

MUSIC

By Diane Rhoades, member of First Congregational Choir

Being in our choir transforms my experience of what it is to sing; more like a vehicle – less like a performance. Our choir is a ministry that comes together in Spirit – in our longing and our belonging. I cry when we practice today's anthem *Child of God*. I imagine Mark notices and that's fine. Mark's nervous system is composed of music. It is luxurious responding to music with him. It is as wild as it is safe.

The service begins. We come to the part where the choir stands to sing *Child of God*. I love the silence before we begin. It is a gathering silence. Mark plays a beautiful introduction, which, all of a sudden, feels like a diving board...and we are off. We flow into the words, the harmonies. The music connects us – all of us. I see it in the faces of the people sitting in the pews when I am not focused on Mark's mouth. Mark directs brilliantly with his mouth and body language.

My heart bears the weight of the beauty. Words come to life. We are, all of us, weaning away from our dependence on sheet music when we really do know the piece. We practice enough to trust the song to come to life.

Music inspires me to trust in a more vulnerable expression; to let go of what distracts me (like self-consciousness) from finding my way to the soulfulness of the song, of the sound. I love our Thursday rehearsals and our Sunday music offerings. I love that we pray together.

Our choir life is a real ministry in love and the freedom to be ourselves. We are inclusive. We are finding a more soulful sense around what makes for a truly God-blessed choir.

So many people have joined our choir. So many more appreciate it. We create atmospheres that take us to the desert, to the cross, to each other and to our own resurrections. We don't just sing. We become whole together. There is a difference. Our choir is a loving covenant.

Music is a safe place to risk being whole. Making music with the love and direction of someone who welcomes us to our beautiful, life-stirring selves is so sweet.