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No place I would rather be than singing with them

By Mark Robinson, President, Alaska ACDA

I learned of the attack on our nation just moments before walking in to teach my first class of the day.

My Swing Choir was mostly assembled when I entered the room. The collective expression on their faces told me that they already knew. For a time, silence. I felt utterly at a loss for words. Yet their faces made it clear they were looking to me, anxious to know my perspective. Without a plan I told them what I was thinking and feeling in my effort to help them and me come to grips with the unthinkable.

Some of these thoughts continue to resonate in my soul. For all the ugliness and darkness we experience in this world I am secure in my utter faith and confidence in collective humanity. I am reassured daily by the faces and voices of good, bright, well-meaning children who sing with me. While we're all capable of unthinkable acts, we do not choose to live that way, as individuals or as a nation.

We shall all experience much that is painful, dark, and mean, but I also know that we will persevere. I have been teaching long enough to watch former students grow into mature, loving parents and citizens, and I am filled with hope. I watch these students tease and play, laugh and talk, and genuinely care for each other and I know that the world will be OK.

I am struck by my gratitude for my chosen profession. I told my students, that aside from a group hug with my wife and child, I could think of no place I would rather be that morning than singing with them. Every day, regardless of discipline issues, administrative hassles, fatigue, or burnout, I always get to sing with lovely young people and thus replenish my soul, reconnect with the infinite, and confirm my love affair with humanity.

Oh how grateful I am to have that now. As with all Americans and many throughout the world, I ask "what can I do?" Aside from the obvious such as donating blood, sending money, being kind and loving with my community, sacrificing when called upon, and prayer, I know there is one more thing I am privileged to do.

Sing! In the coming weeks I intend to sing songs of grief, songs of remembrance, songs of courage, songs of patriotism, songs of optimism, songs of hope, songs of love, and when appropriate, songs of faith.

I intend to share these songs with my students and we intend to share them with our community. This is what we can do. This is what we are privileged to do.