

Music Affirmation of Laurie Lantz
Part of Spirituality of Music worship service
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Meg Barnhouse, UU minister, singer and songwriter, writes in her meditation manual, Rock of Ages at the Taj Mahal:

*I think singing is religious. The word 'religion' means 'to reconnect.'
Something about singing reconnects you to your soul and to the One.
Singing makes that even more powerful. The breath comes through you,
the sound comes out of you, and your soul touches another person's soul.
That is a religious experience.*

For me, music is religious
because for me, it is all about connection –
to myself, to others, and to a divine energy.

Music connects me to my soul; it gets me out of my head and into my heart. Music touches something in me that words alone do not. A piece of music can illicit an emotional response from me that spoken words do not. There have been instances, when hearing an interlude of violin music at a wedding or singing *For the Beauty of the Earth* in church, that tears have unexpectedly welled up in my eyes and streamed down my cheeks uncontrollably because the music touched some buried memory or subconscious emotion.

As Ruthie Rosauer states in her book on singing meditation, music “disconnects me from this world and connects me with my spiritual core. It nourishes my soul. Best of all, I can feel my spirit swelling and rising with joy.”

When I make music – singing or playing piano, in addition to feeling connected to my own core, I feel a strong connection to others. I feel connected to the people with whom I am making music and I feel connected to those in the past with whom I have made music.

I feel connected to my maternal grandmother, who was my first instrumental music teacher and who is, even posthumously, one of my musical inspirations. I feel connected to my relatives, both living and dead, whom all love music and with whom I have participated in numerous sing-alongs around the piano or dinner table and in the car. As a child and young adult, music connected me to my church community and gave me a sense of belonging and contributing – and it still does now that I'm an older adult.

I think we all probably have songs or pieces of music that reconnect us with people, times, places from our past – that make up the “soundtrack of our life.” If I hear Elton John's version of *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds*, I re-connect with my 6th grade self,

lying on my bed listening to my first clock radio. If I hear anything by the band *Kansas*, I reconnect with my high school self and with the group of people I hung out with sophomore and junior year ("all we are is dust in the wind"). If I hear Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, I re-connect with my high school self, lying on the living room floor listening to my dad's records and I re-connect with my college self seeing Ashkenazy play it at the performing arts center and I re-connect with Sam, my quirky piano teacher in college who helped me learn to play that beloved piece of music.

In making music alone or with others, there is an energy that is created that can lift me up, enrich me and inspire me. I have felt that energy playing alone at the piano when I am particularly "into" the music. I have felt it playing in orchestra and ensembles. I have felt that energy when singing with friends around a campfire, singing showtunes around the piano, singing while rocking babies, and singing in church.

I have had experiences, when singing a particularly moving anthem with the choir or a favorite hymn with the congregation, of feeling a perceptible energy that connected all of us. My daughter has experienced that energy singing "Building Bridges" while doing a spiral dance at a multigenerational UU gathering and during an international children's choral festival. In all these instances, although the people present were from different places, of many ages and many races, the music transcended all of that to connect our beings.

As Kim Edwards says in her novel, Memory Keeper's Daughter -

Music is like you touch the pulse of the world. Music is always happening, and sometimes you get to touch it for a while, and when you do, you know that everything's connected to everything else.

It is that connection "to everything else" that renews my spirit and makes me feel religious, a part of the Divine, and keeps me making music.