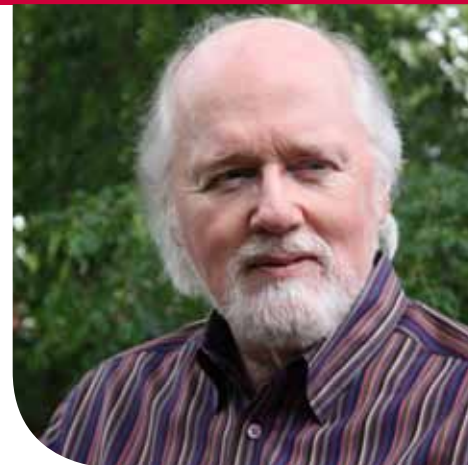


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John Franklin

ARTS IN MISSION TASKFORCE



Arts in Mission Mandate: The AiM task force exists to be a catalyst, advocating an intentional embracing of the arts as a vital arena for missional endeavours. Over the past couple of decades, there has been a resurgence of interest in the arts within Christian faith communities—not least among those in the evangelical camp. This renewed interest sends a clear signal that the aesthetic side of life can no longer be ignored. Religious understanding is not just a matter of reason attending to concepts and ideas, but is also about sensibilities and perceptions that are discerned through drama, music, dance, poetry and visual art.

Under the innovative leadership of Bertil Ekstrom and Bill Taylor, the WEA Mission Commission created a Task Force on Arts in Mission at their meeting in Pattaya, Thailand in November 2008. Over its long history, modern missions has at best been inattentive to the value of the arts for the missional task. There is no doubt that though many on the front lines readily engage the arts, there has been little sign that those in missions leadership are prepared or interested to take up the challenge to include the arts in an intentional way in the work of mission. When we consider the way in which music, dance, visual art, story and craft are woven into the fabric of indigenous cultures in the majority world, it is evident that the arts are an untapped resource for missions. During the meetings in Pattaya, a small group of eight gathered to look at what might be done to give the arts a more significant role in the

world of missions. There was ready agreement that art is an important means of communication and it is a common thread in all cultures. We noted too that acknowledging and engaging indigenous art is a gesture of respect and bridge building across our cultural differences. It was evident to our small group that there is much that could be done through the arts that would strengthen and enrich the work of mission around the world. We were well aware that much is already happening in arts and mission, while conscious that there is great promise in more intentional arts awareness among mission practitioners. Among the things the task force will take up in the days ahead are the following:

- Map organizations, training centres, churches, para church organizations and networks in which art and mission come together
- Articulate a biblical and theological foundation for the arts
- Survey the current level of mission involvement with the arts
- Provide resources and recommendations for national mission movements, mission agencies and training institutions
- Generate conversations on arts and mission through consultations and presence at mission gatherings

The Task Force held a strategic planning meeting in the spring of 2009 to give some shape to how we will proceed in the months ahead. Bill Taylor invited us or perhaps better challenged us to take on a special issue of Connections that would focus

on Arts in Mission. This double issue is the result of a concerted effort to draw on resources from around the globe to inform, inspire and encourage the readers of this magazine on the matter of arts in mission. Our hope is that we might set in motion a fresh consideration of the way in which the arts can uniquely convey the themes of hope and healing as well as serve as a catalyst for justice, peace and renewed articulation of the age old message of the gospel.

What you will read in these pages will give you a glimpse into the ways in which the arts can be significant for the missional task. Every effort has been made to bring you a rich diversity of examples from around the globe and to tell stories and share ideas that will inspire you to see new possibilities in the places where you seek to bear witness to the gospel. This is just a beginning and we are all too aware of what has been left out. It is our desire that this double issue will be a resource not just for the moment but over the next few years. We hope that many of you in the WEA Mission Commission community and beyond will assist us by letting us know what you or others are doing to engage the arts in mission. If you have comments or suggestions, contacts or ideas we invite you to be in touch ●

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