



Key Moments in St. Peter's History

A series of historical highlights from the first 200 years of St. Peter – Libertytown.

St. Peter's Music Ministry after Vatican II



Figure 1 Adult Choir, Spring 2022

Sherri Slattery, directing and left to right: Patrick Donnelly, Gary Naill, Mary Ford-Naill and Joanne Engler.

In 1987, when our previous Music Director, Judy Smarsh, and her husband Ed moved to our Parish, music was not part of every Mass, as it is today. But Fr. Gene Nickol pastor at the time, didn't waste much time recruiting them to lead the 10:30AM Mass choir – Ed conducting, and Judy accompanying on the piano.

When Fr. John Dietzenbach arrived in 1994, he created the position of Music Director to oversee all of the Masses, and

hired Mrs. Smarsh to fill this position. After Ann White's retirement, the 9AM choir joined the 10:30 choir and for the first time there was a single choir under one director. Judy Smarsh continued in the role of Music Director from the 1994 through 2005, but she was involved in the music portion of the liturgy prior to then and she continues to play the piano at various Masses, wedding and funerals.

During the 1980's and 90's, our Parish grew considerably and soon there was a Saturday evening Mass, 4 Masses on Sunday morning in the Church, 2 Masses in the Parish Center and a Sunday evening Mass in the Church. Everything was now in English and the piano and guitars came to be used more frequently, especially at St. Peter's, as the electronic organ was failing. Initially there was no music on Saturday evening Mass, but Judy recalls that "one of the parishioners, Thomas Sappington, would stop at the piano on his way back from Communion and play several hymns, seamlessly moving from one to another until all had received Communion. He had a beautiful, ornate style of playing." Sunday's 7:30AM Mass also had no music for many years, but the choir sang at the 9AM Mass. Elizabeth Lee and Judy Smarsh recall some of the members: Anne and Teresa D'Auria, Paul Sappington, Julian Smariga, Eleanor Metzger, Ann Riordan, Mary Eckert, Claire Sappington, Al Rommal, Margie Gaudino and Catherine Ditman. For the 10:30AM Mass, first the Spielman's – Priscilla and Ken, put together a small group which included Janet Walker, Ann Fowler and Susie Tomasulo, to provide music; and then our

first folk group was formed, led by Al and Carole Rommel – with Al playing the accordion. After the Parish Center was built in 1991, a guitar group, led by Mike Nolan provided music for the Mass said there each Sunday.

Deacon Mike Misulia donated his wife's baby grand piano to the Church following her death in 1988, but as the choir grew, the choir space became very cramped and the decision to replace the large piece with a digital keyboard was reluctantly made.

The 1990's also saw the growth of additional choirs within the Parish. The Chorister Children's Choir was formed in the late 1990s for children in grades 3 – 8. Initially the choir was directed by Judy Smarsh. They sang monthly and were adept at Latin as well as English, singing the Sanctus, Agnus Dei, Victimae Paschali and others. They also enjoyed the Spanish "Resuscito" at Easter time. Beginning in 2017, Sherri Slattery assumed the role of directing this choir as well.

After the church fire of 2004, there was also a middle school age group formed – the Youth Chorale – who sang for the Christmas Masses that were held in the Linganore High School Auditorium (due to its large seating capacity), until the new church was built.

Dawn Miller, who was hired as Youth Minister in the mid 1990's, also formed a "Youth Band" to sing for one of the masses. Initially, they played for the Sunday evening Mass. As the ages of the group participants advanced, the group became known as the "Worship Band". They are still providing music on a weekly basis, at the 11:00AM Sunday Mass with guitars, piano, various drums, and Bill Hall's famous harmonica!

Sherri Slattery, our current Music Director, began her ministry at St. Peter's as Judy Smarsh's assistant in 2004 and when Judy stepped down the following year, Sherri became the administrator in charge of music at St. Peter's. Sherri's background and expertise was in choral singing and music planning, so she needed to find an accompanist to play piano and organ. Dave Conway, then a student at Hood, filled the position for a number of years and for the past 10 years, Ken Tercero has been the accompanist extraordinaire.

Hand Bells were added to our repertoire in 2013 under the direction of Margaret Stack. Margaret brought the Hand Bells and gifted 2 octaves to St. Peter's initially. Since Margaret has stepped down in 2020, 2 young adults have directed this group - Cristo Mochi for the season of Christmas in 2021, and then Angéla Jungbluth, who took over for Easter of 2022 and remains the director currently.

Today we have 3 Masses – all in our 3rd church, which has made scheduling considerably more manageable – and the parishioners are blessed to enjoy music with accompaniment at every weekend liturgy. What a difference, 200 years makes!