

Abstract

Surprised by Imagination: Refreshing the 'hidden streams' of poetry, drama and comedy in the life and worship of the Church of Ireland.

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This dissertation emerged from personal experiences of the imagination, specifically Poetry, Drama and Comedy. These have buoyed and infused my faith and love for God throughout life. The dissertation explores these aspects of the imagination as 'hidden streams' within the Anglican tradition. More specifically, it argues that these streams are a special gift within the Church of Ireland, which must be revitalised and embraced, to fire the hearts of people with love for God.

In the *Introduction* I present a personal and ecclesial imperative for the imagination, and suggest that contemporary culture is open to the imagination. *Chapter One* discusses the misinterpretation of scripture, historical theological biases, and cultural influences that have denied the imagination a place in faith. It also presents a theological, biblical and physiological argument for the imagination. *Chapter Two* argues that poetry is fundamental to human life and worship and examines the poetic as a biblical genre and part of the rich heritage of the liturgy of the Church of Ireland; it discusses the resurgence of poetry in contemporary culture, especially among young people, and calls the Church to return to its traditional roots by embracing the poetic. *Chapter Three* focuses on the Dramatic, its biblical and theological foundations, its role in understanding God and the world, its value in ritual and liturgical worship, and its power in speaking to the world. *Chapter Four* explores the comic – its nature, theological and biblical basis, and fundamental value for individuals, community, faith and the Church. The *Conclusion* reiterates the Church's need to recapture imagination as part of our humanity and spiritual life – both in theological thought and in practice – so that the body of Christ might be fully equipped to be holistic and fully human, and a powerful witness to the Imaginative Trinitarian God of all creation.