

TRAILNOTES

JUNE 2020

The Christian life is a journey.

TrailNotes speaks to forward movement, paying attention to the “landscape” we are passing through in this trail-laced wooded hillside and valley, not to mention the world beyond. *TrailNotes* is an unfolding, ongoing journal of the people who share the trail with us and the things we’re learning and doing.

Singing Isn’t Just for Sunday

Keith and Kristyn Getty call for filling all our lives with songs of the Lord!



An Interview:
by Steve Guthrie

The Christian musical landscape includes dozens of widely known worship leaders and recording artists but comparatively few hymn writers. Of these, Keith and Kristyn Getty are preeminent. Their songs are enormously popular (over 40 million people sing “In Christ Alone” in church services each year) and Keith who is from Northern Ireland, became the first contemporary Christian musician to be honored as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire, an award given by Queen Elizabeth II. Over the last decade, the Gettys have been leading seminars around the United States for pastors and ministers of music. This teaching work forms the foundation of their book, *Sing! How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church*. Steve Guthrie, associate professor of theology at Belmont University, spoke with Keith about reinvigorating the Christian practice of singing in congregations and families alike.

With so many difficult issues facing the church today, why give special attention to congregational singing?

As evangelicals, we take the Bible as our authority. And when we look at the Bible, we find that, actually, the second most common command is to sing. It wouldn’t come up that often if it weren’t extremely important
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ElderTalk: My Brother’s (a) Keeper

ANDY HEININGER



Around noon on April 3, 2020, I received the call from my sister informing me that our brother had died that morning. In the prior five years I had experienced the death of two immediate family members, my parents, so the heartache of losing someone close was, unfortunately, not foreign. But this was different. I had time to process my parents’ inevitable passing and hospice was on call providing their services to both them and the family. The signs were there; they were moving on; and I had the ability to communicate to each of them their immense importance in both my physical and spiritual life. I had time to say thank you and goodbye.

James “Jimmy” Heininger, my significantly older and only brother, was born about 18 and a half years before me. With an IQ at the upper end of the spectrum, Jimmy jumped grades during his elementary years

and was placed in the advanced classes where he excelled. In contrast, however, his teen years and early adult life were riddled with hospitals, doctors, psychiatrists and institutions where he was challenged and even tortured. By his late thirties, the numerous medications finally reached the right balance for Jimmy and he could live a “normal” and emotionally peaceful life.

Truly a book and/or a movie could be written about the episodes my family experienced riding the rollercoaster of Jimmy’s mental health. But instead I would like to reflect on my brother’s Christ-like love and attitude toward me through all his troubled and “normal” times. Whether in his muddled young adult years or in the more stable part of his later life, he always treated me better than I probably deserved. When I was very young, I was the annoying puppy that would yank, pull, and nip

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Meal on Bowman Street: May 24

The Coleman Kids plan sack lunches for the homeless at the McKee Circle Church's meal.



NEWS:

Kay Berry called Dale Black's daughter to see how Dale was getting along in Loudonville. He is doing well, and loves the pizza at Colonial. He cannot have visitors because of COVID-19, but Kay was able to talk with him on the phone and found him as cheerful as ever!

Congratulations to our **three graduates**. Carrin Solon graduated from Madison Comprehensive High School in Cosmetology. She will be taking her boards this summer. Her party was a "drive-through special" in GFC's parking lot on Saturday, May 23.

Alexi Vega is headed to U. of Toledo to their School of Engineering. Her party is June 20—information will be coming soon! She also went to Madison.

Caleb Parsons has received two Associate Degrees from Hocking College in 3 years. He may finish a Bachelor's Degree online. His goal is to work for the National Park Service. This degree was in Wildlife Management.

Congratulations to you all!

Dan Gates is back at work after COVID 19! Pray for Karen and two grandsons, still quarantined until 6/1.

Joanne Widener is dealing with a broken hip and crumbling vertebrae—all without a fall. She will be seeing a very specialized spine doctor in a few days. Pray for Joanne and Rick and wisdom for the doctor.

MOVING ON...

On May 31 our worship service will be held **INSIDE** the sanctuary! Your continued adherence to the State of Ohio's guidelines is recommended. Each family should prayerfully decide if they are ready to take this step. The service will also be streamed live on Facebook.

My Brother's (a) Keeper *(continued from p. 1)*

for his twenty-something attention. But he showed me grace through all my yappy demands. Then in my teen "know-it-all" years, I would criticize and petition for him to change anything and everything about himself that didn't seem like a normal brother should be. But he loved me anyway and never turned it back on me by posting the list of my faults he would like to see me change. Recently, in my adult life, I had finally begun to draw an understanding and appreciation for the unconditional gift that my brother was. In my last conversation with him, I was making plans to visit more often and vacation together this summer when hopefully, all the COVID concerns had passed.

So, as I reflect now, missing my brother, I realize that through my entire life, I can't remember him having any conditions, criticisms, or criteria for his love. He just wanted us to be together. He loved family get-togethers. Those were his most prized possessions. Birthdays, holidays, graduations, plays, vacation...let's be together. Over the years he had moved from institutions to group homes to apartments to assisted living. He always gave everyone he met in these places the benefit of the doubt which exposed him to frequent abuse, bullying, theft, disrespect and disdain. But truly, I never heard him complain or criticize anyone. He continually demonstrated the 70 x 7 forgiveness. No grudge was held, or if it was, it was not verbalized.

With the news of his passing, this collective weight pushed me to the ground. For the next several days, I was filled with sorrow for his passing all alone, without family at his bedside, an assumed instant heart attack at his assisted living facility. I could provide no thank you or goodbye. All I could focus on was my regrets of "when I get the time...we'll get together then." For many days after, I was broken and heavy-laden with no end in sight. Then the Lord moved. He lifted my burden, replacing my vision of my brother lying alone in his room to one of him in his heavenly home. No longer was my brother's mentally tormented past or the harsh abuse, his reality.

He is now able to utilize all the giftings the Lord has fully equipped him with and he is looked upon with the unconditional love he had given me, but now by the Author, Creator and Perfector of that love, our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ.

Thank You, Lord, for placing this example in my life. Please help me to keep in my brother's and Your footsteps of unconditional love.

Singing Isn't Just for Sunday *(continued from p. 1)*

to God. Yet, when Kristyn and I started studying this, we realized we couldn't find good books on singing for ordinary people.

In 2013 we did a series of leadership lunches where we asked the participants, "What's the first question you ask about music in church?" And we got a whole range of answers from production to musical style to personality to presentation. But not one person asked, "How did the congregation sing?" So we find ourselves in a peculiar culture where what is primary—singing—has become secondary, and what is secondary, has become primary.

How do we nurture and encourage congregational song?

We used to understand this holy privilege of congregational singing. Something we do in response to God's command is also a high privilege that will transform how we sing.

As we've traveled around, one thing we've noticed is that it doesn't really matter what a church's budget is, what its demographics are, even the numbers of professional musicians up front. These things can help, but only a little. Congregations that sing well are congregations that understand why it's so important. They have pastors and leaders who are passionate about it.

Why do you devote so much space to the idea of families singing together?

If you look at the Puritans, they really understood the importance of family worship. My wife always describes congregational worship as a Sunday feast that we prepare for during the week. Families that sing actively in family devotions, or pas-

sively just by music playing around the house, tend to sing well on Sunday. The New England Puritans used to meet on Wednesday to begin preparing themselves for Sunday worship. Our culture may not be structured for that level of commitment, but we do have technology to fill our homes with songs.

I once asked John MacArthur, when we were visiting his church for a concert, if he had any advice for raising children. He said, "*Fill your home with songs of the Lord. It's one of the most important things a parent can do.*" I would only add: *Where life is—inside and outside the home—fill those places with songs of the Lord.*

It sounds like a wonderful idea—but you and Kristyn are professional musicians. What about Christians who are not musically gifted?

The point we make is that your voice doesn't have to be *professional* standard, only *confessional* standard. That may sound a bit twee, but it's true. Children will be shaped by the *passion*, not the *quality*, of their parents' singing. Further, the same technology that in some cases is destroying our families can also be used to build up our families. If we have music playing in our homes, that kind of passive enjoyment can, in time, lead to more active participation.

People probably imagine Kristyn and me as the Christian version of the von Trapp family. But actually we started thinking about all of this because we were noticing ways we had been overlooking singing in our own family. Some time ago we visited a classical Christian school where students had been learning

our songs. When we got there, our girls went running up front with the other kids, and who would you guess didn't know the words to many of the hymns—including "In Christ Alone"? It was pretty humiliating! Right after we left, Kristyn and I resolved to give more attention to the singing going on in our home.

You and Kristyn have traveled and led worship all over the world. What can American churches learn from singing in other nations and can churches in other nations learn anything from singing here in America?

We can learn from the church in other parts of the world. Our director of marketing recently spent three weeks with Chinese underground churches. He has videos of them singing. It's extraordinary. But going the other way, Kristyn's dad was a church planter and one of the ways he would encourage himself was to watch videos of the Brooklyn Tabernacle. "*I'm clean by the blood...*"

Then there's other generations... The loss of hymnbooks is the loss of the church fathers, the Reformers, the radical worldwide missionary movement and the revivalists, just to name four movements honed by song.

(“Christianity Today” Sep. '17 Used by permission.)





Can you find Eric? He was in Kenya teaching “The Heart of a Leader” to African church leaders for globalLead — March 2020.

Testimony:

Meeting the God of Chess



Very few elite chess players openly follow Jesus.



How I became one of them!

— WESLEY SO

is a Philipino and American Chess Grandmaster. He is the current United States chess champion.

On the small planet where elite chess players dwell, very few people worship Jesus. If anyone discovers you’re one of those “superstitious,” “narrow-minded idiots,” you’re likely to see nasty comments on your Facebook page. On a regular basis, I receive emails from strangers lecturing me about the dangers of following Jesus. People plead with me to at least keep quiet. They say that thanking God makes me look stupid.

PLAYING IT SAFE

The Philippines, where I grew up, is a country of God-seekers. Everyone believes that He exists. As a child I was informed that you needed to be good so that God would give you certain blessings like food and jobs. I knew many famous crooks who went to church and got tatoos of Jesus and they were pretty rich.

As a child I decided to play it safe. I would say the right words, and make the sign of the cross at the right time. I was afraid God would send me to hell. Deep down the whole thing made no sense.

MY NEW FAMILY

I have played chess since age six or seven. At first it was just a fun game I could win. As I grew up, I kept on winning. But the Philip-pines was a basketball country. I could never afford to hire a coach. I studied from newspaper clippings because we could not afford books.

When I was 18, I decided to leave. I had been depressed since 16. I was living alone and had received an offer from a small American uni-versity to play on their chess team. I decided to take the offer.

Then I met the people who would be my foster family. They were Christians. After awhile my foster mother could sense my un-happiness. She asked me what I wanted to do in life. “*You’ve never had the luxury of devoting yourself to chess full time. Why don’t you do that for two years and see what hap-pens. We’ll support you.*”

Eventually, I left school and moved in with my foster family and launched a professional chess career. Most importantly, I entered into a relationship with Jesus Christ!

I never minded going to church but I often fell asleep during the ser-mons. It was a stressful time! But I managed to absorb wisdom from

the sermon fragments I did hear and got interested in reading the Bible. My foster parents taught me how to get answers to my ques-tions. Before long, I was practicing my faith in a more intense way. I observed how my family lived, how they spent their time and money. I knew I wanted to have the content-ed life they lived and enjoyed.

THE GOD OF EVERYTHING

Win or lose, I give God the glory. Instead of worrying about the future, I try to focus on the work God has put before me. Right now it’s chess, so I study it diligently and play it as well as possible. Will I rise to become the world champion one day? Only God knows for sure. In the meantime, I know that He is a generous and loving Father, always showering me with more blessings than I could possibly deserve. I content myself with playing one match at a time and practicing gratitude for my daily bread.

(Excerpted from “Christianity Today” 9/17. Used by permission.)

Grace Fellowship Church
 365 Straub Rd East • Mansfield Oh 44903
 419-526-4699 • gracefellowship01@gmail.com
 Eric Byrom Presiding Elder/Pastor
 (A complete list of church functionaries will return next month)