



Launch of a New Resource on Visual Art and Intercultural Worship

5 October 2022

Together in Worship, an online collection of free worship resources from Anabaptist sources, is pleased to announce the launch of a new resource about the use of visual art in worship. The centerpiece of the project is a 45-minute documentary video titled *A Creative God: The Visual Arts in Worship* produced by Rebecca Slough (Professor Emerita of Worship and the Arts, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary) and Jerry Holsopple (Professor of Visual and Communication Arts, Eastern Mennonite University).

The video and an accompanying discussion guide are designed to inspire the imaginations of congregations who are ready to explore how the visual dimensions of worship might expand their relationship with God and with each other.

Visual communication students from Eastern Mennonite University and theology students from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary conducted interviews with key leaders in seven intercultural Anabaptist congregations that use visual art in worship. Slough observed, "We believed the selected congregations had insights to share with the broader church about creating worship spaces that welcome all who want to participate."

Holsopple was inspired "by the thoughtful ways the artists and leaders approached the visual arts in their own worship spaces and practices." He observed how the creators of the art were themselves changed by the use of their work within worship: "Many seemed to be more connected to their worshipping communities."

Slough and Holsopple described the students who worked on the project as “representing a span of ages and cultural experiences that enriched the work of our intercultural documentary team.” They credit these students, Mary Ann Jacobs, Karen Martinez, Anna Ressler, Asha Beck, Mykensie Davis and Allison Shelly, for their insights and input.

Another dimension of the project was finding visual artworks by Anabaptist Mennonite artists that can be projected in places of worship. Two Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary students, Anteneh Setegn and Kajsa Herrstrom, curated and prepared images that can be downloaded from the Together in Worship website. Slough encourages Anabaptist Mennonite artists to submit artwork to Together in Worship for use in worship. She believes carefully chosen visual artwork enriches the expressive dimensions of Anabaptist worship.

Sarah Kathleen Johnson, chair of the Together in Worship leadership team, points to this project as a wonderful collaboration: “Together in Worship is excited to partner with scholars, pastors, worshipping communities, and universities to develop and share worship resources from an Anabaptist perspective.” She hopes that this project will inspire new partnerships.

Slough and Holsopple are extremely grateful for the participation of the following congregations in the project:

- Community Mennonite Church (Lancaster, Pennsylvania)
- Immanuel Mennonite Church (Harrisonburg, Virginia)
- Manantial de Vida Ministries (Harrisonburg, Virginia)
- Laurel Street Mennonite Church (Lancaster, Pennsylvania)
- New Hope Mennonite Church (Alexandria, Virginia)
- Oxford Circle Mennonite Church (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)
- Whitehall Mennonite Church (Whitehall, Pennsylvania)

These resources are made possible through a 2021-2022 Vital Worship Grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Grand Rapids, Michigan, with funds provided by Lilly Endowment Inc. Additional funding came from the Marpeck Dean’s Fund.

Join us for two public online events to learn more about the documentary and discussion guide:

- Teaching webinar hosted by Anabaptist Worship Network
 - Wednesday, November 9, 2pm Eastern, 1pm Central, 60-90 min
- Video premiere and Q&A with the documentary team
 - Thursday, November 10, 7:30pm Eastern, 6:30pm Central, 75 min

To explore the *A Creative God* collection visit www.togetherinworship.net

For more information contact Rebecca Slough at rslough@amb.edu