

Celebration Moment #8
CHOIRS AND MUSIC AT FRIEDENS

"In our worship services at Friedens we have used 3 languages. Early services were in German and then in English. However there was always a third language--music."

Included in articles found in the cornerstone of our first church building, laid in 1912, was a list of members of the first choir. Now known as the Chancel Choir, this is the oldest organization at Friedens, and is still going strong. The love of good music, inherited from our mother church, Zion Evangelical UCC, has enriched the lives of choristers and worshippers at Friedens for 100 years. Children growing up in our church have, from our earliest years been encouraged to sing, and many have grown up to be members of the choir today.

One of the most notable of these young musicians in the '30s was the Friedens Octet. Organist and choir director, Martha Brehob realized that in the choir were 4 sets of sisters from the Otting, Hohn, Stumpf and Niemeyer families who all very musical. She formed them into an ensemble that sang in 4 parts, unaccompanied. They became quite popular and had singing engagements throughout the city. Marriages and children ended the octet, and the Hohn and Niemeyer sisters then formed a quartet and continued to sing for church and other events.

In the 1930's a junior choir was formed under the leadership of Elfrieda Rieck, who had herself grown up at Friedens. That group has continued to encourage the children and youth of Friedens to use their gifts in worship...Today that group comprises Praise Makers.

The choir has had many fine directors, among them William Carl Meyer. Dr. Meyer became director of Junior and Senior Choirs in the late '40s. Dr. Meyer was a respected musician from Chicago. He was also a fine organist. In the early 1950's Elise Steffan returned to her home church to assume the position of organist. Now married, Mrs. Marshall became choir director as well, at the departure of Dr. Meyer. Elise expanded the scope of the choral program to include the Cherub Choir, Junior Choir, Chi Rho Singers and Youth Choirs. This choir

program flourished at the move to the new church. Elise served faithfully for 25 years. Elise's husband, Ken was president of the church council when we purchased this site. He had the privilege of actually turning the key that opened these doors for the first worship service.

Following Elise was Ralph Horine, who was the retired choral director at Arlington HS. Mr. Horine served faithfully for 23 years. During the 80's a set of handbells was purchased. Florence Bunning, who directed the children's choirs formed the handbell choir, Sounds of Peace. This group of faithful musicians continues to enhance our worship. Tom Williams and Rob Howard directed the choir for a short time until the choirs came under the capable direction of Rebecca Vernon in 1997. Rebecca brought considerable expertise as an elementary music teacher as well as an accomplished singer. She has written and directed youth musicals, and also started the tradition of singing a Christmas Cantata each year. We are blessed with 3 members who have taken charge of the children's choir program. Beth Poe, Kyrmen Rea-Hedrick and Sally Perkins, along with Rebecca currently direct our children. Using the creative spirit hour has helped to build membership in all choirs.

The church has always used the pipe organ as the principal instrument in worship. (The first church purchased a modest sized Wicks Organ. Organist Martha Brehob promoted the purchase of a New 16 rank Pilcher organ in 1936. When we moved into this Sanctuary, funds were tight and it looked like piano was all that was possible. Thankfully, a local organ builder contacted us. He had built a small 7rank organ for a church, and they had cancelled the order. This small organ served us well for 14 years. The organ fund was started, and in 1977, a new 26 rank Schlicker organ was installed which still serves us well today). Four members who grew up at Friedens have served as organist. These were Martha Brehob Shick, Alberta Niemeyer Unversaw, Elise Steffan Marshall, and Tom Williams. Friedens recently acquired a fine Estonia Grand Piano for Sanctuary worship and Tower Carillon that calls us to worship each Sunday.

In 1998 Pastor Hayden and Tom Williams explored the possibilities of a more contemporary worship experience on Sunday evenings. Tom played electric keyboard, and invited Ken Granger to play along on the bass guitar. Joe Stuteville

also played. Ken took on the challenge of forming a praise band. Due to Ken's considerable efforts our contemporary band took shape under the name Upon This Rock. They continue their dedicated service in our new Shalom Service.

Another recent addition to our Music program is the creation of "Concerts at Friedens." Under the guidance of Elise Marshall, this series brings to this community, musicians of the highest caliber.

We are all grateful for the emphasis on inspiring church music here at Friedens, and pray it continues for generations to come.

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