**[EZ Speech Writers No. 15760]**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Live narration by Mr. James Campbell for the musical celebration of the 149th anniversary of the Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church in Gainesville, Florida.

REVERAND MCCLELLAN . . . LADIES AND GENTLEMEN . . . HONORED GUESTS . . . AND FELLOW CELEBRANTS . . .

IF YOU’LL ALLOW ME, WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN MY REMARKS THIS EVENING WITH A HISTORY LESSON, AND TO END THEM WITH MUSIC.

[BRIEF PAUSE]

THE YEAR WAS 1867. IT WAS LESS THAN 24 MONTHS SINCE GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE HAD SURRENDERED THE CONFEDERACY AT APPOMATAX COURTHOUSE IN VIRGINIA, AND AMERICA’S BLOODY CIVIL WAR HAD FINALLY COME TO AN END.

THAT EVENTFUL YEAR OF 1867 WAS ESPECIALLY FOR A TINY GROUP OF INTREPID FORMER SLAVES WHO HEARD THE VOICE OF GOD. THAT VOICE TOLD THEM, VERY SIMPLY, THAT THEY MUST BUILD A CHURCH.

THEY FOLLOWED GOD’S VOICE HERE TO GAINESVILLE, AND HERE, WITH THEIR OWN HANDS, BUILT THE MOUNT PLEASANT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH. THEY BUILT IT STRONG. THEY BUILT IT RIGHT. AND THEY BUILT IT IN THE FAITH THAT — COME WHAT MAY — GOD WOULD KEEP ITIN HIS HEART AND IN HIS SIGHT, WERE IT TO LAST A THOUSAND YEARS OR JUST ONE DAY.

WELL, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THEY SURELY DID BUILD IT RIGHT! THOUGH WE’VE STILL GOT A WAYS TO GO TO REACH THE THOUSAND-YEAR MARK, 149 YEARS OF CONTINUOUS EXISTENCE IS A MIGHTY FINE START, DON’T YOU THINK?! WE’RE STILL HERE . . . STILL GUIDED BY THE PRINCIPALS AND IDEALS OF THE METHODIST SOCIAL CREED . . . AND STILL DEDICATED TO OUR OWN CHURCH’S CORE VALUES OF *WELCOMING, ENCOURAGING, CARING, ACCEPTING, RESTORING, AND EMPOWERING.* FOR 149 YEARS, WE’RE STILL HERE, AND STILL WE CARE.

WE ARE, HOWEVER, NOT THE SAME CHURCH TODAY THAT WE WERE A CENTURY AND A HALF AGO. THERE’VE BEEN MANY CHANGES IN THE MOUNT PLEASANT METHODIST CHURCH SINCE 1867. THIRTY-FIVE DIFFERENT MINISTERS . . . MANY CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP, AS THE WORLD AROUND US HAS CHANGED . . . NEW PROGRAMS . . . NEW MINISTRIES . . . NEW FACILITIES . . . SOME NEW AND NOVEL FORMS OF OUTREACH. AND WITH GOD’S HELP, OUR NEW FELLOWSHIP HALL WILL BE COMPLETED BY [MONTH & YEAR].

YET THROUGHOUT OUR ALMOST CENTURY-AND-A-HALF EXISTENCE AS A WORSHIP COMMUNITY, OUR MUSIC MINISTRY — EVEN WHEN IT MIGHT HAVE COMPRISED BUT A SINGLE MUSICIAN — HAS ALWAYS BEEN THIS CHURCH’S TRUE HEART AND SOUL. THAT’S WHY WE’VE DEDICATED THE CELBRATION OF OUR CHURCH’S 149TH ANNIVERSARY TO OUR WONDERFUL MUSIC MINISTRY, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF [NAME OF MUSIC MINISTER; ADD APPROPRIATE ADDITIONAL RECOGNITIONS HERE].

OF COURSE, EVERY OTHER CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION IN THE WROLD COULD PROBABLY SAY THE SAME THING, BECAUSE SACRED MUSIC HAS FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES BEEN A CRUCIAL PART OF WORSHIP. I LIKE TO SAY THAT, IF YOU WANT TO VISUALIZE A CHURCHSERVICE WITHOUT MUSIC, JUST THINK OF WATCHING YOUR FAVORITE TV SHOW IN BLACK AND WHITE, WITH NO SOUNDTRACK!

SO WHY DOES MUSIC PLAY SUCH AN ENORMOUS ROLE IN THE WORSHIP OF VIRTUALLY ALL GODLY CONGREGATIONS ON EARTH, OF

EVERY RELIGION, VIRTUALLY EVERY DENOMINATION, AND AS WIDELY DIVERSE AS UNITED METHODIST AND JEWISH CABALISTS?

I BELIEVE THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS FOR THIS, BUT I THINK THE MAIN ONE IS THAT MUSIC SIMPLY SPEAKS TO THE HEART MORE PIERCINGLY AND POWERFULLY THAN ANY SPEECH CAN. AND IN SPEAKING TO THE HEART, MUSIC CAN SOOTHE AND INSPIRE AND COMFORT A SOUL FAR MORE EFFECTIVELY THAN ANY FORM OF SPEECH CAN, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF POETRY, WHICH IS, IF YOU WILL, “SPOKEN MUSIC.”

ANOTHER IMPORTANT REASON FOR MUSIC’S CENTRAL ROLE IN RELIGIOUS CELEBRATIONS AROUND THE WORLD IS THAT IT’S PARTICIPATIVE. THE TUNES ARE SIMPLE AND THE WORDS ARE EASY, AND ALMOST EVERYONE KNOWS THE “OLD STANDARDS” BY HEART. YOU CAN PARTICIPATE SILENTLY TO YOURSELF, IF YOU WISH, OR YOU CAN SING AND DANCE IN THE AISLES . . . BUT YOU CAN’T ***HELP*** BUT PARTICIPATE! I DARE SAY THAT A, QUOTE-UNQUOTE “*REGULAR-CHURCH-GOER-WHO-HATES-MUSIC”* WOULD BE A VERY TOUGH BIRD TO FIND.

AND THEN, TOO, I THINK THERE MIGHT BE YET A THIRD, AND PERHAPS MORE RELIGIOUS REASON THAT MUSIC’S SO IMPORTANT TO US AS WORSHIPPERS, AND THAT IS THAT, TO MOST OF US, THE NAME AND THE HOLINESS OF GOD MUST NEEDS BE ***SUNG*** AND NOT MERELY SPOKEN. FOR HIS NAME ***IS*** MUSIC, AND TO MERELY ***SPEAK*** IT IS NIGH ON TO A BLASPHEMY.

SO IT WILL COME AS NO SURPRISE TO YOU THAT WE’VE CHOSEN TO CELEBRATE OUR 149TH ANNIVERSARY WITH A CAVALCADE OF CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS MUSIC FROM VARIOUS ERAS OF OUR HISTORY, TO BE PRESENTED BY THE MEMBERS OF OUR MUSIC MINISTRY. SO LET ME, ONCE AGAIN PRESENT [NAME OF MUSIC MINISTER; THEN AFTER THE APPLAUSE:] AND LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT THE FIRST SELECTION OF MUSICAL NUMBERS ON THIS EVENING’S PROGRAM; IT’S ENTITLED [ADD TITLE OF SEGMENT I], AND ALL THE SONGS HAVE TO DO WITH [ADD SUBJECT OF SEGMENT I SONGS].

[REPEAT FOR THE REMAING THREE SEGMENTS AND 11-12 SONGS ON THE PROGRAM. END WITH YOUR TRIBUTE.]

**# # #**