



The Cue

A treatment of why we do what we do the way we do

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Something a Bit Different—Aggregates and Gateways

Often times, we are asked about our philosophy of ministry when it comes to The Cue—our weekend gathering at Westwinds. For those who are new to church, the atmosphere may not be what they expected but they are usually pleasantly surprised. For those who grew up in a traditional evangelical or mainline denomination, the atmosphere is familiar in some ways and titanically different and in some case opposed to what they are used to.

At The Cue, our aim is to facilitate an environment—celebratory, liberating, engaging, full of hope and expectation, affirming, restoring, free of distractions, thought provoking, and reflective—where individuals can meet with God (though it will not always be all of those things at once). Our goal is not to *get people to worship corporately*. Though certainly, that happens in our environment. We cannot manipulate it if we tried by nature of worship being an act of an individual's own will. We can influence and create space conducive for it.

Verbiage such as, “let's begin our time of worship” though not inappropriate has led people to defining worship in a narrow and localized way. Language like this leads people to believe worship is an act associated with being in a “worship service” or at a church building. Unfortunately, this has also been perpetuated by the naming and designation of “praise and worship” music. In many cases, the corporate time of worship is gauged solely by the music and the music is often referred to as the “worship.”

But worship—biblically speaking—is a responsive way of living. It is more fabric and global than simply an act or strictly about music or any interactive vehicle we may design. Typically, church nomenclature has minimized and contextualized worship into acts largely revolving around music as well as other acts within the “worship service.”

Furthermore, our desire is to create an environment that has multiple layers that emerge and connect. We want some overlap at the seams of the layers so The Cue feels congruent, but enough independence to the layers that there are multiple themes people can grab (not inert ideas and exercises).

So then, as opposed to many models of corporate church gatherings, our goal is not simply one clear theme we are trying to drive home. A video for a story of a spiritual journey, a Top 40 song, or aesthetic design may or may not bring about a dovetailed thematic link but the experience, fresh perspective, and collision with authentic life experience(s) make it all legitimate.

It is a time of aggregates and gateways.

A Word About Popular Methodologies

Moving forward. Asking questions. Dialogue. Facing hang-ups. Belonging before believing. Deconstructing religious (and not necessarily biblical) language and ruts. Understanding and being able to recognize beauty. Falling headlong into a Jesus love affair. These are all celebrated at The Cue. The Cue is an invitation to dialogue as much as it is a venue to respond—both live simultaneously and symbiotically. We are okay with tension and do not feel a need to “seal the deal” at the end of each 65 minute gathering.

The word “seeker” made it’s way into the church lexicon in the last 15 years in no small part due to the great work of Willow Creek Church in South Barrington, Illinois. Since that time, what it means to design a “seeker service” has developed into a cornucopia of definitions—all that come with their own variety of criticism from different groups as Christians continue to waste time on the wrong battlefields and argue about methodology as a whole as opposed to examining their own communities and developing their own personality and authentic responses (we digress).

“Seekers” or not-yet believers or spiritually curious people come in all shapes and sizes. Therefore, if seeker services are the goal, the immediate question becomes, “which seeker?” While we celebrate some of that early thinking regarding seeker services, our goal is not to design a seeker service of any variety.

Similarly, our goal is not to create an environment that separates believers from not-yet believers, waters down theology to make it more palatable, or caters to bottom-shelf or universalist spirituality. We believe Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life—our only way to Father God. Our goal is not “worship evangelism” in the sense that we want people to see what we model and become like us. The people in The Cue are not our “projects.” They are human beings, designed by their creator to worship Him. We want them to know Him. We want to know Him more.

Westwinds often finds itself on the frontline of creative churches and often talked about in the mainstream media as well as the blogosphere in large part because of The Cue.

Getting to this place has been a long road of fostering a community that values imagination, permission, authenticity, and community. It’s been a repetitive dialogue wherein we invite one another to collectively craft ways to make church not suck for our friends.

The Cue and all of Westwinds’ methodology is not an attempt at being “relevant” which is usually ghettoized to mean “look and speak cool.” It’s about incarnation and a particular offense to mediocrity.

More than that, it’s a deep rooted belief that God has called us to act upon the stuff in our heads. The thirst for the sacred, the mysteries of God, the magic of the sacraments, the otherworldliness of corporate worship, the tears spent on broken people—they call us to act. We act by creating. By making stuff. We incarnate our thoughts into visual art and music and poetry and film. Projects, proposals and petitions. Moments and movements. The Cue is a main venue for this creativity.

A Closer Look

To sum it up,

The Cue exists to . . .

. . . create an original, unsullied, experience-rich, multi-layered environment where we increase the occurrence of people interacting with God, his Word, his truth, his people, and face their barriers that interrupt and antagonize the life Jesus invites.

The only non-negotiable element in the whole Cue experience is God's Word as the living, enlightening torrent of truth that must be present every Cue. Other than that one item, everything else is negotiable.

This philosophy of The Cue means we can design the experience around any elements that are excellent and connect into biblical themes we feel are current needs or culturally vital.

The role of symbol, metaphor and image are integral in designing The Cue. While not an absolute mandate, for each Cue series design we desire to "speak" through a central (or multiple) image, metaphor, or symbol in order to lastingly influence people's hearts, minds and emotions with the big picture—just as Jesus did with the parables.

At Westwinds, we will design The Cue in ways that have never been implemented in the traditional church, even though innovation—in and of itself—is not the goal.

Here is a list of element options that begin to get at the possibilities...

- poetic readings
- disembodied readings
- video confession
- unconventional aesthetics
- cyber-confessionals
- message/talking head
- spiritual journey stories
- messages with a soundtrack
- screen poetry/prayer
- static and dynamic art (installed and created on spot)
- scribing
- mediation times (with a combination of screen/music)
- movie clips
- twitter (on screens in a variety of ways)
- man on the street interviews

interactives (this alone requires an entire treatment—participatory, hands-on elements)
music (congregational/feature)
live interview on stage
baptism (in a variety of stagings)
communion (in a variety of stagings)
paneled discussion
group discussion and Q & A
computer terminal testimonies
computer terminal for Q & A
video or phone link ups
surfing websites live for illustrative material
use search engines to generate statistics or illustrative material live.
total facility usage
total site usage
art installation

Finally, the argument over the use of secular music, movies, and art in church is a non-issue for us. We firmly believe in the much used statement, “all truth is God’s truth.” All art—secular and otherwise (though we resist such delineation)—has the potential to illuminate, bolster, and augment the truth of God’s Word as well as creating dialogue. This is a method of teaching and sharing that is not new to us but is prevalent in scripture and was used by Jesus, the Apostle Paul and many others.

Furthermore, since art is not worship but rather, is a vehicle through which we may worship or reflect or respond to God, we should not have an opportunity to confuse motive for using such art. If a song is “performed” in The Cue space, it should never be suspect as “non-worshipful.” His truth permeates art and culture and often times secular art is a more applicable and honest statement that can be used to surface a need to know, create discussion, set a mood, present a situation, resonate with a person’s current circumstances, cause us to question, answer a question, provoke thought, and move a heart.

The Target

It has been a popular practice in churches over the past decade or so to take a cue from the business world and clearly define their “target audience.” This language is somewhat unpalatable to us though we certainly understand why many think it is important. Bottom line, churches who define target audiences are usually asking questions about who they are catering to, who is in their neighborhood, and how they should tailor their programs and messages to meet the particular needs of that group. In many ways, this is how businesses approach sales. Is my community interested in my product? How much are they willing to pay? How can I surface their need to buy? What are their particular needs and how can my product meet that need . . . so they buy it?

At Westwinds, in relation to programs and The Cue, our approach is different in more ways than it is similar. We certainly would agree it is unwise to believe one model or device that works

well in one demographic would work as well in another. For instance, drama may work just fine in South Barrington but may be a miserable failure in South Beach. However, instead of asking, “who is our target audience?” we ask a different question based on who we are, our personalities and culture, our backgrounds, and the kind of bona fide creativity and thought patterns that flow from within. We ask, “who will most likely be attracted to Westwinds?”

The *religious disenfranchised, the spiritually curious, the artist and the intellectual* will most likely be attracted to Westwinds. That is who we are. It is safe to say many are thriving in our environment who would not readily place themselves in that category but, such is life. We are attracted to what we are attracted to. We celebrate this.

Welcome to The Cue.