

# ♪ Worship Notes ♪

THEME: Global Worship

## GCoMM ASIA 2010

### GLOBAL CONSULTATION ON MUSIC IN MISSIONS

Singapore, 4-7 July 2010

#### *Report and Commentary*

Singapore was the site for the third GCoMM, and the first to be held outside the United States. A wealthy and vibrant island city-nation, it's the fifth largest port and fourth leading financial center in the world. It's modern, bustling, and very clean (it's illegal to import and distribute chewing gum—no kidding!) Singapore has been called the world's "most globalized city," so it was an appropriate venue for GCoMM's celebration of the amazing cultural diversity in Christian worship and ministry.

Co-sponsored by SBC and Bartley Christian Church, GCoMM was wonderfully organized and graciously hosted by many volunteers from these two institutions. There were 350 participants from 35 nations. Over four very full days, there were plenary sessions for worship and teaching, breakout sessions for training, and evening programs with Michael Card and with many examples of creative arts

**VIDEO REPORT ON  
GCoMM 2010  
(with many clips of  
music and other arts):  
[HERE](#)**

(music, dance, drama) from many nations. (See some photos [HERE](#).)

The morning after the conference's Sunday night opening service, I delivered a plenary address on "Creative Arts, Missions, and Worship." It was well received. The text of the message can be accessed [HERE](#), and the accompanying Powerpoint [HERE](#).

A training session series I attended was led by a couple who work with Wycliffe in Southeast Asia. They shared some amazing stories about helping Christians in different people groups to develop indigenous songs for worship in their own "heart language" and style —in many cases the very first



time they had been able to praise God with their own music! It was reminiscent of the statement of a Wycliffe leader several years ago, testifying to that mission's on-the-ground experience: "Where the people groups were taught to praise God with their own cultural forms, the Church grew quickly; where they were not, the Church grew slowly."

For many years missionaries brought their own preferred music and imposed it on new people groups they evangelized—a form of cultural imperialism which has thankfully been disavowed in recent years. For music and other arts are not just extracurricular activities or side pursuits that lie outside of the mainstream of a culture; in

reality, many of a culture's deepest reflections of values, dreams, struggles and possibilities are found in that culture's artistic expressions. The arts provide a window into the culture of a people, as well as a channel for speaking powerfully to the spiritual and other needs of the people.

These issues of cultural contextualization are not limited to the mission field, however. In fact, in your home culture (wherever that may be) you are inevitably facing debates about musical style in your churches. A huge component of

that is normally a generational one, and that grows out of the fact that young and old in our churches belong in effect to different cultures. They have grown up in quite different worlds, and see issues of music, style, etc. quite differently, even as people in different countries do. Most of our churches need a broader appreciation for diverse worship expressions as a way to expand the options for glorifying God —because worship is for God, and His tastes are certainly broader than any of ours!



GCoMM was a vibrant example of how God's people can and should celebrate musical and artistic diversity, and employ a vast array of means to "praise Him according to His excellent greatness" (Psalm 150:2).

## RESOURCES ON GLOBAL WORSHIP

ORGANIZATION: [International Council of Ethnodoxologists](#) (ICE)

This group, founded at the first GCoMM in 2003, seeks to network and link those who are seeking to foster the “development of culturally appropriate Christian worship.”

VIDEO: [“Arts Consultant: Understanding Local Arts”](#)

This excellent production by SIL International/Wycliffe shows the depth and expertise that goes into the work of helping people groups to examine and develop their indigenous forms of cultural and worship expressions.

PAPER: [Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture](#)

This profound examination of the intersection of worship and culture suggests that worship must be *simultaneously* transcultural, contextual, cross-cultural and countercultural.

ARTICLES: [“We, Being Many, Are One; A Fresh Look at a Global Understanding of Worship”](#)

Published by *Worship Leader* magazine in its November/December 2009 issue, these articles by three members of ICE provide a primer on conceptual and practical aspects of an international perspective of the worship of God.

“The Great Misconception: Why Music Is Not a Universal Language” by  
Robin Harris

“Declare God’s Glory: A Vision for Global Worship” by Frank Fortunato

“Global Worship: What in the World Can I Do about It?” by Ron Man

LINKS: [Worldwide Worship](#) (*Worship Resources International* website)

A portal for accessing websites, organizations, publications, and audio and video resources on global worship.

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