

# Transforming Communities Through the Arts: Developing a Community-Focused Arts Ministry

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## **Key Question:**

How can churches use the arts to engage and transform their communities with the Gospel?

## **Theological Foundation**

As we approach the topic of transforming communities through the arts, our conversation must emerge from careful theological consideration. Two fundamental concepts undergird the artistic ministry of the church: *imago Dei* and *missio Dei*.

### **imago Dei**

The calling and capability for redeemed humanity to reflect the nature and glory of God. The development and flourishing of the creative arts glorify God and mirror his own creativity.

### **missio Dei**

God's unfolding plan of redemption through Christ. We join in God's mission of reconciliation of creation to Himself and restoration of the shattered image of God in fallen humanity.

## **Key Question:**

If we are called by God to reflect the glory and nature of God and invited to join in His redemptive plan, how do we accomplish this in our communities through the vehicle of the arts?

## **Philosophical Considerations**

### **Key Question:**

What is the proper response between the Church and culture?

H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*

- Christ against culture
- Christ of culture
- Christ above culture
- Christ and culture in paradox
- Christ the Transformer of culture

## **Three Approaches to Culture:**

### ***Rejection of Culture***

In this view, we see culture as fundamentally shaped by pagan values and therefore reject it. This leads to the creation of a Christian sub-culture.

### ***Adoption of Culture***

Wholesale adoption of cultural values and artifacts. This view sees cultural containers as neutral that can be adopted by Christianity.

### ***Engagement and Transformation***

This approach carefully considers elements of culture and seeks transform them through the witness of the Gospel. An incarnational model of cultural engagement.

“When we contextualize faithfully and skillfully, we show people how the baseline ‘cultural narratives’ of their society and the hopes of their hearts can only find resolution and fulfillment. (Timothy Keller, *Center Church*, 90)

As we approach art and culture, many churches and their leaders inconsistently apply these approaches across styles and disciplines. Some readily adopt and incorporate sounds, approaches, and works of art from popular or high art culture. Others reject contemporary art and music and hold to familiar styles that may or may not have been deeply impacted by the prevailing culture at its creation.

### **Engagement Factors**

- Socioeconomic Conditions
- Cultural Diversity
- Education Level
- Place of Church in the community

## **Historical Models**

The Church’s Historical Role as a Center for the Arts

- Biblical Models: Tabernacle/Temple Worship and Artistry
- Medieval Architecture and Musical Development
- Flourishing of the Arts in the Renaissance
- J.S. Bach and the Thomaskirche in Leipzig
- Lowell Mason and American Music Education

## **Key Question:**

What has changed to cause the church’s influential role in arts leadership to decline? Has society changed or is the church to blame?

## **Evangelism Through the Arts**

The creative arts reflect the glory and beauty of God and enable us to express our devotion to God in corporate worship, but also they have the great potential to draw the unbeliever to faith in Christ.

### **Liturgical Vs. Non-Liturgical Arts**

The need for non-liturgical arts ministries to engage the lost. Guest artists vs. regular participants

“A full, gospel vision for arts ministry is one that attempts to nourish a wide spectrum of the arts, both inside and outside the church building, both within and beyond a Sunday service. If we engage only the so-called liturgical arts, we are modeling an unfortunate dualism that separates Sundays from the rest of the week. We need artists who will work in the church and those who will work in the marketplace.” (David O. Taylor, *For the Beauty of the Church*, 135)

### **How the Non-Believer Engages with the Gospel through the Arts**

- Spectator: Large-scale concerts, revivals, crusades, exhibits, displays in which the Gospel is proclaimed publicly
- Consumer or Recipient: Through music missions, tours, or projects, we utilize the arts as an opportunity to serve, draw attention to, and meet the needs of the community.
- Participant: We engage and invite non-believers to create art alongside believers in an open and honest exploration of the intersection of faith and art.

One of the greatest challenges to effective evangelism is the development of sincere relationships between believers and the lost. By creating ministries that involve both parties, the arts provide common ground for theological discussion, relationship building, and ministry.

## **Practical Matters**

### **What is an Arts Ministry?**

Arts ministry is an attempt to help human beings incorporate beauty into their individual and corporate lives in an appropriate fashion. It fosters the creative and artistic dimension of the life of God’s people, who are empowered by the Holy Spirit to manifest the full meaning of their creation in the image of God. (Bauer, Arts Ministry, 25)

**The exploration, study, practice, and performance of the creative arts in contexts outside of corporate worship designed to facilitate dialogue and engagement between believers and non-believers.**

### **Key Question:**

Why is the church uniquely suited to this type of community ministry? What are the specific resources that distinguish the local church from other community organizations?

## Key Question:

How does the church's location impact the type of artistic ministries that can be employed? How has the move toward suburbia shaped our practices?

## Key Question:

What community art groups already exist? Can and should the church partner with them?

### Possible Community Arts Ministries

Concert Series	Fine Arts Academies	ISD Partnerships
Community Theatre	Dance/Ballet	Art Gallery/Installations
Community Choirs, Bands, and Orchestras	Crafts and Homemade Arts	Photography
Sculpture	Summer Arts camps	Preschool Music Classes
Artists-in-Residence	Senior Adult Opportunities	Music Therapy
Film Festivals and Critiques		

## What is the Role of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary?

- Provide students with the theological and intellectual framework to engage intelligently with culture.
- Promote the spiritual health and maturity of the local congregation. We exist to serve the local church.
- Serve as a model for the local church by engaging our community through the arts.
- Facilitate learning experiences between students and established Christian artists.