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Sunday Stories

September 5, 2021

A Special Edition of the Kingsport Times News

Make a Joyful Noise



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The music ministry at First Presbyterian Church in Kingsport is a multi-faceted program with opportunities for members of all ages and skill levels. From the hand bells (left) to the choir (right), each program offers the chance to grow in knowledge and in skill — all while making services more meaningful.

First Presbyterian offers diverse music ministry

By Suzi McKee

When Mark Davis joined the First Presbyterian Church staff as the full-time director of music in 2006, his goal was to enhance the worship services with music and participation by the congregation, weaving liturgy and the arts into a beautiful encounter with God's presence.



Mark Davis

Mark's reputation as a choral conductor and voice teacher combined with his professional career — bolstered by degrees from the Cleveland Institute of Music and The Ohio State University — bring a level of professionalism to the music ministry at First Presbyterian.

"My specialty is the development of the voice both individually and collectively in the mystery of the choir," Mark said. "If the church is the Body of Christ, then by the Spirit, the choir can be the Voice of Christ."

"We have a multi-faceted program that appeals to a wide range of people in our congregation and each one offers new knowledge and skills that combine to make our worship services more meaningful," Mark said.

Organist Alice Brooks Sanders, who holds a master's degree in piano performance, brings extensive experience, skill and creativity to the ministry of music. In addition to playing all services, and being certified as a Musikgarten instructor for children, Alice offers special recitals of music for meditation combining great music, art and literature of the church throughout history.

The Chancel Choir is open to all adults and advanced high schoolers, working on a weekly basis to sing for the 11 a.m. service. Frequently, Women's and Men's Chorales are assembled for special occasions, and to welcome additional folks into the program. Vocal training is available to all who are interested. It's a wonderful way to share your talents and to expand your musical abilities.

The Alleluia Choir is comprised of children in grades K through 5, who rehearse weekly on Sunday mornings — often employing hand chimes and Orff instruments — leading to participation in worship on a monthly basis. Parents can provide their children a means to improve their enjoyment of church and to learn about music and its impact on the entire worship service.

The music program welcomes and coordinates the participation of church members, according to their areas of interest and skill, in instrumental solos and ensembles comprised of strings, winds and percussion.

The First Presbyterian Performing Arts Series brings a rich variety of world-class performers for concerts throughout the year for the larger community to enjoy. The church is also the Kingsport home of the professional Paramount Chamber Players.

Handbell enthusiasts are invited to participate in weekly rehearsals with the Westminster Ringers. There are also opportunities for advanced ringing in the smaller Chamber Bell Choir. Handbells add a unique element of beauty to the worship services, Mark explained. The heavenly sound produced by a handbell choir is apt to usher in a hushed reverence among listeners. The humble handbell is an instrument that can be picked up just as readily by beginners as by seasoned musicians.

Music at First Presbyterian is enhanced by the church's many beautiful instruments, including a full-range Schantz Pipe Organ, a full five-octave set of Malmark Handbells, a small concert grand Steinway piano in the chapel, a concert grand Boston piano in the sanctuary, and a custom-built, concert-size Kingston harpsichord.

Music is a language that communicates beauty, joy and the wonder of God. The instruments used at First Presbyterian Church deepen that vocabulary of the language — one that simply can't be accomplished with the human voice alone. The participants and the congregation become more closely connected to God which is the goal of any musical program.

First Presbyterian Church invites you to "come and see" for yourself.



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now come try the best
breakfast in town!"*

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homemade biscuits
& gravy, pancakes,
french toast
and more !!!**

Lunch 11-4

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HAPPY LABOR DAY!!!**

