
I have just recently returned from another spring break tour with the Bethel College Concert Choir visiting churches in the Central District Conference, with brief forays into Illinois Mennonite Conference, Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, and Western District Conference. Once again, the tour was absolutely fabulous, characterized by outstanding music, exemplary behavior, and profoundly meaningful worship.

I am inclined to say that the Bethel College Concert Choir exemplifies Bethel College at its absolute best. In making that claim, I am referring to much more than the quality of musicianship, the precision of rhythm and harmony, the beauty of the sound, or even the depth of emotion that it stirs in the hearts of listeners. I am referring to the very essence of Bethel College—the central values upon which the institution rests. From the Bethel College mission statement:

Bethel's programs are informed by four central values:

- *an ethic of discipleship, that recognizes Jesus Christ as Messiah and model for the Christian life and prizes a high level of commitment and free conviction;*
- *an ethic of scholarship, that believes academic achievement to be a logical outcome of intellectual stewardship and esteems both discipline and creativity;*
- *an ethic of service, that deems concern for the powerless to be intrinsic to the Christian gospel and stresses peacemaking and voluntary service;*
- *an ethic of integrity, that celebrates the fundamental connections between spirit and mind, faith and learning, individual and community and fosters personal development through participation in a range of activities.*

When I listen to the Concert Choir, I see all four of these values exemplified.

- Singing primarily sacred repertoire, the entire evening is devoted to honoring and praising that Messiah and model;
- The complexity of the music sung is a brilliant testimony to scholarship in both the composition and the performance of that music;
- The evening itself is an exercise in service, as the choir shares its musical gifts with the audience;
- Finally, the act of choral singing of sacred music epitomizes integrity—the connection between faith and learning, spirit and mind, individual and community.

There is much else that I could—and should—mention about this year at Bethel College:

- A year-long celebration of Bethel's 125th year;
- The dedication of the James A. Will Family Academic Center during Fall Festival in October.
- Other facilities improvements including a remodeled campus entry, a remodeled cafeteria and student center, air conditioning for Memorial Hall and Thresher Gymnasium;;
- Another year of positive and well-attended worship experiences in weekly chapels, as well as the addition of some creative, student-led Bible studies and prayer groups.

But just a few weeks after returning from choir tour, I am still basking in the glow of that experience, and I wanted to share it with you. For ten days I was privileged to see Bethel College at its very best, and I thought you'd like to know.

Thankful for the many prayers, students, dollars, and good wishes of the Allegheny Mennonite Conference, we humbly ask for your continued support.