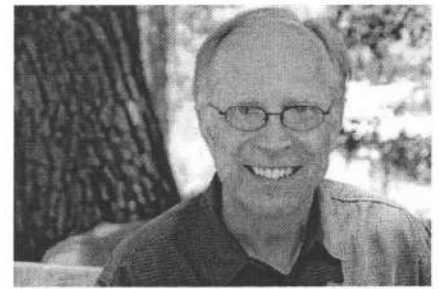


# Sing Together!

## *Stories of the unifying power of song and vision for tapping its potential*

By Dan Korneychuk, President-Elect



Now, more than ever, our churches, neighborhoods, cities and country need the unifying power of song. After a year of polarizing political rhetoric, and in the company of so many who fear that being seen as the "other" may mean further exclusion, ridicule, injury or worse, we ask the question, "What can WE do to help and heal?" One of the highlights of our 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention was the panel discussion entitled, "SING TOGETHER!: Stories of the unifying power of song and vision for tapping its potential." Panelists Brad Ellingboe, Jeannie Cobb, Allan Petker and Ed Willmington all contributed to a stimulating and challenging conversation. Having heard from panelists Allan Petker and Brad Ellingboe in past issues, below are some of the insights shared by **Ed Willmington**, Director of the Fred Bock Institute of Music and Composer in Residence at Fuller Theological Seminary.

*Given the "ministry of reconciliation" that we are called to (2 Cor. 5:18) and the incredible power of SINGING to bring people together:*

### **What are one or two stories from your own experience, where you have witnessed this unifying power at its best?**

The wonder and power of music has long been a source of study and thought...and controversy, of course. Music has such power that it has been used for many purposes – not all positive purposes. However, we as Christian musicians not only have the power of music in our hands, but also the power of the Word of God. When combined in creative ways, there is power to form, disciple, evangelize, and unify the world around us...all pointing upward to the God we worship.

The most powerful unifying musical experience I likely will ever have was the opportunity I had to write, arrange, and conduct worship music for the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization 2010 in Cape Town, South Africa. To hear and see 4000 people worshipping, centered around a 2 ½ hour African Anglican liturgy, was unparalleled...there are no words to describe it! There were simple songs of response, familiar hymns, modern worship songs, instrumental music, choir and orchestra, children, African drummers...amazing. Beyond the music, there were other artistic elements that enhanced the unification...native clothing, large pieces of visual art, 45 dancers in African attire, 25 drums, processions and recession! Take all of those elements and gather them around communion tables as they played and sang...that was a vision of a unified Church I will never forget!

### **What dreams or visions have you or others you know had, and/or what possibilities have you seen emerging for new ways to live out our calling to be "music ministers" of reconciliation in our choirs, congregations, denominations, communities and beyond?**

There are many respected writers who have rightly put forth ideas and concepts for the power and use of Christian song. One good friend in this category is Ken Bible. Ken is a graduate of the Cincinnati Conservatory, but has also done extensive theological training. In his short e-book, **A Vision for Congregational Song** (which he will send to you if you write to him: [LNW@LNWHymns.com](mailto:LNW@LNWHymns.com)), Ken outlines several important factors related to the value of singing. In one section of the treatise, he addresses "The Body of Christ" with several specific points. In one point, he reminds us that song can unify us not only in the present, but also with the past and future. We are simply a group of people who live in this particular part of the longer line of those who came before and those who will yet come. In practice, this requires us to sing the songs of those behind us, but not get stuck either there or in the present – also singing the songs of those who are new in the line of faith. We may be surprised what kinds of songs we will sing in our eternal futures – and whom we sing it with! " (Rev. 7:9-10)

While singing can be an individual act, in our congregations we find the joy of singing together. In music arranging classes, we are taught that the ultimate strength is the power of unison. Everyone singing/playing one unison line of music can cut through a lot of polyphonic texture – and express unity of faith as well as music! From another perspective, Gloria Gaither feels that part-singing is important to unifying song. Her thought is that we express our diversity by singing highs and lows – using the unique range of gifts. And when we sing those parts in beautiful harmony, we are exhibiting the message of unity in diversity. Whether in unison or in parts, we have the possibility to sound and declare that Christ died for each one. We should take whatever creative actions are possible to maximize the unifying gift of song.

### **What other "dreams and visions" do you have for tomorrow's music ministry?**

In looking to the future, I have many hopes. One of those hopes (and now I'm meddling) is that choirs and worship teams would refocus their attentions on serving the congregations in unifying ways. For choirs...return to a focus of leading congregational song. So many choirs have found identity in the anthem they sing...standing to sing and not participating in leading the creative song of the people. There are ways...there are resources. Choirs, please find ways to sing with the people, not only at and for them. Find pride in how you lead the congregation's song, not just in what composer wrote the anthem of the day. Worship teams...realize that the congregations are not as gifted as you may be. Realize that congregations don't have the high notes you possess...and they don't care what's comfortable for your range! Realize that complicated rhythms will be confusing to the person in row 10 of your congregation. Realize that the power of the microphone gives the sense that person in row 6 doesn't have the same power that you have. I have hopes that both sides would have friendly conversation with each other about how to creatively handle the wonder and power of music for the unifying glory of God. Amen.