



Bo's Blog

What is worship?

This is the question that occurred to me at the District Academy in April. Bishop Grant Hagiya was speaking to us about various aspects of church life, particularly on Sunday mornings, and how they fit (or don't fit) the needs/culture of the community, and world, around us. One of the items he mentioned was an analysis of the worship experience put forth over 100 years ago by the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard said that the Sunday morning church experience is a lot like a play, with the congregation as the audience, the pastor as the actor/actress up on stage, and God as the off-stage prompter. Kierkegaard went on to say that the roles should be changed, so that the congregation becomes the actors and actresses, the pastor becomes the off-stage prompter, and God becomes the audience.

This led me to thinking about the question, "What is worship?" What is the purpose of our gathering together on Sunday mornings in the church sanctuary?

If it's to be entertained, then we don't have to do anything. We sit in the audience and watch the show. We remain passive. We let others sing our songs and say our lines. But is that worship? Does that experience fulfill our spiritual needs? Does it help us to grow in our relationship with God? Probably not. It may entertain us, but it probably won't lead us into the deeper waters of faith. That journey calls for interaction.

We do a lot of things in our worship service that keeps the congregation actively participating. One of the first things I noticed about worship here at PUMC is that there is a lot of music in it, which I like. Singing hymns brings us together in community. It's not just me singing a song, but all of us together, and that reinforces our feeling of being a church family. It is a time in the service when we are the actors and actresses, and God is our audience. We sing these songs in praise to God. And many of the hymns have some great theology in their lines that can get us thinking about our faith.

Singing is one way we move from Kierkegaard's first set of roles in a worship service to his second.

This summer I'm going to be experimenting with other ways of doing that. I will be out of the pulpit and off the "stage," in an effort to move that stage more toward the pews. I'll be a little less formally dressed than past summers (no shorts though--that would not be good). And I'm planning on experimenting occasionally with making even the homilies interactive. And I want to know what you think about these changes, whether good or bad. Please tell me what you

think, or talk to someone from the Staff-Parish Relations committee (Peggy Edom, Diane Fortune, Carolyn Hart, Linda Key, Camille Klingele, Sierra Klingele, and Jim Raney).

What is worship for you? What are the things that we do on Sunday mornings that are helpful for you in worshipping God? Whether old or new, whether you've done them in other churches or here. Let us join together in being active in our worship of God.

Shalom,
Bo