

Castledowns Community Choir

The community coming together to sing and fellowship

“It is the most welcoming choir you will ever find, and there is literally everybody there from people who have studied music, to people that occasionally sing along to the radio,” says Castledowns Community Choir member Laura Doyle.

“Everybody is there helping, supporting and cheering everyone else on. You find companionship, fellowship, and a greater enjoyment of music just from being there.”

The choir launched in October 2016 and currently has 30 members that gather together every Wednesday night. The group is just as diverse as its community, with participants from different faiths, backgrounds and ages. You don’t have to be a member of the Church to join; you simply have to want to sing.

“Some of the people in the choir had never looked at a piece of music before they walked in and that was something that was very important to us. Nobody had to audition, or be of a certain caliber or level to be in it,” says Dayna Curtis, the Castledowns program leader.

“We get to use music as a medium to

build relationships,” says Dayna. “Some of the friendships that have developed definitely wouldn’t have happened without the choir. You’re bringing people together who may otherwise not have met, but now are connected through this wonderful group. Music is also a great tool to build a sense of confidence, self-esteem and creativity.”

Recognizing that they want to be more accessible to members of the community, the program leaders make sure that songs learned by the group are varied and not limited to hymns that are mainly heard in church.

“We do sacred and secular music. Anything from hymns to Broadway tunes. That’s part of the reason why people love it so much,” says Dayna “This week we started learning a song from *Rent*, a beautiful arrangement of Amazing Grace, and we also do some of the oldies like *The Rose* or *Lean on Me*. We do everything!”

“For me, the best part of the choir is working on the really difficult pieces,” says Laura. “Whenever we’re doing a

piece that has a really difficult harmony and I can hear the tenors master something that they’ve been working on, it’s amazing.”

“This program is turning out exactly like we envisioned,” says Dayna. “We wanted to reach out to the community by bringing people together in a safe and supportive environment and connecting them through a shared passion – and we’re doing that.”

We also began a Piano and Bass Guitar School in 2017. Classes of 5-7 children and adults come together and learn instruments at different levels of difficulty.

“Again, this program has been instrumental in reaching out to our community and building bridges that welcome people not only into our church building, but welcome people into our church family,” says Dayna. “We are blessed to be able to use the universal language of music to help build relationships but even more so, to build God’s Kingdom!

Written by the Alberta & Northern Territories Public Relations Department.