

May 20, 2018 • Pentecost • Choir Recognition Sunday

## Choir Recognition

Homily by the Rev. Patricia Farris



*Psalm 104.*

*"I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being." Do you know that the very word, Psalm, means "music?" At the heart of our Scriptures we find the Psalms, this beautiful music that praises God, music that ponders all God's marvelous works, music that draws us into closer relationship with God and with one another, music that gives voice to our deepest prayers and yearnings.*

Music is at the heart of our worship, you might even say that it is the heartbeat of our worship. Music is the language of God, the way we stay in close communication with God, music—that goes beyond words alone to draw us close to God, heart-to-heart. The one who sings prays twice, St. Augustine said. Music gives wings to our thoughts and prayers, carrying us to those places of the heart far beyond where our minds are able to go. The music of our prayer and praise unites us with God's faithful people through the ages, going back thousands of years to the time of King David the Psalmist. And it unites us with the angels and heavenly choirs of heaven with whom we sing praise to God throughout all eternity.

We are Methodists and music is in our DNA. We have been a singing people right from the get go. Our music expresses who we are and what we believe. Our praise of God bursts forth in song. Music is our mother tongue--the language of our hearts, our lives and our faith. 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.

The music of this very congregation goes back to the early 1900s. That's even before Dr. Smith was here! I think...?? Our own Jerry Brown, who has written the history of our congregation, notes this of those early years: "The tradition that our church is one where fine choir singing an always be found...gained a firm grounding through the efforts of a Canadian, George Southcott, a member of the congregation between 1906 and 1913. A superb musician, he located and trained members with good singing voices. In the end they were good enough to give special concerts to which people bought tickets, thereby swelling the coffers of the church."

And of course that fine tradition continues to this day. This church is still known for its music. And although we do thank these folks throughout the year, there is, I'm sure, a temptation to take this level of music for granted. And so, annually, we set aside this Choir Recognition Sunday to remember just how fortunate and blessed we are, to thank and to honor the many musicians of this congregation who lovingly dedicate countless hours and seemingly limitless energy and devotion to direct and participate in our various choirs and groups.

There's another dimension to our music for which we give thanks as well. The talents and gifts of our amazing musicians make it possible, each week, for all of us to join together in song and praise. The power of music, like prayer, puts aside whatever differences we have, drawing us together in love, creating harmony, creating unity, creating beauty and through it all, giving thanks and praise to God. Many of you describe what worship is for you during your week: one hour of normalcy. One hour of beauty and hope. Especially in these polarizing and contentious times, what a gift!

This is the power of music, through which God works wonders and signs, life fulfilled beyond our imaging, every week accomplishing abundantly far more than we can ask or imagine, towards life lifted-up, made new and made whole—for us, and for all God's children.

Thanks be to God for this inestimable gift and for all those who make it real for us each and every time we come to this holy place. It is a miracle every week.

See list on back page.

Choir Directors

Jamie Jones: Cherub Choir

Janet Searfoss: Children's Church Choir Director

Jack McHugh: Youth Choir

Mary Crawford: Amadeus Handbell Choir Director and accompanist for

Section Leaders/Soloists

Barbara Smith, Soprano

Alexandra Grabarchuk, Alto

(This is her last Sunday. Leaving us to be a choral director and teach musicology at Earlham College in Indiana)

William Martinez, Tenor

Michael McClish, Bass

(Retiring after this Sunday, but will stay on as a volunteer singer)

Ryan Brown – new bass,

And our entire Chancel Choir

Ty Woodward Principal Organist

Dr. Jim Smith