

adoramus

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Words from the Companion of the Worship Arts, 2010



Robyn Simpson-Mohr

Those of us who were unable to attend the National Worship Conference held in Vancouver this past July, missed something special. Robyn Simpson-Mohr, of Augustana University College, Camrose, Alberta was recognized as the Companion of the Worship Arts. An excerpt from her acceptance speech follows:

Thank you for this honour. I am humbled and thankful and perplexed.

You honour me far beyond my skill or talent. This is especially made evident as I stand among these former recipients of the Companion of the Worship Arts, and other colleagues whom I have greatly admired for their gifts and work in the Church.

Perplexed also because I love my work and the students, faculty, and staff with whom I spend my days. It is my vocation, a calling which feeds my spirit. The students give me energy and life and challenges. Although I am expected to provide them with guidance and supervision and wisdom, they are often my teachers, directing my attention to community projects and exchanges they've participated in, experiences and knowledge they've assimilated in classes, and the urgency of environmental and social justice concerns.

So to be honoured for doing what I love and feeds my spirit is overwhelming.

I work as Assistant for Chaplaincy on the Augustana Campus in Camrose, Alberta, a university owned by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada until 2004 when Augustana became a faculty of the University of Alberta. Together, the U of A and the ELCIC worked on a new structure to enable the continuance of



Chaplaincy within a public university. Pastor Craig Wentland, who holds a call from the Synod of Alberta and the Territories, serves as campus chaplain. We work together with our Student Chaplains (who represent many denominational backgrounds) to program activities around learning, social justice, outreach, and hospitality.

One of the highlights of my work is worship planning. It delights and surprises me that Augustana's academic timetable continues to reflect three worship times each week. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10:00 to 10:30 a.m., the Augustana community is invited to gather for worship (followed by refreshments – also known as breakfast for those who sleep in). While both the Chaplain and I live in “Lutheran skin”, our ministry is ecumenical. This is both privilege and challenge. Worship on Monday is often praise and worship songs led by a student band. On Wednesday, we gather around the table for word and sacrament. On Friday, the worship is more traditional: a sermon and hymns from Evangelical Lutheran Worship, often supported by a liturgical choir. Students are encouraged to serve as Assisting Ministers, communion assistants, cantors, readers, dancers, choristers, worship planners, and musicians.

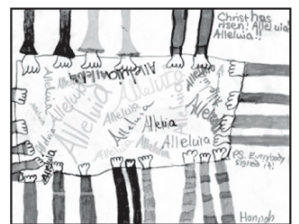
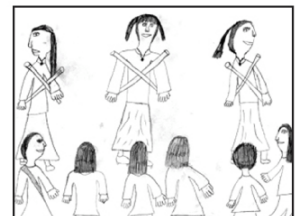
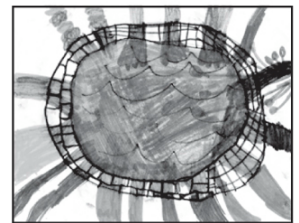
It truly is a place where faith and learning can come together, where the spirit is fed along with the body and the brain, where questions can be asked and discussions occur in both an academic forum and a personal way. These are formative years, and a campus which includes chaplaincy has the opportunity to participate in the shaping and nurturing of these students – in their becoming whole people. This is integrity. This is right. And we as a church are also shaped by these young people.

One of my other privileges has been to help plan worship for National Youth Gatherings and National and Synodical conventions. I have especially encouraged our youth delegates to participate in a leadership role in worship at these conventions because I think it is important to model this for the Church. My main purpose when instructing others is to give them the vision for the action and to encourage them to do it with great purpose ... to embody the action. And sometimes - the best times - are when our right order, our right intention is transcended and something happens that is beyond our imagining.

Each year Augustana hosts an Easter Vigil service with two Lutheran parishes, and the United and Anglican churches in Camrose. I tell the students it's the best worship of the whole year! We begin by gathering around a huge fire in the middle of campus. We bring the light into the building. We sing the Easter Proclamation as we bring the light into the darkness. The children sit in rapt attention as each community re-tells the Biblical stories in creative ways. We fill the font with these storied waters and more. We get wet!

We splash in the water, are thrilled when we are able to celebrate a baptism, mark one another with the sign of the cross, unearth the Alleluia banner so the children can wave it after the Gospel proclamation, dress the table with big swaths of fabric and dishes. We bring in the new, green wheat grass. We gather at the table singing all the Alleluia hymns we can remember because we've held back that word for 40 days. Afterwards, a little wet and smelling of smoke, we eat sweet foods while the children scramble for hidden Easter eggs and splash in the water. We bask in the candlelight, our senses filled to overflowing, knowing that we, too, have witnessed Christ's resurrection.

Two weeks later, I receive a gift: three pictures from three young girls who have faithfully come to this Vigil with their parents for the past seven years. I know that these girls have also been witnesses to Christ's resurrection because they have shown me what they've seen in the water, the story telling and in the Alleluias, for we have embodied the story. And this is truly right. **A**



Lenten and Easter Focus for next Adoramus

Please submit your creative worship ideas to:

Pastor Larry Kochendorfer
at lkochendorfer@elcic.ca

for possible inclusion in that issue.



Congratulations to Dr. Joy Berg ...

Dr. Joy Berg of Edmonton, Alberta was elected President for Region IV (western Canada and the USA) of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians (ALCM) this past summer. ALCM is a service and professional organization dedicated to strengthening the ministry of worship and music in the Lutheran church. ALCM serves through a wide range of publications, conferences, and local, regional, and national events. Membership is drawn from all major Lutheran bodies and is open to all church musicians, pastors, congregations, and lay people who share the goals of the organization. More information is available at their website: www.alcm.org. **A**

Dreaming a Theological Vision at Grace, Edson (Part 1 of 2)

By: Pastor Sean Bell, Grace Lutheran Church, Edson

Our story begins when Tien Young (Grace Lutheran Edson Member) and I sat down to begin to think about what our sanctuary space was saying. I love the sanctuary at Grace Lutheran Church in Edson. It has a lot of warm woodwork but at the same time, it mixes in colder stonework. In many ways I think that it strikes the balance of experience of God in transcendence and imminence.

The transcendence of God simply means the experience of how God is the Holy other – a stranger that we meet in unexpected places. This is the God who seems so powerful and almost scary. This is the God who speaks of death and has the power of resurrection. The ‘high and mighty don’t look straight at him or your eye balls will explode and your brain will melt’ God. While this is true, there is another side to God.

The imminence of God simply means the experience of God as close. Language of family is employed to get at the sense that God is right here, right now – Jesus our brother, living in our hearts, traveling with us every step.

I think our sanctuary catches both and it’s important to hold this tension. God is not one or the other, but both. So our space shows the warmth of the wood, the images of cabin, and the fishers of men theme that comes out in the ironwork. But there is also the cold stone with the tall, backlit cross against it.

So Tien Young and I sat in this space and talked about the lines that move up toward the cross, drawing the eye up. We talked about the colour of the wood and stone. The images you can sometimes see in the stonework. We talked about where the banners had hung in the past and we looked at all of “Holy Hardware” that the church owned... and began to dream.

One of my favourite memories of seminary is the changing of the seasons and the liturgical imagination employed by Prof. Jann Boyd and the other students. We learned to dream about what could be. We learned to listen to what the space was saying. As Rev. Lisa Skogsrud said, “You can’t fight the architecture... you have to work with it.” Starting with what our space was saying, we began to layer on top.

First Seasonal change: Advent 1. It’s a blue season... not a sad blue, but the blue of the sky before the coming of the dawn and the light. This is what first grabbed our attention. How could we bring the idea of the approaching dawn into the narrative of our space? Of the many ideas discussed, what we settled on was large strips of fabric (15 yards each). The first piece of dark blue fabric was draped over the cross, covered much of the stonework up front, and brought a deep sense of peace to the sanctuary... a sense of waiting for what might be. The rest of ▶

Dreaming a Theological Vision (Continued)



The “stable” for the quilted nativity scene at Grace Lutheran, Edson.

the altar furnishings were changed to blue as well. Tien Young flew into action and produced 6 new banners to cover the cinder block walls and wrap us in the warmth of the blue.

Advent 2 and 3: We then added another piece of blue of the same length, but a little brighter to add to the coming of the dawn effect. With the extra cloth we noticed that we could reach around the edge of the chancel. As we were exploring what to do with it, Tien noticed that it looked a bit like a stable if we hung the fabric just right. She then remembered she had access to a large quilted nativity scene so we built our stable and now waited for the light and for the family.

Advent 4 was our “Christmas Pageant” Sunday, and then came Christmas. For the Christmas Eve candlelight service we added a layer of white to the blue fabrics, and of course the altar and pulpit cloths were changed to white. The single white strip overpowered the blues as we celebrated how the light had entered the world and our waiting was finished.

Theologically an interesting thing happened as well. The stable was now made of blues and whites as we celebrated the birth of Christ, but also, the same cloth that was the stable now draped the cross. Over the cross and down the other side it came to rest on the elements for communion. This spoke volumes of the faith we espouse – the hope of the new light; the love of God made human; the cross of sacrifice; the meal of forgiveness. When looking at the chancel, the eye couldn’t help but follow the arc of the fabric, and this led to some great discussions on the interconnectedness of the whole story. The cross and the cradle can never truly be separated. *(End of Part One)* **A**

Photographs by Pastor Sean Bell



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Committee on Worship and the Arts

Larry Kochendorfer Edmonton, AB
(Synod Liaison) (780) 439-2636
lkochendorfer@elcic.ca

Colleen McGinnis Wetaskiwin, AB
(Editor) (780) 352-3519
mail@caelinartworks.com

Tova Olson Camrose, AB
(780) 672-3444
tolson@
messiahcamrose.ca

Carolyn Speakman Lethbridge, AB
(Chair) (403) 327-5257
carolyn.speakman@
lethbridgecollege.ab.ca