



Gwynedd Square Presbyterian Church

The Fifth Decade: 2000-2009

By Sandy Taylor

And finally, our most recent decade! Like all the decades before, our fifth has been filled with growth, changes, challenges, firsts, hard work, and an incredible dedication to our ministry within our church, our community, and the world. We've now been in our beautiful "new" worship space for almost 10 years – with its rounded sanctuary that is warm and welcoming, curved pews that create a feeling of inclusiveness, curved hardwood ceiling that resembles an inverted ark or ship, a round stained glass window which provides an inspirational focus depicting preaching, teaching, baptism, and communion and is surrounded by sparkling organ pipes, wonderful windows that bring the outside in on bright sunny days, and a sense that "God is here."

As the year 2000 began, we had only been worshipping in our new sanctuary for four months and we had just called the Rev. Steven R. Garstad as our interim pastor. In February 2000, a Mission Design Committee of 16 members was formed representing multiple demographic categories within our congregation to gather information about and from our members and about and from our community. This needed to be completed and approved by Presbytery before a Pastor Nominating Committee could be elected. (The PNC was elected in June 2001.)

When in October 2000, Associate Pastor Lesley Blair left to move to Texas to be married, Session decided that her replacement would fill the position of Minister to Families of Children & Youth. Prior to filling that position, Kimberly Koczan joined us as a Student Assistant, working in a variety of areas until February 2003 when she left to join her husband Brian Flory when he accepted a pastoral call. In June 2001, Becca Vetterani accepted our call as Minister to Families of Children & Youth. Becca became an important and well-loved member of our church family and remained with us until June 2003 when she and her husband Tom returned to California. Tragically, in 2007, Becca was killed and Tom severely injured in a van accident as they were returning home from a youth retreat in the mountains of California.

Our Pastor Nominating Committee was tireless and diligent as they searched for a new pastor, and on February 9, 2003, the Rev. David M. Poland was installed as our fourth pastor. Dave and his wife Linda continue to serve Gwynedd Square with deep and abiding faith and commitment, and will hopefully be with us well into our next 50 years. Following Becca's departure for California, Melissa Brown joined our staff in August 2003 as Director of Children & Youth and served in that position until July 2006. In December 2006, Al T. Henderson accepted that position, knowing it to be temporary because the congregation approved the recommendation of Session to call an associate pastor. Al T. left in the summer of 2008, and in January 2009, the Rev. Rebecca A. Kahnt was called to this ministry, began serving GSPC on March 9, and on April 19, was installed as our associate pastor. Becky, her husband David, and 10 month old Sammy have quickly become part of the Gwynedd Square family, and we all look forward to having them with us for many years.

Other important staff news includes the retirement in November 2001 of Nancy Barr, our church secretary for 13 years. Donna Stewart has served in this roll ever since, and in January 2008, Session approved this as a full-time position. Also in November 2001, by order of the Session, Louise Gerdemann, our director of music, was bestowed the title of Minister of Music in recognition of her outstanding service to GSPC which reaches far beyond the traditional responsibilities of this position. Louise was presented with a framed copy of the organ dedication bulletin which had been signed by the organ builders and organ committee. A duplicate hangs in the narthex.

Then, in November 2002, we celebrated Louise's anniversary at GSPC by commissioning an anthem to honor her. "Teach Each Other in Wisdom" was composed by Bradley Ellingboe and was taken from the text in Colossians 3:12-17 (specifically vs. 14, 16 & 17). In June 2003, this anthem was published by Neil A. Kjos Music Company.

In 2000, Session voted to hire a staff person for child care in the church nursery during worship services. After several short-term employees, in

March 2002 Cheryl Bonavita Cressman became our dedicated and much loved child care professional, and several years later her husband Tim joined her in that position. Together they give wonderful care to our youngsters and keep the nursery spotless and neat.

In January 2004, Sharon Bisio stepped down as our Children's Choir Director after five years of outstanding leadership. Abbie Lampe stepped up to fill this position for the next two years, and then Nanci Landes accepted the position and has continued to lead our children in song, both through the choir program and in Sunday school, ever since.

Sadly, in this fifth decade, we learned of the death of our organizing and first pastor, the Rev. Donald Shaw, on March 31, 2008. And then our second pastor, the Rev. Paul A. Corcoran, who served Gwynedd Square from 1968 to 1986, passed away on February 8, 2009.

Although at the beginning of this fifth decade we enjoyed the accomplishment of the completion of our new sanctuary, our building and property committees were never able to rest. Following are some of the major projects that followed, most of which were completed by dedicated and talented church members:

- ~ January 2000, the cross of stainless steel over oak was hung on the cross beams of the stained glass rose window in our new sanctuary
- ~ Early part of 2000, finishing of the new fellowship hall
- ~ March 25, 2001, Organ Dedication service followed by a luncheon and remarks by organ designer David Anker, describing the many "voices" of the organ and how it was designed
- ~ March 2004, new parking spaces added and athletic field repaired
- ~ August 2004, renovations to the original sanctuary begun
- ~ September 2004, sound system in new fellowship hall completed
- ~ January 2, 2005, newly renovated areas dedicated (including three classrooms, youth room, new office for additional staff member, enlarged offices for pastor and secretary, storage, hallway for mailboxes)
- ~ 2006-08 – constant upkeep and maintenance projects
- ~ February 2009, Manse Renovation! Led by Judy and Ty Emerson, a crew of many GSPC members cleaned, painted, and scraped every room, renovated bathrooms, etc. to make the manse a

wonderful home for Becky, David and Sammy – all in approximately 4 weeks!

Another important step for Gwynedd Square in the early part of our fifth decade was the beginning of our Contemporary Worship Service. In April 2001, a sub-committee of the Worship Committee was established to investigate some alternative worship styles in response to inquiries from some of our members. In September 2001, the Worship Committee sponsored two roundtable discussions to discuss the various types of worship that GSPC members might introduce into our church life. Then in November, a Contemporary Vesper Service was held, led by Becca Vetterani and sponsored by the Alternative Worship sub-committee. Beginning on January 13, 2002, the first Second Sunday Vesper Service was held; these Sunday services were continued through 2002. On March 2, 2003, a Congregational Forum was called by the sub-committee for the purpose of sharing worship interests and needs as related to alternative worship, to share positive experiences of alternative worship at GSPC and elsewhere, and to share ideas to assist Pastor Dave and the sub-committee on forming a direction for the future. In May 2003, Session approved a motion to begin Sunday morning Contemporary Worship Services at 8 a.m. with the first service on September 14. In 2006 this worship time was moved to 8:30 a.m.

Some other firsts and highlights from 2000-2009:

- ~ March 2000, Lenten Soup Suppers & Program began
- ~ July 2000, Jen Beals chosen as one of only six students from Philadelphia Presbytery to attend Connections 2000 Conference
- ~ April 2002, E-mail devotionals began
- ~ Summer 2000, Faith in Films program began
- ~ October 2000, Equal Exchange coffee available
- ~ November 2000, program for youth in grades 4 and 5 began (later became known as FISH - Fellowship in Serving Him)
- ~ December 2000, Christmas Alternative Gift [Giving Mart](#)
- ~ May 2001, Jim Barber Camper Scholarship Fund established for camper scholarships to Camp Kirkwood
- ~ September 16, 2001, Jazz Vesper Service, "Captivity and Deliverance," presented by Pete Smyser Trio
- ~ December 2, 2001, Mark Laubach, Minister of Music at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Wilkes-Barre, PA presented an organ recital to celebrate the first birthday of our new organ

~ September 2002, began using “permanent” name tags for Sunday worship
~ December 2002, 1st GSPC Christmas Card Post Office
~ August 2003, began mission partnership with Dr. Mike (Ob/Gyn) and Nancy (nurse/midwife) Haninger, Good Shepherd Hospital in Tshikaji, Democratic Republic of the Congo
~ April 2005, Prayer Shawl Ministry began
~ January 2006, Nancy & John Weber “retired” as Financial Secretaries after serving for 25 years
~ April 30, 2006, 1st GSPC Katrina work crew commissioned during contemporary service prior to departure to Pearlinton, MS. (first of many trips)
~ December 2006, work began on GSPC Anniversary Celebration!
~ October 2007, 25 GSPC adult choir members participated in “One Joyful Choir,” a concert of [\(I think you want to remove this dash? ~\)](#)250 choir members from throughout our Presbytery held at the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia to benefit John Gloucester House and other Presbytery missions

We look forward to the Anniversary [jubilee](#) celebration and worship service on June 13 & 14, and to the next 50 years in service to our Lord through our **Giving, Sharing, Praising, Caring** – things the members of Gwynedd Square do so well.

Sandy Taylor for the Anniversary Committee