

6. LITURGICAL ARTS

Jason Allen Anderson

The role of the parish musician, ever intertwined in all of the fine arts, is changing to include not just music, but also the visual and performing arts, including dance and drama. This project focuses exclusively on an introduction to Christian visual arts and how to integrate them into the worship life of a church.

‘To see a World in a Grain of Sand,
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And Eternity in an hour.’
— William Blake

- 1) Brief history of Christian art (symbol)
 - a) Symbols and meaning
 - i) Images
 - ii) Icons
 - iii) Colors
 - iv) Numbers
 - v) Sculpture
 - vi) Organs
 - b) The Reformation
 - i) Rejection of the visual
 - ii) Focus on the Word
- 2) Need and justification for the creation of a visual arts program in a church
 - a) Multi-cultural arts
 - i) Confluence of cultures
 - ii) Confluence of denominations
 - iii) Feeds into a holistic parish
 - b) Media driven culture
 - i) MTV, Xbox, Computers, Internet
 - ii) Advertising
 - c) Vehicle to bring people to God
 - i) Addresses the effects of a media driven culture
 - ii) Cultivates the need for evaluation and interpretation
 - iii) Redevelops interest in both the visual and verbal
 - (1) Visual augments the verbal
 - (2) Verbal offers context and interpretation of the visual
 - d) Connection to past centuries of Christianity
 - i) Gives context and meaning for the images, icons, and symbols of the early Church
 - ii) Connects with the collective spirit of Christianity in both space and time
 - e) Spirit-driven, like music

- 3) Cultivating and creating a core of artists in a church
 - a) Initial steps
 - i) Define purpose or need
 - (1) Liven up the sanctuary with banners
 - (2) Visual arts a neglected element
 - (3) Fill in an education gap for local school children
 - (4) Educate parishioners and encourage art in the home
 - (5) Artists working with parishioners to explore spirituality through use of various media and materials
 - ii) Define duration
 - (1) Is this a temporary commitment to complete one project?
 - (2) Is this a permanent commitment to enrich the worship life of the church?
 - iii) Survey parish leadership
 - (1) Is the need for a visual arts program generally accepted?
 - (2) What resources (both financial and personal) are members of the governing body willing to invest in this program?
 - (3) What are the various visions for the arts from each of the members of the governing body?
 - (4) Do they know of people in the congregation whose talents would be best used for the visual arts?
 - (5) Do they invite arts from all age groups or will the emphasis be on more professional looking art?
 - (6) What role do children and youth play in the visual arts program?
 - b) Defining the core
 - i) Make contact with those people whom the governing body has recommended to you.
 - ii) Ask for their help in defining the purpose of the visual arts program.
 - (1) What kind of art is appropriate for your church to use in worship?
 - (2) Who decides if the art work fits the church's criteria for use in worship?
 - (3) What is the relationship of this committee to other committees? Is this committee independent or is it directly overseen by the priest, governing body, or someone else?
 - (4) What is the relationship between the church and the artists? Who owns works once they are completed? Who purchases materials?
 - (5) Is the installation a permanent or temporary one?
 - (6) Are changes necessary to the physical structure of the building? Does lighting need to be improved? How will the work be displayed?
 - (7) Will other churches be invited to participate in some way?
 - (8) How is the congregation informed about the work?
 - iii) Ask what level of participation they envision for themselves.
 - iv) Explain that their help can continue for as long or as short as they see fit.

- c) Hold the first meeting
 - i) Have the meeting in a room that offers a strong visual focus
 - ii) Prepare the group with a period of prayer and meditation on scripture using one or two short readings that address the arts
 - iii) Have the group sing a psalm together
 - iv) Begin the discussion on how the prayer, readings, and psalm call to them
 - v) Allow silence to occur, answers to the above question are often slow in coming
 - vi) Move the discussion to the visual and brainstorm media and materials
 - vii) Then discuss the media and materials in current use (if crafting a visual element for the sanctuary)
 - viii) Prioritize the media and materials
 - ix) Move the discussion to projects that could utilize the media and materials
 - x) Prioritize the list of projects generated
 - xi) End the meeting by coming to a clear statement about what is to be accomplished and delegate duties as necessary
 - xii) Close the meeting with prayer and song
- d) Giving structure, allowing freedom
 - i) Settle on a timetable for the project
 - ii) Delegate duties and responsibilities to those best suited for them
 - iii) Establish a budget and stay within it
 - iv) Establish regularly scheduled meetings to check-in with committee members and evaluate progress and redefine duties as necessary
 - v) End the project on schedule whenever possible
- e) Some general rules for meetings
 - i) Always begin and end on time.
 - ii) Include time for prayer, scripture, song, and study.
 - iii) Thank people publicly for their contributions (no matter how large or small).
 - iv) Keep the parish informed through written communication and Sunday morning announcements.
 - v) Keep the project(s) targeted, simple, and focused and keep the committee targeted and focused.
 - vi) Keep written and visual records of meetings, the projects, and the people involved.

Bibliography

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Websites

Christians in the Visual Arts <www.civa.org>

The Episcopal Church & Visual Arts <www.ecva.org>