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Worship: The Embodied Moment for Self and Church Community

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Dr. Kathleen S. Turner
Calvin Symposium on Worship 2017
A18 Worship: The Embodied Moment for Self and Church Community

Workshop Description:

The guiding question for this workshop is: *How can movement gesture enhance the worship of God in ways that are whole, imaginative and fulfilling for both the individual and the collective church body?* This workshop will explore the ways in which song, word, prayer, liturgical materials and movement gesture meet within the worship experience. It will pay particular attention to the use of the body as an expressive instrument that embodies and displays reflective thought and honest emotion during the worship moment.

Opening Movement Prayer: "I Want to be More Like You,"¹

I want to be more like You, Jesus
I want to be more like You.
I want to be a vessel You work through
I want to be more like You.

Opening Question: From the opening movement prayer, the use of liturgical dance was witnessed by you as a participant. Please share your thoughts on its' use and yourself?

- I. What is Liturgical Dance and how is it useful as the Embodied Word?
 - A. What is Liturgical Dance?
 1. Liturgical dance "is expressive and imaginative movement that is used both inside and outside of worship that creatively educates and instructs Christians to comprehend the Bible and their faith in the Trinity through the elements of space, time, and design. Liturgical dance has a relationship with music, spoken word, and silence. For both the individual dancer and congregant the church is identified as community through individual and mutual movement, and dance explorations that cultivate love, prayer, healing, and reconciliation, while fostering Christian identity throughout the liturgical calendar. Because of its experiential properties non-Christians can be exposed to liturgical dance and be influenced by it." (Turner 2012, 200).
 2. For the 21st century church, the properties of liturgical dance warrants it to be creative expression, imaginative exploration, experiential, educative and instructional, introspective, narrative and prayerful, inspired by love and thanksgiving, healing and reconciling, while fostering religious identity within the church community through bodily movement that investigates space, time, and design. (Turner)

¹ "I Want To Be More Like You," Clint Brown, *In His Presence 2, [Live].*, (2013Orlando, FL: CSB Ministries,).

B. Elements of Liturgical Dance

1. Praise

- a. Praise stems from the desire to love and to extol God for who God is, rather than for what God does. One should praise Adonai² for who for who Adonai is. Often praise and thanksgiving go hand in hand. Thanksgiving arises from our need to show appreciation for the goodness of God and for the gifts Adonai bestows upon us.
- b. Praise, epainos (ep-ahee-noss); Approbation, commendation, approval, praise. Epainos, expresses not only praise for what God does for us, but also for who God is, recognizing Adonai's glory.

Manifestations of Praise:

Yadah = To praise; give thanks with extended open hands.

Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord. (Psalm 134:2)

Todah = To offer sacrifices of praise, confession, thanksgiving, with extended hands cupped inward.

Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love, and his wonderful deeds for men; Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy, (Psalm 107:21-22).³

2. Worship

- a. In Hebrews, the word worship means, "to bow oneself down in adoration and contemplation of God." Worship involves devotion, reverence, adoration, respect, and honor. Therefore, if you want to receive from Adonai you must worship *Adonai* and *Adonai* alone.
- b. God wants us to arrive at a place where, as we bow before God, it will not be just the bowing down of the outer person, but the bowing down or bending of our hearts (the inner person).
- c. Worship is acknowledging God for who God is. Worship is all that we are, rightly responding to all that God is. To worship God you must know God. To worship God "in spirit and in truth," we must know – be intimately acquainted with – the truth.

Manifestations of Praise:

Barak – To kneel down to bless God. To bless; to salute, congratulate, thank, praise; to kneel down. Berech, "knee," is probably the source of those words. In OT times, one

² Adonai translates to mean, The Lord, My Great Lord. Its' application means God is the Master and majestic Lord. God is our total authority. Bible References can be found in Psalm 8; Isaiah 40:3-5; Ezekiel 16:8; Habakkuk 3:19. Adonai (plural) is derived from the singular *Adon* (Lord). This term was pronounced in substitution of *YHWH* (considered too sacred to be uttered). (*Names of God*, 2003, Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, 1-4).

³ All biblical scripture is taken from the New International Version.

got down on his knees when preparing to speak or receive words of blessing, whether to God in heaven, or to the king on his throne. From God's side, God is the blesser, the one who gives the capacity for living a full, rich life. Psalm 95:6

Come, let us bow down in worship let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; for he is our God and we are his people of his pasture, the flock under his care, (Psalm 95:6-7).

3. Experiential Moment: Praise & Worship Song with Liturgical Dance Movement:

You Deserve written & music by Clint Brown⁴ (CSB) (2013)

Father You deserve, more than just my song
You deserve my heart, you deserve my all
You deserve, more than words I say
You deserve my life, each and every day.
So I give to You, I give to You, I give You me.

Create in me a clean heart oh God.
Make my spirit right cast me not away.
From thy presence Lord
Make me whole in your sight.

Question: Explain your experience in using liturgical dance to express the words of this song. Did liturgical dance help to express your heart about your feelings toward God? Why? Why not? Explain.

II. Liturgical Dance as the Embodied Moment for Self and Church Community

A. First, We Must Learn to Listen

1. Margaret Crain (1997) makes a strong case in describing what the Christian educator needs in order to address the educational needs of the members of the congregation. One thing Crain advocates is the need for the Christian educator to know how to listen in order to ask the pertinent questions in matters pertaining to religious education for the life of the congregation.
2. Such an act requires that religious educators learn and practice patience, quietness and endurance when waiting for the questions to materialize. Crain contends that such questions "emerge out of the life events and communal identity of the congregation," (101).
3. She affirms that the theological questions that rise out of the lives of the congregation tend to be unique, and they are shaped by specific personalities, diversity and culture, and detailed experiences of the lives of those who make up the congregation. Such an action requires careful and vigilant listening.

⁴ "You Deserve," Clint Brown, *In His Presence 2, [Live].*, (2013, Orlando, FL: CSB Ministries).

4. As pastors, worship leaders, and Christian educators, we are to learn how to listen in order to immobilize ourselves to be a living body of Christ. When using any new idea within the church, we must listen first to the leading of the Holy Spirit so to know when..., what..., how..., where..., and why we are doing what we are doing.
 5. So in using liturgical dance we are to really ask the following questions: how can liturgical dance be used; when should liturgical dance movement gestures be used; why should liturgical dance movement gestures be used; what movement ideas should be used, and where should they be used within the life and context of the church?
- B. 4 Ways Liturgical Dance Movement Can be Used within the Life of the Church (Turner 2012)
1. **Format One: *Dancing in Unison*.** This allows liturgical dance to be an equal partner within the worship experience. This will be demonstrated during the Vesper Service: A Mosaic of Faith & Hope during two songs, "Acceptable to You," and "Jesus Christ is the Way," where movement gesture and word text are jointly in unison as being important in the realm of the worship experience.
 2. **Format Two: *The Dance of Balance and Harmony*.** This allows liturgical dance to either totally support the worship and educational moment or liturgical dance is supported by the worship and educational moment within the life of the congregation as a learning and worshiping community. An example of this will be demonstrated during the Vesper Service: A Mosaic of Faith & Hope during the following three songs, "With Hands Lifted Up," "My Faith Has Found a Resting Place," and "Be With Us All, Lord," where the movement will be taught alone and then it will support the actual song once the song is taught. Mutual balance and mutual harmony.
 3. **Format Three: *To Be Lifted Up*.** This allows liturgical dance to be the sole subject to be taught and whether it is religious education or a bible verse to be memorized, it is the movement that is being highlighted as the sole teaching voice to be experienced. An example of this is what is taking place during this workshop. The first song, "I Want to be More like You, Jesus." The second song was, "You Deserve." Both experiences promote liturgical dance as the sole topic that is experienced in ways that are both personal and communal. It is a personal experience because the individual becomes directly involved with liturgical movement through space, time, design and its application and meaning is understood through its relationship with sacred music. It is communal because this experience is enhanced through and by community. The experiences of the many has the capacity of enhancing the experience of the one. This workshop and the vesper service are examples of such an environment.
 4. **Format Four: *The Partnership of One*:** The partnership between liturgical dance and religious education can require great imagination and creativity. Whether it is liturgical dance and worship, religious education, prayer, evangelism or any other church activity, it can help to establish community. Describing community, Maxine Greene (2000) emphasizes imagination and process words such as making, creating, weaving, saying, and the like. Greene states, "...it ought to be a space infused by the kind of imaginative awareness that enables those involved to imagine alternative possibilities for their own becoming and their group's becoming," (39). What happens to the church community

as a result of thinking outside of the box: first thinking of the individual, then the collective church assembly and then the entire community outside the walls of the church? How can liturgical dance movement gesture help to form the individual Christian, the Christian Church and the community outside the walls of the church? These are the questions you will ask yourselves as you venture into the continual establishment of the embodied word in connection with the Christian individual and the Christian Church.

5. Questions

Closing: *You Deserve* – A New Creation

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