



## DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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### THE CHURCH GOD HAD IN MIND: A GALLERY OF FINE ART

by Pastor Steve Bringardner

Scriptures: Ephesians 2:10 [text]; Psalm 19:1-6 - Jeremiah 33:1-3

#### INTRODUCTION

We've been trying to discern the church God had in mind: What does it look like? What does it feel like? What are its core values that drive its ministry?

The final core value is that *creativity is the natural result of authentic spirituality*.

To set the stage, let me begin by saying:

1. The church God had in mind is kind of like a gallery—a gallery made up of His finest works of art (that's us, of course).

I can almost hear some of you saying, "Whoa, wait a minute! I'm not a 'work of art'." "Now my neighbor or the guy down the street, there's a 'piece of work'." □

2. The church God had in mind is made up of creative people—all using their individual creativity to build the Kingdom of God, grow His church, transform the surrounding culture.

I can almost hear some of you reacting, "Wait another minute! I'm not creative."

"Now, Marcie, she's creative. Elsi, she's creative. But I don't have those talents."

Look at what God says in HIS WORD: "We are God's workmanship [works of art], created in Christ Jesus to do good works [to be creative], for this is what God prepared in advance [had in mind, set it up] for us to do." ~ Ephesians 2:10 ~

This I BELIEVE: If we were to unleash the creative genius that is contained in this room, it would be enough to forever change, alter, convert, transfigure, revolutionize the entire world.

WHY? Because creativity is tied directly to our spirituality (i.e.: our connectedness to God).

The closer we get to God, the more we discover our untapped potential & creativity. And that's what God wants to use to change His world.

#### GOD IS THE "MASTER CREATOR"

His works of creation "*declare* (publish / broadcast / display) *His glory*" [cf. Psalm 19:1-6]

He created the universe and crowned it with the creation of humanity [cf. Eph. 2:10a]

NOT because He is lonely or empty.....How can an all-sufficient God be “lonely”?

BUT because He is full to overflowing.....The world and all that is in it come out of the overflow, the fullness of His being.

Psalm 104:31 – “*May the glory of the Lord [such as displayed in His creation] endure forever.*”

*May the Lord find joy [not companionship, not fulfillment] in what He has made.”*

GOD IS LIKE AN ARTIST: Full of images and ideas. How can He not create?

GOD IS EFFERVESCENT: Like the bubbles that rise out of a carbonated beverage. There is a bubbling up, a liveliness and an aliveness that sparks creation & brings forth something original.

GOD IS LIKE AN ARTISIAN WELL: Ever springing forth. You never have to pump it; it is always gushing upward / always overflowing. That’s because there is a never-ending stream or surge from the pressure of water that drains down from higher plateaus.

### HERE’S THE GOOD NEWS THIS MORNING

God has put that same effervescence, that same creative genius, that same artesian well within us. It is part of HIS IMAGE that He imparted to us. It is embedded in our IMAGINATION.

With IMAGINATION:

- You can see the ideal just like God did when He created the universe & the human spirit
- You can go to places you’ve never been
- You can step into experiences you’ve never known
- You have unlimited resources, unlimited capacity, and an unlimited range of influence

(i.e.: you can make it happen the way you want to)

Your imagination—and we’ve all got one—is part of what makes you like God!

Of course, as with all aspects of God’s image, it is marred & tarnished by our sin.

Imagination gets filtered through our HEARTS:

- When our hearts are separated from God and filled with all manner of unrighteousness, imagination is either cloaked (hardly used at all) OR corrupted (runs wild), meaning misdirected and misused (as with so much of today’s entertainment & media).
- When our hearts are joined to God’s, our imagination can become the birthplace of the dreams of God for our lives, our church, our community, our world. “It’s where you begin to discover your own uniqueness and the unique contribution that God wants to make through you” [Erwin McManus].

So, again, our creativity is directly linked to our spirituality.

I have **three points** I would like to drive home this morning. . . . .

**I. WE AS INDIVIDUALS ARE GOD’S “WORKS OF ART”**

DUMC is a gallery of fine art—very *fine* art (God’s finest!). If you are in Christ this morning, you reflect the beauty of God’s character. You are His workmanship (Eph. 2:10a), His *poemas* (Greek for “workmanship”). Your life is a poem written by God and for God. Your personal story of faith is nothing more than a poetry reading!

**II. WE AS INDIVIDUALS WERE DESIGNED TO BE CREATORS / ARTISTS**

God created us. . .in His image. . .to do His work. Not the other way around.

We didn’t create the idea of God. . .in our image. . .to do our work.

(But, listening to the bulk of our praying, doesn’t it make you wonder?)

We were “*created to do good works*”, not just “*be good (holy, godly) persons*” [cf. Eph. 2:10b]

In fact, Jesus promised we would do *even greater* works than Him. [cf. John 14:12]

God has something for each of us to do. Before any of us were ever conceived, He put a call on our lives.

Like God told Jeremiah: “*Before I formed you in the womb. . .I consecrated you and appointed you a prophet to the nations*” [cf. Jeremiah 1:5].

That’s why each of us has an innate (built-in) desire to make a difference, to accomplish some-thing, to fulfill a purpose. There is this *sense of destiny* that we’re all born with.

But He didn’t leave us with just a CALLING. . .but also CREATIVITY! He put resourcefulness, ingenuity, and imagination inside us. He gives us just what we need to accomplish our call, our purpose, our God-given destiny. Part of our spirituality is using those spiritual gifts + natural talents & abilities + our heart & passions (what stirs us) + and life experiences to make a difference (wherever He places us) and ultimately change the world.

Many people do not consider themselves to be creative. They say: “*I can’t draw or sing.*” But every one of us has been given the essential tool for creativity, and that is IMAGINATION! You may not think of yourself as being very imaginative, or you may have limited your travels through your imagination. But you have an imagination. It is God’s gift to all humanity.

In fact, it is part of His image which you bear.

Practically speaking, IMAGINATION is where all creativity begins. If you are going to build a house, sew a quilt, decorate a room, prepare a Bible study, start a project or ministry—you start with a plan, a vision. But the plan evolves. . .it changes. . .so that what you end up with may not be the same as what you originally intended. . .if anything, it’s probably better.

- None of my sermons ever ends up the way I begin them
- I never play a piece on the piano the same twice

Here's the thing about IMAGINATION: when it takes over, something happens. Have you ever sat down at your computer or workbench, find yourself getting into a flow only to lose track of time? It's like you lose yourself and you're no longer trying so hard.

**ILLUSTRATION:** In Stephen King's novel, *Cujo*, one of the characters is a little boy who, along with his mother, is trapped in a car way out in the country. There's a rabid dog, so they can't wind down the window. After awhile, the little boy dies (for lack of water and fresh air).

When the book came out, many of King's fans asked (angrily): "Why did you kill that little boy?" [We always think the characters are puppets in the author's hands!] King's reply was:

"I didn't kill him. He died while I was writing the story." That's the flow of creativity. . .of imagination. Once it kicks in, it takes over and the story practically writes itself. We need to just let go and let it happen!

You see, artistic ability is not a matter of *biology* or *genetics*, but of *spirituality*. Once again, creativity is a natural outgrowth of our spirituality.

We are all artists! We just work with different media—some with colors, some with words, some with ideas, some with notes (which make music), others with numbers or food or wood (and other natural materials, many with their hands).

Here's an invitation for you. God is speaking to Jeremiah in [Jeremiah 33:3](#) –

*"Call to me, and I will show you things that you could never dream or imagine".*

What dreams has God placed in your heart?

Are you willing to let Him dream a new dream in & through you?

I'm not talking about living in a "dream (fantasy) world" ~vs.~ "real world"

I'm talking about a place in your imagination where dreams become reality!

I'm talking about letting Him transform you and make you an agent of transformation!

One final point!

The church God had in mind is not just a gallery of *fine art* (that people come and look at). . . . .

### **III. WE AS A CHURCH ARE A GALLERY OF FINE ARTISTS & ARTISANS**

DUMC is a work of art—much like a "divine mosaic" made up of broken and fragmented people, put together again (transformed) to form an amazing collage. As such, we reflect the beauty of God's character. That said, I wonder:

- Why can't the (our) church become the place where the great artists of our time paint their first strokes and the great musicians sing their first notes?
- Why can't the church become the environment where the great thinkers and the great scholars and the great writers of our time emerge?
- Why can't our church become the community in which future poets and film directors, dancers and doctors and financiers grow up to discover that their talents are gifts from God?

- Why can't the future leaders of this world come from the (this) church?

[Based on a paragraph from Erwin McManus' book *An Unstoppable Force*]

Once upon a time, the church was the milieu for great art, music, architecture, and literature. The pursuit of science—these days thought to be an “enemy” of faith—was cultivated in the church.

Do you think we really could become a “regional equipping center”? Do you think that could be what God has in mind for our church? Are you up for it?