

GEN's Central Commitment

GEN seeks to remain faithful to a biblical vision of the future by encouraging communities of Jesus followers in every culture to engage with God and the world through their own artistic expressions. GEN offers networking, training, and resources to support the growing movement furthering these goals. Sound theology undergirds each of the values summarized in this document.

Seven core values that guide GEN

1. Christian Worship

GEN celebrates the stunning variety of Christian worship patterns in the global church.

Ethnodoxology's central focus is worship. Worship is the act of adoring and praising God, ascribing worth to Father | Son | Spirit as the one who deserves homage, allegiance, and faithful service. From individual to corporate devotion, worship denotes a lifestyle of being in love with God. The global church exhibits an astounding array of worship patterns, demonstrating the enormity of God's creativity and the diversity of the Body of Christ.

2. Potent Arts

GEN recognizes arts as indispensable to human thriving.

The arts are integral to personal and individual expression, and in initiating, transmitting and reinforcing interpersonal and group communication. They permeate communities, marking messages as important, embedded in, and separate from everyday activities, drawing not only on cognitive, but also experiential, bodily, multimodal, and emotional ways of knowing. Arts instill solidarity, reinforce identity and serve as a memory aid. They inspire people to action, provide socially acceptable frameworks for expressing difficult or new ideas, and open spaces for people to imagine and dream.

3. Historical Awareness

GEN situates its goals and activities within global, regional, and local histories and in their sociocultural dynamics.

We recognize the complex and constantly changing nature of every individual's and community's artistry and worship practices, including our own. Because Euroamerican art forms have largely accompanied the spread of Christianity in recent centuries, local artistic traditions—especially those of ethnolinguistic minorities—often remain outside the church. Ethnodoxology seeks to redress this imbalance by retaining a robust engagement with representatives of local, older, often rural artistic histories. We also celebrate urban multicultural, multiartistic identities and creativity that mark more and more Christian communities, developing resources to help them craft unique worship practices.

4. Human Agency

GEN respects the right and capacity of every individual and all communities to shape their own artistic realities.

Artistic products are made, appreciated and given value by people. We endeavor to encourage the diversity of human artistic ingenuity locally and wheresoever these arts are exported. We acknowledge, honor, celebrate and value the unique artistic creations and contributions of individuals and communities. Therefore we cultivate these gifts both in our own communities and in those we endeavor to encourage and collaborate with so that they can continue to explore their unique identities and giftings--the dynamic arts that are the heart of the people as individuals and in community.

5. Locally-Grounded Methods

GEN favors methods that amplify local agency and creativity.

We encourage the development of a wide variety of arts in the life and worship of the church, acknowledging the importance of local decision-making in the choice of art forms. Given our emphasis on individual and community agency, we choose participatory methods like appreciative inquiry in ethnographic research and sparking creativity. We esteem local categories and practices of artistry as primary, rooting our analyses in the practitioners' worldview. This affirms the communicative, motivational, identity-strengthening power of locally-created expressive arts. In short, we embrace a "Find it—Encourage it" model of arts engagement rather than a "Bring it—Teach it" model.

6. Academic Rigor

GEN carefully integrates insights and methods from the many disciplines that contribute to accomplishing its goals.

We value and develop resources that provide holistic views and positions from a variety of disciplines. Among others, these include performance studies; folkloristics; creativity studies; musicology; orality; anthropologies of arts--music, poetics, choreography, dance, theater, visual arts; along with missiology, worship studies, and other theological disciplines. In our research, writing, and practice we endeavor to maintain high academic standards as well as performances and products that best emulate the creative and representative attributes of the works generated by individuals and communities. Ethnodoxologists need not be professional academics, but they must plan and act informed by rigorous, nuanced, analytical ideas.

7. Confident Hope

GEN embraces holistic visions of better futures that all communities can work toward.

Ethnodoxologists nurture spaces that are life-enhancing and where people can imagine and plan for better lives. Kinds of 'better' include having more justice, health, artistic diversity, love, well-being, creativity, vibrant churches, vital spiritual formation, and awe-inspiring, transformational adoration of God.