

From This Corner

Larry R. Baird

“Lustily and with Courage”

“Sing lustily and with good courage.” This is John Wesley’s point #4 in *Selected Hymns*, “directions for singing”, 1761. I think he was on to something. As I travel about the district, it seems to me that congregations that sing as thus described are healthier than those who do not. Is this mere coincidence?

When I reflect upon my own singing, I would have to say that I sing lustily. I do not always hit the right notes. I sometimes even get onto the wrong verse, but I do sing with all my heart and soul. That is especially so if the words speak my convictions. For me, singing is in all ways a pure act of faith.

I became acutely aware of this one day when I was visiting a shut-in and she was playing the tape of one of our worship services. On that particular Sunday I had apparently neglected to turn off the wireless microphone attached to the neckline of my robe. We were singing “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.” Even though the congregation was singing, all you could hear was a pastoral solo. “Come, thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace; stream of mercy, never ceasing, call for song of loudest praise! Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above.” I am not sure how to describe it, but I think my voice sounded like it emanated from a flaming tongue. It would have been better without amplification. It would have been far better merged with other voices. Nevertheless, there it was. It was a testimony. There was no doubt that I was singing as one convicted.

One of my favorite worship times is when the pastors of our conference get together and sing. If anything brings assurance we are still alive and well, it is in those moments. The singing in these gatherings is wonderful. Many are even able to sing the various parts. It really is worship at its best. Though I am certain that there are other indicators of spiritual health, maybe none is better than “singing lustily and with good courage.”

Now I share this with you to encourage more of you to sing. It is my contribution this month to the church growth movement, and it may be as good as any other principle expounded upon by ecclesiastical gurus.

So here it is. If I can sing, so can you. Not everyone is given the voice of a Cecilia Bartoli or Placido Domingo, but that does not mean you cannot sing “lustily and with good courage.” If we all did, I believe it would give our churches a more fervent testimony, and consequently greater health. Try it. Just make sure you are not too close to the microphone. Trust me.