

A Brief History of “The Screen”. Or, What to Tell the Board and All Who Ask

1) Hand-shadows and Shadow Puppets as Ancient and Multicultural Storytelling

- Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave”, dating back 2400 years, is based on the idea that fire casts shadows upon a screen (the cave wall) and that a role of education is to help people understand the difference between what is real and what is illusion.
- For at least two millennia, magicians and acting troupes traveled through China, India, Indonesia, Asia Minor, and Europe sharing the ancient craft of shadow puppetry, bringing their audiences new worlds, entertaining stories, and morality tales.
- Some thought the screen to be God’s universe, and the hand puppets characters in a divine drama.

2) Origin of the English Word, “Screen”

- The word “screen” is hundreds of years old. It referred to upright panels covered with leather, cloth, or paper and set in front of the hearth to shield people from the heat and form a room divider.
- Imagine children sitting in the space between the fire and the screen, making shadows on the screen and telling stories about them. These screens became a place for playful imagination.
- One of the first light projectors, first written about in the 17th century, was called a “magic lantern,” and it was used to delight small audiences with picture stories shown on walls, sheets, and special fabric or paper screens.

3) Screens, Worship Space, and the Holy Imagination

- A screen becomes an “open window” for seeing the world, as the whole world can

“The screen is a magic medium. It has such power that it can retain interest as it conveys emotions and moods that no other art form can hope to tackle.” Stanley Kubrick

be shown there.

- A screen becomes a place to dramatize the relationship of heaven and earth with the Light of the World, as God’s universe is displayed.
- A screen is an “open canvas” for the play of the holy imagination as we find ways to show the relationship of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, with all of creation.
- Some churches place their screen in relationship to cross and altar.
- The altar is anchored upon the earth, representing the Holiness of God, God’s protecting grace, and our thanksgiving to God
- The cross penetrates earth and heaven, representing the suffering and passion of the world, the death, resurrection, and life-giving love of Jesus the Christ, and our call to discipleship
- The screen in relationship to cross and altar becomes the place of liminality, a doorway or a window that helps us imagine and live anew our essential relationship with our faith story.

4) The Screen As A Place of Theology and Theophany

- Knowing that God can never be fully imagined, described, or reduced into words, pictures, sounds, or metaphors.....
- Worship leaders are very good at “God-

words” (theology) and competent at creatively working to write and talk about God to open ears to words and music about God

- Worship leaders are learning about “God-light” (theophany) and creatively working to imagine and show God open eyes to God in light, color, form, and image
- The screen is a place for imaginative theology and theophany
 - showing words and music
 - showing color, imagery, and moving pictures
 - displaying stories told fresh and new
 - opening new forms for meditation, prayer, and instruction

“...a screen is comparable to a page of an illuminated manuscript where text and image are intertwined so that image reinforces text, and in the mind's eye the two are indivisible.” Gregor Goethals

5) The Screen and Light Together Become Servants of God To:

- Attract attention through light...
 - “...and God said, ‘Let there be light.’” (Gen. 1:3)
 - “...and the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire...” (Ex. 3:2)
 - “...and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light...” (Matthew 17:2)
 - “For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Cor. 4:6)
- Grow understanding through conversations stimulated by screen-light
 - God speaking with Moses to call and clarify
 - The church’s conversation with people who are eager to know more, to learn,

and to grow in faith

- Our own engagement with the world and the positive influence of the creative arts to sensitize, grow awareness, and develop a passion for ministry

- Send out to share ministry in the world
 - Worship of God feeds our need to be engaged in God’s purposes
 - We are sent out into the world as servants of Love
 - Through the place of holy imagination, the screen, worship leaders captures attention, grows our understanding, and stimulates our response in faith