

Living in the Wilderness

By Bruce W. Becker, Executive Director, ACDA of Minnesota

Like so many of you, I find myself trying to navigate through the new normal . . . when one day morphs into the next . . . when you find yourself suddenly at the end of another week wondering how in the world you got there . . . when hours become days, when days become weeks, and weeks become months.

It seems like a lifetime ago when life itself and the constancy of a predictable, yet reassuring and comforting routine, suddenly and without warning came to an abrupt stop. The result of "hitting the wall" head-on at one hundred miles an hour left me reeling in disbelief, confusion, despair, uncertainty, doubt, and ambiguity, resulting in a sense of profound sadness and grief.

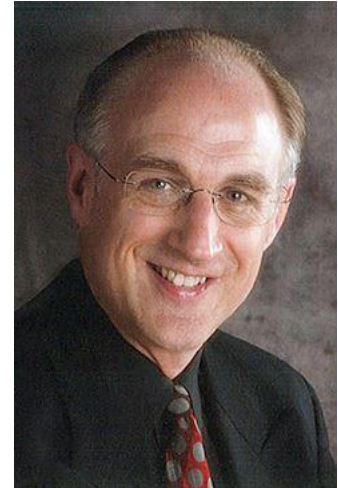
It was, and still, is hard to place a deeper meaning on all of this even when we realize (after we've been told time and time again) "that we are all in this together." That collective message offers some solace, but still doesn't adequately address the (still) uncomfortable place in which I find myself.

That all changed for me in the past week when I heard a well-crafted message delivered by my lead pastor. Responding to the COVID 19 threat, our pastoral and worship arts team developed a sermon series entitled "Wilderness Lessons." Wilderness was described as a conscious or unconscious place in time when one grieves for what has been lost (in the past), and when one is uncertain and apprehensive (about the future). Wilderness, like two roads going in opposite directions, is that junction in time and space, where those past and future roads merge together.

Many of us have already experienced "wilderness" in many personal ways throughout our lives. Perhaps you've experienced unforeseen financial setbacks, difficulties at the workplace, or you've dealt with challenging students or even your own children. Maybe you have faced a breakdown and collapse of special relationships, faced an uncertain or frightening medical diagnosis, or grieved the unexpected or expected loss of loved ones. Through these and other profoundly human experiences, we suddenly found ourselves in the midst of wilderness.

Throughout that message, I was challenged to actually embrace wilderness for what it is. I understood that this could be a time for self-discovery, for deep reflection, for personal renewal, and for a rekindling of mind and spirit. I came to understand that where one road has led you into the wilderness, another road will most certainly take you out. I was also comforted in knowing that I was not traveling on that road alone. That was reassuring, knowing that the road out will be one that will eventually take me to a new place and time. Thinking through this a bit further, I knew that in time, I would find my own "yellow brick road."

What is in store for our future as a singing community? I can't give you an answer, however, I can assure you that where we land will undoubtedly be in that new place and time. Experiencing wilderness now,



will give us an opportunity to place our full focus on making choral music within a much better and even more supportive environment. I have faith and confidence that we will arrive at a better place.

ACDA-MN will continue to seek ways both now and into the future to live out our mission *to inspire and support a community of choral musicians in our state.*

Until that day arrives, immerse yourself and fully take in 'wilderness.' Take time to dream, fantasize (just a little), imagine, believe in big things to come, and savor the road trip.