

THE WESTEND GOSPEL SINGERS

Director: Pastor Hanns-Peter Giering

The 35-voice Westend Gospel Singers is an outreach ministry of the congregation in Eberswalde, a city of 40,000 located northeast of Berlin in former East Germany. During a two-week tour, they will sing gospel music in English at UCC churches in Wisconsin and the Chicago area, performing with choir members of local congregations and The Gospellers, a gospel choir of the Wisconsin Conference UCC.

The congregation of the Westend Gospel Singers is a member of the Union of Protestant Churches (UEK), an ecumenical partner sharing full church communion with the United Church of Christ (UCC). This choir exchange is just one example of how the ecumenical partnership furthers mutual understanding and the work of the church. The Westend Gospel Singers came to Wisconsin in 2006 and 2010; The Gospellers visited Germany in 2008 and 2012. Now these choirs are joining to share the good news of gospel singing with yet more UCC congregations. Local congregations are hosting the Westend Gospel Singers throughout their tour.

Germans have a long acquaintance with gospel music. The Fisk University Jubilee Singers toured the country at the end of the nineteenth century. In the last century Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian and martyr, was taken by music he heard working as a pastor in Harlem, bringing back recordings to play for his seminary students. Recent interest has been inspired by the witness of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as the music of Mahalia Jackson and the Golden Gate Quartet, among others.

Gospel choirs have sprung up across northern Europe, expanding the musical tradition of the church and enriching its faith. In former East Germany, where only 25% of the population still count themselves Christian, it also provides opportunities for evangelism. The Eberswalde choir has become a leader of this movement in their region of Berlin-Brandenburg, each year for the past 18 helping to organize – and often hosting – a gospel workshop now drawing some 400 singers.



IN CONCERT

Westend Gospel Singers

(from Eberswalde, Germany)

