

*The newsletter of the Music Ministry at First Presbyterian Church of Nashville*



*Bill and Mary Ann Girard*

## In the Loft with Bill Girard

*For this edition of In the Loft, we feature Bill Girard, who joined First Presbyterian one year ago.*

Mary Ann and I joined First Presbyterian Church Nashville in the Spring of 2019 and I started singing in the choir a month or so before that. We moved to Nashville in July of 2018 from Tyler, TX, where I had worked as a pulmonary physician for 35 years. We chose Nashville because my daughter lives here. We visited several very nice churches in this area but chose First Presbyterian because of its outstanding music program.

### **How long have you been singing and ringing?**

I have been singing in a church choir since early high school continuously.

### **What brought you to singing/ringing and who has influenced you?**

I grew up in New Orleans in a Baptist church. The directors of both the youth choir and the adult choir were usually students or faculty at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, so they were well-trained and were excellent musicians and we always sang high-quality music.

This is the first time however that I have played in a bell choir, which I have been doing for only a few months now. I do have some experience with other instruments however, namely piano, guitar, violin, bass, flute, saxophone, banjo, and euphonium. My level of proficiency is very modest in any of them, but it has been fun.

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**What is your favorite anthem? Favorite hymn? Favorite handbell piece?**

I do not have any particular favorite piece of music or composer but definitely prefer the classical style, which is sung in this church. I do enjoy Mozart and Ralph Vaughn Williams.

**How do singing and music relate to your spiritual life?**

Choir and music have always been an important aspect of my spiritual experience and the music at this church certainly continues to nourish that aspect of my life.

**What is your most memorable musical experience at First Presbyterian? This can include concerts at FPC, singing in the choir, etc.**

Singing in this choir is especially enjoyable because of the abundance of highly skilled singers. It is also a pleasure being under the direction of Raphael and the accompaniment of Peter. I have found all of the choir members to be especially cordial and there is a great congeniality among the group. I have felt very welcomed.

## Meet Peter Rogahn, FPC Organist

*Peter Rogahn joined the Music Ministry at First Presbyterian Church of Nashville in October 2019 as the Organist and Assistant Director of Music. A native of Austin, Texas, Peter has an active career as an organist, pianist, director, and teacher.*

Peter previously served as Precentor at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Indianapolis, Indiana. A believer in the positive impact of music in education, he served for four years as Choral Accompanist and Instructional Assistant at Lawrence North High School, Indianapolis, where he accompanied the school's six choirs and assisted with music theory, piano, and electronic music classes. During his time in Indianapolis, he also accompanied several choral ensembles including the University of Indianapolis, Indianapolis Children's Choir, and Center Grove High School choirs.

Peter is currently a candidate for the Doctor of Music degree in Organ Performance at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. He is a recipient of the Indiana University Artistic Excellence Award and the Indiana University Graduate Tuition Award. Peter holds a Performer Diploma and a Master of Music degree from Indiana. He received his Bachelor of Music degree from Concordia College, Moorhead, MN. His principal teachers have included: Christopher Young, Peter Nygaard, and Harold Rutz.

In his spare time, Peter enjoys reading, walking, and playing with his two cats, Felix and Fanny. His wife, Tiantian Liang, just recently completed her doctorate in Piano Performance at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. They are both thrilled to join the Nashville community.



# Michael Linton's New Choral Composition for Ryan's Dedication

*On January 12, 2020, FPC installed Dr. Ryan V. Moore as the new Pastor and Head of Staff. Michael Linton composed a new choral anthem, "Sir, We Want to See Jesus" for the 11:00 a.m. dedication service. Dr. Linton is a professor in the music department at Middle Tennessee State University, and he sings in the Sanctuary Choir alongside his wife, Janet. Below, we get to hear from the composer about the inspiration and symbolism in the piece.*



*Rhonda Swanson, Carol McClure, Peter Rogahn, and Michael Linton*

"Terrior" is a French term we usually associate with wine. It's used to describe the unique flavor a particular soil and location gives to grapes; various wines being differentiated by their "terrior." But the French use it for all agricultural products: tomatoes, lettuces, leaks, peaches, they all bear the stamp of their locale and are prized for their specificity. There is no such thing as French "agriculture." There are instead French "terroirs." Our anthem, "Sir, We Want to See Jesus" is like that. It's of the terroir of First Pres Nashville. It was written for the installation of our new pastor and head of staff, on a text he referenced in his first sermon, embodying Reformed theology, for the musicians of First Pres, referencing the pieces we have offered in the church's worship. It is a piece that could only exist here.

The text, from John 12, mirrors the story of the Wise Men in Matthew. But in Matthew the Magi come from the east, seeking "he who is King of the Jews." In John, they are Greeks coming from the west. But these Greeks have no prophetic sense of Jesus, they have seen no star. Instead, they are in Jerusalem for the Passover and they have heard stories about Jesus and approach Philip. Respectfully, they ask, "Sir, we want to see Jesus." But it's more than "see" as in "to look at." It's "to see" in the sense of "believe in." They are Gentiles hungry for salvation.

The shape of the piece, with its recitative and chorus, references the choir's performances of the Bach Passions, which have similar recitative/chorus structures. After the recitative, the chorus enters with the request, each part imitating the part

before it, the echoing parts a picture of the Greeks crowding around Philip, repeating their request. The requests become more tightly packed, the "Sir's" more insistent, the pleas more desperate until the chorus explodes three times, insistently, with "Jesus." The gospel text ends abruptly (we're never told if the Greeks are taken to Jesus) and the piece stops with a similar, almost curt, ending.

Yet structurally the story of the Greeks is a prelude to the Jesus' proclamation "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be Glorified. . . ." The choir's fortissimo "Jesus" is a kind of Vorimitation (or a contrapuntal suggestion of material that will soon follow) of that glorification. In their own mouths, the Greeks have glorified their Lord, even before they have seen him (this itself an oblique reference to the Reformed doctrine of election). And the three chords of the repeated "Jesus"? Between them, they contain all twelve pitches of the equally tempered scale. There are musical reasons for this of course but there's an exegetical reason as well: Jesus contains everything in Himself.

## *Chancel Flowers*



On May 31, 2020, the flowers in the Chancel were given to the glory of God and in loving memory of Libby Marley; a faithful member of FPC and a section leader of the Sanctuary Choir, by her Choir Family.



*Rhonda Swanson and Lisa Thrall*

## Rhonda Swanson plays her 500th wedding

*In June, our Assistant Organist Rhonda Swanson will play for her 500th wedding!*

### **How did you get involved at FPC?**

I came to First Pres as interim organist in December 1996. The church was beginning a search for a fulltime organist; Kristin Lensch was hired in the spring of 1997. Soon afterward, the Sanctuary Chorale was created to sing at the 8:30 a.m. service instead of a quartet. I transitioned to accompanying the Chorale and the youth choir and stayed on as assistant organist, a part-time position. Ever since then, we've been fortunate to have an organist and a half at FPC (I'm the half!)

*Peter's note: That should be two organists – we've been very blessed by Rhonda's ministry; it's been wonderful to have an organist colleague and to share responsibilities.*

### **500 weddings! Wow! What are some of your favorite or memorable weddings you have played for?**

There are always the stories of things that have gone slightly awry – an ill bride, unexpected traffic delays, the location of a wedding license – but Ellen Mayo and her predecessors always seem to negotiate those with ease. We're really fortunate

in Nashville to have excellent instrumentalists and vocalists, and I enjoy meeting with families to discuss their ceremony music. I always hope that the final product is intentional and worship-centered, and it's fun to incorporate music that reflects aspects of the family's history or character. Sometimes that means calling on the services of a bagpiper, for example, or weaving in a beloved hymn.

The wedding #500 will be June 20th – Ellie Osteen and Franklin Garstin are the bride and groom. They were originally scheduled for a different date, but the COVID-19 virus has intervened in so many plans. I think that their wedding will also be Ryan Moore's first wedding at First Pres.

### **What inspired you to keep a list of the weddings you have played?**

I think I started keeping the list because I thought I was going to make lots of money playing weddings. However, I was paid \$5 for the first one, so that wasn't a great start!

*Vist us at [fpcnashville.org](http://fpcnashville.org) for more Music Ministry news and events*