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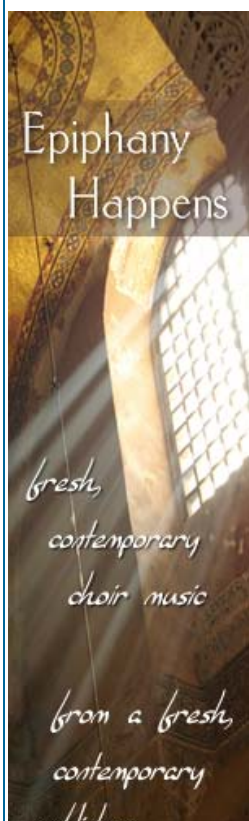
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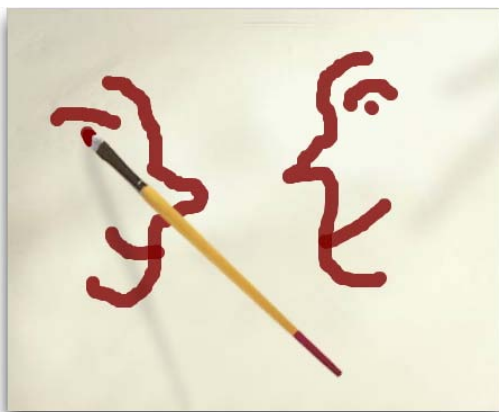
December 21 2009



Professional Tools

Doug Lawrence

Leadership



Creating... The 7 Question Conversation... Interruptus

The 7 Question Conversation is taking a little break for the holidays. But, here's a good ONE question conversation to have with your leadership.

Can teams plan worship?
Well, yes and no...

I have been planning (or trying to plan) worship for over 40 years, and in that time I've learned a few things about how planning works... and doesn't work! First, let me disavow you of the notion that just anyone can plan a worship service, because that simply hasn't been my experience. Just because one has attended a worship service doesn't mean they can create one. Ill-equipped individuals (and yes, that can include clergy), and well-intentioned, but unskilled committees are rarely, if ever, good at putting together an engaging hour of worship.

Here's a quick disclaimer that may help me avoid answering angry emails all week—many churches plan worship with committee teams with great success. I am really only

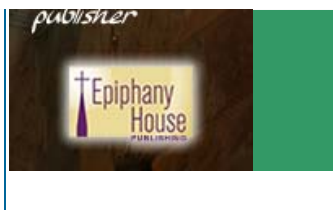
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referring to the 95% of churches that have tried to be egalitarian by locking 10 people in a room and expecting them to come up with a cohesive worship experience. Ordinarily I would put a smiley face here, but there's nothing funny about a botched community effort. By the way, most of you would probably be willing to admit that you have been part of one of these ragtag, patchquilt services at some point in your life. I hope you're recovering well!

5 Outrageously shameful things I have said about Committee-Planned Worship:

1. Don't try this at home, and for sure, don't try it at church—many have and lived to regret it.
2. Look up all the meanings for chaos in your thesaurus—you'll find "disarray, disorganization, confusion, mayhem, bedlam, pandemonium, havoc, turmoil, tumult, commotion, disruption, upheaval, uproar, maelstrom; muddle, mess, shambles, free-for-all; anarchy, lawlessness, entropy; informal hullabaloo, hoopla, all hell broken loose." If this doesn't scare you off, you're not paying attention.
3. If you don't believe this is "mission impossible," try a simple experiment like having a committee of the church decide what color the new carpet should be.
4. Committees often resemble focus groups, and we all know how valuable those can be. (Oh my, be SO careful with so-called focus groups!)
5. Committees are made up of nice people too, they just don't always act as that way.

Where did I acquire these attitudes?

Many years ago, a well-intentioned (junior) pastor who shall remain nameless, thought it would be good to get some creative people in the room and just "think outside the box." (These are perhaps the scariest 4 words in the English language!) He attended several of the weekly worship planning meetings we attempted to institute. I'll never forget the first of them. He brought a boom box into the room and played us a recording that he particularly liked. His assumption was that the slightly off-kilter treatment of this particular artist would help us to be more inventive. Oops! We stifled our amusement successfully enough to keep our jobs another few more months.

From there it was all downhill. Sure, we came up with scores of really creative ideas, but putting them effectively into one service was not even remotely possible. Often committees plan worship much as one would play Scrabble. The words have to qualify within the structure of the game, but they don't have to make any sense whatsoever when put together. The "creative team" lasted one year. They finally came up with a plan that actually works and have been using it ever since. This is it:

What's the plan?

1. One person creates the overview for the service based on the theme or the lectionary or desires of the preaching pastor.
2. The draft is sent to other creatives for suggestions that might enhance the basic plan.
3. A second draft is created (incorporating the doables from the previously mentioned suggestions) for the pastor to look at and approve or revise.
4. A third draft is created with the required changes.
5. The creatives who help implement the worship services go to work designing the "moments" (graphics, videos, musical treatments, and testimonies from congregants) that will work within the context of the very intentional whole.
6. The result is then brought in for the "players" to get acquainted with, and examine the details and potential "bumps" in the plan.
7. The plan is debriefed the following week to ensure immediate feedback on the the whole process and implementation.

Does this "lucky 7" plan work? Give it a try—it couldn't hurt! Take it from a man with many scars to prove "it takes a village" only when someone is actually willing to be in charge and keep the village moving forward!

Blessings

Doug



Doug Lawrence

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Doug has been a consultant to church leaders for 35 years and is anxious to be helpful to you in leadership, musical, and staffing considerations. Please click on his name above and email him. He's available to consult on the phone as well.

Take a look...

This is a great way for singers to connect. There's a lot to see *and* hear!



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