

The Fairview Disciple



The Mission of the Fairview United Methodist Church is to enhance the spiritual growth of its members and the community by providing sound and meaningful experiences through worship, education, outreach, personal involvement in the ministry of the church, and the general nurturing of the congregation in keeping with the example and teaching of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

June 2009

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One of my greatest joys as a minister of the gospel is that of leading God's people in worship every Lord's Day. Over the years, as I have grown in my understanding and appreciation of what it means to be the body of Christ engaged in corporate worship, I have come to cherish more and more this time when we come together prepared to encounter the risen Lord, to listen for the word he speaks for a specific time and purpose, and collectively to offer our praise, prayers, substance, and lives to his service.

Do you detect a theme repeated in that last sentence—appearing in the words “corporate,” “together,” and “collectively”? It is that Christians do not worship as lone individuals. Personal acts of prayer and contemplation are valuable, of course; in fact, they are essential. But time spent alone with the Lord is no substitute for time spent together worshipping him as his body, the church. When we gather in worship on the Lord's Day, we gather as one, a single unit. We join our voices and our skill with musical instruments to sing one hymn; we unite our spirits to pray one prayer, expressed in the words of one person giving it voice; in the scripture and sermon we hear God addressing the church. Even the choral anthem and other musical expressions are offered to God from all of us, not from the performers alone.

THE PASTOR'S POUND

*“An ounce of
common sense is
worth a pound
of clergy.”*

— John Adams

How grateful we are for the gifts God has given to some that their words, songs, and playing of instruments are so lovely, so meaningful! Their offerings make our spirits soar. One of the greatest blessings of corporate worship is that what is offered to God on our behalf is at the same time wonderfully inspiring and edifying to us as well. If worship is, as we believe, the people addressing God and God addressing the people, then surely it is a holy moment when both transactions occur in the same event.

At those times we feel impelled to respond. Our first instinct is to applaud the performers, so appreciative are we of their talent. But to do so runs the risk of turning their performance into an offering to ourselves, as if we were the audience for whom it was intended. The audience, of course, is not us but God, the anthem or solo offered to God in our behalf. How, then, may we express what authentically wells up within our souls?

The ancient practice of both Jews and Christians is to give vocal affirmation with a wonderful Hebrew word, *Amen*, which means “Let it be so.” Translated into our own vernacular, it means “Yes!” or “You said it!” or “I second that!” Sometimes the musical offering evokes awe instead of joyful effervescence; an Amen uttered in humble reverence adds to the palpable mood in the room instead of breaking it, as applause might do.

When our talents be employed so splendidly that they give rise to profound emotion and gratitude from us, may they also, I pray, please God. And the applause of God is all we need.