

## WORSHIP FOLDER PROJECT

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*Pastor Caleb Bassett, Fallbrook, CA, served as project coordinator for the worship folders and concert programs that will be distributed at each service or concert. He shares some thoughts about this project.*

Many congregations print some sort of aid to assist worshipers along the path of the liturgy. These documents must make a good first impression—ushers hand one to each worshiper as they enter. These documents must also have at least some lasting value—worshipers often bring a copy home.

Worship folders are practical tools. Like pews, lights, and microphones, they assist and support the divine service. Worship folders are also artistic elements. Like paraments, banners, and other visual art, they stimulate the heart and intellect during the worship.

If we work with the assumption that what we use in worship should support and enhance the divine service through both its utility and beauty, then printed worship aids, including worship folders, deserve our attention. That was the philosophy behind the worship folder project for the 2014 WELS National Conference on Worship, Music, and the Arts. We set out to demonstrate a variety of styles and techniques that WELS congregations could use in the local parish to promote both *practical* and *beautiful* worship folders.

### VISUAL DESIGN MATTERS

In the mid to late 1980s, desktop publishing tools gave people the ability to produce printed documents on personal computers. A task that once required professional attention became possible for anyone. Desktop publishing software provided workable templates, basic fonts, and basic design conventions. The popularization of creative tools has been a positive development overall.

Nevertheless, much of the practical skill and artistry that goes into producing a great printed page was lost. Furthermore, some modify their templates in a way that hinders or even damages the practical usability and visual appeal of the final document.

This is not the place to dive into the details of what goes into making a great printed page. There is a wide range of issues that designers and typographers must consider as they create a printed document. The designer must consider visual hierarchy, grid patterns, font size, line height, letter-spacing, margin proportions, as well as overall information density. None of this is mere ornamentation. These factors, when done well, produce a document in which the design itself recedes and actually accentuates the content itself. As a good map hides the intricate work of the cartographer, a good page hides the intricate work of the graphic designer. In both cases, that “hidden work” adds to the overall quality of the finished product. The result of high-quality visual design is something that is both *practical* and *beautiful*.

### ABOUT THE PROCESS FOR THIS PROJECT

This project took about six months to complete. I began by recruiting three WELS artists to provide both *custom artwork* and *original visual design* for each of the three main festivals at this conference. The artists were Jason Jaspersen (Baptism of the Lord), Joshua Krohn (Epiphany of the Lord), and Ian Welch (Transfiguration of the Lord).

First, I led the group in a study of the three main festivals. We discussed the main themes of each festival, we read the lessons appointed for each festival, and we reviewed some of the great texts related to the festivals (including hymns). Not only did we discuss the theology of the festivals, we also spent time reviewing the important Christian images traditionally associated with each festival.

After this background study, I directed each artist to begin working on art concepts to illustrate the festivals. As they iterated their work, each artist checked in with me and the rest of the group for review and comments. I encouraged each artist to pursue their own style to illustrate the assigned festival, but I did offer responses and suggestions to guide overall direction. One of our goals was to demonstrate three distinct styles of artwork so that conference attendees could evaluate how they might use different visual styles in their parish settings. I was glad to see that each artist's style came through in the final product.

Once the artwork was complete, we turned our attention to the graphic design and layout of each service folder. Two of the three artists handled this work. Krohn handled the Epiphany of Our Lord, while Welch handled the Baptism of Our Lord and the Transfiguration of Our Lord. In this phase of the project the goal was again to provide three distinct styles while also demonstrating best practices of print design.

Welch also produced a template for use with the other four services/concerts at the conference. While the typography and layout work was custom for this conference, no new artwork was commissioned for these services. Artwork from Steve Ersamer has been used. Conference attendees will be familiar with Ersamer's work from its use in past conferences.

The conference planning committee provided final review for each worship folder. I helped to moderate the review as each artist made the necessary refinements to improve the worship folders to their finished state.

## DETAILS ABOUT EACH WORSHIP FOLDER

These worship folders demonstrate three distinct styles and techniques that congregations could use in the local parish. Here follow greater details about each worship folder. Each parish may consider how to apply this information to their local setting.

### **The Epiphany of Our Lord**

Joshua Krohn brings a modern and graphical flair to his work. Krohn's style also relies heavily on texture and ornamentation. Because of Krohn's affinity for color and texture, I gave him responsibility for the worship folder with the color cover.

In the cover piece, Krohn focuses on the themes of light and darkness that prevail in Epiphany. The magi are in the foreground with glowing Bethlehem in the distance. The night is brooding but the star glows over the home of the boy Jesus.

The Epiphany worship folder employs the following typefaces:

**Brothers** is used on the cover of the worship folder. A slab font in the style of American wood type, Brothers was selected because its generous width allow for greater interior ornamentation.

Brothers is available for purchase for \$49 per face at <http://www.myfonts.com/fonts/emigre/brothers-ot/>

**Whitney** is a contemporary American sans-serif typeface by Tobias Frere-Jones. Designed to meet the needs of body text as well as signage and headers, Whitney is a crisp and clean typeface with a lively flair.

Whitney is available for purchase for \$199 and up at <http://www.typography.com/fonts/whitney/styles/>

**Sentinel** is a slab-serif by Jonathan Hoefler and Tobias Frere-Jones. Based upon an English slab-serif from the mid 19th century, Sentinel refines the slab-serif, a visual style that was originally meant to draw attention to itself, into a typeface that is both elegant and active.

Sentinel is available for \$199 at <http://www.typography.com/fonts/sentinel/styles/>

Krohn employed one of the so-called “canons of page construction” for the layout of each page. This canon, called the “Golden Canon”, is a mathematically proportional layout of text on the page. Remarkably, early typographers quickly formulated page designs that have not been improved upon in subsequent centuries. The Gutenberg Bible of 1454 already employed an early form of the Golden Canon. Musicians may be interested to know that the same mathematics that govern intervals in musical scales apply to the visual harmony of an excellent printed page. Again, this is not mere ornamentation. Proper page proportions make reading a text and following the flow of the page easier for the reader and worshiper. Proper proportions accentuate the content on the page and guide the worshiper from element to element.

The finished product is a vigorous, modern, American style. The Epiphany worship folder models what a parish could do for special occasions such as anniversaries or major festivals. Such labor-intensive artwork, color printing, and sophisticated (and expensive) typography is not something a parish can do every Sunday. But congregations wishing to make a lasting impression through visual art on special occasions may consider commissioning work for their worship folders.

### **The Baptism of Our Lord**

Jason Jaspersen employs a wide range of media in his art and enjoys exploring different perspectives in familiar scenes. For this project his style brings a mixture of classic drawing methods combined with experimentation in digital drawing.

In the cover piece, Jaspersen captures the momentous occasion of Christ’s baptism. The different elements of the piece come together to remind us of the power of that occasion. The perspective of the piece brings us close to the action and allows us to see the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove overhead.

The Baptism worship folder employs the following typeface:

**Avenir Next** is a modern typeface with distinctively Germanic pedigree. The font was designed in 1988 in the tradition of the famous German *Bauhaus* typeface, *Futura*. *Avenir* was meant to evoke the rigorous geometric structure of *Futura* while including nuances that give the face a sensible look for both headings and body text.

*Avenir Next* comes pre-installed on all Apple devices. Windows users may purchase the font for \$29 per face at <http://www.myfonts.com/fonts/linotype/avenir/>

The finished project is an elegant, modern look for worship folders. Parishes that use Mac OS X will be able to replicate this look for no additional cost.

### **The Transfiguration of Our Lord**

Ian Welch pursues an iconic style of art. Welch’s work amplifies the central meaning of each image by eliminating as many details as possible. This focuses attention on one or two very important details. The result leaves room for each worshiper’s imagination to fill in some of the details.

In the cover piece, Welch depicts the magnitude of Christ’s glory on the mount of transfiguration. Christ himself is depicted in the negative space formed by the black ink around his figure. The white color of the paper shines through while the surrounding mountains are even dwarfed by the shining Christ. The image is not to scale, but the iconic use of scale reminds us that Christ in his glory surpasses all things.

The Transfiguration worship folder employs the following typefaces:

**Cronos Pro** was designed to provide warmth and readability. The face has a handwritten flavor as its form was derived from calligraphy of the Italian Renaissance. The font works well for titles and headers.

Cronos is available for purchase for \$35 per face at <http://www.myfonts.com/fonts/adobe/cronos/>

**Jenson Pro** is a digital typeface based on the work of Nicholas Jenson, a 15th century typographer. The font is an old-style serif typeface designed specifically for rendering large bodies of text.

Jenson Pro is available for purchase for \$35 per face at <http://www.myfonts.com/fonts/adobe/jenson/>

The finished product is an elegant, old-style look for worship folders. The serifs of Jenson Pro give the worship folder a comfortable look while the Cronos headings give the worship folder calligraphic grace.

## Other Services

The other services, concerts, and recitals employ artwork from Steve Erspamer, which may be purchased online at several outlets, including Amazon.com.

The typeface in these services is **Palatino**, a typeface produced in the 20th century based on letter forms from the Italian Renaissance. Palatino is notable for its grace and style as well as its ubiquity—the font comes pre-installed on all Mac and Windows computers. Palatino is a fine substitute for Times New Roman.

The finished product is a simple and elegant look for worship folders that many parishes can replicate at little additional cost.

## WORSHIP FOLDERS DESERVE OUR ATTENTION

What we use in worship should support and enhance the divine service through both its utility and beauty. Thus printed worship aids, including worship folders, deserve our attention. I hope that you find the examples at this year's conference useful and thought-provoking. The various worship folders we presented will not match every parish (in terms of both style and budget), but there is a good chance that your congregation may glean something useful from these examples. Give your worship folders some attention and you will enhance both their practical and aesthetic value in your congregation.

## ARCHIVAL COPIES

Conference planners considered whether to print all or some of the worship folders both as handouts and in the conference handbook. While the handbook is a valuable resource for future reference, the decision was made to make worship folders and recital programs available online for archival purposes.