

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises! Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody! With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord!... (Psalm 98:4–6)

Martin Luther is often and famously quoted: “Next to theology there is no art which is the equal of music, for she alone, after theology, can do what otherwise only theology can accomplish, namely, quiet and cheer up the soul of man, which is clear evidence that the devil, the originator of depressing worries and troubled thoughts, flees from the voice of music just as he flees from the words of theology.” Music is *that* important to our lives as Christians!

There are many reasons that make music so important to us. First, music is a special gift from God. In its sounds we are reminded of the intricacy of creation and the intelligent God who orders even the atoms and waves to form patterns and beauty. This is one reason there are so many examples of music in the Scriptures. Some of the greatest songs ever sung were inspired by the Holy Spirit and bring God praise from his people, like Moses (Exodus 15), Deborah (Judges 5), Hannah (1 Samuel 2), David (Psalms), Mary and Zechariah (Luke 1).

Second, as Luther points out, music can comfort and cheer us. Think how we as Christians will sing songs – ‘joyful’ songs – even at funerals! This isn’t because we Christians are pretending like nothing is wrong, nor are we somehow reveling in death. Instead, the rich imagery and powerful words of our hymns point us to our hope in Jesus Christ – the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.

Third, music connects us with other Christians. When we stand (or sit) together in the sanctuary and sing songs, our voices are joined together as one in the body of Christ. As we sing, we are reminded that we are not alone on this earth. We stand together as one people, against even the worst attacks of our spiritual enemies. Even more, this singing shows that we are connected with Christians in the past and in the future! When you sing a hymn, glance at the bottom of the page to find who wrote it and when it was written. In our church, we sing hymns written over a span of 1900 years! And, when we sing “This Is the Feast,” for example, we are singing words sung by saints who are celebrating the final victory of Christ on the Last Day. We are all one in Christ, and we see this in music.

There are other reasons, of course. Yet, what continues to be true is that we at Immanuel are blessed to have such beautiful sacred music. Those of us who grew up with it – the choirs and singing, the organs and pianos, the flutes and guitars – can all too easily take it for granted. That is one reason why we have set aside July to remember music and church musicians during our 150th anniversary celebration. We have had and continue to have organists who are caring and dedicated. God has given us directors, teachers, and leaders who help adults and children sing and play instruments. We are blessed with soloists and musicians who also add music to our worship. Please, don’t take any of this for granted! This month, give God thanks for his gifts of music, musicians, and, most of all, the good news of his Son’s death and resurrection which binds us together and bring us to life!

-Pastor Squire

“Trumpet and pipes! Loud clashing cymbals! Sing to the Lord a new song! Harp, lute, and lyre! Loud humming cellos! Sing to the Lord a new song! He has done marvelous things. I too will praise Him with a new song!”

(“Earth and All Stars” *LSB 817*, v. 3)