

NRC Music News

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Music Committee, Niskayuna, New York*

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Young NRC Musicians



Andrew Burger, with parents Linda and John Burger, after a performance of the Northern Berkshire Chorale

Many members of NRC will remember Director of Music, Andrew Burger, as a child growing up in the church, singing in both the cherub and youth choirs. Many will know that both his grandfather and great-grandfather also served as choir directors of this church. And many members of Niskayuna Reformed Church will also know that his voice is one of a line of many beautifully trained singing voices that have helped lift our hearts in prayer on a Sunday morning. What you may not know is how he launched his musical career and how else he is involved making music outside of our church community.

A graduate of Niskayuna High School, Andrew attended The College of Saint Rose where he received his Bachelor's in Instrumental Music Education

in 2013 followed by a Master's in Conducting from Bard College in 2018. All along his educational path, mentors had a decided influence on his ultimate desire to be a choral conductor. Among those were Paula Brinkman, Chris Neubert, Doc Levi, James Bagwell and David Griggs-Janower. Other influences include Beethoven, whom he admires because he either set the music rules or broke them, and Ralph Vaughan-Williams whose *Dona Nobis Pacem* is a favorite masterwork.

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Meet the Members



Judy Henery and Eric Green

Meet two service-oriented musicians of the Eendracht Bell Choir, Judy Henery and Eric Green. Judy has been ringing since 1987 while Eric began ringing just two years ago. They both say it is a fun way to spend time with old friends, make new

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Meet the Members

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friends and be a part of the music program at NRC. Judy encourages people to join the bells if they would like to brush up on the music skills they had when they were younger. Eric enjoys learning how to read music by playing with the group and says the other members are very supportive.

Playing with the bell choir is just one more way both Judy and Eric provide service to our community. Judy is a retired teaching assistant but continues to work as a substitute teacher in an area school. She has taken many volunteer roles in the church over the years including serving on Consistory, teaching Sunday School, working on various committees such as History and Archives, and even acting as Cemetery Treasurer, all in addition to being a devoted mother and grandmother. Eric, retired from various outdoor employment, now works full time as the fire station keeper at the Stanford Heights Fire Station in Colonie. An army veteran, Eric also volunteers as a firefighter with the Niskayuna Fire District #2. In 2016 he was elected as one of five members to serve on the Board of Fire Commissioners for the district. They both hope you will join the bell choir and help them to ring on!

Music and Worship:

Join In! By Sue Lichtig

“Worship: Where God isn’t moved by the quality of our voice, but by the condition of our hearts.” Chris Tomlin, Contemporary Christian singer/songwriter

Ok, admit it. You are convinced that you should really keep quiet during hymn singing because you think you have a terrible voice. Well, consider now these comments from an article from RCA.org entitled *The Theology and Place of Music in Worship*: “Singing is a ministry that belongs to all the people of God. The congregation is always the primary choir. The role of professional or volunteer choirs and musicians is to aid the whole people of God in their worship.” In other words, the choir has the role of modeling worship, thus encouraging the rest of the congregation to join in!

The Bible contains over 400 references to singing and 50 direct commands to sing. For example, Ephesians 5:19 says, “...speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.” Singing with one voice unites us in our common faith in Christ, it has a powerful way of helping us remember scripture, and serves as a medium for emotional connections with God and the “great cloud of witnesses” from the past. How can you keep from singing?



Senior Choir member, Alan Holmes, performs dixieland music as part of the Music Company Orchestra concert, on June 30, Freedom Park, Scotia.

Young NRC Musician

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Andrew works as a foreman on the family farm while he pursues his musical career. He currently is responsible for conducting not only our Senior Choir but also the Northern Berkshire Chorale in Williamstown, MA. He is the Albany Pro Musica section leader and choral director for the Albany Symphony and gives voice and low brass lessons to students both young and old. In the Fall, Andrew will also begin a new job as an adjunct professor and choral director at RPI.

About turning to music as a career Andrew says, "It takes a lot of dedication to become a conductor. There will always be talent, but how you apply yourself makes all the difference. You can't be afraid of making mistakes." Although others in the family have served as the church choir director he tries not to let that influence him. He chooses music for the worship service based on what he feels will be spiritually moving. About classical music he feels it "seeks to engage the listener and is more powerful when it relates to life experiences...As musicians and listeners we learn to recognize that listening to classical music isn't always about casting away feelings of strife, but using them to experience something all the more meaningful."

Whether it is his musical upbringing, family history, talent or dedication that has brought him to this point in his career, Andrew is sure to continue to grow as a musician. How fortunate we are to have been a part of his musical development and at the same time been the beneficiaries of his skill as our Director of Music.



Bells and chimes set up for a worship service at Niskayuna Reformed Church.

Music Appreciation 101:

History of the Bell Choir: Part 1

By Jim Friderici

The first mention of bells at NRC appeared in the May 1976 issue of the Parish Messenger with the announcement of a memorial to Mr. & Mrs. Smith. According to Consistory notes by Rev. W. Bull, from September 14, 1976, Thelma Hart and her Brother Albert Smith donated our original 37 piece set of bells in memory of their parents Albert E. & Elizabeth S. Smith. The Malmark bells were delivered the week of September 14, 1976.

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Articles for this newsletter were submitted and/or edited by Joyce Anderson, Jim Friderici, Sue Lichtig and Jennifer Politano.

Music Appreciation

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The same issue of Parish Messenger announced that Norma Heafner, who had experience ringing in the Thursday Belles community bell choir, accepted the position as director of our first handbell choir. The next mention of bells, in the September 1976 Messenger, requested players, who were “interested, [had] a musical background, and [were] 9th grade or older” to play in the emerging new popular music phenomena. Consistory notes from November 9, 1976, announced that the memorial bells would be dedicated the following Sunday. On November 14, 1976, the bell choir played two dedication pieces in memory of the Smiths, “Grant us to do with Zeal” by Bach, and “Bell Symphony” by Purcell (arr. Burroughs). The bell choir still leaves a “dummy bell” or “silent” bell engraved with a dedication to the Smiths on the pulpit when they perform. At the dedication service 18 original ringers were thanked as well as several church members who volunteered to make the storage bags and table covers that were used for many years.

NRC Music Groups

Here is a list of musical groups at the Niskayuna Reformed Church. Visit the church website or speak to the committee chair for more information.

NRC Music Group	Rehearsal Times
Eendracht Bell Choir	Wednesdays starting September 18th, 7:00pm NRC Music Room in the Education Building
Cherub Choir (ages 4-8)	Rehearsal times and

	dates vary and will be announced in advance in the bulletin and Messenger.
Youth Choir (3rd grade and older)	Sundays, starting September 22th, 10:45am in the NRC Music Room in the Education Building
Senior Choir	Wednesdays, starting September 5th, 7:30pm - 8:30pm Sanctuary

Who's Who and What's Up

Here is a list of musical groups that church members participate in or recommend in the Capital Region and beyond.

Community Musical Group	Upcoming Event
Albany Pro Musica	September 22, 2019, “Music in the Barn” The Wemp Barn, Feura Bush, NY 3:00pm
Schenectady Symphony Orchestra	October 13, 2019, Proctors Theater, “Mozart the Hero, Mozart the Legend” 3:00pm
Northern Berkshire Chorale	December 13, 2019, Chapin Hall, Williamstown, MA, “A Baroque Christmas” 8:00pm
Octavo Singers	October 20, 2019, St. Pius Church in Loudonville, All Mozart Concert featuring Mozart's Requiem 4:00pm
Colonie Town Band	September 8, 2019, Pruyn House, “Old Fashioned Sunday” 2:00pm