

New Voices in the Chorale by Kathleen Dietz

There are two new members of the Chorale which sings at the 8:30 A.M. service. We are pleased to welcome

Caroline Nielson and **Derek Meler**.

Caroline is a senior at Belmont majoring in classical voice performance with a minor in German. She calls Dallas, Texas her home. Music has always been a part of her life. Her dad is a concert pianist and her grandmother taught her

to play piano at the age of 4. Caroline has been singing in church choirs since she was 5 years old.

Caroline's interests include travel and visiting museums. The summer of 2013 was spent in Berlin. It provided an opportunity to live with a family and perfect her language skills. She is currently learning Italian. Caroline has a full schedule at Belmont. She has performed in several operas — *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Dialogues of the Carmelites* and *Dido and Aeneas* — and tutors college students. She has also performed with the Nashville Opera Chorus in *The Pirates of Penzance*. Caroline desires to sing opera as her life's work or to at least be involved every day with music. She is currently applying for graduate school.

Derek Meler is a graduate of Middle Tennessee State University with a BA in Music, Vocal Performance. He is currently working on a Master's in Education. Derek grew up in Texas singing shape-noted gospel music. He has been part of the Nashville community for 14 years. In addition to music and singing with the Nashville Opera and Nashville Chamber Singers, Derek enjoys cooking, particularly Southern recipes.

New Sanctuary Choir Members

Megan Farmer, soprano, is originally from Murfreesboro and graduated from MTSU with a degree in vocal performance. She also plays the guitar and, fittingly, starred as Maria in a production of *The Sound of Music* during her time at MTSU. She is starting a new job in 2015, at Vanderbilt with the nursing education/professional development staff. Megan counts her favorite Christmas memory as the candlelit singing of Silent Night.

Julie DiTraglia, soprano, and her husband Michael have been FPC members since the 1990s. We're so happy to welcome her back to the choir. As the mother of 13 year old Gabriela and 10 year old Roman, Julie's

description of herself as a wife and mother downplays her significant vocal training and experience; that experience includes vocal study in Italy, a Tennessee Arts Commission honor, as well as the coveted honor of a regional Metropolitan Opera audition. As Julie begins the new year, she is striving for simplicity and purity.

You'll find **Caroline Nielson**, alto, singing in both the Sanctuary Choir and the Sanctuary Chorale for the 8:30 A.M. service. She is a Belmont University senior, majoring in classical vocal performance with a minor in German. Caroline grew up in Dallas and credits her musical family members with her early training and continued support. Caroline has performed in several operas and is currently applying for graduate schools with the desire to make her career in the world of opera.

Mary Sellers Smith, soprano, is a recent graduate of the University of Alabama, with a dual degree in communication studies and civic engagement. Through the Presbyterian Church's Young Adult Volunteer program, she was placed in Nashville and is working at Room In The Inn for the academic year. Mary Sellers grew up singing in choirs at Independent Presbyterian in Birmingham, and was happy to find a spot in FPC's choir. She's looking toward the future, applying to graduate schools for divinity and social work studies. For 18 consecutive years, Mary Sellers and her family have visited local police stations on Christmas Eve, bringing doughnuts and holiday cheer.

Matt Smyth, tenor, was born in Connecticut, has a sister living in Alaska, parents living near Philadelphia and holds degrees from Moravian College (Pennsylvania) and a graduate degree in choral conducting from the University of Oklahoma. He was a member of the Youth Singers of Pennsylvania and recalls early musical experiences with the group as they performed at the 1994 Olympics, Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center. He is in his sixth year as Choir Director at Montgomery Bell Academy, stating that the students challenge him and fill him with energy. Matt is also a member of Schola Pacis, the wonderful men's a cappella group that appeared on our Christmas concert.

— Rhonda Swanson



Soli Deo Gloria

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MUSIC MINISTRY AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In Celebration of Henry Fusner and the Beckerath Organ

by Nick Bergin

On Sunday, October 5, the music department had the privilege of welcoming organist David Arcus as he led choir and congregation in an extraordinary hymn festival. The service, entitled "We Believe in One God," was inspired by the Nicene Creed. Each piece of music was a reflection upon an excerpt of the creed — excerpts which were preceded by related scripture readings. Though this structure may sound formulaic, the worship that it inspired was decidedly spirited. This was due in no small part to Dr. Arcus's confident, imaginative hymn playing and his masterful use of the full resources of the Beckerath organ.

It was fitting that the organ should play so prominent a role in the service, as the hymn festival was in large part an opportunity to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the instrument's installation. It was fitting also that Stuart Gordon took a moment during the service to thank Henry Fusner, who passed away early in February, for his central role in securing the organ, which continues to graciously lead our congregation in song.

Dr. Fusner directed music at FPC for nearly two decades, maintaining very high standards throughout his tenure here. In addition to his work in acquiring the organ, he founded several handbell choirs, built up the children's choir program, administered the concert series and spearheaded the changes that brought Sunday worship at FPC to its current form — the Service for the Lord's Day. After his retirement, he was for many years a fixture at the 8:30 A.M. service each Sunday. Many are the fruits of Dr. Fusner's labor, and we who reap them are blessed indeed.



A Kentucky Caroling

A Kentucky Caroling, composed by Carol McClure, was premiered by the Psalmody and Doxology choirs of First Presbyterian Church, Nashville, in December 2014. The work features multiple solo voices and accompaniment by harps, Appalachian dulcimers, oboe and solo viola. *A Kentucky Caroling* draws from both Appalachian folk tunes and hymn texts, in addition to containing new melodies and texts created by Carol McClure.

"This really is my 'How I Spent My Summer Vacation' composition," states McClure. "But the history of this work has roots in the late 1980s, when I was commissioned to compose a large scale orchestral and choral work, *Song of Kentucky*, as part of Kentucky's bicentennial celebration. The most exciting facet of the project was the phone call I received out of the blue from famed folk singer and musicologist Jean Ritchie, volunteering to play dulcimer and sing the solos for the 1988 premiere and the

1989 orchestral tour of the work. Working with her was an amazing experience!"

Carol received a follow-up commission in 1990 (premiered in Louisville in 1991) to compose *A Kentucky Overture*, an orchestral overture based on hymn tunes written by members of the Kentucky Shaker communities at Pleasant Hill and South Union. This score included a section of twenty Appalachian dulcimers as part of the orchestra.

"For the past 25 years, I have had the outline for the third portion of this Kentucky musical trilogy rattling around in my head. I wanted the third work to be textually based and to feature many of the melodies I loved hearing Jean Ritchie and John Jacob Niles sing live when I was growing up in Kentucky. *A Kentucky Caroling* fell into place this past year — the right choir, the right time and the right opportunity for a premiere of the Advent portion of the work. It was gratifying to be able to contaminate my Tennessee children's and youth choirs with an infectious love for singing this material from my home state."

Music Schedule

Friday, March 6, 7:30 P.M.
Concordia College Choir
Rene Clausen, Director
FPC Music Department
& AGO/Nashville
Chapter Concert

Friday, April 3, 7:00 P.M.
Tenebrae: A Service
of Shadows
FPC Sanctuary Choir
Raphael Bundage, Director

Sunday, April 26, 3:00 P.M.
Spring Concert
Nashville Chamber Singers
Angela Tipps, Director

Sunday, May 3, 4:00 P.M.
An Afternoon of
Chamber Music
Elisabeth Small, violin,
Xiao-Fan Zhang, cello
Robert Marler, piano

In the Loft with Bekah & Bill Caruso

by Nick Bergin

Long-time choir members Bekah and Bill Caruso graciously agreed to be interviewed for the spring installment of “In the Loft.” Please enjoy their thoughtful responses!

NB: How long have you been singing?

Bekah: I’ve been singing as long as I can remember, around the house, on car trips with my family and at church and school. I sang in church choirs directed by my mama in grades 4-12, in school choirs in grades 7-12 and in college, in the Choral Society and the Symphony Chorus in Richmond, VA, and in church choirs all through adulthood. I sang with son Paul a lot when he was little — changing his diapers, giving him a bath, running errands and giving instructions. I found that he responded much more quickly to the little song, “Clean-up time is already here...let’s get busy!” than to my telling him, “It’s time to put your toys away.”

Bill: Since childhood, in my small Presbyterian church in Mississippi. There was no youth choir to speak of, though. In 8th grade, I was asked if I wanted to sing with the adult choir, which I gladly did. Here at FPC, I had Christian Education duties on Sunday mornings, so did not sing here until organist Kristen Lensch created a choir for the 8:30 service, the “Sanctuary Chorale.” The service and the rehearsals on Wednesday were timed in such a way that I was able to be a part of this choir from its inception. After my 2011 retirement from the staff, I pondered my future at FPC. I continued to sing at 8:30, and, eventually, decided to sing at both services, which I now do.

“Mama, the preacher’s wife, was definitely the major influence early on. She directed children’s/youth choirs wherever daddy, the Presbyterian minister, had pastorates.” - Bekah Caruso

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

Bekah: Mama, the preacher’s wife, was definitely the major influence early on. She directed children’s/youth choirs wherever daddy, the Presbyterian minister, had pastorates. My three older siblings sang with her, and I went to rehearsals with her before I was old enough to sing with her. Directors and clinicians I connected with through my years of attending Montreat Worship & Music Conferences and Choristers Guild events have been influential in my adult years of working with children’s and youth choirs, particularly:

- Helen Kemp, matriarch of the Kemp Family of Westminster Choir College, Princeton, NJ, and extraordinary role model/teacher for Choristers Guild members
- Sue Ellen Page, Director of Children’s and Youth Choirs, Nassau Presbyterian Church, Princeton, NJ
- Pam Schneller, former Director of Music here at FPC and Director of the Blair Children’s Chorus at Vanderbilt
- Madeline Bridges, Belmont University Department of Music Education and Director of the Nashville Children’s Chorus

Bill: Typical Sunday school singing as a child, including opening and closing assemblies, with their predictable format. I enjoyed singing hymns on Sunday mornings, Sunday evenings and Wednesday nights, where we were without fail. I went to a Presbyterian choir camp one summer in Mississippi, which had an unlikely (for Mississippi) staff of people: they had gone to Westminster Choir College, in Princeton, NJ. The minister leader himself was a graduate. He had a burning desire to improve music in Presbyterian churches. I ate this up and was very charged up on this subject for the rest of my life. I was asked to lead the singing in church on Sunday nights and Wednesday nights for the last three years of high school — great practice in standing in front of a congregation and in thinking about choosing hymns. In college, I had a dynamic Westminster Choir College person as men’s Glee Club director and enjoyed four years of music for the male voice, as well as mixed-voice music when the Glee Club sang with our Women’s Chorale. The director was ambitious and not afraid to schedule even the most difficult of choral works for these organizations. After college, I sang with two community choruses in Atlanta, as well as a church choir (directed by another WCC person). All of this was before I got into my career of Christian Education, so I brought all those experiences with me into that career.

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

Bekah: Oh, golly! How to choose? How about one of many favorites? Anthem: *Salvation Is Created* by Pavel Chesnokov; Hymn: *All Things Bright and Beautiful*

Bill: Anthem: *Exultate justi in Domino* by Lodovico Viadona; Hymn: *Beneath the Cross of Jesus*

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

Bekah: How privileged we are to be able to sing regularly with first-rate orchestras and guest musicians and to enjoy working every week with our top-notch music staff! This is the reason that Bill and I both have opted to stick around First Pres after retiring. My most memorable experience was singing with Paul on alternate Mother’s Days, when the moms joined the Junior Choristers and the Celebration Singers for three-part canons.

Bill: Bach Passions

NB: How does singing relate to your spiritual life?

Bekah: Being a PK, a preacher’s kid, I’ve had to listen to a lot of sermons in my lifetime. I have a really hard time listening to sermons. My mind takes frequent side trips during the sermon time. I stay tuned in better when I’m actively participating in the service. I worship through our music: hymns, anthems, introits, responses and voluntaries. For my personal time, as I head out most mornings for my walk (also, my prayer time), I’m singing, “This is the day, this is the day that the Lord has made, that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice, let us rejoice and be glad in it.” One of the delightful surprises of singing in church choirs for so many years is the experience of listening to scripture being read and recognizing parts of it as coming from this or that anthem or major work that I’ve learned.

“Anyone who has heard me preach, or has had me for Bible study, knows that I regularly break into song when teaching or preaching.”
- Bill Caruso

Bill: Singers are most fortunate among people because most hymn and anthem texts relate directly or indirectly to scripture passages; hence, Bible reading, whether by oneself or in public worship, always conjures up beautiful music and texts in the singer’s mind. This makes scripture a delight to read, for beautiful memories of music, perhaps long-forgotten, pop up serendipitously. Anyone who has heard me preach, or has had me for Bible study, knows that I regularly break into song when teaching or preaching. I thank God for what musical ability I have, and for the opportunities I have had in church music.



Bekah & Bill Caruso

