



NPM Wichita Noteworthy

St. Cecilia Sing

St. Cecilia, the Patroness of Musicians, will be recognized at a special event on **Sunday, November 22, 2 p.m.** Originally planned as an in-person event at St. Cecilia – Haysville, this will be a virtual event.

The entire program will be pre-recorded and premiered [live at 2 p.m. on the NPM Wichita Facebook page](#). A link will be available for you, your friends and family to join in together. No account is required to watch.

Fr. Josh Evans, pastor of St. Cecilia – Haysville will offer a welcome. Carol Nigrelli will Emcee the event. We featured the talents some of our Young Musician Initiative award winners last year. With that being so well received, will be doing the same again this year. You'll see some great vocal, instrumental and keyboard performances from our youth.

As part of the event, we will again recognize long-time pastoral musicians. You were previously [invited to nominate pastoral musicians](#) who have served more than 25 years. It's not too late to do so, but don't delay. We need these names by November 15!

You can still [nominate youth musicians](#) if you have not already done so. We also need these names by November 15.

Bylaws Approved

The voting on the Chapter Bylaws has concluded. The Bylaws were unanimously approved.

You will now be asked to approve Charlene Dreiling as Chapter Director-Elect, and Marjorie Flesher as Treasurer. There is a link to the ballot included in the Noteworthy newsletter.

Pastoral Musicians' Workshop

The Musician Workshop is still scheduled for January 23, 2021. We will continue to evaluate the ability to hold an in-person event on that day. Stay tuned for more details.

Newsletter Feature

Communications Director, Carol Nigrelli writes about a new musical written by Nathan Carpenter. Nathan serves as Chapter Youth and Young Adult Director. The musical is based on the life of St. Francis. While not performed yet, it's exciting to see how this is developing. Congrats to Nathan on his work!



Tom Wierman,
Chapter Director



Upcoming Events

Sunday, November 22, 2020

St. Cecilia Sing

2:00—4:00 p.m.

- St. Cecilia Sing
- Musician Blessing
- Youth Musician Recognition
- Long-time Musician Recognition
- Chapter Anniversary Celebration

St. Cecilia Church

1830 W Grand

Haysville, KS 67060

Saturday, January 23, 2021

Pastoral Musician Workshop

Does your parish have a music position opening?

Send an email to admin@npmwichita.org to list your parish's open position on the chapter website and Facebook pages.



Singing the Life of Francis

Nathan Carpenter Writes a Musical Homage to the Beloved Saint

by Carol Crissey Nigrelli

Who would think to write a musical about St. Francis of Assisi? NPM Wichita board member and teacher Nathan Carpenter would. And did.

Francis: The Life of the Little Poor Man comprises 35 pages of script, features 10 songs, runs about an hour, and represents two years of research and writing. While those numbers quantify Carpenter's work, they don't come close to conveying the emotion and dedication poured into the project--or the reason behind it.

From the time he was a youngster growing up in Derby and attending St. Mary Catholic School, Carpenter felt the presence of the gentle saint in his life.

"Francis is my confirmation saint," says Carpenter. "When I was young, my dad highlighted (Francis) because he loves animals and is in touch with nature."

While the image of a holy man surrounded by doves and deer appealed to the child, Francis's complex life and personality spoke volumes to Carpenter as a man.

"I realized his love of nature is only one of part of his very dynamic personality," Carpenter discovered. "He is by no means someone who is soft and saccharine. He made a lot of sacrifices and experienced a lot of physical suffering and psychological humiliation in order to conform his life to the Gospel and Jesus Christ."

After reading an acclaimed and well-researched biography of Francis by the late author and priest Omer Englebert a few years ago, "I decided I needed to put [the book] to music," says Carpenter.

He also knew who he wanted to perform it.

"I purposely wrote it for my junior high age group. I want this musical to be accessible to children as young as fifth or sixth grade," explains Carpenter, who teaches music to K-8 students at St. Anne Catholic School in Wichita and social studies to St. Anne's middle school students.

Although a narrator standing off to the side advances the storyline, the character of Francis has long stretches onstage with lots of dialogue. Carpenter foresees an eighth grader assuming the role-- someone who's comfortable as the star of the show and comfortable playing dramatic scenes, since *The Life of the Little Poor Man* has plenty of drama.

The curtain rises on a very un-saintly Giovanni de Pietro di Bernardone of Assisi, Italy, the spoiled scion of a wealthy silk merchant and a French mother who value social standing above all. Carpenter paints a picture of a handsome, witty, gallant, "life of the party" who indulges in many pleasures, all spelled out in the first song "Free and Sweet."

Free and sweet is the canter I carry
For why not live joyful, why not be merry?

Giovanni's conversion to a life of poverty, which occurred around the year 1205, comes early in the musical, after disillusionment with his lifestyle sinks in and he has a vision. His father, who always called his son "Francesco," scolds him in a rage after Francis gives everything he has to a beggar. In a dramatic recitative, his father rejects him, saying, "You are not my son if you will not live like me." To which Francis replies, "My Father is in heaven."



That scene leads to the conversion song. The lyrics refer to Francis's time as a knight, when he "adored to be adored," but realizes his life is empty when he sings,

Lord, you entered the world, to be laid in a manger bed
Why should I expect more, than with what you were privileged to live?
Here I am, full, warm, and rich!
And there's my poor brother, curled up in a ditch.

Drawing on his composing skills honed as a music major at Wichita State, Carpenter draws from all genres of music, including blues, jazz, reggae, and classical, to appeal to young performers. "I've enjoyed songwriting since high school," says Carpenter, 25. "But when I worked on this musical, the floodgates opened and all of a sudden there was enormous creativity. I wrote the music after the script was done."

The character of Clare, a young woman from Assisi quite taken with Francis's message of poverty, sings a ballad in a bluesy and Gospel-like style as she joins Francis and his call to serve the poor.

With joy I pursue my Lord
I in the way blessed Francis has trod
For in giving all things, my soul now does sing
As more wholly, I belong to God

Francis: The Life of the Little Poor Man is finished, save for a few tweaks. Carpenter's bride of a few months, Kyra, is taking his very neatly and meticulously handwritten notes and inputting them into a computer. A very competent pianist herself, Kyra often accompanies Nathan as he works on his songs.

Very few people have heard the full score yet, not even Carpenter's students. "My eighth grade class this year won't get a chance to perform it (because of COVID). But I have a hope my seventh graders will be the leading cast," he says. Carpenter would love to have the premiere on the feast day of St. Francis, October 4.

Carpenter hopes other schools or community organizations will put on this musical, since "there's nothing that says adults can't do this," he points out. As for the future, Carpenter foresees more of the same.

"I hope to be able to write things that can capture a different saint's story, perhaps with a whole different style of music," he says, admitting he has St. Ignatius of Loyola on his radar.