Call to Worship “monologue” — by Jessica Ullom-Minnich

When I first heard the theme and scripture for National Youth Conference — especially the idea of clothing ourselves in love — my first thought was “fashion.”

Think of the world as a photoshoot. The rest of the world is the background, and we are the models. Now, our background has been painted with so many colors and designs over the years that it is a mess. Our history, our reality, is now so tangled and mixed that the only word that describes it is ugly.

Since the day we started learning about the problems in the world, our generation has heard save the world speech after save the world speech. We want to put a new coat of paint on our background.

But the problem isn’t actually the background. We cannot forget how we got here and nor should we.
The problem with the picture right now is that there is too little contrast in the photo. We, in an effort to fit in, have painted ourselves in the same color as our background. If we really want to change this picture, we need to change what we’re wearing.

How many of us have been forced to sit through a painful family photo shoot, a school picture we would rather skip, or a similar experience? Say yes.

It can be uncomfortable to be the center of attention like that, especially if you forgot pictures were that day and you skipped makeup and your hair is in its third day in a pony tail. But yet, we stand in front of that camera because we are meant to be the subject of the picture, not the background. The way we look shapes the reality of that instant, not the background, not the history, just us.

If we fit in with the background, the rest of society, there will be nothing to distract from the ugly of our past. The beauty belongs to the ones brave enough to stick out. The people who say “we will not be a part of the rest of this”. The red lipstick wearing, hawaiian shirt boasting, spiked-shoe walking misfits.

I mentioned that this was about fashion. I lied. I’m actually talking about how to look conventionally awful and be proud of it. Our generation is creative, artistic, and we are full of possibilities. We can blend ourselves into a perfect spot in the background and remain unseen... or we can create a Lady Gaga-style bubble wrap outfit that allows us to roll down the halls each day, aloof to the opinions of others.

My goal, as I leave this place, is to be a fashion disaster. Because the clothes we put on — justice, strength, love, forgiveness, and passion — are not the same color, and they are certainly not the color of the world in the background.

I want to thank the church community I know as the Church of the Brethren, for showing me its okay to match brown and pink and orange, geometric prints with organic ones. I hope more than anything else that when I have a chance to come back to my local church in the next several years, they can look at me and think: “Jessica, you look awful”.... And that’s just what Jesus wants.

Opening Prayer

Please pray with me:

Gracious and Loving God,

We believe you to be the God of heaven and earth,

the Creator of all,
setting into motion everything we experience in a day’s time.

We confess we don’t always pay attention
to everything going on around us;
to the strangers that pass before us;
to our own feelings coursing through our brains.

We give thanks that in ways big and small, you remind us of your presence;
you remind us of your passionate pursuit of us;
you remind us of your immense love for us;
you remind us we don’t have to be perfect, only paying attention to your work in the world.

God, give us the courage to put on the clothes of your call. Help us to not be afraid to make a fashion mistake...because love goes with everything.

In Jesus’ name we pray.

Amen.

**Scripture Reading #1**
Luke 9: 51-56

**Choral Anthem**
"I Choose Love" by Mark Miller

**Scripture Reading #2**
Luke 10:25-37

**Message**
Jarrod McKenna

**Song**
Holy Spirit, You Are Welcome Here

**Sending**
Jarrod McKenna
Instrumental Exit Music