The Announcements: Moveable Feast or Dog's Breakfast?

What worship leader, congregation or worship committee has not struggled with the place and function of the announcements? What some welcome as a sign of an active community of faith, others experience as an interruption in the flow of worship. Moveable feast or dog's breakfast? How many trees must fall to feed our addiction to multi-paged bulletins? The following suggestions are offered to stimulate some thinking in your community.

- **Location, location, location.** As in real estate, so in liturgy. Announcements near the beginning of a service serve to gather people—emphasize that theme. When in association with the offering, they call us to respond with thanksgiving and generosity. If placed near the close of the service, they send us forth into the world. Intentional links with associated hymns and prayers can transform announcements into liturgy and worship.
- **Call it like it is.** Announcements are best thought of as calls to discipleship, invitations to live out our faith. Name them in such a way as to make this clear: e.g. "Our Witness in the World," "The Work of the People," "Our Shared Ministry."
- **Offer guidelines.** Develop guidelines for length (e.g. three lines of text or 30 seconds of speech) and deadlines for submission or notice.
- **Bear witness.** Invite all who submit or make announcements to testify! Ask them to briefly point to how their item can be a way to bear witness to the gospel and live out our faith in the world. Use the language of faith, not mere information.
- **Highlight.** Highlight one or two announcements which relate to the text or theme of the day.
- **Be diverse and inclusive.** Be intentional about including diverse voices and ages, modelling a variety of opportunities and concerns.
- **Be creative.** I remember an energetic invitation to a work day given by a woman wearing a hard hat and waving a hammer proclaiming, "Unless God builds the house, we labour in vain." This had more impact than details of the project.
- **Practice the 3-Rs.** (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) Print smaller runs of separate announcement folders on recycled paper for pick up on the way out of church. In addition, large bulletin boards on wheels can be placed in high traffic areas or in the coffee hour to communicate information. Remind people that such practices are part of our efforts to "live with respect in creation."
- **Go high-tech.** Experiment with paperless technologies. Make shorter announcements and point people to Web sites or recorded telephone messages for more information. Set up an e-mail "list-serve." Use "PowerPoint" projection technology to communicate opportunities for mission and ministry.
- **Pray.** Commend the community's work to God's care and the Spirit's guidance. Conclude the time of "Our Witness in the World" with something like: "These are some of the ways in which we are trying to live out our faith in the world. Let us ask for God's blessing on our shared ministry...silence....Let all the people say 'Amen.'"

William S. Kervin is Assistant Professor of Public Worship at Emmanuel College in Toronto, a position to which he brings his Maritime roots and pastoral experience in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Toronto.