New Child & Family Development Center Opening this Summer
At Long Last, the Village Church Dream Fulfilled

On June 7, 2015, Village Church broke ground for its new Child & Family Development Center at 99th and Mission Road. It’s the final construction project in the Now & Tomorrow, Village Church Capital Campaign. One year later, the facility is nearing completion and later this summer everything will be moved out of the old facility and moved into the new, state-of-the-art Center.

VCCFDC director Rosemary Marshall and Jenny Hull, coordinator and music teacher at the Center, shared their observations during this exciting construction project that will serve 132 children from age six weeks to 5 years old.

Children, parents and teachers have been watching with anticipation as the new child care center gets closer to its open date.

Pearce construction workers have been extremely entertaining, proving an ongoing “production” for the children to watch each day. The reactions from the children vary - the youngest ones are not even aware that we are going to move over. The oldest are only interested if they have younger siblings in the Center, as they will be moving on to Kindergarten in several weeks, and know they will not be part of the new building. Those in the middle of the age range are excited. They know that it will be a new adventure, and are hopeful that their favorite toys will show up in their new classrooms.

Skye, age 4, said she really liked the color of the new building, although she could not say exactly what color it was. For most, the construction excitement is the best. Fletcher, age 4, observed, “The dump truck put dirt into a trash truck!”

Kate, age 4, shared, “They dug a big, big, big, big, big hole, and we walked past it!”

Dylan, age 4, says, “If we go in the wood chips, the bulldozer comes and gets the other dirt.” Jake, age 5, says “I just like it when they cement stuff!”

Teachers have been incorporating the theme of construction into their curriculum. Here are two classes’ ideas on what the new center will look like. The pre-k class seemed to be more concerned with structure while the stars class (older 3s and turning 4 in their year) focused more on what should be INSIDE the walls.

The community is talking about the new Center, and the phone is ringing daily with people looking for care for their children. There is currently a good sized wait list, and building tours are on hold until September.

Continued
Throughout this process, the staff has been extremely flexible, losing first their adult bathrooms, and later, their parking lot. For the past several months, the staff has been sharing a single bathroom.

Despite the inconvenience, the daily line for the bathroom has turned into the Center’s social “water cooler” for the staff.

We are extremely grateful for the patience of the staff and parents, as well as the Food Pantry volunteers and surrounding neighbors, as staff have been parking on neighborhood streets and walking in. The walking is helping the staff with the Center’s ongoing health initiative - everyone is getting an extra walk or two in each day.

Despite the challenges, we know it will all be worth it in the end, as we have a beautiful new center. As Memphis, age 5, stated so well, “I’ll just be happy when we’re going inside it!”

The new center is expected to be completed this month and then most of the contents from the old, deteriorating building, will be moved into the new. Once that is finished, buildings and grounds superintendent George Darrington has asked to be the first in line to start demolishing the old building he’s been patching and maintaining these past 21 years.

Our Little Village will host an Open House later this year for everyone to come see and tour the new facility.

Senior Pastor Tom Are remembers, “The first meeting I attended at Village Church was about dreams for the Meneilly Center. We just called it ‘99th Street,’ back then. From before the time I arrived, there have been dreams for a new Child and Family Development Center. We have always recognized the importance of this ministry to our community. The VCCFDC is the place where children thrive and are loved. The day is finally coming when we realize this long held dream.”

The children’s idea of what the new building will look like.
IN SOLIDARITY WITH ORLANDO

A Prayer Service of Lament and Hope
June 15, 2016

Village Church members and people from various communities gathered in the Village Sanctuary Wednesday afternoon, June 15, to remember those who died in the Orlando nightclub shooting and all those who loved them.

In his words of welcome, Rev. Tom Are said, “We’ve learned that when life seems broken, it’s important to be in God’s presence, the source of healing.”

Rev. Are invited the congregation to come forward one by one to light a candle from the Christ candle as Village pastors read the name of each victim.

“Simon Carillo, age 31, always brought a cake to celebrate his employee’s birthdays. Luis Vielma, age 22, ran the Harry Potter ride at Universal Studios and was studying to be an EMT. Brenda Lee Marquez McCool, age 49, a two time cancer surviving mother of 11 was dancing with her son. Eddie Jamoldroy Justice, age 30, spent his last moments texting, ‘Mother, I love you.’”

As the last victim’s name was read, Rev. Are took a candle from the pulpit, lit it, placed it on the table with all the rest and recited the name of the gunman, “Omar Mateen. We do not know where his hatred came from so we ask you God to do that which is hard, maybe impossible for us, to love the hatred out. Love the hatred out of all. Love the hatred out of all of us. Do not give up on any of us. Do not give up on the world you have made and loved, oh God. Love the hatred out.”

Rev. Are then took the Christ candle from the communion table down into center aisle of the Sanctuary, lighting candles held by participants sitting in the pews, saying, “This candle represents the light of Christ. So it is the light of love. And like these who we have remembered this evening, he too was killed in senseless violence…Jesus exposed the weakness of violence, for he faced it and it did not change his love. And he calls us to do the same. To love. So take his light and do not let love die. Take his light. Because evil is strong. But love is stronger.”

Photo courtesy of Laura Ziegler, KCUR 89.3
“Oh, and I have one more thing for you!” I said excitedly as I placed the camera around my neck and used my free hands to pull out a suitcase. The girls at the orphanage, ranging in ages from about 6 to 12, looked at me with their bright, expectant eyes. They were already having a busy day—they’d given us a tour of their new home, showed us the bunk beds where they slept and answered all of our questions about their pasts and their parents and what they want to be when they grow up. We’d given them t-shirts, and crayons, and taken lots of pictures. But there was still one thing left.

I pulled out that large green suitcase and hesitated—hopefully unnoticed—for just a moment. Had we given them too many things already? Would these blankets be one more thing lavished up on them that gets lost in the wake of everything else? Is it too hot for these blankets? Do they even need them? What if they fight over who gets which one?

I unzipped the suitcase to reveal a swatch of brightly colored cloth, and I heard a collective gasp come from the table where the girls were sitting. I pulled the blankets out, slowly at first, and watched their faces as I laid them around the room so the girls could see their designs. Some of their expressions showed excitement, while others were timid, hesitant. They looked at the blankets, and then looked back at the suitcase and at me, waiting patiently, expectantly. I think they were barely allowing themselves to hope.

When I had pulled all the blankets out and laid each on display, I straightened up and let out a sigh, expecting the girls to stampede their way to the blanket of their choice. Instead, I found myself staring into twelve pairs of eyes—watching me, daring not to look at the beautiful fabric surrounding the room. They just stared, asking a silent question.

I smiled at the girls and slowly, deliberately said, “Women at my church made these for you.” I saw shoulders straighten up, smiles grow, eyes brighten, and some were even holding their breath. I waited a moment. “So?” I said, excitedly, smiling back at them. “You can take the one you want! They are for YOU!”

Immediately a blur of movement accompanied the scraping of chairs along the cement floor. In what seemed like record time, I looked up and found that every girl had claimed her own blanket—in complete cooperation and partnership with the others. There was laughter, and feeling, and twirling. They were rubbing the blankets against their arms and their faces, and the faces of everyone else in the room, too. There were smiles, from one ear to the other, and “thank you’s” sounding off from every corner of the room. “This is mine?” they asked. “I can keep this?”

I do not think I’ll forget that moment for as long as I live. I have never seen such pure joy. I snapped a quick picture of the girls wrapped in their blankets. As soon as I had taken it, a few girls grabbed my arm. “Come take a picture of my blanket on my bed!” they said. “I want to lay on mine, take a picture of me like this!”

Continued
Thwake Village (continued)

Friends at Village Church, I can tell you now, firsthand, that our ministry in Thwake, Kenya continues to change lives. I watched as people traveled for miles to attend the health clinic, finding American and Kenyan volunteers with loving hearts and healing hands. I watched children dance in the church on Saturday night as the adults practiced their praise music for the next day. I saw these young, vulnerable girls, 50% of whom have no living parents, excited for their new lives, loving their new home and the blankets that Mission Sewing made for them. I watched people wash their hands, clean their clothes, and quench their thirst at the water wells and tanks. I saw their gratitude for Village Church, for the Heartland Presbytery, and I heard their thanks and praises to God on your behalf.

Thank you, Village Church, for not forgetting our brothers and sisters in Africa. Thank you for donating your financial resources, your gifts, your talents, and your time to help make life more joyful for people you may never even meet. I see the love of God in your acts of service, and I know they do too.

Food Pantry

In the middle of the hot summer, the Food Pantry is asking for Personal Care Products like those you will be buying for your family: soap, deodorant, sunscreen lotion, shampoo, insect repellent (think mosquitoes!), etc. Think of the Pantry’s clients and pick up some additional ones for them and bring them to church. The Clothes Closet requests large sized clothing - clean and gently used - and household linens: bath, bed and kitchen.

Artwork Display at the Village Church Food Pantry

Artwork currently on display at the Meneilly Mission Center features pictures and bios of the new pastors, Rev. Carrell, Rev. Hottle and Dr. Nishioka, and children’s artwork.

Linda Frashier, a long time Food Pantry volunteer and a 20 year teacher in the Shawnee Mission school district, offers art lessons to four of her grandchildren in her home. They read about and discuss the artist, then paint an interpretation of the artist’s work.
Thank You to All Who Serve in the Military

We are extremely grateful to every person who is serving our nation. You and your families are in our prayers. We would like to add you or any family members or friends who are currently serving in the military to the church’s prayer list. Contact Linda Alley at 913-671-2327 or linda.alley@villagepres.org with name, rank and any other information you would like to share.

Taizé - New Summer Time!

Our Taizé worship service will be held at 7 p.m. Sunday, July 10 and Aug. 14, in the Chapel. Come and experience a different kind of worship, one filled with song, silence, scripture and communion. It’s a calm and reflective way to start your week.

Nominate Your “Green Saint”

The Environmental Action Committee of Village Church needs your help! Surrounded by the manifestations of climate change, environmental degradation, and dwindling natural resources, EAC would like to award recognition to Village members who demonstrate exceptional dedication to earth consciousness in their thinking and living. These are people who practice, model, and teach faithful and responsible stewardship of God’s Creation by adopting sustainable practices and technology in their daily lives; by sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm to influence others; and by supporting environmental programs, legislation, and organizations.

You probably know one of these “green saints” walking among us.

Nominate one or more deserving members for EAC’s 2016 Earth Steward Award. In addition to adults, we would also like to recognize the environmental efforts of our youth, children and entire families. We encourage nominations in these categories as well.


To nominate a green saint, contact Jerry Rees (913-568-4240), ReesVeenstra@aol.com or Rodger Nishioka (913-671-2323), rodger.nishioka@villagepres.org).
Mark Ball, director of music ministry, shares: “For church musicians, The American Guild of Organists is our version of the American Bar Association to attorneys. This is where our professional standards and ethics are set. The guild has an ascending order of certifications for church musicians – the highest being F.A.G.O., or Fellow of the American Guild of Organists. In the entire country there are no more than 50 persons who have achieved this level of proficiency, this professional honor. Until now, Kansas City has had only one such musician, Jan Kraybill.

We received word yesterday that through rigorous examinations, both written and in musical performance, our principal organist, Dr. Elisa Bickers, is now a Fellow of the A.G.O. This is a huge achievement for Dr. Bickers, and a tremendous honor for Village Church and for our musical community.

In addition to her many and varied duties at Village Church, Dr. Bickers performs regularly with The Kansas City Symphony, and appears in our area, and even internationally, as a member of The Bach Aria Soloists, a highly regarded chamber ensemble.

Working with her has been one of the great delights of my 15 years of service at Village Church. I will always treasure her as a colleague and friend.”

A team from Richards, Fowkes & Co. is coming to Village Church in late August to repair, paint and install the 12 Apostles (the largest pipes from the old organ) and the wind system.

The third week of September the organ builders will bring the rest of the organ from Tennessee. The goal is for it to be installed by the first of October.

John Brown from Richards, Fowkes & Co. sent these photos of the large crowns and the broken pediment getting prepared for installation and the ultimate installation in the erecting room.

John explains to Dr. Elisa Bickers, our Village Church principal organist, “The top the case is about 12” from the building support girders. More than half of the face pipes are installed, including the seven largest pipes in the center bay and the two solo pipes between the pillars. Hopefully, this will give you some idea of the scale and beauty of the casework. It is a very stunning case and I can’t wait for you to see it in person.”
At the Heart of Giving...

At a time when most college-bound teens are focused on graduation parties, dorm room shopping, or making some quick money before the start of the school year, Village Church member Emma Pirotte is spending her time differently. “Throughout my high school years, I have wanted to give all I can within these church walls. Whether it’s volunteering at the food pantry or coffee shop, or just being there for kids who need a friend — that is what I can do.”

Being a third-generation Village member, Emma’s love for the church is powerful. “I have been part of this church for my entire life. My mom was baptized here, my parents were married here, and my brothers and I have all been baptized and confirmed here. I have never wanted to go anywhere else. This church is a community where anyone can feel at home, and that’s what really means the world to me.”

As she thinks about heading off to K-State in the fall, Emma reflects on the generosity of the church’s members. “The people of this church have made such a difference to so many. Whether it’s supporting missions across the globe or making sure one of our own youth is able to be a part of the Dominican experience, they are changing lives. That’s a huge deal.”

And Emma plans to carry that generosity forward. “I can’t piggyback off of my parents’ donations forever, so I look forward to being able to give back so the next generation can be blessed in the same way I have been.”

—Kathy Collins

Festival of Faiths Presents Bingo on the Boulevard July 23-30

The Kansas City Festival of Faiths is pleased to announce four performances of Bingo on the Boulevard. In the play, Troost Avenue -- long KC’s line of demarcation - and its neighborhood people come to life at monthly bingo. Then tragedy hits. Inspired by true stories collected in local interviews, the play draws you into everyday worlds of an illegal immigrant, a pastor for social justice, a mentally ill outcast, a female impersonator, and more. It is written by Donna W Ziegenhorn, author of the popular interfaith play, The Hindu and the Cowboy, and presented in the Kansas City Fringe Festival.

Performances are on the Jerome Stage at the Unicorn Theatre (3838 Main) at:
6 p.m. Saturday, July 23
7:30 p.m. Sunday, July 24
7:30 p.m. Friday, July 29
4:30 p.m. Saturday, July 30

Tickets ($10) on sale at kcfringe.org or at door. You also need a Fringe button, available for $5 at door. Your button is required to enter any Fringe program offering and enables the Fringe Festival to operate.
Save the Date
Second Annual Village Church Fall Food Truck Festival
5-7 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 2

You loved our inaugural Fall Food Truck Festival last year, so we’ve brought it back for this fall. This community social event for all ages is sponsored by the Connectional Ministries Committee.

Bring your family and lawn chairs, sit under the big white tent in the north parking lot, enjoy live music by the Prairie Earth Ensemble and choose from five gourmet Food Trucks, including mac/cheese, BBQ, burgers, pizza, tacos, salads and cupcakes.

Food cost is on your own. In case of inclement weather, food trucks will park in the south parking lot and we’ll eat in Friendship Hall.

We hope you will join us!

ADULT EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY

Summer Sunday Adult Bible Study
10:45-11:45 a.m. Room 132 • More than a Summer Picnic: Food for the Journey of Faith

Come join us as we explore the sermon text for the day based around meals in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Adults of all ages are welcome.

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Scripture</th>
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<td>Aug. 7</td>
<td>Luke 19:11-10</td>
<td>Jesus and Zaccheaus</td>
<td>Dr. Rodger Nishioka</td>
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<td>Aug. 21</td>
<td>Luke 24:36-43</td>
<td>Resurrected Jesus Eats with Disciples</td>
<td>Dr. Rodger Nishioka</td>
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PW Fall Event
“Crepes and Conversation” • Wednesday, Sept. 14

Presbyterian Women invite all women of the church and their guests to join us for Chef Emily’s complimentary crepes and refreshments from 9:30-11 a.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 14, in Friendship Hall.

Our annual PW Fall Event, “Crepes and Conversation,” gives all an opportunity to reconnect with friends old and new. It also is an opportunity to discover what’s happening this year and all that PW has to offer. This event is also a great opportunity to invite a friend to introduce her to Village Church and Presbyterian Women.

As a bonus, “Crepes and Conversation” once again coincides with the Shawnee Mission East SHARE program’s Renovation Sensation Homes Tour. Get up a carpool and keep the fun going! Tickets are available in advance for $25 at Hen House in Prairie Village.

Please RSVP by Wednesday, Sept. 7, to Jennifer Sawyer at jrsawyer1947@gmail.com or 913-642-6370 or by Sign-up genius on the PW web page http://www.villagepres.org/presbyterian-women.html.

Child care is available with advance reservations. Contact Pam at pam.southerland@villagepres.org or 913-671-2352 for your reservation.

WOW Lunch at The Tavern at Mission Farms

Ladies of all ages are welcome to attend the Women of Wisdom (WOW) mid-summer lunch at noon on Wednesday, July 20. We will lunch at The Tavern at Mission Farms, 10681 Mission Road in Leawood. We invite you to share warm fellowship and good food at this popular restaurant that features classic American cuisine served in a stylish, comfortable setting. RSVP to Marvie Sneegas, sneegi@kc.rr.com or 913-209-9608 by Tuesday, July 19. Whether you have been a longtime attendee at WOW get-togethers or are considering joining us for the first time, please know that you are warmly welcomed.

Rev. Hallie Hottle was installed as associate pastor for Young Adults at Village Church at The Gathering June 26. Congratulations Hallie!
New Little Village One

Join Children and Family Ministry in welcoming the following little one born recently: June Louise Ballard (Laura and Joseph Ballard, parents. A rose will be placed on the communion table the third Sunday in July to celebrate the new baby.

Creations by Kids & Kids Day Out

Vacation Bible School is right around the corner! In Surf Shack VBS, kids will learn they can catch the wave of God’s amazing love.

All VBS kids will collect for the the Village Food Pantry. There is a critical need for cereal this summer, everything from granola to Fruit Loops! You may drop off your donations in Friendship Hall July 18-24.

In addition to the Food Pantry, we will also collect items to make hygiene kits at the end of the week. Read about Heart to Heart International and their efforts to help people at home or abroad by shipping hundreds of tons of aid and supplies around the world.

Traveling Day Camp

The Heartland Center staff returns this summer bringing with them fun and exciting ways to study the Bible through interactive worship, songs, and of course crafts and games! July 25-29.

PowerServ

Heart to Heart International (headquartered in Kansas City) assembles hygiene kits for distribution to individuals and communities in times of crisis.

Their current model meets only a small fraction of the global need for these kits. With Heart to Heart’s PowrServ program, participants engage in a philanthropic and fun team-building activity.

In the fall (date to be determined), children and their families Village Church members will interact through an assembly line to build personal hygiene kits that are sent to people in need in the Kansas City community and around the world.

Hygiene kits include essential items to stay clean: toothpaste, toothbrush, band aids, nail clippers, washcloth, soap, comb, hand towel and shampoo.

Heart to Heart distributed over 44,000 personal hygiene kits just last year. These kits were distributed in response to a variety of crises here in the US and around the world.

Social Witness & Advocacy

Getting Out the Vote in Kansas!

The Village Church Social Witness & Advocacy Task Force will address questions and distribute information about the Aug. 2 Kansas primary election after the 9:30 and 11 a.m. Sanctuary worship services and the 5 p.m. Gathering service on Sundays, July 10-31, in Friendship Hall. President Franklin D. Roosevelt asserted: “Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is by not voting.”
GOOD NEWS: Highlights for the life of your Village Church (ISSN 1542-1090) Published by the Village Presbyterian Church USA monthly 6641 Mission Road, Prairie Village, Kansas 66208-1799 Periodicals Postage paid at Kansas City MO POSTMASTER: Send address changes to GOOD NEWS: Highlights for the life of your Village Church, 6641 Mission Road, Prairie Village, KS 66208-0050

JULY 5, 2016
Vol. 53, No. 13

MARK BALL FAREWELL RECEPTION

Farewell Reception for Mark Ball

Following the 11 a.m. Worship Service
Sunday, July 10, in Friendship Hall
Remarks at 12:30 p.m.

VPC SUMMER WORSHIP SCHEDULE
SUNDAYS
Traditional – 9:30 and 11 a.m.
In the Sanctuary
The Gathering – 5 p.m.
In Friendship Hall

Radio Broadcast
Sundays at 8 a.m. on 1660 AM KMBZ,
The Business Channel
Week-Delayed Broadcast

Food Pantry & Clothes Closet
Drop-Off Hours
10 a.m.–2:30 p.m. M-F
9:30–11:30 a.m. Saturday

IN MEMORY
Jan Carolan
Norman Gaar
John Hollyman
Rachel Jones
Robert “Bob” Marshall
Lewis “Lew” Patton
Brad Smith
Thank You for the Music
Maestro Mark Ball

Mark Ball first came to Village Church as director of music ministry in 2001. He has built a highly distinctive choral and instrumental music program in the Kansas City area involving hundreds of children, youth and adults. Mark announced in May that after 15 years of service at Village, he has answered a new call at Southminster Presbyterian as their organist and director of music. His last Sunday at Village is July 10.

"People are so kind and generous in their words to me about my ministry here. I really appreciate that. I have a great team. It’s been a joy to work with them. A lot of it is very emotional and a sign that I’ve been in the right place for 15 years," said Mark. "I feel confident that this is the right choice for me at this time in my life. "I want to do things that I feel like I haven’t had enough time to do. It’s time for me to give more focus and energy to my roles as father, grandfather, brother, friend, citizen and neighbor."

Senior Pastor Tom noted that Mark’s departure is a great loss. "I have been in ministry for 30 years and without question, in many ways, Mark Ball has been the finest director of music I have known. But I, too, know what it feels like to be called to a new place. I cannot question his being faithful to that calling; I can only offer my blessing."

I received my degree in music education from Jewell.

After graduate school at The Eastman School of Music - University of Rochester, I taught public school music for a total of 12 years. During that time, I always had a part-time church music job. After moving back to Kansas City in 1993, the music director position at Southminster Presbyterian Church came open and I worked there eight years before coming to Village."

Mark’s Village Innovations

When Mark came to Village, there were not many people in their 30s in the choir. "We had maybe two or three. Now, we have quite a few—so many in fact that we’re able to have Alegria, which is a choir specifically for younger adults that Dr. Bickers leads. That’s so exciting."

Mark started the music internship program his second year at Village. "It was one of the first big innovations that I brought to the work. I wanted to have more young people involved in the choir and give young people in college or grad school an opportunity to learn about church music and how to function in a church music setting.

We’ve had at least four paid interns a year since we started. Right off the bat, it added four really fine singers, one for each section, to the choir. When somebody came to church here they could look up into the choir and see young faces, in addition to the more mature singers. It created an atmosphere where it wasn’t so hard to welcome other lay people who were younger because you see that the choir is a mixture of more mature people and younger people.

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(continued)
There have always been extraordinary singers in the Village choir – people like Judy Bliss who sings with the Lyric Opera and others like her, professional music teachers. So it wasn’t that the choir wasn’t capable or had to have the interns. It’s that it created an opportunity for the church to be involved in teaching what we do. It’s part of being a leadership church.”

**Linking Music and Mission**

Mark also created a pattern of sacred concerts that were inviting and welcoming to the larger, music loving public in the Kansas City area. “Village has become known as the place where music like that happens three or four times a year. One of those concerts, Tidings of Joy, is one of the most highly anticipated Christmas events around.

In 2005, we gave the first performance of the Haydn *Creation*. We started linking a sacred concert with a beneficiary either local or international. The first one was a retiring offering for the community gardens project for Front Porch Alliance. So we’re working to make creation more beautiful and more sustainable through the offering. Over the years, we’ve raised well over $100,000 for different charitable causes.

**Helping Village Find Its Voice**

Mark is a passionate advocate for congregational singing, and finds it to be one of the most rewarding parts of his ministry. “If you had to ask me what I’m proudest of here at Village it would be that the congregation seems to value its own singing more. I feel like if the congregation isn’t singing with fervor and vigor and energy, I’ve missed the mark. My first priority in this job has been to help the congregation sing better, to sing its faith with some energy. I think that’s changed a lot in the years I’ve been here and I’m happy about that. A lot of things have helped in that effort. There’s always been a great keyboard player colleague —Elisa Bickers for the past six years. Now the acoustics in the Sanctuary are much more favorable for congregational singing. But also, the congregation needed to be invited to sing. And from the beginning, I started looking for opportunities to stand in front of the congregation and say, ‘Come On! Your singing is beautiful. Everybody has a right to join in.’

Last summer, I did one ‘How to Sing’ class. This guy in the congregation came and he said he had only stood there silently during the hymns since he was in elementary school and a music teacher told him not to sing. This guy’s in his mid-70s. I showed him in one evening that there was nothing wrong with his voice. That he was singing the right notes, the right pitches. His ear was fine. His voice lined up with the melody we were working on. And so he sings in church every week now. To give somebody their voice back after it’s been wrongly taken away by some lazy music teacher—that makes me really happy. This guy comes up to me now with tears in his eyes and says how much more meaningful worship is because he gets to sing now. There’s nothing better than that.”

Mark has held steadfast on not requiring an audition to get into the Village Choir and the More Love Chorale. “Some churches require an audition to get into the choir. Here we say, ‘Come, bring your gift, we’ll teach you to sing.’ And we give everybody a place to sing. And when people get older, we don’t kick them out. And that’s a wonderful thing. So there’s a sense of musical community. The people with extraordinary musical gifts might be standing and singing with people of much less ability but everybody values each other. I hope that will continue at Village.”

**Postlude**

In addition to spending more time with his children and granddaughter, you may spot Mark at Village Church spending time in a new music role. He successfully auditioned to be in Te Deum Chamber Choir directed by Associate Director of Music Matthew Shepard. “I’m going to be the oldest person in the group by about 15 years. I am so excited about that I can hardly stand it. They’re part of the Village Arts Alliance so all of their rehearsals are here and at least two performances a year are here in this gorgeous Sanctuary. This will be the best choir I’ve ever been in. I told Matthew if he has to kick me out after a year or two I’m ok. I just want the experience of doing it, of singing at that level one time in my life before I’m too old and start to wobble.”

As he lays down his conductor’s baton at Village, he wants the congregation to know, “I feel tremendous gratitude for the way I was welcomed initially and then brought into the Village family. It’s been a great opportunity for me to be here with so many resources and working with so many talented, eager, energetic people. The congregation has let me learn and grow in the work and I’m grateful for that. The world needs Village Church.”