



Diane Bell Contact Reporter

Thursday, September 8, 2018



Entertainer Ben Vereen, in the center of Row 3 wearing a black and white hat, visited the San Diego Street Choir during a rehearsal at First Presbyterian Church. Wearing bright blue jerseys in the front row are directors Ron Bolles next to wife, Reina. Behind them is Jeri Webb. (Courtesy of First Presbyterian Church)

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BlesSING: “Thanks for literally preaching to the choir.” That was the message a choir director had for entertainer **Ben Vereen**. He had stopped by a practice session of The San Diego Street Choir comprised of homeless and living-on-the-edge downtown San Diegans. Vereen was in town to perform at Martini’s Above Fourth last month when he sat in on the rehearsal at the First Presbyterian Church in Bankers Hill.

Vereen, who once studied for the ministry, invited four choir members to join him at his Martini's show and introduced them to the audience.

The street choir has grown to more than 20 members since it was founded in mid-2016 by director **Ron Bolles**. He drew singers from the church's Ladle Fellowship, run by **John Savidge** to serve the downtown urban poor. They are rehearsing twice weekly at the First Presbyterian Church and in preparation for a Sept. 14 performance of Broadway show tunes there. The 7 p.m. benefit, billed as the "homeless serving the homeless through music," is called "BlesSING on Broadway!" It's free, although donations are encouraged to support music programs for homeless and needy kids at The Monarch School.

Vereen may be among guest performers at the event. If he is back in town on Sept. 14, he says he wants to attend.

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