

Director of Music – 2022 Ministry Report

Thanks be to God for the year that was 2022: a year of rebuilding and refocusing for our music ministry as we continue to emerge from the pandemic.

At the heart of our music program is the choir, which rehearses from 9:30-10:00 AM and again from 11:00-noon on Sundays. This is a group of mixed ages, with longtime volunteers supplemented by choral scholars from Allegheny College. The choir is a surprisingly versatile ensemble! Over the past year we've covered everything from Gregorian and Orthodox chant, to classical compositions, to arrangements of spirituals and early American folk hymns. Since many singers travel elsewhere for Christmas, the highlight of the choir season has become our Service of Lessons & Carols, held on the second Sunday of Advent. There is more that I wish I could do with the choir, but we are limited by the amount of rehearsal time available. Nevertheless, I'm grateful for the hours we spend together.

The Liberty Bells rehearse on Tuesdays from 5:30-6:15 PM, and typically ring in church once per month. In December, a group of us took our bells "on the road", providing some entertainment for a lunchtime gathering of the MMC Auxiliary. I should mention that after many years of rehearsing in the choir room, we now use room 200 as our home base. The bellringers seem to enjoy this new space, and the traffic flow in the choir room on Sunday mornings is much improved without bell tables in the way. The bells add a rich dimension to worship, and it's impressive to watch the coordination that's involved in ringing some of our more intricate pieces!

In addition to our regular rhythm of rehearsals and worship services, the year included a number of other musical highlights:

- A Good Friday program entitled *Musical Reflections on the Seven Last Words of Christ*, with soloists Sonya Eagles-Dill and Claire Jurs;
- A solo recital by pianist Alec Chien to a full house, in September;
- The return of the French Creek Brass Quintet, for the first time since 2019;
- My annual Christmas recital, with a guest appearance by Owen (Sonya and Clare were also scheduled to perform on this program, but were unable due to illness).

2022 also saw some major refurbishments carried out on the 125-year-old Steinway piano and the 50-year-old Schlicker organ in the sanctuary. Further details can be found in the Worship & Music Committee's report, but I want to note that this work was possible thanks to the generosity of a number of individuals both within and

outside of the congregation. These are fine instruments of great historic value, and should serve the congregation well for decades to come.

What's ahead for 2023? The COVID era has taught me the futility of making predictions; all I can do is promise that, God willing, I will continue to serve this congregation with as much diligence and enthusiasm as I can.

In closing, let me thank some of the people I've leaned on this past year:

- The Worship & Music Committee (Chris Thomas, moderator), for their advice, encouragement, and patience;
- My colleagues on the church staff, for the genuine community we've become;
- Lois Kafferlin, for covering Sunday services when I'm on vacation;
- Nancy Smith, Dawn Sears, and Sonya Eagles-Dill, for serving as cantors;
- Our audio-visual crew (John Alexander, Chuck Claspy, Ryan Claspy, Ross Feltz, and Chuck Jones) for ensuring that people can see and hear what's going on, whether in the sanctuary or watching from home;
- All of you who have uplifted our music ministry by offering your talents, your financial support, and your prayers.

Kevin Dill, Director of Music