

Response to “Equipping the Saints for Worship”*

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“I don’t want to be a pastor,” proclaimed my daughter when she was about eight years old.

“Why?” I asked.

“Because I don’t want to preach!”

Nowadays my daughter is ten years old. She does *not* preach all right, but she sings with the children’s worship team in our church, not realizing that she is actually preaching—proclaiming the good news—through a different mode of communication, i.e., music. While reflecting on Davis’s inaugural address, I came to the hypothesis that like my daughter, the writer did not want to be “the next great evangelist, bringing millions of people to Christ,” but in the real sense of the word—as a teacher, “an equipper of equippers,” she could indeed bring millions of people to Christ. That message rang clear to me as I mulled over the general tone of her inaugural address.

At the outset, my initial reaction to the address was: there is no doubt, Becky Davis, professional songwriter; music professor; and Wesleyan clergy is so compatible with the life and ministry of the Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary (APNTS)! Her opening statement, “Why is music and worship important to the purpose of APNTS?” begs the hearers to delve into the world and power of music as it relates to the existence of APNTS as a theological institution seeking to train women and men for Christlike leadership and excellence in ministries. This query governed her whole inauguration speech. Davis battled with several notions ranging from music (as both science and applied discipline), worship (personal and corporate), church department, domains of learning, history, theology, hermeneutics, homiletics, leadership, practical Christian education, and global missions—all in one inauguration address. After listening to the speech, I, for one am convinced that music and worship is eternally linked to our existence as souls reaching out to an all-together beautiful God.

* This paper is a response to Rebecca Davis’s installation address, “Equipping the Saints for Worship,” pages 39–45, above.

I want to respond to three crucial “refrains” that resonate in the paper. The first is, there was a pressing conviction to the ever-powerful impact of music and worship not just to the academe and ministry but also fundamentally as part of the core of our humanity. How do we measure the affective side to music and worship? Generally, we are aware of the three domains of learning and are conscious that both cognitive and psychomotor could be quantified. But how can we measure the affective side to learning? In the postmodern times, it seems that everything can be measured. Social science tries to measure love using what they call the Sternberg’s theory of love; Goff, Goddard, Pointer and Jackson’s “Measures of Expressions of Love” (2007); and Chapman’s classes of expressions of love (*The Five Love Languages*, 1995) among others. Hope can be measured using the “Adult Dispositional Hope Scale” (Snyder 1995) for instance. And faith, too, can be measured, e.g., using the Faith Matters Survey (Harvard University and University of Notre Dame 2011). One could be almost sure that these social science approaches to the aesthetics in life are not exact and precise measurements of the qualitative substance of our existence. Davis writes, “In a theological school, it’s easy to focus on reason; on words and ideas. It’s not as common to shine a light on the affective aspect of our faith, because it’s much harder to pin it down. Because it’s affective... it deals with emotions, personal experiences, cultural influences, and movement of the spirit within an individual’s heart. It’s hard to describe, and even harder to quantify.” Davis then states that her field, which is music and worship, “sits squarely in the middle of the affective side of our faith.” Simply put, an inaugural speech is the first speech someone gives when starting an important new job (*Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.). Right there and then I concur with Davis how integral music and worship is to faith development. One of the things that is worth noting in the address is the writer’s discussion on the impact of music in one’s brain. Davis alludes to music’s ability to go “past the synapses in the brain creating memory in places not affected by the damage caused by dementia.” This could have implications to Christian education of youth and adults as well as to holistic child development.

Second, there was the clear connection between the goal of holiness denominations (with APNTS as a theological institution in the Wesleyan tradition serving the Church) and the writer’s calling and vocation. Davis is unequivocal and unapologetic of her calling as a Wesleyan clergy and seminary professor. She declares, “My burden and my calling is for the church.” The address beautifully hinges on Apostle Paul’s message on the leadership gifts

found in Ephesians 4. This particular chapter talks about the unity and maturity in the Body of Christ with special mention on spiritual gifts—for works of service, which also relates to the core of APNTS’s mission and vision. Davis, in particular, focuses on the “need for church leaders to recognize the power of worship and the responsibility we carry for the content of our corporate worship experiences.” She uses the ancient Latin formula, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, meaning, “the rule of prayer is the rule of belief, or, what we speak, we will believe.” This is such a weighty responsibility not just for preachers but also for worship leaders, “prompters” of people as they worship the “Audience of One.”

Finally, the third refrain that resonates in the address is something that was personally transformational for me. There was the “inner conviction,” permit me to call it a “slap to my face,” when the writer talked about haphazard planning in worship. I was especially rebuked on this point. You see, I am part of worship planning in my local church, and more often than not, I confess that there are times in this ministry, when the “process” of planning worship is not well executed, not optimal, not smooth, maybe not at all fitting to this Great God we worship. Davis rescued me from this abyss of not coming up with a “well-planned, well-executed” process so that the “mechanics of what’s happening won’t detract from the message” by providing three helpful and practical P’s: prayer, planning, and practice. Davis was so successful in expounding on these three aspects. The explanation was succinct, clear, to the point, without the pretense of being uselessly dogmatic, but based on her pure conviction, professional experience and years of learning.

Becky Davis is undoubtedly a blessing to APNTS. Just like my then eight-year-old daughter who was scared to death of becoming a pastor but is ministering to the Church in a different way, Davis’s unique contribution to APNTS is evident. Davis’s fervor in leading the APNTS’ community to genuine music and worship, her being that exudes unadulterated devotion to God through music and worship and her commitment to the ideals of APNTS is beyond dispute. In a world where there is too much hype on worship, her inaugural address is a beacon that summons us back to the heart of worship—giving God what He rightfully deserves.

Works Cited

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