

Singing Sunday

Good morning everyone,

I appreciate the opportunity to share this morning.

Morning Has Broken is a song that I listen to almost daily, although it is the Cat Stevens' version, sometimes I listen in my car on my early morning drive into work, or in our living room while cuddled up on the floor with our dog.

This song, whether it be the Cat Stevens' version coming through my record player or sung in church with a larger community, creates images in my mind that are clear, peaceful, and calming.

The warm sun peaking over the horizon and giving a golden glow to the trees and grass.

A gentle sun shower filling the air with the smell of rain.

A clean and crisp fall morning where the air is chilly on your nose, but the sun is warm on your face.

These images also all come with a sense of place. These places make me feel connected to the creation and nature around me. They take me to moments in time that are nostalgic and put me at ease.

At Shekinah on the games field laying in the grass and staring at the sky while the birds sing in the trees.

On our back deck looking out at the creek behind our house while our dog runs and plays.

At our old family cabin on Emma Lake first thing in the morning looking out onto the lake as smooth as glass.

It would take days to list the snapshots that bring these feelings of peace and simplicity, nostalgia, and calm to my mind and body. Although, they are moments that I sometimes take for granted. This song is a daily reminder for me to live in those moments and soak them in, while opening my eyes to look at my life for new images, places, and moments that bring in a calm and peacefulness. This song is also a beautiful reminder to be thankful for what I have, where I live, who I'm connected to, and that I have the freedom to live in a space of peace and thankfulness for the creation around me.

Singing Sunday Reflection – Zac Schellenberg

God of Wonders

It was my plan to be at Shekinah this morning with a Timberlodge full of sweaty youths, having stayed up far too late, groggily making out the words of the PowerPoint, croaking out the morning session in their finest morning voice, singing this song in parallel with you. Their voices may crack and their pitch sometimes questionable, but the energy and the beaming faces of those teens and ‘tweens is something I always look forward to at those retreats. I have been grateful to have been involved in the music at SMYO retreats for longer than I haven’t (this would have marked year 17 of playing retreat music) and it has had a profound impact on my love of music and my interest in worship music.

To say that the musical stylings of SMYO retreats is different from a typical Sunday morning service would be an understatement. Gone is the song leader waving rhythmically in time with the straight quarter note rhythms, spurring on beautiful four-part harmony; in come the louder than life vocals of the PA system. Out with the piano and in with the drums, bass and guitars (admittedly, sometimes a bit on the loud side...); out goes the organ in favour of... actually if anyone has a lead on an old Hammond or Wurlitzer, that might fit the bill...

Instrumentation aside, the faces may look a little different and the energy have a different flavour (and smell...), but what I keep coming back to is that it is all worship music. A room filled with dancing (gasp!) youths and a church full of folks intent on singing in the most precise harmony are both focussed on worship. God is greater than the different ways in which we might come to the table; what matters is that we are at the table. God asks us for a joyful noise, full stop. Not a pretty noise. Not an on-key-noise. Not a majestic oratorio. God simply asks for our joyful sounds.

Unfortunately, the SMYO Retreat is not happening right now, but I wanted to share some of the spirit of what we might sing on a typical Sunday morning on retreat. One of my favourites to sing as we look over the snow-laden valley of Shekinah is God of Wonders, which speaks of God’s grandeur in the universe as well as God’s attention to us each as we walk through the splendid creation before us, even when we stumble in the darkness. The vastness does not have to be uncomfortable, but rather bring us solace in the knowledge that even in the infinite expanse of the universe, God chooses to walk with us.

Marlene Froese

Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah

My name is Marlene. Born a long time ago and the youngest member of a family and was a singing family; my dad sang bass and led choirs; my mom had a beautiful alto voice and learning 4 part harmony was very necessary. I was a soprano and I loved it. We sang many genres but choirs in church, church community we had to join, it was not an option. So in 1961, it was off to RJC- the chance to go to our very special church high school. I was so very thrilled- maybe I'd make chorale- so the very first weekend was school opening and we were under the direction of Bill Kruger; didn't know him as a choir director but as a distant relative.

It was Saturday afternoon, all school choir to practice for Sunday afternoon. We worked on two or more songs- but one was exceptional- Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah. It was an amazing chorale piece musically and also the words. There we stood- all teenagers with voices and under direction was overwhelming.

And the sound and words were so powerful, the spirit of God was all around me. I had never had such a musical feeling ever in my life. I knew that the spirit of God, love and music had entered my whole being. It is 60 years later, still my favorite song and each time we sing it in our church setting I feel a power of love come over me with feelings from that time. Today sing, hear, listen and feel the beauty of this song. My soprano is not like it was then but I can hear the voices of the choir surround my heart.