

Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15

It is good to give thanks to God,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
to declare your steadfast love in the morning,
and your faithfulness by night,
to the music of the lute and the harp,
to the melody of the lyre.

For you, O God, have made me glad by your work;
At the works of your hands I sing for joy.
The righteous flourish like the palm tree,
And grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
They are planted in the house of God,
they flourish in the courts of our God.
In old age they still produce fruit;
They are always green and full of sap,
Showing that God is upright;
God is my rock and has no unrighteousness.



“Music Mends Minds”

*With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms,
hymns, and spiritual songs to God..*

Colossians 3:16b

In his reflection on this spiritual practice Rev. Quinn G. Caldwell wrote: There are about 5,400 species that make complex, intentional, repeatable, musical vocalizations. That is, there are about 5,400 species that sing. The majority live in the trees, a few live in the oceans, a very few live underground, but there is one---only one---singing species that lives on the ground: us. Another thing: humans are the only singing species with a precise and shared sense of rhythm, which is what allows us to sing together. Two birds might sing the same song, but they cannot sing it together. Another thing: if a roomful of people sings at the same time, they start to breathe at the same time as well. Some studies suggest that if the drumbeat or bass line is strong enough, their hearts will begin to beat together, too. And if we're singing together and breathing together, their hearts will begin to beat together, too. 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 whose body it is. Another thing: all the other species stop singing when danger approaches. But humans sing louder the closer the danger gets. We sing together, and we become large, and we do not back down. So come racism, and "We Shall Overcome" you. Come fear, for "It Is Well with My Soul." Come war, for tonight is your "Silent Night." Come death, for "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today." So come suffering, for 'Love Lifted Me.' Come, all ye faithful, and sing.'

That's exactly what the '5th Dimension' music group does to heal their suffering minds. The group started up years ago after Alzheimer's began stealing memories from pianist Paul Lavensky. When the disease started affecting language centers of his mind, and he and his wife stopped talking, she went to work to find an alternative way to communicate. What she noticed was that piano notes and musical tunes were not affected by the loss of his loss of memory and speech. Even on the days he could not remember her name, he could sit down at the piano to play and sing, without flaw, "Fly Me to the Moon." She also noticed that while he played he seemed deeply satisfied, less depressed, and energized. That's when she started to think that if music was helpful to him it could be

helpful to others. David Levithan (21st century) said: "Remember that at any given moment/There are a thousand things/You can love.' So she heeded an inner call to act; to bring together musicians suffering with dementia, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson in hopes of relieving the suffering of isolation through the mutual love of music. When the 'Fifth Dimension' plays together their shared language of music makes a difference in alertness, interest in life, and cognition. It's a 'she/he's back!' anti-dote for the suffering that comes with one's beloved 'slipping away'. It's a deeper place than memory to connect with others in the present moment.

UCLA researcher Marco Yacaboni is providing the science for how music mends minds. His studies show that those hours of week practicing an instrument lays down 'muscle memory' in the brain which is NOT impacted by memory. Music builds emotionally bound channels of communication in the brain that are resistant to negative distraction. The joy of making music creates newness of life for the person in the moment. For the person suffering with dementia that can't speak clearly but can play the harmonica, s/he delights in the freedom to communicate with others by playing a tune. And for the drummer suffering with Parkinson whose tremors stop as long as s/he keeps playing those drums . . . the whole body beats with 'Free at last! Free at last! Free at last!'

Music mends minds by making deep intrapersonal and interpersonal connections. In psalm 92 we find the psalmist listening to the music of the lute and the harp and following the melody of the lyre to connect with the steadfast love and faithfulness of God. Here, notes of thankfulness become faith's muscle memory for mending the soul's disconnect in the mind.

World Peace Prayer

Loving God, who, in Christ is eternally creating humanity anew, lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth, from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace; let peace fill our hearts, let peace fill our world, let peace fill our universe. Amen.

