

**Title** – Sower’s Sign: A Creative Exposure of Christianity and Pennsylvania Dutch Culture

**Program of Study** – Studio and Digital Arts

**Presentation Type** – PowerPoint

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**Category** – Creative/Artistic

**Abstract:** This art piece is a representation of an in-depth examination of the Pennsylvania Dutch Culture and symbolism. In particular, the Pennsylvania Dutch trend of hex signs. Hex signs, originally hexefoos, are commonly seen on the sides of barns and houses in the communities of the Pennsylvania Dutch, though in recent years’ smaller textile versions have become popular. The Pennsylvania Dutch are known for their simplicity, but the hex sign is one of their most complex traditions. The study also analyzes the historical controversy of the hex signs and their name’s relation to witchcraft. The original name for hex signs is unknown, but the first recorded name was hexefoos, meaning witches foot. This translation created distrust of the signs and great controversy. The hex signs have a wide variety of images and each version of the sign has its own meanings. Every aspect of a hex sign has meaning, from the shapes and images to the colors used. For example, yellow means happiness and children while blue means protection and God’s love. This study analyzes the different symbols, meanings, and the history of their applications. The art piece will transcend the controversy behind the Pennsylvania Dutch hex sign by taking the symbolism and applying it to Christianity. A custom designed hex sign will be created depicting the Biblical Parable of the Sower, found in Matthew 13. Instead of applying the hex sign to a barn, a smaller, fully embroidered version will be presented. This embroidered hex sign will create a representation of both the Pennsylvania Dutch and Christian cultures.

**Christian Worldview Integration:** I grew up in Pennsylvania, surrounded by the Pennsylvania Dutch and Amish communities. Their simple lifestyles and love of God is an inspiration for my entire thesis. I took my childhood environment and related it to my Christianity. I enjoy the stories and parables of the Bible and creating visual representations of them. My goal is to create a connection between the simplistic Pennsylvania Dutch culture and the modern Christian world. I want my artwork to make viewers understand basic Christian values and take a step back from the complex and technical culture we live in today. Looking to simplistic but meaningful designs to communicate, I believe that I can create art that reaches the viewers on a basic level. I feel that it is all too easy to get swept up in the abstract and obscure styles and themes of art that are popular today. The trend of pursuing the vulgar and sinful side of life is something that I think should be avoided. I want my art to speak of God's love and show what His love has done for all.