

Lutheran young people share feelings in song

By MARY SALPUKAS
 "To be alive! To be alive and feeling free, and to have everyone in our family to be alive in every way! That's the kind of message a group of young singers from Cross of Christ Lutheran Church are bringing to people in and outside of the Birmingham area.
 "It's a thrill singing to all these people — that they want to hear you," said Marne Mosey, 18, after a recent performance for Our Shepherd Lutheran School.
 "In a couple of songs you can reach all these people."
 Walter Klenke, blonde youth director of Cross of Christ Church and group leader said expressing or sharing religious feelings can be awkward for teenagers.



Colette Jacobson (left) and Mike Hengenmuehle practice for a recording session

"IT'S EASY to say — go out and witness," he said. "But it is more comfortable this way. Singing comes naturally."
 The Cross of Christ Singers, as the group is known, began shortly after Klenke and his wife Shirley, both 37, came to Birmingham five years ago.
 They wanted to do something with young people, but there were no facilities for sports, the most obvious activity at the church.
 "Then we noticed kids coming around, strumming guitars," Klenke said. It took several months before the group began to take shape. Players were called individually and encouraged to come.
 They started with a folk worship service once a month, with Mrs. Klenke, who is a pianist and musician, finding appropriate songs.
 TODAY THE group numbers more than thirty and has a large repertoire of songs, ranging from Godspell music and the Cat Stevens song "Morning is Broken," to a syncopated version of "Our Father."
 They dress in red and white; girls in long homemade dresses, boys in checked shirts and white ties. Most wear crosses.
 They have already reached

many people with performances here, in Ohio, Texas and Washington D.C.; with two records they've cut and a broadcast appearance of the Lutheran hour on radio.
 This summer they will sing their religious folk music at a Lutheran convention in Anaheim, California, appearing between performances by Johnnie Cash and Pat Boone.
 The young people are pleased by what is happening to the group.
 "IT IS something to be proud of, to be asked to go that far (to California)," said Anne Goddard, 17, who has been a member for two years.
 "Traveling is really fun," said Colette Jacobson. "And after cutting the record, getting to see the techniques first hand, I'd like to go into recording."
 To raise the \$10,000 they need for the Anaheim trip they recently held a carnival, a spaghetti supper, sold their records and washed windows.

In the next two months they plan to add to the \$3,500 they have already raised with an ice cream social, more record sales, and painting some buildings.
 All the activities require time and effort, but the group atmosphere is open and many members seem to thrive on it.
 "AT FIRST I thought it was just another choir," said Mike Lang, 17. "Then I went to Monday night practice, everyone accepted me, was friendly, not 'he's new!'"
 "Mr. Klenke makes everyone feel at home," he added.
 But if there is more to it than camaraderie — travel and singing, "Even those non members (of the Cross of Christ Church) accept the religious experience," said Mike Hengenmuehle, 20.
 He and Pat Barkey have been with the "Singers" for four years, and don't like the thought of leaving.
 "I don't know when I'll leave," she said. "It's such a part of me."

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