



Jonathan Davis: 30 Years of Service to The People's Community Baptist Church

By Auburn Mann



“If you had told me when I was in high school that I would spend my next 30 years working full-time at a church, I would have looked at you a bit strange. But as I confidently look back over 30 years, I know that God had a plan for me that I wasn’t even aware of then.”

Those are the words of Jonathan Davis, whose presence and impact can be felt every weekend and throughout the week, through his leadership as the director of the TPCBC’s Music Ministry and through his touch of the piano keys, which produce his signature melodious sound. As we approach Jonathan’s 30th anniversary as a member of the TPCBC staff team, we thought it fitting to reflect on the divine orchestration that forged his path into our fellowship.

According to Jonathan, “It’s almost like God opened a door and you step into it, and He opens another door and then another door, and He keeps opening doors for you, and you start moving in the direction.” The first door was presented and opened when Jonathan was a student at Springbrook High School in Silver Spring. One afternoon, the school’s new choral director, Dr. Anthony Leach, noticed Jonathan’s gifts while he was practicing the piano. Impressed, Dr. Leach offered to be Jonathan’s mentor.

Not too long after, Dr. T.J. Baltimore, who was a friend of Dr. Leach, was searching for a new crop of musicians to help play for Sunday worship services at the church where he pastored –TPCBC. Dr. Leach, already a TPCBC musician and director, eagerly recommended Jonathan, who had already joined TPCBC with his family a year before. So in 1989, Jonathan began his service to The People’s Community Baptist Church.

This was a great opportunity for Jonathan, since music was his life and blood. “Growing up was a fairly musical experience,” said Jonathan. His mother, who had earned a college degree in music, was a piano teacher, and his father often listened to his favorite music albums on an 8-track player. Jonathan began playing the piano himself at age six. However, prior to meeting Dr. Leach, Jonathan wasn’t quite sure how to convert his passion into a career. Of course, at the time, he wasn’t necessarily thinking long-term. Playing for People’s just seemed like the right thing to do. But it took some time to get accustomed to playing gospel music. “When I first started, I couldn’t play [it]. I knew how to read music, but I was basically trained to play classical.” Nevertheless, his mentor and directors thought that, with the right training, he was a strong enough musician to be able to effectively adapt. “I watched some of the other directors and pianists that were brought in. I kind of watched what they did. Some of them showed me different things and I gradually picked it up bit by bit. I just kept building and getting better at it and incorporating it into my practice to the point where I could do it myself.”

One Sunday, when Dr. Leach was unavailable, Jonathan was called to accompany the choir all by himself. “It was kind of like on-the-job training,” he said. After that went well his confidence in his performance prowess was bolstered, and in 1991, Jonathan accepted a full-time position as Director of the Chancel Choir. Amazingly, he was still an undergraduate student at the University of Maryland.

In 2000, Pastor Baltimore named Jonathan Davis TPCBC’s Minister of Music. In the years since, Jonathan has been responsible for the music supporting worship services, vacation Bible school, Christmas concerts, revivals, and virtually every aspect of the church. And in his “spare” time, he provides piano lessons for willing students.

A highlight of Jonathan’s TPCBC 30-year tenure was participating in his first missions trip in 2010 to Johannesburg, South Africa, and coordinating music for the mission team. Jonathan admits that the impact of the experience may have been even greater for the church’s choral contingent than for those they ministered to on the missions field. “[The South Africans’] music impacted us all. I remember one time when they didn’t need any instruments; they just started singing – and it was heavenly.”

In September of 2016, Jonathan married April Holloway. “God directed me to her,” as he gratefully describes it. Musically inclined as well, April is a former member of the choir and praise team at Springfield Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. Even more importantly to Jonathan is her patience with the demands of his role as Minister of Music. Of April he says, “She understands my schedule and the time I put in and the demands of people pulling on me in this and that direction. It takes a special person to put up with that. She’s been a real blessing, and I’m very thankful for her.”

Jonathan’s goals for the future include getting more of the youth involved in the music ministry, especially playing instruments and directing. He also would like to arrange a recording featuring various aspects of the TPCBC Music Ministry. “I pray that, through God’s blessings, grace, and mercy, I’ve been able to positively impact not just the Music Ministry, but entire church as a whole. I pray that I’ll be able to pass along to the next generation what God has shown me and blessed me with, so that His ministry here at People’s will continue to flourish.”

God opened a door – several doors – and Jonathan walked through. Congratulations, Jonathan, on 30 years of service to TPCBC! Thank you!