

GRETTNA'S GOOD NEWS



From the Benches, 2007

Listeners on the benches in the Tabernacle this year were treated to a series of programs (16 of them in fact) that were outstanding in quality and variety, all of them related in their goal of bringing to each listener an opportunity for Christian spiritual renewal in the unique Tabernacle setting.

Actually, there were fifteen traditional Bible Festival programs; a calendar quirk this year put the annual Mt. Gretna Community Church Service within the time frame of the Bible Festival, and the Program Committee was pleased indeed to bring the Rev. Ed Zeiders to the Tabernacle to preach one of his "Let's just do it!" sermons.

The 2007 summer series was favored in another way, as well. We had only two evenings of rainy weather, and although we flirted with a power outage while the Lancaster British Brass Band was playing, it did not materialize. There were four occasions (including the night Tony Campolo inspired more than 1000 persons) when the Tabernacle overflowed with 900 or more people. And we came close to 900 on several other evenings.

To accommodate crowds this large, additional parking was provided in the parking lot of the Mt. Gretna Roller Rink, and we thank the operators of the rink for their help. And on the evening of the Massed Choir concert, with the church bus generously provided by the Cornwall UMC, we were able to provide shuttle bus service from the Roller Rink lot to the Tabernacle.

A quick overview of the 2007 season shows that good weather and good programs make a combination that is hard to beat. For the many faithful supporters of the Bible Festival and Tabernacle who attend most if not all of the programs, picking this year's favorite is probably difficult, although a good bet would be that most of them would put this year's Massed Choir concert high on their list. (For more details, see the Massed Choir story on page 4.)

Also high on those lists would probably be the **Brandywine Harps**, making their third appearance in the Tabernacle. The music made by fourteen harpers playing together provides audible proof that "the whole is greater than the sum of the parts." The arrangement by director Janet Witman of "The First Nowell" and Pachelbel's "Canon" made a truly magical combination. And the Irish tune to the words of "Be Thou My Vision," played on Irish harps, brought moments of spiritual renewal to many listeners.

Versatility, along with beauty, is a characteristic of the Brandywine Harps – a versatility that enables them to move quickly and seamlessly from the spiritual quality of "Be Thou My Vision" to the comic quality ("Harpers Are Not Bizarre") to the patriotic ("Yankee Doodle") to the haunting "Ashokan Farewell." What an unusual accompaniment for spiritual renewal the harp ensemble gave us!

The **Andy Roberts Quartet** opened the summer series of programs with their trademark style of relaxed, respectful arrangements of familiar hymns as well as newer Christian music. The Rev. John Roberts had enlightening commentary on music and worship, and vocalist Robyn Work's lovely voice added to the spiritual quality of the music. The audience was delighted with the surprise appearance of Nicole Roberts, whose clear young voice soared through the Tabernacle in a moving solo and blended beautifully with Robyn's in their duet.

The contrast with the following Sunday's program could hardly be greater – from a soft-jazz quartet to a full scale symphonic band! Yes, it was the **New Holland Band** making their traditional early July appearance in the



Rev. Ed Zeiders



From the Benches

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Brandywine Harp Orchestra

Tabernacle. And if anyone in the audience thought that bands could play only brassy, martial music, this concert proved otherwise. Opening with a thought provoking arrangement of the “Star Spangled Banner,” the band moved quickly to the Fanny Crosby hymn, “To God be the Glory,” followed by the Sousa march “Keeping Step” (“have to have at least one,” announced Director Kenneth Laudermilch). This in turn was followed by a euphonium solo of “Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms” that so delighted the audience an encore (“Bless This House”) was demanded and loudly applauded.

New Performers

The first of two new performers, the **Lancaster British Brass Band**, was about as different from the New Holland Band as it could possibly be. It is smaller (28 instrumentalists), modeled after traditional 19th century British brass bands. This particular blend of brass instruments produces harmonies reminiscent of a pipe organ. Conductor Walter Blackburn took full advantage of this sound in the variety of music the band played – hymns, marches, classics, and show tunes. The band was new not only to Tabernacle audiences, but to Lancaster as well, having been founded only in 2004. The Tabernacle audience agreed that for a three-year-old, this band was quite mature.



Andy Roberts Quartet

The second new group, **Men in Harmony**, based in Millersburg, is a chorus of 26 men, “in harmony with the Lord and with each other,” who love to sing the message of God’s true love. Nine different denominations are represented in the group and 26 different churches; there are four pastors among the singers, and the program they presented in the Tabernacle was an original and reverent expression of Christian faith and love of country. Selections ranged from “A Mighty Fortress” to “Lord, Listen to Your Children” to an original arrangement that combined the movie tune “What a Wonderful World” with the hymn “This Is My Father’s World,” a combination that made perfect musical and meaningful harmony.



Lancaster British Brass Band

Music, Preaching and Teaching

And speaking of harmony, would it be too much of a stretch to suggest that the present concentration of preaching and teaching in the last week of July and the beginning of August is our contemporary way of harmonizing with the original intent of the Campmeeting? The worship patterns of a century ago would simply defeat their own purpose if maintained today. (Actually after only seven years’ of existence as a campmeeting, the managers were being pressured by Annual Conference to call the gathering a “Bible Conference,” which it was, many years later.) And changes in program styles began showing up at an early stage. So today the focus on combined music and preaching begins with the morning worship service on the last Sunday of July, led for the past few years by the music and Christian witness of the **Sacred Orchestra** directed by Dave Stahl, a service that brings capacity crowds of worshippers to the Tabernacle.



Men in Harmony

The preaching and teaching was outstanding this summer, attracting one of the largest audiences of the season. More than one thousand listeners were counted on the Wednesday evening when the renowned motivational speaker,

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From the Benches

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Dr. Tony Campolo, spoke about the Christian obligation to provide educational opportunities, especially for those children deemed to be “at risk.” His stories of challenges and successes were truly inspirational.

The **Rev. Kirby Keller** continued the tradition of great preaching at the following Sunday morning’s communion service with his thoughts on “Words So Hard to Say,” words like *my fault, I’m sorry, and I forgive*, derived from the parable of forgiveness and non-forgiveness in Matthew 18: 21-35.

The **Handbell Festival**, directed by **Michael Joy**, brought choirs from Elizabethtown, Lancaster, Lebanon, and Gettysburg together for a day of rehearsing and an evening of performing a delightful mix of sacred music written or arranged for handbells and some purely “for fun” music that actively involved the audience. The Massed Choir, organized on a different basis this year, filled the platform with two hundred singers and filled the Tabernacle with about nine hundred listeners. (See the story on Page 4).

Morning worship on the second Sunday of August was led by Bob Troxell’s **Dixieland Connection**, and in the evening the **Dr. Darrell Woomer** took us “Through the Christian Year with the Hymns of Charles Wesley,” celebrating the 300th anniversary of his birth. The great hymns of Wesley, spiced with the commentary and explanations of Dr. Woomer and embellished by the gifted fingers of **Dr. Rodney Shearer** flying over the piano keys, were a joy to sing and enlightening to connect with the seasons of the church year.

Something about Tradition

Traditions are customs or ways of doing things that have persisted over a number of years, the exact number never being specified. Therefore, it is possible to speak of the third appearance in the Tabernacle of **Marie Barlow Martin** as a tradition. And there have been many expressions from audience members of their hope that this tradition will continue in the years to come.

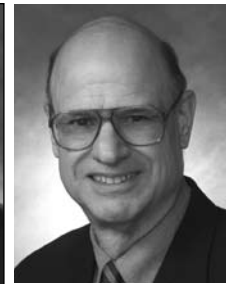
Marie’s story is as compelling as her voice: starring roles in Broadway musicals, her meeting with **Gordy Martin**, her decision to realize her lifelong dream of singing for churches and Christian audiences. The power of that dream and the power of her gorgeous voice, demonstrated in her performance of “How Great Thou Art” compelled many listeners to comment that they had never heard that hymn sung with more power and conviction.

Making their traditional appearance towards the end of August, Linda Tedford and the **Susquehanna Chorale** demonstrated once again their mastery of an enormous range of musical styles, shifting easily from the modern work of Randall Thompson to the American colonial composer William Billings. The beloved “Amazing Grace” acquired new power with the ensemble supporting a soaring tenor voice and a solid bass foundation. Their singing of “Home on the Range,” with a harmonica accompaniment, carried many listeners to that magical region that may never actually have existed but tugs at us still.

And playing this year without a power failure, the **Lancaster Brass** brought the Summer at the Tabernacle programs to a close with their good humored, folksy chatter and their unmatched ability to blend their talents with the music so seamlessly that the listener becomes an active participant in the musical experience.



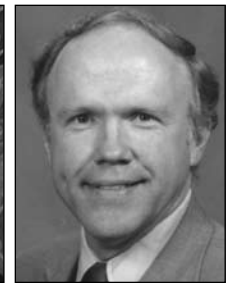
Rev. Kirby Keller



Tony Campolo



Dr. Darrell Woomer



Dr. Rodney Shearer



Dr. Michael Joy



Joseph Martin



Bob Troxell



Marie Barlow Martin



Lancaster Brass



Dream Fulfilled

There were many summers, decades ago, when the Massed Choir Concert, usually at the conclusion of the Bible Conference program, drew hundreds of singers from church choirs—and often from the audience itself. Earl Miller, and later Alden Biely, conducted choirs of 150 to 200 voices, and the Tabernacle benches were filled with lovers of choral music. It has been a major concern of the Program Committee that in recent years the number of singers and the number of listeners have both declined.

Fast forward to August 5, 2007. A Massed Choir program is getting underway; two hundred singers overflow the Tabernacle platform; more than nine hundred people fill the Tabernacle benches and spill out into the surrounding area, and on the podium (actually a small platform erected in the center aisle) is the very personable Joseph Martin, Director of Sacred Publications at Shawnee Press in Nashville, Tennessee. How did we arrange for a nationally known director and composer to spend a Sunday in Mt Gretna?

The answer to that question is that the Program Committee tried a new approach – they decided to ask for help, and approached Grace and Bruce Marquette at Loser’s Music Store in Lebanon. Did they have any ideas that might stimulate interest in our concert, and did they have any suggestions for a nationally known director who might be willing to conduct a volunteer choir?

The Marquettes were more than willing to help. They suggested Joe Martin as a dynamic conductor, who was already under agreement with them to conduct a choral workshop in this area.



2007 Massed Choir

They were even willing to change the date of their workshop to accommodate the Bible Festival schedule, and Joe Martin agreed to do the workshop on a Saturday and then come to Mt Gretna the next day for a rehearsal and the evening performance.

Doug Troutman, Bob Kettering and Don Zechman, the members of the Program Committee most heavily involved with developing the Massed Choir program, began working before the end of 2006, mailing information to previous singers and to many area church choirs. Registration forms were sent to everyone who expressed interest in joining the choir. Rehearsals were scheduled for various area churches, with a final combined rehearsal in the Tabernacle Sunday afternoon before the performance. Box lunches would be provided, and, in a gesture of great generosity, Loser’s agreed to provide free music to each of the registered singers, amounting in all to about \$1600.

If you were among the nine hundred who heard the music sung that evening, you know how successful the program of familiar hymns and original Martin compo-



Director Joseph Martin at piano

sitions was. Not only did Director Martin educate the singers about the history and intention of each piece they sang, he made himself a part of the audience, interspersing his conducting with stories of his North Carolina childhood and background comments on the piece about to be sung. He also gave us a sample of his remarkable skills as a concert pianist. The choir responded with enthusiasm and perfectly clear enunciation, and the audience responded with thoroughly appreciative applause.

It was indeed a night to remember—to remember the marvelous singing, the engaging personality of the conductor, and above all, the enthusiasm and outstanding cooperation of the Marquette family at Loser’s.



Partners in Ministry 2007

Our thanks to those who have become Partners in our Ministry of providing a Christian spiritual renewal in the unique Tabernacle setting by making specific contributions to Bible Festival programs or to the Friends of the Tabernacle. (List complete through October 20).

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A Roof Over Our Heads

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Tabernacle Association has already taken steps to prepare for it. Some time ago, a "roof repair" account was established by the Association's treasurer. There have been contributions over the last year or two specifically marked for roof repair, necessitating the establishment of that account. At their September meeting, the trustees voted to place the funds from the Seiders bequest into the roof repair account, stating that there was no better way to honor the spirit of the bequest than to make sure it would be used to protect the building that is central to the "spirit of Mt. Gretna," about which Marlin so often talked.

In that spirit, the trustees suggest that an excellent way of showing support for the programs of the Bible Festival and the spirit of Mt. Gretna would be to earmark an extra, special contribution over the next year or two for the roof repair account. By so doing, that account will grow and the amount that will have to be raised when the new roof is installed will be more manageable.

It should be pointed out that the upkeep and maintenance of the Tabernacle is shared, half and half, by the Tabernacle Association and the Campmeeting Association.

As is always the case, all contributions will be acknowledged and each contributor will become a Partner in Ministry, in support of the Mt. Gretna Bible Festival.



Remembrances

Capt. Marlin Seiders and his wife, Nancy, before their recent deaths, had enjoyed many active retirement years in the Campmeeting and had accumulated a fund of memories, one of them dating back to 1944—long before retirement—when Marlin conducted the first winter Sunday worship services in the Tabernacle. And they found a way to continue their active involvement with the place and the programs they enjoyed.

By a provision in their will, a portion of their estate was bequeathed to the Campmeeting Association in recognition of that involvement. On being notified of the bequest, the Campmeeting Board of Managers generously voted unanimously to share it with the Bible Festival on a fifty-fifty basis.

The thoughtfulness of the Seiders reminds us that it is possible to continue support for the programs and organizations we work with and enjoy by simply providing in a last will and testament that a certain portion of our estate be given to that program or organization.

Dick Stone mailed in a contribution a few days ago and enclosed a note that is reprinted here:

My wife, Larene Werner Stone, received Jesus Christ in her heart at a church camp in Gretna in about 1944. I wanted to make this contribution in honor of her conversion and the work that Mt Gretna does.

At that time, she was a member of St John's EUB church in Grantville, PA.

We thank Dick Stone for sharing this story with us—another demonstration of the lasting power of the “spirit of Mt. Gretna.”

A Roof Over Our Heads

The caretakers of the Tabernacle, specifically the Campmeeting's Superintendent of Grounds Merv Lentz, and, in a more general way the trustees of the Tabernacle Association, keep a close eye on the condition of the century old building. It is inspected annually by a licensed structural engineer, and Merv is very conscientious about following his recommendations.

It was in 1989 that the present roof was installed on the Tabernacle, and in time it will need to be replaced. That “time” is still a few years away, but the

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