

40th Anniversary Reflection by Founding Member Michael Krentz

In October 1985 I travelled to Columbia, SC together with a small number of other Lutheran Church Musicians from Illinois, where I lived at the time. I recall feeling a bit daunted and apprehensive as I made the trip to a place I'd never been, and where I would only know the folks from Illinois. We worked together on the Northern Illinois Synod (LCA) Worship Committee for a few years.

But I was also excited. The years from 1978 to 1984 had been filled with wonderful learning and fellowship opportunities at *Lutheran Book of Worship* introductory events sponsored by our synod and by the national church bodies. It was an exciting time introducing the new book in my congregation.

But then those workshops ran out – LBW was no longer new. And the national church body worship offices were growing smaller. So, in 1985 when an invitation went out to consider founding a new group of Lutheran church musicians— a group that would carry on the work of learning, fellowship, and support—I was excited.

Moving quickly through my involvement with ALCM, I missed the constituting conference at St. Olaf in 1986 because we were in the middle of moving to Pennsylvania. I attended the biennial conference in Seattle in 1987, where I met some new people and began some long-term friendships. I missed the 1989 biennial conference because our son had been born two weeks prior.

But in 1988 I began to get involved. I served on the local arrangements committee for the Region 1 conference in Allentown. That led to a nomination to become Region 1 president, and I was elected in 1990. After serving two terms, I went on to chair a national conference, serve as Secretary/Treasurer, work in development, serve as treasurer for several biennial conferences, serve again on the board, become Secretary/Treasurer again: and here we are after 40 years.

Why did I give so much of my time, my service, to ALCM? The answer is simple: It is because of the people.

You see, in 1990 that first election ended in a tie vote, and there was nothing in the constitution to resolve that problem. My “opponent” in the election was Tim Guenther, and



he and I spent the first days at the 1990 conference hanging out and getting to know each other. On the final day, President Phil Gehring flipped a coin, and I became president. But more importantly, Tim became a dear, dear friend and colleague (he later served as Region 1 president). We roomed together at almost all succeeding conferences, spending many a late night talking.

Tim is just one example of the many friends I have made in ALCM, friends who have been crucial in my life and ministry. I don't know how the past 40 years would have gone without these ALCM people. I do know my life would have been poorer.

So here is a little advice. Become involved in ALCM so that you too can gather people around you. Attend the St. Olaf conference this summer and the St. Louis conference in 2027. Attend a virtual 4th Friday Happy Hour. Host or attend a Hearts•Hands•Voices event. And if things go well for you as they have for me, you will look back and say, "ALCM was a gift from God given to me for life."

Soli Deo Gloria!