



Wisconsin Gossellers Aug/Sept 2020 Newsletter

Wisconsin Gossellers go VIRTUAL

On ZOOM every 2nd Saturday 11-1ish

- Devotionals, celebrations & prayers
- "Talk throughs" of new music, singing tips, Q&A, etc.
- Conversation, maybe even with our partners in NYC or Germany. Zoom's chat function lets you "whisper" with your neighbor!

Zoom works on ipads, computers & many cellphones; all you need is the link and password, which we'll send each month. Just watch for the Zoom link "invite." Thanks to First Cong. UCC Waukesha for sharing their account with us,

Need help? Contact Malena or Kimberly.



How Great Our Joy!

It was great to see so many Gossellers via Zoom on August 8! Recap:

- Everyone got to share a bit about the challenges (and blessings!) of COVIDtime.
- We waved at Carolyn, Jamani & Blair as they drove through South Carolina.
- Martin led us through a la-la-la version of "Pumpnickelbrot" & gave some tips for learning "How Great Our Joy."
- Alicia introduced us to recording via Screencastify: [Link to video](#) Don't worry, she will send detailed instructions!

* If you need audio links and/or sheet music for "How Great Our Joy" email: wisconsingossellers@gmail.com

NEW!!! BYOBrunch

4th Saturdays @ 11am on Zoom

Informal chat with your food/beverage of choice. We'll start with a topic, but conversational drift is encouraged! Topics can be light or serious. Let Kimberly know what you want to talk about--or just show up.

Aug 22 - Pandemic Playlists: What music have you been listening to? Old favorites? New discoveries?

Sept 26 - Strategies for racial healing from Minneapolis based trauma therapist Resmaa Menakem. Read or listen to his June interview with Krista Tippett:

["Notice the Rage Notice the Silence"](#)

Oct 24 - ???





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How shall we sing?

A friend sent a clipping from *Christian Century*: “The Blessing of Abstaining from Communal Song.” I was annoyed. It’s one thing to appreciate the blessings of living in COVIDland—discovering new teaching tools, hanging out with my mostly-grown kids, etc. But the blessing of *not* singing?!?

Live congregational music anchors my earliest memories of bedtime, worship, roadtrips and day camp. Communal singing connected stage crew & stars in high school theater club. As a camp counselor in Pennsylvania and Germany, I sang before and after *every* meal, all summer long for five years. So abstaining from communal song during COVID19 feels more like a sacrifice, a test of endurance, an act of civic responsibility.

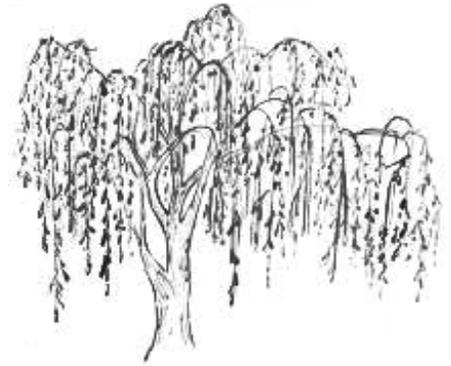
In the midst of this tantrum, the last line of Stephen Schwartz’s “On the Willows There” (from the 70s musical *Godspell*) erupted from long-term memory: *But how can we sing, Sing the Lord's songs In a foreign land?* It’s Psalm 137:

By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion.

² *On the willows there we hung up our lyres.*

³ *For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth, Saying, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”*

⁴ *How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?*



The Psalmist lays it out: Here we are, trapped, in a strange new world. We’ve hung up our lyres, plans, hobbies & rituals. Our captors—those nasty little viruses—taunt us: “Go on, *sing!* COVID19 will spread faster than ever!” After recalling all that’s been lost, the Psalmist goes on a tirade: “Happy is the one who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks!” (Ps.137:9) He *never* even answers the question: “How shall we sing...” We’re left with grief, anger, despair, shaking our fists at our tormentors. Where’s the blessing in that? Maybe it’s this:

1. The Psalmist’s question is “How,” not “If.” We *will* sing the Lord’s song--we just have to figure out *how*. Thank God for that.
2. Context matters. Psalm 137 is pretty bleak. But it’s set up by the last line of Psalm 136: “*O give thanks to the God of heaven for **God's steadfast love endures for ever.***” And Psalm 138 begins:

I give thee thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing thy praise;

² *I bow down toward thy holy temple and give thanks to thy name for thy steadfast love and thy faithfulness; for thou hast exalted above everything thy name and thy word.*

³ *On the day I called, thou didst answer me, my strength of soul thou didst increase.*

This pandemic, like the Jews’ exile in Babylon, has a beginning, a middle and an end. Here in the middle, maybe you or I *can’t* see the blessings. That’s ok. Because the question isn’t “if” we’re blessed; it’s just “How?” On the day I called, God answered. Somehow, God *will* answer our call and strengthen our souls.



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>Notes</u>
Thru Spring 2021	All gatherings online due to COVID-19 pandemic		
Aug 22	Informal BYO Brunch 11am-noon	 Watch for invite from wisconsinospellers@gmail.com	
Sept 12	2 nd Saturday rehearsal/fellowship 11am - 1pm		
Sept 26	Informal BYO Brunch 11am-noon		
Oct 10	2 nd Saturday rehearsal/fellowship 11am - 1pm		
Sp/Su 2021	Gospel & More visit		

Music-based assignment

Learn "How Great Our Joy."

You should have received the music (pdf file) & mp3 files:

- "plunked out" individual piano parts
- full accompaniment with your voice part emphasized

Tips:

- Listen to the full accompaniment version for articulation, synopation (long-short notes), etc.
- Sit/stand up straight & breathe from your belly (diaphragm).
- Memorize if possible--10 minutes/day goes a long way!

Watch for Screencastify recording info and link.

Mission-based assignment

Print or write out our mission & vision statements. Post where you'll see them each day. Read *out loud* 1x/day..

