

gospel notes

TWIN CITIES COMMUNITY GOSPEL CHOIR NEWSLETTER



Fall 2008



The Amazing Olde Tyme Gospel Concert

Every concert has its own personality. The Twin Cities Community Gospel Choir's artistic director, Robert Robinson, has a unique talent to innovatively create while honoring the musical tradition of Gospel. This year the concert was a delightful mix of American gospel music, traditional African music, and dance. The choir was blessed with the talents of the African choral group, Total Praise Ministries, and contemporary dance group, Kenna Sarge & Company. The audience was moved by both of these inspiring and artistically gifted groups.

The concert began with a beautiful dance entitled "Contemporary Koukou." The graceful movement and spirit of the dancers was a fitting beginning to our concert honoring both Black American and African culture. This was followed by a South African song, "Nzamuraanza," which introduced the audience to Robert's genius. Robert and Jeenee Lee sang "House of the Lord," and Melinde Scott and Steve Watson sang "His Name So Sweet," ac-

companied by the Ensemble. The entire Community Choir joined the ensemble on stage and performed several selections with solos by ensemble members, Annette Hardy, Joy Smiley, Aaron Burks, Bev Sellie, Mark Suggs, Dave Wright-Walstrom, and Luther Eskridge.

After intermission, Total Praise Ministries sang two African selections, followed by several more pieces by the entire Gospel Choir, with solos by Gaylene Adams, Joy Smiley, Sandy Hodges and Aaron Burks. Before our final song, Total Praise Ministries joined the Choir, and under the excellent direction of Othello Collins, performed an original song, "Be A Loving Neighbor". We rehearsed with Total Praise Ministries several times and had the opportunity to learn some sweet choreography to go with the song. It was an added challenge for us, but added another dimension to the song. We closed the concert with a rousing rendition of "Trouble Don't Last Always" by

gospel genius Rev. Timothy Wright.

As always, our band of amazing musicians started us off and kept us on beat and on key. They are so wonderful and add so much to the performance. They don't get the credit they often deserve for their patience, talent and willingness to work with us every single week as we prepare for every performance. Sam Reeves directs this great group which includes Lisa Olson (piano), Rev. Stan Robinson (drums), Robert Pittman (bass), Ron Garnett (saxophone) and Lanre Olowo (guitar).

It is so exciting to perform at the O'Shaughnessy Auditorium in St. Paul. The acoustics are first rate, as are all the accommodations. We finished our day believing that we had given 100% of our energies to deliver a powerful message to those in attendance -- grateful for such an opportunity to share God's love in this very special way.



IT'S TIME TO REGISTER FOR THE NEW YEAR!

On October 4, 2008, we will kick off a new year for the Gospel Choir. Membership forms will be available on the website (www.tccgospel.org) after Labor Day (September 1st). The cost of membership for a year is \$125. If you have been thinking about becoming a member, please join us. You'll enjoy great fellowship, excitement and transforming music. Hope to see you there!

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2008 ANNUAL MEETING

The TCC Gospel Choir's Annual Meeting is a time to celebrate the accomplishments of the Board, staff and volunteers who all give so much to this organization. The evening is a mixture of important information, thanks, planning, good food and fun. We started with a delicious buffet dinner, organized by Vice Chair and Board Member, Diana Mills and others. We all enjoyed the feast. Darolyn Gray, Board President, gave her address about the "State of the Choir," and then presented us with a special gift, a solo performance by gospel vocalist, Sara Renner. The song was both beautiful and inspiring.

Kevin Lynch, Board Treasurer, then gave the financial report. We're all grateful for Kevin. He has the talent to present and explain numbers in a way that we can all understand. He cited our strengths and the areas we need to develop in the year ahead, and presented a new Individual Donor Campaign. He challenged us all to think of people that we might know who had the resources to make a gift to the choir.

Robert then gave his report, and thanked the choir and ensemble members for giving their time, talent and energies to this group. He introduced the Advisory Committee and encouraged anyone who might be interested to join. He then presented the 2008 Spirit Award to Mari Forbush and thanked her for her service. Mari said she was honored by the award and that being in the choir had affected her life profoundly in so many ways. Robert then presented a video, produced by Kim Knutson (choir member) and created by freelance videographer, Kevin Opsatz. The video contained footage of past choir concerts and rehearsals, interspersed with commentary from members of the choir talking about their experience with the group and what it means to them to sing this music. Robert promised that each member of the choir will receive a copy DVD after it is fully edited.

2008 Spirit Award goes to Mari Forbush!

Lastly, we enjoyed the annual drawing where several people won great prizes. On the way out there were piece of exquisite cake for everyone to take and enjoy, which had good wishes and a picture of the choir on top!

BUCKET WORK

Martha Graham said "We learn by practice. Whether it means to learn to dance by dancing or to learn to live by living, the principles are the same. One becomes in some areas athletes of God."

I came into the Twin Cities Community Gospel Choir inexperienced and naïve about being in a choir. Although some may argue that I remain that way, I feel that I have learned a lot in my three years in this choir. For example, I thought that the performances were not only the most important part of being in the choir but that they were where all the fun was had. I was wrong.

Now it's true, the performances are fun and exciting and they provide a spiritually exhilarating experience. But I have found that it's in the rehearsals where the bucket work is done. The repetitive, unglamorous, one-foot-in-front-of-the-other work. It's the work that the audience doesn't see that makes those spine tingling, heart soaring moments in the performances possible.

The rehearsals provide an opportunity for learning. Alto Marquita Murton said "...it's in the rehearsals that we not only learn the songs, we get to hear words of wisdom from Robert, Sandy, and Annette." For me, the work of accepting the teaching that is offered and sometimes demanded strengthens my appreciation for the songs we sing. There is a history behind every song and it's in the rehearsals that we learn the meaning within the "songs that speak the truth" as Marquita puts it.

Another part of the rehearsals that is valuable for me is the community of faith that we all share. Now we all come to the choir with our own sense of faith and what that means to us. I mean the faith we have in Robert and the directors, and the band, and the faith we have in each other. We lean on each other and learn from each other. I feel a connection to my spiritual siblings in the tenor section and to everyone in the choir. We share a common bond, the faith that we are part of something bigger than ourselves.



I find myself overwhelmed by a sense of gratitude. I'm grateful for the friends I have made and the community I have joined. I'm grateful for the work we do and the struggle and joy in which we do it. I'm grateful for the support and the gentle and sometimes not so gentle guidance of all my new teachers. Although I'll always enjoy when we're shining in the bright lights in front of appreciative audiences, it's the bucket work done in a church basement with my friends that keeps me coming back for more. And also knowing that we all are becoming athletes for God.

ROBERT'S CORNER

We just hosted the choir's annual meeting a few weeks ago, and I have to say that I am very proud of the accomplishments that the Gospel Choir has made in our 18 years of music-making in the Twin Cities. Year after year, choir members make themselves available and show overwhelming support for the Choir's ministry and work. Each of YOU has done that as well, and we appreciate it.



It is hard to believe, but in May 2010 the Gospel Choir will be celebrating 20 years of service to the community. We are planning now to host several events. One of those events includes a reunion concert. If you have been a member of the choir, please contact us and let us know that you want to be involved. We want to invite everyone back for a three-day workshop and concert of music that will be completely unforgettable. More information about the workshop and the concert will be published soon.

This fall, we will again have open registration for anyone interested in becoming a member of the community choir. Registration information will be available online starting Tuesday, September 2 – www.tccgospel.org.

Here's what you should know:

1. Rehearsals are held twice a month on Saturday mornings from 10am-12 noon.
2. All rehearsals will be held at He Is Risen Church, 1530 Russell Ave. N., Minneapolis, MN 55411.
3. There are **no auditions** to become a member of the community choir.
4. Each person who desires to join the community choir will be asked to sign a one-year contract. At the end of each year, you have the option of renewing.
5. Membership fee for one year is \$125 (nonrefundable).
6. The performance schedule for community choir members is less intensive – approximately four to five performances per year.
7. The maximum size of the community choir will be 100 members. Membership forms will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.

If you don't have access to a computer or printer, call the Choir office and leave your name and address. We will mail the information to you. Send your membership form along with your signed contract and membership dues to: TCC Gospel Choir, Post Office Box 29174, Brooklyn Center, MN 55429-0174. Membership dues must accompany your registration form and signed contract in order for your place to be reserved. The first rehearsal for the "new year" will be Saturday, October 4 at 10 AM. You've been putting this off too long. Join us!

This fall both the ensemble and the community choir will be busy performing. We've got a lot of music to prepare and share with you this season and we invite you to join us. Check out the back page of this newsletter or visit our website for event details.

Hope to see this fall!

Dear Mom,

A LETTER TO MY MOM

I just participated in the most magnificent musical experience in my life. It was the TCC Gospel Choir's Mother's Day concert. I wish you could have seen and heard it. Our director Robert Robinson's goal was to select songs for the program that would inspire and touch the hearts of not only mothers, but all people who attended the concert. He believes that the mission of the Gospel Choir is to give an affirming message to those who may be going through life's "stuff."

The song, "*Like a Shepherd, Lead Us*" touched my heart when I heard the intense dynamic changes. I knew God was right there with us in the church when I heard the song "*High and Lifted Up*;" it confirmed my heart's belief that we can be assured that our lives are in His hands for safe keeping.

This year a new flavor was added to the concert with our Spoken Word artists. These are young people from the community who have a heart for writing about their mothers and other devoted women who have influenced their lives.

I always get goose bumps when I hear Betty Vaughn and Joy Smiley sing "*I Will Trust God Again*". The blend of their voices is so amazing it is really indescribable!

Mom, you would have had a great time at our concert. We like to get the audience up on their feet singing and clapping along with us. Directors, Sandy and Annette do an excellent job of cueing the audience to join in the fun.

No matter what we sing in the TCC Gospel Choir it is always a great joy to be part of an organization whose message is uplifting to the soul.

Love, Mary

TCC GOSPEL CHOIR

Board of Directors

Darolyn Gray, *Chair*
Diana Mills, *Vice-chair*
Kevin Lynch, *Treasurer*
Dee Henry Williams
Jonathan Carter
Robin Shines
Aaron Berstler, *Secretary*

Advisory Committee

Mari Forbush
Kim Knutson
Dave Ballman
Mary Davis

Staff

Valerie Robinson, *Office Manager*
Robert Robinson, *Executive/Artistic Director*

**TCC GOSPEL CHOIR
2008 UPCOMING PUBLIC
EVENTS**

Saturday, September 20

Collaboration w/Great
Northern Union Men's Chorus
St. Michael's Lutheran Church
9201 Normandale Blvd.
Bloomington, MN 55437
Concert: 7:30 PM
www.gnunion.com

Saturday, September 27

TCC Gospel Ensemble
"In Concert"
Historic Church of St. Michael
22 North Main Street
St. Michael, MN 55376
Concert: 7:30 PM
www.churchofsaintmichael.org

Sunday, September 28

Minnesota Sings!
Minnesota History Center
345 W. Kellogg Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55102-1906
Concert: 2:00 PM
651-259-3000
www.mnhs.org/calendar

Friday, October 3

"Hope for the City" Benefit
Sheraton Hotel - Bloomington
7800 Normandale Blvd.
Bloomington, MN 55439
Event begins: 7:00 PM

Sunday, October 26

Sunday Worship Service
MN Correctional Facility -
Plymouth
Service: 10:00 AM
*This event is not open to the
public!*

Saturday, December 20

Robert Robinson's Annual
Holiday Concert
Benson Great Hall (Bethel
College)
3901 Bethel Drive
Arden Hills, MN 55112
Concert: 8:00 PM
For tickets call 651-638-6333

Saturday, March 1, 2009

**TCC GOSPEL CHOIR'S
"OLDE TYME GOSPEL"
CONCERT**

O'Shaughnessy Auditorium
(College of St. Catherine)
2004 Randolph Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105
Concert: 7:30 PM

SHARE THE MUSIC

The choir has three CD's
that we are proud of!

*Love Brings Unity
Thank Ya!*

Make Me an Instrument



They make wonderful gifts and are available for
purchase on our Website at www.tccgospel.org/music.

We appreciate your support!



PO BOX 29174
Brooklyn Center, MN 55429-0174

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

