



# Wisconsin Gossellers November 2018 Newsletter

## Background about the song "Free at Last"

A few thoughts on "Free at Last" and the message we shout to the glory of God whenever we sing its words.

1. "Free at Last" -- a well known Negro Spiritual.
2. "Free at Last" -- even more famous for Martin Luther King's use of it in one of his most powerful speeches.
3. "Free at Last" -- sung by the Wisconsin Gossellers.

In our Gosseller gatherings, we talk often about the levels of coded messages and layers of meaning buried within the words of the pieces we sing. The white listeners who "owned" the singing slaves as property, would hear only one level of the message. Those singing and those compatriots listening, however, knew full well the deep coded messages hidden within.

On our trip down the Ohio River this summer, which included a day at the National Underground Railroad Museum in Cincinnati, Nancy and I learned that those who escaped, celebrated their release, but seldom told the details of that event. They only gave hints of the experience of the moment which was both terrifying and miraculous. Maybe that moment was just impossible to capture in words?

The 1,000 mile stretch of the Ohio river served as an absolute boundary between slave ownership to the South and free territory to the North. Nightly, signals would pass. A row boat would quietly leave an isolated area of the Northern shore and paddle through the fog to a designated location on the other side. A runaway slave would crawl and scratch to the shore, eluding the frightful lights of those looking for escapees (quite a lucrative occupation at the time!). For a moment, the breathing of both escapee and boatman would cease. A candle might be lit -- the silent meeting in the midst of bugs, fog, night sounds, water lapping. The escapee would quickly wade into the water, slide into the boat, muddy and wet, fall to the bottom and be rowed to the Ohio's North side -- to freedom -- freedom not without continued danger, but yes, FREEDOM!

We sing of that sacred moment when the dungeons shook and the earth in silent awe stood still holding the prospect of life and death together in the exact same instant -- a moment too powerful for the mind to grasp.

*I remember the day. I remember it well.  
My dungeon shook and my chain fell off.  
On my knees when the light passed by.  
I thought my soul would rise and fly.  
Thank God I'm free at last.  
Thank God I'm free at last.*

If we manage to sing these lines without tears,  
We're focused too much on the music & missing the message.  
In rehearsal and in concert, we sing of a HOLY MOMENT--  
the moment earth forces could not control --  
    when dungeons shook, and chains fell off,  
    when thunder crashed, and temple curtains tore --  
a momenta too powerful for the mind to grasp.  
When we sing with awe our soul is nourished,  
we, too, know that freedom is ours.

Don Tubesing





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## What do we know so far about the Summer 2019 trip to Germany?

Thanks for your interest in going to Germany and singing some gospel songs and bridging the cultural divides between Wisconsin and Germany. So far, we have the following dates planned for the trip. Not completely set in stone on exact flight times & things, but very likely June 24-July 10, 2019. We'd likely visit the following parts of Germany: Rudesheim & Rhine River and Frankenberg.

If you'd like to go on this trip, please reserve your spot with a \$1,000 down payment due on January 12, 2019. The total cost of the trip would be up to \$3,790 at most, but could be less depending on the number of people planning on going as well as what the travel plans all end up including. Scholarships available upon request to [WisconsinGossellers@gmail.com](mailto:WisconsinGossellers@gmail.com)

Students who would be interested in singing with us and going on this trip would be given a \$600 scholarship, and would only require \$3,190 at most. Kimberly and Martin are reaching out to some schools to see if they'd be able to find students who might be interested in this opportunity.

The next page in the newsletter has some more information about the 2019 trip to Germany. Also, feel free to email [wisconsingossellers@gmail.com](mailto:wisconsingossellers@gmail.com) for any questions you might have.

## What songs should I all have in my music folder?

The following songs have been rehearsed and/or performed in the last two months

Email [wisconsingossellers@gmail.com](mailto:wisconsingossellers@gmail.com) if you need a piece of music.

Additionally, if you need a CD of music to practice the songs, please email [alicia88gardner@gmail.com](mailto:alicia88gardner@gmail.com)

Steal Away	Nothin' Gonna Stumble My Feet
I'll Fly Away	We are Climbing Jacob's Ladder
Jehovah Jireh	Heaven's on the Other Side (no sheet music or CD recording)
He Never Failed me Yet	Pumpnickel bread / Pumpnickelbrot (no sheet music or CD recording)
Praise His Holy Name	Free at Last
Dirait-on	Fill-a-me-up
Swing Low Sweet Chariot	He Reigns Forevermore
Sandy Land	Precious Lord Take my Hand
And He Blessed My Soul	Elijah Rock
Witness	All Flesh is Grass

Follow us on

[www.WisconsinGossellers.org](http://www.WisconsinGossellers.org) or on Facebook by searching "Wisconsin UCC Gossellers"

Want to sing with us? Contact [wisconsingossellers@gmail.com](mailto:wisconsingossellers@gmail.com) for more information.



# WI Gossellers

## June 24-July 10, 2019

Fly Chicago-Frankfurt  
Rúdesheim & Rhine River  
Frankenberg

### Cluster A

Essen—a major industrial center  
Kalkar—13<sup>th</sup> century town near Dutch border



### Cluster B

Wolfhagen  
Bad Arolsen  
Kassel

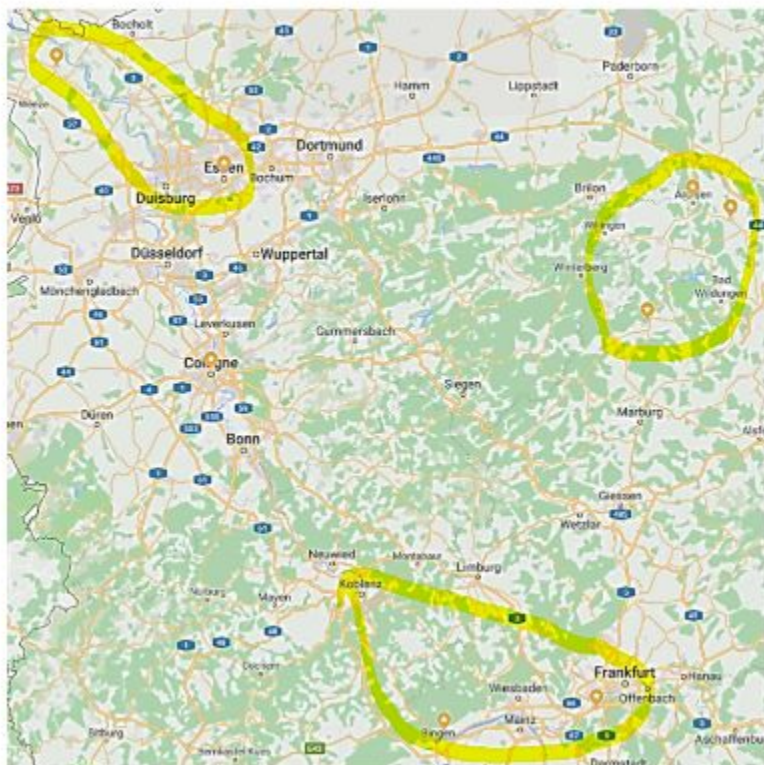


**Maximum Cost: \$3,790**  
(Actual cost could be less)

Scholarships available upon request to  
[WisconsinGossellers@gmail.com](mailto:WisconsinGossellers@gmail.com)

**\$1,000 deposit due Jan 12th**

**students: \$3,790- \$600 scholarship = \$3,190**



### INCLUDED:

- airfare to/from Chicago or Mke
- lodging (homestays/modest hotels)
- professional musical leadership
- most meals
- train & coach transportation
- joint rehearsals & concerts
- some admissions
- cultural prep & support

### Not included:

- U.S. passport
- Trip extensions
- Small gifts for hosts
- \$100 annual choir membership



**Mission Statement: To bridge cultural divides and touch souls through the transformative power of gospel music**

**Vision Statement: A world where God's love triumphs over that which divides us.**



<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Lunch by</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Sat Dec 8th	10am-3pm	Olivet UCC 313 W Prairie St, Columbus, WI 53925	Altos	Rehearsal
Sat Jan 12th	10am-3pm 3pm concert	Cedar Ridge 113 Cedar Ridge Dr West Bend WI 53095	Cedar Ridge	Rehearsal/workshop & Concert
<b>Sat Feb 16th</b> <b>*3rd saturday</b>	10am-3pm	Swiss UCC? 18 5th Av New Glarus, WI 53574	Men	Rehearsal
Sat Mar 9th	10am-3pm concert?	Congregational UCC ? 1511 Nicolet Blvd Neenah, WI 54956	Sopranos	Rehearsal/workshop? Concert?
Sat Apr 13	10am-3pm	Olivet UCC 313 W Prairie St, Columbus, WI 53925	Altos	Rehearsal
Sat May 11	10am-3pm	?	men	Rehearsal
Sun Jun 23	?	Milwaukee?	?	Concert @ general synod?

? = still tentative and could change. Stay tuned!

\*There's NO June 2019 Annual Mtg @ Green Lake because General Synod is in Milwaukee June 21-25.

### **Free-will offerings help keep the Wisconsin Gossellers mission going strong**

In the last two months, the Gossellers have performed two concerts at the churches where they rehearsed. At St. Paul's UCC of Marshfield WI, the Gossellers collected \$550 in free will offering. At Hope UCC in Fremont WI, the Gossellers collected \$250 in free will offering. The support from these communities is greatly appreciated and we want to thank everyone for taking the time to sing in these concerts to help us bridge connections between churches and individuals in churches. Every connection is a way God uses us to bring us together and learn about our differences and embrace our differences. I highly encourage everyone to keep sitting with and chatting with members of the churches we attend. This is a good way to start conversations about what we do and how we share our musical gifts.

Alicia Gardner