Faith and Art: A Creative Exploration

Boston AGO Convention

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Outline

A. What is arts ministry?

We want to give our church songs not yet sung, images not yet imagined, words not yet forged into poems, dances not yet rehearsed in our muscles and bones, and all the other dazzling testimonies to the creative power of God at work here within the creation. We long to bring the warmth and disclosure of art to worship; to bring a joy beyond words to the celebration of the sacraments; to incarnate... the pain and sorrow of the reality of crucifixion; to proclaim a promise of resurrection that evokes hope from the whole being, not merely the intellect.¹

Nancy Chinn

1. Arts
   a. Fine arts
      • Music and Dance
      • Architecture/Visual Arts/Environment
      • Literary Arts
         1. Literature
         2. Poetry
      • Dramatic Arts
         1. Theatre
         2. Film

The purpose of the fine arts is to help us to see, to feel, and to appreciate the world in which we live. They are concerned, not with prosaic facts, but with the poetic joy of discovering beauty wherever it may be found. In the landscape, the sea, the sky, the human soul and many another source, the fine arts discover and picture for those of us who would otherwise be inarticulate, the love, the light, the beauty of God so richly incarnate in Jesus Christ.²

Cynthia Pearl Maus

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2. Human Creativity
   • Cooking, gardening, woodworking, collecting, crafts
   • Living creatively – or artistically, becoming a whole person

   Living creatively is much more than artistic activity. It is living all of life in such a manner that we fulfill the potential of our humanity.³

   Calvin Johansson

3. Ministry
   1. Arts ministry as an independent ministry area and/or a ministry that impacts all other ministry areas

   Ministry is not an eight-to-five job but primarily a way of life, which is for others to see and understand so that liberation can become a possibility.⁴

   Henri Nouwen

4. Definition:

   Arts ministry is an attempt to help human beings incorporate beauty into their individual and corporate lives in an appropriate fashion. It fosters the creative and artistic dimension of the life of God's people, empowering them to cooperate with the Holy Spirit as they manifest the full meaning of their creation in the image of God (the Imago Dei).

B. Who is engaged in arts ministry?
   1. Laypeople
   2. Artists
   3. Churches
   4. Sacred arts organizations

5. Arts institutions

C. When and where does arts ministry occur?
   1. In the church vs. in the world
   2. Worship vs. extra-liturgical

D. How does arts ministry impact our lives?
   1. Arts as a means of fostering a whole life
      a. Left and right brain
      b. Reason and Intuition
      c. Mind and Emotion
      d. Spirit and Body
   2. Arts as a means of fostering understanding

There are ideas, insights and experiences which only sound can communicate, others only communicated by movement, others which only color and line can capture. This is why the arts offer insight into God, each other, and ourselves which can be offered in no other way.5

Judith Rock

3. Arts as part of the process of discipleship - rehabilitating our relationship to ourselves, our neighbors, our world, and God

4. Arts as a means of fostering spirituality
   a. Arts as a school for human intuition

The influence of music and art on spirituality is becoming increasingly apparent. Church members, recognizing the spiritual implications of the arts, are overwhelmingly interested in them.6

Robert Wuthnow

5. Arts as a means of fostering social justice: re-imagining - allowing us to act on the basis of a new vision of the world around us

6. Arts as a means of fostering community
   a. Crossing generational, cultural, denominational, theological, and disciplinary barriers

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7. Arts as integral to liturgy
   a. Ritual moments that enable us to experience transcendence

E. Case Studies
   1. Cathedral Arts Project
   2. Artist-in-Residence
   3. Gardening
   4. Fabric Art
   5. Labyrinth
   6. Concerts with a Cause
   8. Art show/purchase pieces

F. Activities
   1. Taizé dances

G. How does arts ministry happen?
   1. Facilitator
      a. Identifying gifts/interests: Questionnaire
      b. Assembling
   2. The Arts Committee
      a. Functions
         1. Study
         2. Naming
         3. Focal point for programming
         4. Arts minister
      3. Decisions
         a. Culture of high art and/or popular culture
         b. Fine arts and/or human creativity
         c. Religious and/or simply artistic

H. Concluding Thoughts
   The world in which we live needs beauty in order not to sink into despair. It is beauty, like truth, which brings joy to the heart of [people] and is that precious fruit which resists the wear and tear of time…. Remember that you are the guardians of beauty in the world.⁷
   
   Paul VI

Selected Bibliography


Arts Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to provide a brief glimpse of the artistic tastes, background, and interests of the congregation.

Name____________________   Phone ______________________

Email: _______________________

Age Group: Adult__, High School__, Junior High__

Visual Arts
1. Do you create visual art yourself? If so, please check the appropriate categories: (a) painting ___ (b) sculpture ___ (c) pottery ___ (d) photography ___ (e) fabric arts: quilting___, needlepoint ___, embroidery ____, knitting ____, other fabric arts____ (f) woodworking ___ (g) jewelry making ___ (h) stained glass ___, other visual art forms (specify):
2. Have you studied how to produce any of these visual art forms? Yes__, No __
   a. If so, was it in: college___ community___ high school___
3. Have you ever had an art history or appreciation course? Yes_ No_
   a. If so, was it in: college___, community___, high school___
4. Do you visit art museums: regularly___ on occasion___ never___

Literary and Dramatic Arts
1. Have you ever participated in a play? Yes___ No___
   a. If so, was it in: college___ community___ high school___
      church__
   b. If so, in what capacity: act___, costumes__, set___, lighting__, directing__, other:
2. Have you ever engaged in creative writing? Yes___ No___
   • If so, was it: poetry___  plays___  short stories___
      keeping a journal __, other:
3. Do you attend plays: regularly___ on occasion___ never___
4. Do you read: poetry___  novels___  science fiction___,
   non-fiction___ magazines ___ other:
5. Do you watch movies: regularly__, on occasion ____, never ____
6. What type of movies do you most enjoy seeing:
   art films____ comedy____ drama_____ action_____ horror_____
   sci-fi______, other:

Music and Dance
1. Have you ever learned to play a musical instrument? Yes__ No ___
   a. What instrument did you learn to play___________________
   b. What instrument do you currently play?___________________
2. Have you ever sung in a choir? Yes___ No___
   a. If so, what kind of choir? Church___ Community___
      College___ High School___ Elementary School___
   b. Have you ever studied voice? Yes___ No___
3. During a worship service, can you sing an unfamiliar hymn
   correctly on the first or second verse simply by listening and reading
   the musical notation of the hymn? Yes___ No___
4. What style(s) of music do you prefer to listen to when you are at
   home or in the car? Please check only the styles which you listen to
   frequently: Rock___ Folk___ Classical___ Country___ Pop___
   Jazz__ Other (please specify):
5. Do you attend concerts: regularly____ on occasion ___ never___
6. Have you ever taken a music appreciation, music history, or music
   theory course? Yes___ No___
   a. If so, was it in: college____ community____ high school____
7. How often do you dance: regularly__ on occasion ___ never___
8. Have you ever studied dance? Yes___ No___
9. Do you attend dance recitals: regularly__ on occasion ___ never___

Arts Ministry
1. I might be interested in the following possible ministries: film/discussion
   series __, concert series __, visual art show __, poetry ministry __, drama
   ministry__, dance ministry__, bell choir__, adult choir__, youth choir__,
   arts committee__