

# The Chancel Choir's Trip to Carnegie Hall

By Richard Steffan (former Chancel Choir member) and Barbara Oldroyd (Chancel Choir member)

In May 2008, **Ann Y. Schmidt**, Director of Music, made the exciting announcement that the **Chancel Choir** had been invited to sing at New York City's famed **Carnegie Hall** on Saturday, **June 6, 2009**. The concert was for the Shawnee Press 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala and part of the Distinguished Concerts International New York (DCINY) series. Four composers were to be featured, including **Joseph M. Martin**, twice a Visiting Artist at GPC and one of our favorite composers. More than 600 choristers were invited to participate—300 for each half of the concert. This was definitely a thrilling invitation for the Chancel Choir.

After the choir had accepted the invitation, we rehearsed our music (both secular and sacred pieces) for the concert and planned the logistics regarding hotel reservations and transportation arrangements.

On Wednesday, June 3, the GPC bus, filled with Chancel Choir members, spouses, and patrons, left for New York City. Our first rehearsal was on Thursday afternoon. Excitement was in the air and we made friends with singers from all over the country. The rehearsals were led by composers **Greg Gilpin** and **Joseph M. Martin**, who were both wonderful. Our Friday rehearsals and the Saturday dress rehearsal at Carnegie Hall were followed by a full performance at 8:00 p.m. Entering the stage of that hallowed hall and hearing oneself singing as part of a 300-voice choir with full orchestra was a spiritual experience.

The music for our half of the concert included the following:

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| "Ding-a Ding-a Ding"            | Greg Gilpin                                     |
| "Live Your Dream"               | Greg Gilpin                                     |
| "Battle Hymn of the Republic"   | Julia Ward Howe/arr. Roy Ringwald               |
| "Nothin' Gonna Stumble My Feet" | Greg Gilpin                                     |
| "Why We Sing"                   | Greg Gilpin                                     |
| "Shout to God"                  | Joseph M. Martin/Lyrics by J. Paul Williams     |
| "The Rhythm of Life"            | Dorothy Fields & Cy Coleman/arr. Richard Barnes |
| "Song for the Unsung Hero"      | Joseph M. Martin/Lyrics by Pamela Martin        |

For the concert finale, all of the choirs sang Joseph M. Martin's moving composition, "The Awakening," and J. Jerome Williams' "A Parting Blessing."

Everyone who participated in the concert was invited to the famous Tavern on the Green in Central Park for a post-concert reception and dinner—the icing on the cake for an exciting weekend.

On Sunday, tired but still elated, 27 Chancel Choir members, Ann, and our spouses and patrons headed back to GPC, filled with the joy of singing Joseph M. Martin's inspiring words from "The Awakening":

*"Let music never die in me! Forever let my spirit sing! Let music live!"*

