish contains three churches, and all are infrasecular spaces blending secular with sacred uses. This parish's experience is similar to many others across England in which one

minister is responsible for three churches. The small-town setting ensured that the majority of congregants had access to on-line platforms. In rural areas, problems with broadband access meant that some churches provided services via telephone conferences which were unrecorded. ML&C parish rapidly responded to Covid-19 via bricolage to create congregational religious experiences through the creation of intersacred spaces.

First, over a three-week period ministers have engaged in a rapid continual improvisation process based on learning to apply technology to support the delivery of both pastoral care and weekly services. For the Vicar of ML&C this involved the continual re-invention of practices and his home. The first attempt was on Sunday 15 March and this involved livestreaming the 9.45am Sung Eucharist on Facebook from the Vicar's iPhone, which was positioned to observe the pulpit and the altar. There was one minor technological problem – the screen's orientation as portrait rather than the more traditional landscape. By 2 April 2020, this recording had been viewed 252 times. This was a relatively simple livestreaming for self-isolating vulnerable congregants involving a single camera without editing and the location was the parish church. On 22 March, a much more sophisticated pre-recorded service was created using film editing software. This was 'premiered' at 9.45am, the usual time for this service. Social media postings testified to the method by which this service had been curated; on the 20th March, for example, the ML&C Facebook page noted that "We've putting together some recorded bits from various peoples for this week's Virtual Sunday service". At this time, the Church of England had not yet recommended that their churches be closed for private and public worship. This second livestreamed service involved film editing of readings and organ music provided by members of the congregation that were self-filmed at home, along with the ritual elements of the service enacted in the parish church. Domestic settings within congregants' homes had been converted into temporary sacred spaces linked to the church.

Second, for the first time in the history of the parish an intersacred space was created on 29 March, after the country formally entered lockdown. The service took place in the Vicar's office which became a liminal space transformed into a temporary religious space and a film studio; the vicar and his partner became film producers, directors and editors. Members of the congregation became active participants, and this included converting their dining rooms, gardens, home offices or garages into temporary film studios. Thus, the ML&C Facebook page for the 29 March noted that:

> "Welcome to the 5th Sunday of Lent and this virtual service brought to you from our virtual church, aka the Vicar's office. It's as traditional a service as we can make it without access to a church, vestments, serving team, incense, etc. We also decided to forego the large pillar candles on either side of the makeshift altar as the Vicar's penchant for books has resulted in an overabundance of flammable material in a very small space".

In this account, secular and sacred spaces are fused together, but temporarily. The Facebook page advised those planning to participate at home to "grab a cuppa and get settled in". The Vicar's office is still his office, but for the duration of the service it is transformed into a sacred space. Similarly, congregants at home are both involved in producing the service, but they are able to participate in real time by commenting during and after the broadcast. Thus, one participant noted that "I'm amazed that I felt so close to and so engaged in the service playing out on the screen of a tablet". This language highlights a distinct moment of transformation in which the homes of those participating had become part of a temporary intersacred space.

These new forms of virtual worship represent a new form of inclusive worship. Inclusiveness as a form of belonging involves incorporating film recorded in different homes into the service.

During the services, these home spaces become transformed into temporary sacred spaces. In a very real sense, these edited together virtual services reflect a true hybridization of the secular with the sacred to produce a new form of temporary intersacred space. This hybridization is very evident in the comments on live streaming of the 29th March ML&C 11.15am Contemporary Worship Service. This service had 167 views by 2 April 2020, but the comments highlighted the intermingling of the secular with the sacred or the living room with a worship space. The first comment that was made at the start of the live streaming was "funky slippers!" and the second "Tee hee – Vicar working from home attire!". Here we have a very distinct projection of a new form of intersacred space, but this is a temporary space that exists whilst the recording is being taken and whilst it is being played. This is an important point: temporary intersacred spaces blur personal boundaries as homes and personal settings become part of the virtual service. The home was previously a private space, and ephemerality materialised as a part of an intersacred space challenging routines, and existing rules. A new temporary geography of home emerges through the creation of a virtual intersacred space.

Discussion and Conclusion

Covid-19 is an inflection point transforming societies and institutions. Clergy have been challenged to improvise alternative worship forms to sustain their congregations whilst providing pastoral support for the apprehensive, ill and bereaved. This has challenged existing practices disrupting religions that often make a virtue of precisely *not* being culturally contextualised or adapting to social change. The ritual of service is established professional practice for ministers. To Rumsey, crisis changes rules and places (2017); Covid-19 did both, forcing ministers to engage in bricolage through rapid processes of experimentation.

Sacred space is a space for ritual; a holy space that is set aside for a religious purpose. In a virtual service, space inside the minister's home temporarily becomes an extension of the church. This set-aside space is transformed through enacting ritual. The shift to online worship, therefore, has theological significance as well as practical application. Blurring the lines between sacred and secular spaces risks desacralizing more than sanctifying, as new online delivery models make different demands on clergy and risks the development of churches more centred on celebrity and charisma than on theology. The extremely rapid response the church has adopted to a crisis has delivered practical transformations sometimes without theological reflection. New forms of sacred space and worship have been created, challenging existing theological conventions. Offices have become sanctuaries and kitchen tables altars in these new virtual churches, creating new linkages within those intersacred spaces, perhaps turning the vicarage and the worshipers' homes via the webcam into metaphysical extensions of the nave where all can gather and find a welcome. Though these connections are principally ephemeral, they are often reflective of prior relationships and may develop post-lockdown into real-world engagement. Perhaps the 'fellowship of the saints' will emerge anew through digital mediation which will shape the future of physical-space ecclesial interactions.

Drawing upon Bourdieu, ministers' and congregants' homes are 'fields' that have been suddenly and temporality linked and transformed through the layering onto them of 'habitus', or structured structures; those have been constructed through behaviours formerly framed in 'sacred' spaces via ritual and symbols (Bourdieu 1990). It is in this intersacred space that people act and interact with one another through processes of emotional engagement and bricolage adaptation mechanisms as they co-create common worship experiences. This sudden transposition of the religious 'field' to a virtual intersacred space has been made possible because, for many, the technology of a virtual service is part of their everyday habitus (use of

Facebook, YouTube etc.). Thus, the church is layered onto the home and the experience of social media layered onto religious services. This is how the sensory and temporal elements of virtual intersacred space foster temporary new geographies of homes, connected together through shared faith and worship.

Virtual services raise many important questions for human and theological geographers. For the theologian, publicly accessible online services challenge the relationship between parish structure and people; the virtual service destroys geography by extending the geographic reach of the parish beyond physical boundaries and existing communities. Nevertheless, they also extend the congregation; even small churches are seeing online attendances well into the hundreds. Online services enhance inclusivity as the ill, and those who have moved beyond the parish, are able to engage with intersacred space. Rumsey (2017) is interested in the relationship between home, community, and parish: online ministry alters this relationship as the minister's private interior landscape spills over into the homes of parishioners and vice versa loosening boundaries between open-to-all and personal spaces. For geographers, online services are transforming infrasecular spaces with the creation of new virtual shared religious experiences within secular spaces. Homes and spaces within homes become temporary sacred spaces in the instance at which they are linked with other homes – the secular becomes sacred rather than the sacred secular.

In the context of the Covid-19 crisis, it is important to remember that places of worship are places of hope, fellowship and socio-spatial embeddedness - communities which accommodate the otherwise excluded (Hunter 2020). Ministers and congregations adapted rapidly to changing circumstances by creating intersacred spaces, or an interconnected network of temporary sacred spaces, connecting people together in shared worship and fellowship. This new virtual normality contributed to re-connecting people and place through shared beliefs and behaviours and should be central to developing an ongoing discussion between theology and human geography. Churches played an important role in looking after, providing food or delivering medicines to the most vulnerable or those in self-isolation, beyond the reach of church members. This highlights the importance of understanding the intersacred, people, place and governmentality nexus in time of crisis.

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