

Bruce Vantine's
**CORNERSTONE
CHORALE AND BRASS**

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The Heart of the Matter *A dose of empathy...*

The concert was over that evening in beautiful Portland, Oregon. Our *Cornerstone* crews were taking down the acoustical shell, risers, lights and banners. As I walked out of the church and headed for the bus, a man approached me offering a few compliments on the performance, and then saying quietly:

*"I will never see things the same way.
I'm leaving here tonight with a different heart."*

His words resonated with me, because I've heard similar words many times over the 16 tours and 424 performances of *The Cornerstone Chorale & Brass* since 1988.

It's not only members of the audience who respond to the music and social justice theme -- especially the message of God's compassion, love and grace. Often it's the performers as well. After the 5-week 1995 tour, one of our brass players commented:

"You can't perform in 28 Cornerstone concerts and not be deeply affected."

One of our concert sponsors in Bradenton, Florida said that they had never experienced a program that reflected:

"such an abundant expression of God's love."

These are just a few examples of the impact *Cornerstone* programs have on individuals, with a message sorely needed.

Many people feel disillusionment and there is much criticism these days of our institutions, our government, our system of capitalism, our large corporations, and yes - our religious organizations and churches.

A great deal of time and effort go into analyzing how we can improve these structures.

Many of our institutions may well need to be changed or renewed, but let's not just blame structural deficiencies.

After all, it is people who control our institutions and work in them - people who may need a change of heart - *a dose of empathy* and compassion for those that are being left behind in America.

Theologian Frederick Buechner wrote that:

Compassion is the "capacity for feeling what it's like to live inside somebody else's skin. It is the knowledge that there can never really be any peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy finally for you too."

TIME recently named Pope Francis as the 2013 Person of the Year for *"pulling the papacy out of the palace and into the streets, for committing the world's largest church to confronting its deepest needs and for balancing judgment with mercy."*

Pope Francis wrote, *"I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security."*

According to TIME, Pope Francis *"made it clear that he does not just want talk - he wants actual transformation."*

We should expect no less than a *transformation* of our institutions leading toward a more fair, just and compassionate society - a transformation led by our politicians, community, business

and church leaders. It begins with each one of us.

At the very least, those at the bottom of the economic ladder deserve the possibility to lift themselves out of their present circumstances - the hope of finding decent work for fair pay allowing them to support a family. Isn't it part of the "American dream" to offer people *equal opportunity* to strive for "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?"

The Cornerstone Chorale & Brass is dedicated to presenting professional programs designed to help individuals experience *a deeper sense of empathy* for the poor and the disenfranchised who live among us.

When I look through the list of persons who have actively supported *Cornerstone*, I am deeply thankful and humbled by the steady help and encouragement you have provided over the years.

Having experienced your caring support, I know that...

- *"I will never see things the same way,"*
- and I will continue working on *Cornerstone* with an ever stronger resolve...
- and a renewed and *"different heart."*

As we work toward our October 2014 tour through Western and Midwestern states, please help us with a tax deductible gift that will provide the fuel to spread God's message of compassion, grace and hope.

*Bruce Vantine
January 2014*

Our sincere thanks to our 2012 and 2013 Cornerstone supporters.

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