



Wisconsin Gossellers

June/July 2020 Newsletter

COVID-19 & the Wisconsin Gossellers

The Leadership Team has cancelled all rehearsals and events through August. This includes our performance at Folk Song Farm. As of now, Faith UCC (Slinger) still plans to worship at the Farm on August 9th. All are welcome, but do confirm with the church to be sure!

We also have a standing invitation to join Rev, Ruby and Safe Haven UCC (Queens, NY) via Zoom any Sunday morning at 10am Central Time. More info: <http://www.safehavenucc.org/>

Like you, we miss the music and fellowship of our monthly rehearsals, and are doing our best to observe public health guidelines. Please keep one another-and our shared ministry-in your prayers.



President Carter declared June African-American Music Appreciation Month in 1979, acknowledging that American music owes its roots, rhythms and spirit to generations of black musicians.

*Holy One, Spark of Life,
creation was envisioned by you and is sustained by you;
in gratitude we pray for the world:
that its riches and resources be used responsibly & fairly;
that its rulers and leaders may govern with justice,
compassion and humility;
that humankind may live with understanding and respect,
noticing what unites us;
In your love and mercy: hear our prayer.*

*Holy One, Prophet of Love,
you lived among us to teach us - to show us - how to love;
in humility we pray for siblings around the globe:
for those dehumanized by the struggle for existence,
may we listen;
for those overshadowed by the constancy of death,
may we notice;
for those besieged by fear, anger or peril, may we show up;*

for those ensnared by systems beyond their control, may we demand change.

In your love and mercy, hear our prayer.

*Holy One, Breath of Being,
you are here - in this very moment - as constant presence
and insistent voice;
in gratitude we pray...with boldness we pray:
inundate the world with humanity,
overwhelm the world with truth,
flood the world with kindness,
upset our indifference,
accelerate our action,
fortify our resolve,
compel us to authentic discipleship
that nurtures creation, embodies love and breathes life.
In your love and mercy, hear our prayer.*

- kk 6/2/2020 (Inspired by Christine Odell, 1996)



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REFLECTING . . .

The Wisconsin Gossellers – more than just a name of a group. We have a mission and vision statement:

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

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

Both are helpful to me in my life in working for cultural unity and bringing justice to a broken world.

Looking back on life there are events in life that have shaped me as a person.

In my childhood, a strong family focus was always on accepting others, even though they were different from me. In addition to this principle being part of my home life, events that helped shape this concept were my church life, learning a foreign language in elementary school and continuing language studies in school, involvement in the AFS Intercultural Programs during my high school years and spending time on our multi-cultural family farm.

College life opened doors to the multi-cultural world further, as I attended Elmhurst College in suburban Chicago. Attending a church-related college with a diverse population opened up several doors to learning and personal growth. Participating in on campus groups – WRSE-FM (the college radio station), the music program and yearly jazz festival – open new doors of understanding and enriched others as I lived on campus and visited the Chicago inner city for musical activities.

Beyond college and to the present day, several opportunities have enriched my life to be more open and accepting of other culture and populations. Among the many opportunities, some that stick out. One is a conversation with a co-worker from another country and culture as he came to the United States. He shared that because of his color and the community in which he lived (known as a drug area), he had to be careful in many ways and adjust to be seen as different. A second is my continued interaction with my friends in New York City. Learning gospel music from them and continued conversations have helped further open my eyes. Working with people from Germany in a leadership position, singing together, personal interaction and continued communication continues to be helpful.

Our life events shape us. These events get us to take a look at why we do things and live as we do. I invite you to reflect on your life events and how they shape you. What has led you to become part of the Wisconsin Gossellers' ministry?

Peace be with you,
David Wernecke





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EKD Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

A recent letter from the bishop of EKBO (the Evangelical Church Berlin-Brandenburg-Silesian Upper Lusatia), home conference of our founding partners: the **Westend Gospel Singers**.

Dear Rev. Rigert, dear Sisters and Brothers,

In the name of Jesus Christ I send greetings and best wishes from the Evangelical Church of Berlin, Brandenburg and Silesian Upper-Lusatia (EKBO) to Wisconsin Conference!

While also in some German capitals people stand up against racism we again appreciate UCC's engagement with the campaign "black lives matter" very much: we fully agree to UCC's statement that "black lives matter in the kingdom of God!"

As far as we can see there is still a long way of struggle against oppression and racially motivated injustice ahead. So we want to confirm that we stand on UCC's side in solidarity and walk together. The Evangelical Church of Berlin, Brandenburg and Silesian Upper-Lusatia (EKBO) condemns all racist actions and supports peaceful protests calling for justice in face of the murder of George Floyd as well as systemic racism against so many men, women and children. The COVID 19 pandemic magnifies these disparities. We are worried about the fact that coloured people are disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

As Christians, Jesus tells us to love our neighbour as ourselves. And the apostle Paulus wrote "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." God loves his children of every colour. We shall not forget that our first duty as Christians is to care for those who are oppressed and suffering whether in Berlin or in Washington.

May you stay courageous and hopeful and lead your sisters and brothers in the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Yours ever

Dr. Christian Stäblein, Bishop

Six months after a fire was discovered in Eberswalde's Maria Magdalene Church, restoration work began on June 4th. Pastor Hanns-Peter Giering (who also directs the Westend Gospel Singers) hopes it will be finished in 2021. Please pray for the congregation and the workers.



Gospel & More, our partners in Essen, have suspended rehearsals due to the coronavirus, but hope to give their annual fall concert on Nov. 14. In-person worship--with masks and social distancing--has resumed in the *Erlöserkirche* (where we sang in 2019).



The **Lord'n'Joy** choir (photo left) reports a similar situation in Kalkar: while there is no group singing due to coronavirus, f2f worship resumed on May 31st. Attendance is limited to 20 households to allow social distancing.



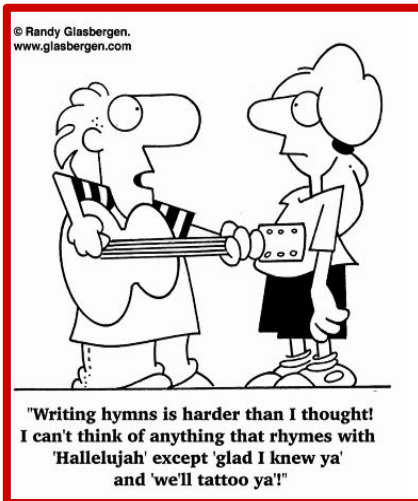


Mission Statement: To bridge cultural divides and touch souls through the transformative power of gospel music

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>
Now - August	All rehearsals & events have been cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic			
Fall	TBD			
Sp/Su 2021	Gospel & More visit			

"Renew our days as of old"



I recently sat in on an Old Testament class at Chicago Theological Seminary. The topic was *Lamentations*, which was written by the prophet Jeremiah soon after Babylon sacked Jerusalem in 586 BCE.

Jeremiah paints a picture you may recognize: "How deserted lies the city, once so full of people!" He goes on to *lament* Judah's fate for five chapters, then concludes with a doubt-filled plea: ^{5:21} "Restore us to yourself, Lord, that we may return; renew our days as of old ^{5:22} *unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure.*"

I learned from the class that on Tisha B' Av (which falls on July 29-30 this year), many Jewish congregations read the entire book of *Lamentations* out loud together—but with a twist: After acknowledging their fear of rejection in 5:22, they go back to *reread* 5:21: "Restore us to yourself, Lord, that we may return..."

This might be a useful practice as we long for the pre-covid "days of old." When I'm honest about my fears, when I can ask out loud if renewal is even *possible*, I can *also* be more honest about my need for God's restorative touch.

- Kimberly

Music-based assignment

Stay tuned for an email from Martin to provide directions for the assignment. It will be nice to stay in touch through music as best we are able. We will keep you posted.

Mission-based assignment

1. Send a note to another member of the Wisconsin Gospellers. Go beyond pleasantries; share something you're especially missing--or enjoying this summer.
2. Take some time to ponder how your faith life has changed during these #saferathome weeks. How might you share that experience with someone else? With a poem? Picture? Song?