

Michael J. Bauer. *Arts Ministry: Nurturing the Creative Life of God's People*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013. 328 pages. \$20.87.

The book *Arts Ministry: Nurturing the Creative Life of God's People* is an intriguing look at both the nature of art in the life of communities of faith and an opportunity to learn from eighteen enlightening case studies of arts ministries that are occurring all over the country. The intent of the book is to provide those interested in the important discussions around “bringing full color worship into their midst” (Intro). With its historical foundations related to arts ministry and its helpful case studies from congregational experiences, any church could gain insights about the prospect of creating this type of ministry in their own community from this book.

*Arts Ministry* is laid out in an easy to follow format. Bauer starts with an excellent introductory chapter about arts ministry, laying the foundation for readers to see the width and breadth of possibilities for arts ministry in their own communities of faith. For some congregations, the varied and intriguing possibilities will be new and exciting. For others already engaged in some types of arts ministry, there are still new insights and strategies to glean from this book.

The author then uses the historical presence of arts in the church, the arguments against those ministries historically, and provides a framework for advocacy related to arts ministry today. It is an interesting way to approach the advocacy idea, which is quite effective. Learning how to counter arguments against arts ministry, including idolatry, stewardship, morality, and distraction, is a helpful resource for anyone exploring this type of ministry (43-64). For a church already struggling with the inclusion of arts, this book lays out a framework for planning and implementing arts ministry in a way that would generate options for any size congregation.

Chapter three delves into the relationship between the arts and God. The gift of creativity and arts ministry is from God and of God. This chapter is a helpful look at the theological frameworks around the arts in which we participate and God's presence in our midst as a creative and creating God. Bauer looks at the holistic role the arts play in human formation and development. In turn, chapter four is an insightful look into the interplay between human identity and human formation (98-101).

Next, in chapters five and six, Bauer explores the widening circle of arts' encounters—from the individual to the wider world, the role of imagination, and a foray into a theology of creativity. The exploration of how arts ministry can engage the world outside of the four walls of the church, especially in evangelism and community outreach was helpful and even raised some cautions in this regard (123-138).

Chapter seven delves into the practical connections between arts ministry and worship itself. The connections between worship and the arts has a long tradition, however, this chapter explores the ways that art has and can be used in ritual moments, drama, poetry, dance, music, art and architecture, and how to utilize these artistic options as liturgical habits in the life of the church (188-206). One of the great gifts of this book is that Bauer explores such a wide array of arts options. Chapter eight begins to work toward a provisional theology for arts ministry. The language, character, and meaning of art as symbolic theology are important in developing a theology of arts ministry (227-242). This text helps congregations with that conversation in a very helpful manner.

The final chapter helps communities of faith answer the questions that might arise around the development of an arts ministry in their church. Providing a model for the creation of an arts

ministry allows the reader to find their way into the discussion in the areas of basic principles, potential pitfalls, keys to consider, and practical considerations for their arts ministry's creation.

Bauer creates a very usable text with his straightforward approach to the subject. The historical foundation he lays out alongside contextual examples and potential pitfalls/issues is both informative and insightful. What Bauer has created is one of the few practical, foundational, historical, and useful resources for arts ministry in the church today. This book is about turning on the senses of the community by utilizing the full range of arts ministry "to experience the power of sight, taste, touch, gesture, line, color, sound, texture, rhythm, and metaphor" (3). For these gifts the church should give thanks.

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