

## Concluding Address: Culture and Worship, Once More

Marva J. Dawn

The organizing principle I needed to pull together the events of this week became clear quite early in the institute. It became clear because of the great wisdom of the people who attended my discussion session after the opening keynote. They raised some critical issues and pulled many things into the dialectical tensions of which, for lack of time, I had been able to explicate only one side. In response, I found myself again and again saying, "This gets us back to the necessity for community, doesn't it?" All of the worship issues, especially the wars, arise because our churches are not genuine communities.

Thus my organizing principle had to be a text on community, and as the week progressed it became more and more clear that the best text was 1 Corinthians 12. I will use that text to emphasize some of the aspects, needs, and struggles in community that have arisen this week, and I encourage you to look at it carefully when you get home to see if I have handled it faithfully. Let me also encourage you to read my book, *The Hilarity of Community: Romans 12 and How to Be the Church*, which explicates the root of everything I do.<sup>1</sup> The church must learn to be a genuine community, where everyone deeply cares about each other. The vendors here did not have this book, nor did they have my book on Sabbath keeping, which is also essential for understanding the context of worship.<sup>2</sup> It is crucial that the church recapture an entire day set apart for God and retrain congregation members in the delights of that day. I don't say these things to make money, since the royalties are given away, but because I hope you can study these issues more deeply after we are apart, since we

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<sup>1</sup>Marva J. Dawn, *The Hilarity of Community: Romans 12 and How to Be the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992).

<sup>2</sup>Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989).

have so little time together here. So these comments are not for my own profit, but for yours.<sup>3</sup>

Paul begins 1 Corinthians 12 by saying, “I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers and sisters, about spiritual things.”<sup>4</sup> That is a good way for us to start this afternoon, for we have worked all week to combat ignorance, to understand more deeply who we are as the church and how we worship together. I won’t have time to discuss everything in 1 Corinthians 12, but we needed to start with that first verse.

Now we must skip to verse 4 in which Paul says, “There are many grace-gifts (*charismata*), but they are all from one Spirit.” I have great gratitude this week for Vigen Guroian’s emphasis on the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup> I find in my own life, though I work primarily with ethics and how to form character, that I don’t talk enough about the Holy Spirit. We cannot be one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church unless it is the Holy Spirit that unites us in our diverse gifts. Dr. Timothy Lull laid out for us this morning a vision—several visions, in fact—of what we need to pull the church together, and I especially want to add to what he said an undergirding with the Holy Spirit. We cannot have a vision for mission unless everyone in the congregation recognizes how the Spirit empowers us for that mission, and the same could be said of worship.

Verse 5 states, “and there are diversities of ministries, but the same Lord.” One of the highlights of worship this week for me was hearing Christopher Cock, whom I have admired greatly since first hearing him sing the part of the Evangelist at the Oregon Bach Festival, direct the Valparaiso University Chorale in the “Kyrie” from David Fanshawe’s “African Sanctus.” It was my privilege to hear Fanshawe himself direct the Portland Symphonic Choir in the entire “African Sanctus,” and I

<sup>3</sup>Another book related to worship is Marva J. Dawn, *Joy in Our Weakness: A Gift of Hope from the Book of Revelation* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1994). Especially as the turn of the millennium nears, when there will be many strange interpretations of the book of Revelation, Christians need to be equipped with a faithful understanding of that book’s comfort and hope and its insights into worship.

<sup>4</sup>These quotations from 1 Cor. 12 are my loose readings of the Greek text to highlight certain emphases.

<sup>5</sup>Though not so much explicitly stated, Guroian’s accent on the Holy Spirit is evident in his liturgical grounding of ethics. See Vigen Guroian, *Ethics after Christendom: Toward an Ecclesial Christian Ethic* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994).

thereby learned the importance of understanding the story of that piece's composition. In the hymn festival Tuesday night you heard the tape recording of an actual Muslim *imam* calling to prayer, around which Fanshawe wove the Kyrie Eleison. The entire "African Sanctus" includes recordings of music from all over Africa, set into Fanshawe's compositions of all the parts of the Mass. Originally intending to record music all along the Nile from north to south, Fanshawe also began to go from east to west; consequently, the program booklet said, he realized that he had traversed the shape of a cross. I think we who listen to Fanshawe's music can hear the uniqueness of Christianity in the midst of the other religions represented on his recordings. Also, he does include some of the music of native African Christians, especially from refugees fleeing the war against Christians in South Sudan. I bring this up because as we talk, as President Lull did this morning, about using new forms and about diversity, I think more and more we have to repeat this primary principle: Christianity matters. In a pluralistic world, there is a reason why we are Christians—not to be imperialistic about it, but to offer it to others as a gift. We do have the Lord Jesus Christ at the center. That may seem so obvious that it is unnecessary to state it, but I have been in many Lutheran congregations where that has not been clear.

In verse 6 Paul says, "There are many workings, but it is the same God who works in all things in every way." Once again, let us focus on God—and at this point I want to thank Dr. Butler, a participant here and professor emeritus from Luther College, who walked with me one day and said, "We misunderstand the word *leitourgia* if we always translate it as "the work of the people" because for Luther first of all it was "the work for the people." Then he reminded me again of the wonderful German name for worship, *Gottesdienst*, which carries the double significance of God serving us and therefore of our service to God and the world. I emphasize that often in *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down* but did not in my keynote for lack of time. Some of the people in my discussion group afterward noted that also, which was very helpful because we cannot do worship to form character unless God has called us first. President Lull also highlighted that this morning by calling us to the freedom for the means of grace, in sacramentality and the Word.

Verse 7 continues, "But to each one is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." We have all benefitted here from that manifestation for the common good and are enormously grateful for the people who are so sensitive to those soundings of the Spirit. We think, first of all, of John Ferguson and the hymn festival Tuesday night. Every

time I am at a hymn festival with John Ferguson, I am awed by his understanding of the text and the way he carries that into sound. I experienced the same thing with Gail Walton directing the choir for worship yesterday afternoon—my privilege after learning that the choir was short of sopranos. She welcomed me as a latecomer and then evoked from us all our best expressions for the common good. What a wonderful principle for all of us to think about. Certainly we could say the same things about Mark Sedio and Lorraine Brugh, even though I was not able to have the privilege of being in their classes.

In verse 8 Paul emphasizes that, on the one hand (the Greek *men*), the Spirit gives one kind of gift, and then, on the other hand (the Greek *alla de*, repeated 7 times) the Spirit gives many others. From this list of gifts I would like to highlight just a few in connection with some of the things that have happened at this institute. In verse 8 the first grace-gift Paul mentions is “the word of wisdom.” More than anyone this week, Paul Nelson has poured out for us abundant words of wisdom in all his brilliant and succinct responses to each speaker, capturing the main points of every plenary session for our further reflection, repeatedly calling the church to faithfulness, and exhorting us to avoid flirtations with the culture. We are immensely indebted to you, Paul, for your gift of wisdom to equip us for further reflection and discussion. Verse 8 also notes the gift of knowledge, which has been conveyed this week by all the workshop leaders. I am sorry that I cannot name them all and could not attend all the workshops, but let us each offer them our thanks for their use of Spirit-given gifts.

In verse 9 Paul spotlights the gift of faith, and that has been evident in my conversations with all of you. The church in this place, in this community this week has shown me powerful gifts of faith, especially through some of you who are with great faithfulness working in very difficult places. I want to thank you for the encouragement to all the rest of us that you model that kind of faithfulness. It gives us hope for the church, and I have to tell you that as I travel around throughout congregations, I get awfully discouraged. Thanks to each of you for your conversations of faith and faithfulness.

Next Paul mentions the gift of healing, which points us especially to Jerry Evenrud’s marvelous collection of art that deals with the parable of the prodigal son. While trying to get to several of the workshops yesterday to get a taste of things, I caught a bit of his gallery tour and was deeply gifted by those paintings Jerry has gathered. You can see what an impact that collection has had on Valparaiso University by looking at what the students have done in response to it. The students’ art works, especially

the photography and calligraphy, are enormously insightful. If you have not seen the collection, I urge you to take the time to do so before you leave this town.

Similarly, what John Steven Paul has done with the theater group is tremendously discerning. Some of you saw the chancel drama by the troupe Soul Purpose, who powerfully illustrated a modern version of a biblical parable. Let me urge those of you who serve in congregations close by to make use of that resource from Valparaiso University. Great healing can be brought to many people by that new parable of a family torn apart, of a person dying of AIDS and the impact on his elder brother.

In verse 10 Paul mentions the gift of prophecy, which was especially manifested by Frederick Niedner's workshop on homiletics. Fred focused on the issue of preaching against a culture in which the free market and capitalism run amuck destroy the concept of vocation. As Christians we must think about this, for the present economy in the United States greatly rewards the CEOs who walk away with big bucks after eliminating a lot of people from the work force. There is something seriously wrong with an economy in which Wall Street is delighted if the unemployment rate goes up. In the midst of such a society, we as the church, which President Lull also stressed, must be concerned for justice. Fred Niedner's class was so prophetic, speaking the Word of God into the reality of our world, that it modeled for everyone here the kind of prophetic Word our worship must carry. I keep emphasizing that one of the dangers of much contemporary music that we have to stand guard against is its tendency to be self-centered. Now, please note this: I do like contemporary music, but I don't approve of texts that are narcissistic, the stuff that calls me only to think about personal coziness with Jesus and doesn't call us all into mission and ministry in a world where the economy is strangling people. So thank you, Fred, for your prophecy.

Also in verse 10 the apostle Paul talks about the discerning of spirits, a gift perhaps demonstrated best by Walter Wangerin. His narration Wednesday night discerned what might be happening in people's hearts and minds, and he especially guided us to think through what might be happening in the mind of Jesus as he faced his suffering and death.

When Paul next mentions various tongues and interpretations of tongues, we have to hold up the musicians who have spoken this week in many kinds of tongues. For example, last night I was overwhelmed by Richard Weinhorst's "The Seven Words of Christ from the Cross" as performed by Martin Jean and the Kantorei. What a wonderful interpretation of tongues that was for us, to hear in the music what *Eli, Eli,*

*lema sabachthani* means. It brought to us new depths of significance for all the events of worship in which we have participated here.

Verse 11 states, “But in all these things one and the same Spirit works, distributing to each one just as he wills.” That needs to be emphasized again because of Vigen Guroian’s challenge on Wednesday afternoon for us to have a more biblically faithful, a more powerful pneumatology. Especially we must add the phrase, “distributing to each as he wills,” to President Lull’s list of freedoms—the freedom of the Holy Spirit. We must learn to give space for the freedom of the Holy Spirit in our worship. One of the most compelling worship services I ever experienced was during a time of severe health crises. I was leading a conference, and during the worship service carefully planned by the host committee, one woman interrupted and said, “Wait. I really think that we ought to pray about Marva’s health.” And the whole assembly stopped and prayed. Do we give space for that kind of Spirit movement—that perhaps suddenly we have to go in an entirely different direction because of the pain of one of the members of the body of Christ?

Starting with verse 12, the apostle Paul initiates an A and B contrast. I love the way he elucidates the dialectical tension of this A and B. The A principle is that there are many members in the body; the B principle is that there is one body. This leads us back to Mark Bangert’s categories of contextualization and of being transcultural or countercultural. For Paul, the A principle is contextualization, for the body has many members who live in many geographical and cultural contexts. Principle B, that there is still one body, reminds us that we together as the church are transcultural and united in one faith, as well as countercultural, for there are many things in our contexts that are contrary to the work of God. Mark Bangert especially emphasized the fragility of all that, which we must hold together in this dialectical tension of the A and B.

Lest we forget how it is we are rooted in those two principles, Paul in verse 13 reminds us again of our baptism and of the Lord’s Supper. “For by one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body, whether Jew or Greek, whether slave or free, and we were all made to drink of the one Spirit.” Once again, as Dr. Lull highlighted the sacraments, we recognize that these gifts of grace are a primary means by which we hold together the dialectical tension of the many and the one.

After the summary of principle A in verse 14—“For the body is not one member but many”—Paul breaks out into his usual humorous self. One of the problems in reading Paul is people don’t recognize that the Bible is hilariously funny. The only way to take it seriously is to recognize

how comical it is. For example, think of Elijah, leaning against the fence post, watching the prophets of Baal—one of my favorite jesting places in the scriptures. You all know the story, in which the Israelites have turned away from God, so Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to a duel of fire. He graciously lets them go first in praying to Baal to send down a fire on their sacrifice, and of course Baal doesn't answer because Baal doesn't exist, so that would be rather difficult. So there is old Elijah over there, leaning on the fence post and mocking, "What's the matter, you guys? Is your god on vacation? Or maybe he is going to the potty." You're in serious trouble if he can't go to the potty and help you at the same time. Why is all that so funny?—because we realize that we have gods, too, that are just as incapable of helping us.

Similar is the apostle Paul, who has got nothing on Robert Rimbo and Scott Weidler. Let me use them for an example. Why was what they did at the banquet so enormously funny and helpful to us? In the course of laughing at their ridiculous songs last night, we realized a lot of dangers, and we perceived that we ourselves sometimes do some of those imperialistic things. In the same way in verse 17 the apostle Paul makes us laugh at this big eye rolling down the street, when he says, "Is the whole body an eye?" While we are laughing our heads off (pun intended), we realize we make the body only one member when we do not recognize the importance of every little person in the body. Just as Rimbo and Weidler invited us into humor to discern ourselves, so does the apostle Paul.

In verses 15 and 16 Paul humorously questions, "If the foot should say, 'Because I am not the hand maybe I don't belong to the body,' is it for that reason any less a part of the body?" Or what if the ear says that about not being an eye? Then verse 17 introduces the big eye (which makes a great English pun). "If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the sense of smell?" Mark Bangert encouraged us to use more senses, to have worship that involves people with all their learning styles. I would like to modify what Professor Bangert said just a little bit to pull in another dialectical tension, in response to his comment, "Why do we produce this mini-book every Sunday?" which is a very good question, as is the query, "Does the organ inhibit singing?" Some organ playing does—but not all. What we need to ask is how we can involve all the senses, how we can use images without being unfaithful to the God who forbade graven images and to the gospel and its depth. Yes, we need to use more images in an image-laden society; yes, we need to do more memorization in a society that can't read—but let's not "dumb down" the faith and move away from reading entirely,

since there is much more depth than one could understand simply from images. I totally agree that Professor Bangert's questions must be asked, but I think it important to pull in the other side of the dialectic there, which he probably could not introduce for lack of time also.

In verse 18, as part of this same focus on the "many" side of the dialectic that we have been discussing since verse 14, Paul stresses once again that "God has put the members, each one of them, in the body as God wills." Here let's remember Mark Bangert's most essential question, "How can we contextualize in our own backyard?" I would like to add to his presentation that the first answer must be to start with our own vocation, our own identity. One of the things that grieves me terribly as I travel around the country is that many clergy seem to be afraid of being Lutheran; many are embarrassed about our identity. That embarrassment takes many forms, so I'm not picking on any particular individual here. There are many ways to ignore the good and true things Martin Luther frequently said, and therefore, to ignore the reality we have a lot to offer the world around us. I work across denominations and am astonished repeatedly at how helpful to people in other denominations is Luther's insight that we are both sinner and saint—especially in those church bodies that emphasize movement from one to the other and don't know what to do about backsliding. They find it enormously hopeful to see a reason for our failures in the fact that we are still always sinners who are forgiven. And yet I encounter a lot of Lutherans who do not want to acknowledge we are sinners. Recently, when I was teaching about the doctrine of the atonement, a prominent church person objected to that notion and insisted, "We shouldn't say that. It hurts people too much." What hurts people too much is not acknowledging sin and getting forgiven. We can't receive forgiveness if we never admit we've sinned, and Luther is very clear about the power of forgiveness. To be clear about sin enables us to be equally clear about how great a gift grace is. Most of U.S. culture is awash in guilt because people cannot be forgiven when they euphemize sin.

Verse 19 summarizes this section from verse 14 about the "many," as Paul asks, "If the all were one member, where would the body be?" Let me highlight again what is going on here is a critical dialectical tension. In the church we need each other to discuss various worship tensions, so that as we pull from opposite sides, we can keep each other from falling off on the extreme poles of the dialectical issues.

Now in verse 20 Paul moves to the other side of the A and B, to the principle that there is one body. Especially here let us appreciate President Lull's emphasis on the issue of helping the world see, in spite of our

disagreements, that we are one body. Our public witness falls short severely. When I was at Notre Dame and some of my friends found out I had grown up in the Missouri Synod, they asked, “How can you stand that church? All they do is kill each other.” I know; I have been the recipient of some of the venom—and from opposite sides. If the ultra-right knew what the ultra-left says about me, and vice versa, we’d all be in better shape. Notice again the need for dialectics—and for genuine community!

Frank Burch Brown especially made this point for us when he asked his key question, “What do you do in a congregation with all those differences?” The apostle Paul moves in verse 21 to another humorous picture: “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ and the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you.’” In our oneness Frank Burch Brown deeply called us to listen to each other. I found it personally very helpful when he told the little story about his daughter saying to him, “But you like Arvo Pärt,” when he was asking her why she liked Smashed Pumpkins—or is it Squashed Pumpkins?—(that I don’t know the name shows my lack of listening to teenagers). Since I also like Arvo Pärt’s music and find it quite evocative of transcendence, Brown’s story encouraged me to listen with new ears to some of the acid or hard rock or heavy metal or whatever to hear what transcendence might be there. I am so grateful that Frank Burch Brown urged us to listen, because we need to be aware of how much we have not heard. We need to listen to arguments, to styles of music, to the pain of our brothers and sisters who are marginalized.

I will group verses 22 through 24 together since our time grows short. Here Paul says, “if we are really a body, then we’ll care about the less honorable parts, the less comely parts, the parts that are weaker.” President Lull underscored this when he discussed the many people who are distrustful of churches, when he urged us to take special care for such persons. Those parts that are hurting in many ways require great consideration.

All of this leads Paul to verse 25, where he pleads that there not be “any schism in the body, but that the members would all have the same care for one another.” Mark Bangert emphasized this when he asked us as we use the multicultural resources that are available, if we really get closer to the people whose music we use. I thought about that when the Valparaiso University Gospel choir sang for worship on Tuesday afternoon. At one of my speaking engagements, the African-American song leader abruptly stopped our singing of “Lift Every Voice and Sing” by standing up, smashing the piano keys with both arms, and saying, “You

white folks always sing too fast!” We do. We don’t hear the internal rhythm very well, and we rush with our hyper-busyness. We need our black brothers and sisters to teach us to sing more slowly.

Also, none of us white folks was moving on Tuesday as the Gospel Choir sang Richard Smallwood’s “I Will Sing Praises.” We all sat there like stone. Of course, as one participant of the institute told me later, it hurt that the choir was behind us up in the balcony so we could not enter into their singing and movement. My point is merely that if we use multicultural resources, then we want to learn to care about each other more deeply and have the sources teach us how to sing their songs so we can get out of our straitjackets.

My African-American brothers and sisters teach me many things about how to care for each other in the deep community at Martin Luther Memorial Lutheran Church on Martin Luther King Boulevard in Portland, Oregon. We have two piano players there: LaVeta, who is black, and I, who am white. LaVeta plays the soul music, and I play the printed notes—and we need each other. We experienced this especially on Easter. Her father, our pastor, wants the people to know the Lutheran liturgy. Coming from a southern heritage in the Baptist tradition, he became a Lutheran who especially values the liturgy for what it teaches and how it comprehends the faith, for how it “speaks volumes” and doesn’t depend on his personal choices or favorites. We had always been saying it, but this year we started to learn to sing it, and LaVeta thanked me for playing it and increasing her appreciation for it. On Easter we sang the liturgy and some of the best Lutheran hymns, which I was playing, but also there were three young people baptized that day, so after worship Pastor Gilmore wanted some “travelling music” for the whole congregation to process and greet the new members. LaVeta took my place at the piano. I can’t play black-style travelling music or hymns; LaVeta does it superbly. The great gift is we both appreciate what each other can do. I wish I could play as she does, with a constantly moving bass, with the freedom of constant improvisation. In the community we can learn from each other.

That leads us to verse 26 and a great deal of pain. Paul says that in the body “if one suffers, we all suffer-together-with.” Our body needs to suffer-with this morning, because at the workshop for the new Spanish hymnal yesterday only one person showed up. Of course, there were so many workshops it was terribly hard to choose what to attend. However, we must ask ourselves, if we really want to be multicultural, if we care enough about the people involved. How do you think Pedro and Gerhard, who have been working on the Spanish hymnal, felt that only one person,

a Puerto Rican, came to the class? None of us white folk attended. If one member suffers, we all need to suffer. I must emphasize another point: we ought not to be newly imperialistic about the people of the Two-Thirds world by taking their music to brighten our worship services without taking their needs to heart and taking the people to our heart as friends. Let us welcome the Mexican people into our congregations to teach us how to sing Hispanic music. Let us learn Spanish so the church is more able to welcome the increasingly large percentage of the U.S. population that will be Hispanic in future years.

I am also suffering today because I heard from many of you stories about your suffering in your church vocation. I hope and pray that being here this week has given you the courage to go back into that suffering. May we all recommit ourselves here to supporting each other, especially our brothers and sisters who work in very difficult positions. Are we willing to suffer in the body because others are suffering?

In verse 26 Paul also invites us to rejoice. We rejoice because Dori Erwin Collins and the members of Prince of Peace in Dublin, Ohio brought us into other kinds of music and the workings of a liturgical parish. We rejoice that the Spanish hymnal will soon be released and look forward to the forthcoming African-American hymnal. Let us also rejoice in the great gifts we have experienced this week.

Paul summarizes all of this in verse 27 when he reiterates both A and B principles: "But we are the body of Christ and members in particular." Here I want to add the dialectical opposite to something Mark Bangert said yesterday about the symphony orchestra. I have noticed an unusual phenomenon in the Pacific Northwest; the part of the country that seems to have some of the worst trivialization of worship is also the part of the country that has the most flourishing symphony orchestra. The Oregon Symphony has the highest level of paid subscriptions and the fullest attendance at concerts of all the orchestras in the United States. Our region also supports the Portland Baroque Orchestra, the Columbia Symphony, the Vancouver Symphony, the Eugene Bach Festival, several other summer festivals, and more professional concert choirs per capita than most other cities. It seems people are starved for transcendence and excellence at the same time that many of the churches are trivializing worship. There is an immense urgency for us to use all kinds of resources but always to remain faithful to the kind of God we have. We are members in particular of the body, but let us not forget it is the body of Christ, who is Lord of the cosmos.

Finally, in the last verses of 1 Corinthians 12 Paul says that in the body there are apostles and prophets and administrators and so forth. Let us honor the administrators, to whom we owe a huge debt of gratitude—David Truemper, Pam Gleason, Mary Albano, and the Institute Advisory Council—for all their work in planning and effecting so that we could have these wonderful days together. Then Paul goes on to say, so that we don't get jealous of each other's gifts, "Are all apostles? Are all this? Or that?" Let me put it this way: are all pianists like Martin, Dori, and Tim? Are all organists like Lorraine, Larry, Bruce, Mark, Martin, John, and Tom? I have to highlight these musicians because they were all so amazing. Yesterday I was absolutely trembling when Bruce was playing his prelude—then I found out I was having an insulin reaction. Thank you, Bruce, for the most delightful granola bar I've ever had—with such fine musical accompaniment! To continue with Paul's question: we can't all be worship leaders like Martin Seltz, who provided such wonderful narration for the hymn festival, or like Paul, Mary, David, Walter, Robert, Louise, and Marilyn. We can't all be conductors like Christopher, Gail, Judith, Martin, and William. We can't all be preachers like Fred. We can't all be like the unnamed dancers, crucifers, choir members, readers, and the schola who have served us this week. But we can all be who we are.

The chapter ends with Paul saying, "But you think you have to seek the higher gifts." That is not the way our English translations usually put it, but I am convinced it is more accurate to the original Greek. Frank Burch Brown talked about the medium influencing the message. It seems that the medium of our competitive society has influenced the translation of this text. In the context of the whole chapter, which reiterates frequently that we are many members but in one body in which every gift is equal, it hardly seems likely Paul would suddenly command the Corinthians to seek earnestly the higher gifts. This especially doesn't make sense in light of chapter 13, where Paul goes on to say a better way is to recognize that the key to everything is love. The mistranslation of verse 31 gives us a warning doubled by the fact that the text itself is a warning. Paul reprimands the Corinthians as if to say, "You guys are messing up the community by thinking that some gifts are higher and that you should compete for them." We know that was the problem in Corinth.

What would the warning be for us? What were the dangers highlighted for us this week? Frank Burch Brown said we have the musical idea and the event that encapsulates it, but most of all, the behavior that accompanies it. My last exhortation to you is that in

everything we use let us make sure it forms the character of Christians, of people who follow Jesus. You can't sing words about majesty with music that is not majestic and not have that affect your character and your humility (or lack thereof) in the face of God's majesty.

The greatest thing is love, Paul insists. Therefore, I especially appreciate that finally this was said by President Lull: the priesthood of all believers is the key. As the fruit of this conference, let us continue to learn to equip the saints for all of them to be missional, for all of them to understand that worship is work, that worship involves the participation of all. Using lots of styles, let us carefully choose them so we are formed to be missional people, who are hospitable to the world around us and welcome the world to worship because we have been friends to that world. As Walter Wangerin said last night, "We have a strange story. Its ending is in the middle." The work of this institute has just started.