



Summer 2006

# gospel notes

## TWIN CITIES COMMUNITY GOSPEL CHOIR NEWSLETTER

### Mother's Day Concert 2006

By Mari Forbush



The planning begins a year in advance. Possible auditoriums are checked out. Songs are considered. Soloists are engaged. Options for other artists are reflected upon. Robert begins to implement his vision for our concert. This year, he wanted a small orchestra, a youth choir, and a spoken word artist to enhance the experience for our audience.

At the rehearsal right after the Old Tyme Gospel concert, we began to work on our music for Mother's Day. As ever, it seems overwhelming. How will we learn it all? But, we work hard, we encourage each other, and it comes together. In March, we began rehearsing with the youth choir, and their energy was a welcome addition to our singing.

Members of the choir auditioned for solos in one song, and were encouraged and applauded by their fellow choir members. Each week, the excitement built, as we got our flyers, postcards, and tickets to sell. Robert gave us updates on sales. We decided to recognize important women in our lives in the program.

Finally, May 13<sup>th</sup> arrived. We got to the Minnetonka Arts Center at 1:30, and settled in for a long afternoon and evening.



We had our sound check. We realized that, yes, everyone could fit on the stage! We passed out flowers for the choir members to wear, marveled over the beautiful African dress of the Ensemble members, and waited.

And finally, it was time to begin. The auditorium was at capacity. We entered, singing "River of Life," the music began

to flow and the evening was underway. Many beautiful numbers were sung, including "He Lives in You," from the Lion King, with percussion by Guest Artist, Jose' James. We had wonderful solos, two songs by our own TCC Band Music



Director, Sam Reeves, Jr., a guest solo by Robert's cousin, Randy, a spoken word piece, written and performed by Tish Jones, and of course, beautifully moving solos by our leader, Robert Robinson. Robert's words to the audience and his ability to involve the audience add to the experience for all. The final number, "The Lord's Prayer/ For the Kingdom," was a perfect ending to an evening that continues to live in our hearts. The combination of music and praise to God, coupled with gratefulness for our many blessings, engages and affects everyone, musicians



and audience alike. We finished the evening exhausted and exhilarated, thankful to be part of this wonderful choir.

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## TCC Gospel Choir

*Founded and directed by Robert Robinson, the Twin Cities Community Gospel Choir and Ensemble gathers more than 100 singers of various degrees of musical experience, ethnic backgrounds and religious creeds to celebrate the rich tradition of African American gospel music. Backed by a talented ensemble of musicians, the choir strives to share the joy and the power of gospel music, ranging from inspirational spirituals to cutting edge contemporary gospel.*

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## Director's Corner

The Gospel Choir has had a successful year, and we'd like to thank our fans, family and friends for their overwhelming support. This year's Olde Tyme Gospel and Mother's Day concerts were a huge success. The feedback we received from the surveys we distributed at each of the concerts reinforced the fact that we are on the right path. Your opinions matter to us, so we're grateful to each of you who took the time to complete and turn in your survey. We are already making plans for 2007. Morris Johnson and company have already agreed to come back and be with us for our Olde Tyme Gospel concert, which will be held on Sunday, February 25, 2007 at the O'Shaughnessy Auditorium on the campus of the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul. Plans for our Mother's Day concert are developing as well. It will be another exciting year!



The new year for the community choir will begin Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>. If you are interested in becoming a member of the community choir, please make sure to download the information and registration form from our website. Details will be available on the site beginning September 5<sup>th</sup> at [www.tccgospel.org](http://www.tccgospel.org). If you cannot download information from our site or don't have access to a computer, feel free to call the Gospel Choir office and request that the information be sent to you after Labor Day!

Finally, I want to share with you some information about the holidays this year. So many of you have asked when the Gospel Choir will be doing another holiday show. Well, the wait is over. The Choir will be participating with me this year in several holiday shows. Our Minneapolis show will be held at Benson Great Hall on the campus of Bethel College on Saturday, December 16 at 8 p.m. Tickets will be available for that performance through the Benson Great Hall ticket office at 651-638-6333. Additionally, we are working on shows in St. Cloud, Rochester and Eau Claire. For more information see my website at [www.robertrobinsonmusic.com](http://www.robertrobinsonmusic.com) or the choir's site at [www.tccgospel.org](http://www.tccgospel.org). Our plan is to have all the details available by the first week of September.

## The Olde Tyme Gospel Concert

*By Joy Smiley with comments from Morris Johnson (choreographer)*

The O'Shaughnessy Theater welcomed the Twin Cities Community Gospel choir with open arms on a brisk Sunday in February of 2006. Robert Robinson's vision of adding texture with African drummers and the Morris Johnson and Company interpretive dancers layered the enjoyment level to a rich experience for all 1,106 in attendance. Morris Johnson (choreographer) said an audience member approached him after the concert to say, "You can't IMAGINE what this combination of dance and music did for me." Morris responded, "Oh yes I can. It did it for me too! I don't get to dance to spiritual pieces very often, especially not songs with words being sung by other believers. I believe in God, and consider this night a blessing. Every song had a personal story for me. It was a way of saying thank you for my gift which is God-given by presenting it back to the Gift Giver."

When you've been smacked down after going through a really rough time, "What should I do?" may be a question you have asked those around you. Maybe they offer to pray for you. So begins Roxanne Wallace's journey of transformation to "Walk in the Light". As the choir sang... a slow and tired, reflective, but curious soul was reminded



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## Advertise with the TCC Gospel Choir!

Reach out to other gospel lovers! You will have the opportunity to advertise your business in the program for our upcoming Mother's Day concert, which will be held on Saturday, May 12, 2007. You may submit an advertisement, ranging in size from a business card to a full page, for inclusion in the multi-page program. Please contact the Choir office at [tccgospel@uswest.net](mailto:tccgospel@uswest.net) or call 612-521-0800 for more information about this wonderful opportunity.

# Gospel Reflections

By Joy Smiley

The Twin Cities Community Gospel Choir and Ensemble have experienced many opportunities to share the "Good News of the Gospel" with a variety of audiences in the past 8 months. It was a rewarding and sometimes challenging schedule. Here are a few highlights:

December 2005 was an opportunity for our yearly performance with a group of children, youth and their caretakers at St. Joseph's Home for Children. The audience especially enjoys the chance to listen and answer questions which can lead to prizes of CD's, t-shirts, or other choir-related gifts. But one of the choir's favorite parts of the program is when the children get to come up and be the lead soloist with the choir. It is always amazing to watch the transformation on their faces and on those of their peers.

January and February 2006 were very busy months with a performance at the Basilica and a full concert in Rochester for the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday celebration. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of January, the Ensemble found purpose and validation in sharing their messages of encouragement in an evening program with an audience of three hundred incarcerated men at Lino Lakes prison. Several corporate gigs later, the choir and ensemble had a chance to do a two night sold-out program with Holly Collison and Robert Robinson in "Two Voices, No Boundaries." The blend of live orchestra and two voices from totally different backgrounds shared how music tells of so many layers of love. They took us from friendship love, to world love, to God love. There were pop music love songs, theater and stage renditions, R&B and gospel renderings. But hearing Holly and Robert sing opera (Robert in Italian) was priceless. February meant travel for the ensemble, visiting audiences for Black History Month performances at the College of St. Benedict in St. Joseph, the University of Wisconsin in River Falls, WI, the city auditorium in Grand Forks, ND, and a weekday afternoon assembly at Stillwater High School. The month of February also was rounded out with the big winter Olde Tyme Gospel concert at the O'Shaughnessy, on the campus of the College of St. Catherine's in St. Paul.

In March 2006, the choir helped to send off a group of Christian young people on a Freedom Ride from Minneapolis across the nation. The Ensemble had the privilege of being asked by the Puckett Family to provide special music at Kirby Puckett's private family Funeral in Excelsior, MN. The Minnesota Twins asked the Ensemble to sing our version of the "Star Spangled Banner" at the Kirby Puckett Memorial in the HHH MetroDome, and to end the program singing, "Beams of Heaven," as one beam from the top of the dome enlightened the dark stadium to be focused on Kirby's jersey and shoes.

The choir was introduced to young people who are "spoken word artists" with much to say, in April of 2006. As we gathered together to share words of encouragement with each other, the audience was addressed through diverse methods (Poetry Slam and Gospel Jam). Both forms of expression were eventually blended in a piece by Tish Jones, with Robert Robinson providing Gospel ad-libs overtop. A corporate gig for the Widex Corporation later in the month had people on their feet and dancing at International Market Square.

May 2006 started off with a day concert for the Association of Oncology Workers Conference at the Hyatt in downtown Minneapolis. The main event of the month was to honor all mothers at the annual Mother's Day Concert on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

June 2006 was another busy one, with a specially commissioned song in an early morning corporate performance for Medtronic at the Convention Center in Minneapolis.

We were honored to be asked once again by the Starkey Hearing Foundation Benefit ("So the World May Hear") to be a backup choir for one of their international performers. We sang "We are Family" with Kathy Sledge. She is a gracious and talented woman who asked for one of our CDs. The month was rounded out with a chance to be part of the opening night at the new Guthrie Theater. The ensemble provided dinner music, "Shall We Gather at the River," for the sit-down dinner. Later that same evening, the choir sang a rousing rendition of "Lift Him Up" from the play, "Gospel at Colonus" with soloist Jevetta Steele. And the month ended on a high note with the Mayor of Minneapolis's request for the choir to sing at the Target Center for the Democratic steering committee. We hope it may help sway the decision for the National Democratic Convention to be held in our city this year.

At the time of this article our calendar for July 2006 says the Ensemble will soon be on the road to sing a full afternoon concert at the Faith Fest, held at the North Iowa Fairgrounds in Mason City, IA. It should be a fun chance to sing outdoors.

We enjoyed seeing many of you at these past events, and we look forward to seeing some of you at our upcoming venues.

# Year End Giving

Although we have a lot of volunteers in the gospel choir, it still takes money to run the TCC Gospel Choir organization. We must pay rent for facilities used for practices, as well as for concert venues. There are salaries and musicians' fees to be paid. Office materials and choir materials must be typed and run off, machine maintenance and online fees have to be paid. Arrangements and written music must be produced. Group travel and accommodations for some of the out of town venues are supplied. Auditing of the books and financial records is a regularly scheduled event. Although some monies are earned through performances, it is not enough to run the organization. We apply for grants and corporate assistance, but your donations make up the difference.

## Direct Donations Process:

If you wish to make a one-time tax deductible donation directly to the choir before year end, please make your checks payable to: TCC Gospel Choir

Mail to: Post Office Box 29174, Brooklyn Center, Minnesota 55429-0174

Another option would be to add a TCC Gospel Choir donation to your monthly bill-paying schedule. One choir member says, "When I write out my mid-month bills, I also write a donation check to the TCC Gospel Choir. It is easier for me to make 12 smaller monthly contributions to the group rather than one year end lump sum. It might be something others want to consider."

## Giving Through United Way:

To designate funds to the TCC Gospel Choir, which is a qualified nonprofit organization, you must submit specific choir information at the time of the pledge.

Two ways to give through United Way:

1. You may decide to participate through your workplace United Way Campaign which starts in August/September of 2006 for the upcoming 2007 payroll. You will need to list the full name of the choir "Twin Cities Community Gospel Choir" to designate funds to a specific organization.
2. Or you may wish to mail in your gift directly to United Way. To mail your gift, fill in the form below and send it along with your chosen form of payment to:

Donor Stewardship  
Greater Twin Cities United Way  
404 South Eighth Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55404

## Payments received:

The choir will receive your designated cash or credit card 2006 gift to United Way in February of 2007. If you choose to donate through your payroll plan at work, the choir will receive your specifically designated gift in three payments in April, August, and December of 2007.

For further details you may wish to visit the website for the Greater Twin Cities United Way, which is

<http://www.unitedwaytwincities.org>

If you make a donation through United Way, please notify the choir office of your donation.

## UNITED WAY DONATION

**Nonprofit Agency Name:** Twin Cities Community Gospel Choir

**Address:** PO Box 29174, Brooklyn Center, MN 55429-0174

**Mail To:**

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Donor's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Amount \$: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you wish to remain anonymous? (check one)  Yes  No

### • Form of payment (select one)

Check number \_\_\_\_\_

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Expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Olde Tyme Gospel Concert

— Continued from page two —

to follow in the path of hope and purposeful direction by turning to the Light. As Valerie Robinson's solo and the choir heated up, the Light renewed and refreshed the dancer's body and restored her spirit. The new path of opportunity had her glowing with the Light of Jesus in her soul that would not stop shining. Morris Johnson says, "You could feel the warm Light lift her up, and open her up. It was a reflection of her heart, her movement, her face. She encouraged others to see the Light in her and realize it was available for us all."

The ensemble took on a Mississippi twang with, "Oh, Lord, there's a blessing **Just for Me.**" Dancers, acting as the congregation, invited the audience to be privy to a church meetin' of hard-workin' farmers and good ol' country folk from the Deep South. "The congregation's spirit-filled movements and expressions showed what a magnitude of fulfillment can be found within the church. We saw a fun side of church... that simple, yet comical expression you don't see too often. Where people just let go and do the best they can with what they've got," said Morris. It turned out to be a 'holy ho-down of thanks' that we hope ya'll enjoyed. Come on back sometime, y'hear?

The collaboration of Robert Robinson on vocals and Morris Johnson in dance was a stroke of genius. "I can't sing, and he can't dance, and neither of us can play that piano ... but together as a trinity we more than fulfilled each others limitations," says Morris. What began as a visual of someone outside God's grace who felt unconnected and unworthy but having that shred of hope... came alive with a writhing, tossing, struggle of conflicting

emotions as Robert's solo on the traditional hymn, "**Just as I Am**" was interpreted through dance. The audience went through their own 360 degrees of emotion as our personal experiences were portrayed with voice and movement. Many eyes in the auditorium filled to the brim as we watched the lost one find enough courage to come crawling closer and reach out from a prostrate position to finally touch the Lamb of God. And many tears overflowed as the hand of acceptance came down to welcome the lost one home, and to encourage him to stand erect, resting his head and his heart on the Rock... just as he was.

One audience member commented that, "At first it felt like the song made my heart beat louder, then it pulsed in my veins, and as I watched the dancers, I knew that these bones could no longer be still," for that "**I Love Jesus Medley**". Morris Johnson called it, "sanctified" as the choir stirred up the name of Jesus, and the dancers surrendered themselves to the fresh fire of the Holy Ghost. Their bodies dipped and rose, twirled and whirled, jumped and collapsed, from simple rejoicing to frenzied joy. It was a night to remember!



## TCC Gospel Youth Choir!

By Mari Forbush

It was early spring. The Mother's Day concert was approaching. We were learning new songs. As always, each rehearsal was filled with energy and the spirit of God. Robert came to rehearsal and made an announcement. This year a youth choir would be part of the Mother's Day concert! What a wonderful way to introduce young people into the TCC experience. What a wonderful way to honor mothers. Twenty young people were recruited and came to several rehearsals. They worked hard to learn the songs. They were well behaved, even when they weren't involved in a song, and they brought a wonderful enthusiasm to each rehearsal.

The young people wrote brief essays on their

applications to be part of this concert. One youth choir member said, "I want to participate in this choir because I love affecting people's lives in a positive way." Another said, "It will be an honor to sing with the choir, and it will be special for my mom to come to the concert." Another said, "I feel like it would be a great experience for me to sing for the glory of God." Another said, "I believe that music from the soul heals other souls." Another, "This will be a good way to show our mother how much she means to me." And finally, "Since God gave me the ability to easily memorize words and melodies, I love using this skill to share His word."

The day of the performance, their enthusiasm bubbled through the sound check and during the time we waited to go on. When they came on stage, their smiles lit up the hall. They performed beautifully and added so much to the concert. We give many thanks to all of them for their commitment and talent.

# Public Events Calendar



**Thursday, September 28, 2006**

*Women's Advocates  
Fundraising Breakfast*  
Sheraton Hotel  
1330 Industrial Blvd.  
Minneapolis, MN  
Event: 7:30 AM

**Tuesday, October 10, 2006**

*Concert with TCC & the West  
End Gospel Singers  
From Eberswalde, Germany*  
St. Paul's United Church of Christ  
900 Summit Avenue  
St. Paul, MN  
Concert: 7:30 PM  
Concert is free and open to the  
public!

**Saturday, November 11, 2006**

*Benefit for Recovery Weekend  
Program*  
House of Hope Presbyterian  
Church  
797 Summit Avenue  
St. Paul, MN  
Event: 7:00 PM

**Saturday, December 9, 2006**

*Christmas Concert*  
Historic Church of St. Michael  
16091 - 45<sup>th</sup> Street NE  
St. Michael, MN  
Concert: 7:30 PM

**Saturday, December 16, 2006**

*"Songs for the Season" - Robert  
Robinson Holiday Concert*  
Special guests: TCC Gospel  
Choir and Holly Collison  
Benson Great Hall  
(Campus of Bethel College)  
3900 Bethel Drive  
St. Paul, MN  
Concert: 8:00 PM

**Monday, January 15, 2007**

*"Harmony for Mayo" - MLK  
Celebration*  
Christ United Methodist Church  
400 Fifth Avenue SW  
Rochester, MN  
Event: 7:30 PM

**Sunday, February 25, 2007**

*Old Tyme Gospel Concert*  
O'Shaughnessy Auditorium  
College of St. Catherine  
2004 Randolph Ave.  
St. Paul, MN  
Concert: 4:30 PM  
(Tickets will be available  
through the O'Shaughnessy  
Auditorium)

## Open Registration For The Community Choir

It's that time again! The first rehearsal for the new community gospel choir is scheduled for Saturday morning, October 8 at 10 a.m. Membership information will be on our web-site - [www.tccgospel.org](http://www.tccgospel.org) and available for you effective Tuesday, September 6. You can also call the office and have membership information mailed to you - 612.521.0800. If you think you might be interested in joining us this year, here's some information you will want to know.

1. Rehearsals will be held twice a month on Saturday mornings from 10am-12 noon.
2. Rehearsals will begin Saturday, October 8, 2006.
3. All rehearsals will be held at He Is Risen Church, 1530 Russell Avenue North, in north Minneapolis.
4. There are no auditions to become a member of the community chorus.
5. Each person who desires to join the community chorus is asked to sign a one-year contract. At the end of each year, you have the option of renewing.
6. Membership fee for one year is \$125 (nonrefundable).
7. The performance schedule for community choir members will be less intensive - approximately four to five performances per year.
8. The maximum size of the community choir will be 100 members. Membership forms will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.
9. Registration forms for membership will be available September 6. If you are interested in becoming a member, you can call the office and have a membership form mailed to you, or you may download a membership form and contract from our website - [www.tccgospel.org](http://www.tccgospel.org) and send your member form along with a signed contract and your membership dues. Forms will not be available on our website until September 6.

Please feel free to e-mail us at the choir office if you need or desire additional information. Our e-mail address is [info@tccgospel.org](mailto:info@tccgospel.org). Hope to see you this fall!



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