

Building a Worshiping Community Through Art



BY CAROL GRUBER

About 10 years ago, Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, remodeled the center hall of the church into a small gallery they call Art Space, where art hangs from a picture rail. A recent display included life-size mosaic aprons with scenes depicting parental wisdom, such as “eat your vegetables” and “say your prayers.” Another display drew inspiration from a junior–senior party at the church, attended by children ages 10 and under and seniors 70 and over. The party goers were interviewed and photos were taken of their intertwined hands. These photos became an ArtSpace display.

“It was a double blessing,” says Kara Root, church pastor. “The ArtSpace is a great source of inspiration and encouragement. Often, the display will feature a local artist. Sometimes the art is religious, sometimes not.” The church schedules openings, inviting the community as well as the artist’s friends and family, to be the first to see the display.

Sue Goodspeed is in charge of recruiting art. “Our goal is to have three or four exhibits a year,” explains Sue. “It is a mixture of artists from the Twin Cities area and displays from church members. Most of the artists from the community have no connection to our church and, often, not to any congregation. There is an artist who uses space in the church basement as his studio, and his displays are social justice oriented. One theme had to do with abuse. It challenged us



Photo courtesy of Carol Gruber

Kara Root (left) and Sue Goodspeed have found that the ArtSpace gallery at Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church enriches the worship lives of members and draws new people to their church.

as viewers and also brought out the spiritual presence of God’s surrounding love.”

ArtSpace is located in a well-traveled portion of the church. “It is a thoroughfare,” says Sue. “Outside groups use our building for their meetings, and they walk past the art displays. The work that is up nurtures everyone who comes through the space.”

At Lake Nokomis Presbyterian, children are an important part of the art that enriches the church’s worship life. Art supplies are available in the sanctuary, and the children create art during worship. That helps them engage in the worship service with as many senses as possible. The children’s art is then displayed in the fellowship hall. During the children’s message portion of the worship service, the children tell what they have

learned in their Sunday school classes that day.

Art sometimes becomes part of adult worship, with an artist drawing his or her vision of scripture, sermon or music as it happens. Occasionally, the congregation takes part in creating a visual enhancement of the worship message. For example, the Stations of the Cross were featured during Lent. During the week, people looked for pictures that represented the themes of the stations and brought the pictures to church. The pictures were fastened to wooden boards

that were put together to form a cross on Easter Sunday. “Only the worship team knew beforehand that these shapes would make a cross, so it was very meaningful to watch the cross come to view,” Kara says.

“A great strength of our church community is that we encourage people to do things out of joy and a sense of calling and purpose. We have all the resources we need, and we are just the right size for what God intends for us,” Kara adds.

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