

# Words of Faith

THE NEWSLETTER OF FAITH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Summer 2016

Faith Presbyterian Church  
Presbyterian Church in America  
620 South Shirley  
Tacoma, WA 98465

253.752.7601  
fpc@faithtacoma.org  
www.faithtacoma.org  
Contact Words of Faith: editor@faithtacoma.org

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## “Help Lord!”

*A Look--from the Inside--at the Preparation and Performance of Felix Mendelssohn's Oratorio **Elijah***

Florence Rayburn

My late father-in-law first introduced me to *Elijah* in the mid-1970's. Having established a St. Louis Mendelssohn Society, made up largely of singers from various church choirs in the area, he managed to prepare and conduct performances of both *Elijah* and *St. Paul*, Felix Mendelssohn's two biblical oratorios. Rob and I happened to be in St. Louis for the performance of *Elijah* and Dad recruited him to sing tenor (what is it with church choirs always needing tenors?). He had plenty of sopranos, so I got to sit and enjoy the music. I remember Rob telling me how difficult it was, having never sung most of the music before.

Some years later, our own little choir here at Faith began its life rehearsing together in the old “Youth Room,” in the basement below the old office wing, with Marcella Brewer at the old upright piano. Ken Anderson sang bass, his wife Helen alto; Bob Rogland, Marty Payne, and Rob sang tenor; Bonnie Payne sang soprano with her daughter Laurie (now Laurie O'Ban), when she was actually in the country. Jack and Diane Collins also sang bass and alto with us for the few years they were living in Tacoma. It was a delightful choir, with its own little quirks--like Bob Rogland telling me that when he found himself lost, he would meet me at the next bar (the upright line that divides the measures in a musical score)! We learned “He Watching over Israel,” one of the choral anthems in *Elijah* and one of the most beautiful of all sacred anthems, but it took us many months of Sunday afternoon rehearsals, more than one of which I conducted with a baby on my hip.

“Blessed are the Men who Fear Him,” came next. We sang it first many years ago in a service of ordination for new elders and deacons, and since then we have sung this anthem at ordination services. This one is particularly hard on the accompanist, who would sometimes say to me--with more than a tinge of frustration, “Not so fast!” *Elijah* is a beast for organ or piano accompanists!

“Lift Thine Eyes,” another exquisite *Elijah* chorus, requires only female voices – at the recent performance of the oratorio Melissa McMillan led her choristers in a beautiful rendition of it – which makes it particularly useful in a church choir in which male voices are sometimes in short supply! With adult voices it is harder to sing in tune, as developed vibrato can lead the voice astray! “Cast Thy Burden Upon the Lord” seems easy to learn, but its nuances have often eluded us. In the same way, I'm not sure that we have ever really “nailed” the other anthem from the oratorio--“He That Shall Endure to the End”--though we have sung it many times through the years.

Expanding from that modest beginning, The Association of Christian Musicians, of which our Ron Bechtel is the executive director, formed a choir of 47 voices from Faith and 8 other area churches (12 if you count those of the string players) to sing *Elijah* in April 2016. We began rehearsals in February 2015 knowing very well how much and how difficult is the music we had to learn.

(continued page 6...)

## “An Interview with Pastor Rayburn” Installment No. 5: Final Thoughts

Dr. Mark Murphy

Dr. Mark Murphy recently sat down with Pastor Rayburn to talk about various aspects of his ministry, his life as a pastor, Faith Pres., etc. Herewith, an excerpt from that discussion, covering some final thoughts.

**Dr. Murphy:** *Please speak to the importance for the minister of having a loving, supporting, co-laborer in Christ as his wife.*

**Pastor Rayburn:** I think a happy marriage is an unparalleled advantage for a minister. He needs to be able to come home, to leave what is sometimes very sad and difficult work behind, and be renewed and refreshed in his ordinary life as a man, a husband, and a father. And I can say the Lord has been extraordinarily good to me in that respect. I have a very happy marriage from which I get an immense amount of pleasure. My life with Florence has been a center of well-being for me and I'm sure it has enabled me to be a more effective pastor.

**Dr. Murphy:** *I attend a weekly men's group known as the Samson Society, in which we “share from our experiences the challenges and encouragements of daily Christian living in a fallen world.” Can you share with us from your own pastoral experience one of the greatest challenges you have faced? Also, one of the greatest encouragements?*

**Pastor Rayburn:** There are certainly discouragements in any minister's life. You wish every life situation would turn out well and they don't always. I would say, however, in terms of my own pastorate probably the most memorable times of discouragement have had to do with disunity in the congregation. And the greatest encouragements have come at the same time from the unity of the congregation. For example, we have made some remarkable changes to our way of worship at Faith through the years (installing kneelers, moving to wine in communion, changing our way of observing the Lord's Supper, and so on). To have navigated those changes without any disunity is nothing short of amazing, a great credit to the congregation and an immense encouragement to its leadership! I should

take the opportunity to say that one of the things that has meant so much to the life of this congregation and certainly to my own ministry has been the quality of men in leadership here, the elders and the deacons. It is a very impressive group of men. I think there are very few churches who wouldn't give their eye teeth to have the elders and deacons we have at Faith. That has meant a tremendous amount to me not only because these men have led the church wisely and set a godly example; we have through these thirty-seven years almost never been at odds with one another. They have been very supportive of me and have given the congregation a secure foundation in fidelity to the Word of God and Christian godliness.

**Dr. Murphy:** *Do you live with any regrets? (“Gee, if I had only done that differently...”)*

**Pastor Rayburn:** I live with regret. It is a Christian's inheritance and certainly that of a Christian minister. No sinner can be happy that he sinned. No one whose sins affected others can be indifferent to those effects. But as a minister I think one lives with a greater measure of regret because one is occupying a role that bears so significantly on the spiritual life and welfare of others. I have a thousand regrets, not that I am consciously dealing with them in the mind at any particular moment. It is not simply that I must say in one case or another, “If only I had...” I must say, “I should have done everything better than I did.” There is rarely a sermon or a pastoral conversation about which I don't wish I had done better. I will be going to heaven thinking much less about how I lived and worked and much more about how Christ lived and worked for me!

**Dr. Murphy:** *Is there anything I have not asked about your ministry or Faith Presbyterian Church that you wish to share with us?*

**Pastor Rayburn:** The last thing I would say about my ministry at Faith over these thirty-eight years or so is that the Lord has gathered an extraordinary group of people here whom I have found it very easy

to love and to admire. Whatever else we may say about the church and its ministry or my ministry, the fact of the matter is the church is the congregation. The strengths that we have as a congregation – and there are a number of such strengths -- are the strengths of God’s people here. The weaknesses may be mine, but the strengths are those of God’s people. Faith Presbyterian Church is a wonderful group of godly folk for which I am very grateful. It is high honor for me to be their pastor!

## Barbara Anne Painter Gronewold

June 19, 1932 – April 18, 2016

Barbara was born in Decatur, Illinois, in the middle of four brothers. In 1944, the family moved to Tennessee for a year, and then to the Tacoma area in 1944. She graduated from Lincoln High School in 1950.

After high school, she went to work for Washington State and lived in Olympia with her friend Dee. In the fall of 1950 she met a fresh young Army guy named Joe Picklesimmer. On April 27, 1951, she married him, and sometime during their courtship she discovered that his name was really Marvin Gronewold, but he was always Joe to her, and so he remained for the rest of her life.

“Joe” was deployed to Austria for the first part of their marriage, but when he got out, they moved back to Tacoma and began their family. They had Diana, Cynthia, James, and John within six and a half years. Their first house in Tacoma was near Lincoln High School, a real fixer-upper, and they took hoses into the house to clean it out.

Barbara and Joe began attending Faith Presbyterian Church in 1960, involved in Vacation Bible School, Sunday school, Homebuilders, and Ladies’ Circle, hosting many parties at their home. In 1966, the family moved to Puyallup, but continued going to church at Faith in Tacoma. These people became their friends for life.

In 1978, she began school at Green River Community College. Getting her AA degree was one of her proudest moments.

Barbara was a pretty adventurous and fun-loving person. She loved to dance, and even in her later years, she was one of the first on the dance floor, preferring to dance with Joe, but willing to dance with just about anyone.

In her last decade of life, Alzheimer’s began to affect her memory, her abilities, and her perceptions of reality. Throughout her decline, she held fast to her faith in Jesus Christ and knew that she would be going to heaven because of her faith. She remembered the words of Jesus:

*“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”* John 14: 1-3



## News Bits

### Gross-Ungersma Wedding

Dawn Darby

Have you ever been to a double wedding? And I don't even mean two couples getting married at the same time—perhaps you are picturing a final scene from *Pride and Prejudice*. No. In addition to the two couples, there were two separate wedding parties, two processions, two sermons, and four pastors. If you missed the concurrent weddings of Jonathan Gross & Abi Ungersma and James Hieter & Tasha Ungersma, then you missed a masterfully choreographed event. With the four getting married, 14 attendants, four children, four pastors (including our own Pastor Rayburn), and one father of the brides “running” back and forth to bring his daughters separately to the front of the church, it had to be!

These weddings took place June 17, 2016, in Lynden, WA, the hometown of the brides. First Christian Reformed Church was brimming with family and friends of both couples, including quite a few people from Faith, who made the two and a half hour drive from Tacoma to witness this one of a kind ceremony.

The Ungersma family, who attended Faith for several years about 25 years ago, lost two daughters at once (or did they gain sons?) in the space of a couple of hours. Our own Ryan & Suzan Gross gained a daughter-in-law (or did they lose a ... oh never mind). To celebrate afterwards, a sit-down reception was held at a nearby fair grounds, complete with program and entertainment lasting several more hours. For those of us privileged to be there, we know that this day was only the prelude to four lives becoming two families and we pray God's richest blessings on them.

### Sacred Road

Evan Kvale

The trip to Sacred Road was a great opportunity to serve, and I am really thankful for all of the things I was able to do and learn--roof and paint houses, and play with Yakama kids--while serving.

Learning to roof was particularly fun. I was able to joke around and carry on a conversation while roofing, which I really liked. It felt good to make the progress we did, but it was even better coming off of the roof on the last day and hearing the shout, “Good job, guys!” Better still was hearing others explain how we were the Love of Christ to them.

But the most important part of the day encompassed two short hours after work. Kid's Club was probably my favorite part of the trip. For the first day I had no kid that was “my kid.” But the second day, a little kid wanted to join in a tag game on piggy back, and then he decided he wanted me to be his designated driver. Matthias could say only one word very clearly, and that was “back.” He made good use of this word, and I probably spent six and a half hours of ten carrying him around on my back. He really liked it when I ran with him and when I pretended to be a cow while he rode on my back.

We talked about how the Sacred Road missionaries are “working themselves out of a job” by raising up leaders in the community. I got to see this at the worksites where Yakama teens were helping out with painting and other work. I also got to see the teens help out at kids club. And I thought it would be a very good thing for the missionaries to work themselves out of their jobs, because it would mean the next generation was becoming the servants and leaders in their own community.

### CHS graduation

Covenant High School held its 24th Commencement on May 27, 2016. The 23 graduates won an impressive variety of scholarships to study at colleges as far away the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City and Amherst College in Massachusetts, to as near as Tacoma Community College and UW Seattle. Karli Stevenson gave the Salutatory address, Trent Colbert the Valedictory, and The Reverend Jerid Krulish commissioned the graduates.

### ACM Singing Camp

July 11-15, 47 singers, between the ages of 5 and 18, worked with camp directors Melissa McMillan (of FPC) and Sonia King (of Pilgrim Bible Church

in Steilacoom) on better use of breath and space, phrasing, and singing with understanding. Mrs. King worked with the 5-8 year olds, and Mrs. McMillan worked with the 9 and up group. The week of hard work culminated in a Friday night concert, at which the young singers performed 2 gospel songs, 2 hymns, a song from Sound of Music, the lighthearted Taco Bell Canon, and a John Rutter piece called "Look at the World."

## New Members

Rachael Shelden grew up in Edmonds, WA and was raised in a Christian home, though it wasn't until after college that Rachael began to seriously seek to understand the Bible and live out her faith. She started attending Resurrection Church, formerly a Mars Hill Church, where she met Nate Shelden, who came to a Bible study I was involved in.

She started splitting time between Resurrection and Faith Presbyterian Church in the summer of 2014, shortly after she and Nate began dating. While they loved (and still do love) the communities at both Faith and Resurrection, the "double-dipping" exhausted them, so they knew they needed to plant themselves in one place and get more deeply involved. Rachael officially transferred her church membership to Faith shortly after she and Nate were married this past December.

The Sheldens live in the Stadium District of Tacoma, and Rachael works at the University of Puget Sound as an instructor, directing the campus writing and tutoring center, teaching classes on reading and composition, and coordinating academic support services. Nate will begin physical therapy school at UPS in the fall.

## Musings

Bonnie Payne

With several starts I leave my chair  
So comfortable and reading there  
The phone seems jealous of my ease  
Off rings the marketer to please

To laugh and weep at power of pen  
A favorite novel read again  
The writer's skill to fill the page  
So gifted, to the mind engage

What blessing this biography  
To challenge self and walk with thee  
Of course the Word is next the chair  
All other books cannot compare

What blessings here of sight and mind  
To take and read - life's answers find  
Who knows the Author well, believes  
Much benefit for life receives

He frets not 'bout a world gone 'wry  
Nor neighbors who the truth deny  
The Sovereign God will have his way  
For all the earth is in his sway

Our maker watches over well  
Of love and mercy, who can tell?  
Sweet comfort tunes the heart to sing  
Thanks and praise our tribute bring



*Better English on 6th picnic, July 18.  
The next BE6 picnic will be August 15, 5:30 at  
Titlow Park in Tacoma. All are welcome.*

## **“Help Lord!”** (continued from page 1...)

Before we could begin, of course, we had to secure the vocal soloists and the primary accompanist. Ron secured Ross Hauck as our tenor. He asked me if I would like to ask my daughters Evangeline for the organ and Courtney for the soprano solos, respectively. (That didn't take too long to figure out!) Heidi Bentson Bone, who had recently returned to the area and rejoined the Faith choir, agreed to sing the alto solos and, of course, we knew that our *Elijah* would be Daniel Roberts.

With the most important things in place we were able to begin rehearsing. Mr. Bechtel would later engage the wonderfully talented instrumentalists, Cheryl Johnson, violin; Anita Knight, violin; our own David Forman, viola; and Bronwyn Hagerty, cello; Anna Hastings who played the continuo parts; and Maddie Lee who was our rehearsal accompanist, both on piano. These musicians kept me in awe of their skill, their enthusiasm for the project, and their flexibility and willingness to work in the unique space of our sanctuary.

We began rehearsing with the first chorus, “Help Lord,” which seemed an appropriate beginning for a choir undertaking such a daunting project! Its polyphonic passages were difficult and required a number of rehearsals to conquer and we still had eighteen more anthems to go! As we learned, then refined, each anthem, we took advantage of the opportunity to present them in preludes before our evening services. There is nothing like a live performance to test a choir's progress. I will never forget the last of these evening preludes, several months before the performance on April 24. I sat down afterward and caught Marie Seifert's eye and we both smiled in the realization that we had done it! Only two more anthems to learn and the great work was conquered, if only to the degree that such as we were capable. The Lord had helped and we felt his blessing upon our work.

One of the great pleasures of engaging such a work as Christian singers is, of course, the realization that we were reciting real history, a wonderful story the more wonderful because true. Mendelssohn bent his genius to telling the story with music that adorned

its magnificent importance. Both the history and its implications for life are beautifully expressed in the oratorio, and singing the anthems that many of us already knew within the context of the entire story made them all the more beautiful. For example, “Blessed are the Men Who Fear Him,” comes immediately after Elijah has restored the widow's son to life and she has learned from the ministrations of the prophet that God deserves to be loved by her “with all her heart and with all her soul and with all her life.” To hear Courtney Dey and Daniel Roberts sing that story in a beautiful duet which then leads directly into the choir's “Blessed are the men who fear him, they ever walk in the ways of peace,” was an exquisite moment--both for the music and for the truth of what was being sung--for me, even as I directed the choir. Another example of history and spiritual theology beautifully woven together is the lovely anthem, “His Mercies on Thousands Fall,” which is the climax of the chorus “Yet Doth the Lord See it Not.” Israel is complaining that the Lord had not heard them. Her failure of faith is corrected by the promise of God's Word.

The short but enthralling “Cast Thy Burden Upon the Lord” comes immediately after the prophets of Baal had failed to arouse their god and as Elijah is preparing to call upon Yahweh. It is a quiet interlude in the midst of the dramatic conflict on Mount Carmel. We took Ross Hauck's suggestion to let the choir stay seated while singing and to sing without music so as neither to interrupt the interlude by standing up (never possible without some rustle and disruption) nor fail to do justice to the emotion of the music (as often happens when a choir is over-tied to the score).

Special thanks are due to Mr. Hauck, who is much more than a supremely accomplished tenor. When the string quartet musicians and soloists rehearsed together for the first time the Friday evening before the performance (neither Ross nor Courtney were present for the first two rehearsals), we discovered that the score for the strings, though published in the U.S., was adjusted to the German text and so all its rhythms fit the German not the English text. For that reason it was difficult for them to follow the soloists

singing in English. Ross stepped in and realized that they needed a conductor who could keep them together. It was not possible for them to watch a conductor who was in the balcony so this gifted man filled both the roles of instrumental conductor and tenor soloist. His musical accomplishment was highlighted for me when Ross, Ron Bechtel and I met one afternoon in Ron's office to talk through the entire score. I had decided that we were going to leave out the parts that belonged to Jezebel (a decision that greatly disappointed Heidi Bone, who wanted to try her hand at expressing a bit of wickedness!) while leaving in the recitatives which carry the story along. One mark of Mendelssohn's genius is that, at least in *Elijah*, each anthem and recitative follows in a key closely related to the last so that the soloist can more easily hear the note he or she must begin on at the end of the previous piece. By removing Jezebel's parts we were making it difficult for Ross to come up with the first note of his next recitative. We talked about options but then he said to me, "I think I can pull a C-sharp out of that," and he did! The rehearsal with the strings and soloists lasted until 11:30 p.m. that Friday night. It took that long just to get through the entire work. I was by then lying on a pew in the balcony struggling with the first indications of a cold, talking quietly with Heidi, and wishing we could all go home to bed but, Ron told me later, Ross wanted to talk over things and kept him there until midnight!

It was a large project, often daunting, but a number of things sustained us--as individuals and as a choir--as we marched through more than a year of rehearsals. For the Kvale clan it was Thursday night, post-rehearsal, beer dates! For Maddie, who went through a pregnancy, delivery, and adjustment to a new baby during the year we worked on *Elijah*, it was the satisfaction of conquering many beautiful passages she had not known before, and then working with her friend and former teacher, Evangeline Wykoff, as the two of them together performed that beast of an overture on the organ. For others it was the satisfaction of being able to learn something at once so beautiful and so difficult -- at least mostly to learn it! We would never claim to have mastered this great oratorio. For me it was

many things: the personal delight of having three daughters and two grandchildren home for that long weekend; the chance to delight in their musical gifts and to work with them to produce something grand; the satisfaction of seeing the choir master one chorus after another; but most of all it was the journey of faith, through the lives of these biblical characters -- Israel, Obadiah, the widow, Ahab and of course, Elijah, presented so dramatically by Daniel Roberts -- who came face to face with Yahweh's holiness, power, judgment and mercy and then responded--either in faith or rebellion. It was the "still, small voice" that spoke of absolute understanding and control and of a coming Savior whose praise will be voiced by His people and whose rule will be acknowledged by all.

## Calendar

### August 2016

Emily Sheldon & Tyler Trudeau Wedding,  
August 6, 2:00 pm, Faith Pres.  
Reception to follow at Wells Hall, North K. St.

Writing Camp, August 8 - August 12, Faith Pres.

Art Camp Grades K-3, August 8 - August 12,  
Art Room, Faith Pres.

Better English on Sixth Potluck Picnic, August 15 @  
5:30 pm - 8:30 pm, Titlow Park, 8425 6th Ave

### September 2016

Men of Faith Oktoberfest, September 24

Pacific NW Presbytery Retreat and Stated Meeting,  
September 26 - September 28

Women In the Church Retreat,  
September 29 - October 1 Seabrook, WA,

Choral Event: The Music of Greg Wilbur,  
September 30 @ 7:00 pm FPC Sanctuary

### October 2016

Men's Night of Prayer,  
October 28 @ 9:00 pm - October 29 @ 3:00 am

### December 2016

Men of Faith Seminar,  
December 3 @ 8:00 am - 12:00 pm FPC Sanctuary

Women In the Church Christmas Brunch,  
December 10, FPC DeSoto Hall

For more details about these events, please visit  
<http://www.faihtacoma.org/events>

## Member Changes

### Additions

Bob & Kathy Somerville, reaffirmation, May 1

Christian Sukhia, child profession, May 15

Isaac Dye, transfer from Grace Point Presbyterian  
Church, Irmo SC, June 19

Caleb Isenberger, child profession, June 26

Josetta Skrivan, child profession, July 3

Myla Wilson, child profession, July 17

### Baptisms

Noah Bentson, June 12

Milo Jackson, June 19

Cole Knauss, July 10

Flynn Downie, July 17

Rosemary Downie, July 17

Ava Downie, July 17