

Bertil Ekström serves the WEA Mission Commission as Executive Director. He is a staff member of Interact as well.

Bertil Ekström, Executive Director

FROM MY CORNER

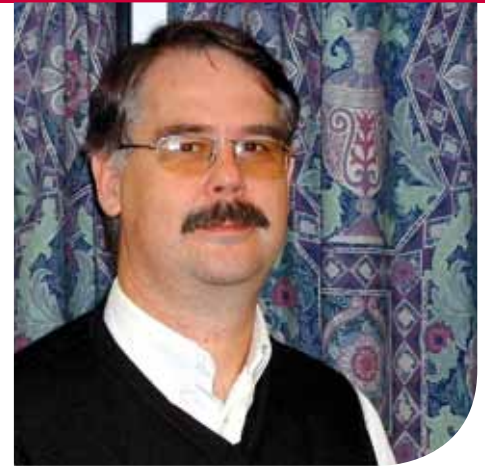
We now focus on Arts in Mission, one of the outcomes of the new task force established at the last consultation of the Mission Commission in Pattaya, Thailand, 2008. I was raised in an ecclesiastical context and tradition where visual arts and “body language” were not encouraged as appropriate ways for a Christian to express faith. Therefore, I am amazed by the variety and richness of culturally-based expressions of biblical truths through different kinds of arts. To be fair to my church background, I recognise that some forms of art were encouraged and certainly seen as more holy than others: music, poetry and rhetoric.

Artistic creativity is a gift from the Creator and reflects the image of God in the human. The commandment to take care of God’s creation demands this capacity to produce new things in dialogue and tension between the feelings of our inner being and the outer reality in which we live. Therefore, the arts have an important therapeutic function as well as a pedagogic purpose, helping us to understand

the different dimensions of life. The Scriptures are full of artistic expressions, including the way that God’s revelation of himself has come to us through metaphors and case studies of intervention in the history of humankind.

Art is present everywhere and probably much more so than we think about. Music, dance, poetry, sculptures, paintings and drama are arts that we usually recognise. But we could add to that list many other forms, such as architecture, arrangement of gardens and flower expositions, design of clothes, and many more. What would the world and life be without art?

Art is also an important tool for the communication of the Gospel to other people and therefore has its natural place in Mission. The Arts in Mission Task Force is precisely an attempt of the Mission Commission to stimulate the involvement of Christian artists in integral mission. We want to give them space for using their gifts to reach those who do not know about Jesus. But we also want to deepen the



missional community’s understanding of what mission is about and how it can be communicated. The dream is to see the whole richness of the global Church engaged in the common cause of advancing the Kingdom. Thus, artists from all cultures, languages, tribes and nations are welcome to take part.

Art as Mission could be another way of phrasing this dream. Art is not just a tool for expressing faith. Art is a mission in itself—in the sense that excellent art is a way of honouring God and giving testimony to His image in us. In other words, great art fulfils part of the Creator’s purpose with our lives. Perhaps it is time for our theological seminaries to introduce courses in arts alongside homiletics. I think most of us would agree that a picture, a sculpture, a painting, a musical performance or a drama presentation can say many times more than thousands of preached words ●