



## June 1 – Choir

AS I ponder this text, I find myself thinking about one of my biggest regrets from my college years. It was my sophomore year while attending Waldorf College. That year our tour was during Advent and featured Christmas. My favorite song that the choir sang was a Christmas Lullaby set to the tune of a popular Welsh folk tune. It was an absolutely stunning piece of music.

After the tour, we recorded an album of all of the songs the choir and band played on tour. When recording that song, three friends and I decided to embellish part of the song with a suspension. That is when you hold a note in tension before resolving the chord. We thought it sounded cool. We were positive the director would correct us and then take another take. When we recorded the song, I was the only one who sang the suspension. And, the director was happy with the first take. Now, in my favorite part of my favorite song, my voice stuck out in rebellion to the beautiful harmony that was planned. I can barely listen to the song. Every time I hear that I am absolutely embarrassed by my own childish ego.

The Waldorf Choir followed the choral tradition of other Lutheran college choirs. It is all about blend and balance. You never want to stick out, and the result is a choir of 80 people that sound like one voice per part. This is what is known as the St. Olaf Choral method, which was largely built through the work of F. Melius Christiansen. It is all about removing individual sounds in order to be in perfect blend with one another. This stands in contrast to what is known as the Westminster Choral Method, which encourages individual voices to sing in full, making a small choir sound massive. Both are wonderful choral traditions and have their strengths.

This text from Paul's letter to the Galatians speaks of how we live together in community. As a choir nerd, I find myself thinking a lot about our life together in these terms. There are times when our life together is profoundly personal, times when we find our own voice and focus on the faith life of individuals. We witnessed such moments the last couple of weeks with the baptisms of Nolan, Slade, and Dakota. Each one was welcomed by first, middle, and last name. Each time the entire gathered community focused their attention and prayers on the baptized.

The opposite happens in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. There, all the lines that divide us fade away. All of the barriers are gone. It doesn't stop there. All of us gather around the same table as a broken people in need of God's grace. We become one people, singing with one voice, finding our blend. It is absolutely beautiful to witness.

I believe this is what was on the Apostle Paul's mind as he penned, "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is no longer slave nor free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ." There is incredible power when we let go of our own ego and lean into the incredible power of being a people. A gathering of people is a collection of individual voices and can sound rather loud. A people is different. It is a group of people with focus, working toward the same goals.

This is the work to which we are called, to become a people focused on the dream of the early church. A people that works to break down the walls that divide us. A people focused on making sure all feel welcome. A people focused on sharing the Good News of Christ Jesus with the world around us.

Like I said, my biggest regret was trying to hear myself when I should have blended with other choir members as a people. My prayer is that we can find ways to become a people, and share the love of God with the world around us with focus and clarity. Amen.

Pastor Michael Schmidt