

OPENING WORDS  
Nathan Siler  
Sunday, February 25, 2018

Good morning and welcome to All Souls. My name is Nathan Siler.

I work here as a soloist in the All Souls Choir. You may have seen me over the last nine years singing solos right over there. Or sometimes right there. One time, I was up there, but I was not singing. I was performing up there for a Musica Viva concert, which - incidentally - I will do that same sensational thing that I did last time, flanked by Andrew Moore and Shawn Bartels, but I'm not going to tell you what it is...you have to come and find out. So it's really strange to be up here speaking to you, because I usually don't speak to you - I sing to you. I sing AT you. I sing for you. And I sing with you

When I said what I do here, I used the word "work," which implies that I am paid to be here to sing and play for you. That is true. I am. I can't tell you how grateful I am to be making my living as a musician in New York City. I'm just a kid from Oklahoma, and now here I am -doing this thing? Woah.

But sometimes, I get frustrated. I work with other musicians who make their living the way I do, and over time, they begin to dread the thing that they so longed for, as if it were some huge chore. Granted, half of it is just an act; they put on a certain world-weary cynicism to indicate that they are so professional and have performed for so long that they are "over it." I know...It's the same in every profession. But I know many who still radiate joy through what they do.

I try really hard to be vigilant and guard against the cynical attitude, not because I'm just some hayseed from Oklahoma who was simply born with pep and congeniality, but because I was given the gift of desperation. I am an alcoholic who is now 8 years sober, and I know what it's like to lose everything. I know what it's like to be sick, to get fired, to lose the trust of friends, to be left by a spouse, and to be cutoff from family. I know what it's like to be hopelessly alone.

I found All Souls by hearing about their choir. During the final two years of my drinking, during my manic swings of sobriety and relapse, our dear Walter Klauss accepted me as a volunteer and eventually hired me as one of the professionals. It is Providential how much being here fitted in with my recovery. Even through those dark years, I never lost faith in God and never abandoned the Christian principles I hold dear. But the recovery fellowship I belong to coupled with my experiences at All Souls have helped broaden my concept of what God is.

And when I say, I "work" here, what I really mean is, if I am truly doing my job, I can open a window into the transcendent place so that you can clearly see the God that I see. At this point in my journey, it's no longer about how I sound or how I look or what singerly facial expression or gesture I do to qualify me as a professional musician. No. My only wish is to connect with the God I really got to know during those dark years, to get myself out of the way, and to let you see how glorious this existence is. Even through the pain - even through the depravity and disbelief, I only wish to show you the thing that you know - and that I know - is right here. And I won't always do my job perfectly, and it is very difficult to get the ego out of the way. But I make a commitment to you to do my best to open the window to that

transcendent place to see God with a capital G by singing to you, by singing At you, by singing for you, and by singing with you.

Would you please rise and join me in the Bond of Union

*In the freedom of the truth,*

*and in the spirit of love*

*We unite for the worship of God,*

*and the service of all*