

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 1/5/2024

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

Many Lutherans, especially in the Midwest, are familiar with Garrison Keillor, the author and humorist. Keillor created and for many years hosted the “Prairie Home Companion” on National Public Radio featuring live performers and usually ended with Keillor sharing his “News from Lake Wobegon” about the fictitious hometown in Minnesota. Keillor, in particular, loved to tell stories about Lutherans, reflecting his own experiences with members of the predominant denomination in Minnesota. Those stories were both humorous and touching sharing the best and, not the worst, but the uniqueness of what it is to be Lutheran. Garrison Keillor wrote the following article about Lutheran singing which says a lot about our music and choirs, especially in worship.

SINGING WITH THE LUTHERANS

by Garrison Keillor

I have made fun of Lutherans for years - who wouldn't, if you lived in Minnesota? But I have also sung with Lutherans, and that is one of the main joys of life, along with hot baths and fresh sweet corn.

We make fun of Lutherans for their blandness, their excessive calm, their fear of giving offense, their lack of speed and also for their secret fondness for macaroni and cheese. But nobody sings like they do.

If you ask an audience in New York City, a relatively Lutheranless place, to sing along on the chorus of 'Michael Row the Boat Ashore', they will look daggers at you as if you had asked them to strip to their underwear. But if you do this among Lutherans they'll smile and row that boat ashore and up on the beach! And down the road!

Lutherans are bred from childhood to sing in four-part harmony. It's a talent that comes from sitting on the lap of someone singing alto or tenor or bass and hearing the harmonic intervals by putting your little head against that person's rib cage. It's natural for Lutherans to sing in harmony. We're too modest to be soloists, too worldly to sing in unison. When you're singing in the key of C and you slide into the A7th and D7th chords, all two hundred of you, it's an emotionally fulfilling moment.

I once sang the bass line of Children of the Heavenly Father in a room with about three thousand Lutherans in it; and when we finished, we all had tears in our eyes, partly from the promise that GOD will not forsake us, partly from the proximity of all those lovely voices. By our joining in harmony, we somehow promise that we will not forsake each other.

In CHRIST's love,
Pastor Jeffrey