

“WHEN WORDS ALONE CANNOT EXPRESS . . . BRING MUSIC!”

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May 21, 2017

Christmas Eve 2015. I heard something strange coming from the organ area – something rarely heard – it sounded like a mistake! If you’ve been around here for very long, you know that’s something that rarely happens. After the service, I found out why it happened – one of the keys had fallen off in Sharon’s hand while she was playing. Uh oh!

Fast forward seven or eight months into 2016 – before worship was about to begin I heard this strange noise coming from the organ – it sounded like, well, a wounded goose. I thought to myself, “What the heck is going on?” and I looked over at Sharon who motioned to me that none of the pedals were working.

That was the day we knew that we had to do something. We’d known it was coming, that our beloved organ was on its last legs after 82 years of faithful service, but now, we had to do something.

And do something we did! In a matter of months, we – you – so many people in the church and even outside the church – stepped up to the plate and gave generously to make today a reality. And it all happened – from soup to nuts – from the first meeting of the planning committee until today – in about six months! So thank you, thank you, thank you to all who helped make it happen – to those of you who gave, from children who gave coins to those who were able to give thousands – thank you! Thank you to the organ committee, thank you to the incredible team of men and women who, over the past three weeks, have worked like crazy to take out the old organ and make the space ready for the new one! And thank you Sharon who will make it come alive for us! Oh God is good, and what a great day this is!

So, on this great day, it seemed to me that the most appropriate way to celebrate would be to let the sermon – the message today – be music. So I picked a series of hymns today that would let us, not only sing our faith, but also let us hear some of the amazing sounds this organ can make and the amazing things this organ can do.

So let us begin by praising God – our Creator God – who gives us all good gifts, by singing a beautiful hymn in the green hymnal, entitled “Creation Sings,” No. 2018, which is sung to the lovely tune of “Danny Boy.”

CREATION SINGS, NO. 2018 (W & S)

When it comes to hymns about Jesus, I could have picked from dozens of them, but I picked one that is a favorite of so many of you, and again, one that will show off our new organ. It's #261 in the red hymnal – “Lord of the Dance.” By the way, pay close attention to the organ along about stanza 4, because the tempo changes, due to the words we'll be singing.

LORD OF THE DANCE, NO. 261 (UMH)

The next hymn may be unfamiliar to some of you. We've sung about God the Creator, and Christ the Savior, so now we turn to the third person of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit. The title of the hymn which is “Sweet, Sweet Spirit,” No. 334 in the red hymnal beautifully describes its character – it is a sweet, sweet song.

SWEET, SWEET SPIRIT, NO. 334 (UMH)

We've sung about God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – so now we sing about the church and the people of faith throughout the ages. The hymn is #698 in the red hymnal, “God of the Ages.” Hold onto your hats, because you're about to hear the trumpet sounds from our new organ!

GOD OF THE AGES, NO. 698 (UMH)

Having sung about the people of God who have made an impact through the ages, we're going to take a break from singing for a few moments, to thank some of those same kinds of people in our midst today – people of faith who have helped us grow in faith – our Christian Education teachers and leaders. Leading us will be the Director of Children's and Educational Ministries – Katie Sparks.

RECOGNITION OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION TEACHERS AND LEADERS

Someone once wrote that “Music is a fair and glorious gift from God.” And that it surely is. As we have seen, music helps us express our praise, it teaches us so much through its words, but it also sustains us in life. To show that so beautifully, we will sing now another favorite of many, “It is Well with My Soul,” No. 377 in the red hymnal. And if you have come here today sad or burdened for any reason, my prayer is that its words and music will be a balm for your soul.

IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL, NO. 377 (UMH)

Music is also the perfect way to express the joy we feel, and I picked the next hymn, “What Gift Can We Bring?”, No. 87 in the red hymnal because of the joy we feel about the new organ today. I particularly like the part that expresses thanks for “those who had vision, who planted and watered so dreams might come true.”

As we sing, I'll be thanking God for all who made this dream of a new organ a reality, and I invite you to do so as well.

WHAT GIFT CAN WE BRING, NO. 87 (UMH)

Finally, a hymn about music itself. You may not know this hymn well, but it is a glorious, uplifting hymn about the power of music to glorify God. It's #68 in the red hymnal, "When in our Music God is Glorified." I invite you to stand as we sing it. Indeed, may we always glorify God through our music!

WHEN IN OUR MUSIC GOD IS GLORIFIED, NO. 68 (UMH)