



The MVEer Monthly December, 2019

Calendar for December

Monday, December 2 Rehearsal St. Luke's at 7pm

Wednesday, December 4 Drexel Towne Square, Oak Creek at **5pm**
for our Christmas tree lighting performance

Monday, December 9 Rehearsal St. Luke's at 7pm

Saturday, December 14 Welcome Christmas Show!!! **Noon** at USM

Monday, November 16 VA Hospital Show Meet at VA @ **6pm**

Tuesday, December 17 Joint BOD 19&20 St. Luke's at 7pm

No practices on Dec 23 or Dec 30

JOIN THE
MIDWEST VOCAL EXPRESS
WISCONSIN'S PREMIER MEN'S A Cappella Chorus

AS THEY
"WELCOME CHRISTMAS"

WITH SPECIAL
FEATURED GUESTS
Martini
QUEENS OF HARMONY!

SATURDAY
DECEMBER 14TH, 2019

TWO SHOWS
2:30 & 7:30

VIRGINIA HENES YOUNG
THEATRE AT THE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MILWAUKEE
- RIVER HILLS, WI. -

For tickets:
Go to www.MVE.org
Or see an MVE Member

Welcome Christmas - The Virginia Henes Young Theater at the **University School of Milwaukee** on December 14 - 2 shows: 2:30pm & 7:30pm. **Call time is NOON.**

Address: 2100 W Fairy Chasm Rd, River Hills, Wisconsin.



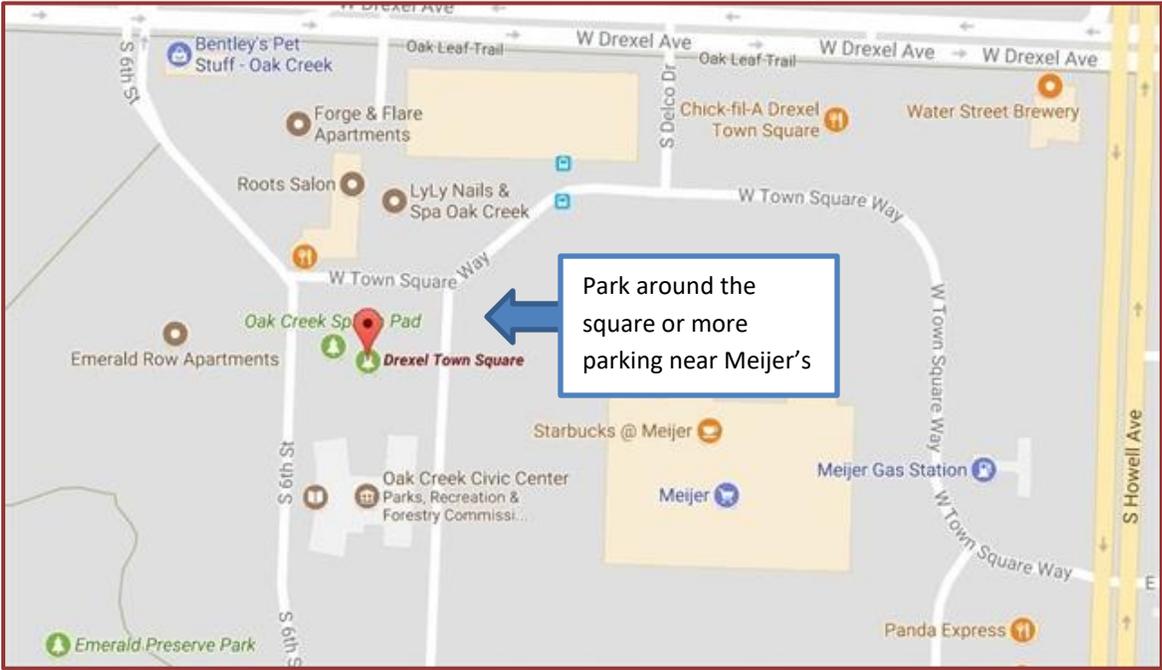
Directions: If going north on I-43, exit at 82B at Brown Deer, Road. Go west about 1/2 mile and turn right (north) on **N Spruce Rd**. Go about 1/2 mile to **Fairy Chasm Rd** and turn left. Go another 1/2 mile to the University School of Milwaukee and park on the right side.



Directions: If coming from the west, you could take **Main Street** from I-41 becoming Brown Deer Road to **N Range Line Road** to **W. Fairy Chasm**.

Christmas Tree Lighting at Drexel Towne Center

Call time is **5pm** on **Wednesday, December 4** for warm up and sing at 5:30 at **500 W Drexel Ave**, Oak Creek, WI 53154. From I-94, go East on Drexel. We often meet up at the City Hall and Library (under the clock tower in this photo) and sing in the square in front of the tower. As parking may be quite scarce, you could park closer to Meijer's and walk over as in this map below.



Gabe Becker's Funeral Service – Dick Marcus



Saturday, November 23, 2019 at St. Florian's Catholic Church in West Milwaukee, not far from **Miller Park** (or whatever the park's new name is now), a number of MVE members joined the **Heart of Harmony Chorus** and the **Festival City Chorus** to sing and honor our friend Gabe, with **Rick Van Gomple** directing us.

Michael Gabriel Becker or "**Gabe**" or his own nick-name "*Spaceman*" sang with the MVE primarily 2013-2015, but he also sang with the Festival City Chorus from 2005-2012. He was part of the **Ancient Harmonious Society of Woodshedders** from 2011-2015 as well.



After singing with us, he moved up north somewhere to write science fiction. He wrote a book, **Beyond the Martian Star** and other blog posts.

(https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/16971875.Michael_Gabriel_Becker).

He was just 26, but his diabetes and ulcers combined to shorten Gabe's time with us. His obituary says, in part:

Gabe was born June 23, 1993 in Milwaukee to Michael and Catherine (nee Ginski) Becker. He was educated under the Seton Homeschool Program. Gabe loved technology and tinkering, always curious about the world around him. He loved to sing in the Barbershop Festival City Chorus, playing games on the computer, and spending time with his family and friends. His smile and the joy he brought to others will truly be missed. The overflowing love his parents have for him will never be forgotten. <https://www.myrhumpatten.com/notices/Michael-Becker>



Participating from the MVE at the funeral and/or singing were: **Aaron Davis, Mike Lietke, Dick Marcus, Matt Nagel, Bruce Vitale, Tom Weber**, and perhaps others who I apologize if I forgot to list.

The combined chorus sang "*Precious Lord, Take My Hand.*"





Jim Franklin: An interview with our incoming Chapter President and one of the Founding MVE Members

MVEer asks: Jim, you were in a barbershop chorus before there was the Mighty MVE. What was that? Weren't you a director somewhere?

Jim replies: My High School quartet and I joined the **Racine Dairy Statesmen** in the mid-1970s, a top ten International chorus competitor of about 70 men. Their membership got older, less hungry, more comfortable in the 1980s, so they experienced less success and shrunk. I was not active for 3 years because I was working in Skokie, IL.

When I returned to BBS in the late 80s, 2 things happened. Racine asked me to be their Director, which I did for 2 years, and we started MVE.

I've also directed a **Sweet Adelines** chorus and over the years I have been fortunate to be both Assistant and Interim director for MVE.

MVEer asks: Then, what was the reason for creating a new chorus?

Jim replies: There was no chorus in the area that was dedicated to performance excellence. **Harry Hanson** knew that there might be interest among some hungry guys in the area, and gathered 16 of us in **Caldwell, WI** in January 1988 and decided to start building a new chapter.

MVEer asks: How big was the MVE at its start?

Jim replies: It took us over a year to go from 16 to the required 30 members to become a chartered chapter.

MVEer asks: What was the first accomplishment that you remember from the early days of the MVE?

Jim replies: Becoming a chapter was the first accomplishment. We won our first contest the day we received our charter. [EDITOR'S NOTE: April 29, 1989, I believe, also known as the date **Bryan Ziegler** was born.] Performances at **Irish Fest** were proud moments as well.



MVEer asks: You are to be our Chapter President in 2020. What do you most love about our chorus?

Jim concludes: Lots. Our guys and their passion to give their all to the audience. The resilience we've shown through 30 years. Like family, the way

we encourage and support each other in good times and bad. The excitement we feel about our future.

MVEer says: Thanks, Jim. We're excited, too.

The Holly and the Ivy – Mike Lietke

As I promised, this is what I could uncover from the lyrics of the Holly and Ivy.

Holly and Ivy are two plants that stay green throughout the winter, and thus have held distinct symbolism since even before the spread of Christianity. The Holly in those days represented man, and Ivy was woman.

In medieval times, that Holly started appearing in paintings featuring and in literature alluding to Jesus, with Ivy representing Mary, his mother. Other elements of the symbolism were served well by the plants.



"Christians have identified a wealth of symbolism in its form. The sharpness of the leaves help to recall the crown of thorns worn by Jesus; the red berries serve as a reminder of the drops of blood that were shed for salvation; and the shape of the leaves, which resemble flames, can serve to reveal God's burning love for His people. Combined with the fact that holly maintains its bright colors during the Christmas season, it naturally came to be associated with the Christian holiday." [Angie Mostellar]

What of the troublesome running of the deer and choir and Organ?

The date of Christ's birth was unknown, and so it was set as a matter of convenience at the end of the Winter Solstice (December 21 or 22), or the shortest day of the year. At that point, the promise of longer days and crops growing in the field began anew.

Thus, many areas had a celebration of the end of Winter Solstice. There may have been a "**running of the deer**", a method of hunting (not a fan, even



The Holly & the Ivy by Portmeirion

though it is still used today) or flushing the deer out of a field by having a line of townspeople walking in unison and forcing deer toward awaiting archers.

This venison, which was illegal for the peasants to "poach" from their lords, was often shared during this celebration (even if only the worst cuts and offal). This would happen early in the day so that they

could be prepared for the celebrations (rising of the sun).

The poem dates back to at least 1711, and found in publications in 1841 by Wadsworth, but the tune we know was a song by **Cecil Sharp** in 1911 in *English Folk-Carols*. Early versions from 1811 have in the chorus: *The rising of the sun, the running of the deer, the playing of the merry groan, sweet singing in the choir*. This is now changed in 1911 to "the playing of the merry organ," instead.

The meaning of the "merry groan," is that there is an old instrument called *a gruhn* that is a string instrument played by "grinding" it either with a bow or by turning a wheel as in the photo to the right. This rubs against the strings as with a hurdy-gurdy. The merry organ is a modernization of an old lute/hurdy-gurdy type of instrument.



On this day of celebration, a hurdy-gurdy would be played and the choirs would sing in the hopes of a new beginning - originally of the coming planting season...and later - a new life in Jesus Christ.



So, you see, our song is the singing of Jesus and Mary, and the celebration of a new beginning in Christ...is hidden in plain sight in a song that has images with history going back many years.

Hope this helps. Mike

Where the MVE Rehearsed – Harry Hanson and Mike Lietke

Newer members only know of our rehearsals in **St. Luke's Lutheran Church** in downtown Greendale, but we've moved around a bit. **Dick Marcus** asked us to tell where we have practiced. We remember them, but our dates are imprecise. They are close enough to give a general history.

As **Jim Franklin** noted in his interview, our first location was a church in **Caldwell, WI**. This was our first place for the reason that one member had a wife that was a pastor at **Caldwell United Methodist Church**. It is south of Mukwonago and we were there from 1988-89. We didn't stay there long as we moved about the time we got our charter in April 1989. The location was too far for some of the guys.



We moved to **Our Shepherd Lutheran** at 5901 Westway in Greendale just north of *Sherwood Park*. We were there from 1989-1994. Some think that it looks like a spaceship from the *War of the Worlds*.

We found that it was hard to hang around this church and sing tags after practice, so we moved from 1994 until about 1998 to the **St. Francis Lion's Club**. Although it was somewhat hard to

get to, it was by far the best place we have ever practiced. It was "dark" on Monday nights and three or four of us were given keys by the club. Basically we could practice from 7:30 to 10:30, and then people could walk 100 feet to the bar and have the soda or beer they



wanted. We merely kept track of the pitchers poured and paid for them at the agreed-upon price.

More tags were sung in those years than any other in our history – because we had no “unsympathetic ears” to worry about. We left the **St. Francis Lion’s Club** because it was truly so far out of the way for just about anybody not living in St. Francis.



Our next move was back to the basement of a church, **St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church** on Forest Homes Avenue in Greenfield, WI. We were there about six years (1998-2004). It was intimate. We had to carry the risers up and down a winding back stairway every time. (*EDITOR’S NOTE: I couldn’t find a picture of the outside of that church, but these girls are in the basement where we practiced.*)

Finally, we moved to **St. Luke’s Lutheran Church** in Greendale, about 15 years ago, say 2004, where we are now. We have much more space, pretty good acoustics (though there are some odd spots), room for some cabinets, and our risers. Our rickety old risers that we lugged upstairs at St. John’s were replaced over ten years ago with the nicer ones we have now, with wheels, and we can store them in the church basement!



The MVE is a great group of singers who strive for excellence. **We are not a location**, but we do enjoy being part of



Greendale (to participate in Greendale parades, singing for the community at the Gazebo, and of course singing for St. Luke’s Lutheran Church). We are happy here.

Milwaukee VA Medical Center Performance

On the Monday after our two great "Welcome Christmas" shows, we go to the VA Hospital, often called the *Zablocki Center*.



Our **call time is 6PM** on **Monday, December 16** at Milwaukee VA Medical Center at **5000 W National Ave.**, Milwaukee, WI 53295. We sing about 6:30. We sing to about 30 veterans. They love this show. One important bullet point in our Chapter Mission is altruistic service, which means doing good for others.



The Greendale, WI Chapter, Barbershop Harmony Society, is a fraternity dedicated to providing members, audiences, and the community with:

- A cappella entertainment excellence
- Education in this unique American musical style
- Altruistic service



After the performance last December, most of us went to **4238 West Orchard** along Miller Parkway to the **Ice House Bar & Grill** to continue our Christmas cheer. An afterglow is not yet scheduled, but we may decide to go there again.



The Grinch Who Stole Christmas Memes & Messages

A **Meme** is a humorous image, video, or piece of text that is copied (often with slight variations) and spread rapidly by Internet users.

