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Faculty Assembly Devotions: January 5, 2012



by Karen De Mol

Here we are at the mid-point of the year—new beginnings in our continuing work! I hope your break was refreshing, and especially that your experience of Christmas—the celebration of Christ becoming human—was newly rich and joyful. For me the yearly celebration of Christ’s birth is a high-point—and then it is over, and I take a deep breath and take up my tasks again. Perhaps it is that way for you, too. I am reminded of thoughts from W. H. Auden’s *For the Time Being—A Christmas Oratorio*: now the relatives have gone home; the decorations taken down; the song of the angels has receded, and we are back to scrubbing the kitchen table—the “betweenwhiles” between past and future glories.¹

Dr. Karen De Mol has served Dordt College as Professor of Music and Chair of the Music Department for 28 years.

This moment is also the “betweenwhiles” in our academic year—half way through the academic year. We are in the betweenwhiles in another way too; we are in the betweenwhiles between the creation and the renewal of all things. We are between Genesis and Revelation, two pillars on which our work here at Dordt is founded. In our curriculum we explore and develop in God’s great creation, and we rejoice in it as well. Our work starts in Genesis 1: “And God said, ‘Let there be light...dry ground... plants...living creatures...humankind. And God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.’”²

And we look forward to the renewal of all things; while seeking restoration and healing now, we look forward to that great day foretold in Revelation 21: “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them.... He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’... He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making every thing new.’”³

Our daily work at Dordt focuses on those two pillars—creation and renewal. In the words of the *Contemporary Testimony*, “our daily lives of service aim for the moment when the Son will present his people to the Father. With the whole creation we wait for the purifying fire of judgment. For then we will see the Lord face to face. He will heal our hurts, end our wars, and make the crooked straight.”⁴

We are in the “already and not yet” of God’s great plan for us and for his entire creation, and all our disciplines and fields of study are there too. All our disciplines are rooted in creation, blessed for

present kingdom labor, and all our disciplines are destined for renewal and future kingdom glory. You know the implications of that for your field better than I do. But allow me some examples and some imaginings.

In the beginning God said, “‘Let there be light.’ And there was light.”⁵ Light! And with it, color, light prised into vibrant purple, gentle yellow, brilliant red, colors enough for every shade of lake and flower, colors enough for a thousand paintings, set out there right at the beginning of things. Charged with the care and development of these gifts, we are busy in art and engage our students in art. And I wonder: what will art be like when all things are made new and perfect? What rough places will be made plain?

In the beginning God created sound. Though Genesis does not name sound, God surely made that too, somewhere in those days of primeval silence, conceiving the idea of sound, spinning out into his world the sine wave, choosing the pitches of the overtone series from which could spring tunes and harmonies in a thousand shapes and sizes, building into the woods and fibers the resonance and power for a mega-orchestra of tone colors. Charged with the care and development of these gifts, we are busy in music and engage our students in music. And I wonder: what will music be like when all things are made new and perfect? What crookedness will be made straight?

In the beginning God made all the substances and laws of this world—the far-flung galaxies, the tiniest cell, the force of gravity, the speed of light. Such wonders! No matter how deeply we plumb the skies and the cells, there seem always to be yet further and deeper mysteries of science. Charged with the care and development of these gifts, we are busy in the sciences, and engage our students in the sciences as well. And I wonder: what will the sciences be like when all things are made new and perfect? What glories of the Lord will be revealed?

Genesis tells us in simple words that God made man—made the human body and human psyche, both of them complex wonders. Each of us, and each of our students, is fearfully and wonderfully made—intricate psychologically and physically. He also made us capable of relationships; in perfect relationship within Himself, among the persons of

the Trinity, he made us capable of relationships as well. Charged with the care and development of ourselves and each other, we are busy in psychology, biology, nursing, sociology, and education—and engage our students in these disciplines. As we work in these fields, we long for the day when all things—all bodies, all persons, and all relationships—are made new, perfect, and healthy. What will that perfection look like in health, in relationships, in learning?

God gave us eyes and ears to perceive the wonder of color, of sound, of cells; minds to understand and imagine; hands to fashion and to heal; hearts to respond and to love. This semester he calls us again to care for his creation and for his people, to show his wonders to new generations, to invite them into relationship with him and into his service. He calls us again to develop his world. He calls us again to name what is crooked and to work now to make it straight and even. And he holds us accountable to do so.

But he who calls us and charges us will also equip us and sustain us and bless our efforts, not for our personal use and pride but for his glory. And so we begin again! Let us do so with joy and confidence. For in this betweenwhiles, this time between semesters, in this January of 2012 between creation and the final renewal, he will guide and sustain us, and he will give the increase.

Please join me in prayer for his blessing on our work this semester:

Lord God, our maker, redeemer, sustainer,
We stand in wonder at your good world, your
amazing works in creation.

We thank you for the eyes and ears and minds to
see your works.

We humbly thank you for the privilege of being
given a task in your world, and we stand
amazed that you would designate us as your
stewards.

Help us not to shrink from the task.

In this new semester, bless us with energy, insight,
enthusiasm, dedication, perseverance, and
wisdom for for the task ahead.

And make our work effective, for without your
blessing, all we do comes to naught.

In the generations of those who serve you, pre-
pare our students for their future roles in your

kingdom, and raise up new generations to
serve at Dordt.
For all we should raise to you in prayer and do
not, we ask the Holy Spirit who pleads for us
to present our unspoken needs, and we thank
you for hearing our prayers, which we lift in
Jesus' name.
These prayers and praises we lift in Jesus' name,
Amen.

Endnotes

1. W. H. Auden (Wystan Hugh). *The collected poetry of W. H. Auden* (Vintage International, division of Random House, 1991).
2. Genesis 1 (Today's New International Version).
3. *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Reformed Church Publications, 1987, 1904).
4. Revelation 21 (Today's New International Version).