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New Collections of Plays Ask *Beautiful Questions*

“**Beautiful Questions: Theatrical Pieces for Worship, Volume 1**” (ISBN: 978-0-557-00483-6) and “**Beautiful Questions: Theatrical Pieces for Worship, Volume 2**” (ISBN: 978-0-557-00535-2) by Chris Leyva are now available from Lulu.com Publishing for \$17.95 each.

The plays in these collections have been developed and performed at Lovely Lane United Methodist Church in Cedar Rapids, IA, Broad Street United Methodist Church in Columbus, OH, and at The University of Iowa. These pieces can be performed during or in conjunction with various worship services, though can also be at home in places outside of worship.

Playwright Chris Leyva began writing pieces for worship while attending the Playwrights Workshop at The University of Iowa. According to Leyva, “It was a fortune cookie, speaking the words of E.E. Cummings that sent my playwright mind spinning with the phrase, ‘Always the beautiful answer [to he] who asks a more beautiful question.’ Plays are, themselves, beautiful questions that can be witnessed within an intimate environment, performers and the audience occupying the same space at the same time.” It is with the idea of creating “Beautiful Questions” for audiences to experience that Leyva put together these two volumes of work.

The pieces that make up these collections represent a diverse array of topics and situations, ranging from the drama, *Roof*, about a father and daughter stranded on their roof after Hurricane Katrina to the light comedy, *Douglas, Donna, and John the Baptist*, about a couple living with John the Baptist and his desire to attend a company Christmas party. “Volume One” also includes *The Legend of Carne Cristo*, a fable for adults about community, inclusion, and living without discrimination that was commissioned by Pastor David Meredith for a national gathering of clergy interested in working for a fully-inclusive United Methodist Church.

Also in “Volume One,” is a scene from Leyva’s play *All Grace*, which was recently produced during the Columbus Arts Festival through the support of Broad Street Methodist Church. *All Grace* is a metaphorical, spiritual journey based on the true story of Jewish sculptor Jacques Lipchitz’ commission to create a sculpture of the Virgin Mary for a Catholic church high in the Alps called Our Lady of All Grace. The play intertwines the stories of Lipchitz’ life; the life of Father Marie-Alain Couturier, a priest determined to change the Catholic Church’s view on Modern Art; and the life of the Virgin Mary herself, who mingles in the lives and work of both Couturier and Lipchitz. The scene included in volume one presents the angel Gabriel telling the Virgin Mary that she is pregnant.

“Volume Two” continues the diversity of topics, including plays such as *Isaac and His Dad*, a dark, modern adaptation of the story of Abraham and Isaac on the trail to fulfill God’s request that a father kill his own son to the touching comedy *BING!* about a man who finds beauty and joy in a place where one would least expect it: a Wal-Mart!

Copies of both volumes can be purchased by visiting Lulu.com or Amazon.

In addition to these plays, Chris is open to commissions, creating work for specific congregations to meet liturgical needs, or working in collaboration with theatre groups. He is also available to lead workshops in playwriting and directing. For more information, you can visit Chris Leyva’s playwriting blog: “Just Trying to Write Plays” at <http://www.cleyva.blogspot.com>.

Chris Leyva is originally from Albuquerque, NM. He received an M.F.A. from the Playwrights Workshop at The University of Iowa and a B.A. in Directing from Coe College. Chris directed a production of his play, *All Grace*, (Richard Maibaum Award in Playwriting, workshop production, 2006 Iowa New Play Festival) for the Columbus Arts Festival in 2008. His play, *Solamente Una Vez; A Thaw*, was named a finalist in the Regional Tony Award-winning Alliance Theatre’s 2007 Kendeda Graduate Playwriting Competition and was presented in a staged reading at Playwrights Horizons and at the Alliance. Other plays include: *The Brothers Caramillo--Eulogy for a Piece of Sh*t*, a “fast & loose” adaptation of Dostoyevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov*, (staged reading 2008, Great Plains Theatre Conference, semi-finalist PlayLabs 2008), *Bloodletting* (reading 2006, Bison Theatre), *Holy Schmidt!*, (staged reading, 2005 Iowa New Play Festival), *Father Bob*, (workshop production, University of Iowa), and *Dialogues with Lars*, (finalist, YES Festival of New Plays, Northern Kentucky University; semi-finalist, New Play Festival, Florida Studio Theatre).