

The Visiting Artist Series (2003–2014)

By Ann Y. Schmidt and Barbara Oldroyd

The vision for the Visiting Artist Series at Gaithersburg Presbyterian Church came to **Ann Y. Schmidt**, the Director of Music for 14 years (January 2000 – August 2014), from attending numerous workshops, festivals, concerts, and events with the finest church musicians and clinicians living today. She really wanted her choirs and her church to experience some of the joy and enrichment that she received each year when she went away to study. Because she could not take all 200 musicians from the church, the obvious answer was to bring an artist to Gaithersburg. And so it began in May 2003 with the first guest artist, **Joseph M. Martin**. After rehearsing the music in preparation for the workshop and Saturday evening concert, the Chancel Choir spent two days in prayer and practice, fine-tuning various nuances of his compositions. Highlights of that first concert included two pieces that became some of our favorites—“Sometimes I Hear God’s Music,” and “Ring Out Ye Bells of Hope.” The latter incorporates handbells, voices, and organ.

The pattern continued for 11 more years, with Visiting Artists spending most of a Friday and Saturday in mid-May of each year with the Chancel Choir; for several of those years, a portion of that time was spent with our two adult handbell choirs (the Celtic Ringers and the Cambridge Ringers) as well. The weekend culminated in a Saturday night concert, and often the clinician stayed and led the choir(s) in singing and sometimes ringing in worship on Sunday morning.

Ann’s final collaboration in the series was with Don Besig and Nancy Price, who returned to GPC in May 2014 in conjunction with our 50th Anniversary celebration. The choirs were delighted to welcome them back and, among other pieces in the Saturday night concert, sang “Come and Rejoice,” which GPC had commissioned them to write to commemorate the occasion.

The following clinicians were invited to our Visiting Artist Series over the years:

2014 — Don Besig and Nancy Price

2013 — Joseph M. Martin

2012 — Don Besig and Nancy Price

2011 — Mary Kay Parrish

2010 — Dr. William A. Payn

2009 — Arnold Sherman

2008 — Pepper Choplin

2007 — D. Linda McKechnie

2006 — Joseph M. Martin

2005 — Fred Gramann

2004 — Dr. William A. Payn

2003 — Joseph M. Martin