

2018 Student Choir Tour

*Memories
and
Divine Appointments*



Choir Tour 2018

Memories and Divine Appointments

Saturday, July 7, 2018

Oklahoma City Capitol Building – They were doing construction on the building, and we couldn't find the way in! It felt like it was 2,000 degrees outside, and we walked around the very large building, trying to find the entrance. While we wandered, we met a couple from Budapest, Hungary, who were also searching for the entrance. We eventually found our way in.

When the choir began to sing, the couple from Hungary was there, and they videotaped the music. After the choir sang, Michael asked the couple how we could pray for them. They said they didn't know, so Michael offered to pray for safe travels. Lauren Beaty prayed for them.

At the same time, downstairs, a couple listened with some of the sponsors. The woman appeared to be blind, and as she listened to the music, tears poured down her cheeks. She shared with our sponsors that she had experienced something like this once before, in a cave, hearing a tour choir sing, and she cried then as well. She felt like hearing such beautiful music was such a special, once-in-a-lifetime experience, and she'd experienced it twice.

Another couple listened and told us they'd pray for us.

Oklahoma City Memorial Museum – This museum dedicated to the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing was emotional and intense, but it was good for the kids to have an up-close and personal look at how innocent and vulnerable we were in the pre 9/11 days. Outside, we toured the park and saw all the empty memorial chairs. We had a wonderful ranger/guide, Ian Hartley, who shared about what happened that day. At the end of our tour, the choir sang outdoors for Ian, and he seemed very moved by our song. Quite a few tourists stopped to listen, some near us in the memorial park, and even a few across the way watched from over a wall.

Sunday, July 8, 2018

Hilton Honors Hotel – After breakfast, our students sang the blessing for the staff and other guests at the hotel. Several staff members videotaped the song and seemed very moved.

First Baptist Church, Mustang, Oklahoma – During Sunday School, our students sat among the FBC Mustang students without being told to do so. Our students were friendly and reached out to the other students, and were well received. Later, our students performed in the morning worship service, and the church was very

moved. During *What a Beautiful Name it Is*, the congregation spontaneously stood in worship.

Central Baptist Church, Winfield, Kansas – We arrived around 3:30 p.m. to an enthusiastic, excited pastor. Pastor Blake shared about how it was really hard to grow a church in that area, and when presented with the opportunity to host our students for a concert, he was thrilled. The church runs about 130 in worship, and is made up of mostly older adults. The ladies from the church fixed us dinner, and about 50 people attended our concert. It was a conservative crowd, but people sang along, softly clapped their hands, and even one or two lifted their hands. I noticed an older gentleman pumping his fist in victory after one song, and a teenage boy leaned forward with his arms on the pew in front of him, he was so engrossed. Cody shared his testimony and many people were moved, both from the Kansas group and from our group. Daniel, our bus driver, came in for the concert and videotaped much of it on his camera.

Monday, July 9, 2018

Just inside Colorado, we stopped at The Colorado Welcome Center to eat lunch. The weather was beautiful with a cool breeze, and we ate at a soft grassy spot. The kids played Frisbee and enjoyed the respite from the bus. The people inside The Visitor's Center learned we were a choir and invited us to come sing for them. After lunch, the students went inside to sing *The Blessing*. Rhonda, the Welcome Center director and Emma, who has worked for the Welcome Center for 30 years, both videoed and asked if they could post it to Facebook.

We also took in a tray of cupcakes to share with them, and they were very appreciative for the food and the song. We visited with Ron and Polly from Chattanooga, TN. They are a senior adult couple who have only been married for six months. His first wife died last year, and her first husband died two years ago. They were on their way to Salt Lake City, UT for a convention. They volunteer at the Chattanooga Rescue Mission and invited us to come sing there one of these days. They were touched by our singing, and they blessed us and encouraged us as well.

Miss Rhonda came out to the bus to thank the students and offer God's blessings over them.

Denver Rescue Mission – We arrived at the mission to see that it was rougher than missions we'd seen in the past. People were sitting and lying on the sidewalks, and foul language was everywhere. But when we unloaded our equipment into the chapel, it felt safer. When the audience filed in, it was mostly men. There was one woman, Eve, serving water and tea, and another woman, Rotina, who sat near the back. Many seemed to have addictions; others seemed like someone who might live next door to you.

When the students worshiped, many in the audience began to worship, lifting their hands, clapping, singing along. Some sat with heads bowed, tears streaming down their cheeks. As the students saw these people who had *nothing* worship, the students worshiped even more, and the Holy Spirit truly filled our choir. The songs held such hope, and many of the people in the room grasped onto that.

The mission director, Jamar, said he could tell the people were affected in an unusual way.

After the concert, students filed into the audience and talked and prayed with people. Some of the people were:

- Richard, who has a broken tibia.
- Mitchell, whose very young granddaughter has lung problems.
- Luis, who is from New York, and who is “running” because he is too ashamed to go back to his family.
- Tony, who seemed clearly addicted to some substance.
- Troy, who asked us to pray for his sobriety.
- Eve, who asked us to pray for her son, Blue, to make good choices in life.

Dinner, Casa Bonita – We waited in a very long line, but the students were cheerful and happy and did not complain about the wait. We ordered Mexican food and our server, Sam, was the only one working our group. He seemed grateful that our group was patient and kind. He commented that he had been in high school choir. After dinner, he asked us to sing for the wait staff in front of the 40-foot waterfall. We sang The Blessing for him and the restaurant patrons, and people stood around and watched and seemed truly grateful for the song and the presence we brought.

Tuesday, July 10, 2018

a.m. – Church in the City, Beth Abraham Mission – Students came in and set up the risers and sound system, and some helped prepare the hot meal for the day. People came in for a cereal breakfast and many stayed for the concert. After the concert, students talked with the people and then helped prepare and serve a hot meal. They brought the meals to the tables, where the people were seated. There were many men, an older couple, several ladies, and a young mother with three children, the youngest of whom was three weeks old. One older lady said she wanted to talk to a young man, and Foster spent some time talking to her. She asked questions like where we were from and what all we’d be doing on our trip.

Some of the people we prayed for:

- Patrick – Two months sober. Buddhist; we asked him to consider Christ.
- Matt – asked for prayer for a job and a home.
- Royce – asked for prayer for a better life.
- Rich – general prayer.
- Eduardo – health.

The people were very grateful to be served, seated, a hot meal of baked chicken, corn, rice and gravy, and muffins or Danishes.

Afterward, students were given a tour by the pastor of the Messianic Church where the mission is located, which was originally a Jewish Synagogue. The synagogue was in ruins and has been declared a historical site, and it’s been completely restored. The church houses a scroll of the Torah that belonged to a Holocaust survivor. They were able to look at and hold this pre-Holocaust copy, which was hand-written by a scribe.

p.m. – Colorado State Capitol – Students toured the capitol and sang God Bless America in the rotunda, from the third floor balcony. The sound filled the building, and people applauded.

Denver City Park – Fun stop for a picnic lunch. We prayed for a lady named Monica, and then she prayed for us.

Basilica Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception – A guide, not clergy but an employee of the church, brought us inside and seated us. He took a lot of time explaining the architecture and the artwork, such as the stained glass windows, the sculptures, and other features of the cathedral. He asked and answered questions about the catholic faith, including the meaning of the Immaculate Conception.

Students were invited to sing on the steps to the altar, and the acoustics were amazing with a five-second reverberation. It was a once-in-a-lifetime, worshipful experience.

The choir director, Phil, talked to the students about the organ construction and why the organ is in the balcony, and explained that the cathedral was designed before sound systems. It was designed for sound to carry from the balcony and fall on the church. He invited the students to sing from the balcony, and it was breathtaking. Then he offered to play The Blessing (by ear!) to accompany the students. It produced a holy, pious, worshipful sound.

Patrons and visitors to the church were moved by our students' performance.

Red Rocks Amphitheatre – We made a quick stop here, but the gates had closed early so we could not go in. We were still able to get some beautiful pictures outside, and it was a beautiful exhibit of God's handiwork.

Colorado Rockies Game – The students had a great time. Matt and Hank had fun trying to get on camera with their silly dances, and they were successful! The camera panned by them and their mad dancing skills were showcased on the big screen.

Wednesday July 11, 2018

Riverside Baptist Church – When we left our host church, we invited the Family Life Center employees outside and sang The Blessing over them. Several wiped tears as we sang. One lady, Nina, gave Michael a note to pass on to an air force cadet when she learned we were going to the Air Force chapel. She said, "It will be an act of God to get him this note, but it will really encourage him."

United States Air Force Academy Cadet Chapel – At the Welcome Center, Michael asked someone about delivering the message to the cadet and was told that wasn't possible. Students sang for a very small audience, including LeeAnne and Cliff Swank. LeeAnne is Mike Waters' sister. Students enjoyed looking around the unique chapel. The chapel host was a man named Terrell, who shared about the mission work that his church does.

We left and walked back up a steep hill, toward the bus. Michael felt a tug at his heart that he should go back to the chapel and ask Terrell if he could help find a way to deliver the note to the young man. On the way back, he met Bob and Maureen from Chicago. They said hello and talked a minute. Michael could already tell, when he met them, that God had a purpose in sending him back. When he got back to the chapel, Terrell told him that a cadet would be given a really hard time about having a note like that delivered, but the chaplains could deliver the note in confidentiality. He took the note and promised to pass it on to the chaplains, who would get it to the right person without causing trouble.

Bob and Maureen were still at the Welcome Center when Michael got back. They wanted to hear the choir, so we sang The Blessing and they were deeply moved. Bob spoke with the group and told the students how much the encounter meant to them. He encouraged the students to not miss these opportunities for divine appointments through meeting new people. He said God can really use those things.

Garden of the Gods – This place really exhibited the beauty and magnitude of God’s creation. The enormous, unique rock formations showed God’s creativity.

Friends of Renae’s met us there for lunch and brought Rylan, an autistic boy with Tourette’s. Rylan has done art exhibits with his unique artwork and descriptions of his processing disorder and his unusual brain function. The students sang The Blessing for these friends, and then Rylan shared his artwork with the students. He then offered to give them autographs, and he signed a piece of paper for each and every student.

Renae’s friend Stephanie shared pictures of the time on her own Facebook page, and used the words “Divine Appointment.” We used that phrase a lot with our students this week, but Renae never used that phrase with Stephanie.

Free Slurpee Day! – Mr. Salyards texted Mrs. Salyards and let her know it was Free Slurpee Day at 7/11. Michael challenged the students to Google 7/11 locations and find one nearby. Our bus was rerouted slightly to accommodate a 7/11 and all the students got free slurpees.

Cave of the Winds – They had to close the road to get our bus up the mountain, and there were six hairpin turns for the bus to maneuver. Daniel, our bus driver, did a great job getting us there safely. Again, this experience exhibited the beauty of God’s creation. Two young boys on a church trip discovered Cave of the Winds in 1886. They went off exploring and found the cave system.

Students went into the cave in two groups. Connor led the first group, and Nicole led the second group. Both groups were able to sing The Blessing down in the cave. The sound reverberated. Other groups in various parts of the cave could hear, and they applauded. The group behind us was brought forward to hear us better.

Springs Rescue Mission – This was another rough mission. There drunk men, and men who were high. Students set up the risers and sound system, and it started to rain. Then it started to hail. We gathered up and prayed, believing that God had something good in store. It stopped raining and hailing, but the concert was moved indoors anyway. This was better, because many men were on bunks and pallets in the room. Even those that didn’t choose to come to the concert area were able to listen, and the director shared that many of them were moved to tears by the hope-filled songs. God says His Word will not return void.

- After the concert, students talked and prayed with the men in the mission:
- Mike decided to reconcile with his mother because of the concert.
 - Sean was blessed because he had been slipping back to his old ways, but the songs made him realize he didn’t want to do that again. He said, “Have you

ever had someone come into your life at just the right time, and you knew God had sent them? That's who you were for me tonight." He said he really needed the encouragement we brought, and if he didn't know better, he'd think we were angels.

- When we left, students lined up on the bus to share stories with the microphone. Lots of divine appointments.

While we were inside, Daniel, our bus driver, was outside frantically trying to fix the headlight that wasn't working. He pulled out all the wires and didn't know what the problem was. He shared that as soon as he heard the students start to sing, he touched the wires and it started working. He felt like that was a sign that God had his hand on the students' singing.

Freddy's Burgers – Great steak burgers and frozen custard! Students sang The Blessing over all the wait staff and cooks, and some were very moved. The manager videoed the students to share on their FB page, and she was going to share the experience with her general manager, who was not on duty. One of the customers was moved to tears. We met a couple from Houston who stayed longer just to hear the kids sing. Later, Stephanie texted Renae and asked the name of the choir and how she could hear their full concert. Renae shared the student choir tour FB page with her.

July 12, 2018

Hotel – After breakfast, we sang The Blessing for the breakfast and cleaning staff. Blondie, our breakfast lady, was moved within seconds to tears and silent sobs as our students sang. She clearly needed that blessing in her life. Renae came over and put her arm around her as we sang, for support.

Echo Canyon Whitewater Rafting – We went whitewater rafting. We divided into groups of 6 or 7 for each raft. Our guides were Wilco, Mickey, McKenna, Rosa, Hoff, and Charlie. We had fun splashing each other in the other boats. The rapids were mild, and we all had a great time. At the end, we sang The Blessing for our guides, and they were all grins. Each of them was a young adult, early 20's, and we could tell they thought our song was super-cool.

Harrison won the awesome award for the trip when he flew off his boat and landed in the water. He climbed back on pretty quickly.

Royal Gorge – We made a quick stop at Royal Gorge and took pictures.

The Owl – We stopped for lunch at a tiny retro burger joint, and we overwhelmed the place. It took three hours to eat lunch, but the laid back atmosphere provided a nice break. Before we left, the students sang The Blessing for them, and the people were truly touched. The owner stood behind the bar and opened his arms to the students, then he'd hold his hands to his heart, then he'd open them again. We learned that man was the pianist for the group Flash Cadillac, who performed as the band on Happy Days and many other cool things.

Manufactured Home Community Concert, Pueblo – The manager, Amy, greeted us when we drove up, and we could tell she was excited to have us. They fixed hamburgers and hotdogs, and after setting up, our students went in groups into the community to invite people to eat and to the concert. As young people showed up, our students interacted with them, talking, playing basketball, etc. When the concert started, people trickled in from the community. Many didn't come close, but they stood in their yards and listened. Several drove by slowly with windows down, or parked on the street and rolled their windows down to listen.

The concert was different from what we'd experienced before because we did not have a captive audience. People came and went, children rode their bikes in front of the choir, and there were many distractions. But our students sang and worshiped, and seeds were planted about God's amazing hope and love.

At the end of the concert, Michael asked the audience to move in close. The students surrounded them and sang The Blessing over them, and it was clear many in the group were deeply touched.

- Harrison and Austin prayed with Kathy Britton. Kathy and her husband are missionaries with the North American Mission Board, and they prayed for the community.
- Some of the adults in the group talked with Kathy and David, and they shared the history of this community. They've been in this community as missionaries for nine years. About six years ago, they felt called to start a ministry at this community. At that time it was called murder row, because the crime rate was so high. Children did not come outside their homes. About the same time, the manufactured home community got a new manager who evicted anyone who caused trouble. Kathy and David started with an Easter egg hunt. Shortly after that, they were inundated with calls from church groups wanting to do mission trips to Pueblo. The entire summer was filled with activities, VBS's, etc. That summer saw a change in that community.

Now, it is common to see children playing at the playground and riding their bikes. It is a peaceful community now.

- Deslys spent time with some little girls. Their grandmother is Eleanor. The girls' mother, Eleanor's daughter, committed suicide, and Eleanor is raising these young girls. Deslys asked the choir to pray for them.
- Bailey talked to some kids who were swimming as they got out of the pool. She invited them to the concert. They went home and did not come all the way back to the concert, but Bailey saw the girl standing in her yard listening and dancing along.

July 13, 2018

Windham Wingate – We did not sing The Blessing, since we sang it yesterday morning. Blondie—whose real name is Kevsor—was there, and seemed emotional that we were leaving. Renae spoke with her and learned that her father is German and her mother is Turkish, and she came to the U.S. when she was 15 years old. Renae prayed for her, and she cried.

Another hotel patron, David, told Michael that he's worked with Boy Scout groups. He said that it's more common, when traveling with a group of young people, to hear bad things. He wanted to make sure we knew how polite and well-mannered our group was.

A couple in the breakfast area also commented what a pleasure it was to share the dining room with our students. We are a witness even when we're not singing or talking to people directly about Christ!

The Texas Show – We sang in the pouring rain for the Texas Show. We set up risers, but ended up moving onto a small covered stage and singing without the risers because of the rain and lightning. The covered area actually amplified our sound and made us sound like a bigger choir. The audience was sparse, but people sat and stood in covered areas in front of and behind the group, looking toward the choir and listening. Then we sat through The Texas Show and it rained the entire time.

July 14, 2018

Hampton Inn – We sang The Blessing for Jeannie and Rachel at the front desk, and they videoed it on their phone. Reggie Watson, a hotel patron, came over to tell us how good we sounded. He is a Sunday School superintendent from Tallahassee, Florida.

McDonald's and Sonic – We stopped for lunch in Childress, Texas, and a couple at McDonald's asked where we were from. They said they could tell we were on a trip because of all of our tourist t-shirts. They were from Colorado Springs! They said we had such a clean-cut, well-mannered group. At Sonic, a man asked where the group was from, and when he learned we were from Stephenville, he said, "Oh! They've got a great BBQ place there, the Hard-8!"