

A Reflection from Scott Hayes, Our Music Director

Wednesday, August 23, 2023

Let the Peoples Praise You, O God

- Psalm 62

In 2016, we started choir camp as a way for kids to give singing a try or for our choristers to get back in the groove of singing. Those early years saw high participation of All Saints' choristers, but over time, the choir camp has become one of our more significant entry points into the choirs.

Last week, we welcomed 17 choir camp participants to All Saints! Each morning, we'd sing, play games, have voice lessons, and share in noonday prayer. The afternoons would be something fun – we'd head out to roller skate, bowl, and play laser tag, among other things. On Saturday, we'd sing the National Anthem for the Richmond Kicker's game, and on Sunday, we'd sing in church – as well as ride some roller coasters at King's Dominion.

It takes a village for these camps to happen! Thanks especially to Diane Hayes (whose name tag read "a.k.a. Mom"); all those who brought food, snacks, or chaperoned; and to Daniel Stipe who helped us write the hymn tune we premiered on Sunday morning.

Each day, we'd end the "serious" time of camp with a short service of Noonday Prayer. As the week went on, the kids would eventually take on the role of the officiant or read a scripture passage or collect. About everyone took part in the service. I'd add a quick "meditation" – usually talking about something that we'd sung in a hymn or read in the service. The last few days, I asked the kids to ask me anything about the church that they'd wondered about (being sure they knew I didn't know everything!). The church building can teach us so much through its art and symbolism. A lot of prayers, scriptures, and hymns have big words that a 2nd grader wouldn't know quite yet. I attempted to decode these strange terms for them as best I could!

This year, it was amazing to see this group of strangers come together and sing God's praises. The kids had a wonderful spirit about each other, too. They were unafraid to jump in and help each other, building one another up. That's what it's all about sometimes – especially in the church.

While I hope that we'll see some of these children come into our choir program and become the faces we see in the choirs, choir camp has become more important than just "recruitment"! It's about sharing a piece of our tradition of music at All Saints with those in the community and gifting those who participate with a seed of inspiration with great potential – musically, socially, religiously, or artistically.