

Dear

It is obvious that God has blessed Cornerstone with an extraordinarily diverse blend of artists. Musicians, poets, painters, sculptors, builders, workers of fabric and thread, chefs, singers, alchemists, speakers, and others -- we desire to empower and release art in the varied ways in which God gives it to us through you, the artist. This letter seeks to provide for you some definition and expectation of what it means for you to be an artist in the family of Cornerstone, in Lebanon, and in your life in general.

We artists tend to be complex, a bit moody, and challenging to work with at times. A true artist needs both extreme freedom for creativity as well as life-giving structure for accountability. Creativity is like a powerful raging river; accountability like riverbanks. If there is no freedom, the river is dry and lifeless; if there is no structure, the river turns into a destructive flood.

The ideas that "my art exists for the sake of itself" or that "my art exists for the sake of its creator" are not Kingdom ideals. A lot of the time, artists can find themselves biding time, waiting for someone to appreciate their creativity and work. Not only that, but sometimes art -- especially among musicians -- requires teamwork and often there is a fearful reticence to engage honestly with the creative team. These are just some of the pitfalls that an artist can fall into; a redemptive artist is no exception.

Being aware of the pitfalls of creative ministry is important. But rather than major on that stuff, we instead would like to issue a call to you, the artists at Cornerstone and in our region. Creativity and beauty are deeply central to the foundation of all things, God Himself being the source of both realities. When we create beauty, we are joining God in His beautifully creative work; we join His revelation of Himself in all His originality and uniqueness. We are called to experience God sensually - - sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell. It is for this reason that at Cornerstone, art is prophetic.

Be it painting, congregational worship leading, building with hands, poetry, acting... the voice of the redemptive artist is to join God's voice. What makes art unique in this regard is that it often is a piece of nuance of God's voice, language or experience that we don't often hear, see, smell, touch or taste, and it is you, the artist, that brings that nuance to life in a unique form of revelation. It is also why art can sometimes be selfishly possessed by the artist. Rather than releasing beauty like God does, even allowing His creation to pervert it or miss it if they so choose, the artist often clings to his art, waiting to be called upon and have his art valued properly rather than pouring it out lavishly so that God may pour in more.

And so, these concepts establish a baseline for art at Cornerstone. As a redemptive artist, your art is worship and therefore, God will initiate it and you must release it. Here are a few guidelines by which this principle might play itself out:

1. You cannot wait to be called upon to create something.

A commissioning of a piece might happen, and you should take advantage of it when the opportunity arises, but you cannot just sit there waiting to be commissioned. *God is at work in you and your art is your worship.* The Body will receive from you through your act of creation, it may even steer a sermon, ignite a worship set, or redeem someone's pain. But if you are not creating *pro-actively* instead of *re-actively*, then these things cannot happen.

2. You are not an island unto yourself.

Any time a word of prophecy is received in the church, it is the local church leadership's job to determine if this word is for God, for the speaker, for the leadership, or for the Body. This

discernment takes place in community through the healthy leadership structures that God has ordained, that He oversees and that mutually submit to one another appropriately.

Redemptive art is the same way. God may initiate an act of creative worship in you and you may think it is simply for yourself, but in reality, it is meant for the Body. Or you may think it is for the Body, when in reality it is simply for God, or for the leadership of the church. Regardless, your redemptive art must be released to the Body of Christ for appropriate accountability regarding its ministry to the church. This is practically worked out by communicating with Justin who will then take the worship piece into community discernment.

3. You must create for process, not product.

Because redemptive art is worship, that places it into the realm of practical sanctification. As you grow and change, so does your worship. As you experience joy, brokenness, heartache, peace, loss, love, hope, so should your art. The point of redemptive art is process, not product.

4. You should not fall into narcissism.

Pride kills redemptive art. So does false humility. You must create for God to reflect *His* beauty, not yours. That's not to say that it won't be deeply personal and introspective. It certainly doesn't mean that your obvious spirit-print isn't all over the piece. It is to say that the spirit of the piece is not to gaze at oneself, but to gaze at the beauty of God.

One of the enemy's greatest triumphs against Christ's Bride, the Church, is to rob her of her beauty. We will not stand for this at Cornerstone, or in our region. So friends, consider yourselves released to explore and create with your Savior. We deeply desire your contributions, direction, insights and creations regarding God's work and words to our church and in our region. We look forward to seeing Christ shine more and more as we worship Him through art.

*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.
Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves
be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

Blessings,

Jay and Justin



C. S. Lewis said that reason is the organ of truth, but imagination is the organ of meaning... it takes the imagination to sense something has meaning because we cannot cognitively grasp the glory of God... The meaning of life is the glory of God... While we have artists because they have the ability to see the greater reality, we *need* artists because, if Lewis is right, we can't understand truth without art... The Christian artist needs to interact in community because of what the artist will bring out in others and what others will bring out in the artist.
[Tim Keller IT WAS GOOD MAKING ART TO THE GLORY OF GOD]

