



Gretna Good News

Mt. Gretna Bible Festival News

Spring 2016

New/Old Thought

It is worth noting that the summer of 2016 will be the third year of life for the Tabernacle Ecumenical Program (TEP), the innovative “Friday evenings in June” worship series that brings area pastors to our Tabernacle to explore denominational similarities and differences. It is innovative because it is on Friday evenings instead of Sunday mornings, and also because the same theme will be considered from differing denominational perspectives.

Actually, the idea of trying something different really does resonate with the whole history of the Campmeeting. “Let’s try camping some other place than Stoverdale!” was the energizing thought that established Mount Gretna. In the beginning, it was the bishops and presiding elders of the Conference who conducted the ten days and nights of worship services. The six ministers on the Board of Managers simply assigned various members specific tasks for the upcoming campmeeting time. There was always a music director, and there was always a director for the Children’s Program. (Maggie Baltzell – daughter of the first music director – filled that spot for many years.)

The need for innovation to meet changing circumstances over which we have no control never completely disappears. Thus, a couple of years ago, it happened that the problem of how to resolve the conflict many people felt between the pattern of Sunday morning worship services and the increasing number of secular Sunday activities came to be a topic of conversation on some of the Campmeeting’s dialog-friendly porches. An informal account of the emergence of TEP, indicates that the idea developed from a discussion among two or three couples. (Those of you familiar with the Stoverdale-Gretna story know that that decision to move was made by an all-male group.)

It may have been casual porch-sitting conversation at first, but as the Friday night Theme concept was discussed, additional couples responded, willing to assist with this new endeavor. And so a program was born: **Tabernacle**, because that’s where it would

be; **Ecumenical**, because it would reach out over and around denominations; **Program**, because that’s what they hoped it would be – worship in the Tabernacle four Fridays in June, one theme each year, four different traditions exploring the same theme each year.

“God speaks to me . . .” was chosen as the theme for the first year. For the second year it was “In God we have . . .” Needing only one more pastor to complete the second year’s schedule, Tom and Kay Heberling, one of the founding couples, were celebrating a birthday in a well patronized restaurant, talking about TEP and who might fill the fourth-Friday opening. During a thoughtful lull in the conversation, they became aware of a church-related dialog taking place behind them. Not one to miss an opportunity, Kay approached the table where two unknown pastors were conversing. She began explaining the TEP program. When she returned to her place the fourth Friday had a preacher; Tom silently completed the series theme: “In God we have. . . hope and help.”

The theme for 2016 is “God’s Love. . . .” The Friday evenings in June promise to be **interesting ones as pastors** from four denominations – Lutheran, Church of the Brethren, Moravian, and United Methodist – consider what “God’s Love” really means.

Mount Gretna Tabernacle 2016

At 3rd Street and Glossbrenner Ave. in Mt. Gretna, PA

Ecumenical Program

“GOD’S LOVE...” is the common theme for Friday night worship services during June at the Mt. Gretna Tabernacle.

JUNE 3rd at 7PM - “GOD’S LOVE GETS DIRTY,” Pastor Jillian Riddle, St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church, 700 Pleasure Road, Lancaster, PA.

JUNE 10 at 7PM - “GOD’S LOVE IS DEEP AND WIDE,” Pastor Pam Reist, Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren, 777 S. Mt. Joy St., Elizabethtown, PA.

JUNE 17 at 7PM - “GOD IS LOVE,” Pastor Mark Breland, Lititz Moravian Church, 8 Church Sq., Lititz, PA.

JUNE 24 at 7PM - “GOD’S LOVE - EXTREME MAKEOVER,” Pastor Quentin Wallace, Covenant UMC, 110 N. Mulberry St., Lancaster, PA.

There is no admission for these programs. A free will offering will be taken.

Two Words

With the inclusion of the complete listing of “Summer at the Tabernacle” programs, there is little need to repeat that information in this letter. But if you think there is no need for a Newsletter, we have a response. First of all, we just like to keep in touch with our readers, who also double as our loyal supporters financially as well as personally by attending the programs we present. And incidentally, *Gretna Good News* provides a convenient way to make sure you have an envelope that will take your financial contribution directly and easily to the Bible Festival treasury, which we need not remind you is both needful and appreciative.

Second of all, we’d like to say two words about the Bible Festival music:

spiritual in conception,
enthraling in performance.

The move from Stoverdale allowed the United Brethren campers to develop their seasonal programs in their own way. There was always preaching, of course, and there was always music, along with praise and prayer services. Recently, the music portion has tended to eclipse the traditional worship and preaching services.

There is more variety in the styles of music presented today, and it is now performed by many different artists, but these two words are still the right ones to use. So for 2016 we can say that whatever kind of worship music you most appreciate, you’ll hear some of it at the Tabernacle this summer. *Spiritual Jazz?* There’s the **Andy Roberts Quartet** on June 19. *Great choirs?* We’ll have newcomer **Bright Side Baptist Choir** on July 24, the **Massed Choir** on the 31st, and

the **Susquehanna Chorale** on August 21. *Southern Gospel?* Come and enjoy another newcomer, the **Keystone Gospel Quartet**. *Male quartets?* **Bob Kettering and the Ministers of Music** will sing on August 3. The closest we can come to symphonic music (and it is very close, indeed) is the **New Holland Symphonic Band** playing its annual concert on June 26.

A number of these performers, such as the Susquehanna Chorale and **QuintEssentially Brass**, have become almost standards on Bible Festival programs. Of course, the Massed Choir – with its formal history going back to Earle Miller and the 1950s – and its roots deep in the original 1892 campmeeting – is a tradition we cherish and nurture with great care.

A well-loved local favorite, new to the Tabernacle, is the **Mennonite Children’s Choir**, an outstanding group of school children (grades 2 through 12 from all church backgrounds) who want to praise God through excellent choral singing. The group is ever changing as the children grow, but their mission remains unchanged and their Tabernacle audience will surely enjoy an evening of beautiful music.

Another popular and well-known group, **Tim Zimmerman and the King’s Brass**, will travel to 20 states this year, including Mt. Gretna, PA on July 10. Their exuberant brand of worship music was enthusiastically received by well over 1000 attendees here in 2014.

Dave Stahl and the Sacred Orchestra with their vibrant Big Band arrangements of traditional hymns and recent Christian tunes and the witness testimony offered by band members are not far removed from the excitement and enthusiasm of the early rural campmeetings. They are returning to the Tabernacle for an evening worship service July 14. The Sacred Orchestra provides an unusual but very inspiring worship experience, with its remarkable combination of artistic skill, spiritual commitment, and desire to share musical artistry and personal witness with the congregation. Most of the Orchestra’s previous appearances in the Tabernacle have been for Sunday morning services; the shift to an evening hour may make it easier for worshippers to plan an early arrival time in Gretna – always a good idea, but especially so when the Sacred Orchestra is leading the service.



Susquehanna Chorale will be performing in the Tabernacle on August 21, 2016

More Treats

If your vision of 19th century campmeetings focuses on emotionally charged preaching, with altar calls for sinners to come forward, confess, and be forgiven, you are partly right. Supercharged preachers did tour the countryside bringing rural folks all the excitement of conversion experiences and salvation. But as far as we can tell from the surviving records, the trance-like ecstatic singing and shouting played little part in either the Stoverdale or Mount Gretna experience. As a matter of fact, it was the excessive noise and shouting (to say nothing of the dust) accompanying the impromptu buggy races making it so difficult to hear what the preacher was sermonizing about that drove the move to Mount Gretna.

The desire was to retain all the spiritual features of the program at Stoverdale – the music, the preaching, the children’s programs, and the general socializing – in a new location, without the secular distractions. The existence of an amusement park nearby at Mount Gretna, with its carousel and photo tent and ice cream stand, apparently did not equate to the buggy races at Stoverdale and its “open on Sundays” store. Of course, the Park’s attractions were fixed in one place, a little distance away from the campgrounds. Even the Narrow Gauge Railroad, originating in the Park, circling the lake and extending to the National Guard rifle range and on up to Governor Dick, was sited well clear of the new location. The distractions of the National Guard encampment were even further away, although there were times when Campmeeting ministers worried about what their daughters might be getting into when squired around the grounds by a soldier!

The 1892 program in the newly cleared Mount Gretna camp ground was to be simply a continuation of what the managers had planned for Stoverdale. Although some elements faded a bit – there is less preaching – others, music for instance, were strengthened; many of the programs scheduled for 2016 would have been right at home back in 1892.

There are more than a few fans of Southern Gospel songs among our loyal followers, and they will no doubt be looking forward to August 10 when the award winning, **Keystone State Quartet** makes their first appearance in the Tabernacle. With members scattered between Ebensburg, Somerset,

and York this group does a lot of traveling besides a lot of great Christian singing. They have amassed a total of fifty years’ experience singing (not all with the same group) but make no claim about total miles traveled. Perhaps they’ll tell us how such geographically separated vocalists got together to form such a popular and successful singing and recording group, sensibly centered in Ebensburg. Even if they don’t tell us, their Southern harmonies will certainly create an old-time campmeeting spirit, perfectly at home in the old-time Tabernacle.

The service planned for Sunday evening, July 24, has the same balance of preaching and singing as the earliest programs in Gretna even before there was a Tabernacle. **The Rev. Louis Butcher**, pastor of the **Bright Side Baptist Church** in Lancaster will be preaching and the Bright Side Choir will provide music for the service. Rev. Butcher has earned a solid reputation as a man of words and a man of action. A graduate of Franklin and Marshall and the Lancaster Bible College, he has acquired a lifetime’s experience in private industry and public service.

At the same time he was organizing the Bright Side Baptist Church. He has been its pastor for the past thirty years, during which time the congregation has renovated one building, moved twice, and erected a wholly new building for their worship and community service. Talk about activity!

That activity had a focus – a small group of devout and very committed worshippers who organized themselves into a Mission group and elected Rev. Butcher their Pastor. Three months later the Central Baptist Association Council recognized the group as a Missionary Baptist Church. That was in 1980, and the story has been one of constant activity and growth since then, always under the pastoral care of Rev. Butcher, reaching out into the Lancaster Community, providing examples of Christian outreach and success, eventually creating the Bright Side Opportunities Center. The focus of that original dedicated group was on worship and service. The group is significantly larger now, but its members are still dedicated to worship and service. We will hear some of the results of that double dedication when Rev. Butcher and the Bright Side Choir bring their commitment and their talent to the Tabernacle in July.



**Mt. Gretna
Tabernacle Association**
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Change Service Requested

Saddle Shoes and Choirs??

Remember saddle shoes on the campus in the '30s? We'll bet you do – how we wore them day after day, through spring rain and winter snow and the autumn piles of dead leaves – through so many trips to the shoemaker for repairs that one thoughtful owner wondered whether the shoes he currently wore could actually qualify in any contest for the “oldest saddle shoes in use.” An interesting and not very useful question, but it brings up, for some of us, the similar question of continuity for the Massed Choir. Is it the same as it was in 1959 when Earle Miller conducted a gathering of Lancaster County EUB choirs in the Tabernacle? Are there any members of the 2015 choir who sang under Earle's direction? Even if there are, the 2015 choir conducted by Mark Hayes was certainly not the same as the 1955 choir. But the concept and the tradition live on, just as the renovated saddle shoes lived on. The skilled shoemaker has his musical counterparts.

So this summer we'll have the opportunity to hear the current version of what Earle Miller began and a whole lot of musical-shoemakers (including Alden Biely, Francis Williamson, Don Zechman, Bob

Kettering, Doug Troutman, and Grace Marquette) have kept more than comfortably “wearable” for our ears. And that's the end of this misguided metaphor!

Smart readers have no doubt skipped the paragraph about shoes and are eagerly jumping to this one, with its announcement that the 2016 **Massed Choir** will be conducted by

Patti Drennan. A composer, conductor, and teacher, she will travel to the glades of Gretna from her home in Oklahoma. She has guided many Norman, OK high school choirs to “superior” state ratings and has found time for composing and arranging more than four hundred published pieces. Since leaving public school music education, Patti has expanded her work as a choral clinician; she is looking forward to the concert in our Tabernacle. Patti is well known among church musicians for her exceptional piano artistry, which she demonstrates during concert breaks. Sounds as though there's a special treat in store for us this summer!



Patti Drennan
Conductor of the
Massed Choir