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McKenna, U. and Francis, L.J. (2025) *Assessing visitor evaluation of an immersive cathedral experience: applying the Jungian lenses of feeling and thinking and Bailey's theory of implicit religion*. Journal of Beliefs and Values. ISSN 1361-7672

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Accepted 30.6.25: *Journal of Beliefs & Values*

Accessing visitor evaluation of an immersive cathedral experience:

Applying the Jungian lenses of feeling and thinking and Bailey's theory of implicit religion

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### Abstract

The SIFT hermeneutical approach, rooted in Jungian psychological type theory, distinguishes between two core cognitive processes: perceiving concerned with gathering information and judging concerned with evaluating information. The present study applies this approach to eliciting and interpreting visitor evaluation of an immersive cathedral installation (a pre-Christmas *son et lumiere*) by focusing on the evaluative lenses of feeling and thinking. Drawing on data from 545 visitors, analysis of qualitative responses to the feeling prompt, ‘What touched your heart during the installation or connected with your values?’ identified ten main themes. Analysis of qualitative responses to the thinking prompt, ‘What big questions were raised in your mind during the installation or connected with your interests?’ identified seven main themes. These two prompts generated quite different responses, suggesting a complementary and richer evaluation of the total experience could be accessed by engaging both the feeling function and the thinking function.

*Keywords:* cathedral studies, feeling, thinking, psychological type, son et lumiere, visitor studies

## **Introduction**

Innovative exhibitions and installations have emerged as an increasingly visible component within developing missional and financial strategies among English Anglican Cathedrals, but not without some high-profile controversies surrounding events like the Helter Skelter in Norwich Cathedral, the Crazy Golf Bridges in Rochester Cathedral, or the Eighties Silent Disco in Canterbury Cathedral (see further Francis, 2024). Such controversies have stimulated serious reflection within the field of cathedral studies, leading both to conceptual studies exploring the rationale and coherence of such developments, and to empirical studies exploring the experiences of participants and the potential impact that such innovative exhibitions and installations may have on them. Against this background, the aim of the present paper is to test the capacity of the SIFT hermeneutical approach for eliciting and interpreting the responses of such participants. First, however, it is necessary to set the context for the study: by establishing the conceptual framework within which the study is located; by reviewing previous empirical work within the field; and by introducing the SIFT hermeneutical approach.

## **Conceptual framework**

Recent approaches to think strategically and missionally about the role of exhibitions and installations within cathedrals have been rooted in three fields of enquiry: the work of Judith Muskett (2016, 2019) concerning the power of metaphors both to reflect and to shape the self-understanding of cathedrals; the work of Edward Bailey (1997, 1998) in refining the notion of implicit religion to explore soft boundaries between the secular and the sacred; and the work of Gary Hall (2014) in rooting the essence of Anglican cathedrals within an analysis of the character and function of bishops as expressed in the ordinal.

Muskett's analysis of the range of metaphors currently in circulation to illuminate the perception of cathedrals privileged five metaphors for special attention: shop windows,

flagships, beacons, magnets, and sacred space and common ground. All five metaphors communicate the capacity for cathedrals to reach out missionally beyond the more restrictive scope of parish churches. It is Muskett's metaphor of sacred space and common ground, finely capturing 'the vocation of cathedrals to be both a spiritual and a community utility' (Muskett, 2019, p. 86), that resonates most richly with Bailey's concept of implicit religion.

The power of Bailey's concept of implicit religion for illuminating the distinctive capacity of cathedrals to engage wider publics was introduced to cathedral studies by Hammond (2007) and subsequently developed by McKenna, Francis, and Stewart (2022) in their exploration of the range of installations, events, and exhibitions recently promoted within Anglican Cathedrals. In their analysis of these data, McKenna, Francis, and Stewart (2022) focused on two specific insights from the theory of implicit religion.

First, the notion of implicit religion softens the boundaries between the sacred and the secular, giving real substance to the claim that cathedrals can be described as 'sacred space and common ground'. Drawing on data from cathedral websites, McKenna, Francis, and Stewart (2022) identified eight categories of events, exhibitions, and installations hosted within cathedrals that hold capacity to soften boundaries between the secular culture and the sacred space: scientific exhibitions, festivals, musical events, art exhibitions, theatre, markets, community events, and installations. These events clearly held capacity to enhance footfall, to extend the reach of cathedrals into diverse publics, and to draw across the threshold into the sacred space people who otherwise may never have ventured into that environment.

Second, the notion of implicit religion respects the multiple ways in which individuals untouched by the culture of explicit religions draw on a wide range of phenomenon and experience to fill the vacuum left by the withdrawal of explicit religion from the public sphere. The notion of implicit religion draws attention to the themes and activities that generate meaning and purpose and that, by so doing, hold the capacity to direct and enhance

human flourishing. Events, exhibitions, and installations not only hold the capacity to draw diverse publics into the common ground, but within the sacred space, may offer experiences that connect with generating meaning and purpose and with enhancing human flourishing. Drawing on data from cathedral websites, McKenna, Francis, and Stewart (2022) identified seven themes promoted by recent events, exhibitions, and installations within cathedrals that may work in this way: social justice and social conscience, violence and reconciliation, remembrance, migration and sanctuary, Covid-19 and lockdowns, personal wellbeing, and nature and environment. Having crossed over into the sacred space, participants may discover that themes like these hold capacity to stir the human heart, to anchor the human mind, and to promote engaged human flourishing.

What Gary Hall (2014) brings to this analysis is an understanding of Anglican cathedrals rooted in Anglican ecclesiology. Hall argues that the defining characteristic of cathedrals is that they hold their bishop's *cathedra*. The rationale, then, for Anglican cathedrals is that they represent and empower bishops to fulfil their episcopal mandate across the diocese. By so arguing, Hall roots the function of cathedrals within the Anglican episcopal ordinal. Developing Hall's argument, Francis (2023) explored 'Anglican cathedrals as episcopal theological resource churches for nurturing growth and sustainability' and suggested that cathedrals are mandated to do what bishops are called to be. In this sense, exhibitions and installations in cathedrals can properly be harnessed to extend the episcopal ministry and mission of the diocese.

### **Empirical framework**

A few empirical studies, employing quantitative and qualitative approaches, have attempted to capture aspects of the responses of participants experiencing events, exhibitions, and installations in cathedrals. Using a quantitative approach and drawing on psychological type theory, Francis, Mansfield, et al. (2023) reported on a survey conducted among 196 visitors

to Brecon Cathedral within the context of the Brecon Jazz Festival. This study demonstrated that the jazz festival drew into this cathedral more intuitive types and more perceiving types than is generally found among cathedral visitors (see Francis, Robbins, & Annis, 2015). In other words, specific types of events seem to extend the reach of cathedrals.

In a second study using a quantitative approach, Kirby, Francis, and Village (2023) reported on a survey conducted among 283 visitors to Liverpool Cathedral during the installation 'Space, the Universe and Everything'. This study demonstrated that the installation brought into the cathedral many people who would not describe themselves as churchgoers. Using John Fisher's (2010, 2016) four domain model of spiritual wellbeing, this study invited participants to assess the impact of spending time in the cathedral on each of these domains. The data demonstrated that it had helped 69% to feel less stressed about themselves (personal domain), 59% to feel better about their relationships with other people (communal domain), 57% to connect better with the natural world (environmental domain), and 36% to connect better with God (transcendental domain).

In a third study using a quantitative approach, Village and Francis (2024) reported on a survey conducted among 562 visitors to Liverpool Cathedral during the installation 'The light before Christmas: The angels are coming'. This study designed seven measures of participant engagement styled as: Christian engagement, Cathedral engagement, spiritual/religious engagement, positive engagement, negative engagement, personal engagement, and imaginative engagement. The sophisticated analysis of these data explored the effect of personal, educational, psychological, and religious factors on predicting levels of engagement across these seven measures. The two core findings were that the installation exerted its greatest impact on younger people and on those who did not attend church services, and that this positive experience of the cathedral encouraged them to want to return.



The installation was not only extending the reach of the cathedral, but delivering an experience that enticed them to want to experience more.

The quantitative survey discussed by Village and Francis (2024) also included two qualitative components. The first of these two qualitative components comprised the fairly standard invitation at the end of the survey: ‘If you would like to write about your experience of the Cathedral in your own words, you can do so here’. From the 374 participants who responded to this invitation, McKenna, Francis, et al. (2024) focused on the 123 participants who identified as never attending church services. These qualitative data confirmed that the *son et lumiere* succeeded in softening the boundaries between the sacred and the secular and provided a deeply moving experience for these non-churchgoing participants. One such participant expressed her appreciation of the installation in the following words: ‘I am not religious, but I had the best experience ever’.

### **The SIFT hermeneutical approach**

The SIFT hermeneutical approach is rooted in psychological type theory as originally formulated by Jung (1971) and as developed and operationalised through a series of instruments, including the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (Keirsey & Bates, 1978), the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985), and the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis, 2005; Francis, Laycock, & Brewster, 2017). Psychological type theory offers three core insights into human cognition. The first insight differentiates between two key psychological processes, styled the perceiving process and the judging process. Perceiving is the process concerned with gathering information, while judging is the process concerned with evaluating information. The second insight posits two contrasting functions through which each process is expressed. Perceiving is expressed through the two functions of sensing and intuition. Judging is expressed through the two functions of thinking and feeling. The third insight posits that, while individuals have access to all four psychological functions,

they tend to prefer one perceiving function over the other, and one judging function over the other.

Working from this understanding of psychological type theory and operating within the reader-response approach to biblical hermeneutics (see: Detweiler, 1985; Fish, 1980; Fowler, 1991; Resseguie, 1984), Francis and Village (2008) proposed the Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, Thinking (SIFT) method as a systematic way of engaging with scripture. The method suggested drawing the four cognitive functions in turn to dialogue with the text. The four functions were drawn into play by asking in sequence four distinct questions: what do you see in the passage (sensing), what sparks your imagination in the passage (intuition), what touches your heart in the passage (feeling), and what challenges your mind in the passage (thinking). In a series of three commentaries on the Sunday Gospel passages proposed by the Revised Common Lectionary, Francis and Atkins (2000, 2001, 2002) tested the application of the method across a wide range of content. Then a series of empirical studies among participants working in type-alike groups tested the validity of the theory (see, for example, Francis, 2010, 2012; Francis, Smith, & Astley, 2022; Jones & Francis, 2024).

The suggestion that specific well-shaped questions could call the four Jungian functions into play and thereby enable visitors to reflect more widely on their experiences of an immersive cathedral experience was tested for the first time by McKenna, Francis, & Village (2024) who turned attention to the second of the two qualitative components within Village and Francis' (2024) quantitative survey among visitors to Liverpool Cathedral during the installation 'The light before Christmas: The angels are coming'. This part of the survey was designed to test whether prompts specifically shaped to engage the distinctive lenses of feeling and thinking would focus and extend the range of responses elicited from participants.

Among the 978 participants responding to the quantitative components of the survey, 398 responded to the feeling prompt, 'What most touched your heart?' and 238 responded to

the thinking prompt, ‘What big issues were raised in your mind?’ The analysis identified nine themes sparked by the feeling prompt: valuing being moved by visual images of the nativity; valuing the Christmas spirit; valuing multi-sensory engagement; valuing the opportunity to light a candle; valuing personal feelings, valuing reflection on family; valuing being moved by the responses of children; valuing the sense of community; and valuing the use of cathedral space. The analysis also identified eight themes sparked by the thinking prompt: reflecting on the importance and meaning of Christmas; reflecting on shared experience; reflecting on relationships with others; reflecting on consumerism and commercialism, reflecting critically on the Cathedral’s engagement with consumerism; reflecting on religion; reflecting on the big questions of life; and reflecting on the world. In other words, these two prompts generated quite different responses, suggesting a complementary and richer evaluation of the total experience.

### **Research question**

While the analysis offered by McKenna, Francis, and Village (2024) clearly supported the benefits of posing prompts specifically designed to engage the Jungian functions, there were limitations with the two prompts designed to engage thinking and feeling. Both prompts were quite narrow in the way in which they tried to capture these distinctive functions. This limitation was addressed in the design of the survey to assess the evaluations made by participants who attended the Christmas 2023 *son et lumiere* ‘The light before Christmas: The manger’.

## **Method**

### **Procedure**

When people booked to attend the Christmas 2023 *son et lumiere*, they were invited to give assent to receiving a follow-up survey from the cathedral team to assess their experience. Survey responses were received from 545 participants.

**Instrument**

The survey was hosted on the Qualtrics platform of York St John University. The quantitative survey also included two open-ended invitations to engage the feeling function and to engage the thinking function. The prompt to engage the feeling function was, ‘What touched your heart during the installation or connected with your values?’ and the prompt to engage the thinking function was, ‘What big questions were raised in your mind during the installation or connected with your interests?’.

**Measure**

The quantitative survey included the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis, 2005; Francis, Laycock, & Brewster, 2017). This is a 40-item instrument comprising four sets of ten forced-choice items related to each of the four components of psychological type theory: orientation (extraversion or introversion), perceiving process (sensing or intuition), judging process (thinking or feeling), and attitude toward the outer world (judging or perceiving).

**Participants**

Among the 545 participants who completed the survey, 22% were male, 78% were female, and one preferred not to say; 12% were under forty, 12% were in their forties, 25% were in their fifties, 33% were in their sixties, 17% were in their seventies, and 2% were aged eighty or over. Among these 545 participants, 278 responded to the feeling prompt, and 153 responded to the thinking prompt.

**Analysis**

The written responses to the feeling prompt and the thinking prompt were extracted into separate *Word* documents. Using content analysis (Cohen, et al., 2018; Robson, 1993) these data were then subjected to five iterations of reading, re-reading, categorizing, and grouping the data into themes. Initially, participants voicing similar responses were grouped together. These were then read carefully to identify the key categories of response in relation to each

prompt. These categories were then re-read, revised, and sub-categories identified. All responses, categories and sub-categories were then shared and discussed between the two co-authors. Emerging themes were identified and illustrated with examples taken from the corresponding categories. Within the feeling category ten themes were identified and within the thinking category seven themes were identified. To preserve anonymity each participant was assigned a unique number and differentiated by sex (M/F), age, religious affiliation, and psychological type (e.g. INTJ, but where participants did not report their type this is indicated as ???). Participant responses indented and cited at length have been given their full identifier. Others cited within the prose show only their numerical identifier in order to preserve the flow of the text.

## **Results**

### **Drawing on the feeling function**

The prompt designed to access the feeling function, ‘What touched your heart during the installation or connected with your values?’ drew responses from 278 participants of whom: 18% were male and 82% were female; 11% were under forty, 8% were in their forties, 26% were in their fifties, 35% were in their sixties, 19% were in their seventies, and 1% were aged eighty or over; 74% identified as Christian (including 40% as Anglican and 25% as Roman Catholic), 22% identified as not belonging to any religious group, and 4% identified as ‘Other’. In terms of psychological type, 51% preferred the feeling function, 31% preferred the thinking function, and the remaining 18% had not completed the Francis Psychological Type Scales.

When prompted to draw on their feeling function, ten main themes emerged: valuing the affective impact of the installation; valuing the religious impact of the installation; valuing the opportunity to light candles; valuing the spiritual impact of the installation; valuing the impact of the cathedral space; valuing the sense of community; valuing

connections with family and friends; valuing the engagement of children; valuing the outreach ministry of the Cathedral; and valuing the cathedral staff.

### ***Valuing the affective impact of the installation***

The distinctive voice of the feeling function was heard in the affective impact of the content of the installation on the participants. The music was described as ‘lovely, very moving’ (167), as ‘evocative of Christmas’ (170), and as ‘emotive’ (220). The combination of colour, pattern, and imagery connected with the participants and had a ‘quieting’ effect (294):

The music, colour changing and interconnecting patterns was absolutely quieting for me .... the outside world and its many issues had stopped for that wonderful time. (294, Female, 70s, Anglican, ISFJ)

The grandness of being inside, listening to the music play and watching the lights bounce off the walls and ceilings was spectacular. (121, Female, 40s, Anglican, ISFJ)

Some of the messages displayed in the first part of the installation resonated with participants and warmed their hearts. As one participant put it:

The messages displayed in the first installation really struck home, especially one about what was good, rather than dwelling on what was wrong. (61, Male, 70s, Anglican, ISTJ)

Further messages were identified by other participants:

‘The pain of parting is nothing to the joy of meeting again’ - This projection really resonated with me and touched my heart. It helped me feel that God knows my situation and has a good plan for my life. (83, Female, 30s, Christian, ISTJ)

The quotes were all lovely, one in particular stayed with us: ‘We need never be ashamed of our tears’. (319, Female, 60s, No religion, ISFJ)

### ***Valuing the religious impact of the installation***

The distinctive voice of the feeling function was heard when describing the religious impact of the installation and expressed in appreciation of ‘the amazing story of the manger’ (346), the ‘moving’ impact of the ‘high altar’ (153), and images of Christ and Mary connecting

‘with our values’ (92). Participants wrote of an overwhelming sense of ‘love for God’ (125), of feeling ‘a presence of God’ (49) and being ‘connected to God’ (325). They described being absorbed by the experience, embracing the impact of a familiar hymn.

The religious aspects of the installation I found very moving. It was not ‘just a light show’ but something much deeper than that. It was lovely to be amongst so many other people experiencing the same emotions. (57, Male, 60s, No religion, ISFJ)

The Holly and the ivy - sentimental reasons, made me cry. Was beautiful. The star on the ceiling was impactful. I felt overwhelmed with love for God and the story of the nativity come to life. (125, Female, 30s, Catholic, INFJ)

Hearing the Angel Gabriel hymn, always has significance to me. (374, Female, 30s, Catholic, ISTJ)

### ***Valuing the opportunity to light a candle***

The opportunity to light a candle was particularly prominent when addressed by the distinctive voice of the feeling function. These responses ranged from reflections about valuing the opportunity to light a candle on behalf of family and friends or in memory of ‘my late mum’ (185), to those who felt that allowing time to light a candle provided space to say a prayer. Seeing the display of ‘glowing’ candles was described as ‘heart-warming’ (113).

Lighting a candle for someone dear who is quite poorly. Quite emotional for reflection. (33, Male, 70s, Anglican, ISTJ)

My mum and I were able to light a candle for my dad and it was peaceful and uplifting. (305, Female, 50s, Anglican, ISFJ)

The lighting of the candles and the opportunity to absorb the peace of the Cathedral and say a prayer. (251, Female, 60s, Catholic, ISTJ)

The candles you can light and being able to say a prayer and think of loved ones doing this. (112, Female, 30s, Anglican, ISFJ)

### ***Valuing the spiritual impact of the installation***

In terms of the spiritual impact of the installation, the distinctive voice of the feeling function was heard in an appreciation of the atmosphere, which was frequently described as welcoming, calm, spiritual, and peaceful, and as engendering a sense of ‘reverence throughout’ (237), ‘serenity and beauty’ (131), and ‘joy’ (132).

The nativity was special and the chance to appreciate life and feel more spiritual. (316, Female, 60s, Catholic, ISTJ)

The atmosphere, and the feeling of peace and contentment. A welcome break from what’s going on in the world. (4, Male, 50s, No religion, ISFJ)

While I suppose I’m technically culturally Christian, I don’t believe in a deity or in religious interpretations of Christian historical figures. But the spiritual dimensions of Christianity do speak to me, and the imagery in the installation ... does, at some level, evoke those. (347, Female, 50s, No religion, INTJ)

Peaceful, calm and emotional. (80, Female, 30s, No religion, ISFJ)

The beauty and joy was overwhelming at times. I loved the quotes and the sense of love, which is our core being. It was reassuring to feel this. (132, Female, 50s, Other religion, INFP)

### ***Valuing the impact of the cathedral space***

The distinctive voice of the feeling function was also heard in appreciation of the feelings of awe and wonder when faced with the size and space of the Cathedral described with words such as ‘majesty’ (38) and ‘grandeur’ (358). There was appreciation for ‘using the building in such an imaginative way’ (46) and with ‘the displays accentuating the size of the building’ (208).

Being in a large space experiencing the wonder and thought-provoking images and that we are all the same. (117, Female, 60s, Anglican, ESTJ)

Lots of small, insignificant people in this vast building, admiring such technical virtuosity. (236, Female, 70s, No religion, INTJ)



The size of the cathedral makes one appreciate one's small yet significant part in society. (214, Female, 70s, Buddhist, ENFJ)

It informed us that there are wonders out there and within. The misery, greed, despair, mercilessness, hate, addictions and desire for power were swept aside by intimate glory and splendour. It reminded me that creativity is the antidote to fear and depression, that humanity can be uplifted and inspired. (297, Female, 60s, No religion, INTJ)

### *Valuing the sense of community*

The distinctive voice of the feeling function was heard in appreciation of the social impact of the installation with its capacity to bring people together. Many participants commented on the generational reach of the event and how well attended it was. They described it as 'inclusive' (172; 280; 323) and 'open to all' (70) irrespective of age, faith, or disability (73; 160; 310). Attendance at the event provided opportunity to 'talk to others' (70) who were praised for their 'friendliness' (5) and 'kindness' (284).

All ages were interested in what was happening. There aren't many events can do that. (72, Male, 70s, Anglican, ????)

The message of all peoples being together in a place of peace and harmony. (166, Female, 80s+, Anglican, ESFJ)

Just sharing the sound and light show with other like-minded people from all walks of life, who all appeared to be moved and wowed by the show. (195, Female, 60s, No religion, ESTJ)

The idea that all faiths can come together and celebrate in a modern way. (140, Female, 50s, Catholic, ENFJ)

I think seeing so many families or people with disabilities enjoying the installation, made you think about what your beliefs are all about.... (154, Female, 60s, Catholic, ENFJ)

### *Valuing connections with family and friends*

The distinctive voice of the feeling function was heard in the emphasis placed on togetherness and the ability of the installation, with its ‘family feeling’ (147), to heighten the importance of family, to bring family closer, and to connect with those departed.

That the importance of family and friends is key to happiness and feelings of wellbeing. (298, Female, 60s, Catholic, ISTJ)

It is always lovely to go to an event which brings your family close to you. (272, Female, 60s, Catholic, ENFJ)

Made me think of my parents and friends who have died, felt connected to them there. (144, Female, 50s, No religion, ENFJ)

### ***Valuing the engagement of children***

The distinctive voice of the feeling function was also heard in expressions of the pleasure taken when observing the engagement of children with the installation. Children were described as ‘entranced’ (35), ‘happy and curious’ (222), and ‘fascinated’ (258; 311)

I loved hearing young couples saying how cool it was and little children belting round with glowsticks. Families and oldsters all being absorbed in the same thing. (267, Female, 60s, No religion, ISFJ)

A grumpy and reluctant 9-year-old anticipating a difficult time with her parents contending with our younger child with additional needs ... had a wonderful time and would like to attend future events now. We all enjoyed our time and came out uplifted. (173, Female, 40s, Baptist, ISFJ)

The enjoyment of my little grandsons really touched my heart. The lights and the music just encapsulated everything. (157, Female, 60s, Catholic, ISTJ)

Just watching people and families lost in their thoughts, particularly the children lying down on the cushions staring up at the ceiling and watching what looked like a fountain of light falling down on them. (219, Female, 60s, Anglican, ISTJ)

### ***Valuing the outreach ministry of the Cathedral***

The distinctive voice of the feeling function was heard in responses valuing the outreach ministry of the Cathedral. Participants wrote of the capacity of the installation to enable the cathedral to connect with wider society.

The fact that the Church of England is reaching out to the wider community with this event. It keeps the church in people's lives. Ultimately, it is bringing Christ to those who currently don't know him. If they choose to reject him, that is their decision. But as the church, you have a duty to reflect the light of Christ, which you have most certainly done with this event. (16, Male, 60s, Baptist, ISTJ)

I also love that the cathedral is used for a wide range of events, that draw the public. They help to make the cathedral accessible to the people. The cathedral offers a peaceful and spiritual space and experiences that many other religious buildings do not. This opens 'the house of God' to many people who would not usually visit religious buildings. It is a welcoming place for everyone. (367, Female, 70s, No religion, ????)

The outreach of the Cathedral also was reflected in the capacity of the installation to convey the true meaning of Christmas. This was expressed as a time for 'everyone' (88), a time for 'family and loved ones' (221; 345), a time of 'warmth' and 'joy' (327), and a time to 'reach out' (43).

Was lovely to see the true spirit of Christmas was portrayed. (119, Female, 50s, Anglican, ????)

The warmth of the display. The joy of Christmas and family time and the spread of Christmas cheer with others. (327, Female, 40s, Anglican, ????)

The feeling that Christmas is for everyone regardless of your religious preferences. (88, Female, 60s, Anglican, ????)

### ***Valuing the cathedral staff***

Finally, the distinctive voice of the feeling function was heard in the valuing of and appreciation for the cathedral staff. Staff were praised for their 'kindness' (289) and for creating a 'warm, relaxed and welcoming atmosphere' (284).

The rector/priest ... at the end, saying thank you and giving us the events at the church ... was a lovely feeling of being valued. (147, Female, 60s, Catholic, ENFJ)

The vicar at the end providing a personal message of gratitude for attendance was touching. (370, Female, 50s, No religion, ESFJ)

The staff with their torches guiding us through the journey. The rector wishing us a merry Christmas on the way out. The friendly policeman looking after us as we left the building. (320, Female, 70s, Catholic, ????)

### **Drawing on the thinking function**

The prompt designed to access the thinking function, ‘What big questions were raised in your mind during the installation or connected with your interests?’ drew responses from 153 participants of whom: 18% were male and 82% were female; 7% were under forty, 7% were in their forties, 24% were in their fifties, 39% were in their sixties, 22% were in their seventies, and 2% were aged eighty or over; 76% identified as Christian (including 40% as Anglican and 26% as Roman Catholic), 20% identified as not belonging to any religious group, and 4% identified as ‘Other’. In terms of psychological type, 56% preferred the feeling function, 34% preferred the thinking function, and the remaining 10% had not completed the Francis Psychological Type Scales.

When prompted to draw on their thinking function, seven main themes emerged: analysing and naming negatives; analysing and naming positives; analysing the sources of creativity; analysing implications for spiritual formation; analysing implications for personal faith; analysing implications for the meaning of Christmas; and analysing implications for the Cathedral today.

### ***Analysing and naming the negatives***

The distinctive voice of the thinking function was heard in the detailed analysis of the experience, and this analysis included a number of negative comments. A small number of negative comments identified and criticised organisational issues.

The floor lighting could have been better as it was very dark in places. (121, Female, 40s, Anglican, ISFJ)

Lack of suitable parking for the event for disabled. (330, Female, 40s, No religion, ESFJ)

Need more space for wheelchairs in cafeteria for refreshment break. Disabled parking furthest away from entrance used. Queuing up in rain outside not pleasant for people with disabilities. (197, Female, 50s, Christian, INFJ)

A larger number of the negative comments identified and criticised aspects of the content. Some felt that the installation was difficult to understand and lacked adequate connection to the biblical story of Christmas. Some participants expressed a preference for the previous year's installation noting, 'how disappointing this year's show was compared to last year's show' (209).

Wasn't really sure what was supposed to be going on. (213, Female, 50s, Anglican, ISFJ)

At times too abstract to connect with. (235, Female, 70s, Christian, Anglican, ISTJ)

Where is the Gospel? Jesus Christ would be disappointed. (67, Male, 50s, Anglican)

Where was the Christian message? A big opportunity missed. (369, Female, 60s, Anglican)

In comparison to last year, I found this year's installation disappointing, confusing and do not feel that it showcased Christ, Christmas or anything in particular really!! (42, Male, 60s, Anglican, ISFJ)

### ***Analysing and naming the positives***

The distinctive voice of the thinking function did, however, also identify a number of positive things about the installation, and these positives outweighed the number of critical comments. Some of these positive comments focused on the content of the installation, including noting the aura and the atmosphere generated by it.

I don't know what I was expecting but it was fantastic from start to finish. I come to all the exhibitions, but this was on another level. I will be back next year. Thank you. (97, Female, 60s, Baptist, ENFJ)

It was a special event in a special place and I know I will return soon. (316, Female, 60s, Catholic, ISTJ)

Having a terminal illness I concentrate on the positive things I have experienced in my life and thank god for all of these. I have also changed my attitude to the future and take full advantage of the opportunities that I create or come my way much more than I never did in the past. The installation and the overall atmosphere in the cathedral reinforced all of this. (61, Male, 70s, Anglican, ISTJ)

We had previously read about the installation and also asked questions of the volunteers as we walked through the installation. We love art in every form, and this was exquisite. (284, Female, 70s, Anglican, ESTJ)

### *Analysing the sources of creativity*

The distinctive voice of the thinking function was heard in comments focused on the creative skill of those who designed the installation. Participants were intrigued to know what had 'inspired the creator' (280), and wanted to understand 'how they did it' (190; 280)

Just how did those responsible manage to create such an amazing event. (26, Male, 70s, Catholic, ISFP)

Whoever conceived and put it together deserves a lot of credit. (36, Male, 70s, Anglican, ISTJ)

How did they do this? How can light and images be projected in such a way? (177, Female, 60s, Anglican, ISFJ)

How the creators of the installation were able to use the unique layout and structure of the Cathedral building as a perfect setting for the lights and colours being displayed. (288, Female, 70s, Anglican, ENFJ)

### *Analysing implications for spiritual formation*

The distinctive voice of the thinking function was heard in analysis of the implications for the participants' own spiritual journey, and for the wider spirituality of society. This theme gave rise to many descriptively detailed responses.

I suppose it will be how important it is for everyone to have some spirituality in their lives. To be able to sit peacefully and calm ourselves in a busy environment seems to be even more pertinent today. (214, Female, 70s, Buddhist, ENFJ)

Why have humans forgotten how to enjoy simple relaxation episodes of pure and utter joy through a show such as this. How to take a step out in time and get off the proverbial 'treadmill'. (294, Female, 70s, Anglican, ISFJ)

The world is large and our worries are small in comparison. Take joy from the wonders of the world we live in. (293, Female, 40s, Catholic, ISFJ)

That adults need to share in a spiritual experience beyond the plastic emptiness of 21st century life that we are told we want. That we can still seek the way, the truth and the light. (297, Female, 60s, No religion, INTJ)

Was a spiritual experience and the reminders of the power of the human spirit, e.g. Charles Dickens' stories reminding us even in adversity and poverty we can find Joy and Light. (319, Female, 60s, No religion, ISFJ)

### *Analysing implications for personal faith*

The distinctive voice of the thinking function was heard in analysis of the implications for the participants' own religious faith (or non-belief) and practice.

I should go to church more and reinvigorate my faith. (2, Male, 60s, Anglican, ESFJ)

Am I living the best Christian life I can. (128, Female, 70s, Anglican, ISFJ)

How much do I believe in the full Christmas story. The exclusivity of the Christian 'truth' as opposed to faith which direct people to peace, goodwill and compassion. (24, Male, 60s, No religion, ISFJ)

Probably my lack of faith. In the past I have been a churchgoer for many years but have difficulty balancing faith with the terrible things happening in the world.

However, I do get some comfort from churches. (289, Female, 60s, No religion, ESTJ)

Here the distinctive voice of the thinking function was also heard in the participants' personal reflections on their hopes and aspirations for the future life of the churches.

Why are we not using methods like this installation to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ more! (3, Male, 60s, Anglican, ISFJ)

I am already a practicing Christian. I suppose the effective ways that the church can reach out, to the unsaved, is food for thought. (16, Male, 60s, Baptist, ISTJ)

How can religious institutions adapt to the changing expectations and beliefs of new generations. (311, Female, 60s, Methodist, ????)

### *Analysing implications for the meaning of Christmas*

The distinctive voice of the thinking function was also heard in the ways in which the participants reflected on the meaning of Christmas. For some participants the 'true' meaning of Christmas was associated with 'the birth of Christ' (96) and with 'images of Mary, Jesus, the kings' that made them 'think about where it all began' (286). For other participants the installation made them remember that Christmas was 'greater than all the material elements' (89) and 'magical' when 'away from shops and shopping' (346).

About community and tolerance and welcoming people from different backgrounds. Appreciated the religious meaning of Christmas much more as a result of attending. (161, Female, 50s, No religion, ISFJ)

I did reflect on what is Christmas and what it has been through history and time. The visions of Christianity from the past made me feel part of something far greater than I could understand fully and yet I felt embraced by it all. (132, Female, 50s, Other religion, INFP)

### *Analysing implications for the Cathedral today*

The distinctive voice of the thinking function was found in questions that evaluated use of the cathedral building and its role in contemporary society. Participants reflected on how more



use could be made of the Cathedral for public engagement, and about how the Cathedral is (or can be) a bridging place between Christian worship and wider society.

How to make more use of the Cathedral for suitable public events. (35, Male, 70s, Anglican, ESTJ)

I would love to see more events at the cathedral, a magnificent building but has a serene and calming feel. (263, Female, 60s, Catholic, ISTJ)

The fact that this brings places of worship back into line with society. It makes them more relevant and shows what can be done to bridge the gap. (116, Female, 50s, Methodist, ESTJ)

My interests in art, music and theatre, and a strong desire for my local community to have the opportunity to come together in fellowship and love, all came together in one package and played out in the wonderful place of worship that is Liverpool Cathedral. (166, Female, 80s+, Anglican, ESFJ)

### **Discussion and conclusion**

A number of English Anglican cathedrals have invested in innovative exhibitions, installations, and events, and some of these innovations have led to high-profile controversies. The field of cathedral studies has responded to these controversies both by conceptual studies exploring the rationale and coherence of such developments, and by empirical studies exploring the experiences of participants and the potential impact that such developments may have on them. The present study was designed to build on and to extend this field of enquiry.

Conceptually the present study was rooted in three primary streams of thought: the work of Muskett (2016, 2019) concerning the power of metaphors both to reflect and to shape the self-understanding of cathedrals; the work of Bailey (1997, 1998) in refining the notion of implicit religion to explore soft boundaries between the secular and the sacred and as applied to cathedral studies initially by Hammond (2007); and the work of Hall (2014) in rooting the essence of Anglican cathedrals within an analysis and function of bishops and as further

applied within cathedral studies by Francis (2023). Drawing together these three roots provides a strong case for valuing both the financial and the missional contributions of innovative exhibitions, installations, and events.

Empirically the present study was rooted in the developing science of cathedral studies, employing both quantitative and qualitative research methods designed to explore the experiences of participants at such events. Among these earlier studies, McKenna, Francis, and Village (2024) had drawn on Jungian psychological type theory to shape two evaluative prompts designed to engage the feeling function and the thinking function. The two main conclusions drawn from that study were: that the attempt to engage the feeling function and the thinking function had generated two quite different categories of responses; and the prompts employed in the study could be further refined and improved. The present study was a direct response to that challenge.

The prompt designed to engage the feeling function in the present study was ‘What touched your heart during the installation or connected with your values?’. Analysis of the data generated by this prompt identified ten main themes: valuing the affective impact of the installation; valuing the religious impact of the installation; valuing the opportunity to light candles; valuing the spiritual impact of the installation; valuing the impact of the cathedral space; valuing the sense of community; valuing connections with family and friends; valuing the engagement of children; valuing the outreach ministry of the Cathedral; and valuing the cathedral staff.

The prompt designed to engage the thinking function in the present study was ‘What big questions were raised in your mind during the installation or connected with your interests?’. Analysis of the data generated by this prompt identified seven main themes: analysing and naming negatives; analysing and naming positives; analysing the sources of creativity; analysing implications for spiritual formation; analysing implications for personal

faith; analysing implications for the meaning of Christmas; and analysing implications for the Cathedral today.

Including the four-letter psychological type profile alongside the selected responses, when this was available, makes it clear that the selected exemplifications generated by the feeling prompt were from thinking types as well as from feeling types. Similarly, the selected exemplifications generated by the thinking prompt were from feeling types as well as from thinking types. This finding is totally consistent with Jungian psychological type theory, as discussed for example by Ross and Francis (2020). The theory suggests that, while individuals prefer one of the two judging functions over the other, the less preferred function is both accessible and necessary for healthy human flourishing. What the SIFT hermeneutical approach sets out to achieve is engagement of the less preferred (and less well developed) function as well as the preferred function. The present paper has richly illustrated how posing the right prompts can successfully draw the SIFT hermeneutical approach into eliciting a richer and fuller evaluation of an immersive cathedral installation.

The main conclusion arising from these findings is that the SIFT hermeneutical approach, focusing on the two evaluative functions of feeling and thinking, can be commended for use in future qualitative studies designed to listen to visitor evaluations within the field of cathedral studies.

A limitation with the present paper is that it has focused solely on the Jungian judging functions (feeling and thinking). The argument for selecting the judging process is that this evaluation process is more pertinent than the perceiving process *after* the visit. At this point, it is argued, no new perceptions are accessible, but evaluation of previous perceptions may continue. Nevertheless, the validity of this argument needs testing empirically by examining how prompts designed to engage the two perceiving functions (sensing and intuition) work in

a study retrospectively inviting visitors to reflect on their experiences through these two lenses.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflicts of interest were reported by the authors.

**Availability of data**

Data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

**Ethics approval**

Ethical approval was granted by the Research Ethics Committee for the School of Humanities, Religion and Philosophy at York St John University (approval code: HRP-RS-AV-05-22-01). All participants had to affirm they were 18 or over and give their informed consent by clicking a box that gave access to the rest of the survey.

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