



RESOUND

North Central ACDA Divisional Newsletter

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REsounding Throughout The Division

May 1980

Church Music Corner

THE CONDUCTORS' PODIUM (Illinois ACDA, Jan. '80) contains an article by Tom Gieschen on the relationship and interdependence of the church musician and the public school music teacher, a relationship about which we have all known but, somehow, to which we probably have given little attention. Did I say known about? I would hope so, because many of us are or have been both simultaneously! Being both, like the tennis player who plays on both sides of the net, we ought to be able to control the total game more effectively.

Read Tom's article, CHURCH CHOIR - MUSIC EDUCATION: MUTUAL SUPPORT.

For about a decade and one-half church choir directors have been hearing the predictions of labor saving devices in the homes, shorter work weeks, and an increase in the availability of disposable, personal leisure time. Church musicians were told that as these expectations were fulfilled, it would remove the excuse of people being too busy to participate in the church choir. In the ensuing years, these expectations have come to pass to some extent, but there does not seem to have been a proportionate increase in the available people for church choir membership. This would cause me to conclude that the "too busy" reason was just a convenient excuse all along; and, I guess, we have all really known that. This also makes me conclude that my wife's homemade, practical philosophy is correct when it says, "everybody finds the time to do what they really want to do."

As we look elsewhere for reasons

to explain the paucity of young, interested recruits for the church choir, we come across the incompetent conductor as a prime candidate. In his conducting book† Royal Stanton has some stinging things to say about the relationship between inept conducting and church choir recruitment problems. Even though we don't care to hear these assertions, we must admit that we know this correlation exists. But that is not the point here. Even though there are many unfortunate exceptions, I believe the level of competency and leadership has been generally rising during the last fifteen years in church choir situations. And yet, even in places where good leadership exists, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain a steady stream of interested, new, young people to replace choir members who move away, retire, or disengage from the choir for other reasons.

My thesis in this regard is that there is a direct relationship between the deterioration of public school, elementary and junior high music programs and the low interest in church choir singing on the part of young adults. People generally do not enjoy doing things that they don't know how to do. Since these people have been denied the skills they need to deal with musical notation, they will stay away from church choirs because participation is frustrating rather than satisfying. If during their school years, these people have never been lead to experience the honest thrill of participatory, aesthetic encounter, they do not understand how it can be a rich and rewarding personal experience. Thus, they have no way of knowing that being in a church choir can bring pleasure and excitement; and since their school denied them this insight, they are not

motivated to move past the threshold of non-participation.

If the thesis mentioned above is valid, then several actions should follow. The first is that church musicians should become much more acutely aware that there is a strong relationship between the choir situation and the school music programs in the public and private schools of their parishes. The second result is that church musicians need to become much more active in working with their local school districts to insure that in each school there is a level-by-level music curriculum has identifiable and predictable outcomes. It will no longer do to sit in the church and complain about choral problems and continue to remain uninvolved in what's happening in school music programs. The improvement in the situation will require effort on the part of all of us together.

The church musician should not feel that because he speaks from the point of view of the church he has no influence in public education. He should remember that he is also a citizen of his local school district and that the school musician would welcome his or her active support. Nor should the public school music teacher feel that he or she is now to be training singers for the church. The first concern is the welfare of the child, and the growth and enrichment that are the right of that child. If some benefits of this education happen to be useful in the child's worship life, or to the church, that would be a very nice by-product. This would seem to be one of those rare situations where everyone would benefit.

†Royal Stanton, *The Dynamic Choral Conductor* (Delaware Water Gap, Pennsylvania: Shawnee Press, Inc., 1971), chapter 1.

And In This Corner

Boy, do we have work to do! After attending various workshops and reading sessions last summer and fall, one of our prominent composer-friends wrote: "The junk-rate is incredible! Has everyone gone bananas?" The whole world of choral music is becoming geared to *entertain*. Entertain! Entertain! Entertain!

Schools have gone bonkers over Swing Choirs, with the result that we're rushing headlong toward that day when schools will be turning out a lot of entertainers who could end up illiterate about the classics. Entertain! Entertain! Entertain!

And in church, we're drifting away from the truth that the function of

music in worship is *not* to entertain. The function of music in worship is to *edify* — to *enchant* the Word of God. Music is the servant; the Word is the master. The proper focus of worship is God, not man. (I hasten to add that this is not a call for dull church music!)

I have a friend who directs a church choir, and got pressured into

doing one of those current sincere-but-mindless works that pass for church music. The congregation applauded. *Applauded*, mind you! Now, I'm not opposed to applause in church if it is a spontaneous response to being *edified* — but in this particular case the applause was apparently because the congregation felt *entertained*. Entertain! Entertain! Entertain!

I trust the world will forgive me for not sharing the current commonly-held view that all of life is to be entertained. Sometimes I like to drink from deeper wells — to withdraw from the "hype" and ballyhoo — to learn, to cogitate, to think deeper thoughts, to be edified, to listen for that still small voice of God that comes after the whirlwind has blown itself out.

"Gospel" music (I'm not always sure what that means) seems to be the current rage. And much of the music industry is trying to cash in on it. We're getting a paper-flood of third-rate stuff with no real depth of quality in either music or text. But as my composer-friend (the one who wonders if everyone has gone bananas) points out, it's all "so sincere" — one can "emote to heavenly delights." This reminds me of a comment one of my seminary profs once made: "The presence of the Holy spirit is no excuse for parking your brains!"

Don't get me wrong; I like "Gospel" music at its best. But what bothers me is that whenever some particular style of music emerges as the current vogue, we always seem to get a paper-flood of third-rate stuff from publishers. Church music is not ultimately a question of *style* (I hope we've won that battle!), but of *quality* within each genre — created to *edify* rather than *entertain* per se. Any style of music at its best is potentially a vehicle for worship.

I think the "electronic church" is doing church music a great disservice when it uses music that is entertaining rather than edifying, in order to attract viewers. Then our good church musicians find themselves under pressure from parishioners (and sometimes pastors!) to present similar slick, hyped-up, professional entertainment in their home churches. Entertain! Entertain! Entertain!

Somehow, let's get people back to understanding once again that somewhere between mindless-emoting and correct-dullness is some excellent church music. Church music should be aimed first of all at conveying the Word of God. If it doesn't do that, it is inappropriate. But conveying the Word is no excuse for using any ole lousy music! If the music attracts most of the attention to itself, it is probably entertaining. Music that edifies draws attention *beyond* itself — to the Word.

The church cannot compete with the secular world for entertaining. Nor should it try. That's not what worship is all about.

Current trends are setting church music back several decades. Entertain! Entertain! Entertain!

I hope you will join me in doing whatever you can to re-educate the people. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord with the best we have to offer in music that is truly edifying and appropriate for worship.

*With permission from the author,
Robert Wetzler of AMSJ*

But In This Corner...

Pursuing further the use in church of the so-called "gospel song" or "evangelistic hymn," a question which was raised originally but left unanswered in REsound of May '79, I introduce Arnie, a church organist who can play anything he can whistle, and who works regularly as a music therapist in a state mental hospital — a true story.

Arnie asked and received permission from the hospital superintendent to bring a senile old man who had lost contact with the outer world into the recreation room to see if he could be reached by some kind of music. The old gentleman was unaffected by a great deal of the music which was played; however, when Arnie shifted to "church music", the patient became more attentive and ultimately seized upon one of the "gospel songs," crawled up on the table, pulled his hospital gown up over his head and sang it time after time.

During that brief contact with reality, Arnie asked him what was so significant about that particular song. The dear old soul replied, "That is the song they sang in church the night I was saved."

Is there a place for such music in church?

Great Directors With/Versus Modest Talent

Part of an article by Russell Hammar, originally printed in ACDAM (Mich.) Newsletter, April '78, was quoted in REsound, May '79. His point still intrigues me: how effectively could the "greats" in our business work with the non-professional, the modestly talented, and the general run of our school singers?

Avoiding a name to protect the guilty, I have seen one of them work with a relatively select high school group — I say "relatively select" because they were a select group from a "poor music area" of the state where

I was teaching. Admittedly the tenors (and why do the tenors so often get the lumps?) had slow ears, intonation-wise, but our guest conductor confined his ministrations to reviling them for their problems, with no attempt to suggest remedies.

At a summer teachers' workshop the same director spent much time railing at the sopranos, some of whom were not in the best vocal condition, but he had no suggestions to help improve them in their plight.

On the other side of the coin, I've seen Paul Christiansen work with a similar workshop group (same location, come to think of it) and at the end of the session have them begin to exhibit some of the unique qualities which have made his ideas on choral singing famous.

Likewise, I have had the joy of working on the Brahms GERMAN REQUIEM under Robert Shaw after having shouted bad tenor and unsupported soprano at my slow-eared choir too many times during the school year. When we performed the REQUIEM at the end of the session, my mis-handled vocal chords were in better shape than they had been for years.

It could be excellent practical experience for most directors to observe one-who-can-do-it work with a choir of the calibre of singer which most of us inherit. Incidentally, some of our more unsung heros and heroines who take beautifully performing choirs to conventions could do it, too — better than some of the biggies since they work with that level of talent regularly.

There should be a place for an on-going session like that at one of our conventions where we could observe the spade-work being done with the modestly talented without the expectation of a final polished performance to prove the talent of the choir or to sustain the director's reputation.

It was most edifying — and comforting — at the Madison convention to see Bob Fountain subject his choir and himself to a first go-through, in front of the conventioners, of a number which his group had never seen. It was edifying to know of the solid talent and background which his choir possessed, and comforting to hear their struggle with some of the problems we all face. That sort of session is a real step in the right direction.

Wouldn't it be interesting, and revealing, too, to get 500 general choir singers together in a reasonably well-balanced organization, to have them count off by fives, then to assign all the ones to one directors, the twos to another director, etc., and put them all to work as five independent choirs in open rehearsals? I wonder what the harvest would be??

Keep it in mind for your next convention, either State or Divisional.

Editor's Edifice

With this issue of REsound we say "Our division is dead, long live the divisions." (That's plural.) But our old division isn't really dead, even if it is going to be divided. How can those of us who have made and enjoyed warm friendships with our colleagues from east to west and from north to south in the Mississippi and Ohio River valleys summarily sever those relationships, brush off our hands, and close that chapter of our old musical lives? Not much! While it'll take a bit more doing, we CAN meet again, and yet again, at our National Conventions. We can even attend each other's state and new divisional conventions.

Speaking of Divisional Conventions, the last "old" North Central Convention in Madison was a joy and an inspiration to attend, from the gentle post-mortem of past REsounds by the assembled State, Divisional, and National officers through a wonderful variety of special interest sessions, the Madrigal Dinner, the Ecumenical Choral Evening Service Praise, and a panoply of superb choirs.

The variety of choral organizations with their individual styles and approaches, each with its own particular integrity, showed again that there are many ways to move audiences.

It is heartening to sense, too, the increased concerns of the membership for the state of church music as evidenced by the attention given that facet of our profession in various phases of the Convention.

Although your Editor attended the Ecumenical Service with a brand new, scarcely broken-in Madison cold, it was a thrill to hear and to participate, albeit croakingly, with the estimated 700 choral directors as they raised their voices in unison, in harmony, or in antiphonal singing — yes we CAN read the directions. (It is not necessary that the presiding clergyman read the program to us.) This, coupled with the resident Bethel Lutheran Choir directed by Lawrence Kelliher, and the Glenview (Illinois) Community Church directed by Ted Klinka, plus Paul Manz at the organ and the University of Wisconsin Brass Ensemble — and I must mention the liturgist, the Most Reverend George Wirz, Auxiliary Bishop of the Madison Diocese, and the Cantor whose cantillating of Psalm 23 in Hebrew took us back to the foundations of our faith — was, well, indescribable.

And how refreshing to have the Governor of Wisconsin greet us and discourse briefly and intelligently about music, and to have the Rev. Dr. Robert Borgwardt, pastor of Bethel Lutheran, deliver a homily appropriate to the occasion.

Now that was a convention! If you

missed — but we've harangued the non-attenders before. It is not possible to bask in your old educational juices for long and keep up with the profession. Just don't be a lost cause when the next one comes around.

Thanks, Chuck Thomley, Convention Chair, and all of your cohorts for a prodigious job superbly done!!

Watch Your Tongue

Be careful what you say to your students or your choir, it may come back to comfort you — or to haunt you, depending on their reaction to it.

One of the elder statesmen in our business is quoted as having auditioned a workshop participant and told her, "If I had a voice like that, I'd never sing again!" A student of mine took time out from her college pursuits to marry and raise a family, doing a little substitute teaching on the side in the meantime. On her return to the academic fray, she told me, "I'll always remember one of the things you told us when I was a young student, and I've found it to be only too true." What was the statement, apparently so deserving of being carved in musical marble for posterity? "To be a music teacher you have to become a jackass of all trades." OOF!!

Some one criticized my Dutch-windmill conducting technic in one of the Christiansen workshops, but Olaf said, "Ah, but he has the *spirit!*" And when our college orchestra seemed to ignore the beat during rehearsals, "Papa" Kendrie would carefully put down his baton and say gently, "Ladies and gentlemen, in the beginning there was rhythm." Even we teachers remember!

During my early years as a brash college choir director, I missed a prize (and necessary) bass at the beginning of the second semester. Meeting him on the campus a bit later, I asked him the reason. "Well, I'll tell you," he said, "None of us are trained singers. You ask and we try; but often we go down the hall after rehearsals, look at each other and say, 'Isn't that guy satisfied with anything we do?'"

But our jobs make it necessary that we be critical of the work of our choirs — if, in our sight, we can find nothing more to improve in their performance, we'd better move on or quit.

We must encourage without lulling our singers into non-productive complacency, but, at the same time, be critically constructive so that our brood doesn't lose face in front of their audiences. But not so much that they are tempted to become statistics in our roll books. Be careful what you say and be

careful how you say it. WATCH YOUR TONGUE!

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Coming Conventions

Reported or ferreted out.

Ohio ACDA
State Summer Convention
July 20-22
Wright State University
Dayton, OH
Contact Martha Wurtz

Iowa CDA
Sixth Summer Convention and
Choral Symposium
July 29 through August 1
N. Iowa Area Community College
Mason City, IA
Contact Gary Schwartzhoff
909 Eleventh St.
Charles City, IA 50616

Nebraska CDA
Choral Music Reading Session
and Workshop
August 8-9
Ramada Inn
Grand Island Neb.

Illinois ACDA
Fifth Annual Convention
October 24-25
Northern Ill. University
De Kalb, IL

Minnesota ACDA
State Convention
November 22
St. Cloud State University
St. Cloud, MN

And A Corner For the New

A purist or an ascetic who urges the adoption of the old and the ignoring of the new, unwittingly urges worship of an anachronism and unwittingly neglects the opportunity to commune intelligently with those who still find living in the present to be provoking and stimulating.

Quoted from Russell N. Squire, CHURCH MUSIC, page 108.

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Overstuffed With Stuffers

The space-filling squibs which have been tucked in before, after, and between articles in REsound have elicited more comment from the readers than the articles themselves. One teacher posts appropriate ones, one a day, on her bulletin board which her students check before every rehearsal for the latest kernel (or nut) of choral wisdom.

As the hunter said while being pursued in the snow by an inquisitive bear, "If you like my tracks, I'll make you some more." (Sorry.) Here goes:

Mots from Madison

From Leon Thurman, et al: Vocal Health session:

Float the head above the vertebrae.
To project is not to sing more loudly.
Sing defensively.

From Father Elmer Pfeil: Planning Church Music:

Is anything happening when you worship?
Do you try to sensitize yourself to differences between the novel and the creative?
Select music which is viable.
Is it good for people in their worship, or only as music?
Does it fit gracefully in the place where it is to be used?
Does it express and nourish faith?
Does it affirm that which is being celebrated?
Is it better than silence?
All appropriate music ends up as prayer.

From Robert Fountain: Clinic: Choral Pedagogy:

Music travels through the rests.
Maverick intervals.
Get the jelly out of the tone.
Use a sliding scale of vitality, increase the vitality when the volume decreases.
Be gentle with intervals going up and stingy as hell coming down.

Mots from Meanderings

From Robert Shaw: Workshops: U. of Minn., U. of Ill.

Hold up your hand when you make a mistake and mark it.
Have the last note of the phrase in mind when you sing the first.
Intonation improves with a knowledge of function (leading tone, major/minor 3rds, etc.)
Music works in duration, so make the lapses of time meaningful to self and audience.
No successive short tones are the

same intensity.

Togetherness comes from divided pulse — think 16th notes.

Don't sing successive 8th notes as equal values — sing the second one as a departure.

Art is communication between people who work together.

The reason for the repetition of a note is its urgency.

From Paul Steinitz: Workshop: U. of Ill.

Try to find out what the composer wants — no fancy personal ideas until you've tried his.

A performer (director?) must not only have a heart, but a brain, too.

Do you refuse to add to what exists and risk being dull? Add carefully — perhaps only to underline.

Echo effects are highlights and part and parcel of 18th century works.

If you are too consistent, it is purism gone mad.

A "first time bar." (A first ending.)

Any errors in crediting are a product of the editor's ancient manuscripts and mangled notes, toted home from various illuminating workshops/conventions.

J.R.V.: Contest Results — too many overtrained voices and undertrained ears.

Convince Me

Team teaching a Freshman Seminar in Fine Arts with an ordained minister who has a deep interest in General Semantics, and whose other professional responsibilities include teaching argumentation and debate, public speaking, and persuasion is a dangerous undertaking — especially when he knows just enough about music to be dangerous with his penetrating questions. It has been mind-expanding and boggling for an establishment-type to have him question heretofore foregone conclusions and beliefs, puncturing some of them and letting out the hot air with his quick recognition of their soft spots and glibly mouthed conclusions.

He maintains that appreciation courses as taught are for the birds, that appreciation texts as they exist ought to be relegated to the paper reclamation center, that listening to records is totally boring and unproductive, and he finds a place in his musical life only for tunes he can hum.

He would like to know what makes music good. Who decides? How can you say that this is better than that? What do you mean, "It says something to you?" He raises intriguing questions, too, like what happens in the thalamus that makes certain types of

Make A Memo — Write A Letter

Sandy Chapman, editor of Iowa's SOUNDING BOARD (Nov. '79) urges us to heed our correspondence obligations. (This summer perhaps?) I take the liberty of altering some of her suggestions to make them more appropriate for the divisional membership.

- 1) A thank-you note to your first voice teacher. You had to start somewhere, even if it was with "Hark, Hark the Lark."
- 2) A request to the governor of your state that a choral person be named to the state Arts Council.
- 3) A "glad-to-see-you-in-our-state-paper" note to one of your advertisers.
- 4) A brief explanatory and praise-filled letter to parents of your All-State participants.
- 5) A newsy note to the editor of your state paper. (Sandy says her mail man already has curvature of the spine, so what's one more?)
- 6) An invitation to a choral colleague to join ACDA.
- 7) A schedule of choral events to your Congressman; let him know there's more to music in your state than half-time shows. (Sorry, all you band associations!)
- 8) A registration form from your State, Divisional, or National convention.
- 9) A change-of-address in plenty of time to your state newspaper/letter editor.
- 10) An IOU for three hours of undivided attention to your husband-wife-sweetheart-children — or all of the above.

music literally "grab" some people — but which makes others threaten to upchuck upon exposure to it? What makes some people happy to sit in a practice room six hours a day (all right, would you settle for two to three hours?), perfecting skills while others are quite satisfied to pull a ring on a beer can and push the "on" button of the TV (in that order) for their artistic fulfillment?

Why should they bother to cultivate a taste for "great music?" You say for a fuller life? Bosh, a Manx cat who has no tail is perfectly happy without one — he can't miss what he's never had!

WHOOSH! (That's some of the previously mentioned hot air escaping.) Three sets of alphabet soup after my name and scarcely a bow or curtsy among them in answer to any of his questions! These degrees, interspersed with and followed by professional readings, have concentrated primarily on "what to," "how to," and "when to," rather than "which to," and "why to."

With the current school levy losses, retrenchment, piggy-backing positions, diminishing departments, and the need for justification and accountability for music at all levels, all of us in the profession need to equip ourselves with answers to some of my colleagues questions. Who knows, it is quite possible that our superiors-with-the-whip-hand may demand answers to the very same questions that my partner in the classroom asks.

SOS, SOS, SOS, (Save Our Situations)! Perhaps our readers might suggest specific reading sources that would give us all some needed answers. REsound would be happy to print a bibliography of references to be read in our collective defense, or perhaps some of our readers would like to come to grips with the questions in a Guest Spot letter.

Expiring Epitaphs

'Way back in REsound, Sept. '78 your Editor, in a fit of capriciousness, attempted to bait the membership with "Write Your Own Epitaph," asking that, when you leave this mortal soil, what ONE or TWO word epitaph you hope would most characterize your life, your work, and your influence here on earth. Although I promised to print them anonymously to protect the vain and the wishful, as well as the modest, all I have heard through the all-pervading silence is the sepulchral thud of the casket lid on my little brain-child.

There may be some logical concerns to account for the membership's

reluctance to enter into my merry little challenge. Overwhelming modesty might be one of the reasons, and I accept that; however, perhaps one of the following may strike at more real ones:

1. I don't expect to have a tomb stone, how about a marquee?
2. You mean only TWO words?
3. Will anyone really care?
4. I haven't done anything for which to be remembered.
5. Other people may not accept what I put down.
6. I'd rather not be remembered.
7. I don't plan to do anything for which to be remembered.
8. Don't get nosey, bub!

Yes, the above are products of my most recent fit of capriciousness, however, there is a more serious overtone in the minds of those of us who have resigned from a position such as I have after 33 years of pushing the stick at a whole raft of kids in the same location. I suspect, as I look back, that it is a needed personal evaluation in which we should indulge ourselves, perhaps yearly, although our yearly perspective may be warped as we remember the good and bad times equally.

It can begin to balance out in our favor, as mine seems to be doing, when returns begin to filter in from former choir members who are accepting an invitation back for a massed choir at Commencement (an interesting word, Commencement) — five thus far from the '47-'48 (my first F.C.) choir — one to join her son who graduates as a member of the group this year. The balance becomes more heartening with "testimonial" letters from many others who can't come.

You note that I resigned, thus avoiding the word retired. I figure there is considerable mileage in the directing arm and sufficient grey matter under the white fringe to drive it intelligently for some time in other choral situations. Yes, I do plan to edit REsound for the rest of friend Maurice Casey's term as President of the new Central ACDA. After that I won't predict where my peregrinations might take me beyond the fact that ACDA will continue to be a part of my professional life. It's been a great organization — but no greater than you people who make it up.

Now I've unexpectedly, and uncomfortably — and probably swell-headedly — bared my own thoughts — but not to the extent of publishing my own epitaph! Why don't some of you take up the challenge and send me your two words — anonymously, of course. Yours may just set some of our young directors to thinking about and working toward what they would like their epitaphs to be!

And Still Another Corner

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Fundamentally, genuine worship is impossible unless it is God-centered. When the Christian enters the sanctuary, he must first of all "lay aside every earthborne care." True communion with God begins only when we have drawn ourselves "quite apart from the world of our everyday thoughts and experiences." It follows that the experience of worship may be sustained as long as, and to the degree that, this experience of apartness from the world is maintained. The first job of the church, as a building, as a functioning organization, and as a spiritual fellowship, is the creation and nature of those conditions which make it easy for the worshipper to shut out the world from his consciousness, and to center his thoughts on communion with God. (page 1)

[From the choir master]: If I perform my duties to this church in the way I hope to, you will not feel an urge to come to me after the service and say, "How beautiful the music was this morning!" Nor will you feel impelled to tell me how much the choir is improving. If your choir and organist do their jobs as they should, you will want to leave the church in reverent silence, being aware only of a deeply satisfying experience or worship. (pages 1-2)

The church musician should consider himself only the instrument through which music speaks... Any attitude, conscious or unconscious, taken by the church musician which calls attention unnecessarily to himself destroys, to a degree, God-centered worship by drawing the worshippers' attention away from his contemplation of God. Offensive in the sight of the Lord and His worshippers should be the organist, choirmaster, or singer who does anything at all "to be seen of men!" (page 2)

From Dwight Steere, MUSIC FOR THE PROTESTANT CHURCH CHOIR, John Knox Press, Richmond, VA 1955.

**REST, REVIVE,
RENEW,
RETURN!**

Come . . .

Augsburg Church Music Clinics

Minneapolis area
Saturday, August 9, 1980
Salem English Lutheran Church
610 West 28th Street
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Columbus area
August 11-12, 1980
Worthington United Methodist Church
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