

Transforming Worship Introduction

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The celebrated poet, Anna Kamienska, writes of *Small Things*,

*It usually starts taking shape
from one word
reveals itself in one smile
sometimes in the blue glint of eyeglasses
in a trampled daisy
in a splash of light on a path
in quivering carrot leaves
in a bunch of parsley...*

In my recollection, this conference's taking shape began as the second or third dot point on a white board as we, the members of the Assembly's Worship Working Group, sought to give imaginative thought to our three year tenure. It immediately struck a nerve, as ideas for keynote speakers and themes began to flow easily and well. And so here we all are, some 180 of us eighteen months later because of that small dot point. Thanks be to God!

'Transforming Worship' has two correlating elements. Perhaps the most obvious concerns the verb to transform. That is, through our creativity and crafting – a significant and important part of our gathering – we desire to shape something new; something accessible, yet *dynamic* so far as discipleship in this present age is concerned.

However, there is also the promise of what God offers in and through the gift of worship itself: Divine Presence, which cannot be coerced or created by human hands, however clever, however prayerful. Glory is simply glory

and sometimes it is only (frustratingly) glimpsed. Grace is simply but surely grace. Yet these *gifted* operations of the Spirit are the invitations and kernels of our own transformations. Indeed, C.S. Lewis said it really well about his own conversion by the Joy of God's presence, "All this was given me without asking, even without consent."

It is the intent and desire of the Conference Worship Group to facilitate our daily worship in that open hearted, astonished and thankful spirit.

Whereby we would encourage us all, in the wisdom of T.S. Eliot, to 'put off sense and notion, because we are not here to verify, instruct ourselves, inform curiosity or even to carry report. We are here to kneel - where prayer has always been valid.'

So, two correlating, enriching aspects of the one given reality. Two sides of the one worship practice coin, if you will.

Kamienska concludes her *Small Things* poem in stunning fashion and in a way that I hope offers us great encouragement for the enjoyable days ahead:

*It's not from the grand
but from every tiny thing
that it grows enormous
as if Someone was building Eternity
as a swallow its nest
out of clumps of moments.*