

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

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*The American experiment:
“...does that star spangled banner yet wave?”*

-Francis Scott Key (1779-1843), American lawyer & poet

When Francis Scott Key penned the words to what would become the national anthem of the United States, he was watching from a distance the British naval attack on Fort McHenry in Baltimore Harbor mid- September, 1814. In the light cast by “the bombs bursting in air,” he could catch glimpses of the U.S. flag, tattered and torn, but still waving over the fort as it remained in American hands. It was a significant moment because just three weeks before, the White House in Washington City had been captured and set ablaze by British troops.

We currently face another unsettling moment in American history:

128,883 deaths in the U.S. due to COVID-19 (as of 7/1/2020), with economic upheaval and high unemployment - especially among people of color;

+ the checks and balances between the three branches of government have been rendered less effective if not impotent, with Executive branch over-reach, unprecedented political influence on the Justice Department, as well as partisan congressional stonewalling and stalemate;

+ national security and health agencies have been ignored, muzzled, or dangerously diminished to deflect blame and provide political cover for the White House, which continues efforts to divide the American people and to manipulate traditional oversight restraints while testing the limits of constitutional law;

+ racial injustice issues have come into laser-like focus across the U.S. and world after the brutal murder of George Floyd in *Minneapolis* and those that followed, notably spawning numerous *peaceful multi-generational and multi-racial demonstrations* - alongside cases of vandalism and violence.

We cannot avoid the challenges

and other people of color struggle for a deeper breath of freedom?

Will we *boldly move* out of our church comfort zones (or support those who do) to help the 21% of our American children - yes, *our* children - who live in hunger and poverty while “every year, more than two million kids in America will face a period of homelessness?” [Covenant House].

Most often, **our *inaction or silence is based in fear*** - fear of creating a conflict with friends or family, or even fear that speaking out may affect our income or social standing.

Pulitzer Prize winning author, Jon Meacham, writes:

“*The opposite of fear is hope,...* *Fear feeds anxiety and produces anger; hope, particularly in a political sense, breeds optimism and feelings of well being. Fear is about limits; hope is about growth. Fear casts its eyes warily, even shiftily, across the landscape; hope looks forward, toward the horizon. Fear points at others, assigning blame; hope points ahead, working for a common good. Fear pushes away; hope pulls others closer. Fear divides; hope unifies.*”

[“The Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels”]

Will we set aside our fears

**Cornerstone October 2020
Tour Postponed**

The *COVID-19 Virus* made it necessary for us to postpone our *Cornerstone Chorale & Brass* fall 2020 concert tour. As disappointing as this is to us, it certainly is not the most catastrophic thing happening at this time. In the middle of this pandemic we now have another national crisis which demands our attention - stemming from our long history of racism.

We regret that we won't be able to share God's message of love and compassion in person this fall, but may we remind everyone of the basic premise that *Cornerstone* shares with its audiences.

We traditionally end our concerts with this narration...

*I am only one,
but still, I am one.
I cannot do everything,
but still I can do something.
And because I cannot do everything,
I must not refuse to do
the something I can do.*

-Edward Everett Hale

And with this final choral piece...

*Go now and love one another
as I have shown my love for you.
Take up a cross and feed my sheep,
love ALL of my crying lambs.
Go now and love one another*