

2011, Having received acknowledgement as a “long time” Methodist church organist, I want to give recognition to those who preceded me. Acknowledged, too, because as years pass and the congregation changes, many do not remember or did not know any other organist. I can assure you that Marge Waring is not the only organist to have served this church.

How it started for me:

Back in 1958 I played the pipe organ at the Presbyterian Church for the wedding of Karen Milner and Jim Graves. This was my first attempt as an organist, and it took a lot of practice. Karen was a friend and wanted me to play the organ at her wedding. Betty Johnson’s father, Arhie Larson, was at the wedding and approached me afterwards saying, “Why don’t you play for us?”. Somehow that was my introduction to the orange bench at the church which I had grown up in and attended all my life except for the years I was away at college. I think my response was, “I’m not really an organist... I just did it for this wedding...But I might help out if needed”. I had played the piano nearly all my life, including many UMW programs throughout the years. My Mother was president of the wheel, and she liked to have special music at the meetings. She liked to have special music at the meetings. She frequently would call on me and my friends to play and/or sing at the wheel.

James Grey was our pastor when I was in Jr. High and High school. He was here for many years. I played the piano for youth group activities back then.

Rev. Mcallister was the minister in 1958 when I played my first church service. I still have the bulletins, but in those years the organist was not listed. In fact, I have saved several bulletins from each minister I have served with. But here is where I want to acknowledge the faithful organists of and before my time.

For years, when I was young, ora Canfield played all the church services. I can still see her yet. She played for many, many years, Rev. Fisher is the earliest minister I remember. I also recall that our old church had a grand piano.I played my last piano recital on it when I was in 8th Grade. Maude Gregg was my teacher from the time I was 5 years old. I had a deal made with my parents that could quit after I finished the 8th Grade.

As I remember, Bea Snyder followed Ora Canfield as church organist. Bea gave piano lessons in her home for years and taught many Bellville children to play the piano, but not the organ. When I started in 1958, we shared sundays and I played for the Junior choir and sunday school.

Bea was a loyal, faithful servant always there, year after year. Nadine Stutzman followed her, and Nadine and I shared the sundays in the sixties during Rev. J.Karl Jones time, when we had double morning services at our church, she played the 8:30 and I played the 11:00.

Now, during pastor Lennie Maxwell’s service, we have been introduced to new age music. He has also been instrumental in getting more people involved in leadership and commitment. Pam Scofield had given us great leadership as director of music. She is enthusiastic in her dedication, presenting the newer music to the congregation.

I still remember meeting J. Karl and Marguerite Jones for the first time. I was at the church one afternoon in 1960, practicing the organ, when 3 people came up the aisle. It was Vera Stafford showing the new minister and his wife the church they would be serving.

J. Karl played an important role in my life, as he officiated the marriage ceremony for Gene and Me in 1961. He baptized David, and had Suzi and Scott in confirmation classes during his tenure here.

Nadine played until she resigned around 1979, during pastor Larry Dutton's term as minister. I had the full time responsibility after that. However, throughout those years we had pianists who shared services, and who played piano-organ duets with me, etc. When Rev. Harry Blackburn became our pastor, we also got his wonderful wife, Doris, who was a piano teacher. She helped out on the piano and contributed in so many areas of the churches' music but, at the time, did not play the organ. She now plays the organ one Sunday a month, and I've enjoyed working with her through the years. Pastor Jim Graves and his wife Cherlene were both excellent musicians. She directed the choir and he sang in it. She also became the bell choir director.

Betty Cassleman, Natalie Piroutek, and Denise Malo were 3 talented pianists who played several church services and contributed much. Natalie also directed the choir for a while. We also enjoyed doing piano-organ duets together. Pam Scofield, Kathleen Stump, Doris Blackburn, Cherlene Graves, played piano-organ duets with me many times; and Pam was a choir director for awhile, as was Kathleen Stump and Steve Scofield. Then, around 1992 the board decided to advertise for a salaried choir director and a full time organist. There was no response to the ads for organist, and only one young man in Concordia responded to the choir director position. He was not experienced, and didn't last long. For a while I kept a choir going, but it wasn't easy to be the accompanist and the director. So Wednesday night choir practice fizzled out.

Pastor Bill Brazil wanted a choir of some sort, so I started a "Congregational Choir," which encouraged a few more people out of their seats to come forward and join in a "group sing" of a familiar hymn or gospel song. I knew there were singers out there. I could hear their voices every Sunday, and this was a way of having an "instant choir". There were several faithful, eager participants in this group, who loved receiving the "hymn of the day" that I would hand out before the service. It was like a no commitment choir, which we did one Sunday a month for a few years. Sort of a lukewarm response in answering God's call to serve.

We were blessed when John Surber came to Belleville in 2002. He is so willing to share his talent. His vocal solos are special and I asked him to do special music often. I tried to line up special music at least twice a month. Sally Splichal would sing when asked, Pam Scofield did piano organ duets with me. Susie Watson, along with her brother and her friend Linda, would come to my house to work up a special song to sing at church when they were here from

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Oklahoma. Anyone who had family coming to visit was on my list if they could or would sing. Deb Knox sang for us, and sometimes Deb and her sister would give us a duet. Al Ulrich, Steve Scofield, and many others have shared their talents with us.

Jillian Seybold Couture, flutist, enriches our music, it makes worship so meaningful. Having song leaders at the microphones each service as a great way to help lead the congregation, especially in learning the new praise music. Song leaders have been Amanda Ehlers, Sid and Pam Scofield, John Surber, Carolyn Maxwell, Stacia Piroutek, Tandy Trost, Laura Monsanto, Janis Houdek, Kevin and Kerri Johnson, Kelby Johnson, Waylon Sheetz and other youth.

In earlier years we had big choirs. Lula Carroll conducted choir for many years. Choir practice was every Wednesday evening for many, many years. The Scofield family was always there. Max and June, you could always count on their presence as well as their sons, Steve and Sid. Pat and Gerald Fraser, Betty Johnson, the Davidsons. Charlie Stafford, Dick Williams and Dick Casselman had beautiful voices and sang many solos. There were many others throughout the years. Dorothy Gaston was choir director for a few years.

In 1981 pastor Jim Graves arrived to serve our church. He had a lovely voice, and his wife, Cherlene, had a degree in music. She contributed her talent in many ways. As choir director and then, in the best way when she took directorship of the bell choir. Now I could participate as a ringer. There were 13 of us ringing in that choir when we were invited to perform in Salina at the Smoky Hill River Festival. Our final number was the stars and stripes forever. It was thrilling to say the least. I would say that under Cherlene's direction we peaked as bell ringers.

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