

Meaningful and Memorable Liturgies

Following four years at Hope College and arriving in Spring Lake in 1960 to begin a teaching career here spanning 33 years, my wife Claire and I found that we were neighbors of Dick and soon got to know him. Even though I was employed at the Spring Lake Presbyterian Church as organist/choirmaster, being of the Reformed tradition, I felt lost without an evening service, so often frequented First Reformed Church on Sunday evenings. I eventually became the evening organist/choirmaster.

Years passed and Dick Rhem (whom we also knew at Hope because he was then a Western Seminary student and taught intro to Bible at Hope. He was Claire's prof., then went to New Jersey and The Netherlands. When he returned to the Spring Lake church, things began to move.

I was invited to be a part of that movement and growth and was delighted to do so...building a Worship, Music and Fine Arts Department over 30 years.

Working with RAR became a joy. My ideas for music and creative worship were supported by his remarkable ability to meld them into great, meaningful and memorable liturgies. As I had a full-time teaching position, we often communicated by writing each other copious notes - no easy task for the secretaries to read as we both have illegible hands. Somehow this worked quite well for us and things got done. Dick said that leading worship is like "passing the baton around the chancel" and that is what we did - thus blending music and sacrament and the spoken word into a grand collage involving all the senses.

The word "liturgy" means work of the people and our worship did indeed involve many participants in various choirs, dance troupes, bell ringers, instrumentalists, crucifers, acolytes, torch and banner bearers, along with directors and support staff, leading our divine worship.

RAR supported our acquisition of harpsichord, chimes, carillon, grand pianos, octaves of bells, trumpet en chamade and the great organ.

He loved to sing and led his people with a hale and hardy voice. I even got him to sing an introit from the rear of the church as well as a Dutch Psalm - in Dutch, of course.

Today we look back fondly on our many years together in the place we call "home" ...truly a Community of Christ.

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