

Wayfinding: God's Spiritual Signposts in the U2 Eucharist

A newly confirmed youth member suggested several months ago that we might be able to hear God's voice rise from an unexpected place — rock music. With that prompt, our worship community embarked on a liturgical path marked with spiritual discoveries, a kind of spiritual wayfinding in our media-saturated world. This spring we offered our first U2 Eucharist, a worship service that replaces hymns with the recorded music of the rock band, U2.

Originally developed by an Episcopal priest, Rev. Paige Blair, this ministry is a celebration in which driving rhythms and spiritually-impassioned lyrics of justice and faith cascade into the traditional liturgy of the Eucharist. The collection taken during the service offers a tool for alleviating world poverty as outlined in the UN Millennium Development Goals, reminding us of our community with the most desperately poor people on earth and providing such practical assistance as insecticide-embedded mosquito nets for those living in malaria-ridden areas.

We do not approach the U2 Eucharist casually, even though the electronics and rock riffs might seem to call for unceremonious treatment. Instead of having the shallow experience of hearing popular music without giving thought to its meaning, we make a pilgrimage within our sanctuary to worship, to listen, and to respond to the messages expressed in the lyrics: hospitality, compassion, justice.

I waited patiently for the Lord / He inclined and heard my cry / He brought me up out of the pit / out of the miry clay . . . How long / to sing this song . . . lyrics from U2's "40"

We select songs from the band's recordings based on tempo and lyrics that fit and enhance the order of worship. We celebrate Communion at five stations placed throughout the sanctuary, stretching us from old habits and leading us into new ways of approaching God and each other. We project images of our global community to remind us of our physical place and our spiritual path — to recognize how small we are as individuals and how powerful we can be when we join together.

One love / One blood / One life / You got to do what you should / One life / With each other / Sisters / Brothers / One life but we're not the same / We get to carry each other / carry each other . . . — lyrics from U2's "One"

In our over-stimulating environment, it's all too easy to feel small and insignificant, without a voice, without a story to call our own. How, then, do we recognize the spiritual signposts that help us find our way as individuals and communities? Where are the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire for our generation? Where do we find our compass? We live in an era of new and unfamiliar landscape. In the past our churches, our friends, our community oriented us, helped us find our way. Sam Keen has said that

We are the first generation bombarded with so many stories from so many "authorities," none of which are our own . . . three television screens . . . giving three sets of stories; fax machines bringing in other stories; newspapers providing still more stories. In a sense, we are saturated with stories; we're saturated with points of view. But the effect of being bombarded with all of these points of view is that we don't have a point of view and we don't have a story. We lose the continuity of our experiences; we become people who are written on from the outside.
(<http://samkeen.com/fontsize2bwonderingsfontp/>)

part, out of their wish to revel in the mystery of God and at the same time to give of themselves with offerings that have literally saved the lives of others around the globe.

By stepping away from the usual atmosphere of worship while still holding onto the traditions that nourish our community of faith, we find that our eyes and ears open to the Spirit, renewing our vision and revealing to us the signposts on our journey. The word of God lives, breathes, and moves us all in powerful ways . . . even through rock music! And our pilgrimage leads us to new perspectives on our faith, on our community, and on our vast potential to love and serve each other.

For more information about the U2 Eucharist at First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, visit our website: lincolnschurch.org/Eucharist.htm — or email info@lincolnschurch.org <mailto:info@lincolnschurch.org> for liturgy, “talking points,” or to arrange phone conversation.

* The dialectical consideration of the U2 Eucharist is an adaptation of Walter A. Brueggemann’s description of faith being a movement — from being securely oriented — to being painfully disoriented — to being surprisingly reoriented. — *Praying the Psalms* by Walter Brueggemann