

A Reflection from our Director of Music, Scott Hayes

Wednesday, August 9, 2023

Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.

Psalm 46:10

As many of you are aware, I spent my upbringing in West Virginia as a Methodist pastor's kid (PK). When questioned about my specific location within West Virginia, my response usually leans towards "everywhere", given that we resided in four different parts of the state (along with a year in Florida) throughout my 18 years of childhood. Growing up in West Virginia was a wonderful experience: the community was welcoming, there were abundant opportunities for youth, and a multitude of activities to engage in.

During my recent vacation, my family and I revisited West Virginia. This trip marked the first occasion I could show my daughter some of the meaningful landmarks from my past. We visited the church where I had my first job as organist (complete with the pizza place on the corner), went horseback riding in Pipestem State Park (also where I went for the first time), visited the church where Amy and I were married, among other activities and places. It was great fun, and for the most part, Alice humored my trip down memory lane!

Recently, a fellow church musician, Jason Abel, wrote an article for Virginia Theological Seminary about the value of silence in church. [You can read his article here.](#) His piece prompted me to ponder not only the importance of silence during liturgical moments but also the broader relevance of silence itself. When does it hold profound meaning? When does it become overwhelming? And when does it become indispensable? You'd think as a musician I'd understand this – as the space between the notes is where music is truly made!

I spent my formative years in a stunning location (well, for about 9 months of the year... as West Virginia winters can be quite desolate!). However, during the 18+ years of my residency there, I wasn't able to value the beauty that enveloped me. I was too busy growing up, anticipating what was next, to notice the splendor of what was around me. Now, 21 years later, I see it all differently – and it's peaceful. It's a wonderful place to just be.

Silence, by definition, is the absence of sound. That said, it can be so many other things than just "quiet". Silence can have emotional, physical, and visual dimensions. It can mean letting go of something that's troubling you. It can mean lying in a hammock staring at the stars. It can mean reading a good book. It can mean going on a drive to the beach. It can mean going to church and being around a beloved community. And yes, it can just be "quiet", a state of simple existence.

While silence can take on various forms, it consistently requires us to allocate time, much like God's rest on the seventh day. As we navigate busier periods with the start of school and the resumption of programs, I hope to remember to take time to be silent, stop, find my center, and just be with God. I pray that you will find "quiet" as you need it to be as well.