



The Scroll



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SUSAN ANTHONY-KLEIN, CONCLUDES 28+ YEARS AS DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

After 28+ years of music ministry at Salem, Susan Anthony-Klein will be stepping down (much to our sadness) from her position as Director of Music. Throughout her ministry she has elevated the music of Salem to a standard of excellence that is recognized far beyond our church walls. Between leading the Choir, and her immense talent playing the piano and clarinet, she has blessed hundreds of people over the years. Her musical ability and her passion for its expression has moved people, helping spirits to soar or sit in peaceful reflection. Hearts have been touched. Many have been drawn to Salem because of what Susan is able to convey through her gifts. Many often express how the music of Salem has enhanced or deepened their walks with God.

Susan's last Sunday as Director of Music will be July 1. During Worship, we will pause to remember, celebrate and bless Susan for her presence and ministry among us. She will continue to be actively involved with Salem and there may be occasions when she will share Special Music or fill in on a Sunday morning. A special reception in her honor will be hosted following the Service.

As a tribute to Susan and her many hours, months, and years she poured herself into Salem and the music, this Special Edition of the Scroll is dedicated to her. Below is an interview with Susan, covering some of the highlights of her work at Salem, facts and stories, and her plans for the future. We wish her God's very best as He leads her into the next chapter of her journey.



When did you begin as Music Director at Salem?

My first Service was June 17, 1990 and I distinctly remember that day. I wasn't filled in on all the little ups and downs of the Service so I made a few fumbles. I tried to stand the choir for the Prayer Response and got some adamant head shakes of "no". I also wasn't told that I could come sit with the Congregation for the Sermon, so I hunkered down on the uncomfortable organ bench for the duration. And as I recall, it was a long Sermon! Eric Quist informed me afterwards that I could go sit in the pews.

How did you learn about the position opening?

I was applying for a position at Branson Ultrasonics as a secretary where Eric Quist would be my boss.

He saw on my business resume that I happened to play piano so he spent the interview time discussing how they were looking for someone to replace the present Salem Choir director. I told him I had never directed a choir, wasn't even a member of a church presently, and had absolutely no experience. But somehow he talked me into applying and running a rehearsal as an audition.

As I was leaving the Branson interview, he asked me, "By the way, do you type?" Fortunately I do and at the time I typed 99 words a minute so that was good enough for him and I got the job. Branson Ultrasonics is where Kevin worked so it was just meant to be. Eric would later call himself a catalyst in my life and I suppose that is true!

What pastors have you served alongside of?

When I started, I worked with David Sundell. As Salem was searching for a permanent Pastor after he left, I worked with Ron Newlin who married Kevin and me. Then there was Doug Bixby followed by some more Interim Pastors before Paul Corner. Then the process started again before Linda Williams. Yes, I have worked with my share of Pastors. I guess I have a bit more experience than when I first talked with Eric Quist at my Branson Ultrasonics interview!

In addition to Sunday worship, what other music venues did you lead or coordinate at Salem?

Quite frankly, not as many as I would have liked. Maybe my new direction at Salem will involve some extra music performances? I did bring in several professional singers to do recitals throughout the years. Salem has a wonderful space and piano, and it was always appreciated by musicians.

The choir was involved in a few concerts aside from Sunday Service. My most memorable was the concert we did to benefit cancer. It included the Kent Singers and a few members of local church choirs as well as a phenomenal piano soloist. It was a large and well-appreciated undertaking. I recall doing a concert for New Milford Loaves and Fishes at some point, also.

We did several spring concerts of our favorite Anthems and this last Lenten Season we did a lovely concert of Lent music. And of course, there were the yearly Christmas Concerts. But who could forget the Salem Choir Cabarets! The first one was shortly after I arrived at Salem in an effort to raise money to purchase new choir robes. The robes the choir wore when I got here were hideous.



(If anyone recalls them, you know what I mean.) So that was my first order of business: get rid of them!

The choir had such fun doing that first Cabaret, that we did a few more. Each one got progressively more “professional” so that by the last couple, we had fancy lighting, a back drop, used the risers and even paid to have the grand piano brought downstairs before ultimately purchasing an electric keyboard. Though we were blessed the final cabaret when the Hansen’s bought an even nicer keyboard for the choirs use. From what I could tell, the town really enjoyed them, also.

What are some of the concerts or worship services that stand out most to you? Favorites?

The Christmas Concerts were always highlights of my year. I especially enjoyed the times we brought in instrumentalists. And it was great to see the packed audiences. The first couple concerts were not as well attended. I recall the first Christmas Concert there were maybe about 40-50 people? And that may be overestimating. As an aside, I made my Carnegie Hall Debut the week before my first Salem Christmas Concert. And quite frankly, the Salem Concert was more important to me! Carnegie Hall is great, of course, but what a big deal to direct a choir of such special people! I was actually more nervous for the Salem concert.

Christmas Eve and Easter Services were always special, especially when Max and Aaron were younger. So much excitement and anticipation. And I got to pull out the heavy-duty music! Through the years, there were some really challenging pieces I threw at the choir for Christmas and Easter. And after some beginning grumbles, they always came through.

What are some of your favorite hymns? Anthems?

There are too many to list!

Can you tell us about an occasion that really touched you, or when you think back on it, makes you laugh?

There were many times in the course of Sunday Service’s that moved me. Of course, many times when the choir sang and it was just right - either

how they sang, or the context in which it was sung. Sometimes it was looking around at the Congregation and realizing that I knew pretty much every one in the pews. I could name names and knew a bit about their families - such a sense of *Family*. I never had that in the church I grew up in.

There are many times I had laughs with the choir during services. Fortunately, my back is to the congregation so I am hoping they are unaware of my reactions – a missed or bad entrance, a wrong breath or note. My number one ‘laugh’ was when I had this big dramatic Introit planned where John Quist was going to start a cappella at the back of the church singing “Prepare Ye The Way” (from *Godspell*) as he walked up the aisle towards the choir who would join him when he got there.

This was rehearsed to perfection. But when I gave John the pitch that Sunday morning, he started on the wrong pitch! Not sure what he was thinking? At the time, it was not very funny. In hindsight in the years since, it’s very funny and still gets a laugh from any choir member that was there at the time.

How has music/choir/ church changed over the 2 1/2+ decades? Stayed the same?

There have been many changes in my time as Salem’s music director. Of course, the biggest being the fluctuating members of the choir. There are only two members – Julie Fredlund and John Quist – that have been in the choir continuously since I started. Some have joined, left a bit, and come back. When I first started, I called it “The Quist Family Choir” because there were six Quist family members.

I have tried to keep the choir interested in the music – in other words, not always work on simple music that doesn’t allow them to grow. I have tried to challenge what they think they can do. At times I think even they have been surprised at what they have accomplished. So there has been growth in the choir, and maybe even more confidence in what they are doing because they have handled the more difficult repertoire.

The church itself has also changed and fluctuated. When my boys were younger, there were many more children. A typical Sunday may see 20 kids

Covenant Church



Under Susan Anthony-Klein's guidance, Salem Covenant Church choir rehearsals have been fun and achieved positive results.

In May 1998, Susan and the Salem Choir were featured in The Spectrum for their music at Salem Covenant and in the larger community.

piled up front for the children’s message. I’m hoping that will happen again! With Pastor Linda, there is a lot of movement towards re-vitalizing and re-energizing the church. Yet she is doing it in such a way that the core of Salem is still there. And that is a great thing to see.

What did you find most challenging, or stretched you most in your ministry here?

Dealing with the different personalities in the choir can at times be very challenging. I love them all, but they are like family members in that they squabble and pick at each other. Often I would try to release tensions with laughter. It was very hard the first few years to not leave a rehearsal drenched with self-doubt about handling everything. But in time, I learned to let stuff not bother me as much, and I have been happier and feel more competent because of that. I also think members have felt more comfortable approaching me with issues that may come up. That helped me to figure out what to do – whether it be move someone in the loft, or discuss it further with individuals.

Why have you made the decision to resign at this time?

There are a few reasons why I feel like this is the time to resign, but mostly it is fatigue. I have very much enjoyed my time as Music Director and have learned a ton. But I am, quite frankly, worn out. I’m not a ‘Spring Chicken’ anymore! Many may not be aware of the time and energy that is spent outside of the church in this position. Choosing music, practicing that music, etc. Then there is the

job of teaching that music to a choir that mostly doesn't read music. Add to that the very great difficulty of being at Salem without Kevin by my side, and it just felt like the right time.

Where will you be sharing your gifts of music next?

Who knows? I think I will take time to reassess and figure out where and what my next chapter is. Of course, I hope to still be sharing music at Salem through subbing on Sundays when needed and recitals outside of the Service.

What aspects of being Salem's Music Director will you miss most and why?

Most definitely, I will miss regular contact with the choir members. I know I said they can be difficult at times, but they have become and I hope continue to be my very best friends.

Is there anything you would like to tell the congregation, or specifically the choir members?

I primarily want to say "Thank You" to the Congregation. For trusting me to be the Music Director, for supporting what I had as a vision for the choir. For allowing me to have pretty much free reign over where I was trying to take the choir. Even when we would try something completely different (Like "He is the Rock"! I thought that would shake people up, but it was accepted and I think ultimately one of the favorites of the congregation!). I thank those that came to the Christmas concerts. Seeing Salem Members sprinkled in the crowd was always gratifying. It meant so much to me that we weren't taken for granted, that those who came truly appreciated the choir and the very hard work they do on a weekly basis.

THANK YOU, SUSAN

for sharing your very special gift of music for so many wonderful years with the Salem family and well beyond. You will be sorely missed up front, but we are grateful you will be worshiping alongside us in the Sanctuary. God Bless You!