

# Music Helps Build Gospel Messengers

“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts” (Colossians 3:16).

I write this article from the front of a fifty-seven-seat motor coach. Behind me, fifty-six seminarians are catching a quick nap on the first day of our spring choir tour. Their nap is well deserved. Since they returned to campus after Christmas break, they have been hard at work—digging through commentaries, wrestling with languages, crafting sermons, penning papers, and leading lessons. All of this is done so that the Word of Christ might have its way with these future full-time proclaimers of the gospel!

The fifty-six men on the choir tour have put in extra work, roughly the equivalent of an extra three-credit course, as they meet three times a week to learn, practice, polish, and then memorize an hour and fifteen minutes of music. You can hear the program slowly taking shape as their anthems echo through the hallways of the seminary’s classroom building. At first, the sounds are hesitant and shaky; the mistakes are obvious. But over time, a program is built. And then they go off to sing to the saints in WELS churches across America.

But this is key: as they build a program to take on the road, the music they sing is building and having its way with them. How could it not? The gospel of Jesus goes to work in them through the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs they sing. How wonderful that fifty-six unique creations of God sing the praises of their Creator. Baptized, they praise the triune God who washed them. As God’s redeemed, they proclaim the Redeemer’s work. As men who have been raised from death to life, they sing of Christ, the



resurrection and the life. The music in their mouths is directly connected to the faith in their hearts. For months, they have been internalizing the Church’s great devotional texts. As they do, the Spirit is building them up from the inside out. The music they sing forms them. And then it moves them.

It moves them to sing so that they might teach and admonish the saints with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Their music does much more than “beautify a service” or produce pretty sounds in a sanctuary. The gospel of Christ saturates their song. Their music is a sonic sermon that comes in different musical styles, from various cultures, with a variety of instruments—all for this purpose: the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to his people!

And God’s people are listening. As the director, my back is always to the congregation as I direct the choir. But the men of the choir often tell me

what they observe in the pews. They see the impact their proclamation has on the faces of God’s people: the head resting on a shoulder as a song comforts them; the tears welling up in their eyes as they reflect on the “glory I shall see” while mourning the loss of a loved one. They witness it in the joyful reactions of God’s people after the concert. They frequently receive thanks from new Christians or even non-Christians who listened and now understand more about Christ than when they first sat down and opened the program.

The Seminary Chorus has helped to build men for full-time ministry for ninety-five years. Since their very first public appearance on April 19, 1931, the chorus has helped build others up with the sounds of salvation. The Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes! †

*Aaron Christie serves as director of the Seminary Chorus, as dean of chapel, and as professor of worship and preaching.*