

The Goddard Spirituals Concerts

In the summer of 1994, I attended a National Church Music Conference in Montreat, North Carolina; there it was my great delight to take a week-long conducting course from a choral conductor whom I had admired for years. I was very excited, and basically ate up everything he offered to us with a spoon. Everything — that is until he made a statement that seemed to issue a personal challenge. That statement was, and I quote, "White choirs cannot sing spirituals well."

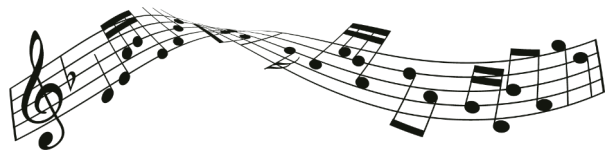
Historically, the quickest way to prod me into action is to tell me that I can't do a given thing. The previous spring, the Chancel Choir had performed William Henry Smith's "Ride the Chariot" and had done what I thought to be an exemplary job. So let's just say that out of a spirit of challenge, the Chancel Choir had crafted an entire concert of African American Spirituals.

By the following year, God had purposefully engineered a crossing of the paths between Barbara Tucker and me, and after Goddard had fallen in love with her, and considered her a must for our concerts, she introduced us to the musical miracles that she directed named A Chosen Few — a stunningly gifted group of singers with whom we have shared literally decades of love and musical partnership.

The Covid 19 pandemic conspired to silence us and our annual concerts; the last one held was October 2019. That is why we are so eager to reinstate this treasured tradition and attempt once more to provide church and community with this unique opportunity for music and worship.

Thanks from the bottom of our hearts for being here this evening.

George Mann and Sami Sue Welch



Goddard UMC Chancel Choir presents



Goddard United Methodist Church
Sunday, October 1, 2023
6:00 pm

"Follow the Drinking Gourd"

Many escaping slaves, including Harriet Tubman, James Pennington, and Josiah Henson, may have "followed the drinking gourd" to freedom. The song "Follow the Drinking Gourd" talks about people escaping slavery by following clues to go north to freedom.

Some Clues About the Words:	
CHORUS	EXPLANATION
Follow the drinking gourd. Follow the drinking gourd.	The "drinking gourd" alludes to the hollowed out gourd used as a water dipper. Here it is a code name for the Big Dipper constellation, which points to Polaris, better known as the North Star. The slaves knew this group of stars as the "drinking gourd" and used it to stay on a north course.
For the old man is awaitin' for to carry you to freedom If you follow the drinking gourd.	"Ole man" is nautical slang for "Captain". According to accounts, an Underground Railroad operative and former sailor, Peg Leg Joe, would meet the runaways on the banks of the Ohio. Of course if he were unable to meet them then another operative would to assist them in the right direction.
VERSE 1	Taken together, this verse suggests escaping in the spring and heading North to freedom.
When the sun comes back And the first quail calls,	These are signs that winter is ending and the days are getting longer. Quails begin their breeding calls early in April.
VERSE 2	Describes how to follow the route north from Alabama.
The river bank will make a very good road, The dead trees will show you the way. Left foot, peg foot, traveling on	The river bank here is that of the Tombigbee River in Mississippi. "Left foot, peg foot" talks about outlines of a human left foot and a round spot in place of a right foot that were left on dead trees along the river bank. If Peg Leg Joe is the man behind this song, these may be his marks.
VERSE 3	Describes the route through northeastern Mississippi and into Tennessee.
The river ends between two hills, There's another river on the other side	When the Tombigbee River ends near Woodall Mountain and a neighboring lower mountain, slaves should go north over the hills until they come to the Tennessee River.
VERSE 4	Describes the end of the route, in Paducah, Kentucky
When the great big river meets the little river, For the old man is awaitin' for to carry you to freedom	The Tennessee River joins the Ohio River. Once slaves crossed the Ohio, they were in free territory. People from the Underground Railroad could help them as they escaped to freedom.

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Spirituals Concert 2023

Steal Away to Jesus
Spiritual, arr. Raymond Haan, George Mann, organ

You Must Have That True Religion
Spiritual, arr. Roland M. Carter

Deep River
From "Feel the Spirit", arr. John Rutter, Mary King, soloist

Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel
Spiritual, arr. Ken Berg

Hedreich Nichols
Phillip Hall, accompanist

I Love the Lord
Richard Smallwood, arr. George Mann, Hedreich Nichols, soloist

Offertory Prayer by Rev. Chase Green

Offertory
Spirituals Medley
Phillip Hall

Follow the Drinking Gourd
Traditional, arr. André J. Thomas

Fix Me, Jesus
Spiritual, arr. Mervyn Warren, Hedreich Nichols, soloist

Great Camp Meeting
arr. Lela M. Anderson

In His Hands
Traditional, arr. Tim Osiek, edited Dan Forrest

Total Praise
Richard Smallwood, arr. George Mann

We Shall Walk Through the Valley
Spiritual, arr. Benjamin Harlan

Postlude
Phillip Hall