

## BELIEF

BELIEF by Rev. Katheryn Barlow-Williams

# Lord, hit us with a hot note and make us bounce

As I waited for the show to begin, a woman asked if the seat next to mine was available. When I said, "Yes," she collapsed in the chair.

"My name is Martha," she said. Her words pushed passed the facial mask shielding her from an arsenal of germs.

I introduced myself as the mother of one of the soloists. My daughter's high school voice teacher, Constanza Roeder, is a cancer survivor. She visits the oncology unit every week, and she arranged for her students to give a concert at Methodist Hospital.

Young vocalists of all ages sang a variety of styles. The



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music swirled through the hallways, drawing patients out of rooms and pausing the hurried steps of the staff.

One student sang a G-rated version of "You're Perfect" by Pink. For Martha, the words were powerful and sacred. She punctuated each verse as if it was a responsive prayer.

"I've chased down all my demons, I've seen you do the

same."

Martha said, "Yes, that's right. I'm chasing my demon, cancer, down."

"Underestimated, look I'm still around."

"Amen! I'm still around. I am here!" Martha said.

Though the Apostle Paul says, "We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), I think Jesus would have loved that a young girl sang Pink's song to remind oncology patients: You are loved. You are not your illness. You are a child of God.

Martha asked me to point out my daughter, so when she got up, I whispered, "That's her."

Sarah sang "Hit Me With a Hot Note and Make Me Bounce," a song from the 1980s Broadway hit "Sophisticated Ladies," based on Duke Ellington's career. Ellington was a deeply spiritual man who refused to be defined by racism. He chose to be defined by God's love.

Divine hope sings through unexpected people in unexpected ways. An unmarried girl named Mary sang with hope at the unexpected birth of perfect love on Earth. A criminal on a cross prayed with hope. An empty tomb proclaimed it.

Jesus spent most of his ministry outside the pristine halls and routine patterns of temple

life. Filled with perfect love, he leapt into human chaos to feed the hungry, heal the sick and liberate the oppressed. May this unorthodox prayer push us out of our pews and into the world:

"Dear God, hit us with a hot note and watch our lives bounce in directions we never dreamed possible. Hit us with a hot note of love and grace so that the rhythm of the spirit can carry us higher and deeper and further than fear allows. Hit us with a hot note of divine wisdom and courage so that we can bounce back from failure, and stand firmly to proclaim your song of perfect love to the world."