

Yesterday was overwhelming, reminiscent of my seventieth birthday, when the seven cakes came through the door with ten candles each, but even more so. Worrying about being appreciated and loved is not my problem. This morning the flowers greeted me with the scent of a community's on-going, life-giving support. I am deciding which window the glorious glass will occupy. Marian must have been in on the decisions, because its diameter fits precisely in the windows, and she is the only one who knew the dimensions. Yesterday, the bass clef from Regine's bread was savored, like eating music, even as music takes a different place in my life.

In some ways, I retired from what I love last March. The pandemic stole from me, from us, the joy of singing together. How should I cope when my favorite activity, getting a congregation to sing, became life-threatening? Now the retirement from leading music in church becomes official, but no one can retire from trying to follow the way of Jesus. Nor am I retiring from this community. To be a vibrant, inclusive community, rooted in the Gospel, has never been more important. However much we are changing, discussing, becoming more or less involved in each other's lives, you are my family. Notice, I did not write, you are *like* my family. I wrote, you are my family. This is where I belong, and where I hope others can be invited to find their place.

Thank you to everyone who showed up on the live-stream yesterday, who endured being 'wet and frozen' as Valerie wrote, when the stream suddenly stopped, who joined the coffee hour afterwards, who contributed to the virtual choir. Most of music I write is for the moment. The Gloria for Easter Eve is one piece we have repeated, but this time it was as if it were sung to me, for me, so that I could hear it new without having to be directing or playing. Since I have made a couple of attempts at a virtual choir, I know how much work it is to produce the master tape with which others can sing, find the right mix of voices, and then synchronize the whole. At that moment in the service I knew something was coming, but I was more expecting some kind of combination of bloopers or maybe Marian doing one of her famous parodies of me. Not in my wildest imagination was I thinking that I would hear Gloria. It was a great gift, made possible by many, but especially Koko and Ray, who must have spent many hours making it happen.

Over all the thirty-two years, Koko and Regine have been there. Regine never put on a 'German-organist' hat renouncing all this non-classical music, but rather chimed in with the pedals when we were missing the bass and improvised with the flute. I am glad that Regine will now take over and continue to discover the 'what next' of our community. Koko quietly filled in the gaps, making sure the percussion was at hand, checking that we had things ready, directing when I traveled. Many of you have already heard this story, but I write it down. This year she saved Christmas for me. I was in despair when we learned that we could have only one singer. I imagined what it would be like to sit in the sanctuary and listen to someone sing, Silent Night, and not be able to sing. But Koko discerned that if we could not vary the singer, we could vary the instruments and she reached into her vast repository. She showed me her otamaton, with its muppet-like mouth, electronically mimicking the human voice, and launched into some alto part. Quickly she had me laughing away the despair.

I told Andy this morning, that his sermon yesterday, might have been one for my funeral, because it was such a keen summation of what is important to me. There is no greater affirmation than having someone else catch the main thrust of what one is about and put that on a plate for all to see. (Whoops, the image is a little too close to John the Baptist's head.) When I complained to him that the sermon was too much about me, he replied that it was not about me but about what I bore witness to. Clearly, we are not finished. It continues to be a privilege to work with Andy. We are blessed to have him as our pastor.

There is one tiny correction to the sermon. It was not the pastor of the church, Steve Larson, who invited me to the parish. It was Tosh Arai, the colleague from the WCC, who had been instrumental in my coming to Geneva. He did not insist, but quietly, in his Tosh way, mentioned that he attended the Lutheran Church, and I might like to try it alongside others. When I later asked Tosh about

starting a choir, his quick reply was that his wife, Akiko, would be happy to join. I don't know if he had consulted Akiko or not. But when we started up, Akiko faithfully came to sing. This was only one of the many ways that Tosh changed my life. Those who are not pastors have an important role in welcoming others into the community.

So we start again, "The beginning of the Good News," discovering the grace of God, descending like red roses from the balcony, surprising in ways that make us laugh and cry, obliterating the piano keys for a moment, yet setting us free in the song of God's love, alive even in pandemic times, as we look forward to the day when we can be together and sing.

Terry

The first day after retirement

11 January, 2021