



We of the small (but brave) North County Church Fellowship choir have come to the end of our season and have embarked on a summer break. Since the beginning of the season we had been practicing with the choir at the First Baptist Church across town. They invited us to join with them for the Easter service planned in the city park on Easter Sunday.

It was an ambitious program, with six majestic songs fitting Easter. One of them was an extremely complicated and demanding song. We spent a lot of time on that particular piece, practicing it over and over hoping and wondering if we were up to the challenge. I have to hand it to Shelanie, our choir director. She believed in us, and miraculously we came together under her excellent direction and ceaseless encouragement. And with a lot of praying on everybody's part. It was the world's shortest prayer.

When we first got the invitation, I was like, what if the First Baptist Church's choir is practically professional. What if we were not good enough for them? What if our tentative voices, thin and not very sounding, messed them up and stood out like sore thumbs? We are all self-admitted amateurs. Let me amend that statement: the tenor section of the NCCF choir is pretty awesome and strong, but the rest of us....we're all just starting out. Nervous, a bit comic, but, not much experience.

We shouldn't have worried. The First Baptist Church was so welcoming and kind. By the end of our time with them

...that I was ecstatic about that invitation. I'm pretty
...fellow choir members all feel the same way. There's
...g heavenly about singing with a large group of



...Make a joyful noise unto the Lord....

...e all learned a lot. We learned to breathe the right
...learned silly warm-up moves for our bodies and
...n-up exercises for our voices. We all acquired a bit
...dness and confidence. Singing is fun, but challeng-
...e's music theory involved – whole notes, half
...arter notes, eighth notes, beat, tempo, DS, double
...re were those Italian words on our sheets of music
...-what?).

...t, before all of that, there was this. I didn't know
...expect from a bunch of Baptists. I caught myself
...things like, will they be straitlaced and ultra-strict?
...ervative for my taste? Formal vs casual? God for-
...y? Will we fit in? Will they think we're weird?

...hmmm, excuse me? Aren't I a little more open-
...han to be having those kinds of thoughts hiding in
...? Hasn't walking with Jesus taught me anything at
...t I know better? Apparently not.

...t, here's what happened. We sang together. We
...stakes together. We backed up and did it over, to-
...e clapped, and then we learned to clap on the off-
...ll, some of us. Some of us get confused with that
...uff. (Who, moi?) We did dance steps, or tried. We
...together. We made new friends. No one pointed

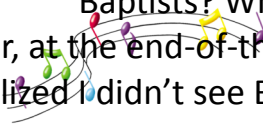
There was kindness, good cheer, and good s
There were jokes. There was silliness. Did I mentio
laughing? We experimented and tried new things
our voices and our style. We had fun.

There were serious moments too. We made
of us singing for one of the choir who ended up in
pital in an extremely serious situation. We prayed
each other and for each other.

And, aside from all of that, there was choco
every practice. As if all the rest wasn't enough. Eve
day night. Chocolate. (Yes, I have such great priorit

We learned the subtleties of conveying a me
through singing. We learned that we, not only our
but our very beings, our faces and our bodies, wer
of God and meant to be a blessing. We were instru
of the Lord, used to convey a message straight fro
heart to those who heard us sing. God's love threa
throughout and over every practice we had, and e
time we sang to our congregations. We learned to
God, each other, ourselves and our choir director's
tions. Best of all, we learned to sing together as an
worship to God.

Baptists? What Baptists? On our last evening
er, at the end-of-the-season party, I looked around
alized I didn't see Baptists anymore. I just saw fam



...Now all of you together are Christ's bo