

May 21, 2017 • Choir Recognition Sunday



Recognition of the Choirs

Sermon by Rev. Patricia Farris

Psalm 47:1-2, 5-7

Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with loud songs of joy.

For the Lord, the Most High, is awesome, a great king over all the earth.

God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.

Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises.

For God is the king of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm.

This is Choir Recognition Sunday, and we're going to be doing a lot of clapping in few moments as we thank all the dedicated, gifted, marvelous musicians who fill our worship and our hearts with music each and every week.

Annually, we set aside one Sunday in May to thank all our musicians for the time and the effort they put in, week after week, sharing their God-given talents with us through music. I know we make them work extra on Choir Recognition Sunday. I would say "I'm sorry," but I'm not. And I know you're not either. So be sure and take a moment to personally thank as many of them as you can catch at Coffee Hour so that they know how very much we love and appreciate them.

Actually John and Charles Wesley were quite clear that ALL Methodists should join in singing in worship. Look in the very front of our hymnal—p. vii-- for the "Directions for Singing" that John Wesley himself wrote. "Sing all," he said. "See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you...Sing lustily and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead or half asleep, but lift up your voice with strength..."

So let's try something different here to make sure that we're not half dead or half asleep this morning....more like how the Psalms would have been used in worship originally...

After each phrase of today's Psalm we'll (CLAP, CLAP)

Clap your hands, all you peoples; (CLAP, CLAP)

Shout to God with loud songs of joy. (CLAP, CLAP)

For the LORD, the Most High, is awesome, (CLAP, CLAP)

And rules over all the earth. (CLAP, CLAP)

God has gone up with a shout, (CLAP, CLAP)

The LORD with the sound of a trumpet. (CLAP, CLAP)

Sing praises to God, sing praises; (CLAP, CLAP)

Sing praises to our King, sing praises. (CLAP, CLAP)

For God is ruler of all the earth; (CLAP, CLAP)

Sing praises with a psalm. (CLAP, CLAP)

Wonderful! That's the spirit of this joyous day. Now, I am aware that it's Blood Pressure Screening Sunday...so, nurses, if our numbers spike a bit today, it's just temporary.

We are a church that knows the power of music. We are a church that knows the life-saving, heart-pounding, tear-flowing power of music. We are a church that knows the high-soaring, God-praising power of music. True to our Methodist heritage, we know that for all the power of the spoken word, it is as often the music of our worship that opens us to the saving, grace-filled, resurrecting power of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Today we celebrate the wonders and signs God works through the power of music. Descriptions of the early church often include a mention of them singing hymns, praising God through music, in the manner of the Psalms as we hear today. This was their heritage. "Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our God, sing praises. For God is ruler of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm!"

Wesley gave us another instruction as well. He said we should "strive to unite your voices together, so as to make one clear, melodious sound...have an eye on God in every word you sing..."

John and Charles Wesley well knew the power of music, to bring us together, to find harmony in place of discord, and to lift our eyes and our hearts above, to something much bigger and greater and more enduring than ourselves alone. Because in this way, God works wonders and signs far beyond any human limitation. And our God does this in the world as well as in the church, usually just when it's needed most.

And don't we need to be powerfully reminded of God's power and might this morning? We live in stressful times, anxious and troubling times. Through Scripture and worship and music this day, we are reminded that "God Rules!" Despite every attempt to thwart God's power, God's ways—justice, compassion, peace--will indeed triumph upon the earth and God's people will see the Lord in the land of the living.

The praise of God in music grounds us in the deepest truths of our faith—that God is God, and God is love, and God is ruler of all the earth (even now!) and ruler of our hearts. Music opens us to the power and the presence and the peace of our God. Music brings us together and creates new harmonies of love amongst us.

SO--

Clap your hands, all you peoples; (CLAP, CLAP)

Shout to God with loud songs of joy. (CLAP, CLAP)

For the LORD, the Most High, is awesome, (CLAP, CLAP)

And rules over all the earth. (CLAP, CLAP)

SO—indeed!--thanks be to God for the inestimable gift of music and for all those who make it real for us each and every time we come to this holy place.

Let us now thank all those who, week in and week out, share their love of music, with us all, assisting us in the worship of God, forming us into becoming more fully human and more whole, and binding us together in the beautiful harmonies of God's love.

Children's Church Choir/Ensemble director – Janet Searfoss
Children's Church Choir/Ensemble accompanist – Mary Crawford

Newly forming YOUTH CHOIR -- Jack McHugh, Director

AMADEUS HANDBELL CHOIR -- Mary Crawford, Director

simple church Pianist /Accompanist – Jack McHugh
Cantor– Holly Pitrago

Chancel Choir....

Section Leader/Soloists

Barbara Smith, Soprano
Alexandra Grabarchuk, alto
William Martinez, tenor
Michael McClish, Bass

And all the members of the CHANCEL CHOIR

ORGANIST---Ty Woodward

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC -- Dr. James Smith

© Rev. Patricia Farris 2017. Permission is given for brief quotation with attribution. All other rights reserved.

First United Methodist Church • 1008 Eleventh Street Santa Monica, CA 90403
www.santamonicaumc.org ■ 310-393-8258