

# Weathering The Storm

## :: worship ::

In his book *The Emerging Church*, Emergent leader Dan Kimball shares some of the Emerging ideas about worship:

- It should overcome the fear of multi-sensory worship and teaching
- It should create a sacred space for vintage worship
- It should expect the spiritual
- It should create experiential, multi-sensory worship gatherings<sup>1</sup>

Within the Emergent Church we can find a few themes in regard to corporate worship.

First, the Emerging Church's worship is ***Experiential***.

In an article titled *What Experiential Worship Looks Like*, Emergent author Bill Carroll writes:

*"They [Worshippers] want to 'experience' God rather than have Him logically explained to them."*<sup>2</sup>

Chuck Fromm wrote in an article:

*"In many ways the Church is seeking a way back to its oldest and most sacred traditions: those in which **all the senses** are fully engaged in the act of worship from incense and bells to icons and vestments."*<sup>3</sup>

Later Fromm states:

*"The power of the preached word is being augmented and occasionally outpaced by the impact of the visual."*<sup>4</sup>

Popular Emergent leader Robert Webber, now deceased, was the foremost pioneer of what is called 'Ancient-Future Worship.' This worship style was meant to blend ancient rituals and stimuli together with modern worship techniques. He believed that a failure to do so created a faith that is, "an inch deep."<sup>5</sup>

Former Emergent leader Mark Driscoll explained the approach to experiential worship:

*"Everything in the service needs to preach – architecture, lighting, songs, prayers, fellowship, the smell – it all preaches. All 5 senses must be engaged to experience God."*<sup>6</sup>

Emergent worship is most focused on the physical, emotional and mental experience of the individuals participating.

<sup>1</sup>Roger Oakland, *Faith Undone*, pg 57

<sup>2</sup>Bill Carroll, *What Experiential Worship Looks Like*, <http://www.next-wave.org/jan01/experiential.htm>

<sup>3</sup>Roger Oakland, *Faith Undone*, pg 60

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. pg 63

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. pg 66

Second, the Emerging Church's worship is **Experimental**.

Here are a few ideas that I came across that are meant to help worship services become more Emergent:

- Create A Dividing Wall: For a service based on Ephesians 2:14, we made a "dividing wall of hostility" out of cardboard boxes running down the center aisle of our worship space. This was a vivid image of the relational separation brought by sin as people looked over the "wall" at other worshipers. After a moving confession focusing on the sin that separates us from each other, we kicked down part of the wall while proclaiming the forgiveness of sins. Then during a musical worship set people were invited to come and take a box out of the wall and pile it up in another part of the worship space.<sup>7</sup>
- Play With Clay: To involve people in the biblical image of God as the potter shaping our lives, we gave each worshiper a small ball of clay in a Ziploc© bag to hold in their hands throughout the service.<sup>8</sup>
- Windy Worship: In a service that focused on wind as a metaphor for the power of the Spirit, we rented two large industrial fans and set them up on the worship platform. At a certain point near the end of the service we turned on the fans while we were singing about the power of God's Spirit.<sup>9</sup>

These ideas and others are typical of Emerging Worship services. The integration of live painting or sculpting, incense and other forms of expressive artistry are commonplace in Emergent Churches.

Another popular trend in Emerging Worship is the use of secular music during congregational singing.

A 1000 member Georgia church reported that secular songs by Bon Jovi, the Black Crowes and even ACDC's Highway To Hell have been used during corporate worship sets.

Finally, the Emerging Church's worship is **Eucharistic**.

There is a large push towards reintegrating the Catholic Eucharist in the Emerging Church Movement.

Methodist, Anglican, Lutheran, Episcopalian and even Non-Denominational churches are moving quickly to embrace the Roman Catholic ritual of Eucharist.<sup>10</sup>

Emergent leader Scot McKnight has said, "the Eucharist profoundly enables the grace of God to be received with all its glories and blessings."<sup>11</sup>

McKnight, a theological professor and Emergent Village coordinating group member also states: "The point of an Anglican gathering on a Sunday morning is not to hear a sermon but to worship the Lord through the celebration of the Eucharist."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup><http://www.experientialworship.com/bodyworshipIdeas.html>

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Roger Oakland, *Faith Undone*, ch 8

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. pg 135

<sup>12</sup><http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/blog/index.php?p=738&more=1&c=1>

Lastly, the move toward the Eucharist has taken a rather hip turn. An organization called: *The Episcopalians For Global Reconciliation* has developed and implemented an emergent worship service that they call *U2Charist*.<sup>13</sup>

From their website:

*"U2charist is an Episcopal Eucharist service that features the music of the rock band U2 and a message about God's call to rally around the Millennium Development Goals...U2 is calling people worldwide to a deeper faith and engagement with God's mission. The U2charist seeks to be an extension of this ministry."*

From the creator of U2Charist's website:

*"U2 requires that ALL money collected at a service that uses their music goes to an organization furthering the [Millennium Development Goals](#)."<sup>14</sup>*

U2Charist services have been or are being held in Ireland, Australia, Mexico City, Hong Kong, New York, North Carolina, Florida, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Arizona, Ohio, Connecticut, Alabama, Maine, New Mexico, Illinois, Oklahoma, Oregon, California, Idaho, Maryland, Washington, Missouri, Georgia, South Carolina, Indiana, Massachusetts, Vermont, Kentucky and let's just stop there for the sake of time.<sup>15</sup>

When you get right down to it, Emerging Worship is set up as an anything-goes, existential experiment that focuses on personal experience. The more you study it the more you will find that it is characterized by spiritual all-inclusiveness, mystic ritual and separation from Biblical foundations.

Let's ground ourselves in the Word of God, let's ground ourselves in Jesus Christ so that when the storms of doctrine and heresy come we will be able to stay rooted in the truth of our faith.

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<sup>13</sup><http://www.e4gr.org/u2charists/service.html>

<sup>14</sup>[http://www.sarahlaughed.net/u2charist/u2charist\\_faq/](http://www.sarahlaughed.net/u2charist/u2charist_faq/)

<sup>15</sup><http://u2charist.blogspot.com/>