

Trust Your Orchestra
Rev. Jennifer Gingras
Monroe Congregational Church, UCC
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Matthew 6:25-34

You may have heard me say before that my years playing violin in youth orchestras were amazing. Besides the excellent music program at my high school, I was also a member of the Shoreline Youth Symphony Orchestra. We played all kinds of venues, from Carnegie Hall (that one time) to Tanglewood to our hometown Elks Lodge.

I never had the natural talent of some of my peers (the ones who are professional musicians today), but I had a good ear. With moderate practice and regular lessons, I kept my chair in the second violin section. From time to time, especially after a good performance, I imagined that someday I could be a professional musician.

When I was a junior at UCONN I decided to change my major from psychology to music performance – somehow, I passed the audition. I loaded up on classes I needed: Piano, music theory, and woodwinds. It was going to be an awesome semester. Honestly, if I could have pulled it off, my mother would have been so proud.

Unfortunately, that was the semester I almost flunked out. Not for lack of studying! It was just that my brain could not understand how to use both hands to play an instrument, my piano playing was abysmal. I had never been a great sight reader, that's still the case. My clarinet playing sounded like a drowning cat. Worst of all, even the most basic music theory made no sense to me at all. It felt so mathematic.

So I gave it up and changed my major to English. I had too, in order to graduate. At that time of my life, it was clear that I wasn't being called to be a professional musician.

As our UCC Statement of Faith declares, Jesus conquered sin and death; he lived a life that did not compromise his devotion to God and he was willing to die for it.

It is quite unlikely that you or I will ever be called to do the same, but every day we are faced with choices between God's dream for the world and our own personal wants and needs.

If Jesus could face death rather than compromise his God-given purpose, we should be able to have the courage to tell the truth when the truth is hard to tell and serve others with a word of hope and a witness of love.

Jesus was not about winners and losers; he was about harmony and wholeness. The gospel he preached reminds us that relationships are more important than being right all the time and reconciliation is worth striving towards.

If only we could be like Jesus and realize that harmony and reconciliation is the ultimate win. We have become so dependent on ourselves that we have forgotten the interdependency of all life.

We hear messages all the time that say achieving personal success is all about being independent and self-sufficient. In the world of music, we might call that a soloist.

But life is a web of interconnectedness. Wise people have known this for a long time, but recently we have begun to see just how connected we are. Our economy ebbs and flows on the news from Europe. Our sea levels rise when far-off glaciers melt. The actions we take or do not take on far-off continents effect our mental, physical, social, and spiritual welfare.

Jesus knew this because Jesus knew God as one who cares for the smallest forms of life, the lilies of the field as well as for us.

Jesus knew something about the interrelatedness of our world; he understood that to heal one's body also meant paying attention to one's soul. When Jesus says don't worry, he doesn't mean to ignore the tasks God gives us to do. The world is still a chaotic place. The hope is that ultimately, in God's time, the divine power for love, harmony and reconciliation will be realized.

An orchestra consists of many voices: woodwinds, percussion, strings and brass. The goal of orchestral playing is not necessarily for one individual musician to stand out and shine, but for the group to work together as a whole to achieve a work of art. And to play in an orchestra requires listening

for the swells and fade of dynamics, tuning yourself to the pitch of others in your section, interpreting the sheet music, and encouraging the weaker players.

I think it's true that playing successfully in any musical group – whether that be a band or a choir or an orchestra - requires commitment, both in rehearsal time and physical practice.

But the great thing about making music in a group is that when you do so with the goal of achieving harmony a kind of kinship, loyalty and love is built. Together, you learn that you can change the world, one piece of art at a time. It requires trusting the musician to your left and your right, but also those in that other section across the stage. It's pretty amazing, the music you can make together when you trust your orchestra. Amen.