

**MRS. SCHNEIDER IN CHURCH**  
**by Kathleen Norris**

It's the willingness to sing  
that surprises me:  
out of tune,  
we drag the organist along  
and sing, knowing we can't,  
and our quite ordinary voices  
carry us over.

I get caught up  
in the parts:  
the tenor to my left,  
still clear and high,  
proving that voice  
is no clue to character.  
I see him not in that brown suit  
but in shirtsleeves  
in the back room  
of his farm-parts store,  
cheating at cards,  
his wife up front, ragged with work.

That complaining soprano  
above the rest  
is the grocer's widow.  
She never stopped screaming at him,  
and hates him now  
for dying.

every week  
the young wives lead us,  
tilting forward in improbable shoes:  
they're firmly anchored  
by the wobbly bass  
behind me.

...

Now we are changed,  
making a noise  
greater than ourselves,  
to be worthy of the lesson:  
all duly noted,  
all forgiven.