



NPM Wichita Noteworthy

Happy New Year

Happy New Year! Hopefully the many challenges of 2020 will soon be behind us.

We are still unable to schedule in-person chapter events. For now, we are planning an annual meeting on May 2, 2021 at the Church of the Magdalen Parish Hall. More details will follow.

Memberships

Chapter memberships have been on an annual basis. For 2020 we automatically renewed everyone's membership, but did not collect dues. The board will be discussing how to handle 2021 at our January board meeting.

Newsletter Feature

This month Carol Nigrelli writes about fellow musician, Justin Hall, from Holy Savior. Enjoy reading more about Justin and his work in the parish.



Tom Wierman,
Chapter Director



Upcoming Events

January 23, 2021

Pastoral Musician's Workshop
Cancelled due to COVID

Sunday, May 2, 2021

Annual Chapter Meeting
Church of the Magdalen (Parish Hall)

July 27-30, 2021

NPM National Convention
New Orleans, Louisiana
npm.org

Soul Man

Multi-Talented Musician Justin Noel Hall Enlivens and Enriches Holy Savior

by Carol Crissey Nigrelli

The hands that built the brand new Holy Savior Catholic Church on 13th Street near Hillside, part of a successful \$10 million church/school project, made sure every nail, nut, bolt, rivet, socket, bracket, screw, iron beam, and wooden plank was drilled, hammered, welded, and fastened securely.

And that's a good thing.

Because the pure joy and spirit emanating from the music during Holy Savior's Dedication Mass on the pre-COVID evening of November 22, 2019 packed enough power to blow the roof off. Members of the 8:00 Sunday Men's Ensemble and the 11:00 Sunday Gospel Choir joined with guest soloists and a chamber orchestra comprised of a string quartet, two flutes, trumpet, saxophone, guitar, drums, piano, and organ, to give praise for a dream fulfilled.

Not many could have chosen the music appropriate for the intricacies of a dedication ceremony, arranged every single note of the more than 20 selections to better accommodate the singers, scored the music for the instrumentalists, held two, two-and-a-half-hour choir rehearsals a week (often writing until the last minute), and completed the undertaking in two months. But one man did it all.

"Yea, it was pretty crazy," laughs Justin Noel Hall, one of Holy Savior's music directors. "I put in 141 1/2 hours of work. That's like working straight for a week without sleeping." After a slight pause he continues, "It was the hardest project I have ever worked on in my life."

At age 30, Justin still has a lot of life ahead of him. But he has also lived a full life thus far, accruing several monikers: singer, pianist, arranger, composer, percussionist, marimba maven, entrepreneur, TV and film actor, and model. A self-described Air Force military brat, Justin spent his childhood in Anchorage, Alaska and Biloxi, Mississippi. Music lessons started early and came easily to him, beginning with glockenspiel and xylophone in third grade and piano in fifth.

When his father landed here at McConnell Air Force Base in 2000, the then 13-year-old Justin immersed himself in "all things arts"--drama, band, orchestra, and choir at Derby High School. He played on the drum line, but eventually gravitated away from drums and toward the mallet instruments like xylophone, marimba and vibraphone.

And it wasn't until he moved to Wichita that he noticed people's eyebrows went up when he mentioned another one of his titles: Catholic.

"Both my parents were born and raised in New Orleans and my whole family is Catholic," Justin explains. "There's a large Black Catholic population down in New Orleans, even in Mississippi where we lived. So for me, it was normal to be Catholic."

But when he tells people here in Wichita where he worships, Justin says the conversation goes something like this:

"What? You're a Catholic?"

"Yup. I'm Catholic."

"Really?"

"Yup."

"You mean you're not Baptist?"

"Nope"

"You're not Methodist?"

"Nope."

"You're not Episcopal?"

"Nope."

While earning his undergraduate degree in instrumental performance at Wichita State University, Justin discovered Holy Savior Catholic Church, whose congregation includes a large African-American presence.

"Ever since (my family) got here, we were trying to find a church that made sense to us and it wasn't until Holy Savior that we went, 'Oh, this makes sense.'"



Pastor James Billinger remembers Justin as a very reserved, low-key young man in those early days. Though Justin eventually joined the choir, he didn't let on about his musical abilities. But it didn't take long for "Father Jim" to realize Justin was hiding his lamp under a basket.

"Justin's chief instrument is the marimba and he's a genius with it. He's so gifted," says Father Billinger. "I went to his senior recital and was amazed." At the time, Father Billinger was looking for a director of music. "He has such a gift for hearing music and he became a very viable option for that job."

Justin's vast knowledge of contemporary Christian music as well as Gospel, Spiritual, and standard Catholic hymns came to the forefront on that night of November 22, 2019. Two contemporary entrance songs, Bruce Ballinger's *We Have Come Into This House* and J. W. Harris's powerful *A Follower of Christ* also fall into the Gospel niche and had the overflow crowd in a church that seats 500 singing and swaying along with the choir.

Soprano Regina Henderson, Holy Savior's 4:00 Sunday cantor, joined the Gospel choir that night and will never forget the experience. "We entered the church from the back, singing as we walked into this brand new space that's so acoustically alive," she recalls. "We were behind Bishop Kemme and dozens of priests, and filed down two aisles, circling around the church and singing the entire way. Amazing." The Spiritual *Wade in the Water* provided the backdrop for Wichita Bishop Carl Kemme to perform the Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling of Water. With Justin at the keyboard playing his arrangement, the chord changes and harmonies brought the 120-year-old Spiritual into a new era and yet maintained its reverence.

The same can be said for his treatment of the evening's communion song *Here I Am, Lord* by Catholic liturgical composer Dan Schutte. Justin's arrangement uses bluesy chord progressions that bring out another dimension and another layer of beauty from the popular hymn.

"The pieces that Justin arranges, the chords he comes up with...singing it by yourself you think, 'That's never going to work,' but then you hear all the parts together and you go, 'Wow!'" says Henderson. "I was blown away by what he did. He's one in a million."

As he works on his master's degree from WSU and jumps from one acting or modeling gig to another, Justin's ambition is to get his arrangements published. For someone who once questioned whether he had the proper skillset for music ministry, one cold November evening proved his lamp shines very bright.

Holy Savior's Dedication Mass is available on YouTube and the church's Facebook page.