



## Mr. Fixit

**Drew Danielson, Coordinator of Youth and Campus Ministries**

I place tremendous value on a person's ability to fix things. I feel that anyone who can put something back together, save an object from its demise, get a thing going again is really the best kind of person there is. On the other hand, the "wreckers" — those who bust stuff or screw up the workings — those people deserve their own ring in Hell! Strong sentiments I know; they come out of closely held, basic values passed down from my farmer and carpenter ancestors, surely. More immediate, they come from my dad — a universally loved sweet heart of a man — who nevertheless freely vented his anger and disgust for people who "break things."

It was a hard lesson to feel Dad's rare ire when I came to him with a broken axle or cracked wing on a toy plane or truck. I would be briefly damned for the reckless, wanton, truly immoral nature that would abuse a good, valuable object. Dad never stayed mad at me long. He quickly shifted into "fixit" mode, and was in fact energized by the chance to apply his ingenuity and skill with tools to repair the damage. And very often what he did was an improvement on the original! The repaired item gained even more worth, with a built-in reminder to be careful.

I also learned from my dad that being contrary or sullen, or in any way "wrecking" a situation was a terrible thing too — better to make the best of it, avoid any conflict, keep things rolling! I'm sure I pass this same thinking on to my kids, to your kids, to anyone who's around me much. I am a patient sort for the most part but get very short with wreckers and obstructers. And like my dad I put great self-value in being able to fix stuff. I don't like to throw away anything broken; I feel obligated to try a repair. I have spent a large portion of my life dreading and then minimizing the idea that we people can also be broken, believing it is better to walk very softly around each other to avoid what makes us fragile. Because breaking is bad. I uphold avoiding conflict and pain as a virtue, and I keep a tool belt of humor and donut holes handy to fix what breaks. I very often shift to repair mode too soon, I know. Ask my wife.

I don't think I will stop believing in the high virtue of repair. I may soften my stance on the evilness of things breaking. Things *will* break — things might be repaired, they might be good as new, they might be better, they might be less. What is most important is that we hold the pieces together tenderly.



## Music Notes

**Ahmed Anzaldúa  
Director of Music Ministries**

Outside of my work at Unity Church, I direct a professional choral ensemble named Border CrosSing. We will start the month of February with two concerts of gorgeous Renaissance and Baroque choral music from Latin America, the first concert will be at Westminster Hall in downtown Minneapolis on February 1st and the second at Unity Church on February 2 (<https://bordercrossingmn.org/>). These early music works are at the core of how Border CrosSing seeks to repair a choral landscape that has been historically segregated in a wide variety of ways.

When the Rev. Jen Crow preached at Unity a few weeks ago, she referenced "The danger of a single story," a fabulous TED talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. There are numerous "single stories" about Latin American culture. When I perform school concerts I will often ask students to tell me what sorts of things they think about when they think about "Latin American music." The responses invariably include mariachi, salsa, Shakira, and "La cucaracha." Adjectives such as rhythmic, spicy, festive, and colorful are also quite common among the responses. While there is certainly a lot of music from Latin America that matches these descriptions (and Border CrosSing performs plenty of it), this "single story" of Latin American culture can contribute to stereotypes that serve to dehumanize — a slippery slope that may lead to us being regarded as lazy, prone to partying instead of working, and perhaps not capable of experiencing the world as seriously or fully. These responses also speak to the "single story" that exists of classical music: that it is exclusively the realm of white, European men. The danger of the single story narrative is that it is incomplete; repair begins by embracing complexity, by seeking out what is missing, what we don't know that we don't know.

A picture — or, in our case, a song — is worth a thousand words. Rather than trying to explain the many other stories that exist, of speaking endlessly about the history of Latin American music and the many unacknowledged contributions of Latin American musicians and composers to the canon of European classical music, we can simply perform and let the music itself shatter that single story. Breathtaking choral polyphony in Native American languages from Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru; a gorgeous Requiem Mass by a black composer from 18th-century Cuba; a lively concerto for orchestra and voices written by a nun in 17th-century Mexico... these things simply do not fit into the single story that most listeners have about Latin America or classical music. They do not need to be explained, they are experienced and, if we did our job, the experience is such that the listener is moved to accept and seek out a more complex story than what they had before.