

Food for Thought

There many reasons why a choir is vital to the life of any church. The following three come from an article entitled "The Importance of the Choir in Today's Church." It is shared at the suggestion of Raphael Bundage and reprinted with permission of the author, Phil Nitz, who serves as Staff Arranger and Worship Leader at Christ Church, Nashville.

1. The choir is an **opportunity** for involvement. A church's ministry is only as effective as the people in its congregation who choose to get involved. Small groups, outreach teams and the arts have provided great opportunities for congregants to sow into the life of their church's ministry, and the choir falls under all three of those categories. I've often heard the choir referred to as "the church within the church." When you join a choir, you're not just singing notes together, you're doing life and ministry together.

2. The choir is an **extension** of the pulpit. There are so many fantastic songs that have been written for the Church and many that have yet to be written. But not all songs are necessarily suitable for corporate worship. There are songs that teach, encourage, compel and call to action, and the choir is a marvelous mouthpiece for such things. By presenting these kinds of songs, the choir takes on a pastoral role and it brings a rich dynamic to the

theme or message of that particular service. This is especially effective in services with a missional focus or special services like those during Holy Week or the Christmas season.

3. The choir is a **reflection** of heaven. The prophet Isaiah gives us a glimpse into God's throne room with angels singing together, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). John paints a similar picture in the book of Revelation. There is a heavenly choir that sings God's praises for all eternity. When we see our friends



and family in the choir loft singing in harmony of voice and spirit, I believe we are momentarily transported (even if only in our minds) to the throne room of heaven. Furthermore, we often see a wide array of ages, ethnicities and cultural backgrounds on display in the choir. This, too, is a reflection of heaven — God's people, of every age and every race, worshipping together as one body.

We must not discount the richness the choir brings to the church's worship experience. I think many would be surprised by the long-lasting effect a choir program can have on their local church. If your church is anything like mine, the choir is a long-held tradition, and traditions enrich the life of the Church. Just because something is thought of as "traditional" doesn't mean it's not *relevant* for the body of Christ today. Let's strive to keep these traditions alive while moving forward together into a richer and fuller life with Christ!



Soli Deo Gloria

SUMMER 2016

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MUSIC MINISTRY AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In Loving Memory of Virginia Rubin *by Nick Bergin*

The Sanctuary Choir lost one of its dearest members on February 26 with the passing of Virginia Rubin from this life to the next. Originally from Memphis, Virginia attended Duke University and majored in music. After graduating, she served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Philippines from 1962 – 1964. On returning to the States, she began a career with the Tennessee Department of Human Services, first in Shelby County, then in Williamson County; she worked for the DHS for 30 years.

Virginia began to sing with the Sanctuary Choir in 1990, and she remained a loyal member for over 25 years. An avid traveler, she joined the choir for its trips to Scotland, France and Switzerland, and Ireland, as well as its trips to Montreat. She was also closely involved with the children's choir program, accompanying the Genesis Singers for over ten years. All of us will miss her peaceful disposition, quiet confidence and intrepid spirit.



Children's Choir Ministry *by Jerry Monds*

The Children's Choir is getting ready to wrap up another season. This winter and spring have been quite a success for the various choirs. Jerry Monds became the new Children's Choir Coordinator on January 1. Lara Woodward continued to direct the Hosanna choir, while Kelly Posey led the amazing Cherub singers.

The Children's Choirs have been active in worship throughout the past few months. Doxology sang "Dona Nobis Pacem" and "Siyahamba" at two worship services. The Cherubs and Hosanna singers combined to sing "I Love You, Lord Jesus." All the choirs joined together at a worship service in April to sing "Come, All Children, Join to Sing." The Hosanna group accompanied with Orff instruments! The Cherubs and Hosanna singers also sang at the 11:00 A.M. service on Mother's Day, May 8. The children sang "Do You Know Who Made the Day" by Hal Hopson.

The Children's Choir is hoping to build upon a strong spring and bring new singers into the mix starting in the fall. Sunday afternoon rehearsals are being added in addition to Wednesday rehearsals to include more children who cannot attend weeknight rehearsals. We hope that you have enjoyed listening to these young voices. It is exciting to hear the gifts that God has given them during worship.



In the Loft with Susan Wood

by Nick Bergin

Susan Wood, a faithful member of the Sanctuary Chorale, kindly agreed to be interviewed for this installation of "In the Loft." Please enjoy her responses!

NB: How long have you been singing?

Susan: I have been singing as long as I can remember! My mum used to tell me about my picking up the songs on the radio when I was 5 years old. I would dance out on the veranda and sing. I really liked the Beatles! We are talking about the early 60's when we were in Singapore. I have been singing in the choir at First Pres for about 30 years.

NB: What brought you to singing and who has influenced you?

Susan: My dad was a good singer. He sang in the church choir when he was a boy in Kirby Cross, Essex, England. When I was little he would make me stand on the kitchen table and sing to whomever was visiting. My first church choir was in the Church of Scotland, Gigha Parish Church. There were about four women and two girls in the choir, myself and my best friend Janette.



NB: What is your favorite anthem? Your favorite hymn?

Susan: This is a hard one. I really have so many "favorites." I love the traditional old hymns and psalms that I grew up with. Several of the tunes used in the States are quite different, and it took time to get used to them, but they continue to grow on me. "The King of Love My Shepherd Is" is an anthem we have for May that I learned as a child. It is beautiful, with a Celtic melody. "Loving Shepherd of Thy Sheep" is a lovely anthem which is also in my old hymn book. I also love the 23rd Psalm sung to CRIMOND. "All Things Bright and Beautiful" and "Jesus Bids Us Shine" are great children's hymns full of joy. "Eternal Father, Strong to Save" holds memories of times when boats went

down and lives were lost on the coast of Britain. "Be Thou My Vision," "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," "I Need Thee Every Hour" and "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" all take me back to Gigha and our wee church.

NB: What is your most memorable experience of singing in the choir at First Pres?

Susan: In the old days, I used to sing with the 11:00 A.M. choir, before we had the 8:30 A.M. I remember singing Handel's *Messiah* with the Nashville Symphony. It was an incredible thrill!

NB: How does singing relate to your spiritual life?

Susan: Singing comes from the heart. For me, it is the most sincere form of worship. The text of the hymns and the melodies written are gifts to be shared with everyone. There are hymns for virtually every occasion, whether one is in need of solace, hope or giving thanks and praise to God.



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Of Note



The past few months have been fruitful ones for the music department here at FPC. On Sunday, January 31, Nick Bergin performed a solo organ recital featuring music of Buxtehude, Bach, Böhm, Mendelssohn and Rheinberger, demonstrating the full resources of the Beckerath organ.

The following Friday, February 5, the Sanctuary Choir presented its annual Broadway dinner show. This year's



program was entitled "Be Our Guest," and it provided a welcome opportunity for the choir members to collectively let down their hair. Special thanks to Bob Loflin and George Armistead for emceeding, to J. Alexander's for donating dessert, and to Jeff Dale, Myfanwy and Tim Graeff, Sheila

Odusote and Beth Sargent for serving dinner.

Later in February, the Sanctuary Choir joined forces with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra for a compelling performance of W.A. Mozart's *Requiem*. As with all of our concerts, this program was presented to the public with no charge for admission — a tremendous gift to the community to be sure.

In addition to a great deal of beautiful music during Holy Week and Easter, this spring also featured two 12:20 concerts. These brief after-church concerts have become a beloved tradition at First Pres — an excellent opportunity to share beautiful music and showcase the considerable talent in our choirs. On March 6, Greg Thomas performed Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Songs of Travel* and on April 10, Chris Simonsen and Scott Willis

performed Aaron Copland's *Old American Songs*. Nick Bergin accompanied both programs at the piano.

The Nashville Chamber Singers performed their 20th anniversary concert on Sunday, May 1. Daphne Garey, Administrative Assistant for Music Ministry, is a charter member of the choir and sang several beautiful solos, including one with her daughter McKenzie. On May 15, the church hosted a chamber music concert featuring violinist Christina McGann, cellist Eli Lara and pianist Heather Conner. The program included trios by Mozart and Schubert.

