These Hands

I was honored to collected the remembrances of Ken Szmagaj former students upon the occasion of his retirement. It was clear that the memories of Ken were much more than that of an honored professor. The shared stories of the care with which Ken assisted and worked with students both inside and outside of class were heartwarming and profound. It reminded me of the old saying attributed to St. Francis of Assisi that:

A laborer works with his/her hands.

A craftsperson works with his/her hands and head.

But an artist works with his/her hands, head, and heart.

Yet, beyond these attributes the alumni stories referred to a teacher and mentor. As we, like Ken, work side-by-side with our students, let us remember the import of the saying that our students “don’t care what we know until they know that we care.” So, to the saying above I would add:

A laborer works with his/her hands.

A craftsperson works with his/her hands and head.

An artist works with his/her hands, head, and heart.

But a teacher works with hands, head, heart, and soul.

I hope you all have a great academic year!

THESE HANDS

Words and Music – Roger Tomhave, ©2016

For the retirement celebration of Ken Szmagaj

These hands have worked beside mine

Calloused and raw

Magically caressing every flaw

Not afraid of work

Hard or unrefined

Labored with great effort over time

But, these hands have crafted wonders

Innovations of the mind

Thoughtfully considered like fine wine

These hands, these hands

Of a wise and gentle man

Such quiet strength lies in these hands

These hands have brought forth beauty

Creations of the heart

Both in me and in his own sweet art

I won't forget his kindness

And every gentle nudge

Never harsh and never quick to judge

But, these hands point toward a future

With faith I couldn't see

Applauding every effort that's in me

These hands, these hands

Of a wise and gentle man

Such quiet strength that lies in these hands

Blessing my life, believing in me

These hands, these hands

Of a wise and gentle man

Such quiet strength that lies in these hands