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Dancing figures express ubuntu in winning convention logo

By Daphne Mack, September 04, 2008



[Episcopal News Service] A swirl of dancing figures, coupled with the words 'I in you and you in me', was selected as the winning entry in a contest to select a logo for the 2009 General Convention theme of ubuntu.

"I feel humbled, honored and excited about people thinking and talking about the design and what it means to live, move and work together," said the Rev. Paul Fromberg of his winning logo.

The contest asked for designs that would convey the idea of ubuntu (pronounced oo-boon-too), a Zulu or Xhosa word that describes humaneness, caring, sharing, and being in harmony with all of creation.

Fromberg, the long-term interim rector of [St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church](#) in San Francisco, is a member of [Episcopal Church in the Visual Arts](#) (EVCA) and is a liturgical, iconographer and multimedia artist. He said he entered the contest because he was interested in the abstract of "how to make ubuntu visual."

"The design is a graphic representation of a community of people dancing together," he explained. "It reflects our practice here at St. Gregory of dancing in a circle after Sunday communion to reflect our life desire to express joy and affection physically." The words "I in you and you in me" are from the Gospel of John.

The appeal ran from April to June, 2008 and received 82 submissions.

"I was very pleased with the outpouring of artistic talent," said Gregory Straub, executive officer and secretary of General Convention. "You could tell by the designs that people understood ubuntu and illustrated the interconnectedness of persons one to another."

He also said that "crayon submissions" indicated that even children had entered.

The contest, the brainchild of Bonnie Anderson, president of the Episcopal Church's House of Deputies and chair of the General Convention's Joint Committee on Planning and Arrangements which sponsored it, was an additional way for participants in the General Convention to explore the Episcopal Church's call to mission through the sub-themes of identity and mission. The 76th convention is scheduled to take place July 8-17, 2009, in Anaheim, California.

The entries were judged by the Very Rev. Canon Michael Battle, priest-in-charge, Church of Our Saviour, San Gabriel, California; the Rev. Dr. Fran Toy, president of the Episcopal Church's Asia-America Ministry Council; the Rev. Robert Two Bulls, director of the Diocese of Minnesota's Department of Indian Work and Mel Ahlborn, president and chief executive officer of ECVA. Wade Hampton, art director, digital communications, served as technical advisor.

Battle, who has researched the concept of ubuntu in his theological work, and is deeply connected with Cape Town Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and his articulation of it said, Fromberg's work, was selected because it captured the "essence of ubuntu."

"His work does a beautiful job of matching text and image and shows us that God's creation is linked together," said Battle.

According to Ahlborn, the judges were impressed by the "graphic strength" of Fromberg's design and his "sensitivity" to the meaning of ubuntu.

She went on to say that throughout the selection and design process, the judges were seeking a visual representation of the Trinity for the logo and that God the Father, Earth-Maker, is represented by the globe or circle, God the Son, Pain-Bearer, is represented as a cross etched onto the axes of the globe, and God the Spirit, Life-Giver, is carried in the colors and the movement of the figures around the center.

"We were looking for an image or design that captured the flow of ubuntu," she added.

In addition to the logo winner, the judges selected the work of Dennis Di Vincenzo and Virginia Davison as runners up.

Di Vincenzo, supervisor of graphic design in the creative services group for New York and Boston for Ernst & Young, said he was excited about his work being acknowledged.

Di Vincenzo is a graduate of Pratt Institute. He has worked as an assistant art director at Travel & Leisure Magazine; a senior graphic designer for DDB Needham (which was then Doyle Dane and Bernbach); and has ran his own business Di Vincenzo Design.

The contest offered a first place prize of \$5,000 to be donated in the winner's name to an organization addressing one or more of the U.N.'s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for social progress and two \$500 prizes donated in the names of the runners-up to similar organizations.

Fromberg plans to announce his organization upon further discussion with his bishop and Di Vincenzo has an organization in mind; however he needs to research it further.

The ubuntu logo will be used as the cover design for the General Convention Office, licensed by vendors and the Diocese of Los Angeles for their marketing, and will inform the design of the worship space and Church Center booth.

Fromberg summarizes ubuntu by referencing his parish where he said "we are discovering our passion of doing work together."

Ubuntu also means that we seek that relationship both in and outside the church," he explained. "It's important at this moment to break down the barriers that we create that allow us to live within our own walls."

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