



GETTING TO KNOW THE NEW MUSIC DIRECTOR

submitted by Sarah Richtmyer

If you've spent any time in the nave in recent weeks, you have probably noticed the music coming from the organ pipes. We welcome our new director of music, Karen Hindenlang to the staff of St. John's. Her capability of making the organ sing, added to her approach at directing and working with the Chancel Choir and Bells has already been noticed by the many who have come in contact with her and her talents.

You may have also experienced her excitement and dedication to sharing God's love through music! It is infectious!

Karen has earned degrees from the Eastman School of Music and Wells College. She also studied at Cornell University, Westminster Choir College, and the Choate Organ Institute.

She taught music history at University of Rochester and Colgate University and designed a music program for students K-8 in a private school in Auburn, NY where she taught for nearly 20 years.

Having a well-rounded ecumenical background, Karen has worked in Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Lutheran, & Roman Catholic churches. She does however have a strong personal preference for Anglican liturgy and the Book of Common Prayer.

Karen says that she is very happy to be at St. John's, Ithaca. She has lived in upstate NY for decades, and in Aurora with her husband for more than 30 years. She currently serves on the village of Aurora zoning board, and is involved in historic preservation.

Music has always been a big part of Karen's life. She grew up in a tiny village on the far east end of Long Island with two brothers - although she says, it seemed like more! {Having three brothers myself, I totally understood that comment! } She started piano lessons at age 4, began playing piano for her mother's Presbyterian Sunday School classes when she was 5. Karen would come home from church on Sundays and play by ear the hymns that she had heard in worship. The family story is that she told her grandfather that "she planned to 'help' in church someday".

Karen said, "I began my first job as a church organist at age 12 -- "a very long time ago!" "The Methodist church in my home town had lost their legendary organist after 50 years. Several adult replacements didn't work out, so the Pastor and Choir Director asked me to help.

I was known as a proficient local child pianist, but could barely reach the organ pedals. They offered to hire me and pay for organ lessons while I figured out what to do!

Karen observes, I served that church through middle and high school, and learned a lot on the job -- about music and about life. I have since made it a point to help teach other pianists thrown unprepared onto the organ bench!"

When asked to summarize her thoughts on what about her job is important to her, she replied: "I believe that singing is an innate expression of God's gift of music. I've always sung in choirs, and began conducting choral groups as an undergraduate. I am a collaborative musician, most comfortable working with others. I don't have the temperament of a recitalist, the soloist mentality. I greatly value being part of something bigger than myself, contributing to a greater whole. Helping to raise the collective voice of a congregation and its choir in worship one of my greatest joys. "