

ALLELUIA FOLK GROUP MUSIC MINISTRY



Circa 2005

The Alleluia Folk Group (most often known as “AFG”) is one of a number of music ministries at Holy Family. AFG is the only music ministry at Holy Family which has been in existence and in continuous service to the community since 1973. Our goal is to joyfully and prayerfully inspire all in our community to fully participate in liturgical celebrations.

AFG specializes in a diverse collection of styles, but favors contemporary spirit-filled music using a wide variety of vocal and instrumental combinations to achieve a sound and feel that we believe is most conducive to an enthusiastic and meaningful liturgical experience. We attempt to continually move the community forward by introducing new music, but we also maintain a solid repertoire of the “old favorites” that everyone has come to know and love.

Our current instrumentation includes multiple guitars, keyboard and guitar synthesizers, acoustic piano, electric bass, flute, electronic drums, chimes, tambourine, and miscellaneous percussion instruments. We have at times in the past also included violins, brass, and harmonica, and hopefully new musicians will come forward to bring these talents into service with our ministry once again. If you have any of these talents, we invite you to come forward and join us.

AFG is also always open to new vocalists to add to the wonderful mix of voices with which we are now blessed. It is not necessary to be able to read music, since we learn most of our music from teaching CD’s or audio files shared electronically. We feel very fortunate to have members who are equipped with many years of experience that enables us to work out virtually all of our own harmonies, descants, dynamics, and vocal arrangements, rather than using formal SATB arrangements. The only requirement beyond a basic ability to carry a tune is a willingness to consistently dedicate yourself to working cooperatively as a member of a musical team that is wholeheartedly committed to the ministry, and which fully supports each other in all our endeavors, since our ministry to our community, and to each other, goes far beyond just showing up to make music together.

AFG is a family in every sense of the word. We laugh, cry, sing, eat, pray, play and generally have a wonderful time sharing our lives with each other. We participate in many social and community-building activities, such as special occasion parties, camp-outs, weekends away, going to concerts together, dinners out, retreats, etc. The group also sometimes provides music for events outside of Holy Family at other churches, hospitals, jails, homes, etc. We also provide music ministry at special liturgies, such as penance services, children's liturgies, memorials, etc., and are proud to provide the music every year for San Jose's Italian American Festival mass, and an annual Christmas concert at Byington Winery.

AFG participates in a weekly liturgy rotation with Holy Family's other musical groups, which allows the community to experience many different musical styles from week to week. We generally provide the music ministry for approximately four or five liturgies per month. Most of the time we minister at two liturgies "back to back", such as both the 8 am and the 9:30 am liturgies. The norm is for us to do two such "back to back" liturgies in a month. That usually gives us at least one weekend a month when we are "off", so we can be ministered to by one of the other music groups, or participate in outings, etc.

Our rehearsals are weekly on Thursday nights at 7:00 pm in the church, though most of the time when we are off for an upcoming weekend, we skip practice that week as well, except in busy liturgical seasons. Our practices generally last until approximately 9:30 pm, though it is not unusual in the special liturgical seasons for us to have a couple of practices which can run substantially longer than that, or to have an extra practice scheduled. Yet it is not uncommon for many in the group to go out for a snack and socializing together after practice just to be able to spend some additional time together.

We gather together an hour before every liturgy begins so as to set up our extensive sound system equipment used for our ministry, and to warm up our voices. Set-up and tear-down is a team activity, with everyone having their assigned duties and specialties for which they have received "on the job" training.

There are a number of sub-ministries within AFG, including most notably the music planning committee. Several members of our group attend the monthly Liturgy Advisory Committee meeting, and bring back input to our own AFG music planning committee. The planning committee reviews the minutes and the readings for each week, consults various planning guides, and primarily draws on their own wealth of experience from years of dedicated service in planning and preparing music for each liturgy that will best touch the hearts of the worshiping community. We also coordinate with other ministries serving at the liturgies, such as the Ministers of Movement, Lectors, and of course the Presiders, to lay out a full Order of Worship for each liturgy. Another member of the music planning committee then prepares a songlist (which we call our "menu") for every liturgy, and distributes it to all concerned. Another member handles projection of all of our music onto screens for assembly participation.

Another sub-ministry within AFG is our webmaster who maintains the AFG website that includes our constantly changing calendar of all events, provides each person with a method to register and update our weekly commitment for each liturgy and practice online, keeps an up-to-date list of all members' contact information, and gives us a place to share on-line photographic journals of recent liturgies, parties, and events. In addition, our webmaster provides us with an email server that allows all of us to communicate easily and almost instantaneously with each other by email. We also have a weekly newsletter that goes out to all members via email, with announcements, calendar updates, prayer requests, planning notes, fun things we want to share with each other, etc. We maintain an additional specialized website which allows us to share music, menus, audio teaching files, photos, etc.

If you feel called to join AFG in this ministry, you can contact our leader, Joan Pfeifer, at her personal email address, which is joanpfeifer@yahoo.com, or by phone at (408)778-8500.

Come celebrate with us!!! It is truly a labor of love.