Worship in Our Everyday, Ordinary Life  
by Warren Anderson, D.W.S.

On the weekend before this article was due, on a trip home from St. Paul, Minn., I hit a deer on a rural stretch of I-90 in central Wisconsin. It was late at night, and this stretch of highway had no overhead lighting, so I didn’t even see the stupid beast until a split second before impact. To be truthful, I never actually saw a deer, just a furry mass out of the corner of my eye. I suppose it could have been a really big badger.

At times like these, the alarmingly random nature of life looms large. If we had just awakened earlier that morning and gone to the first service instead of opting for the seeker-friendly 11:30 am worship...If I had just ordered the already-made breadsticks instead of waiting for the made-to-order cheese bread at dinner a little earlier... If the deer had just been standing in the center of the road, where my headlights would have picked her out even a few seconds earlier, instead of running at me from the median, where, traveling at 65 mph, my peripheral vision didn’t help me much...

I admit that in the immediate aftermath of the collision, I felt a little like the writer of Ecclesiastes: “As for humans, God tests them so that they may see that they are like the animals. Surely the fate of human beings is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; humans have no advantage over animals” (3:18-19, NIV). Bambi is stumbling around the woods of Edgerton, Wisc., with a pretty severe headache; I’ve got a couple of thousand dollars’ worth of front-end damage.

Mercifully, I have been a Christian long enough to recognize God’s sovereignty in the midst of my frustration. (Why, exactly, did we not get comprehensive coverage for this vehicle?) Even as I sat in my office writing this piece, one of my students, a former small-town cop, told me of an accident he witnessed where a woman hit a heavily antlered buck that crashed through her windshield, puncturing her vital organs. She didn’t walk away from that accident; I got a free lift to the next truck stop from one of Wisconsin’s finest and had a tasty slice of apple pie à la mode while waiting for the tow truck to arrive. To everything there is a season; things certainly could have been much worse.

Judson University’s Center for Worship in the Performing Arts, for which I am privileged to serve as director, cites Romans 12:1 as its theme verse, specifically as rendered via a hybrid of Eugene Peterson’s The Message and the NIV: “So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. This is your true and proper worship.” One of the true joys of teaching in the CWPA is helping students expand their concept of worship to include their activities outside of the four walls of their local churches—those efforts they initiate on their own and those that come to them unexpectedly in the course of their “everyday, ordinary life.”

I once wrote an article for Worship Leader magazine on the unique relationship between suffering and worship. “Robert Webber famously wrote that worship is a verb,” I noted, “but for those in the throes of painful circumstances, it’s often a verb in the future perfect tense. Like Job, by the time many suffering souls come to the end of their crisis, turmoil, or struggle, they will have, somewhere along the way, found the capacity for worship.”

So thank you, Lord, for this opportunity to be reminded of Your grace and mercy in my life. And bless me and my colleagues as we teach. If we can help students learn to worship in response to the fender-benders of life—from the merely annoying to the truly catastrophic—we will have provided for them an invaluable education where their worship of their God is concerned.