

This week we look at the development of our church's music program:

Music at the Brandermill Church

Rev. Sandra Bottoms (former Associate Pastor at Brandermill) wrote, "I am very grateful to God for the Music Ministry at The Brandermill Church - the leadership, the vocalists, the choirs, the accompanists, the instrumentalists - each one is a minister of music to me! The gift of music in our midst never ceases to bless my soul!

Music has been an important part of the life of The Brandermill Church since its very beginning. In the summer months of 1977, Mary Tyndall and Tom Bell played guitars to accompany the singing of hymns. Mary Tyndall was our church's first Director of Music. As such, she called for singers for a newly forming choir. "She needs both men and women (men especially)." Ms. Tyndall hosted weekly choir practice in her home.

Two choirs for children were developed at that time. The Cherub choir was made up of children in grades 1 thru 3 and the Carolers choir for grades 4 thru 8.

As the Brandermill congregation grew, services were moved to Clover Hill High School (then on Hull Street Road). Rev. Bartges preached from the auditorium stage to the congregation sitting in rows of seats. Mary Tyndall provided music using the school's piano.

In September 1980, Sandra Lacey became Brandermill's second choir director.

The church continued to grow and on October 19, 1980, the congregation celebrated their first service in their own church building (this original church building is today's Fellowship Hall).

The church drew its members from the Brandermill community and was there to serve the needs of the Brandermill community. The first use of the new church building for a community organization was on November 23, 1980. On that day, the "Smetana Trio, a resident chamber ensemble at Virginia Commonwealth University." performed under the auspices of the Brandermill community Chamber Series. The church's acoustics were described as "brilliant." Our church has continued to host a variety of community musical events.

At Easter, 1984, the church choir presented an Easter cantata entitled, "Worthy is the Lamb". The choir was accompanied by Myra Branyon, piano; Ed Mendenhall, guitar; Kathleen Gambill, violin; and Lynda Hatton, flute. Later that year, the choir presented a Christmas opera entitled, "Amahl and the Night Visitors". Chip Goodman played Amahl and Nancy Smith as his mother. The kings were played by Michael Flannagan, Bill Lyon, and Clem Carlisle. Sandra Lacey directed the choir.

The Easter Cantata for 1988 was "The Seven Last Words of Christ." Featured soloists were Marty Kump, Laura Hare and Chloette Wenzel, sopranos; Net Hatcher and Byron Corcoran, tenors; and Hal Sherman, bass. Kim Peachy was the accompanist and Roberta Hare directed the performance. "Each of these musical professionals brings to the presentation a wealth of musical experience."

The previous week, the Junior Choir, directed by Beverly Bray, offered the musical work, "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat." "The musical was performed as a multi-media presentation. The thirty voice choir of first through fifth graders sang to a taped accompaniment while a pre-recorded video made by the group was shown on a huge television screen."

The church's first set of handbells were dedicated on June 16, 1991. That original three octave set of handbells has grown to a present 5 octave set of handbells and chimes. Dawn Rancka currently directs the Branderbells handbell choir.

By 1998, the church's music program had expanded. A group called "The Early Risers" sang at the 8:30 a.m. service and was led by Diane White. Jack Winn led the Sanctuary Choir at the 11:00 a.m. service.

Jack Winn also directed the Brandermill Church Instrumental Ensemble which "meets the needs of instrumental accompaniment for all choirs and provides many additional music offerings for our music ministries."

There were several children's choirs. The Cherub Choir, directed by Nancy Cameron, consisted of children aged 4 to 7. They normally sang in church once a month.

The Quarter Notes, directed by Lois Rodgers, was for children in grades 3 to 5. They normally sang on the third Sunday of each month. Ms. Rodgers also directed the Youth Choir for grades 6 to 12 who sang on the second Sunday.

At this time Marty Kump directed the Branderbells.

The Youth Sunday service, held on February 8, 2004, included a Praise Band. The members were, Daniel Adams, bass and guitar; Kalia Alsip, vocals; Ashley Batten, vocals; Richard Bolinger, guitar; Lacy Hickl, vocals; Jonathan Kirkland, drums; and Will Riggerbach, bass guitar and vocals.

On Palm Sunday, 2004, the Sanctuary presented a Gospel Mass. A traditional mass set in an African-American Gospel style. Choir members who sang solos were, Jan Baran, Charlie Bechtier, Mike Hill, Lovie Holmes, Marty Kump, Monica Rakes and Sam Rodgers.

Our current Music Director, Jamie Barrack joined the staff of the Brandermill Church on August 1, 2006. His leadership skills and musical abilities have challenged the choir to an outstanding level of performance.

Spanish pianist Jose Luis Reyes presented a concert, on June 3, 2012, as a benefit of the church's youth mission trips. This world class pianist performed classical Spanish music.

On April 13, 2014, The Raleigh Ringers, an international acclaimed handbell ensemble performed a concert at Brandermill. The concert was a "unique interpretation of sacred, secular and popular music, including famous rock n' roll tunes arranged just for handbells".

In June 2015, long time choir accompanist and worship pianist, Kim Peachy, left Brandermill to be near family in Montana. "Kim has played a major roll in Brandermill Church's Music Ministry for 28 years accompanying the choir, small choral groups and individuals, as well as providing the congregation with her beautiful piano solos week after week."

On September 6, 2015, Ashlee Albertson became Brandermill's new accompanist. Ashlee stayed until July 2016 when she accepted a position in Washington, DC. Tonya Cory, a 20 year member of the choir, was named as our church's next (and current) accompanist.

In mid 2017, the church's Music Ministry was enhanced with the addition of Cornerstone. This group included Justin Ott, lead singer who also played guitar and piano, Jordan Mason, bass player and Kayen Wilborn, percussionist using a box drum.

Like all aspects of The Brandermill Church, the Music Ministry has changed over time. This article has hit some highlights of our church's music history in an effort to show how the music program has evolved over time.

The skill, scope and variety of the music presented each week is an important and necessary part of our worship experience. Many thanks go out to all those who have been part of The Brandermill Church's music experience over the last 40 years.