A Sequel To

Silver Screen, Sacred Story: Using Multimedia in Worship
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Worship and Technology Across the Generations
By Michael Bausch

The editor of this edition of "Liturgy" told all of her writers, "The assumption behind the issue is that worship is naturally intergenerational." I think we can all agree with that. I think we might also agree that to talk about technology and worship in the same breath seems rather unnatural. While I have been using technology in worship for a long time, I've never talked about the technology. The best technology is invisible technology. It is invisible because it serves the central core of the church and its worship: to capture the gathered community's attention, to engage them in a Holy Conversation, and then to send them out on missions of love and justice.

The church is all about communication. The first verses of the Bible tell the story of God's communication with the primordial chaos: "the earth was a formless void, and darkness covered the face of the deep…Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light" (Gen. 1:2-3, NRSV). In those early verses from the book of Genesis we find a communicator (God), a message ("Let there be light"), an audience ("the face of the deep"), and a response ("and there was light…").

Later, in Exodus 3, God catches Moses' eye with Divine Fire at the burning bush. As Moses comes closer, the Holy Voice engages him in a discussion. God then sends Moses on a mission to tell Pharaoh to "let my people go." Jesus taught his disciples and the gathered crowds with parables and stories. He communicated a message to his audience and asked response of them.

The early churches, and every subsequent generation of Christians, used various communication methods to tell others the stories of faith and to invite them into a relationship with the love of God in Jesus Christ. The stories, doctrines, traditions, and teachings were shared through speaking and preaching, written letters and sermons, manuscripts illuminated with hand-painted illustrations, mass-produced Bibles and pamphlets, visual arts of sculpture, painting, fresco, mosaic, etching, and photography, musical arts of lyric, melody, and harmony, and later, motion pictures and video vignettes.

The church's mission is to communicate the Gospel and to make disciples in every generation. To do that, teachers and preachers communicate the Gospel using the available technologies of their generation.

100 years ago, Christian clergy in the U.S. promoted the church's use of emerging motion picture technology to communicate the Gospel to children, youth, and adults in worship and religious education, as well as to promote mission awareness and involvement. While some church leaders shared this interest in the new technology, there were others who raised the caution flag, seeing danger in the "via media." Those who advocated using the new moving picture technology as a tool of the church countered by

pointing out that church people have always opposed technical changes before adopting them, including such things as quartet singing, the pipe organ, the printing press, and new translations of the Bible.

The situation hasn't changed much when we speak of worship and technology today: there are many who embrace it, and there are others who oppose it. The very word "technology" has become a barrier, a metaphor for a kind of rapid change that isn't always good or helpful. Yet experience shows that the technology people allow into the sanctuary is the technology that serves the worship functions of the church.

Churches have already adopted many different technologies into worship space that have become virtually invisible because they have been so well integrated into the worship space and experience. These include the following:

Architectural Technologies
These provide structural building features such as foundations, walls, and roofs, along with windows and ceilings; lighting fixtures, heating and cooling systems; furnishings such as altars, tables, pews and chairs; chair lifts and elevators. Included in this list might be the decorative technologies placed into sanctuaries such as those that facilitate fabric art and banners, plant and floral arrangements, pictures, art work and seasonal displays of altar arrangements.

Liturgical Support Technologies
These include sound systems with amplifiers, speakers, and microphones; organs, pianos and other musical instruments; clocks (we all know how the clock has quietly changed expectations about service length!); communion elements (bacteriological studies influenced a shift from wine to grape juice); printed worship bulletins, songbooks, and hymnals; audio and video tape recording systems and broadcast capabilities, and so on.

Presentation Technologies
While these might be understood to be liturgical support technologies, I think they deserve special attention. They include projectors of all kinds (slide, film strip, 16mm, LCD video, etc.); surfaces for image projection including walls, screens, fabrics, etc.; computers and presentation software such as PowerPoint; flat screen televisions in place of projector and screen; data sources such as 35mm slides, video tape (analog) or DVD movie, computer (digital) generated text and visuals or even Internet brought into the sanctuary with wireless signals.

Recent surveys show the prevalence of presentation technologies in today's churches. In an April, 2008 report, the Barna Group cited a study on church use of emerging technologies, including worship technologies of large screens showing video imagery and movie clips.[1] They found that 65% of Protestant churches have a large screen projection system in their church. They also found that the rate of adoption of these systems has slowed since 2005, and that the large-screen system is related to a church's size and theology. Among churches with less than 100 adults in weekly

worship, only 53% use these systems, while 76% use them in churches with 100-250 adults, with upwards to 88% of churches drawing more than 250 adults to worship each week.

The survey also found that only 43% of churches described by the pastor as having "liberal theology" have the big screen possibilities, compared to 68% of churches self-identified as theologically conservative. We are left to draw our own conclusions on reasons for this until more data is gathered about why this is true.

88% of churches now with a big screen in place show movie clips or other video segments, which is more than in 2000, but less than in 2005.

George Barna, the director of the studies, speculates that small churches may be less technologically friendly because of lack of size or budget, and that they just might be small because of that kind of self-limiting thinking. In addition, he says that as more digitally-resistant churches find ways to fit their vision to the use of these technical tools, there may be further growth in the use of such technologies.

Because of the wide use of presentation technologies across the U.S., most church members have experienced worship with them in place. If their own churches don't employ them, they've seen them used when they've visited other churches for special occasions like baptisms and holiday celebrations with family, or just out of curiosity to see what other churches are doing. My experience is that what these visiting church members report when they get home is less an observation about technology, and more about what they experienced: how they liked singing with their heads looking up at a screen rather than down at a hymnal; how they liked not having to hold a heavy hymnal; how they appreciated not having to follow along with a worship bulletin in an unfamiliar church and could just follow along on the screen; how the pictures and video clips they watched connected with the mission and message of that church; and how they noticed a lively spirit among those who had gathered for worship.

Another recent study shows that just as more and more church goers are becoming accustomed to presentation technologies in worship, so too are they increasing the personal use of various media technologies in their daily lives. The Nielsen Company, known for its data on television viewing, issued its first quarterly "Three Screen Report" regarding television, Internet, and mobile usage in the U.S. in May of 2008.[2] What they found was that those aged 55 and older watched an average of 168 hours of television a month, twice as much as children and teens, and 36% more than 18-54 year olds.

As a percentage of the video-watching audience (defined as video seen on live television or playback), the 55+ age group accounted for twice as many viewing as children and teens. Those 35 and older accounted for 63% of the video viewing audience in comparison with 37% of those under the age of 34.

When we put this data side by side with Barna Group studies on church attendance, we find that the age groups watching the most television and video are also

more likely to be attending church. A 2006 Barna Group study showed that 54% of elders (born before 1945), and 49% of boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) attended church services, while 43% of busters (born 1965-1983) and only 33% of mosaics (born 1984-2002) attended. [3]

Where we might think our older members would be against the use of presentation technologies in worship, and media in general, they are in fact the very people who use media technologies at home more than other age groups.

Stated in other terms, someone who turns 100 years old this year was being born as churches in Connecticut, Indiana, and California were advocating showing movie scenes in worship. Documents from 1909 show how clergy and laity from several denominations were promoting the use of motion pictures in worship and education. [4]

Today's 85 year-old was born in 1924. That was the year my grandparents were married, and for their honeymoon they went to see a silent film in Chicago. Today's average 85er was born as churches in the U.S. had been using motion pictures in education and worship for well over 15 years.

While the Nielsen studies show that people across the generations are comfortable with television, movies, the Internet, online video, and mobile media, there is still some discomfort and resistance about using presentation technologies in worship. There are many reasons for this, including the resistance of a lot of tired clergy who are overextended in their ministries already and can't see adding something new to what they're already doing, and including church members who regularly see how poorly presentation technologies are used in their workplaces. One need only go to www.youtube.com to view short videos featuring how not to do PowerPoint presentations!

If all these people who come to church already are familiar and comfortable with television and other media use, why is it that there is such resistance in some congregations, particularly self-identified liberal congregations, to the use of such technologies in worship? I am convinced that what we've done is trained clergy and developed congregations who have come to expect that worship is for our ears and not our eyes. We've developed congregations of auditory learners who expect that worship is more about listening and hearing than it is about looking and seeing.

Consider how most Protestant worship has been mediated by the aural arts of music and preaching. This 500-year-old emphasis on speaking and listening has pushed aside the worshipful use of visual arts of painting, sculpture, film, and photography.

The reasons for ear-centered worship go back to Exodus 20:4 and it's cautioning against graven images and extend through the Protestant Reformation with its elevation of the spoken, preached, and printed word as the best means to produce faith. As a result, most Protestant worship today is designed for the ear. Most of what happens in worship—music and spoken words-- treats the ear. We take it for granted that our ears

are the instruments of faith, and we give them music and preaching that is pleasurable, instructive, and worshipful.

The ongoing National Congregations Study through the Hartford Institute for Religion Research One has reported that in the U.S. 90 percent of a typical worship service involves listening to choirs, liturgists, and preachers.[5] Worship has become a listening culture where people come to hear a good sermon and listen to good music.

While statistics vary, studies show that of today's adults, 70 percent are visual learners, 25 percent learn by hearing, and 5 percent are hands-on learners. Is this true of our worshiping communities? Given the viewing habits shown by the recent Nielsen report, this is probably so. Given the resistance that many pastors report to attempts to use video clips and other visuals in worship, it might be that our church practice has created congregations full of auditory learners, or at least of people who have grown accustomed to an ear-centered worship culture.

Age alone does not determine which sense is dominant, as many youth and young adults are also auditory learners. I remember a faithful member of a congregation I served who closed his eyes during the entire sermon. It wasn't that he wasn't listening….he could tell me specifically what I had said. This auditory learner was simply blocking out all visual stimuli so that he could concentrate one what he was hearing. I imagine that were he alive today, he would oppose any use of film or photography in worship on the grounds that it would be distracting to his concentration. During a particular confirmation class, I recall a couple of teenagers who, instead of watching a class video, sat with their heads on the table, eyes closed, a picture of lazy inattention. When they correctly answered every question I asked, they proved that despite appearances, they were listening very carefully to the video. They were auditory learners and they did not need to see the screen to know what was going on.

Our churches are full of such auditory learners, and since aural content has been the predominant practice of many churches, most worship communities are composed of people who prefer an auditory approach to worship. Many of these church members would find it distracting to look at pictures of any kind. These are the people who, when hearing a suggestion to show a video clip during a sermon, would say, "If I wanted to watch a movie, I'd go to the movie theater."

That said, many churches have successfully integrated more visuals into historically audio-centered services by projecting visual announcements, words to hymns, images that enhance the sermon, and classical religious art. There is evidence that congregations, even auditory ones, enjoy the pairing of sound with sight when it is done tastefully, sparingly, gracefully, and gradually.

These experiences are further strengthened when presentation technologies are used to celebrate the intergenerational nature of the church. For example, some churches have easily integrated into their services pictures and video clips that show:

--pictures of the couple that was just married in the church the previous weekend
--photographs of the latest new born with mom and dad, grandpa and grandma
--pictures of the whole family gathering after a baptism
--scanned images of art projects from a church school class
--pictures of the confirmation class as infants and now as they are at confirmation
--short video clips of a recent youth service project
--emailed photographs of church members on a mission trip
--screen shot of a community news item featuring a church member
--photographs of a recent senior citizen luncheon program
--photographs or video clips of church members who reside in assisted living facilities or in nursing homes

These materials can be presented in worship during the announcements, as a special mission report, as part of the offertory, as an introduction to a special time of recognition, or during the sermon presentation. All ages of worshipers give special attention to these visual portrayals of their church family and friends.

Over many years of developing a visually-rich worship experience, we heard many positive comments from people across the generations. One woman who visited with her children and grandchildren said, "I've gone to church my whole life but this is the first time I got something out of it. It was because I could see what you were preaching about." Other long-time members who had attended worship weekly came to prefer the visual service because they could understand more of the message with its combining sound, words on a screen, pictures, religious art, and relevant movie clips. Attentiveness increases with younger members too. Infants and children quiet when an interesting visual is presented. I recently saw a two-year old stand up on the pew and lean forward to see the pictures that were illustrating my sermon. She followed along intently.

There are other positive intergenerational results that can emerge from the convergence of worship and presentation technology, including increased attendance, attentiveness to worship content, and mission awareness and response.

A visually centered and culturally relevant worship experience creates an interest among those searching for fresh and meaningful worship. Children, youth, and adults start coming to church with the expectation that something new, different, and engaging will be presented as part of the worship service. My experience with a visually-rich service showed that young adults and families with children started attending worship more regularly. They represented a generation accustomed to screens, relevant music, and film clips, but for whom the application of these materials to biblical story and theological theme was exciting. Members invited friends and family into the worship service. Grandparents began to report things like, "I came to the media service because this was the service my children and grandchildren attended. I also came to like it myself."

Another response to the use of visuals in wors hip was increased discussion and

interaction with material presented during "visual sermons." With the addition of visual illustrations, including symbols, diagrams, film clips, and photography, people could reflect upon their own experience with what they saw and heard, and gain a memorable experience to talk about afterwards with others. Pictures made the preaching themes more memorable by adding an additional sense, the visual to the auditory.

Effective visuals help people better understand the mission projects the church promotes. Pictures of these projects, and in some cases brief video clips, help draw people into the project and stimulate financial support for these very specific needs. After Hurricane Katrina we raised thousands of dollars because we were able to show pictures of local people on site in Louisiana purchasing and delivering diapers, towels and blankets. In another instance, hundreds of dollars were quickly donated to help out a local family with hospital expenses associated with the premature birth of twins in a nearby city. We were able to show pictures of the newborns on a weekly basis and report their progress as well as highlight the amounts being donated by church members toward various medical needs. Parents reported more conversations with their children about what they had seen on screen, and a growing church family awareness of the opportunities for serving the needs of others.

Developing an Intergenerational Interpretive Community.

Probably the most important change that took place as a result of the introduction of media arts in worship was the development of an intergenerational interpretive community. As more and more people became engaged in direct experiences with creating liturgical media art,[6] they came to understand the importance of having theological conversations to link biblical text with cultural media productions such as film clips and pairing of images to music and lyrics.

As youth and adults became comfortable developing PowerPoint presentations with original photography and appropriate music, we found teams of fathers and daughters, mothers and sons, daughters and mothers, and fathers and sons offering to provide pieces of liturgical media art.

Rather than becoming recipients of someone else's messages about scripture during worship, they became direct participants with a stake in a creative engagement and application of scripture to cultural media. People developed fluency with a kind of hybrid worship language from the creative interchange between cultural media and theology.

Introducing visual presentation technologies into congregations accustomed to an emphasis on auditory technology can be jarring. Yet with sensitivity to the audio and visual needs of congregation members of all ages, it can be done gradually and well. When such changes are harnessed to the purposes of worship—to gather around, experience, and respond to the Word of God in words, music, imagery, sacrament, and offering—the change is understood as serving the heart and soul of the worship community. Worship becomes engaging for all the generations, and the technology that helps make this happen remains invisible.

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[1] "New Research Describes Use of Technology in Churches," April 28, 2008 and available at http://www.barna.org

[2] This is from "Nielsen's Three Screens Report: Television, Internet and Mobile Usage in the U.S." (May, 2008). See http://www.nielsen.com for the latest quarter's report of the "Three Screens" survey results.

[3] See http://www.barna.org

[4] See Terry Lindvall, The Silents of God: Selected Issues and Documents in Silent American Film and Religion, 1908-1925 (Lanham, MD and London: The Scarecrow Press, 2001).

[5] This is data from the 1998 research of the National Congregations Study through the Hartford Institute for Religion Research http://hirr.hartsem.edu/cong/research_ncs.html. Findings for the 2006-07 research had not been released at the time of this writing, but may now be available at the website.

[6] For further discussion about the developing field of liturgical media art, see Eileen Crowley's Liturgical Art in A Media Age. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007).

Celebrating the Possibilities: Media Art in Preaching and Worship
By Michael Bausch

The perspective that I bring to this conversation is as a parish pastor with a long experience of using visuals and visual technologies in worship and preaching. During the 1960's and 1970's many of us tried using 35mm slides, record albums, and video tapes to offer what is now called "liturgical media art" in worship and education. Somewhere in the middle of the 1990's technologies changed, and it became even easier to bring pictures, music, and video into sanctuaries. It was during this time that I developed, along with teams of laity, a weekly media-intensive worship experience in a mid-sized Midwestern church.

During those years I also began to offer workshops on the use of media in worship to denominational gatherings, taught summer courses at a number of mainline seminaries, helped develop a doctor of ministry program in digital media and congregational revitalization, and wrote a number of articles and a book about screens, media art, and worship. All of this is to say that while I have long experience with using media in preaching and worship, I have also combined this with research in the field to better guide clergy and laity who are also interested in developing or improving liturgical media art in their worship and preaching settings.

It is not my purpose to define for you worship, preaching, and liturgy. I trust that you have your own understanding of their origin, purpose, function, and presentation as they happen each week within the life of your own worshiping congregation. Generally speaking, many of us would agree that what happens in worship is that people gather to:

>   Come into God's presence,
>   Engage the Word of God,
>   Respond to the experience of that Word, and
>   Be sent back out into the world.

Much of how this is accomplished is in telling the stories of faith. This is done through story-telling in many dimensions: the announcements of the congregation, where people are told what has happened and what is to happen in the life of the gathered church; the singing of hymns, songs, and anthems in which stories, scriptures, and theological lessons are presented; the liturgies of prayer in which life stories, plots, tensions, and resolutions are named; the reading of scriptures through which biblical stories are remembered; the preaching of sermons filled with illustrations, anecdotes, and stories organized to draw meaning from the scriptures.

Most of what I have described is familiar to worship leaders, and follows the structure of how this story-telling occurred in biblical times. The song of Miriam at the sea in Exodus 15:20-21 is a celebration and a testimony to the story of the deliverance of the Hebrews from the Egyptian oppression. Joshua called for 12 stones to be carried across the Jordan River and placed on the promised land (Joshua 4:4-7) so that children will see them and ask, "What do these stones mean?" in order that the story can be told. Jesus told parables which then raised questions in his listeners' minds, which stimulated further discussion, for the sake of a life lesson.

Songs, monuments, and parables all are means to tell the stories of faith. There is yet another way to tell stories, and it was used by the early churches when they painted simple pictures and symbols in the catacombs, and by later congregations as they added mosaics, stained glass windows, painted canvases, and fabric art to show the stories and their symbols in the worship sanctuaries. These media, put together into a harmonious whole (which is the art and science of rhetoric), helped tell the stories of faith effectively while inviting a worship congregation to remember these stories, apply the lessons learned to their own lives, and experience the catharsis of being grasped and pulled in by the story.

Today's presentation technologies make it easy to continue this long tradition of story telling in worship while increasing the options for doing so. As I have learned while developing weekly media-intensive worship services for eight years, this can bring changes to a worship community. What primarily started as a means of telling the stories of faith more effectively to a visual (and audio-visual) generation in worship by picture and parable from popular media, came to bring many unanticipated results.

Increases in worship attendance.

As with all increases in worship attendance, the increase was due to a number of factors. While the main factor for this was adding an additional worship service to the Sunday morning schedule, making the service visually centered and culturally relevant created an interest among those searching for something new and different. People started coming with the expectation that something new, different, and engaging would be presented as part of the worship service. More young adults and families with children started attending worship more regularly. They represented a generation accustomed to screens, relevant music, and film clips, but for whom the application of these materials to biblical story and theological theme became a draw. More men began to attend worship, partly as a result of the simplification of the liturgy by reducing the number of words that were read, increasing the number of pictures that were seen, and by reducing the number of hymns

that were sung. These increases also were a result of members inviting friends and family into the worship service. The media service created a new sense of evangelism. People who felt the multimedia worship experience met their needs through its attention-getting excitement and cultural relevancy became very comfortable inviting friends and acquaintance to this unique experience.

Increases in mission giving.

We came to see how effective visuals were for helping people better understand the mission causes the church was promoting through special offerings. Pictures of these appeals, and in some cases brief video clips, helped draw people into the story of the project and give to support these very specific needs. Thousands of dollars were raised for victims of Hurricane Katrina because we were able to show pictures of local people on site in Louisiana purchasing and delivering diapers, towels and blankets from the initial donations provided by our church. More gifts followed these pictorial reports. These emailed pictures helped dramatize the urgency of the situation as well as show the specific ways our congregation's donations were being used. In another instance, hundreds of dollars were quickly donated to help out a local family with expenses associated with the premature birth of twins and their hospitalization in a nearby city. We were able to show pictures of the newborns on a weekly basis and report their progress as well as highlight the amounts being donated by church members toward various medical needs. Having the projector, screen, and computer in place in the sanctuary made it easy to "think visually" and show the various causes we were supporting, thus making it easy to raise much-needed funds.

Increased engagement with the sermon.

Another response to the use of visuals in worship was the increased discussion and interaction with material presented during "visual sermons." With the addition of illustrations to a message, including symbols, diagrams, film clips, and photography, people could enter a message at different points stimulated by the visuals, reflect upon what they saw and heard through their own experience, and gain a memorable experience to talk about afterwards with others. Pictures made the preaching themes more memorable by adding an additional sense, the visual to the auditory. Besides the stimulation of dialogue about sermon presentations, there seemed to be more catharsis resulting from some of the powerful visual illustrations. We noticed that there were more tears in worship as a result of music combined with rich imagery and linked up with scriptural text and theological theme. Dramatic and emotionally gripping film sequences added to the catharsis in

unexpected ways. People were touched and drawn deeper into the sermon message through the use of visuals and audio in the sermon.

An expanded opportunity for preaching contemporary issues.

Those clergy wishing to preach contemporary social issues can find an easy alliance with visual media. All of today's social issues are communicated through popular media of film, television programs, books, newspaper and magazine articles and photographs, and in many songs. Preachers can select from a wide variety of visual resources to illustrate a topic and present an outline for understanding the issues involved as well as to demonstrate a theological viewpoint. In their preaching and during worship, church leaders can use the screen to more effectively communicate and promote theological, political, economic, and social issues. Poverty, war, racism, gender inequalities, consumerism, and global warming are easily illustrated with photograph, art, film clip, and animated graphics as part of a sermon illustration, prayer litany, or invitation to the offertory. Preachers and liturgists can visually show local, regional, national, and global church efforts to reduce the effects of poverty, to protest war, to dismantle racism, to foster cross cultural-communication and competencies, to educate about HIV/AIDS, to eliminate the death penalty, to mobilize efforts to face up to global warming and encourage necessary life-style changes, and to affirm a diversity of loving relationships and family systems.

As the Bush Administration developed its case to invade Iraq, we offered sermons about nonviolence as a Christian approach to international conflict. We found pictures to accompany the U-2 song "Peace on Earth" and showed Iraqi families in their homes and communities. Through this multimedia approach we hoped to put a human face on the Iraqi people. As part of the song we posted on the screen quotations from Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nietzsche, and Jesus about non-violence. We found old newspaper articles from the local community during the Vietnam War, where people questioned the role of God in times of warfare.

As our state was considering a constitutional amendment to define marriage as solely between one man and one woman, we provided a Valentine's Day sermon that featured illustrations from traditions surrounding the original St. Valentine, who was imprisoned by the Roman government for illegally performing marriages of soldiers who were not to be married while they served Rome. His was an example of affirming loving relationships even when the government had passed laws defining who could marry and when.

On a Memorial Weekend we juxtaposed patriotic songs about America with film clips from the film, "The Fog of War" (2003), featuring video and audio

tapes of Lyndon Johnson and Robert McNamara willfully deceiving the American public about sending more troops to Vietnam. This media vividly illustrated the vigilance people must maintain when governments wage war without much public accountability.

After a local clergy association expelled Muslim and Wicca members of the group (these clergy were chaplains in a state correctional facility in the community), we outlined the necessity of interfaith dialogue through onscreen images of newspaper headlines and articles about the local controversy. Scenes were shown from a PBS documentary about a similar controversy that was generated when a Lutheran pastor prayed with people of other faiths at a September 11 memorial service at Yankee Stadium.

On Mother's Day we showed photographs of a local dog who had adopted some orphaned kittens, and then used a song about a non-traditional family composed of two lesbians raising a child together, showing pictures of a diversity of family configurations, including multiracial and same-gender families, and more pictures of that dog mothering some kittens! This was to illustrate a message about the wide embrace and compassion we experience from many mothers, and how this is a call to all of us that comes from Christian faith.

In all of these cases, the screen was effectively used to show the issues being discussed through the use of photographs, artwork, quotations, and film clips. The screen became a new window in the sanctuary, a window where with imagination, creativity, and passion, a media arts team can boost the preacher's persuasive appeals from the pulpit.

Widespread involvement by members of the congregation in planning and presenting worship.

As much of our screened material was locally-produced, this approach created the need for more people to become involved. As people caught the excitement of what happened by adding visuals to worship, some of them learned how to share their own artistic sensibilities by combining imagery with music, or finding film clips of scenes relevant to theological discussion and preaching themes. While some people came forward through general invitations, others stepped forward on their own, volunteering to assist in small manageable projects. Those who were already involved and who had shared certain experiences could help bring others in and train them.

Further, this called attention to the fact that many people in the congregation had skills that were under-used by the church. By adding visual arts to worship we invited in the photographers, graphic artists, art

educators, artists, videographers, and latent media artists to share their gifts to illustrate and present various preaching and theological messages. This in turn served to reactivate inactive members. We found that the typical over-reliance upon musical arts in worship brings in musicians and singers of a congregation yet excludes many who are visually-oriented. Some of them are nominally involved in church because the church hasn't met their needs. They return when invited back in to share and experience worship with a visually rich environment. This participation came to affirm the continued use of visuals in worship. Such positive reactions grew a culture of expectation that the church would continue to use the screen in direct relationship to preaching and worship.

As youth and adults became comfortable developing PowerPoint presentations with original photography and appropriate music, a kind of cottage industry developed which provided limited opportunities for some part-time work. As more people caught on to the power of visual displays in special events such as weddings, funerals, and special worship occasions like confirmations and celebrations of graduations, they asked church members who knew how to do this to provide them with media art for these family occasions. Families hired young people to develop wedding and funeral presentations with their skills at camera work, video editing, and scanning and creating slide shows. This arrangement provided a source of income for some teens and adults who were able to develop the media art that fit these occasions.

Most Important Change: The Blossoming of an Interpretive Community.

Probably the most important unexpected change that took place as a result of the introduction of media arts in worship was the development of an interpretive community. As more and more people became engaged in direct experiences with creating "liturgical media art", they came to understand the importance of having theological conversations to link biblical text with cultural media productions such as film clips and pairing of images to music and lyrics. Rather than becoming recipients of someone else's messages about scripture during worship, they became direct participants with a stake in a creative engagement and application of scripture to cultural media. People developed a fluency with a kind of hybrid worship language from the creative interchange between cultural media and theology.

The interpretive community became widespread. Large numbers of people became involved in many different aspects of developing, preparing, and presenting liturgical media arts, or in becoming part of the milieu in which is was nurtured and shared. Small groups met regularly to study lectionary texts, select themes, and brainstorm film clips and music that could be used

to help illustrate those themes. The core team invited others in the church to find pictures, art, music, and lyrics that seemed to connect with various biblical themes and stories. Some watched films and found scenes with obvious connections to "churchy" topics such as prayer, forgiveness, sin, peace, love, and justice. Those who joined in these efforts developed the practice of drawing preaching themes out of cultural "texts" or finding "texts" to support preaching themes. Some people grew fluent in this process and suggested or developed entire worship services that focused on a theme of personal interest that could be easily illustrated by film and music. A group of nurses, for example, prepared a worship service around the relationship of health and faith.

Film groups, book groups, and bible study groups all fed into the experience of weekly worship. Photographers and painters saw the connection of their arts with worship. Trips to area art museums and international travel changed members' views of art and they returned with new suggestions for using visuals in worship. Some members enjoyed the solitary experiences of working with computers to artistically enhance and edit photographs and videos to provide original illustrative material.

This interpretive community extended to those whose involvement was simply a part of their attendance at weekly worship. Some worshipers reported finding themselves making connections with Sunday's message connecting the presented message during the following week when they encountered popular music and media. The media triggered for them thoughts of the message that had been illustrated by the media the previous Sunday.

As a result of these surprising and often unanticipated results of using liturgical media art in worship, I came to understand and develop what I found to be three principles of interpretive communities. These principles help answer the question why the blossoming of interpretive communities matters in our churches.

Interpretive communities center themselves around the scriptures.

Interpretive communities grow in relation to their mutual study of scripture together. They find ways to experience scriptural story and theological theme through commentaries, poems, novels, paintings, films, short stories, sculptures, fabric art, movement and dance. They expose their faith to the arts in all of its forms, and their conversations together create meaning through theological reflection. These communities come to understand their life and faith as lived in the midst of a particular location and community.

Interpretive communities equip one another to grow in understanding and participation.

Interpretive communities equip one another to construct, present, and interpret the messages of Christian faith through their educational, social, worship, and mission practice. They go to art museums and talk together about what they see; they attend concerts and films to experience, engage, and discuss with hearts of faith; they form book groups to read anything that informs hearts and minds about life, love, theology, critical social issues, or recent biblical scholarship; they select social projects and join efforts to identify systemic injustice, oppose war, eradicate poverty, dismantle racism, and work for gender equity; they develop, present, and evaluate worship experiences that build community, honor and worship God, and send people equipped with faith and purpose out into the world.

Interpretive communities grow over time.

All who join with a worship community participate in that particular community's history, tradition, and practice. This is a living process that evolves over a period of time. People have come and gone in the life of that community, and the community is always changing through births, marriages, confirmations, deaths, as well as through its participation in its entire social, educational, mission, and worship experience. People grow comfortable in these communities as they spend time with them. These communities of interpretation actively engage, interpret, and construct the meanings that a broken world desperately needs. As they join together to create and support artistic interpretations of biblical story and theology, they grow in trusting one another, they develop means for whole-brain learning through the use of multisensory media, and they formulate ways to engage the world through faithful witness.

Today's digital media technologies of screens, projectors, computers, and music playback devices make it easy and affordable for church members to create, store, and present attention-getting audio and visual resources for worship and preaching. In the hands of interpretive communities of faith, these technologies can contribute to a vibrant theological conversation that has the potential to make a transformative difference in the lives of those who participate. As my own experience has shown, these new media offer churches limitless creative possibilities for telling the stories of faith in engaging and memorable ways.

[This article by Michael Bausch, with the additional material below, is scheduled to appear in the May, 2008 issue of Liturgy.*]*

Interpretive communities need a ready supply of resources!

Listed here are three websites that continue to prove to be useful for creative worship preparation in interpretive communities. One site develops lectionary based resources, one engages film, music, and other products of popular culture from a spiritual perspective, and one provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how to use today's media to reach a digital media generation.

http://www.textweek.com

This website is well known to many clergy as a starting point for weekly sermon preparation. While organized by lectionary text, the site offers the capacity to search for specific scripture passages, making it helpful to those not particularly bound to using the lectionary. The website is full of resources including sample sermons, illustrations, stories, primary sources and bible translations.

Of particular interest to those using projection technologies are the art and movie concordances. Works of art are searchable by their connection to scripture passages and themes, and are presented in chronological order with the oldest art listed at the top of the page and the newest works at the bottom. This information is helpful for those looking for either more classical or more contemporary art, including that of artists from around the world.

The movie concordance also lists films and scene descriptions by their connection to lectionary texts and themes. Unfortunately with most descriptions there is little guidance for where to find the scene in the film. It is left to the reader to watch the film, find the scene, and preview the content for its suitability in one's worship setting. While this is not the best solution for those hoping for a reference to quickly-found DVD chapters and minute marks, textweek.com still provides a stimulating starting point for finding film clips appropriate to lectionary scripture passages.

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This site affirms the presence of the gospel in today's films. Using the slogan, "Pop culture with a spiritual point of view," the website provides reviews of films currently showing at theaters as well as DVD's available for rental and purchase. Each review offers a synopsis of the film's story line and then adds commentaries from Christian writers sharing their perspectives and uncovering scriptural references, theological themes, and "what to look for."

I find the site very useful when I have a hunch there might be sermon material in a film that I am either looking to rent or going to the theater to see. For example, with the entire media buzz" surrounding a film like "The Da Vinci Code", HJ offered plenty of study resources and interpretive guidance. That said, the website is more than a film database. Dozens of reviewers discuss current TV shows, music, fiction and nonfiction books, and comic books, all with an eye towards their spiritual contribution.You can stay current by reading blogs, listening to podcasts, or getting RSS feeds sent to your email address. HJ is a great starting point for church leaders who wish to understand and to reflect upon the many messages communicated through today's popular culture.

http://www.marcprensky.com/

This website is helpful to those wishing to understand the impact of digital technologies on today's children and youth, and how teachers (and preachers) need to find new ways to communicate with today's "digital natives."

Marc Prensky is an educator who creates videogame-based training tools designed to teach today's technically fluent children, youth, and young adults. In his ground-breaking article, "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants", Prensky coins the term "digital natives" to refer to those who are natural users of computers, video games, and the Internet. Those people not born into this digital world he calls "digital immigrants." Although they are using much of today's technology, digital immigrants retain an "accent" because they were born before the advent of home computers, cell phones, and the Internet. Prensky maintains that today's educational challenge is for the digital immigrants teaching in classrooms (and preaching in our churches) to find ways to effectively reach out to the "natives" in our midst.

At his website, Prensky offers downloadable versions of his many articles about today's youth and how they think differently, and how their brains are changed as a result of their use of digital technologies. When navigating his website, click on "Writings" to go to a number of his free articles, including those with practical suggestions for developing effective teaching and learning strategies.

Prensky has given us a way to understand the shift that has been taking place ever since the development of the radio, the camera, the moving picture, and television: those who use these media are affected by them. Prensky discusses how the"digital" world of technology is changing human brains. If brains are being changed, and if multiple generations of people are now shaped by electronically-delivered content, how does the church harness this force for the sake of the gospel?

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Screens In Worship: "Framing" The Conversation
                    By Michael Bausch

Many worship communities are talking about projection screens and why to use them, how and when to use them, where to get them and in what size and material, whether it's even a good idea to use them at all, and, why not to use them!

While all of these questions are important ones to any congregation thinking about screens in worship, another conversation lurks behind it all: what is this thing called a "screen"? What does it have to do with God, and the worship of God? Could it be that the church has always used "screens" but we just haven't noticed?

Simply put, a projection screen is a framed surface upon which are projected colors, shapes, designs, pictures, and words.

The earliest surfaces used for expressing messages with color, shape, and picture were cave walls, where an available space was used by early artists to call attention to an essential event of daily life: the hunt. Early Christians used a similar surface, the walls of Roman-era catacombs, to portray essential events of their daily life: eucharist and prayer.

The surfaces of these walls provided small spaces that were dedicated to the content--- and the meaning---of human life. Some early wall-art had no discernible frame, such as a free-formed picture of a bison, while later wall-art, such as Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling, was framed by a combination of the architectural features of the ceiling, and the lines of color the artist used to distinguish one panel of the frescoed mural from another.

Today's church interiors employ a number of framed surfaces for communicating content and meaning: plain painted walls that sometimes include murals or pictures; colored-glass windows sometimes showing symbol, picture, and story; carved or painted wooden panels with story and symbol; stretched canvases painted with landscapes and human forms and framed as pictures; hanging fabrics with sewn or applied shapes, colors, symbols, and words.

Given this wide variety of framed panels already included in church interiors, the projection screen may be seen as another framed surface the church uses to display the content of religious faith through color, shape, pictures, and words.

A Surface For Story-Telling

For millennia, people have understood the story-telling power of figures fashioned from light and shadow. Plato's "Allegory of the Cave," dating back 2400 years, uses the analogy of a wall with shadows cast upon it by fire-light to suggest that a role of education is to help people understand the difference between what is real and what is a representation of reality. Philosophers and story-tellers alike came to see the educational and artistic possibilities brought by a light source, a surface, and the casting of shadows.

Walls and other surfaces would become the means, through light and shadow, by which skilled performers would bring delight—and moral lessons--- to audiences throughout the world. These artists tapped into the interplay of light and shadow, and found ways to use shadows themselves as story-telling devices for fun and learning.

For at least 2000 years, magicians and acting troupes traveled through China, India, Indonesia, Asia Minor, and Europe sharing the craft of shadow puppetry, bringing their audiences imaginative worlds full of entertaining stories and morality tales. First using walls and later, fabric screens, some of these performers understood the screen to be God's universe upon which they cast shadows of their hands and hand-made puppets as characters in a divine drama.

The English word "screen" finds its origin in this relationship of light and shadow. Hundreds of years old, the first uses of the word referred to upright panels covered with leather, cloth, or heavy paper and set in front of the hearth to form a room divider and shield people from the direct heat of the fire. It's easy to imagine children sitting in the space between the fire and the screen, making shadows on the screen with their hands and telling grand stories about these figures. These screens, like those of the shadow puppet theaters, became a place for playful imagination.

Techniques for intensifying and focusing lighting effects developed gradually over time. Early light projectors were constructed to shine light through painted glass and to show the pictures on room walls. One of the first light projectors was called a "magic lantern," and it was used to delight small audiences with picture stories shown on walls, sheets, and special fabric or paper screens. Images were painted on glass in various colors and projected on the wall of a small room.

In 1646 the Jesuit priest Athanasius Kircher wrote a paper called "The Great Art of Light and Darkness" and gave instructions for building one of these light projectors. While he loved to "astonish" his viewers with this new visual art, he also encouraged them to understand that the images were not magically-produced but occurred naturally through the relationship of light source (a candle or sunlight), a mirror inside the projector, and the wall or screen upon which the colored pictures were shown. Eager to connect his projector and screen to his theology, Kircher is said to have actually traced rabbinical use of projected images back to Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem.

As photography and motion picture technologies advanced in the 19th and early 20th centuries, churches began to use technically impressive projectors and screens to raise awareness and develop support for important mission projects. In 1908 the Foreign Christian Missions Society used a screen and projector in the Central Christian Church of Indianapolis to show church delegates stereopticon slides and picture films of missionary work in Japan, China, India, and Africa.

With the continued advancement of early motion picture technology, a number of clergy and laity in the U.S. advocated using movies and screens in worship services. Thomas

Edison gave his blessing to these projects with an article he wrote for a church periodical in 1910.

During the course of the twentieth century, churches began to use other types of projection equipment in education and worship, including film strip projectors, 35 mm slide projectors, opaque projectors, and transparency projectors, and projected picture and color onto walls and screens developed for that purpose.

A Window To the Holy Imagination

A screen, then, can be any surface upon which or through which light, shadow, and color may be projected. The screen itself may be a wall; a piece of colored or translucent fabric stretched on a wooden frame or attached to adjacent walls by taut lines; an unrolled synthetic white or gray surface stood on a tripod; a specialized material suitable for video/data projectors raised and lowered from a narrow case by means of electric motor. The screen may consist of a reflective material upon which light is cast, similar to a typical film-strip or slide-projector screen, or it may be translucent material such as thin fabric or a synthetic material best-suited for video/data projectors. With translucent material the light projector may be in front of or behind the screen.

The screen becomes a window for seeing the world, as the whole world can be shown on and through this window. It becomes a panel for displaying God's universe through the relationship of light and word, as at the beginning of creation when God said, "Let there be light." The screen becomes an artistic canvas for church artists to develop their holy imagination to show the worshiping community the relationship of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit with all of creation.

The apostle Paul wrote about the relationship of light, darkness, and the Christian community when he wrote to the church at Corinth: "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6)

Light projected through and upon worship screens helps the community grow in their understanding of the content and meaning of Christian faith. The screen can become a means for the church to be in relationship with people who are eager to learn more and to grow in faith. Through engagement with the world and the positive influence of the creative arts to sensitize and grow awareness, people hear and respond to a calling to ministry in fresh and new ways.

The Screen As Another Framed Surface On A Church Wall

Think of the screen as the wall, the page, the panels, the window, the mosaic, the painting, the fresco, the fabric art.   It becomes any of the framed surfaces the church has used to show its story with pictures, symbols, and words:

>A catacomb wall
>A printed page of words
>An illuminated manuscript with word and picture
>A painted wood altar piece
>A stained glass window
>A mosaic
>A stretched and painted canvas
>A frescoed wall panel
>Fabric art
>A framed photograph
>A movie screen

A screen can show clear and large any of these classical art forms:

>A picture of praying figures from the catacombs
>A page from any Bible or illuminated manuscript
>The panels of a medieval wood altar piece
>A stained glass window from any church
>A mosaic from the apse of a basilica
>An oil painting of a bible story
>A frescoed wall panel from the time of renaissance
>A piece of fabric art
>Photography of important subjects

A worship team equipped with a computer, a projector, and a screen can create, store, retrieve, and present words, pictures, symbols, colors, shapes, and art forms that provide the content of Christian faith in new---and old---ways.

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Four Books and Three Websites: Seven Essential Resources

by Michael Bausch

What follows are reviews of current books and websites that will be useful to pastors wanting to use digital technologies to promote the mission of the church. The works cited are offered as helpful guides into the practical and theological issues of the use of such technologies.

Book Resources

Susan J. White, <u>Christian Worship and Technological Change</u>. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.

While this book has been around for more than a decade, it is a starting point for anyone wishing to address the church's use, and resistance to, a wide variety of technological developments. Susan White's work is an important survey of the church's response to many of history's important technological innovations. Avoiding promoting one technology over another, her goal is to show how the church's adoption of various technological innovations shaped worship and liturgy. White concludes that technological progress is inevitable, and it is always a free choice whether to see a new technology as something that will help the church accomplish its mission.

She points out that churches quickly adopted most technological innovations as they were developed, resulting in the widespread use of things not now considered to be "technology," such as duplicating and copy machines, anything working with electricity, mass produced hymnals and bibles, and a wide variety of musical technologies. Those still bound to the expectation of a one hour worship service will find her discussion of the liturgical implications of the invention of the clock to be quite amusing!

White also discusses how 19th century bio-tech research would eventually result in many churches replacing wine with grape juice in communion, quickly changing a 1900 year tradition of using wine with the sacrament.

As we find ourselves awash in a sea of quickly changing technologies, White reminds us that this is nothing new for the church. In some ways her book provides us the small comfort of knowing we join a long line of church leaders faced with similar dilemmas: to decide when and how to use, or not to use, the products of technical progress.

John P. Jewell, <u>Wired For Ministry: How the Internet, Visual Media, and Other New</u>

<u>Technologies Can Serve Your Church</u>. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004.

Jewell organizes his material around three main themes helpful to church professionals as they seek to understand and integrate new technologies into education, evangelism, mission, administration, and worship: 1) to be aware "of the pitfalls of the new technologies in the life of the Christian community 2) to "develop a knowledge of the promise of new technologies that can facilitate and enrich ministry" and 3) "to develop a working strategy for the implementation of the best practices for the integration of technology in ministry."

Using terms such as "technolust," "technostress" and "technobabble," Jewell is clear in his critique of the church's use of tools of this digital age, while simultaneously showing how the church can embrace these means for reaching out.

Through a series of short chapters, Jewell provides a thorough survey of the issues that must be mapped out when considering such things as communicating with today's "Net Generation" of children and youth, starting an Internet ministry for visibility and evangelism, building an online learning system for your church, or what authentic screen-based worship might be like. Ever interested in integrating technology and ministry, Jewell offers the balanced perspective pastors will appreciate.

While much of what he suggests is not new to church people aware of recent technological developments, what is new is that today's technological tools are even more affordable than they ever were. Jewell also has a good eye for what he calls "the fit" of technical skill, technological tool, and congregational sensibilities and needs.

Tex Sample, <u>Powerful Persuasion: Multimedia Witness in Christian Worship</u>. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005.

Tex Sample's latest book is a real treat to read. Always autobiographical in his approach, and rooted in a teaching and writing ministry, he embraces technologies which provide a full use of multi-sensory and multimedia experiences in worship. What I appreciate most is not only this embrace, but also his theological reflections on the urgency of this embrace. Few commentators have given this a more readable treatment. Without straying into dry theological formulas, Sample manages to keep his material lively, informative, and compelling. The stated focus of his book is to answer the question, "how can the church use multisensory and multimedia rhetoric in ways that are intrinsic to, or compatible with, faith?"

What he provides are some really good answers. "The use of multisensory and multimedia rhetoric requires a craft knowing of the uses of image, sound, beat, light, move, and dance in the emergent culture and how they serve in the representation and presentation of God's story." He calls for "faithful experimentation" to learn this new "craft" as part of the "prophetic work of the church" to be "an alternative community of faith able to love the world but also able to oppose it and to call it into question."

For Sample, the use of media technologies is to serve the progressive witness of God's story of justice, peace, and love in a broken world. Those considering using visual arts and products of popular culture in worship, or those already doing so, will benefit from Sample's foundational theological work.

Tom Mucciolo and Rich Mucciolo, <u>Purpose, Movement, Color: A Strategy for Effective Presentations</u> New York: MediaNet, Inc. 1994.

This short, 71-page book offers pastors and lay teams everything they need to consider when presenting computer-enhanced, screen-based messages. Using research on the impact of color and shape on the human mind, speaker placement in relationship to the screen, and the power of purposeful communication, the writers concisely explain the basics for electronic presentations. "By establishing a central theme, by paying close attention to layout and design elements, and by incorporating color into the presentation, your chances for a successful event dramatically increase."

The book covers the importance of graphic symbols for anchoring the eye to your slides, and the use of geometric shapes (such as arrows) to lead the viewer to a certain expected or unexpected bit of content. In a section about emotions and background color, various emotional responses are linked to the colors one chooses as slide backgrounds: red heightens emotion, blue indicates a conservative approach, green stimulates interaction, etc. Citing research studies, the writers back up assertions on how men and women respond to various colors.

Another helpful section of the book gives specific advice for those accompanying their verbal presentations with visuals. For example, the authors recommend that the screen is to the speaker's left side (or on the right side from the audience or congregation's perspective). The reason given for this is that we read from left to right, so the viewers' eyes move easily from the speaker standing to the left of the screen to the material being shown on the screen.

While this book was written many years before most in the church were presenting sermons and liturgy with screens in the sanctuary, the basic principles still apply.

Internet Resources

http://www.marcprensky.com/
This next resource is helpful to those wishing to understand the impact of digital technologies on today's children and youth, and how teachers (and preachers) need to find new ways to communicate with today's "digital natives."

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who, while using much of today's technology, retain an "accent" because they were born before the advent of home computers, cell phones, and the Internet. Prensky maintains that today's educational challenge is for the digital immigrants teaching in classrooms (and preaching in our churches) to find ways to effectively reach out to the "natives" in our midst.

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Prensky says that while today's teachers (and preachers) do not need to master all the new technologies to be effective presenters, we do need to involve the digital natives by listening to them on how they might teach (or preach) the material, and to enlist them in helping design their learning instruction.

What I like about Prensky is that he has given us a way to understand the shift that has been taking place ever since the development of the radio, the camera, the moving picture, and television: those who use these media are affected by them. Prensky discusses how the"digital" world of technology is changing human brains. If brains are being changed, and if multiple generations of people are now shaped by electronically-delivered content, how does the church harness this force for the sake of the gospel?

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David Bruce's web contribution is to affirm the presence of the gospel in today's films. Using the slogan, "Pop culture with a spiritual point of view," the website provides reviews of films currently showing at theaters as well as DVD's available for rental and purchase. Each review offers a synopsis of the film's story line and then adds commentaries from Christian writers sharing their perspectives and uncovering scriptural references, theological themes, and "what to look for."

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That said, his website is more than a film database. Dozens of reviewers discuss current TV shows, music, fiction and nonfiction books, and comic books, all with an eye towards their spiritual contribution. You can stay current by reading Blogs, listening to podcasts, or getting RSS feeds sent to your email address. HJ is a great starting point for church leaders wishing to understand and reflect upon the many messages communicated through today's popular culture.

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[This article appeared in the January 2007 issue of The Clergy Journal.]

Picky Eaters In the Pew: A Strategy For Changing The Worship Diet
By Michael Bausch
(This article was published in 2007 in *The Clergy Journal*)

"Taste and see that the Lord is good." Psalm 34:8

"I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it…"
      I Corinthians 3:2

Worship is a matter of taste ("aesthetics"), and by providing tasty foods, we can also, as the Psalmist writes, see the goodness of God. Taste and seeing go together! So do aesthetics, the visual arts, and God! The Apostle Paul also understood that church people grow and change, and that there is a natural "food progression" as we grow from spiritual infancy into spiritual adulthood. Milk serves our needs in our infancy, but as we develop and grow, we need something more solid, and, tastier!

Let's play with these metaphors and learn how to develop the "visual taste" of our congregations through the gradual introduction of media arts in worship (a pedagogy of theological aesthetics?).

When trying to get a child to eat something new or even unpleasant to the child's taste, a frustrated parent might simply say, "Just eat it, it's good for you." Most of the time, the child may not try it, unless the adult develops a positive strategy. Frustrated parents can turn to any number of child nutrition sites for guidance, including the Mayo Clinic ("…the dinner table can become a battleground…") and "Getting Past Yech", a Wall Street Journal article about the picky eater.

It occurs to me that when it comes to worship, the worship leader and/or pastor is just like that frustrated parent trying to get a child to try something new: "Just give this worship change a try, it's good for you."

We understand that, like the dinner table, worship can become a battleground, to borrow the Mayo Clinic phrase. This being true, it doesn't mean that we can't try to add something to the worship "diet" and even help parishioners grow in their appreciation for the new "food" of a worship change.

So, borrowing from the "Getting Past Yech" Wall Street Journal article about the picky eater, let's see how we might apply the same strategies to getting a child to try—and eventually enjoy-- a different food, to the similar task of encouraging a worship congregation to change its diet and try something new. Let's have some fun with this…and use your own imagination!

"When introducing a new food, put a small amount on the plate. Do this at least 10 times before giving up."

Worship Media Suggestion: when introducing media arts into worship, do so in small portions, and do it repeatedly. Be careful not to use too much of the screen at first. Show announcements before worship one week. Use pictures to illustrate a choir anthem the next. Show a very short mission message from a denominational video tape or DVD during the offering. Display three or four "Last Supper" paintings during communion. What you are doing is giving the congregation small amounts of media arts without a "full meal" and just enough to grow everyone's level of comfort and familiarity.

"Let the picky eater wash, cook, handle or even play with new foods. The idea is to familiarize the person with different looks and smells and to reduce fear of the unknown."

Worship Media Suggestion: notice the family members who take photographs after a wedding or baptism of a member of your church family. Ask if they could email the church a few of those photographs for display on the church screen. Display the photos as part of the announcements within the week or month. Add text to the photo that congratulates the family and identifies the newly-weds or the newly-baptized as part of the church family. You will be connecting the family to the congregation, affirming their use of digital photography, helping them and the whole congregation grow accustomed to the use of a screen in the sanctuary. One message is that the screen isn't used for something that is "done to them" from the outside, but is a communication medium from within the congregation. No longer is this something from "the unknown" or strange, but a part of the church family communication system.

"Try food chaining: identify foods a fussy eater does like, then introduce other times and build from there. If the finicky eater loves chicken nuggets, try breaded nuggets of other meats, and then move on to meat that's not breaded. If vegetables are the issue, start with crispy vegetable chips, then move on to baked sweet-potato slices."

Worship Media Suggestion: having developed a sense that what is displayed on-screen is imagery from the church families, add a little more. Show pictures of a confirmation retreat, or a recent women's group meeting, or congregation members working at a food pantry or at another community-based activity. Use these pictures during the visual announcements before the worship, and slowly add them in to places during the worship like the offertory period, or perhaps as an illustration of mission during the sermon

presentation. You are using local imagery and pictures of the life of the congregation during the message times of the worship service.

"Cover new foods with a familiar sauce that the reluctant eater already likes."

Worship Media Suggestion: here is an opportunity to use visual imagery while the choir sings. The anthem is a "familiar sauce" that adds to the "flavor" of worship. By selecting imagery that fits the lyrics of a choir anthem, you are enhancing the flavor of the music, amplifying (in a visual way) the choral contribution to worship by adding visual imagery, and visually offering the congregation another way to experience what they are accustomed to.   Alternatively, a preacher might preach the sermon (something the worship community already "likes") with pictures that individually and visually "anchor" each of the sermon's points. The congregation is used to a sermon and a preacher's typical sermon structure; the visuals, when selected well, increase attentiveness, add to understanding, and facilitate retention (remembering what was said).

"Don't yell or punish the picky, but don't cave in and cook them whatever they like either. Allow a fussy eater to go hungry occasionally to learn that his or her pickiness has consequences."

Worship Media Suggestion: once you've started to use visuals, and once you start to hear some negative criticisms, don't give up! While your goal is to help the congregation become more familiar with this "strange new food" of visual arts in worship, after trying "ten times" (see the first suggestion!), you might want to stop for a week or more. People will notice, and some will begin to miss the visual "diet" you have introduced. They will tell you, and begin to make comments like, "are you going to use the screen again?", or "I miss the screen. You can use it every once in a while, you know."   This "feedback" will help you understand that you've begun to change the "diet" of the congregation in a good way, and that they are beginning to enjoy the new flavors while appreciating the nutrition you are offering.

Food advisers tell us that it's far easier to train a child to try a new food and like it than it is for an adult who has been set in his or her eating habits for a number of years. Maybe this is what Jesus understood when he said, "Bring the little children to me, for to such belongs the Kingdom of Heaven." Children, youth, and young adults will appreciate your introducing new visual "food" into worship, and, if our experience with worship change is an indicator, the older adults who have trouble with "new foods" will also grow in their taste.

AUDITORY AND VISUAL LEARNERS IN THE PEW

by Michael Bausch

When addressing issues of technology and worship, many leaders think that resistance to such innovation is rooted in a discomfort with change itself. While resistance to change is natural and real in many of our churches, those working to change something in the life of a congregation might strengthen their case for a specific change by acknowledging that what is feared is not the change. Rather, people fear that somehow the proposed changes will negatively impact the very heart and soul of the congregation. They do not fear the change so much as that the change might not "fit" the culture of their church. An example of this is proposing to add visuals into worship and preaching. The fear is less about adding a screen and projector to a sanctuary, and more about how this might change the worship culture and practice of a congregation.

Leaders interested in incorporating screens, computers, and projectors into worship sanctuaries must address this fear. While it is important for leaders to learn all they can about screen, projection, computer, and sound technologies, it is even more important to notice what introducing those technologies into worship will or will not do to the heart and soul of the worshiping community.

EAR-CENTERED WORSHIP

One of the biggest hurdles faced by those wishing to add more visuals to worship is the reality that most Protestant worship has been mediated by the aural arts of music and preaching. This 500-year-old emphasis on speaking and listening has pushed aside the worshipful use of visual arts of painting, sculpture, film, and photography. The reasons for ear-centered worship go back to Exodus 20:4 and its cautioning against graven images and extend through the Protestant Reformation with its elevation of the spoken, preached, and printed word as the best means to produce faith. As a result, most Protestant worship today is designed for the ear. Most of what happens in worship—music and spoken words-- treats the ear. We take it for granted that our ears are the instruments of faith, and we give them music and preaching that is pleasurable, instructive, and worshipful. One recent study reports that in the U.S. 90 percent of a typical worship service involves listening to choirs, liturgists, and preachers. People come to hear a good sermon and listen to good music.

AUDITORY LEARNERS AND VISUAL LEARNERS

I remember a faithful member of a congregation I served who closed his eyes during the entire sermon. It wasn't that he wasn't listening….he could tell me specifically

what I had said. This auditory learner was simply blocking out all visual stimuli so that he could concentrate one what he was hearing. I imagine that were he alive today, he would oppose any use of film or photography in worship on the grounds that it would be distracting to his concentration.

Age alone does not determine which sense is dominant, as many youth and young adults are also auditory learners. I remember a couple of teenagers in my confirmation class who, instead of watching a class video, sat with their heads on the table, eyes closed, a picture of lazy inattention. When they correctly answered every question I asked, they proved that despite appearances, they were listening very carefully to the video. They were auditory learners and they did not need to see the screen to know what was going on.

Our churches are full of such auditory learners, and since aural content has been the predominant practice of many churches, most worship communities are composed of people who prefer an auditory approach to worship. Many of these church members would find it distracting to look at pictures of any kind. These are the people who, when hearing a suggestion to show a video clip during a sermon, would say, "If I wanted to watch a movie, I'd go to the movie theater."

Yet, the 21st century provides a new challenge to communicators of faith. Worship professor Doug Adams has asserted that 60 percent of those under the age of 60—raised on viewing television—remember primarily by what is seen. While statistics vary, studies show that of today's adults, 70 percent are visual learners, 25 percent learn by hearing, and 5 percent are hands-on learners. Is this true of our worshiping communities? Probably, but given the resistance that many pastors report to attempts to use video clips and other visuals in worship, it might be that the church has created congregations full of auditory learners. What is understood to be resistance to technology and adding a screen to worship might more likely be resistance to introducing the foreign language of visual illustrations to people who are accustomed to experiencing worship with their ears.

Those wishing to gauge the audio/visual orientation of a congregation may well look for clues among people. Studies in neuro-linguistic programming have shown that people use language that reflects their dominant learning sense. "Do you see what I am saying" is a visual learner talking, just as "do you hear what I am saying" is used by an auditory learner. I have a hunch that people who love telling jokes are auditory learners, because they hear a joke and remember it, and have a ready storehouse of jokes and stories to share! People who say they "listen to the television" are auditory learners, while those who "watch TV" are visual learners. Those who listen to NPR or books on tape are certainly comfortable with auditory learning.

INTRODUCING MORE VISUAL MEDIA IN WORSHIP

What does this mean for those wishing to use more visual media in worship? It might mean starting a new service for your visual learners and to attract those visual learners who avoid worship because they do not listen or learn well by listening. Starting a new service gives everyone a choice and doesn't threaten the auditory learners and their worship service. Why force a predominantly aural congregation into having to look at visual illustrations when you can provide your congregation another style of worship at a different time? This additional worship service also may increase the number of visual visitors who are among your inactive members, those searching for a new church, or those who are craving worship that includes more of the senses.

That said, many churches have successfully integrated more visuals into historically audio-centered services by projecting visual announcements, words to hymns, images that enhance the sermon, and classical religious art. There is evidence that congregations, even auditory ones, enjoy the pairing of sound with sight when it is done tastefully, sparingly, gracefully, and gradually.

For those who can see and hear, worship will always involve both senses. With projection screens, projectors, computers, and surround-sound systems, it is possible to add more visuals to worship in ways that build a new tradition.

In the church I served, where we developed a weekly visually intensive multimedia service, we heard positive comments from many people over 70 years of age. One woman who visited with other family members said, "I've gone to church my whole life but this is the first time I got something out of it. It was because I could see what you were preaching about." Other long-time members who had attended worship weekly came to prefer the visual service because they could understand more of the message with its combining sound, words on a screen, pictures, religious art, and relevant movie clips. What started as an attempt to reach out to a visually-oriented generation of young people had unexpectedly attracted visual learners of all ages who had grown accustomed to seeing pictures in magazines and who have watched television and movies for most of their lives. Now they are getting the biblical text, sermon theme, and a memorable worship experience through both sound and image. Introducing visual technologies into congregations accustomed to an emphasis on auditory technology can be jarring. Yet with sensitivity to the audio and visual needs of congregation members, it can be done well. When such changes are harnessed to the purpose of worship—to experience and communicate God's word, spoken and visible—the change is understood as serving the heart and soul of the worship community.

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Theology, Worship, and Revelation

by Michael Bausch

A theological rationale for the use of visuals in worship, including electronically-mediated visuals, is developed through a description of both the function of worship and the doctrine of revelation.

God is at the center of our worship practice. In worship, we gather in awe of God's love, justice, and creative power, and we offer thanksgiving, praise, and devoted gifts to God. In our worship we name our relationships with God, with each other, and with our selves. Paul Tillich wrote that

"Religion opens up the depth of man's [sic] spiritual life which is usually covered by the dust of our daily life and the noise of our secular work. It gives us the experience of the Holy, of something which is untouchable, awe-inspiring, an ultimate meaning, the source of ultimate courage."

The imagery of our words and our visual images are in the service of this revealing of God's grace, God's love, and God's relationship to our lives. In 1 Corinthians 14:26, we find Paul's characterization of "orderly worship" to include "a revelation." The Greek apokalupsis, "to remove the covering veil," finds its way into the Latin re-velum, "to turn back the veil," and into our English "reveal."

Tillich's discussion of revelation begins his Systematic Theology. "Revelation is the manifestation of what concerns us ultimately." This revelation needs "the word as a medium of revelation." Tillich is careful to define this "word." It is not to be narrowly defined as spoken, written, or heard words, but is to accommodate "...the religious symbolism...which uses seeing, feeling, and tasting as often as hearing in describing the experience of the divine presence...the divine 'Word' can be seen and tasted as well as heard."

This is important as we develop a case for the use of visuals, including electronically-mediated visuals, in the service of God's revelation in worship. Revelation is known through all of the human senses.

Theology disclosed and revealed through the senses is prominent in biblical narrative. The ancient Shema has served as a central affirmation of Israel's faith: "Hear O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." (Deut. 6:4-5) Israel was not only to "hear," but they were to write those words on the doorposts of their homes, and recite and talk about them with their children. The Shema served as an ancient "audio-visual" where hearing and seeing were combined with disciplined reflection and discussion.

In Exodus 3, we find Moses leading his father-in-law's flock to pasture. Suddenly a

bush bursts into flame and he sees that it is not consumed. His full attention is captured. He says "I must turn aside and look at this great sight..." (Ex. 3:3) Then the voice of God calls to him from out of the bush, and Moses not only is engaged in seeing and hearing but he responds verbally, takes off his shoes, hides his face, and feels fear. He is fully attentive to God in that moment of revelation through his visual, aural, tactile, and emotional senses.

Our word "attention" comes from the Latin tendere meaning "to stretch." To give attention is to "stretch toward." To give our attention is a physical stretching process of engaging all of our senses. Like Moses at the bush, we need our senses engaged in order to turn aside, stretching to become closer to God's revelation in a historical moment. God's revelation to Moses in Exodus 3 occurs through the light of a burning bush and the sound of a voice. All of Moses' senses are engaged in the encounter. The prophet Isaiah provides another excellent example of theology disclosed and revealed through the senses. As an oral teacher, Isaiah uses sensory language and aphorisms because they maintain the listener's interest. Isaiah uses language that engages the senses and refers to that which is therefore familiar to the listeners.

Through 66 chapters, Isaiah employs references to the senses and the human sensory equipment:
--references to hearing and the ear are made 87 times
--references to speaking and saying are made 245 times
--the mouth is referred to 27 times
--references to seeing and the eye are
made 95 times
--hands are referred to 76 times
--the feet, 19 times
--the tongue, 2 times (it's mentioned only 9 times in the entire Bible), and to the tongue licking, once
--the experience of travail, or labor at childbirth, 7 times
--the nose, four times

Isaiah uses sensory language to capture the fullest attention and response of his audience.

Similarly, we find sensory communication in specific stories from Jesus' life. For example, when Jesus gathered with the disciples in the upper room, they were eating together. Taste and smell were added to the visuals of the meal, the table, the gathered friends, the sounds of talking and eating, and the feelings of the moment. Paul gives us the first account of that night, how Jesus "...took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'" (1 Cor. 11:23)

In speaking over the breaking of bread and the sharing of wine, Jesus engages the full

sensory attention of his disciples and offers the truth of the Psalmist, "taste and see that the Lord is good." (Psalms 34:8)

The disciples saw the bread and the cup. They heard the words of Jesus. Their feelings and thoughts were engaged by his telling them to rethink the meaning of the bread and cup and to remember him from that moment on. The Sacrament of Communion was instituted using common, everyday material for divine purpose. These examples illustrate the importance of engaging more senses in our communication. Biblical narratives demonstrate how hearer and reader are invited into a new reality through language and symbol.

As Tillich asserts, this language is not limited to spoken or written words, but it includes symbol and image. God's Word is more than words. To consciously or unconsciously limit Word to word is to weaken our relationship with God. Tillich declares,

"...the Word of God often is understood--half-literally, half-symbolically--as a spoken word, and a 'theology of the Word' is presented which is a theology of the spoken word. This intellectualization of revelation runs counter to the sense of the Logos Christianity. If Jesus as the Christ is called the Logos, Logos points to a revelatory reality, not to revelatory words."

In the same way that visual arts have been identified with idolatry, so too can words, doctrines, and verbal constructions be idolatrous when they are elevated at the expense of the visual. This is what Tillich calls, "the Protestant pitfall." To suggest using visuals in worship is a way to balance the mediation of God's revelation to our human senses. Just as God's revelation is not confined to image, neither is it confined to word.

Introducing visuals in worship is a starting point for reclaiming the fullness of the Logos as "revelatory reality."

Reclaiming the Power of Image In Worship

A typical worship service is saturated with words: hymns, printed prayers and responses, sermon, lyric and anthem. These claim our fullest attention. Even as the eye sees architecture, movement, banners, bread, wine, and water, singers, and speakers, these visuals are deemphasized as words are emphasized. The ear has plenty provided for it but the eye never seems to get enough.
One Sunday morning I illustrated a sermon with a video clip from a trip to France. In it were scenes of members of our church relating with members of another congregation in Paris, with whom we have a sister relationship. As I turned on the television set in order to show the video, I looked out at the congregation and noticed all eyes turned and focused on that blue screen. In that instant I saw eyes hungry for visual feeding.

Harvey Cox has advocated the importance of the visual arts in general and film media in particular as expressions of "the theological import of the visual world." Recognizing the Protestant emphasis of "the Word at the expense of the Light" he suggests that "it may be time to redress the balance a little." Protestants have emphasized the creative power of word and deemphasized the creative power of image.

When we deemphasize visual imagery in our theological discourse, we miss that which precedes verbal construction: image. A word-oriented, book-oriented church misses the power of the image and its essential cultural and theological contribution. To understand imagery and symbolism as media for God's revelation is to legitimately explore the potential that electronic visual arts of film and video have for deepening our experience with God's revelatory power. These arguments suggest the importance of including within the life of the church, and specifically, within its worship life, visual arts, including electronic visual media.

The church's mission is to communicate the Gospel--to make disciples--in every generation. To do that the Gospel must be communicated using the available technologies of each generation. 21st century preachers have additional means for communicating power messages with the advent of electronic and digital communication systems.

Incorporating audio-visual media in worship engages our senses, encourages our attention, and deepens our response to God's work in our lives. Walter Brueggemann suggests this is critical to our work,

"...the task is to fund--to provide the pieces, materials, and resources out of which a new world can be imagined...people in fact change by the offer of new models, images, and pictures of how the pieces of life fit together--models, images, and pictures that characteristically have the particularity of narrative to carry them. Transformation is the slow, steady process of inviting each other into a counter story about God, world, neighbor, and self."

Film and video engage the eye, the ear, the heart, and the mind of the viewer. They transport us to different settings, and encourage us to make choices about how we live our lives in response to God.

Theology as Theophany

This discussion about reversing our bias towards word in favor of a fresh look at image leads to an examination of our theological language.

The very term we use to talk about our experience with God, "theology," reflects a bias towards "word," theos-logos = "God-words." Other words loaned from the Greek reflect our bias, too: we value logic (logos) over fancy (phanos).

The favored status of our word "theology" can trace its roots to Greek Stoic philosophy and early church tradition, which refer to a threefold way of speaking about gods in natural, civil, and ritual functions. It wasn't until Abelard in the 12th century that theologia was used to refer to "a philosophical treatment of the doctrines of the Christian religion..."

The term "theology" came to express our systematic thinking about God. With the development of the printing press, rational, linear, word-oriented contemplations found a medium for distribution, and the printed word became a means for the spread of the Protestant revolution in the 16th century. The revolution was fueled not only by a suspicion of the abuses of the Church, which visual arts and architecture represented to many, but also by a technology that allowed for mass distribution of words.

God's "Word" came to be mediated through words and logical constructions of such words. Theology came to be understood to mean "The study or science which treats of God, His nature and attributes, and His relations with man and the universe." Tillich concludes his theology of revelation with the striking declaration that all of the "different meanings of the term 'Word' are all united in one meaning, namely 'God manifest'..." While he doesn't use the Greek word, he is talking about Epiphany, which means "manifestation," or literally, "to show upon." Using biblical Greek to translate Tillich's phrase, "God manifest," we arrive at theos-phanos, or, "to show God."

The difference between theology ("the study or science" of God) and theophany ("a manifestation or appearance" of God) is the difference between transcendence and immanence---a study removes us one step from the experience, while a manifestation is direct experience. The very word "theology" is more transcendent, more removed from us, than the word "theophany," which is more immanent, more immediate.
To propose using visual arts in worship is to reclaim the fully immanent revelatory power implied in the term "theophany," which is defined as "A manifestation or appearance of God or a god to man [sic]." Just as the church uses words to understand God's revelation, so does the church legitimately use pictures and imagery.
Through the use of visual arts, and electronic visual media, the Word of God is mediated in fuller expression. Using visuals in worship is a way to rebalance our need for word, and our need for image, as mediators of God's revelation to humanity.
Theology is theophany, theophany is theology. Word and light are joined to one another in an interactive dynamic. Biblical narrative weaves this theme throughout its stories.

The interplay of light and word begins in Genesis 1:3, "Then God said, 'Let there be light...'" Light is called into being by the creative word of God. Light emerges in relationship with God, with darkness, with heaven and earth. Similarly, the Gospel of John pairs word and light, "And the word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory...full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

At the burning bush, Moses is engaged both by light (the fiery bush) and God's voice, the word. In the great stories of the exodus from Egypt are many dramatic examples of God acting through light and sound. At Sinai, there is lightning, thunder, the blast of a trumpet, and a voice. (Exod. 19:18-19)

At the baptism and transfiguration of Jesus, the voice of God is paired with light playing off of the figures of a dove at the baptism and of the prophets Moses and Elijah during the transfiguration.

The interplay of light and word is evident in Paul's conversion. On the way to Damascus, a bright light and a questioning voice encourage Saul's conversion: "Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice..." (Acts 9:3-4)

Later Paul writes, "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6)

To bring together Word and Light in worship by using electronic visual resources, paired again as they have been since the dawn of creation and throughout important biblical stories, can effect a richer evangelism and teaching ministry.

Theology that includes multi-sensory phenomena opens a deeper and wider experience of God's revelatory Word, a Word that is known in word and images. Worship that engages spoken and written word and still and moving visual imagery assists in our honoring and glorifying God.

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