



## There are many parts but one body

One characteristic of the use of art and design within worship is that its creation allows those gifted in this area an opportunity to share their gifts with the Body. When we talk about gifts in the church we tend to list off the gifts of the Spirit or even some of those more obviously associated with the common activities of the church (i.e. music). Sometimes people will even mention the parts of the Body that are less obvious, those we are to treat with “special modesty,” as Paul instructs us.

If the Body is to work properly then all the members need to contribute appropriately and effectively. Artists and designers are no exception. One of the problems churches encounter is that talented artists may abdicate their role because they have been used or abused by churches in the past. This causes a problem for everyone. In certain cases other members of the church step in and serve in artistic roles. These results can sometimes be disastrous, or at least of a low caliber. But how do we involve those with great desire but limited ability?

One solution is to utilize the artist—paid or volunteer, member of the congregation or from the outside—as more of a design director. Professional artists are busy people, just like professionals in any other discipline. This means that their time is valuable and they can only provide a certain amount of it. Assistance is needed to complete most projects.

These are actually concepts most of us already recognize, subconsciously at least. Assistance does not always need to be of the highly skilled variety. Even some artists are not always aware of that. Some of the best assistance can be found on the polar ends of the scale. Children and senior citizens can be great assets. Both demographics have more available time to volunteer than the average person. One has an abundance of energy and the other an abundance of experience.

I have seen liturgical works in needlepoint that were designed by an artist and stitched by the older women in the congregation. I have also seen the artwork of children projected or enlarged for the enjoyment of the entire congregation. The sharing of tasks by various generations in the church is an excellent way to draw the Body together.

The role of the artist or design director in all this cannot be overstated. Someone who beautifully stitches from store-bought kits may have no design skills, but can implement a plan. Not every child’s Sunday School drawing is suitable for corporate worship. In fact, most children’s art will be unsuitable, though his or her parents will *always* think it is extraordinary. The point is that a wide cross-section of the Body can come together, using their various gifts and skill sets, to enhance worship for everyone, under the direction of a skilled artist.