

## REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONED MINISTER OF MUSIC

Our year began, as it does in odd-numbered years lately, at Plymouth Church, for our combined Epiphany service, this being the first with Grace and Edwards being together. The anthem was a new one for the occasion, "Amen! Tell It on the Mountain" by Mary McDonald. The spring included many milestones associated with my commissioning as a Minister of Music. The first, though not choir-related, took place on the evening of February 1, when lay and clergy members from a dozen churches came to listen to my commissioning presentation and to challenge me with an array of questions. By night's end, I had been approved to be commissioned. It was a tremendous day!

Our Lenten anthems focused on the theme of "Sanctuary," drawing from the familiar libraries of May Brahe ("Bless This House"), Virgil Thomson ("My Shepherd Will Supply My Need"), Jay Althouse ("Soar Like an Eagle"), and introducing a new setting of "How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place" by Carl Schalk. Our Holy Week services were unified by "Easter Fanfare" sung both Sundays, with adjusted lyrics. On the afternoon of Palm Sunday, April 9, the choir participated in the ordination service of Shane Montoya, held at Natick's Eliot Church, singing a new arrangement of "Here I Am, Lord," by Craig Courtney.

Easter morning, April 16, was the most joyous I can recall, with returning trumpeter Chris Heater, and Cheryl Elkins' two sons and their friends providing brass music for the anthem "Entrata Festiva" by Flor Peeters, and a rousing "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today" setting, arranged by S. Drummond Wolff.

Just one week later, the choir participated to a great degree in my commissioning service, Sunday afternoon, April 23. We sang six anthems ("Be Thou My Vision," arr. Bill Cutter; "Blessings Abound," by Pepper Choplin; "My Shepherd Will Supply My Need," arr. Virgil Thomson; "Dedication," by John Rutter; "Hlohonolofatsa," arr. Andrew St. Hilaire; "The Lord Bless You and Keep You," by Peter C. Lutkin) and a variety of instrumental music by both Susan Minor and Cheryl Elkins.

On Pentecost, the choir bid farewell to mentored pastor Nena Radtke in our usual manner, with Denes Agay's setting of "Old Irish Blessing."

As we rounded out the choral season with a number of familiar songs and repeats from my commissioning (they deserved a break!), I was delighted to think on what a great program year we'd had, finishing on June 11, as usual with "The Lord Bless You and Keep You" by Peter C. Lutkin. Also that day, we handed out first year choir pins to Holly Rust Martin and Don Akin. I dedicated the choir's program year to my recently departed choral mentor Sue Ellen Page, whom I worked with at Nassau Presbyterian Church in Princeton, New Jersey.

Choristers recognized for singing in at least one service with the choir in the 2016-2017 season included: Soprano: Cindy Booth, Debbie Clark, Jane Ezbicki, Kelly Lopez, Holly Martin, Terri Taylor, Ronda Yeomans; Alto: Ruth Carney, Karen Dolliver, Jeannette Loughman, Marge Roy; Tenor: Rob Delossa, Bryan Douros, Len Ezbicki, Nicola Seaholm; Bass: Don Akin, Ric Carl, Frank Carney, Rick Robinson.

Just one week following that final service, our dear friend Don Akin passed away, and we lost a friend, chorister, and music committee member. The choir sang "My Shepherd Will Supply My Need" at his memorial service on July 1.

I was happy to return as a guest preacher on August 20, speaking on self-image and evaluation.

The fall program year began earlier than usual with a kickoff on September 10, the choir singing "Wade in the Water." We sang at the Open Spirit Welcome Mosaic Dedication with Sebastian Temple's "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace." In October we celebrated the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Protestant Reformation with a series of anthems from the German and Lutheran churches ("Agnus Dei" of Hans Hassler; Telemann's "Hallelujah"; Mendelssohn's "Verleih uns Frieden," featuring cellist Marian Levinstein; and Ferguson's "For the Beauty of the Earth," with Bruce Cichowlas on melodica, among them). Our Special Music Sunday on December 17 continued our study of German Church music with Christmas pieces by J.S. Bach ("Sheep May Safely Graze" and "Jesu, Joy

of Man's Desiring") and Praetorius' "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming." Also this fall, the choir was grateful to have Gabe Marcincavage join the tenor section.

We have been grateful many Sundays throughout the fall for a gift of choral anthems from the recently closed church in Maynard where Ruth Carney served in the office for several years.

At Christmas Eve's Candlelight Service, the choir sang "All Bells in Paradise" by John Rutter, as requested for this Christmas by Don Akin, not knowing he'd be listening to the joyful noise from paradise. It made for a perfect conclusion to our fall season.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rick Seaholm, Commissioned Minister of Music