

## Introduction

One of Trinity Western University's (TWU) cherished traditions is our chapel program. As part of the Student Ministries department at TWU, this program includes our daily, half-hour chapels, as well as Sunday Night Alive, a one-hour praise service that occurs every second Sunday evening, and various small group prayer gatherings. I have overseen the music and arts aspect of this ministry since 1997. Every year I have wrestled with how to best equip the student leaders with whom I work. The goal of this study was to identify areas where our student leadership training and practice could grow and deepen, so that student leaders were equipped not only for their present role, but for an ongoing, enriching ministry in the local church that is relevant to the twenty-first century and faithful to the gospel. I identified three Christian universities with a similar mission and chapel program to Trinity Western University, for the purpose of visiting, observing, and learning from their strategies of equipping. These three schools were:

- ❖ *Calvin College* (Grand Rapids, MI): A respected Christian liberal arts college in the Reformed tradition, Calvin College has about 4000 students and offers numerous degree programs. Calvin has a daily, voluntary chapel program, as well as a Sunday evening service called "LOFT." Calvin makes use of student leaders in their chapel program, calling them "Worship Apprentices"; they employ a collaborative model of leadership.
- ❖ *Northpark University* (Chicago, IL): Northpark is a Christian liberal arts university from the Covenant denomination. Northpark has about 1300 students and offers numerous degree programs. Northpark has two voluntary chapels each week, as well as a Sunday evening service called "College Life." Northpark assigns various levels of responsibility in its chapel program to student leaders. They employ a collaborative model of leadership.
- ❖ *Trinity International University* (Deerfield, IL): Considered TWU's older, American sister, TIU is part of the Evangelical Free Church of America. TIU has about 1300

undergraduate students, and offers many degree programs. TIU's chapel is mandatory, and is held three times a week. TIU employs student leaders in its planning, especially in its Monday praise service, "The Gathering." Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, TIU's seminary, also employs student leaders for the same purpose. In both cases, a collaborative model of leadership is employed. I visited these campuses in February 2005. I interacted as much as possible with staff, student leaders, and the general student population in order to get a sense of mission, vision, stated and implied values, the intention and actual value of training students were receiving, and the intention and actual experience of students who attended chapel.

### **The Present: Trinity Western University's Chapel**

TWU chapels in 2004-2005 look very similar to what they have always been in my time at TWU. The "stage" is rapidly assembled in a gymnasium. At 11 am, after a few announcements, a student worship team leads the congregation in ten minutes of music and Scripture. This is followed by Scriptural teaching from a guest or in-house speaker. At 11:30 am the congregation is dismissed, and within ten minutes the whole infrastructure is dismantled and the gym has been transformed back into a basketball court. On Fridays, Praise Chapel allows the congregation the opportunity to spend a full 30 minutes in singing, prayer, and hearing Scripture. Attendance at chapel can vary from less than 200 for institutionally-focused chapels such as those led by the President, to 1000+ attendees for Praise Chapels. Very few of those attending would be faculty or staff. Then, every second Sunday evening, about 150-250 students, mostly residents, converge on "the Atrium," a lounge in the middle of campus, for Sunday Night Alive – an hour of singing, prayer, hearing Scripture, and sometimes a few devotional thoughts.

As Associate Director of Student Ministries for Chapel Programs, I oversee 8 student leaders, each of whom is responsible for helping facilitate a particular area of chapel. There are two worship leaders in addition to me, who lead weeks of chapel in a 3 week rotation. Another worship leader is responsible to facilitate Sunday Night Alive. Two student leaders recruit and lead the *Incognito* Sound Team – the “strike team” that miraculously sets up chapel in ten minutes every day. We have a leader who leads the *Impact* Dance Team, which performs a worshipful dance in Praise Chapel 6-8 times a year; another leader leads the *Imagine* Worship Arts Team, which is responsible for brainstorming and creating the non-musical elements of our worship services: readings, visual art, and dramatic presentations. Finally, the *Ignite* Prayer Team provides behind-the-scenes prayer support, not only for chapel but for the life of our campus.

As I have led this ministry I have wrestled with how to best train my leaders for their roles and for their contribution to church ministry in the future. I saw this need particularly when some of my most dependable leaders graduated, went into church ministry or internships, and were completely surprised and swamped by the nature of their responsibility. How could I better equip them?

### **What Was I Seeking to Learn?**

There were five central questions for which I was seeking answers:

1. How could I operationalize my espoused philosophy of collaborative leadership?
2. How could I train my leadership team more intentionally in a biblical, historically-connected, holistic, pastoral, and progressive approach to worship, and how could that training trickle down into the lives of the teams they lead?

3. Were there ways to structure our corporate worship that would provide fresh and valued traditions for our whole campus to participate in, and better equip my leaders as pastors, or shepherds, of congregational worship?
4. How could I work with my leaders to make our campus worship gatherings more relevant to the lives of students and even to the life of our campus?
5. Is our current structure of leadership, and are our current resources appropriate and adequate for achieving the goals for which chapel is mandated to achieve?

This study addresses my discoveries regarding these questions, and how my observations at Calvin, Northpark, and TIU might or might not apply to Trinity Western University's chapel program.

## **What I Learned**

### **Listening to God Together: A Model for Collaborative Leadership**

#### **Foundations**

In George Barna's book, *The Power of Team Leadership*, the author identifies several common threads that fostered collaboration on church leadership teams. These were: (1) creating biblical community; (2) developing unity; (3) cooperative decision-making "based on the diversity of talents, experiences, and gifts within the group"; and (4) a balance between personal independence and satisfying interdependence.<sup>1</sup> An effective team must have a clear understanding of the wider culture and its influence on its task,<sup>2</sup> a significant and clearly defined challenge to overcome or address,<sup>3</sup> and a serious commitment to achieving certain standards of excellence.<sup>4</sup> "Great teams rely upon each person to lend his or her experience and expertise in developing creative and viable solutions to each challenge they

---

<sup>1</sup> George Barna. *The Power of Team Leadership*. (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2001), 119-120.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 122-123.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 123, 125-126.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 123-124.

face.”<sup>5</sup> Malefyt and Vanderwell expand on this in relation to worship planning, arguing that collaboration images the Triune character of God, the pattern of Old Testament worship, and the ecclesiology of Paul, who spoke of the body of Christ functioning best through the contributions of many different gifts.<sup>6</sup> Collaboration, they argue, leads to increased creativity, a wide range of insight, knowledge, and skills, greater ownership, healthy correctives, healthy variety, enriched spiritual heritage, greater balance, consistency and reinforcement of biblical themes, and greater integration.<sup>7</sup> In the context of university student development, the advantages of team leadership and collaboration go beyond their effectiveness in getting things done. Blimling and Whitt argue that it is these interactions in the context of community – caring for each other, encountering others’ viewpoints and methods, acting and dialoguing together – that develop character.<sup>8</sup> Thus, students who participate in collaborative worship planning will have a richer, deeper, more expansive experience than those who are left to planning on their own. For these reasons, a collaborative approach is superior to a solo approach – albeit a more difficult and challenging way at the outset.<sup>9</sup>

## Observations

The collegial structure of **Calvin College**’s student leadership team, called “Worship Apprentices,” or “WAs”, creates a dynamic collaborative atmosphere. Once they have been “hired,” none of the WAs are assigned officially to a specific role until the conclusion of the two week training workshop that occurs prior to the school year. At this time each WA is not

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 127-128.

<sup>6</sup> Norma deWaal Malefyt and Howard Vanderwell, *Designing Worship Together*. (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2005), 3-4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 5-8.

<sup>8</sup> Gregory S. Blimling, Elizabeth Whitt and Associates, *Good Practice in Student Affairs*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 51-55.

<sup>9</sup> Malefyt and Vanderwell, *Designing Worship*, 8.

only assigned to his or her most prominent role, but also to various other appropriate responsibilities according to his or her other gifts, interests, and needs, as well as according to the needs of the team or ministry. A WA who has significant, visible responsibilities in one service may still serve in a behind-the-scenes way in another service. Some WAs serve exclusively behind-the-scenes, across the spectrum of services. All WAs are expected to contribute to the most menial of the necessary tasks. And all WAs help to recruit additional students to assist them in planning, music and the arts, and other volunteer needs. Because their primary training is almost entirely focused on creating biblical community and a unified commitment to a vision of worship that will form their strategy for the year, the WAs develop an overall approach to planning that seeks to involve the whole team. This creates a dynamic atmosphere of idea-sharing, open personal reflection about issues of worship, honesty and appreciation that pervades the team. One contributing factor to the ongoing preservation of community on the team is the fact that the WAs are given an office in which they often work and socialize together, where resources can be stored and accessed, and where messages and ideas can be recorded on the white-board.

In Calvin's service planning meetings, those present (usually 4-6 people, both WAs and non-WAs) had an opportunity to affirm and critique the previous service and discuss how it could have been done better; then the WA who was responsible to lead the upcoming service would share some of his or her thoughts about service direction (based on the assigned text or theme), what songs could be included, and any resources he or she had discovered. At this point the team would discuss the ideas, raise questions, provide their own perspective, and eventually give a final shape to the service. The assigned leader still had the freedom to change and adapt these ideas if necessary. In one of the rehearsals I observed, the

service continued to adapt even as they went through a musical practice! The process appeared to be unstructured, and staff were minimally directive. Yet all team members took initiative in helping the process move along, and they always arrived at the necessary destination – a careful, thoughtfully planned and prepared worship service. It was clear that the staff had been effective in communicating the values and in focusing the team on what was important to accomplish as they worked together.

In **Northpark University**'s chapel program, the chapel planning team, overseen by the Campus Pastor/Dean of University Ministries, gathers weekly to plan and then implement the Wednesday chapels. Similarly, the College Life planning team is overseen by the Worship Coordinator (part of the University Ministries staff). These teams are made up of students with an interest in or passion for worship and spiritual formation; they are invited, according to interest and giftedness, to make a “career commitment” – to contribute for as long as they remain a student at Northpark. On both teams, the planning process includes “discerning the times,” that is, giving input to the staff member from a student’s perspective on the spiritual climate of the campus (including the impact of previous chapels); recommending speakers; laying out the framework of each service; and helping to set up chapel, however complex the service might be. With a service structure and theme in place, this team then communicates with the applicable worship (i.e. music) team leaders regarding the time allotted to music, so that they can plan the song list.

I attended a chapel service and a College Life service. In the actual implementation of these services, student teams operated smoothly and cooperatively; the staff member was, for the most part, presiding over the service, without controlling it. I was impressed with the ownership that student leaders took in praying for the service and in contributing various

elements to the services. This team ownership is something I would like to develop more of in the TWU chapel student leaders. I also appreciated the way in which the overall service structure of both chapel and College Life reflected the conviction that corporate worship is the entire experience of gathering together, rather than simply the music. Yet, it seems that excluding the worship team leaders from the planning of the whole experience promotes a view that differentiates the encounter that occurs in the musical element of a service from the overall spiritual journey that is occurring in the meeting. Yet this is still better than what currently exists in Trinity Western's chapels, where there is little or no intentional connection made (beyond guesswork) between the speaker or topic in chapel and the music that is sung before that speaker or in a subsequent Praise Chapel.

Finally, **Trinity International University's** model, still in process, is also collaborative. Under the leadership of the Director of Chapel, two graduate interns oversee the undergraduate and divinity school chapel planning teams. Members of this group may be identified and invited to be a part at any time during the year. To do so, the potential participant-leader first sits in on meetings to observe the planning process; if there seems to be a fit, then he or she empowered to participate within his or her gifting. This kind of recruitment allows students to contribute to the degree that they are comfortable, bringing their unique gifts to the collaborative process.

These teams provide ideas and perspective, and give the logistical and creative leadership that is necessary for planning Monday chapel services, called "The Gathering." In a typical planning meeting, TIU's collaborative process included (a) the opportunity to pray and read over the assigned text of Scripture; (b) discussion regarding the message of that Scripture and its relevance to the life of TIU's campus (informed by the speaker's notes and

ideas); (c) brainstorming regarding how that Scripture might be portrayed or read in a way that could draw people into its central message or theme; and (d) brief discussion of other things that could be done to enhance the service, and assignment of duties to the leadership team. All of this collaborative process was done within the liturgical structure which the Director of Chapel is committed to following (see below: “A House to Live In”).

I enjoyed the creative dynamic that I experienced in the planning meetings for TIU’s and TEDS’s chapels. There was a strong sense of team; the interns had clearly received a lot of investment from the Director in terms of philosophy, empowerment, and affirmation. It was not clear whether the rest of the team members were completely clear on their role, beyond contributing to discussion. The collaborative process of discernment and creative brainstorming was exciting and helpful, and led to some very good ideas for bringing worship to life. It was also more than simply a creative brainstorming session; there was a sense of dependence on the Holy Spirit, as the team paused for prayer a few times in the meeting. Such a planning process requires a significant period of time in which to do it – a minimum of 90 minutes would be required for a meeting to bear the fruit that was required to have a service ready every week. However, there were many elements of this process that could be applied within the leadership team at TWU.

### **Collaborative Leadership at Trinity Western University**

The model of leadership I espouse with my leaders is team-based and collaborative. There are many advantages to such an approach. First, worship is most sensitive and appropriate to a community’s spiritual journey when a team of leaders and planners is assembled, and each member brings his or her attentiveness to God’s work within the community, his or her unique gifts and talents, and his or her concerns and passions, into the

process of discerning and planning the direction, structure, and content of a worship service. This approach leads, in the words of worship planner Cathy Townley, to a truly “indigenous” expression of communal worship,<sup>10</sup> to what Marva Dawn calls “home cooking.”<sup>11</sup> I reject a model of worship leadership that relies on and exalts certain individuals as celebrities (usually based on their musical talents), instead embracing what Marva Dawn calls a “charismacracy”: “the authority of the gifted community, under the Holy Spirit’s directions, talking together to create worship services that keep the focus on God, unite the members of the congregation into genuine community, and form the believers to be faithful followers of Christ.”<sup>12</sup> As Barna states, “we ought to recognize that the prevailing idea about leadership – namely, that people are to be led only by powerhouse individual leaders – is simply wrong.”<sup>13</sup> Also, I believe that the team approach leads more often to a clearer discernment of God’s direction, and provides the strength to persevere in joyful Christian leadership even when times are difficult for particular members of the team.

### **Further Developing Collaboration at Trinity Western University**

At TWU this principle of collaborative leadership has happened in fits and starts rather than as a consistent *modus operandi*; this can be blamed on the ever-present tyranny of the urgent, on my personality’s preference for independent work, and on the lack of a clear strategy. Also, at TWU, student leaders’ roles are primarily associated with tasks they undertake outside of the leadership core, as they mobilize and lead teams of students. This makes it more difficult to achieve a sense of collegiality and collaboration within the leadership team.

---

<sup>10</sup> Cathy Townley, *Designing Worship Teams*. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002.), 122-123.

<sup>11</sup> Marva Dawn, *A “Royal” Waste of Time*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.), 199.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 197, 199.

<sup>13</sup> Barna, *Team Leadership*, 75.

In future training, we should focus on creating a stronger team spirit within the leadership core. Similar to Calvin's leadership training, this should include the communication of the departmental values for chapel, traditional team building exercises, and a communal envisioning of the how year's corporate worship life might unfold through our leadership. Each person should be assigned roles on the leadership team that provide assistance to others on the team. Finally, our weekly meetings need to become more focused on planning the upcoming services. This planning process could be adapted from Calvin's, Northpark's, and TIU's "discernment" process, taking into account TWU's planning timelines and more role-oriented leadership. (I have drafted an idea of how such a planning meeting might be structured in the Appendix.) This will serve both to advise specific leaders in their planning, as well as to increase the personal ownership that each leader has in the services that are occurring in chapel and Sunday Night Alive, whether or not he or she is "on stage."

## **An Enduring Approach to Worship Leadership Training**

### **Foundations**

It has been said that if you give a man a fish, you'll feed him for a day, but if you teach him to fish, you'll feed him for a lifetime. This proverb can be applied to leadership as well. In empowering people to accomplish a task, it is always more fruitful not only to dictate to them how they are to accomplish a particular task, but to equip them to accomplish, with increasing competence and confidence, that task and many others no matter when or how they face it. Barna identifies the best practices of successful team leadership training. These include: regular self-assessment; a mentoring program; formal, classroom-style instruction; "purposeful social events"; provision of fresh and up-to-date resources;

experience-based learning; and “road-trips.”<sup>14</sup> Investing in the on-going development of leaders makes them more effective, affirms the contribution they are already making, and ultimately equips them to leave a legacy wherever they contribute, even beyond the particular role they are fulfilling today.

## **Observations**

**Calvin College**’s training included all of Barna’s “best practice” training elements. During the academic year, Calvin’s training occurs almost exclusively informally, through one-on-one mentoring and comments within planning meetings. The students did not necessarily travel together, but part of their role included working together in certain elements of a worship conference hosted by Calvin in January – a version of a “road trip.” Formal team training occurs during the two weeks prior to the beginning of the academic year. This training includes

- intensive team-building exercises and purposeful times of fellowship
- ten teaching sessions on a theology of worship (based on principles found in their statement, “At Calvin, worship is...”)
- six skill-development sessions (everything from planning to Scripture-reading to leading worship to working with technology)
- five sessions on leadership (particularly related to this team of leaders)
- times to brainstorm and plan out the year together.
- Sunday visits (in pairs) to local churches and a chance to evaluate what they observed.

From my observations, every discussion, every conversation about worship, every planning session, and every service I was able to sit in on was saturated with the principles and strategies covered in these weeks of training. Also, the WAs commented on how their experience as student leaders had contributed to more intentional time management, deeper engagement with course work, a stronger sense of vocational identity, and to a more

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 130-133.

wholistic view of worship. Finally, there were at least three points during the year where the WAs – individually and as a group – were asked to evaluate themselves and the process of leadership of which they were a part.

In TWU's context, our student leadership orientation is only one week long, and involves an overall orientation to TWU, to the Student Life division, and to the department of Student Ministries; this restricts the amount of time I have to work specifically with my leaders to about 10 hours. I will need to give some thought to how best to use this time for intentional conversation, team-building, and teaching, as well as how to integrate training into the weekly planning meetings.

**Northpark's** training is very informal and much less developed than Calvin's. They have some very brief documents outlining basic character expectations, weekly role expectations, and the principles behind College Life. These documents are talked through with the chapel and College Life leaders as part of the University Ministries retreat at the beginning of the academic year. All other direction and training occurs as it is raised within individual conversations or within group discussions that arise within service planning sessions. This informality stems, in part, from the staff's conviction that spiritual formation is "messy" and does not usually follow a highly structured program. While I appreciate this acknowledgement of the complexity of God's work in students' lives, there is still value in providing systematic, yet highly practical training that not only equips students to accomplish a role in a particular year, but also to equip them with skills and convictions for lifelong contributions to church life. Overall, Northpark's worship ministry could benefit from a more intentional development of resources, formal training, and experiential opportunities

that would further equip their students for enduring impact through the application of their passions, gifts and talents.

TIU's training, while not as extensive as Calvin's, still includes many of the elements cited by Barna. The interns maintain an ongoing mentoring relationship with the Director of Chapel. The Director provides bimonthly leadership workshops for the students involved in the program. A retreat at the beginning of the academic year provides the opportunity for a road trip, for experience-based leadership training, and for purposeful social connection. While I visited, the Director was invited to lead a planning meeting to spark a fresh synergy on the team, as it sensed it had begun to become stagnant in its approach. Beyond the foundational principles of worship structure and philosophy, there was not an obvious systematic curriculum of training that continued throughout the year. One intern mentioned, in conversation, that he would appreciate more specific on-going training, but this is not possible due to the many demands already placed on the Director of Chapel.

### **Worship Training at Trinity Western University**

As I have led this ministry I have wrestled with how to best train the whole leadership team together to more adequately accomplish its communal role. With such a diverse set of responsibilities and gifts, how could I provide pre-year and weekly leadership training that would apply to the whole group? For example, would focusing on worship exclude the Prayer Coordinator? Would learning to plan a service exclude the Sound Coordinator? Is there a way that we could discover together what a deeper, more reflective approach to congregational worship planning might look like, in a way that would go beyond me simply dictating to individual leaders how it was done? The main training "best practice" incorporated at TWU is mentoring relationships. I find that my default in formal training

often falls to more general “curricula” such as notions of individual leadership development, personal spirituality, and opportunities to share how things were going. To some degree I am missing the opportunity to truly empower the members of the team for leaving a legacy both at TWU and in local churches.

### **Further Developing Worship Training at Trinity Western University**

In observing the teams at Calvin, Northpark, and TIU, I was reminded that the most successful teams are clear on their mandate and goal, and convinced of the importance of their work. Clarifying that mandate and developing such a conviction involves a strong investment in intentional training. I first need to be clear about the role of leadership I expect, not only of individuals, but of the team. Then, I need to be deliberate and unapologetic in teaching the whole team about things such as a theology of worship, an understanding of worship forms and functions, the role of the arts and technology in worship, the role of public and private prayer in the life of a body of believers, concepts of effective leadership, and the Holy Spirit’s role in leading the entire process. Much of this must be done at the beginning of the year to set the tone and direction for the entire year. Furthermore, I must challenge the leaders to pass their training on to their teams, and provide them with the resources with which to do this. That is, I must develop the expectation that every time a team is together, some intentional passing on of the perspective, values and vision of our ministry should occur. It may simply be explaining the process by which that leader planned a particular service or event, as well as more devotional or skill-oriented reflections. Intentionality like this will not only strengthen the program in its present year and develop the leadership and teaching skills of my present leaders, but it will build a solid foundation into future leaders even before they become leaders. Those who have participated

can thus be sent into the wider world with a set of resources and perspectives to inform their ministry, no matter what level of leadership and training they participated in. Finally, I must determine ways to engage the students informally, at least a few times throughout the year, for the simple purpose of connecting and getting to know one another. The ideal would be to wrap the team planning meeting with a time of table fellowship in someone's home, but this is difficult to do within the busy atmosphere of an academic community (not to mention my own family life). (This training will be further and more specifically developed in the Worship Training Program paper.)

### **“A House to Live In”: Establishing Appropriate Campus Worship Traditions**

#### **Foundations**

In his study of “younger evangelicals,” Robert Webber notes how his subjects are looking for “God-centered worship that emphasizes the following nine features”:

1. a genuine encounter with God
2. genuine community
3. depth and substance
4. more frequent and meaningful experiences of Communion
5. challenging sermons and more use of Scripture in worship
6. participation
7. creative use of the senses; visual
8. quiet, characterized by the inclusion of contemplative music and times for quiet personal reflection and intimate relationship with God
9. a focus on the transcendence and otherness of God.<sup>15</sup>

All of these characteristics speak to the hunger felt by a new generation of worshipers for a connection with the narrative of Scripture and with the history of the church. This hunger is based on more than historical romanticism, however. “For them,” concludes Webber, “worship is not entertainment... but an engaging, challenging, authentic rehearsal of the *Missio Dei*, which demands a committed embodiment of the truth that all of life should be an

---

<sup>15</sup> Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 189.

offering of worship to God.”<sup>16</sup> This movement toward a holistic, historic, Word and Table centered worship is a good thing; as scholar and liturgist Marva Dawn argues persuasively, “Christian character is nurtured by all the scriptural narratives and rules, our images for God, specific worship practices, prayerful consideration of means and ends, tiny choices in daily life, the values of the community, and our interactions with its members.”<sup>17</sup> That is, all worship practices are not just expressive, but formative. Debra Dean Murphy expands on this point: “The ‘knowledge’ imparted in worship ... is material and corporeal; it is a knowledge that can be known only in the doing of it. It is, at heart, bodily and performative.”<sup>18</sup> If this is true, then we must be much more aware of how our particular practices of worship transform, or deform, the community as disciples of Jesus Christ rather than as “disciples” of the prevailing ideologies and values of the culture. The historic liturgies of the church can function as a guide to forming these practices, though they will always need to be adapted to the contemporary, local manifestations of Christian community. This contextualization of the church’s worship life is perhaps the most challenging aspect of worship planning when much of the world (and the church) trains people to expect entertainment and presentation instead of participation and transformation. This is no less true in the contemporary Christian university setting.

## **Observations**

In this case, I will begin with **TIU**, simply because it offers a metaphor in which to understand this concept. In my conversations with Director of Chapel, David Whited, he referred to the commitment to a liturgy as “a house to live in.” In other words, says Whited,

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 201.

<sup>17</sup> Marva Dawn. *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 106-107.

<sup>18</sup> Debra Dean Murphy, *Teaching That Transforms*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2004), 104.

people need a place to be “at home.” Aimlessness and surprise may be good for teenagers on a road trip, but they seldom provide the safety and security that develops a sense of family. Similarly, if worshipers never know what to expect, when to expect it, or what the overall purpose of their efforts is, they become consumers rather than participants. Even more, when those who plan worship must constantly “reinvent the wheel” every time they plan, it can lead to discouragement and creative burnout. When one has a “house” to live in, one can freely express creativity in the decorations and furnishings, and when necessary “blow out a wall”; but the location of the home, and the overall function of each room remains, giving the opportunity to develop valued rituals and traditions that make a “house” and “rooms” into a “home” that gives shelter to a family. In the case of worship, it is liturgy that provides this house. In particular, liturgy is the house for the gospel; in White’s words, it is the “place” where people trained by the systems and structures of a consumerist, entertainment-oriented, self-centered and individualistic culture can be instead enculturated, through a different set of systems and structures, to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and all that it entails for their lives. At TIU, this house takes the form of seven “rooms,” each with an important enculturating purpose:

- **Gathering**, or call to worship: developing a sense of “family.”
- **Invocation**: recognizing the inviting presence of the Host, Jesus himself.
- **Confession and assurance**: renewing a sense of identity as redeemed sinners.
- **Scripture**: hearing the Story that defines us as a family.
- **Homily**: reflecting on the real-life implications of that story.
- **Response**: celebrating, repenting and/or dedicating the community to living out those implications
- **Benediction**: affirming the family’s existence as a missional people, existing not for itself but for the redemption of the world.

Within each of these rooms, there is a fair bit of flexibility to “decorate” – that is, communicate or invite participation in creative and innovative ways, or remain in a particular

room for a shorter or longer time. But the purpose is always clear: that in meeting together in worship, the congregation will encounter the character and works of God in such a way that they actively identify with Him and are changed by the encounter.

A corollary of this “house” is TIU’s commitment to following a lectionary – that is, a systematic schedule of Scripture readings that are intended, over time, to cover the entirety of Scripture in a congregation’s worship life. Again, behind this commitment is the goal of enculturating people, not just to “timeless biblical principles,” but to Scripture as the record of God’s unfolding plan to redeem humanity – a plan and story still being told and that now defines their identity and calling in the world. In TIU’s case, they simply follow an existing lectionary.

The TIU students with whom I conversed seemed to appreciate this more focused attention on the content and participatory nature of worship. While they could not describe the pattern in detail, they knew it was there and appreciated the opportunity, in particular, for reflection, corporate confession, silence, and challenge. However, to them the more reflective style of worship sometimes felt “heavy” and “condemning.” Perhaps a reliance on traditional forms might generally favor more reflective styles of music, and this is something to be aware of in pursuing such a commitment.

**Calvin College**’s structure, especially in the LOFT service, follows the same “classic pattern of worship” – one that you might find “in a Lutheran Church, CRC church, Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church”<sup>19</sup>; in places it is more detailed than TIU’s, and at the same time remains flexible. Of particular note is that the Response can include a variety of elements: *profession* (this would be some kind of creedal or confessional statement), *lamentation* (acknowledging the struggle of living “between the times”), *intercession* (lifting

---

<sup>19</sup> Paul Ryan. Personal e-mail. Sunday, May 08, 2005.

the particular concerns of the community to God, in light of what has been preached), *thanksgiving*, *dedication* and *celebration*. Also, some of the LOFT services include the celebration of Communion. Paul Ryan provides another helpful metaphor:

An analogy I've found helpful is ... the idea of healthy habits in relationships. It's good that I say on a regular basis to my wife, 'I love you, I'm sorry, I'm listening, Why? Help!' Of course, I don't say all of these things every time we sit down to dinner (though it has happened!). It's the same thing in our worship of God. It's good to return to the sheet [detailing the service order] and see if we've been cultivating a healthy relationship over time.<sup>20</sup>

The service is always ended with the *blessing* (often the traditional *barukah*) and the *benediction*, which is always a song called "My Friends May You Grow In Grace," sung with joined hands across the chapel. A humorous story regarding this last song illustrates the power of tradition, even among college students: one week the LOFT planning team decided to "shake things up" by ending the service differently; after all, they had been using the same song for years. When the planned service was complete and the congregation had been dismissed without the song, the congregation simply stood waiting. Eventually the leaders were forced to sing the song – and the tradition has held since.

Calvin is not tied to a lectionary. However, they do spend considerable time mapping out the themes of the year's services, with particular attention to the church calendar (esp. Advent, Lent, Passion Week, Easter season, and Pentecost). Also, their weekly chapels retain a certain rhythm:

- **Monday:** *Testimony* – a guest shares how God has made Himself known in their vocation.
- **Tuesday:** *Prayer* – a meditative time of confession, intercession, and reflection.
- **Wednesday:** *Preaching* – a challenging message from Scripture.
- **Thursday:** *Global* – an opportunity to worship in the styles and forms of global cultures.

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

- **Friday: Praise** – a celebrative service similar to TWU’s Praise Chapel in form and popularity.

The staff’s strategy regarding liturgy and rhythm is not just based on their Reformed theological heritage; it is also strongly tied to the conviction (expressed by Murphy and others) that these kinds of communal “habits” actually teach people, in an active way, what a lifestyle of worship and discipleship might look like. The challenge, of course, is to guard against such habits becoming mindless – the easy way out of true engagement with God. But this challenge is no less true of the “free” traditions of worship, as much as they might claim to be free of what they perceive to be “vain repetition.” In my observation, Calvin’s team was doing a good job of trying to remain fresh and innovative, while remaining committed to the structures that themselves mentor a congregation in a worshipful lifestyle. The services were infused with a sense of God’s presence; included challenging messages; incorporated well-read, significant portions of Scripture; were alive with a sense of community; sought to engage the senses and the participation of the congregation; and included elements of historic and global resources. In short, they were actively seeking to embody what the younger evangelicals (and perhaps what all those who really desire to connect with God in worship) are yearning for.

Due in part to its location in urban Chicago, **Northpark** has a very strong commitment to diversity, which for them encompasses ethnicity, race, and denominational tradition. This commitment contributes to a variety of forms, especially over the past two years. In the 2003-2004 year, Northpark created a four-week rhythm within their Monday chapels:

- **Circle:** Any student was invited to contribute, by sign-up, to a basic liturgical structure. No rehearsal or deliberate coordination of elements.
- **Story:** Two people shared about how their stories intersected.

- **Voices:** Throughout the course of the year, students experienced worship in the Armenian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and numerous other traditions.
- **Sabbath:** Students were encouraged to skip chapel entirely, using the time to rest, connect with friends, or spend personal time with God.

Wednesday chapels were centered around the preaching of the Word. In the 2004-2005 year, Northpark moved away from this model. Because Monday chapels happened only 14 hours after Sunday evening's College Life service, Northpark created a weekly Prayer Chapel, which was essentially the provision of a quiet, prayerful space for students to come and spend personal time with God. No other programming occurred on Monday chapels. Wednesday chapels were again dedicated to the preaching of the Word, but the elements around preaching – music, prayers, announcements – all remained focused on the diverse ways in which worship is expressed, spiritual growth is pursued, and cultural impact is achieved.

In terms of the College Life service, the “house” was less about in what order the elements of the service occurred, and rather about four guiding principles, called the College Life vision:

- **Connecting:** a commitment to helping people connect with others, both through congregational participation and through the inclusion of people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives within the service.
- **Responding:** deliberate attention to providing tangible ways for the congregation to respond to the challenges that had been given in the Scriptures and message. (This will be expanded on below: “Faith in Action.”)
- **Creating** – a commitment to incorporating the arts in their diverse forms and expressions.
- **Becoming** – an emphasis on the expectation that people should be growing in their faith, becoming transformed in character into Christ-like individuals.

These four “vision principles” are spoken of at every College Life, making them part of the very ethos of the community as it gathers. They leave room for a great amount of innovation and creativity. In this kind of situation, those who plan must be very conscious of the fact

that every community develops its own sense of rhythm and “liturgy.” This being so, planners must be intentional not only with overarching principles, but with the very structures (whether surprising or expected) within which worship occurs. That is, because even the structures of liturgy teach people how to worship, one must not be too loose with their creation and recreation. In fact, too much innovation can discourage the congregation from participating, because they are not clear on what is expected of them. Nevertheless, Northpark’s overarching vision did create a sense of accountability to what the impact of biblical worship should be on a congregation. In addition, of the three schools Northpark did the best in recognizing and connecting into the diversity of worship forms with which the church has been blessed. One danger of this commitment to diversity is the possibility of creating a tourism of Christian spirituality, in which the community tastes and experiences superficially without making a solid commitment to the principles and history that form that expression of spirituality, and which thus make it truly effective in impacting its life. In some ways such an approach can draw so much attention to the form of worship that the content – the life-transforming narratives of the gospel – can be lost in the novelty. (This is part of the reason that Northpark moved away from the “Voices” element of chapel.) All the same, the services I attended at Northpark were thoughtful, personal, creative, sought to encounter God through powerful music and readings of Scripture, and alive with a sense of community.

### **Worship Traditions at Trinity Western University**

To this point at Trinity Western, we do not use a detailed service structure and worship schedule (such as a lectionary) to guide our worship planning. In a sense, students are given blueprints, but not the house itself. Similar to Northpark, we articulate

foundational principles and offer a general guideline that is meant to guide individual students as they plan. These include 5 core values:

- **Christ-centered worship:** emphasizing whom worship is for;
- **Discipleship-fostering instruction:** emphasizing the expectation that we will be changed;
- **Vocationally-relevant reflection:** emphasizing the connection between worship and the vocational preparation encountered at university;
- **Community-oriented services:** emphasizing participation and sensitivity to the traditions present;
- **Excellence and Creativity in Communication:** emphasizing the importance of striving for media that capture the glory and wonder of God’s work and ways.

In addition to introducing student leaders to these values, the worship leaders are asked to complete an exercise in which they classify each song within the TWU repertoire according to its purpose within a worship service. Implicit in this exercise is a basic structure of worship revolving around *Gathering, Revelation, and Response*.

In spite of these blueprints, conversations with my student leaders reveal that the implicit expectation to build a new “house” from the ground up, every week (or three weeks) can become exhausting. (This exhaustion is closely related to the need for greater collaboration, detailed above.) Not only is the leader expected to think creatively about songs, song arrangements, thoughtful readings, and Scripture passages, but he or she is also expected to draft the structure that they hang on, and somehow connect it to the overall spiritual climate of the campus. This is a tremendous and unrealistic amount of pressure being placed on individual leaders for spiritual leadership on the campus, especially for those who are still relatively young in their faith.

### **Moving From “Blueprint” to “Home” at Trinity Western University**

As the models at Trinity International University, Calvin College, and Northpark University demonstrate, there are numerous advantages to constructing a “house” in which a

congregation's worship can be "at home" and become a family. An intentional, carefully thought-out, Scripturally-oriented, and habitual worship structure is the practical way in which program is consistently held accountable to values. It allows worship planners to focus on engaging creatively and intentionally with the subject and object of worship, instead of being distracted by the logistics of structure. It actively educates the congregation (which includes the leaders), through repetition and participation, in the attitudes, postures, and language of worship.

Trinity Western University would benefit from thoughtfully building a worship "house" in more detail, on the basis of principles and blueprints that have already been drafted, and on theological and liturgical resources. This house should include a thoughtful layout of the most important elements of congregational worship; the introduction or development of congregational "habits" – shared movement, texts, and songs – that further engage the congregation in the experience; and, beginning with Praise Chapels and Sunday Night Alive, a trial run of some kind of lectionary – a biblical map to guide the spiritual journey of the campus throughout the year.

### **Faith in Action: Connecting Worship to Life**

#### **Foundations**

"Active learning" is one of the "good practices" in student affairs detailed by Blimling and Whitt. Active learning is the opportunity for students to participate in the formation of new ways of seeing the world. Blimling and Whitt challenge educators to rely not only on telling students how to see the world in new ways, but to invite them into the dialogue – to, in Henri Nouwen's similar exhortation, "provide the fearless space where ... questions can come to consciousness and can be responded to, not by prefabricated answers,

but by an articulate encouragement to enter them seriously and personally.”<sup>21</sup> Blimling and Whitt imagine :

Think about the last event you attended [for our purposes, a campus chapel] . . . . Follow-up dialogues in which students could pose problems based on their view of the issue, reflect on the experience, process multiple perspectives about it, organize new understandings, and explore how these apply to their lives could turn these routine campus events into active learning opportunities. Pursuit of these topics from students’ vantage points is a crucial part of the process.<sup>22</sup>

However, this issue goes beyond aiming for educational effectiveness. Scripture itself says,

“do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. . . . Faith without deeds is dead”<sup>23</sup>; Belcher affirms this in her study on worldview formation:

“Recognizing the existence of a worldview philosophy is not enough unless the worldview is verbalized and intentionally manifested. . . . There is a difference between articulating, or espousing a worldview and applying one.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, educators who help students hear, act out, wrestle with, act out, articulate, act out, own, and once again act out the messages and ideas they hear are assisting them in the important journey of discipleship (and may find themselves helped along in their own journey).

Two authors have reflected on what contributes to this engagement. Garber challenges educators to intentionally lead students into *convictions* that can fully embrace the realities of life; to provide mentors – people of *character* – who are living those convictions with integrity; and to help them develop a supportive, lifelong network or *community* of like-minded, fully committed individuals. “Woven together, convictions, character, and

---

<sup>21</sup> Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*. (New York: Image, 1975), 87.

<sup>22</sup> Blimling and Whitt, *Good Practice*, 39.

<sup>23</sup> James 1:22, 2:26.

<sup>24</sup> Christina Belcher, “What Do You Do With a Slightly Used Worldview?” *College of Christian Higher Education E-Journal*. (November 2003), 20.

community nourish a vision of moral meaning which can stand against the most destructive forces of modern consciousness.”<sup>25</sup> Sharon Parks affirms this, and advocates engaging students in three venues: hearth, table and commons. The Hearth is the safe, warm, informal place where life is “talked through”<sup>26</sup>; the Table is the place where body and heart are nourished in relationship, and where people learn how to relate in healthy ways<sup>27</sup>; the Commons is the place of (intentional or chance) gathering where the community actively works and lives toward a common goal.<sup>28</sup> These reflections on young adult formation actually relate to a larger movement within the global church toward a missional understanding of the church. Robert Webber summarizes: “The church’s mission is to show the world what it looks like when a community of people live under the reign of God.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, when university students are given opportunities, within community, to live out their faith as it forms and transforms, they are actually engaging in the mission of the church in the world, and are hopefully developing into those who will lead the church into its vocation in the coming decades. Chapel is one place where students can enter into this dynamic and ongoing vocation and begin to find their place in it.

## Observations

At Trinity International University and Calvin College, I did not observe an obvious connection between the messages communicated in chapel and the opportunities students might have to engage with them. This is not to say that they do not exist, but there was not an explicit or implicit strategy within the experiences and documents I received. **Northpark**

---

<sup>25</sup> Steven Garber, *The Fabric of Faithfulness*. (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1996.), 38.

<sup>26</sup> Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.), 154.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 156.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 157.

<sup>29</sup> Webber. *Younger Evangelicals*. 133.

**University**, however, is very intentional about how it connects its congregational worship to the call of discipleship in the world. As has been mentioned, one of College Life's core values is "Responding," which they describe as "putting our faith into action; being doers, not just hearers; we do this by taking the time during the service to respond through reflection and activities designed to help us live out what we have been taught."<sup>30</sup> As an example of how this occurs, one of College Life's services revolved around the theme of "Helping orphans and widows (James 2)." At the conclusion of this service, students were given the opportunity to choose a backpack, in which a list of school supplies could be found. The students were to buy the items on that list, and then those who were able were invited to spend the next Saturday morning handing out these backpacks in a local poor area of town. This event impacted many of the students who were involved. As another example, a service that I attended revolved around the theme of "Finding Your Identity in Christ" (especially speaking to the issue of body image). At the end of the service, a staff member invited students to participate in various ways in Eating Disorder Awareness Week, beginning that Monday morning. This "responding" element is not limited to College Life, however. A chapel on racial reconciliation advertised an opportunity for students to participate in Sankofa, a whirlwind, interracial trip around the key sites of the Civil Rights movement. (It is worth noting that at Northpark, College Life is usually 90+ minutes long, and chapel is usually 50-60 minutes long.) In addition to this, every Wednesday chapel is followed by "Chapel Chat," where students are invited to have lunch with the staff and the guest speaker. This event varies in attendance from 5 to 15 students. The Northpark University Ministries staff works very hard to integrate their many opportunities for service and experience into the chapel and College Life services, so that students are never faced with the predicament of too

---

<sup>30</sup> Taken from a Northpark staff document entitled "College Life 2004-05."

much knowledge, and no place to apply it. They appear to be very good at creating a hospitable environment for students to integrate their life experience with new realities and perspectives, in many different contexts and venues. This strategy fits into their larger philosophy of “Messy Spirituality,”<sup>31</sup> in that they acknowledge that most people need many points of opportunity to engage with truth before it really takes root in their lives. Thus, some students may never come to chapel until they sign up for a Habitat for Humanity team, and are invited to come and to be commissioned. Similarly, some students may never engage with Habitat for Humanity’s work with the poor until they are challenged to do so in chapel. Northpark’s strategy is a helpful example as we consider how to bring a more intentional, active engagement to Trinity Western’s chapel.

### **Faith in Action at Trinity Western University**

At Trinity Western University, our intentionality in connecting belief to action varies. We hold certain theme weeks, such as Evangelism Emphasis Week and Missions Week, that naturally lend themselves to workshops, seminars, and opportunities to participate in programs. However, in many cases a week of chapel will include a variety of messages and themes: perhaps an institutional message from the President, a talk on discerning the will of God, student testimonies, and a challenge to more actively share your faith. Important ideas and messages heard in chapel can be quickly diffused when heard within a plethora of other academic discussions in campus classrooms, within the influence of media entertainment and the internet, and with the other challenges and stresses students face – even more so when they are seemingly disconnected from one another and from the wider campus reality. Also, students often speak of being in a “bubble”; they feel (or fear) that the discussions and

---

<sup>31</sup> A phrase taken from a book by Mike Yaconelli.

messages they hear within the safety of Christian community are, at best, naïve to, and at worst, not able to stand up to the challenges of the wider world.

Furthermore, very little teaching emphasis has been given to Sunday Night Alive. It has tended to be a service of music, Scripture and prayer. Any teaching has come in the form of devotional thoughts from the student leader's current reflections on Scripture. While there is some value to this, what has been lacking is a long-range shepherding strategy that seeks to lead those who participate on a communal journey of reflection and response, based on the unfolding of Scripture. Some positive moves have been made over the past few years, as leaders have tried to map out themes for a semester or year (such as Creation, Fall, and Redemption). But these themes have generally been determined by the student leader, outside of any consideration of how those themes might connect intentionally with the institutional themes, with the core messages of Student Life, with the ebb and flow of campus life, and most importantly, with Scripture as the foundation.

### **Intentionally Connecting Faith and Action at Trinity Western University**

Of course, not every student will be captured or impacted by every message/theme every time one is offered. Nevertheless, we must devote a greater effort to providing clear, united emphases within our chapel services, and then give students immediate opportunities to grab hold of challenges they have heard. This will require more integration of Student Life, Student Ministries, and even academic programming. As well, we must devote greater attention to giving students opportunity to respond in worship and testimony to the ways that God is shaping their lives in other venues and contexts. In these ways, students begin to see the importance of, and engage in the development of, a holistic, active, vibrant and relevant

faith. Some of the ways in which this connection between worship and life could be fostered are:

- A moderated lunch or meeting (in the spirit of Hearth or Table) with chapel speakers around intentional, thought-provoking topics, (i.e. Please join us for lunch to discuss “ – ”). The purpose would be to help students ask questions, raise issues, and go deeper with topics that speakers have begun to address in chapel.
- “Forums” or moderated discussion in a chapel between a staff member, faculty, and an astute student leader, in response to a series of talks that have just been heard in previous chapels. The purpose of this discussion would be for students to participate in an on-going dialogue about how our community responds to the topics that have been raised – how we might apply it among us.

In relation to worship leadership training, involving student leaders in thinking of ways to actively engage with the ways God is speaking through worship is, in itself, an opportunity for active learning. It helps them wrestle deeply with Scriptural themes and challenges in a way that helps a service move beyond superficiality. Even more, it gives them personal investment in leading congregational worship that is expressive *and* formative, word *and* action – “liturgy and life as all of a piece, a seamless, organic whole.”<sup>32</sup> For, as Don Saliers states it, “Worship ascribes glory to God alone; but unless the glorification is shown in works of justice, mercy, and love faithful to God’s commands, Christ’s liturgy is not fully enacted.”<sup>33</sup>

The students’ involvement in designing and leading this living liturgy must occur under the advisement of Student Ministries staff, through the collaborative model, within the context of ongoing training, in a thoughtful worship structure that is guided by the narratives of Scripture. It can be most readily applied within Sunday Night Alive, where more time can be devoted to developing a theme and pursuing it together in community. However, it would be valuable for Student Ministries to consider involving students in this process in chapel

---

<sup>32</sup> Murphy, *Teaching That Transforms*, 210.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Murphy, *Teaching That Transforms*, 209.

services as well, either at the level of planning, or even in chapels, where student leaders could be included in panel discussions, testimonies, and reports that demonstrate the connection of ideas to life.

## **Leadership and Resources for Mission Fulfillment**

### **Foundations**

As another “good practice of student affairs,” Blimling and Whitt state: “Student affairs leaders who want to influence the growth and success of the campus and organization must know the campus culture, how it serves them well and where it impedes them in acting on those issues for which they are accountable.”<sup>34</sup> Coming to know and shape this culture in positive ways takes careful observation, active participation, and caring commitment.

### **Observations**

**Calvin College’s** worship training program is a complex web of relationships. Chapel is overseen by the Dean of Chapel, who is a member of the faculty and reports to the President. The Chapel Coordinator serves under the Dean, helping with logistics and overseeing the music and arts aspects of chapel. LOFT and Jazz Vespers fall within a Christian Formation group in the Student Life division, and are overseen by the “Coordinator of Christian Formation through Worship.” The Worship Apprentice program (along with numerous other campus programs) is funded by a Lilly Foundation grant, and is overseen by both the Chapel Coordinator and the Coordinator of Christian Formation through Worship (whose positions are also partially funded by the Lilly grant). In other words, the Worship Apprentices’ “chain of command” is far from clear, and requires a fair degree of communication between staff, students, and faculty. Each Worship Apprentice is given a

---

<sup>34</sup> Blimling and Whitt, *Good Practice*, 119.

fairly significant stipend (\$2000/year) in exchange for “something more than ten hours a week.”<sup>35</sup> Other students are rewarded with personal investment by leaders and staff, the satisfaction of a job well done, and with positive friendships.

Within this structure of staffing and funding, Calvin’s biggest challenge appears to be that somewhat competing visions are struggling to drive the worship programs that occur on campus. (The following analysis is based, I confess, on limited observation, and may therefore be grossly superficial.) The Dean of Chapel sees chapel within the framework of intellectual engagement; the Christian Formation group aims to challenge students in terms of personal spirituality; and the two staff most closely involved with student worship leaders must somehow advocate, on the basis of their shared expertise and collaborative relationship as worship practitioners, for a holistic approach to worship leadership, even as they report to people with potentially competing perspectives. At the same time, given positive relationships between the actual people who hold the various roles across the campus, this structure could provide for a very rich and multilayered approach to campus worship. It especially opens the door to a greater connection between academics and spiritual formation.

**Northpark University’s** worship programs fall completely under the University Ministries (UMin) department. In relation to other divisions on campus, and to university administration, the UMin department operates with a great deal of freedom, as can be observed in the way they have radically changed the structure and programming of chapel over the past two years (detailed above). Chapel is overseen by the Campus Pastor/Dean of University Ministries, who preaches almost weekly, and oversees the student chapel planning team. At the same time, chapel and College Life are given some direction from the Director of Spiritual Formation (part of the UMin staff), who envisions and resources creative ways of

---

<sup>35</sup> *Worship Apprenticeship Application*. Calvin College (2005).

engaging students in opportunities for spiritual formation – in chapel, College Life, and all other UMin programs. Finally, the Worship and Arts Coordinator, with the Director of Spiritual Formation, oversees the College Life planning team, as well as the music, arts and sound teams. There are approximately 40 student leaders in the UMin team assigned to chapel and College Life. None of these leaders receive a stipend; they receive continual investment by staff, through retreats, meetings, and personal relationship.

One of the challenges Northpark staff mentioned with regard to this structure bears resemblance to Trinity Western University's chapel. Because Northpark's worship program staffing falls completely under UMin, its connection to the academic elements of university life becomes more difficult to establish. That is, because chapel is staffed as a student-centered program rather than as an institutional one, faculty and administration remain ambivalent toward chapel. This may affect students' long-term perspective on the role of chapel in their academic experience. Northpark's average attendance of approximately 250 students (of 1300) may be related to this challenge.

**Trinity International University's** undergraduate and divinity school chapels are both overseen by the Director of Chapel, who is a member of the Student Affairs division. The Director is responsible for the overall speaker schedule and program. Under the Director's leadership, the student leadership program is in the early stages of development. Planning for each chapel (undergraduate and divinity school) is led by two interns, selected from the divinity school and paid a modest stipend for their time (which varies from 10-20 hours per week). The students on the planning teams are rewarded with personal investment from their leader, the satisfaction of a job well done, and positive friendships.

TIU's greatest challenge at the moment is simply getting the campus to believe that chapel is a valuable and dynamic part of the campus experience. TIU's chapel (especially the divinity school) is recovering from a reputation for being dead, boring, and irrelevant. As it continues to invest in a collaborative, student-led model of leadership, and as that model bears positive fruit, it may become possible to bring more financial resources into the program for a more stable staff and student leadership cohort.

A strength of TIU's chapel is that because it is positioned and staffed as its own distinct department within the Student Life division, it can ensure a consistent philosophy of worship across its programs. This helps to synthesize speakers, music, media and the arts into a cohesive whole, under the direction of a dedicated and visionary director.

### **Leadership and Resources at Trinity Western University**

Trinity Western University's worship programs fall within the umbrella of the Student Ministries department, part of the Student Life division. As such, responsibility for chapel is shared between the Director of Student Ministries, who acts as a campus pastor and who coordinates the chapel schedule, and the Associate Director of Student Ministries for Chapel Programs, who coordinates the prayer, arts and worship (PAW) elements of chapel and Sunday Night Alive, and provides some leadership to institutional worship services. The eight student leaders involved in chapel are part of a group of 90+ Student Ministries leaders, and therefore fall under the department's training programs. For their 10+ hours of service, they receive a stipend of approximately \$2300 as well as the opportunity to participate in fun and meaningful off-campus retreats. At the same time, they participate in some specific training that is provided for all PAW teams, such as the autumn Worship Retreat. The complexity of training leaders within a larger structure, and leaders and team members within

the lower structure often stretches student leaders and the ADSM for Chapel Programs to the limit. Nevertheless, such training is worth the effort because it helps to integrate the values of the program as deep as possible into every participant.

### **Addressing Leadership and Resources at Trinity Western University**

In comparison to Calvin College, Northpark University, and Trinity International University, TWU's PAW student leaders receive a high degree of investment. The value placed on their leadership indicates the importance of their role in relation to the role of the chapel program on campus. That is, it is important to recognize (and therefore expect) that students involved in chapel leadership have a very public role in the institution, by providing training and mentoring that will ensure their success as examples and shepherds of the spiritual climate of the campus. In fact, because even team members play a very public role, I would advocate increasing funding so that even team members can be recognized for their contribution, either by paying for the Worship Retreat, or even by providing a modest stipend.

There are advantages and disadvantages to chapel's staffing structure at TWU. In the current structure, chapel is well-positioned to partner with other Student Ministries programs to allow students to put their faith into action (as discussed above). In booking the chapel schedule, the Director of Student Ministries can do so relation to the bigger picture of Student Ministries strategy and programs. However, chapel's position as one student program within a department within a division makes it difficult to position it as a campus event – one that students, staff and faculty ought to attend whenever possible. This, in turn, makes it difficult for students to connect chapel with their wider experience, since their professors and mentors are not sharing the experience of chapel with them; and this has the

potential to promote the unnecessary divide between whole student development and academic scholarship. It would be valuable for the Student Life division to wrestle with the priority it places on chapel; if chapel is to be a unifying, campus event – a venue for faculty, staff and students to mingle and meet over a shared experience of worship – perhaps it needs to be positioned higher within the structure of Student Life, and staffed accordingly. However, if it is considered to be one of many “on-ramps” through which students encounter opportunities for spiritual formation, then perhaps its current position will be sufficient. However, I question whether chapel can maintain a significant presence on the campus within its current positioning.

A final, long-term consideration regarding chapel staffing relates to the freeing up of the ADSM for Chapel Programs to teach and equip students more adequately. In the short term, I suggest the hiring of a student leader to assist with some logistical details of auditions, and of equipping programs such as the worship retreat. In the long-term, I would like to see the hiring of a staff sound and media coordinator who could professionally maintain equipment, ensure the technical quality of chapel, and give more personal attention to equipping student leaders in technical skills, so that they are able to invest those significant skills in the venues to which they will contribute in the future.

### **Conclusion: Recommendations**

This paper has sought to answer five questions:

1. How can I operationalize my espoused philosophy of collaborative leadership?
2. How can I train my leadership team more intentionally in a biblical, historically-connected, holistic, pastoral, and progressive approach to worship?

3. Are there ways to structure our corporate worship that would provide fresh and valued traditions for our whole campus to participate in, and better equip my leaders as pastors, or shepherds, of congregational worship?
4. How can I work with my leaders to make our campus worship gatherings more relevant to the lives of students and even to the life of our campus?
5. Is our current structure of leadership, and are our current resources appropriate and adequate for achieving the goals for which chapel is mandated to achieve?

On the basis of my research, I make the following recommendations:

1. **Leadership:** That we experiment with a collaborative model of worship planning in the coming year, especially for Praise Chapels and Sunday Night Alive.
2. **Training:** That PAW training would operate on the assumption that all leaders are involved as worship planners and practitioners who are assigned particular roles, rather than as a hodge-podge of people with specific roles, some of whom are worship planners. On this assumption, training for all would focus on a theology of worship, worship planning, and other theoretical and practical considerations related to worship leadership.
3. **Traditions:** That we would create, teach, and adopt structures of worship in which chapel's values and principles can be creatively and consistently applied. This includes the adoption of some form of liturgical structure (within contemporary styles), and the formation/adoption of a chapel "lectionary," which will function as the foundation for collaborative worship planning. This must be done within an overall commitment to innovation, creativity, and collaboration.
4. **Action:** That we would begin to envision and experiment with a "responding" element in chapel and Sunday Night Alive, connecting teaching with tangible ways in which students can respond in the here and now. With regard to chapel, Student

Ministries staff would more intentionally integrate chapel messages with campus programming. With regard to Praise Chapels and Sunday Night Alive, this element of responding would be built into the collaborative planning process.

5. **Structures:** That we would plan to incorporate some form of financial recognition of team members' contribution; that the Student Life division would (re)consider the structural positioning of chapel in relation to its role on campus; that plans would be made to hire a sound and media coordinator for the chapel program.

## Appendix

### Leadership Core Meeting Agenda Sample/Draft

#### August/September

The Leadership Team will determine together the overall direction of Praise Chapels and Sunday Night Alive, with particular attention to Scripture texts.

#### Weekly

**Pre-meeting:** Student leaders journal a brief personal response to the assigned Scriptures for upcoming weeks. Student leader with particular responsibility brainstorms possible songs.

Staff does deeper study on the texts.

0:00	Gathering time
0:10	Devotional: reflection on some aspect of worship, leadership etc.
0:20	Reading of assigned Scripture
0:30	Prayer around the Scripture
0:40	Discussion regarding the message of the text and its application to the campus
0:55	Brainstorming around how to communicate the message. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Attention to styles of communication/learning/engagement<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• i.e. visual, aural, kinesthetic/tactile, etc.</li></ul></li><li>▪ Attention to appropriateness<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• i.e. degree of complexity, mood, etc.</li></ul></li><li>▪ Attention to diversity<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• i.e. worship traditions, global expressions, etc.</li></ul></li></ul>
1:15	Drafting of service order and assignment of duties
1:25	Close in prayer

## Bibliography

- College Life 2004-05*. Northpark University Ministries document.
- Barna, George. *The Power of Team Leadership*. Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2001.
- Belcher, Christina. "What Do You Do With a Slightly Used Worldview?" *College of Christian Higher Education E-Journal*. (November 2003) 19-20, 29-35.
- Blimling, Gregory S., Whitt, Elizabeth, and Associates. *Good Practice in Student Affairs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.
- Dawn, Marva. *A "Royal" Waste of Time*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- . *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Garber, Steven. *The Fabric of Faithfulness*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1996.
- Malefyt, Norma deWaal and Vanderwell, Howard. *Designing Worship Together*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2005.
- Murphy, Debra Dean. *Teaching That Transforms*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2004.
- Nouwen, Henri J.M. *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*. New York: Image, 1975.
- Parks, Sharon Daloz. *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.
- Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002.
- Ryan, Paul. Personal e-mail. Sunday, May 08, 2005.
- The Holy Bible: New International Version*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985.
- Townley, Cathy. *Designing Worship Teams*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2002.
- Worship Apprentice Application*. Calvin College program document.