



Wisconsin Gospellers Sept 2019 Newsletter

August Folk Song Farm Worship & Performance - Sharing in Fellowship and Song

Thanks to everyone who was able to sing & participate in the Worship Service and Concert at Folk Song Farm in August. We were able to mingle and meet with individuals from the churches that participated in the service. We taught them all some new songs, and enjoyed getting to know them during lunch time. Thanks Mark for teaching us some songs to sing with the congregations.
~Alicia Gardner



The above picture is from the children's moment at Folk Song Farm. I can't recall the message exactly, but I remember she had on the wrong gear for running, and said we have to get rid of anything in our lives that is slowing us down from the goals God has put in front of us. ~ Alicia

Dear God,

As the Wisconsin Gospellers our calling mission is: "To bridge cultural divides and touch souls through the transformative power of Gospel music. Our vision is: "A world where God's love triumphs over that which divides." Through our singing, interaction with those in our group and others who we encounter, loving God, help us to bring the light of the Gospel to those living in darkness. Help us to bring the hope of the Gospel to those living in despair. Help us to bring the healing of the Gospel to the lonely, and disadvantaged and marginalized. And bring the peace of the Gospel to a divided world.
Amen.

Spirit of the Living God
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me;
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.



Presbyterian minister Daniel Iverson was inspired to write this chorus on evening while attending revival services led by the George T. Stephans Evangelistic Party in Orlando, Florida, in 1926. It became widely popular at similar meetings before it was published several years later, (New Century Hymnal, Cleveland, Ohio, The Pilgrim Press, 1995)

-David W.



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Radical Hospitality: Walk humbly with our God

Malena

We often talk about radical hospitality in the UCC. I've been thinking about this topic often since it was first brought to my attention by our former pastor Rev. Howard Bowman. We often think of hospitality as how we care for others. Do we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned? But our care for others is only half of the story. If you go through your whole life and are never hungry, naked, imprisoned, or at the very least, inconvenienced, you never really experience radical hospitality. How often did Jesus have to rely on lodging, water and food provided by others? It seems to me he was more often the guest instead of the host. Even the party we associate most often with Jesus, the Last Supper, took place in a rented room with a meal provided by others.

Being a guest in a host's home where you don't understand the language or the culture is being a guest in an act of radical hospitality. Having to lean on the shoulder of a fellow choir member when you're having a terrible day or health issues makes you the guest in an act of radical hospitality. Having to rely on someone to lead you through the halls or streets all day, every day because you can't see the obstacles in these places for yourself makes you the guest in an act of radical hospitality. In all of these situations I've been both the guest and host, most often the guest. I've found it profoundly humbling. It helps if I remind myself that this is exactly how Jesus lived most of the days of his life.

In the last months of my grandmother's life, when she was suffering from dementia, in her times of greatest lucidity she would ask me why God hadn't called her home yet. Why had she had to live without my Grandfather for almost 30 long years. She was of little comfort to anyone anymore. I was just learning about hospitality then. My grandmother was the best host I've ever known. Every holiday was hosted at her house. Her classroom hosted so many children in need of someone who consistently cared about them. They even sent the "naughty" 7th and 8th graders to her 3rd grade classroom because she understood how to "care" them into understanding the error of their ways. She gave and gave and gave and gave of herself in so many ways. (In my eulogy at her funeral I speculated that this was the cause of her frailty in later life.) I told her that God must have something more for her to learn in life and that it might be about being on the receiving end of hospitality, something she may not have experienced so much in her life. She was providing meaningful work for the people caring for her in the facility where she lived. She had to allow the family that she so lovingly cared for to now lovingly care for her. I don't know if she understood those conversations, but it was extremely profound for me.

How do we begin to fix the social injustices of our times? We have to create opportunities to *receive* radical hospitality and possess the mindfulness to truly experience the vulnerability. If we always have the expectation that we will be the providers of hospitality, then we will approach every situation with an attitude of privilege. I could certainly have paid for hotel rooms and my own meals. But having to rely on others for these basic needs allowed me to experience the love and care of others as Jesus did and so many others in our society must. I observed the Holy Spirit at work in my heart in the form of gratitude for these simple necessities and experienced the effect of this gratitude in the deepened relationships with my hosts, if only for a few days.



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TRAVERSING THE MOUNTAINS

Reflections from Art and Cathy Wille

In his book, Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory, Tod Bolsinger says that the world in front of us is nothing like the world behind us. He tells the story of Lewis and Clark who were prepared to find the Northwest Passage to the Pacific Ocean as canoe voyagers. Instead of paddling all the way to the ocean they encountered the Rocky Mountain range and realized that their canoes were not going to take them all the way to the Pacific. Bolsinger says that we are now living in a culture we did not expect much like the uncharted territory that the voyagers discovered. Questions of developing relationships with others is one of the challenges we face in our new territory. But issues of white privilege, skin pigmentation, sexual orientation, gender identification, the “nones” (people who do not identify themselves as religious) challenge us as we move forward. We are confronted with finding new tools to help us traverse the mountains.

Bolsinger suggests that the first thing the voyagers did when they decided that they were going to move ahead instead of turning back, was to stop, observe and listen. Art and I took the opportunity to do that on our journeys and here are some of the things we learned.

First we observed, as did the voyagers, that it was important to develop relationships with the “natives.” Lewis and Clark discovered the Shoshone Indians who live in the mountains. As they developed a relationship the Shoshone taught their new neighbors how to ride horses and survive in the mountains. Sacajawea, a young nursing mother, offered to travel with Lewis and Clark to help them move through the mountains to the other side of the Rockies. For the Gossellers, the Safe Haven UCC Congregation, Rev. Ruby, Rev. Carolyn, Jemani, Eric, KC from Milwaukee and the German gospel singers and directors may be our “Sacajawea.” What a gift we have received as they have accepted us, trusted us and are teaching us how to move forward into this uncharted territory.

Another learning for us in our journeys to Germany and New York, as Gossellers, is the use of music to transcend divisions. It is a tool which is God given and is not necessarily new, but one that could be used in a new way. In one venue we were greeted by the singing of an African song, “Singabahambayo”; in all venues we were met by choir members and hosts who were part of the church and others not affiliated with our partner church in Germany or with any church; we encountered participants in the choirs and audiences that were Moslem and from other religious groups; we met people of various gender orientations; we sang music together with other choirs that was written in different languages and different genres of spirituals, gospel songs, contemporary Christian; and we came across other differences that were not obvious to us. It soon became clear to us that making music together transcends many of those things that divide us in our cultures. How can we continue to connect with those who are different from us, learn from them and move forward together in this new territory with our tool of music? How can we share this message and provide the education to help build a global society using our tool of music?

Our hope is the next steps will continue the partnerships we have with Safe Haven, the Germans and other possible groups to navigate the uncharted territory that lies ahead. We, also, need to encourage our white brothers and sisters to learn to cross the Rocky Mountains, which would be slightly different focus for the Gossellers. And above all we need to keep in mind that we are “One in the Spirit” and that Spirit will continue to guide us.



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 Oct 12	10am-3pm rehearsal	Olivet UCC 313 W Prairie St, Columbus, WI 53925	altos	Rehearsal
Sat Nov 9 - Sun Nov 10	10am-3pm Rehearsal 10am Worship	Grace Congregational UCC 2801 Garfield St, Two Rivers, WI 54241	men	Rehearsal Concert/Worship *Over night stay available
Sat Dec 14th	10am-3pm rehearsal	Congregational UCC 1511 Nicolet Blvd Neenah, WI 54956	sopranos	Rehearsal
Sat Jan 11th	10am-3pm 3pm concert	Cedar Ridge 113 Cedar Ridge Dr West Bend WI 53095	Cedar Ridge	Rehearsal/ workshop & Concert
Tentatively Jun 29-Jul 10	Gospel & More Choir from Germany visits	Various churches throughout wisconsin	n/a	Rehearsal & concerts & touring

? = still tentative and could change. Stay tuned! Will be updated at a later date or via email.

***Over night stay available = Let the Leadership team know if you need a place to stay**

Music-based assignment for the month

1. Work on memorizing Dirait-on
2. Start learning the layout of the song Fill-A-Me Up
3. Listen to the song "Stumble my feet" a couple of times to get familiar with it

Mission-based assignment for the month

Throughout this upcoming year, we've decided to give assignments to help with the part of our mission statement about bridging cultural divides. This month, in the newsletter there is an article about radical hospitality. Read that and work on improving your hospitality skills.