MEET Wendysue

By Becky Wehrspann

The love of music came early and naturally for her. She emulated Amy Grant as a child, singing into a hairbrush in front of a mirror. She began songwriting before she could drive, and she kept an airliner full of strangers at attention with "How Great Thou Art." She has shared the love of Jesus through song in 26 states, with a goal to hit all 50. She'll get one state closer this summer when she leads us in song at our 75th Anniversary LWML Convention in Albuquerque. Her bubbly personality is contagious and she truly loves serving our Lord through music.

I invite you to pull up a chair and get to know Wendysue Fluegge with me.

How did you first become involved with LWML?

I had been praying over getting connected to the LWML, even at the local level. Then I happened to go to a luncheon at Concordia (Mequon, Wisconsin), and sitting at the table with me was [LWML Past President] Jan Wendorf! We ended up having coffee and lunch and talking about women's ministry, and she connected me to [current LWML President] Patti Ross, and the rest is history. It's so fun to look back and say, "Wow! God had this all planned."

God started that plan for your life long ago. What parts of your childhood influenced where you're at today?

I was raised in a Christian home with godly parents. My mom was a singer in the church choir, and I remember going to choir practice and doing my homework while she was singing with the adult choir. I went to parochial grade school, had many opportunities to sing in church, and was also surrounded by God's Word at home. My childhood dream was to be a professional singer.

What paths did God use for you to realize your dream?

Being raised in a Christian home, surrounded by church music and things of God, really influenced my early writing. The summer of sixth grade I was cast as little orphan Annie (at the community playhouse). I fell in love with the stage, the music, theater, and drama.

I met my first piano teacher there, who approached my mom and said, "Maybe you want to think about her getting piano lessons." My mom sewed alterations for a living; my dad was a modest worker at a grocery store and had a painting business of his own. We didn't have a lot of extra funds. A client asked Mom to sew him a 3-piece suit, and in exchange for the suit, he gave us a piano! I had lessons for 6 months until the money ran out.

I didn't have a lesson again until college, but by then was already hooked on songwriting and singing. That was the path God had me on — He put people in my way to connect me and steer me to music and provided what we needed.

How did your family support you?

I met my husband in my last year of college, studying vocal performance at Concordia (Mequon). During our first year of marriage, he took me to a studio to record the lyrics and songs I had written. A year later we recorded my first CD. God provided musicians — friends who played drums and bass guitar and others who were interested in playing with me. I started calling churches locally, telling them who I was — that I would love to come and share. That was how it started, and God took it from there.

My current family, this wonderful unit that God has given to us, is very supportive. God put me together with Craig, whom I've been married to for 21 years. Craig is a designer — I've got the music side down, and he's got the visual side down. Our daughter is very gifted musically and artistically. She's been singing with me since she was born. Our son is a drummer and very artistically gifted as well, and has recorded some songs with me. Our children are very supportive of what I do. For many years our family has traveled together. The kids were around the church — they were constantly in church services and up front singing with me. That's been their life.

Even with these unique opportunities, what struggles or difficulties have you faced?

Traveling as a family actually ties into the struggle, because it's not easy being gone so many weekends out of the year. Being on the road is a different life than being at home. It was exciting half the time and tiring half the time.

Another challenge is that I'm an independent artist and musician. I have to call congregations, handle all my own promotional things, make my own contacts, do all the work — the leg work, the physical work, all the planning and preparation, and it's a lot of work!

My biggest struggle, honestly, is that balance between this world — the way we communicate through the internet, and the way people are communicated with by videos — to having a ministry and business, where an online presence is a necessity. There's so much involved to keep that going, and I never want to muddy down whom I work for, which is the Lord Jesus Christ. And what I want to do — I don't want to have all these fans and followers for my glory — I want it to be for the Lord. And I want it to be encouraging and inspiring for people living out their faith.

Sharing Scripture and song with a southern drawl at a women's breakfast

The Denver flight crew who allowed Wendysue to sing 37,000 feet over Kansas.

"Think of yourself as a missionary. You don't have to go to Africa to talk to people about the Lord to make a difference in their faith walk."

Wendysue with husband, Craig, and teens, Collin and Miranda, after singing the National Anthem for the Milwaukee Brewers.

You want your music to be an encouragement to those who hear it, but how are you encouraged, and where do you find your encouragement?

I am a very relational person. I'd always thought I was most passionate about music, but I'm most passionate about people! I get encouragement from helping people see what God is doing in their life and to be closer connected to Him. That's my main encouragement place — to get a chance to play just a tiny part, one link in the chain, of wherever God needs to lead them to where He wants them to be.

What other tools, besides music, do you use in your daily life?

Scripture is number one. Every day I am in the habit of thanking the Lord for my blessings. I practice being in the habit of saying out loud and listing my blessings and talking to God about them. Another thing I do every day is pray for someone else. That turns the focus away from us and on to others, which is where we need to be. The last thing is physical exercise. I believe it's important to take care of this vessel that the Holy Spirit dwells in. If we are lovers of the Lord, and we want to work for Him, we need to be healthy to work for Him.

Describe the mission opportunities you've had in working for the Lord.

This is one thing I'm really excited about, being connected to the LWML, because we are all missionaries! This everyday missionary thing is a running theme in my life. God has opened up so many opportunities in conversations.

It started years back when I would fly for ministry trips. I couldn't sleep — the Holy Spirit kept nudging me to "talk to the person next to you … talk to the person next to you." He wouldn't leave me alone! The more I practice having conversations and being obedient to take in the opportunities that God puts before me, the more I see His hand continually working and connecting people to Him.

I have my guitar with me whenever I fly — it's a conversation piece automatically. I had a chance to play as we were flying over Kansas, 37,000 feet up! The crew gave me the microphone and let me sing to this cabin full of strangers. It was awesome! Those are some of the mission opportunities I have in everyday life.

If we just open our mouths and start sharing, God will be there, He'll orchestrate it, and it makes a difference in their lives. It's Jesus transforming me and talking through me. I'm excited to share that with the LWML women — think of yourself as a missionary. You don't have to go to Africa to talk to people about the Lord to make a difference in their faith walk.

You might not travel to Africa, but what are some of your favorite places you've been to?

This United States of ours is beautiful. Every state has its own beauty, and I appreciate all of it. I don't get to sightsee as much as I'd like to, but I still get to see the general lay of the land.

I am a mountains and rivers girl! I've gotten to sing outdoors on the back of a flatbed truck —which is crazy and weird, but it is fun! I've had a chance — twice — to sing at Miller Park baseball stadium. With no instrumentation or anything, you purely sing with only your voice with this lovely echo of the anthem of our country.

One of the most meaningful times singing the National Anthem was last September at The Moving Wall (Vietnam memorial). My family was broken and estranged for a long, long time and just recently was healed. My parents came and my dad (a Vietnam veteran) was present. I sang the anthem for the veterans right in front of The Moving Wall — it was so beautiful, meaningful, and emotional.

What are some of your other favorite hymns, songs, or a favorite of your own original work?

There are so many great hymns. I really like "How Great Thou Art" — my grandparents were singers, and I remember my grandfather belting that out. "What a Friend We Have In Jesus" — I love that it focuses on prayer and talks about our sins forgiven, friendship, and companionship. I also really like "Jesus Savior Pilot Me." I can use it when driving, knowing that he's piloting my car and my teenagers' cars when they're driving; I can use it on the plane, knowing that he's the Pilot over the pilot.

My favorite Praise and Worship song is "Bless the Lord, 10,000 Reasons." I've always enjoyed the text from that song; in fact, the words are my confirmation verses from Psalm 103. I also enjoy "Lord I Lift Your Name On High" — it's kind of a classic. We do that at every concert that I sing, because we can do actions and move our bodies while singing that song.

My new CD "Bold" is my favorite original work right now. It's new, it's fresh: they're recent songs that God has given me in this season of my life. Both my teenagers played on a couple of the songs and sang. I'm excited that the Lord allowed me to do it, and I'm excited to share it in Albuquerque, with some of those same arrangements that we'll be singing together.

Looking to Albuquerque — what are you most excited about?

I'm so excited to have all those women in one place and praising and encouraging and learning together. It's going to be energizing! I am thrilled to meet the women there, and I am praying that I can be a tiny little part — a little link in the chain of their faith journey. I want to encourage them in their missionary life to know they are important and they are going to be used by the Lord wherever He has planted them. I want to love on them and encourage them and support their faith journey. Q

Wendysue Fluegge, a singer/songwriter from Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, attends Brookfield Lutheran Church with her husband and two teenage children.

Leading music at Our Savior Lutheran in the beautiful mountains of McCall, Idaho

Faith and family ...

Every single birthday card I got from my grandmother while I was growing up had Proverbs 3:5–6 written in it. I used to think "There it is again … there it is again" and now I hold on to those verses with my life. *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your path.* I love those verses — they are so dear to me — and I think of my grandmother every time I quote them.

And I love — as a mom — I love using Philippians 4:6–8; six and seven I used a lot in a really tough season of ministry for me. I was very anxious, very stressed; there was a lot going on. I would quote that on my way home every day, *Don't be anxious about anything.* And I love verse eight, particularly as a mom. That helps us as Christians to know what not to participate in as much as what to participate in.