2017 Chapter Directors' Meeting at the Cincinnati Convention
Presentation by William Berg, Metuchen Chapter Director

Good morning, I am William Berg. For the past six years, I was the Coordinator for Planning for our NPM Metuchen Chapter and now I am the Chapter Director. I am going to share with you some of the activities which helped us get more people involved in NPM and led us to become chapter of the year last year. I hope you can find something of use for your local chapter.

At the founding of our diocese, we started and had a very active NPM chapter. We are close to Westminster Choir College, Princeton and we have and continue to use their faculty as clinicians. In the past we had offered Hymn Sings with Dr. Eric Routley, and Children's Choir Workshops with Helen Kemp, God rest their souls. These would get huge numbers in attendance. But in more recent years, we offered workshops for our NPM membership and we always seemed to get the same ten to fifteen people who come to everything. So we decided to look outside the box. We made a conscious decision as a board to include all members of the music ministry of our diocese those parishes who were members of NPM, as well as non- members. All choir members, cantors, ensemble members, instrumentalists, handbell ringers were now part of our local chapter. So we decided to do programming geared toward them – the grass roots - which would help improve liturgical music at the ground level for our diocese as a whole.   We began with two summer workshops: "How To Become A More Confident Choir Singer", - which was basic music reading – half notes, whole notes, rhythms, rests, etc, notice we did not call this Beginning Music 101. At the same time we offered a workshop on "Pick up Music and Sing It" it was basic sight singing we advertized it from a keyboardists point of view ABCDE as well as a singer Do Re Me Fa Sol.   These sessions were an hour and a half long and occurred on 3 consecutive Thursdays. They had a minimal cost ($25). What happened was like striking gold. We had more than 50 register for each workshop. They were so popular, the next summer we added a part two as well. We offered part 1 on Tuesdays and part 2 on Thursdays. Again huge numbers attended. We then offered workshops for the Ensemble musician and Spanish speaking musicians, and workshops on Vocal Health. We advertised for our workshops on our NPM Chapter Facebook page, our diocesan website, in the diocesan paper, and Email flyers sent to our membership and those expressing interest in NPM. We also worked with the Office of Divine Worship to get the word out directly to the pastors. We are very successful. This helped our treasury and our local NPM membership grow as well. We told those who attended to go back and ask their music director if they were members of NPM. When your choir member IS a member of NPM and you're NOT, Catholic guilt takes over.

These summer workshops then helped pay for sessions during the year such as choral reading sessions – we went from, having each member of the board bring a few of their favorite anthems, to share; to national clinicians from major publishers come and lead us with brand new music. Now that we have more members on our roster, these events draw 80 – 100 singers. We offer our workshops in parishes all around the diocese from the far north to south east to west not just at the central Diocesan Center. We also worked with the Office of Worship on sessions on Gregorian Chant, to Contemporary Music for the Guitarist. We then encourage people to join NPM after each session.

You're going to hear this week "Don't forget to check out the Silent Auction": I say look for your local NPM Chapter. We have "won" national NPM handbell clinician – Donna Kinsey She is coming out in a few weeks to work with our chapter ringers. We have won commissions for hymns for diocesan anniversaries. Mary Lynn Plezakowski of the national NPM Cantor's Guild, gave a workshop to the Cantors of our diocese. Mary Lynn was so enthusiastic about Cantor Certification, she had to come back the following summer and we had over 20 people make their basic NPM Cantor Certification and 5 their Intermediate Cantor Certification.

All this success began with that first workshop "How to become a More Confident Choir Singer" so as a board we wanted to give back to the one who helped us get there. We knew the leader of that workshop, Anthony, had just graduated from Catholic University. He was engaged to be married and served in a poor parish who struggled to pay his salary let alone send him on an NPM Convention . At NPM meetings we always talk about the Convention with great enthusiasm. With student loans, and saving for his wedding, Anthony had no financial means of attending an NPM Convention. So we as a board decided to begin an NPM Convention Scholarship award. There were three criteria: # 1 we looked for young people from our diocese ages 18 – 30 who were either working full time in Church music or majoring in Music in College, # 2 they had no financial means to attend a national NPM convention, and # 3 have never attended a NPM Convention before. We pay their registration, hotel and travel expenses. They pay their meals and any other incidentals that they require. They are mentored by one of the board members as to what workshops, events, etc. to register for. They are required to write a letter to the board about their experience of the convention both good and bad. We take pictures of them during the convention, and we write an article for the diocesan newspaper, our NPM Facebook page and our NPM Diocesan online newsletter. They also are required to help out at our regular events, as their talents allow. We are now in our third year doing this and we have candidates who we are discerning for next year already.

All of these good things led up to our most popular event. We began a Pastor / Musician dinner with a short 10 – 15 minute presentation from a successful Pastor / Music relationship - how they work together in ministry. During the talk last year, my pastor leaned over to me and said "we could do this talk" So guess who's on the list to

present next year. After this dinner, we have a Choir Recognition prayer service with our Bishop. I'm sure you all have choir and ensemble members who have served for 10, 20, 30, even 50 years. Have they ever been publically recognized and thanked? We put together a simple Evening Prayer service for those 5, 10, 15, 20, 25… increments of 5 years. Those choir members came to the cathedral on a Friday, Advent night. The cathedral was packed! Their names were read aloud. They shook hands with the Bishop, and received a certificate from the Diocesan NPM Chapter thanking them for their years of service. We tell them about NPM and finished with koinonia in the Cathedral Parish Hall. We have already gotten calls for those who are 9 years – asking when this event is scheduled next year so they can get recognized.

These are all in addition to our annual NPM St. Cecilia Sing –ours is a huge choir festival at the Cathedral, involving all ages, - Children Youth and Adults. One year we invited Msgr. Hilgartner past NPM President to preside over our Sing. One of our founding members passed away – her family had a private funeral. This women, Barbara worked with Fr. Virgil Funk in creating DMMD. So NPM had a memorial service for her. We filled the Diocesan Chapel and musicians from all around the region celebrated her life and shared with her family how much *her* music ministry touched the lives in our diocese and beyond. We try to be as diverse as possible to meet the local needs. Two weeks ago we had Tom Shelton from Westminster lead us in "Tips and Tricks for your best Choir Rehearsal Ever."

We work very closely with and receive help from our Office of Worship. Our future involves asking our Pastors what _they_ think _their_ musicians need. That is in process now and that information will be driving next year's workshops. Because NPM is all about building bridges, we unit in service to the Lord through Liturgical Music. I hope this was helpful for you and you heard something you can use in your local NPM chapter. Thank you.