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A burning book inspires Canadian to take Bibles to Vanuatu

TORONTO, Canada, March 25, 2003 —

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University of Toronto Gospel Choir - worships on campus through song

TORONTO, Ontario, March 16, 2003 —

When the University of Toronto Gospel Choir gets together to practice on the U of T campus each Friday evening in downtown Toronto, it's not just a rehearsal taking place. It is, in fact, worship... [\[more\]](#)



What were the Biblical beliefs of Sir Isaac Newton?

TORONTO, Canada, March 16, 2003 —

Sir Isaac Newton... (1642 - 1727) has long been recognized as one of the greatest scientific intellects of all time, but until recently, little was known about his religious beliefs... [\[more\]](#)



Newton thought world will end in 2060, based on Biblical study

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University of Toronto Gospel Choir - worships on campus through song

by Patricia L. Paddey, Bible Network News



Photo: Robert Simpson

Sisters Rhonda and Lisa Toussaint, business manager and choir director respectively, University of Toronto Gospel Choir.



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TORONTO, Ontario, March 16, 2003 — When the University of Toronto Gospel Choir gets together to practice on the U of T campus each Friday evening in downtown Toronto, it's not just a rehearsal taking place. It is, in fact, worship.

At the sound of the very first notes of instrumental music, eyes close. Heads bow in solemnity. Or passionate faces tilt heavenwards and bodies sway in time to the rhythm. Then at precisely the right moment, in unison, 40 voices sing. They sing softly at first. Then as the sound swells, the harmonies build; richly, smoothly, "How Excellent Is Thy Name!"



The University of Toronto Gospel Choir, now in its eighth season, was started in February 1995 by two students at the University, who wanted to do something special with music in honour of Black History Month.

Surely, these are the sounds of heaven itself

The listener is equally transported to a place of worship, and with eyes also closed, it's easy to reflect that surely, these are the sounds of heaven itself.

The practice concludes with a short devotion led by choir President, 22-year-old Caroline Bruce. She challenges her fellow choristers to "always be ready to defend our faith" and to all "be reading our Bibles", in order that they can "know what we believe and why we believe it". Bruce then offers a short prayer, "Father, thank you for allowing us to get together to worship," and the group of mostly young, 20-something adults is dismissed into the night.



Photo: Robert Simpson

Caroline Bruce, President of University of Toronto Gospel Choir

The U of T Gospel Choir, now in its eighth season, was started in February 1995 by two students at the University, who wanted to do something special with music in honour of Black History Month. Rhonda Toussaint, now 28, was one of those students. Raised in a Methodist Church, Toussaint says starting the choir felt like a natural step because using music to praise God has always been a part of her life. "We sang a lot in church as kids. We were put up there often. I sang when I was about three or so, (standing) on a box, because I couldn't see over the lectern. We've just always been singing," she remembered.

For students from around the globe, the choir is a home away from home

Toussaint's sister Lisa has been the choir's Director since its inception. She says when the choir began, it was with the intent of doing only one performance. "It was only going to be short term. We rehearsed for about six weeks, and we did a concert at Hart House (at the University) that was sold out. And it was awesome, we had such an incredible time," Lisa remembers. It wasn't until they attempted to disband the choir that members protested. "Everyone said, 'No! We really like this. We want to do this again!'" Lisa says.

Lisa says that what the young students had discovered, even more than a place to share their love of singing and music, or even a place to worship and connect with like-minded people, was a sense of family.

Ask any of the current members what they appreciate most about their participation in the choir, and that word family will be mentioned again and again.

Mark Chatarpal, 19, is an Economics student. He says, "(The choir) means family. It means friendship. It means meeting people who like the same things you do, and so you bond very fast."



Photo: Robert Simpson

Mark Chatarpal, 19, is an Economics student and choir member.

For Nkatha Karauri, the choir provides a place of refuge, and a sort of "home away from home". The 22-year-old studies Computer Science and Math as a foreign student. Her family is in Kenya. "Especially because I'm so far away from home and I really don't have anyone, I look forward to (choir practice) after a week of classes. (Canada) is a cold place to be alone. So coming here every Friday ... it's wonderful."

Toussaint looks not only for talent, but for the right fit

Preserving that family feeling is important to Lisa Toussaint, who says when considering new members, she looks not only for talent, but for the right fit. "When I audition, I pray a lot about who to choose," she explains. "And I really pray it's not me choosing, but God telling me. We're actually a family, and you're very selective with who you're going to allow into your family, no matter how well they sing."

"Sometimes I have people come in here that blow me away with their singing ability, but I just don't feel that connection with them spiritually. Sometimes you can just sort of sense that there's something there, that would probably not work with what we've worked so hard to achieve within the choir body."

On the choir's Web site, Toussaint sums up what it is that makes them unique: "The passion that this choir carries in the willingness to usher the presence of God through song, the spoken word, believing and adoring our Lord and Saviour is what makes our ministry so special."

The U of T Gospel Choir is available for bookings. A non-profit organization, they depend on fund-raising and donations to meet their performance commitments. For further information please visit their web site at: www.utgc.org.



Photo: Robert Simpson

22-year-old Nkatha Karauri, from Kenya, studies Computer Science and Math and is a member of the choir

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