

*May 5, 2024 Service*

# **“What Happens When A Woman Takes Power?”**

*Led by Glenn Mehrbach and the Community Church Choir*

## **COMMUNITY CHURCH CHOIR**

*SOPRANO:* Deborah Klinger, Jean McKinney, Carol Parker, Betsy Yarrison,  
Bonny Chirayath, Stephanie Johnston, Susan Hafer, Jane Provan,

*ALTO:* Amy Shaub Maddox, Eileen Regan, Shannon Thielman, Linda Thompson,  
Kirsten Bergman, Ivy Brezina, Laura Doherty, Wendy Jebens, Mary LeMay

*TENOR:* Paul Eskildsen, Raul Nacianceno, Larry Ross, Scott Provan

*BASS:* David Clarridge, George Thompson, Jim Doherty, Larry Mason, Josh Socolar

*CONDUCTOR:* Glenn Mehrbach

*PIANIST:* Ariadna Nacianceno

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### **“Today”** *text by Ozioma Ogbaji, music by Lucy Walker*

From the composer: “I came across the poem ‘Today’, by Ozioma Ogbaji, earlier this year, and interpreted her words as a message of hope and strength, particularly resonant with the difficult times we have all experienced over the past year.”

Today I rise, I soar in splendor as the day keeps unveiling all her grandeur  
Let the chains of yesterday break away!  
Today is here, I will not cling to yesterday!

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### **“TaReKiTa”** *by Reena Esmail*

From the composer: “I wrote TaReKiTa as a gift for a choir called Urban Voices Project. They are a choir of people who are currently or have recently experienced homelessness on Skid Row in Los Angeles. They are so dear to me, and one day I just decided to teach them about Indian rhythm. They enjoyed the lesson so much that I wanted to write them a piece that would use what I had taught them. The result was TaReKiTa – I literally wrote it in an hour, just in a single moment of inspiration, and recorded myself singing all the parts for them to learn. It has since become a staple of their repertoire, but it’s also been sung by so many choirs around the world. There is just something about the piece, perhaps borne out of my love for this choir, that just seems to resonate with people.

Practically speaking, this piece is based on sounds the Indian drum, the tabla, makes, called “bols” — they are onomatopoeic sounds that imitate the sound of the drum. The result is something like a scat would be in jazz – ecstatic, energetic, rhythmic music that feels good on the tongue.”

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### **“I Am Light”** *by India.Arie*

From the composer: When I wrote the song, I thought the words I Am Light were kind of corny. I Am Light, it sounds like a stereotype of a spiritual person in a movie. But, when I get myself into that place where I am allowing the music to emerge and I'm not trying to force it out, I trust what I hear. That's why I get myself, like I pray and meditate first and get myself into a place where I'm not judging anything. I trust what I hear and so I'm like, this is what I hear. I wrote a song around it and when it was done... so often, songs are not done the same day often, but this one took a few hours and when it was done, I just thought it was really beautiful and special and I thought that it captured in a simple way the heaviness of what it feels like to be human, because it's easy to write a song with a lot of words and a lot of verses, it's hard to write a song that's a simple truth.

I am light, I am light.

I am not the things my family did, I am not the voices in my head,  
I am not the pieces of the brokenness inside, I am light.

I'm not the mistakes that I have made, or any of the things that caused me pain,  
I am not the pieces of the dream I left behind, I am light.

I am not the color of my eyes, I am not the skin on the outside,  
I am not my age, I am not my race, My soul inside is all light, all light,  
All light, all light.

I am divinity defined, I am the God on the inside.  
I am a star, a piece of it all, I am light.

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**“What Happens When a Woman?”** by *Alexandra Olsavsky of “Artemisia”*

What happens when a woman takes power? What happens when she won't back down?  
What happens when a woman takes power? What happen? What happens?  
What happens when a woman takes power? What happens when she won't back down?  
What happens when a woman takes power? What happens when she wears the crown?

What happens when she rules her own body? What happens when she sets the beat?  
What happens when she bows to nobody?  
What happens when she stands on her own two feet?

We rise above, we lead with love We have won, we are one, we've just begun.

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**“Quiet” by Connie Lim (a.k.a. MILCK)**

From the composer: “In 2016, I wrote my song “Quiet” as a healing process to reclaim my identity as a survivor of abuse, as an Asian American and as a woman. I searched and found people in DC to sing “Quiet” in a choir during the Women’s March and a video that someone recorded went viral. “Quiet” became the unofficial anthem of the Women’s March and started a movement around the world empowering people to use their voices for change. 8 years later our voices continue to sing louder than ever before.”

"Put on your face, know your place. Shut up and smile, don't spread your legs."  
I could do that.

But no one knows me, no one ever will, if I don't say something, if I just lie still.  
Would I be a monster? Scare 'em all away, if I let them hear what I have to say?

I can't keep quiet, no. I can't keep quiet, no. A one-woman riot, no.  
No, I can't keep quiet for anyone. No, not anymore.

'Cause no one knows me, no one ever will,  
If I don't say something, take that dry, blue pill  
They may see a monster, they may run away, but I have to do this.

I can't keep quiet, no. I can't keep quiet, no. A one-woman riot, no.  
No, I can't keep quiet, no.

There'll be someone who understands (Let it out, let it out, now.)  
Must be someone who understands (Let it out, let it out, now.)  
I can't keep quiet, no. No, I won't keep quiet.

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**“Resignation”** *words and music by Florence Price*

About the composer: Price was born in Little Rock, Ark., but spent her professional career in Chicago. Price enrolled at the New England Conservatory in Boston, where she majored in organ and piano. After graduating with two degrees, Price worked as a college professor, a church organist and a theater accompanist. However, she is best remembered as the first woman of African descent to have a symphony performed by a major American orchestra. In 1933, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra played her Symphony in E minor. That orchestra also premiered her Piano Concerto the following year.

My life is a pathway of sorrow; I’ve struggled and toiled in the sun.  
With hope that the dawn of tomorrow would break on a work that is done.  
My Master has pointed the way, He taught me in prayer to say:  
“Lord, give us this day and our daily bread.” I hunger, yet I shall be fed.

My feet, they are wounded and dragging; my body is tortured with pain;  
My heart, it is shattered and flagging, what matter, if, Heaven I gain?  
Of happiness once I have tasted; ‘twas only an instant it paused  
Tho’ brief was the hour that I wasted, forever the woe that it caused.

I’m tired and want to go home. My mother and sister are there;  
They’re waiting for me to come where mansions are bright and fair.

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**“We Shall Walk Through the Valley”** *Negro Spiritual, arranged by Undine Smith Moore*

About the composer: Moore wrote over 100 musical works, writing pieces for piano, choral and various instrumental settings. Moore’s work was heavily influenced by her own culture and experiences. In many of her compositions, she included the African American melodies and spirituals that she learned from her parents.

Moore also composed her own arrangements of many existing spirituals, including “We Shall Walk Through the Valley” and “Daniel, Daniel, Servant of the Lord.”

Moore was also influenced by the injustices Black Americans faced during her lifetime. One of Moore’s more notable works is a choral and orchestral oratorio called “Scenes from the Life of a Martyr,” dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr. The work was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1981.

We shall walk through the valley in peace, We shall walk through the valley in peace.  
If Jesus, himself, shall lead us, we shall walk through the valley in peace.

There will be no trials there, there will be no trials there.  
If Jesus, himself, shall lead us, we shall walk through the valley in peace.

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**“Take What You Need”** *by Reena Esmail*

From the composer: "Of the many performances of Take What You Need, very few of them have been in traditional concert halls. Most performances have taken place in jails, homeless shelters, support groups, schools, memorial services, places of worship — in places where people can gather to see and honor the humanity in one another.

Take What You Need was first written for Urban Voices Project, a choir made up of people who are experiencing or have recently experienced homelessness — so many of whom have trusted this piece with their own stories of loss and redemption, and who I am so honored to count among my dearest friends. But this piece is also meant to be a resource for musicians and communities to come together and build the lasting relationships that plant seeds for social change.”

Take a moment, take a breath, take time, take care,  
Take heart, take hope, take a step, take a chance,  
Take courage, take charge, take a stand, take pride  
Take joy, take pause, take a moment, take a breath,  
Take what you need.

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**“Luminescence”** text by *Blaire Ginsburg*, music by *Andrea Ramsey*

From the composer: I was provided a copy of Blaire Ginsburg's writing by her former high school choir teacher, Mr. Dustin Cates, who commissioned this work in memory of his father and in honor of his son's birth. Blaire wrote the poem initially as a response to her own powerful experiences while singing in her high school choir with Mr. Cates. I was immediately struck by the evocative imagery in the poem, and particularly the word “luminescence,” which not only has rhythmic and articulative interest, but effectively describes so many of the most wonderful things in life: light, music, human beings who are lit with inspiration or new ideas—just to name a few.

When writing the mixed meter figure for the word “luminescence,” I envisioned the glint on light on the facet of a diamond as it turns—a fleeting flash of something bright and brilliant. I hoped the energy of the accents and the shifting pulse could evoke the same intensity. I view the work in its entirety as a journey in sound and light and a tribute to the unifying and encompassing nature of the choral experience—the joys of singing community with others—where “many become one.”

Eternal light, Eternal light. Luminescence,  
Muted at the edges, Time forgotten, Time shifting, luminescence  
Eternal light, sifting through silence, Finding reason, finding life.  
Breathe in, silence, Breathe in, stillness, whistles low like wind chimes,  
Voices lush in tone, uniform in soul, Voices take me, where exhale paints the sky,  
Touch of color, sounding air, Smooth as marble, light as down,  
Reaching for light. Uniform in soul where many become one.

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**“Still I Rise”** by *Rosephanye Powell*

Notes about the piece: Commissioned by VOX Femina, “Still I Rise” was inspired by laureate Maya Angelou's poem. It is a women's anthem, saluting the strength of women to persevere through life's difficulties— low self-esteem, physical and emotional abuse, rape, incest, prejudice, abandonment, and such like. Though a woman's life or past may be filled with tears and heartaches, with each day that she finds herself still living, she finds that she has grown stronger and risen a little higher because her circumstances have not overcome her. Thus, every new day can be one of hope and joy because regardless of the past, today, “still I rise”!

Though I have been wounded, aching heart full of pain.  
Jus' like a budding rose, my bloom is nourished by rain.  
Haven't time to wonder why, though fearful I strive.  
My pray'r and faith uphold me 'til my courage arrives.

Still I rise as an eagle, soaring above every fear.  
With each day I succeed, I grow strong an' believe  
That it's all within my reach; I'm reaching for the skies,  
Bolstered by courage, yes, still I rise.  
Yes, it's all within my reach; I'm reaching for the skies, yes, still I rise.

As my heart grows heavy, and my confidence dies,  
Pure strength is in my tears and healing rains in my cries.  
Plunging depths of anguish, I determine to strive.  
My prayer and faith uphold me 'til my courage arrives.

Though you see me slump with heartache; heart so heavy that it breaks.  
Be not deceived I fly on bird's wings, rising sun, its healing rays.  
Look at me, I'm getting stronger; I'm determined to survive.  
Tho' I get tired an' I get weary, I won't give up, I'm still alive.

Yes, still I rise. By prayer and faith, still I rise.