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Video Subject? 2/24 FHE Musical Number: Crash or Glorify God?

by Sterling D. Allan, 228033; B2-1 101A

To: Sterling Vanwagonen, ~~SOLID Videographer~~

2/22/25 (; 3/1/25)

Hello Sterling,

Congrats on stepping into the role of video documentarian for SOLID highlights (if I understand correctly — let me know if this is incorrect). I'd like to bring to your attention something that could be a great representation of SOLID excellence and overcoming of obstacles.

This coming Mar. night, the Don Robinson choir that I've been directing, starting this year, will be performing "Come Thou Fount" (which we/congregation sang last week) for FHE, at the end of the meeting.

I could wrote a booklet about the story of all the dynamics of bringing this about. It's been quite the saga. "Herding cats" gives an idea of what it's been like to bring this about. All of us involved, from what I can gather, are "on the autistic spectrum," each being gifted, but also having idiosyncratic eccentricities that clash. ~~Last night/~~ Yesterday ~~evening~~ afternoon, it nearly melted down to a total collapse. Things have resolved substantially since then, but are still on edge a bit.

If things materialize ideally (which I hope they will) ^Volunteer Don Robinson will accompany us on the piano (98% probable); Steve B1 will sing bass (60% probability, key pushback); Jason B1 will sing tenor (75%, tends to follow Steve); I'll sing alto & direct (100%); Chris B1 Fairbanks will sing lead (100%); ~~and~~

John will sing lead (~~80~~ 90%); Sam will sing lead (80%, confidence issue); J.C. will sing lead (80% confidence — effected by Steve pushback). Chris and J.C will do a guitar duet between vs. 2 & 3, which is absolutely gorgeous, with J.C. playing the melody while Chris does a counter ~~melody~~ harmony. ~~playing~~ It's one of the most beautiful things I've ever heard. That's followed by 4-part a capella singing with interpretive meter that augments the lyrical feeling, ending with a ff refrain ending.

If we do it well (which we can), it could be one of the most beautiful renditions of that song ever. (5% probability)

Here are some dynamics of note: (Betty)

- Last Wed., Sam went from thinking he couldn't sing, sitting off to the side, ~~to being ready to~~ then joining us, singing ~5 notes low, not realizing it; I calibrated how (up, up, up) at which point he locked in. He picked up the interpretive variation and was performing a capella, ready to go. We practiced another hour today. (with John & me)
- John has not considered himself a singer, doesn't ~~not~~ know how to read music (notes, rhythm, rests), but he's got a great voice. He really resisted when I introduced the interpretive 3rd verse a couple of weeks ago. thinking he couldn't do it.
- John & Sam nearly resigned (left) when I informed them yesterday about Chris & J.C. doing the guitar interlude. Steve & Jason & them & all voted no on guitar interlude last Wed.
- Steve went ballistic yesterday when he found out ~~ab~~ that I planned to plug in Chris & J.C.'s guitar duet for the interlude, after they'd voted no.

- I've never been in a choir where the director didn't run the show music-wise, and the members deferred to his/her preference/call. I'm standing up, and Steve & Jason (& John & Sam following the mob mentality) are fighting that. A choir is not a democracy / mobocracy.
- J.C. was the previous director, until the practice night changed from Tu → W, and he has a conflict (class) that night. He's tending to lend to the "democracy" but was still practicing his guitar part this morning, where Sam & John & I were practicing. I pointed out to them how good he sounded, and they agreed. I'm now that I'm now unfolding
- I've never directed a choir performance before, but see a gift there.

Monday night, we plan to practice for the hour (FHE) in another, small room (w/piano), then perform it at the end of FHE.

I'm thinking that filming excerpts of that practice will be interesting, to catch some of these festering dynamics and see how we rise above it — or don't. It could crash. And, of course, it would be good to have a good recording of the performance.

I'll be writing a note ~~to~~ via tablet to Chaplain Hall to maybe get his recording equipment set up (instrument impairing the piano output). I'll be informing John & Sam of the possibility of videoing this. I think I mentioned it to Chris, who will be talking to Steve & Jason at church tomorrow (hopefully).

There are a lot of moving parts here. A lot of things that could go bad. My experience is that the

best variant rarely shows up. Will this be one of those exceptions? I hope so.

I haven't mentioned Don's component. He is a masterful pianist (by ear and music) but has been holding back on his intro and interludes, ~~simp~~ over simplifying them to ~~to~~ the mediocrity that the choir has manifest hitherto (prior to my becoming director). And the Steve faction appreciates that (don't push us out of our rut!)

Don has seen me as "strident", and worries I'm driving people away. I see myself as gentle but firm and gifted in bringing out natural talent.

Don is likely to be disconcerted when he finds out about my adding in Chris & J.C.'s guitar duet for the 3rd interlude before the a capella 3rd verse — as we practiced w/ Chris last Wed, but they voted no (wrongfully). I'm putting my foot down.

It was divine intervention how J.C. was practicing his part in the back of the chapel yesterday while Chris & I were practicing his guitar interlude on the front of the room, then we invited J.C. over. They're both excellent and have a great chemistry together. It was nearly weeping it was so gorgeous.

J.C. has been working on this for 4+ months.

p.s. I'd like to get this letter back so I can post it to my website (Sam's mom does that for me).

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Follow Up

When I showed up Mon. night, Bro. ~~Eaton~~ Layton & Bro. Robinson told me we would be doing the song at the opening of FHE and would do it the way we last practiced it ~~last~~ the Wed. night prior. I tried to make a case for how I wanted to do it, but their minds were firm (primarily Bro. Robinson).

Bro. Robinson's piano intro was very botched. I saw that as a sign that he was out of line with what God wanted to happen here. Other than that, the song went well. John sounded great on lead. The ensemble followed my directions for the interpretive a cappella verse 3 precisely, unified. I had a cold, which ~~made~~ ruled out being able to sing high, so I sang alto an octave lower. John said Sam didn't miss a note.

Afterward, individually, I told each group member that, ~~it was~~ as good as it was — and it was good — if we'd been able to do what I wanted (w/ guitar duet interlude, and able to practice the how of FHE and perform ~~sing~~ at the end) it would have been twice as good.

Ironically, J.C. later railed on me for the vs. 3 ~~is~~ interpretive version. He ~~said~~ said it tormented him, and he had a hard time sleeping that night. Wow. That really puzzles me. I thought and am confident that it brought out the message of the lyrics.

Another (I see as demon-induced) obstacle Mon. night was that Chris wasn't allowed in by the officer who said he didn't have his levels. Chris was able to get that solved by another officer later.