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Excerpted from a sermon preached on December 19, 2010

Scientists say that there are somewhere in the neighborhood of 5,400 species of animals that are known to make intentional, repeatable, complex (that is, more than just a couple of notes) musical vocalizations. That is, there are about 5,400 species of singing animals. Of these, the vast majority live in trees (think birds and gibbons), a few live in the ocean (think whales), a very few live underground (did you know there are singing mice? There are.), and one, *only one* lives on the ground: *us*. Humans are the only singing terrestrial animal.

You see, evolutionarily speaking, singing is a costly behavior: not only does it burn energy and take up time that could be spent searching for food, it also allows predators to pinpoint the location of their prey exactly. Marine or arboreal species need not worry about this particularly, as they have a number of ways of avoiding predators, usually moving vertically to a level of their habitat that a predator cannot reach. Terrestrial animals, however, live always on the same level as their predators—there's nowhere else to go—and so the evolutionary pressures on them have kept them either largely silent, or limited to vocalizations that are short, efficient, and necessary. Even birds that normally sing when they are in the trees stop singing and make other types of sounds when on the ground.

Humans, on the other hand? We have sung since the beginning. No one knows when exactly we started singing, but we know that the earliest collections of songs we have are religious in nature, among them the Psalms and the other songs of the Hebrew Scriptures. In the Hebrew Scriptures as in our lives, the people sing when they



*Painting by Rodrico Brown age 13, public domain.
From churchmusicblog.wordpress.com*

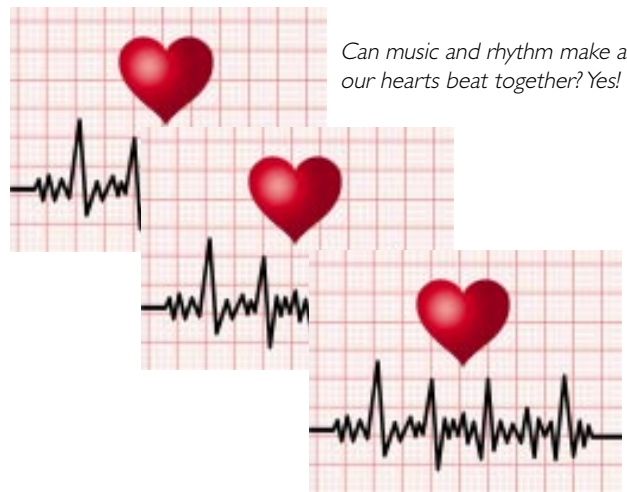
are happy, when they are sad, when they are perplexed, or angry, or frightened, or defiant—and when they are scared. The Jewish Mary is an unwed teenager and is told that she will bear the son of God in a broken world, and the first thing she does? Sings the Magnificat. Zechariah's son John the Baptist is born, and he knows that his son will live a hard life and die an ugly death, and the first thing he does? Sings the Benedictus. The first century Christians are beset by strife from within and persecution from without, and what does Paul tell them to do? Sing. Sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, he says. *Sing in the face of terror.*

Another thing about humans. Of all the singing animals, we are the only ones with a precise and shared sense of rhythm. Which may not sound like a big deal, but think about this: a precise sense of rhythm is the very thing that allows us to sing together. Two birds might sing at the same time, but without a shared sense of rhythm, they're just singing next to each other. Whales might sing to each other, but they can never sing the same song at the same time.

But humans? Because of our sense of rhythm, 400 of us can sing a Christmas carol at the same time. And when a room full of people sings together, they don't just sing together, they start to breathe together, too. And if the rhythm is strong enough—if that drum beats powerfully enough—studies show that our hearts will literally start to beat at the same time as well. And if we're singing together and breathing together and our hearts are beating together, then it's like we're one body—and you know who's body it is. In Advent, we wait for that tiny baby body of Christ to be born, and when we sing, we become the very body we're waiting for.

Most species fall silent and get small when danger approaches, and hope it passes one by, but us? When danger approaches, that's when we start to sing. We start to sing, and we become large. The world would say that we sing these carols because we're happy, we're full of joy. It says that these songs are some of our very most beloved because we just feel so happy when we sing them. Well, maybe.

But I think we're singing for another reason. I think we're singing because the wolf is at the door. Isn't there someone in this room being stalked by cancer? Isn't there someone else backed into a corner by depression? Aren't there single mothers raising children alone in Boston tonight, mothers whose Josephs did not decide to stay with them? Won't someone come to this sanctuary tomorrow and spend all day here because he has nowhere else warm to go? Don't



Can music and rhythm make all our hearts beat together? Yes!

our tax dollars—yours and mine—go to stalk the world with war?

And so we stand up, and we breathe in deeply, and the breath we breathe is not air but the Holy Spirit, and we become one body with one heart, and we start to *belt*. And we are not silent, and we are not small, and we are not alone, and we are not afraid.

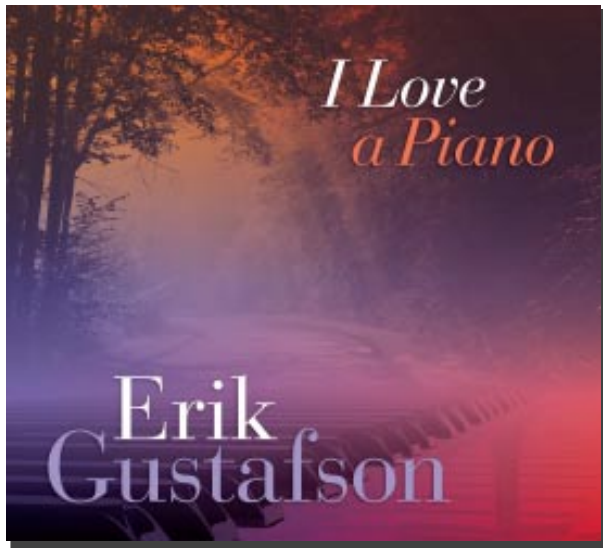
The animals hide from their predators. We sing to that which stalks us, for though we are terrestrial, our song is celestial and we sing with the voice of the angels, we sing with the breath of the Spirit. We sing, "Predators, here we are. Predators, bring it on.

*Come, Hunger; and we will fill you up.
Come, Loneliness, and we will sing to you of Emanuel,
God with us.
Come Death, for Hark, the Herald Angels sing that
Christ is risen with healing in his wings.
Come, Depression, and we will sing 'Gloria in excelsis Deo,'
and we will hold that long 'o' until you are no more.
Come, Power, and we will sing to you that the
first Noel was to poor shepherds.
Come Despair, and we will sing joy to your world.
Come, War, and we will sing you to sleep."*

5400 species that can sing in the trees and the oceans. They all sing alone and fall silent when danger is near.

Just one. Only one that stands on the earth, with the breath of heaven in its lungs, with hearts beating literally at the same time. Only one that can sing together and only one that dares to sing more loudly the worse the danger gets. Just one.

The wolf is at the door; the world needs the body of Christ to be born. So come, all ye faithful, and sing. ✚



A LABOR OF LOVE

The Making of the CD

by Erik Gustafson

For some, it is eating dark chocolate; for others, it is running, even in the Boston Marathon. For me, it is composing and playing the piano. The latter “habits” occupy the majority of my time and energies; and these activities have developed over the years into instruments for giving and for self-expression. Such is the idea behind my new CD, “I Love a Piano,” recorded at Old South Church and just released at the church’s annual Craft Fair on December 4, 2010.

For the past nine years, I have had the opportunity to share musical works with Old South Church in Boston and its community. For this experience of contributing to the service and life of this inspiring church, I say, “Thank you!” Noting also the appreciation from the congregation, I have often thought of future ways of sharing. During the past summer, I corresponded with Senior Minister, Nancy Taylor, concerning the idea for this CD and an intent of financially helping ongoing efforts to restore and repair the church’s sanctuary organ. Receiving a gracious response, I was soon scheduling rehearsal and recording times for this project, involving almost all original music. So began a three-month musical adventure.

As the insert of the actual CD indicates, the title of the recording, *I Love a Piano*, comes directly from a song of the same name by Irving Berlin. While not moved as much by the song itself in considering the idea for the CD, I found myself very much moved by the sentiment behind the song as well as a gesture concerning the song. Namely, when I was a teenager, I received the sheet music of this song from another member of my then spiritual home. Rather

than commenting on hearing the same *Prelude in C#* by Bach on piano Sunday morning after Sunday morning, this church member supported me in practicing to get it right: I’m still grateful for that encouragement—of me and of other young musicians.

As for the CD itself, it contains seven original works for piano solo, a new original work for soprano saxophone and piano, plus *Clair de lune* by Claude Debussy. While I could go on describing the pieces represented in the recording, here are my “top ten” bits of information to share with you.

1) *Bells* (1991) dates from my college days at Harvard: the minor third repeated in the opening section and the ending imitates the bell of the university’s Memorial Church.

2) *A Summer’s Afternoon* (2008) appears on my first recording effort for the Old South Congregational Care and Support committee: *For Everything There is a Season*, and it is recorded here on the Gordon Chapel’s newly restored Mason & Hamlin instrument.

3) *Homage* (2004) derives its inspiration from specific works of Beethoven and Chopin, also cast in “C-sharp minor;” but it seeks to depict moonlight and mystery on its own terms.

4) *Seascape* (2003) intends to mirror different perspectives of light and ocean waves, especially from Rockport, Massachusetts (where the piece was conceived).

5) *Wedding Bouquet* (2010) represents a musical tribute to a cousin’s marriage and seeks to depict different floral colors in an impressionistic way.

6) *I’d Rather Be...* (2010) has an alternative title of “Daydreaming” with the listener trying to make up his/her mind what direction to take – as the composer is trying to do tonally throughout the piece.

7) *Just Because* (2010) intends to be a piece of leisure, like a “bagatelle” or “little nothing,” for listener and composer; and it intends to feature the piano as an accompanying instrument.

8) *Spring Returns* (2009) intends to depict a return of hope and new life through times of ice and melancholy, particularly for those facing challenging health concerns (the *raison d’etre* for the piece).



Erik is likely more comfortable behind a piano than behind a microphone (photo by George Delianides).

9) *Clair de lune* by Debussy has become a signature piece with my family, including my maternal grandmother who used to play it herself and who also taught me how to play piano from an early age.

10) This CD recording features both of the main pianos at Old South Church, in part from inspiration coming from the instruments' differing timbres, colors, and magnitudes of sound and in part coming from necessity from construction occurring outside the church during the recording process.

I could not close this description of the CD without some important acknowledgments. First, to the ministers and leadership of Old South Church, deep thanks for support and permission for use of space and instruments. Second, to the administration of the church, many thanks for the

creative and practical support in maintaining the recording environment amid many parts of keeping a busy church running. Also, many thanks to the Church School staff and children for patient assistance with a quiet recording environment. Lastly, deep thanks to the "charter members" of the CD, including several members of Old South Church, who also supported the CD from conception to completion.

While printed music and audio samples from this CD will soon appear on a personal website, copies of the CD will continue to be available at the church's Front Desk, with one-half of the proceeds to go toward the Old South Sanctuary organ's repair and restoration. In the end, I hope the recording will serve a greater good as well as mark my appreciation and inspiration from being a member of this spiritual and musical community. ✚

BUTTERFLYFISH TAKES OFF AGAIN WITH *GREAT AND SMALL* *An Interview with Liz & Matt Myer Boulton*



A whole lot of music is going on at Old South Church these days, and one of the most interesting directions taken is by "Butterflyfish" — sometimes known as Old South's "House Band," as they often provide gospel and bluegrass music at Old South worship services. You may remember from our *Summer Reporter 2009* review of their first album, *Ladybug*, that one of their primary objectives with that first CD was to provide singable music for families that speaks to progressive Christian values and stories.

Well, Butterflyfish has built on the success of that first album, and this fall released their second album, *Great and Small*. We thought you would enjoy hearing, in a direct interview, from two of the creators of this new sound, Matt Myer Boulton and Liz Myer Boulton, who along with Zoe Krohne provide the terrific vocals on this new album, as well as writing most of its songs. -- *Evan Shu*

Q: With this second album, is your target audience families with young children? How does writing "children's lyrics" differ from other kinds of song writing?

MATT: From the beginning, we've thought of this project as a "music for all ages" sort of thing. One of the great things about church (and other religious communities) is that it's

one of the only places on earth where the generations sing together, and we envision Butterflyfish in that way. Of course, the genesis of the project was the birth of our two kids, Jonah and Maggie, and as they grow up, the music may shift and change somewhat. But the overall vision is for songs with vibrant, interesting Christian ideas that can be genuinely enjoyed by a three-year-old, her thirty-three-year-old parents, and her sixty-three-year-old grandparents. "From 2 to 92," as they say!

Q: The title song *Great and Small* has an interesting story behind it. Can you recount for us how this song was inspired?

MATT: There's a wonderful collection of Jewish Hasidic folktales, collected by the brilliant Jewish thinker Martin Buber, entitled, *Tales of the Hasidim Later Masters*. And in that collection, there's a wonderful little gem that has always stuck with me, so I decided to write a song about it. Here's the gem.

"Rabbi Bunim taught: Every person should have two pockets. In one pocket should be a piece of paper saying: 'I am but dust and ashes' [Gen 18:27]. When one is feeling too proud, reach into this pocket and take out this paper and read it. In the other pocket should be a piece of paper saying: 'For my sake was the world created' [Talmud: Sanhedrin 38a]. When one is feeling disheartened and lowly, reach into this pocket and take this paper out and read it."

From my point of view, this is the perfect life lesson for all of us (from 2 to 92!), and it vividly evokes what it's like to live a religious life: always evolving, tacking back and forth, endeavoring to stay both humble and courageous.

Q: With your first album, you talked about providing songs with Christian lyrics for children that are very different from what is now out there on the music scene. It seems like *Over There* and *The Gospel Story* are a great examples of that intent. Would you explain your thinking, especially with the song that begins, "I ain't going up to heaven in the sky"?

MATT: That's the line that begins the song "The Gospel Story." There are innumerable songs in the country/folk Americana traditions in which the lyrics talk about going up to heaven, leaving the Earth behind, and so on. Maybe the most famous one these days is "I'll Fly Away" – and that's a song I really do love. But I wanted to write a song in that same style that takes the other point of view: that heaven is "coming down here" to us on earth, not the other way around. As I see it, this "heaven's coming down here" approach is a lot more consistent with the New Testament. After all, Jesus arrives on the public scene preaching not "Repent and fly away to the kingdom of heaven" but rather "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It's right here, "on Earth as it is in heaven," in us and among us and around us, near enough to touch — and though God does promise a great transformation, it doesn't involve leaving the Earth behind. Instead, it involves restoring the Earth (and restoring heaven, too!) into what Isaiah calls "a new heaven and new Earth." That's what that song's about: the gospel here and now.

Q: With *The Old Familiar* you pay tribute to the old, familiar gospel songs of our childhood. And you also include some traditional gospel songs such as *This Little Light of Mine* and *Amazing Grace* with some different takes and even a new verse of your own. Would you describe what role these old familiar songs play in your music and what you wanted to convey with these new renditions of familiar songs?

MATT: A lot of music making is about connecting to the past: a lot of the Christmas carols we just sang this past Christmas, for example, are actually not all that old (many of them are nineteenth century songs), but they were written to sound as if they are a lot older. Part of this is the power of nostalgia — but part of it is the wonderful idea that through music, we connect with generations who've gone before us and with generations that will come after us, since classics like "Amazing Grace" will likely be around for quite a while. So I think familiar songs play a crucial role in human life generally, and in Christian life in particular. You can see it in the word itself: "familiar" songs are really about "family," the Christian family, the human family, all those who've gone before and will come after we're long gone.

Butterflyfish Band members (l to r): Matt Myer Boulton, Zoe Krohne, & Liz Myer Boulton.



LIZ: Matt said everything so well — the only think I would add is that the traditional words of *Amazing Grace* are, well, quite amazing. Every time I sing it I'm reminded of the Easter story which got me thinking: what if there was a verse that explicitly proclaimed the good news of Easter morning. So, that what I tried to do with this verse. It warms my heart to think of families singing about God's amazing grace in beautiful new ways.

Q: How did the music-making of this 2nd album compare with that first album? Are the musicians the same? Did it help that you are now singing more often with these musicians at Old South worship services? Did any of them significantly shape or influence the way these songs eventually came out?

MATT: Zack Hickman arranged the songs and plays upright bass; Charlie Rose (who is often with us in First Worship) plays banjo, pedal steel, and mandolin; Jake Armerding plays fiddle; and Mark Erelli plays guitar. These guys are truly incredible. With this record, we wanted a more "live and jangly" style, and they delivered it beautifully. The song "In the Beginning" is one example of their interpretation: they found a sweet and whimsical groove (whereas I had pictured a sort of Mississippi blues sort of sound), and I like their take on the song much better!

Q. Since you have a ready-made demographic testing sample in your own family, how did Jonah and Maggie react to these new songs. What are their favorites?

MATT: Well, it's a little bit of a special case, because they hear me writing the songs around the house, etc., so they've heard them for a while, and they're basically interested in the *next* album's songs by the time a given album comes out. And on the other hand, they love to hear Mama and Dada sing — so they're biased both against and for these songs! But they tend to like the upbeat numbers: *Great and Small*, *You Be You*, and *The Gospel Story* are all favorites.

Q. Now that the CD has been out a few months, have you had any surprising reactions to any specific songs or to the album in general?

MATT: The songs that have gotten the most attention are *Great and Small* and *The Gospel Story*. But there's also a lyrical, simple lullaby on the record called "All in All" that's caused a bit of a stir. And the song, *Let It Go Down* has been picked up by several reviewers as a standout: it's my attempt to write a song for all ages about a fairly gruesome — but very important — subject, the story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery (in John 8), where Jesus calls on "the one who has no sin" to throw the first stone. Obviously, I don't focus on the adultery part of the story (!), and instead emphasize Jesus' critique of judgmentalism, which really is a theme that cuts across all ages. We in the band talked quite a bit about whether to include this song, but in the end I'm now convinced we made the right decision in including it. Kids deal with difficult issues, too, and they can handle the big ideas of Christian faith more than many adults give them credit for. On our first album, the song *All Sad Songs* is a similar sort of thing, since it deals with sorrow and hope, not typically themes in music meant for kids and families. But kids feel sorrow and hope, too! And at any rate, the reaction to both "All Sad Songs" and "Let It Go Down" have been overwhelmingly positive, so the proof is in the pudding.

Q. What's next for Butterflyfish? Any thoughts for an "adult" CD?

MATT: Yes — as a matter of fact, we're now talking about two things: a Butterflyfish Christmas album, and a spin-off project that's 100% a cappella. Fun!

Q. Okay, we're sold. How and where do we buy this album? Is there a site where we can sample this music?

MATT: Yes; the albums are available at the Old South Church front desk, and may also be sampled/ordered on our website <www.butterflyfishband.com> [or the Old South website <www.oldsouth.org> via *Online Giving*]. Thank you for all your support! Our dream is that this music get out into as

many hands as possible, and that someday it become financially self-sustaining. It's not there yet, but we're stubborn and hopeful — and besides, we're having too much fun to stop now! ✚



Butterflyfish musicians often play bluegrass at First Worship Services.



From <www.angel-guide.com>.

LIFE LESSONS FROM A CEMETERY

By Janet Eldred

I was most recently employed by a certain Victorian burial ground in York, England. And while I have many personal lessons and resonances of that place, I am here, instead, reflecting about Yoncalla Pioneer Cemetery in Oregon, the place where Shannon Applegate writes about in her book *Living Among Headstones: Life in a Country Cemetery*. So, you might consider this Part One of "Life Lessons from Cemetery;" with a continuation, perhaps, in future, after I've had an opportunity to process my own seven years of experiences at York Cemetery.

Shannon is an author and historian who assumed the role of cemetery sexton about 15 years ago. In 2005, her publisher described her book of experiences thus:

When Shannon Applegate inherited ... [the] cemetery ... she began to record [its] history and daily life Soon she found herself exploring ancient and contemporary funeral customs practiced the world over, while burying her family, friends and town folk. Applegate talks with gravediggers, funeral home directors, stone carvers, friends, and philosophers as she examines the universal question of why the living care so much about the earthly setting in which the dead are laid to rest. The result is an illuminating reflection on the longing of the living and the power of hallowed ground.

First, let's consider the setting.

Yoncalla is a small, rural town (population just over 1,000) in mountainous western Oregon, approximately 150 miles north of the California state line. The Applegate family

founded the town, and Shannon is a direct descendant. Her family owned and managed the Pioneer Cemetery for many years, but it's now under the jurisdiction of the Applegate Arts and Heritage Foundation.

The cemetery dates from the early 19th century, sits on five acres, has about 1500 graves and many mature trees, is a bit overgrown, and is entirely maintained by volunteers. It depends upon donations and fees charged for burials for all of its income. Shannon fits in her duties as sexton around the other demands of her life, and over the course of the first few years, she learns a number of lessons about the cemetery, herself, and her community. I'll recount five of those lessons today. These are not earth-shattering or revolutionary; but they bear repeating.

Lesson One: Be prepared to enter a new job—even one you've grown up with—feeling as if you know almost nothing. In fact, assume that the job may be very different from what you've been led to expect. And be prepared to question, soon after you begin, your ability to carry out the work.

When her elderly father—the previous sexton—off-loads shoeboxes of scrawled notes, dog-eared ledgers, and old maps that form the cemetery's records, Shannon quickly learns how unprepared she is for this responsibility. She has to make sense of what is (and isn't) already known before she can begin to understand her myriad tasks. She worries about making mistakes, such as marking the wrong grave to be dug, and dreams about accidents, perhaps a huge limb falling off a tree and shattering a headstone—or worse. Her own feelings of ineptitude (her word) are reinforced by the words and attitudes of patronizing funeral directors, officious town clerks, and bullying relatives of the deceased.

Those of you who think working in a cemetery is peaceful and easy will discover, as Shannon did, that it is anything but. Were it only the dead to contend with, then the answer would be "Yes." But as cemetery workers interact with the living, then the answer is a resounding "No!" Military images are frequently more appropriate: battlefield, minefield, enemy, ally, diplomacy, negotiation, test of wills, security, conflict, death, bereaved, anger, fear, and financial, physical, emotional, and spiritual costs.

A story that unfolds over the course of the book's narrative is that of a man Shannon refers to as the "Obscene Telephone Screamer." Early on, Shannon and some other volunteers had worked to tidy up the cemetery. Soon after, she arrived home to find a vicious and threatening message on her answering machine, shouting about valuable articles that had been 'stolen' from a stillborn baby's grave. As

Shannon recounts the message and her fears for her safety to a colleague, she ends by saying, "I guess it takes nerves of steel to be a cemetery sexton, all right, and I just may not be up to it."

Lesson Two: Rules help, but don't follow them slavishly. Think through why they exist and be prepared to amend them in the light of new evidence and understanding.

All churchyards, council cemeteries, and private burial grounds have rules and regulations. These are for safety, security, and appearance. When it comes to objects on graves—which we might collectively term "grave goods"—what is special and meaningful to one person can be tacky or even vulgar to another.

Graves thus become contested spaces, where families act out their feelings on the surface while Shannon tries to maintain a balance between protecting "a lovely green space, filled with history" on the one hand and the rights of grave owners on the other. She also considers how everything—memorabilia and bodies alike—gradually disappears, and so can be left alone to do so. She comes to a position of compromise and writes, "I never wanted to forget the [cemetery's] oh-so-human purpose as a place to mourn the dead."

Lesson Three: No matter how we might handle our grief, everyone is different, and so it does no good to expect others to behave as we do.

During the course of Shannon's story, her brother and her father both die, and she loses several close friends within the small community of Yoncalla. We also discover that she lost a baby granddaughter a few years before. And, just as she learns to accept other people's taste in grave ornaments, Shannon works to see grief from their perspective.

The poet Emily Dickinson writes,

*I measure every grief I meet
With analytic eyes;
I wonder if it weighs like mine,
Or has an easier size.*

Dickinson wonders if others feel the pain of grief as deeply as she does, and in the end decides that it's best to presume it hurts as much. This understanding begins to dawn on Shannon as she considers the different people in her small community who all have an emotional claim on the cemetery. With respect to the Obscene Telephone Screamer, she asks herself:

"How long will it take you to get over a baby you will never know, yet lingers in your consciousness, feeling more real than many things in life?" [she asks herself]. "What's the timetable, the proper period or method of mourning? And does everyone get to feel grief or is it just for the chosen few?" Grief happens to everyone, I realized, but in some people it just comes out sideways.

Lesson Four: Forgive. Forgive yourself. Forgive others.

People can become abusive in the most unlikely circumstances; how will you react? One of my favorite Bible verses is from Proverbs (15:1): "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." How very true!

This lesson doesn't come easy, as Shannon keeps encountering more and more people in her small town who are related to the Obscene Telephone Screamer. After the very long process of tracking down who might be responsible for arranging burial of a local man's ashes (himself related to *that* family), and meeting up with behaviors that frequently leave her speechless, Shannon privately gives vent to her frustrations while driving her car.

Something is rushing through me. It is all I can do not to turn off at the first gas station exit where there is bound to be a phone booth. I want to call the half-brother; only I didn't get his name. I want to call the bank teller: Obscene Telephone Screamer? I'll show you a screamer! "What's the matter with everybody?!" I want to yell into the receiver: "Can't we forgive and forget? Can't we be decent? Take your un-love and choke on it!"

It's very difficult to forgive others their sometimes inconsiderate behaviour, even when intellectually you know that it's probably not personal—you just happen to be in the way of their anger or frustration. In Shannon's case, she is a *role* (the cemetery official) not a *person* (that is, a neighbor in the community). And it's especially hard when you label others, making them less than human. This is why we join Lala Winkley and all others who have written a version of the Lord's Prayer in saying: "forgive our weak and deliberate offences, just as we must forgive others when they hurt us".

Lesson Five: We are, in the end, only responsible for our own actions and thus only able to change ourselves.

Buddha said, "My actions are my only true belongings. I cannot escape the consequences of my actions. My actions are the ground upon which I stand."

In the final chapter of her book, Shannon describes her chance encounter, at the local gym, with the partner of the Obscene Telephone Screamer—the mother of the stillborn baby. As each gradually realizes who the other is, they have a quiet conversation about what has happened between Shannon and the various people in the woman's extended family.

There was no question about it: The family of the woman across the room was largely responsible for a lesson I had received concerning tolerance. It had been inadvertent, very unpleasant, and delivered in anger; but it was nonetheless a lesson worth having. And it occurred to me . . . that other families in Yoncalla . . . had also taught me things . . . I had learned about the community of the living, from the community of the dead . . .

[I] had done some raging of my own because I was angry that other people were not doing what I perceived to be their part. I felt superior. I branded a whole family and the horses that they had ridden into town. I put them on my 'list' . . . How long was I going to hold on to my resentment, a resentment that made me behave in a way I didn't like?

It all seemed very Confucian: My primary responsibility was my own "right conduct." If the reprehensible, average, and good were so intermixed in other human beings as to be confusing and frustrating, it was also true of myself . . . As I struggled with an emerging sense of compassion and the depth of my own anger, I asked myself if I were willing to forgive the Obscene Telephone Screamer. If I weren't, was I at least willing not to call him that?"

Shannon and the woman end their encounter by each making a simple apology to the other. And Shannon is thankful for the understanding, at last, that both she and others can change.

Those are five of Shannon Applegate's life lessons from a cemetery.

I'll leave you with a bonus lesson, a quotation from Bostonian Ralph Waldo Emerson. I kept this quote taped to my computer at York Cemetery, so I could see it every afternoon before I went home:

"Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could; some blunders and absurdities no doubt crept in. Forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day; you shall begin it well and serenely." ✚

Old South Associate Member Janet Eldred, now living in York, England, regularly sends us her spiritual reflections from "over the pond."



RENAISSANCE GENTLEMAN OF JAZZ

by Joe Sardaro and Evan Shu

While a common sight at Old South Church worship services and fellowship gatherings, Joe Sardaro maintains a low profile at OSC. Soft spoken and gentlemanly, he quietly enjoys the many musical offerings at Old South as well. But unless you talked with him in depth, you would never know that he is quite an accomplished musician in his own right, with recorded albums, spanning *both* the vinyl and CD eras (*Lost in the Stars*, *Protege*). In 1988, a *LA Times* review described his voice as having “such a degree of warmth, relaxation and jazz feeling that only the pickiest of listeners would find fault with his delivery.”

Joe Sardaro began his musical interests the obvious way — his oldest brother was a professional guitarist and singer, and his father was a wonderful musical talent, immigrating to America from Italy, playing the guitar and singing hundreds of Italian folk songs. Needless to say, there was always music in the Sardaro house in suburban Philadelphia.

Joe also had a natural art talent and was preened for a career in art. Although he did go off to art college, he still had a tremendous desire to sing and learn music. On Saturdays, he would commute in downtown Philadelphia, not far from his art school, and study with the best vocal teacher in town. Several years of this dual life and now wanting to stretch out with a more jazz influenced approach, he studied with Norma Mendoza, who was married then to the popular Philly jazz piano player Jimmy Wisner.

More study with other teachers continued until the memorable moment in 1960 when Joe met his main vocal jazz influence and good friend, the renowned Anita O'Day. Anita was performing at a local jazz club, the Showboat Lounge, and Joe got the rare opportunity to meet her. When

she heard that he was a singer and vocal student, she invited him up on stage to sing a song — an experience that changed Joe's life.

Joe did the jazz standard, *Just in Time*, which was from the then current Broadway hit *Bells Are Ringing*, and Anita really like what she heard. She gave Joe a lot of encouragement and told him to quit those formal voice lessons and instead learn theory and harmony, and then just “sing, sing, sing!”

Joe took Anita's advice and began theory classes, but in 1961 the US Army had other things in mind and Joe was drafted. While in the service, he was assigned to Special Services and spent his military career at Fort Lewis, Washington, putting together variety shows in the service clubs on post. He later transferred out to Ankara, Turkey, where he sang with a jazz band of Turkish musicians six nights a week at the American Officers Club. These Turkish musicians knew all of the American standard songs and were great musicians who played like their American jazz counterparts.

After his military service ended, Joe returned to the states and tried working around the Philadelphia area with some young bands, but he knew that the best way to grow would be to go to New York City. So, in 1970, he moved to Manhattan.

During this time, he kept in touch with Anita O'Day and they became very good friends. Over the next 10 years, he spent a lot of time with her, and she gave him many tips on singing and developing his own style. Whenever he attended her shows, she always invited him up to sing. In the meantime, he was making his living doing interior design work for Bloomingdales and Macys, while continuing to sing at night in NYC jazz clubs.

In 1980, Anita convinced Joe to move to Los Angeles. Over the next four years, they were inseparable. In 1984, she published her book *High Times, Hard Times* and then moved out of LA. But soon thereafter, they were both booked into the Vine Street Bar and Grill and so were able to continue to work together. Anita O'Day passed away in 2006 at the age of 87. Joe recorded dedicated his most recent CD, *Protege* to her memory in 2008, saying, “I was very impacted by her sound and bought every album I could find of hers. . . . I hope you like my tribute to Anita!”

During the 80s, Joe also continued his progress toward a full relationship with God. He began reading his Bible and sang in a Presbyterian Church choir for eleven years. His



The LA Times said Joe Sardaro has "such a degree of warmth, relaxation and jazz feeling.."

search for God continued even as he became desperate as he was broken by the vagaries of life as the California economy took a nose dive in the early 90s. He pulled together his last bit of assets and with seed money from his family, he opened an antique and decorative furniture store in Northridge, California. But then in 1994, the Northridge earthquake hit and destroyed his shop. He put what was left in storage and with the encouragement of musician friend Rebecca Paris, he moved to Boston.

He arrived in Boston homeless and penniless but still devoted to God. He was baptized in Christ in September 1994. He feels like God has used all the circumstances of his life, both good and bad, to bring him to the point of true discipleship. He now feels the hand of God on him each and every day. He is now retired and is excited to have more time for prayer, Bible study, and yes of course, for music. He has toyed with the idea of putting together a new CD of spiritual jazz songs.

In addition to Joe's CDs (*Lost in the Stars*, *Protege*), he has been working with Jazz trio performing live in jazz clubs as well as senior housing all around Boston and bringing his songs — colored by a lifetime of experience — to many. We are richer to have him in our midst. ✝



The Willie Sordillo Trio helps those at Jazz Worship to feel nearer to God.

Angel Choir from Christmas Carols Old & New, 1871



MUSIC MAKES ME FEEL NEARER TO GOD . . .

from the Old South Forum

Editor: We asked members of the Old South Forum to complete the sentence, "Music Makes Me Feel Nearer to God . . ." and the answers we got were so good, we just had to share them with you. Enjoy, and may you continue to hear the music in your hearts this whole year long.

Music helps me feel nearer to God ... when I sing. Sometimes I find singing a favorite hymn is akin to prayer. Doesn't matter if it's in church with hundreds of other voices, or walking around town, while I'm driving or stuck in traffic. "Joy to the World", "Just as I am", "Blessed Assurance", "Be Thou my Vision" so many others, all prayers.

— Candace Kosturko

Music helps me feel closer to God because music moves, challenges, thrills, and engages me. And sometimes the beauty is almost too much to bear. Much like God! — Sally Peabody

Music helps me feel nearer to God because it is one of the everyday miracles that is proof of God's existence and continuing creativity. If it weren't for music and babies, I'm not sure my faith would be where it is. — Willie Sordillo

Music helps me feel nearer to God when I am singing with my family and see the joy in my children's faces!

— Kate Grant

Music helps me feel closer to God when I can hear a "still, small voice of calm."

— Erik Gustafson

Music helps me feel nearer to God because the good Lord doesn't mind when I'm off-key.

— Pam Roberts

Music helps me feel nearer to God when it is sublime music that I share with those I love, including those at Old South!!

— Sam Ou

“Be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all time and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
— *Ephesians 5:18-21*

Music helps me feel nearer to God when I get chills up my spine because the Old South Ringers are playing so well!
-- *Peter Coulombe*

In your concord and harmonious live, Jesus Christ is sung... (so) become a choir, that being harmonious in love, and taking up the song of God in unison, ye may with one voice sing to the Father through Jesus Christ.”

Ignatius of Antioch from Christian Century
(January 11, 2011. Thanks to Dick Yeo.)

Music helps me feel nearer to God when I hear and sing good gospel music. I feel like I know what it must have felt like to speak in tongues and feel God's pleasure!
— *Evan Shu*

Music helps me feel nearer to God because it is a reciprocal gift full of the rich nuance of holy dialogue -- both praise and blessing present in every song. That aching space between the reaching fingers of the deity and humanity on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel? Music! — *Adriana Repetto*

Music helps me feel nearer to God when the Early Worship pickup choir sings . . . superb choir and solos on “Wade in the Water” just this past Sunday. That pick-up choir is just tops.
— *Jeff Makholm*

Music helps me feel nearer to God when the Old South Choir wraps me in a musical hug when we sing. My body resonates with the bass voices behind me and reflects the energy of the congregation beaming at me ‘til I shine with the joy that must be God's love!
— *Carol Blair*



The Old South Choir wraps us in a musical hug.

The Old South Ringers will send chills up and down your spine (photo by George Delianides).



Music helps me to feel nearer to God because it calms me, and also informs me about our God-given human potential.
— *Ginny Crane*


Music helps me feel nearer to God when . . . my spirit longs for expression and my sighs are too deep for words alone.
-- *Ken Orth*

I'm not a church-goer, but the music of the Jazz worship service makes me feel closer to God than I ever have.
-- *Anonymous*

Music presents and illustrates for me, in the first place, the infinite transcendence and depths of what and/or who, in the pathetic limitations of human language and words, we call, "God." But, secondly, I see in and through Jesus -- and the wholeness of the Gospel -- the revelation of this "infinite transcendence," in our history, finally, as Love.
-- *Jim Crawford*

Music that stirs my soul and evokes strong emotions helps me feel close to God.
-- *Cal Genzel*

Music helps me feel nearer to God:
... because it represents human creativity;
... when I find myself singing in the most unlikely of places or situations;
... because music can reach me in both my most painful and my happiest moments
-- *Anna Yoder*

[Because of singing] .. We seemed to remember more readily that each one . . . had a voice, and that it was best for the whole group if each voice was heard. We discovered that the sound of all our voices together could be beautiful... Our singing modeled the kind of community to which God was calling us, and we declared the glory of God a little more faithfully for having listened to the wisdom of the song.
— *Steven R. Guthrie* from “United We Sing”
(*Christian Century*, Jan. 11, 2011 courtesy of Dick Yeo). 

Old South Reporter



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*“If that drum beats powerfully enough—
studies show that our hearts will literally
start to beat at the same time as well. And
if we're singing together and breathing
together and our hearts are beating
together, then it's like we're one body--”*

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Old South Reporter

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essays, and commentaries

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