

ORGANIST EXTRAORDINAIRE

For more than 50 years, Jan Snowden has graced our church with the sound of organ music. Throughout the years, she has faithfully shared her gift on Sunday mornings, laying a musical foundation for our worship services. Her soft, contemplative tones have announced the start of services, quieting our animated conversations and preparing us for worship. Jan's lively rhythms have led our congregation in song, playing hymns at what we affectionately call "West Granville tempo." Her often triumphant music has proclaimed the end of services.

In addition to that, Jan has used her gift to accompany the choir, soloists, and instrumentalists. Her organ music has enriched congregation members' major life events from weddings and baptisms to milestone birthdays, anniversaries, and funerals. Jan's passion for the organ comes through every time she plays. For her, there is a spiritual aspect to playing her beloved instrument during services.

"It's the feeling I get that God is with me," Jan said. "I hope I am providing some enjoyment to the congregation and that they are also feeling God is with them."

Jan majored in playing the organ at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. One of her classmates played the organ at West Granville Presbyterian Church. In spring of 1971, he announced that he was leaving the position and the church needed a new organist. Jan, who was raised in a Presbyterian church in Cottage Grove, said that she was interested in becoming the new organist.

The Rev. Edgar Bletcher was pastor at the time and he helped guide Jan toward the lively rhythm that has become the hallmark of her hymns. "It was my very first service," Jan recalled. "I had prepared and was all set to go. We started that first hymn and Edgar was at least two measures ahead of me. I had to pick up the pace to keep up with the man."

One of Jan's favorite hymns is "Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty." Reflecting other highlights, she recalled the John Rutter Tenebrae service she performed with the choir for a Maundy Thursday service years ago. Jan also noted that she has loved playing for weddings throughout the years.

Jan is not the only member of her family who has shared musical talents at West Granville. Her husband of more than 50 years, Michael; her daughter, Angie; and granddaughters, Josci and Karli have all contributed to the music at our church.

In addition to playing the organ for West Granville, Jan teaches piano, keyboard, and organ lessons. She taught at the White House of Music and currently teaches at the Academy of Music in West Bend.

Her passion remains playing for the church. Jan acknowledged that a few years back, she thought that 50 years might be enough, but she still feels ready to share her music with the church. As West Granville resumes in-person services, Jan is looking forward to returning to her bench and filling the sanctuary with the sounds of organ music.

"I'm really looking forward to getting back at it."