

Peggy Verschelden (retired): I moved here in 1952 and that's when I joined the choir when they had Song Leaders and sang every other week for many years. At that time, the organ was in the choir loft and we had two marvelous organists: Kay Ronsse and Fran Royer. We were dedicated. It was said that, "Nobody got married or buried unless we sang or played for them." Later, there was a group of retired men who considered it their ministry to sing for funerals. They were Lawrence Mees, also known as "Skeeter," Bernard Peterson, Leo Ronsse, Bill Homan, and Bernard Rickstatter. Barb Brockamp played for them when she was in High School. So, for a long time, we had a big group who sang upstairs: Bonnie Brunin (our Music Leader), Karen Schoemann, David Steele, Sally Flerlage, Pat Verschelden, Barb Brockamp, Gerry Lou Marstall, and myself. After the organ went bad, we moved downstairs. Gerry Lou, Barb, Pat, Sally, and I continued with a group. There was about a ten-year span where I sang every Saturday Mass without an accompanist. I retired in 2015. I got my love for music from my dad, who was a musician. I have always felt that since God gave me the talent to sing then I wanted to give back to Him with song. And, our church had a need for it. So, I did it. I can't really select a favorite Mass song, but I do love "How Great Thou Art."



Sally Flerlage (retired): I began singing at Immaculate Conception in the 1970s and retired when Covid came along in 2020. I have my love for singing from my mother. When I was a little girl, our family would take trips in the car to Wakefield, KS to visit my grandparents. Back then, our car didn't have a radio. So, my mother would lead us in many songs on the way to and from. What drew me to continue to sing in the Music Ministry was that song is also part of praying! My favorite Mass song is, "Lord, When You Come to the Seashore".

Pat Verschelden (retired): I joined the Immaculate Conception Choir in the late 60s and sang in the choir loft. I was inspired by all of the people who sang every week in that choir. I continued to do it for many years for the enjoyment of the fellowship with other parishioners. I would say that my favorite song is, "All Is Well With My Soul."

Barb Brockamp (current): I began playing the organ in 1976, after taking piano lessons from Peggy Lenherr. Her daughter and I both started then. I played for Peggy and for the Men's Group. During my time at K-State and my first teaching job in Seneca, I didn't play much. After returning to St. Marys, I began singing with the Guitar Group that included Bonnie and Karen. After Bonnie and Karen passed away, our group went back to the organ. Gerry Lou and I are the only ones left from that original group. My Grandma Lucy and Aunt Stella both loved music and provided music for their church while growing up. I've always loved music. My favorite Mass song is, "You Are Mine," and all Christmas music!

Gerry Lou Marstall (current): I started singing after Bonnie Brunin called me on the phone to recruit myself and other sisters to sing with the Guitar Group at Immaculate Conception. Pretty soon, we were going to weekly practices and then eventually started practicing at Bob and Bonnie's home when they moved to town. Karen Schoemann was the other guitarist and at one point, there were about a dozen of us singing in the choir loft. I learned to play bass guitar for the Jazz band at SMHS. I took lessons from Warren Sickle in the summer and started playing the guitar that the church had at that time. I would sing occasionally while I was in college when I was visiting. After Bonnie and Karen retired, our group reorganized and Barb (Marstall) Brockamp began accompanying us on organ and piano. Our group had seven people, then four (Barb, Gerry Lou, Sally, and Pat). After Covid, I became a soloist with Barb. As I learned the Mass and how liturgical music brings people together, I felt committed to volunteer for our parish. I am so grateful that Barb (my sister-in-law) and I are able to offer music for the congregation. My favorite Mass song is, "These Are Enough for Me." As I reflect on the 40+ years of volunteering, I hope and pray that if you hear a calling to volunteer your musical talent, ask any of our musicians on how to join in music liturgy. It brings so much joy and connects me to my Faith in so many different ways.

Marita (Marty) Ronnau (current): I began my Music Ministry at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Delia, KS, when I was in my early years (1960's) of grade school. My Mom, Rita Kerwin, was the Choir Director and I just started going with her to the choir practices and learned how to sing Gregorian Chant music as well as Latin hymns before Vatican II. Eventually, my Mom let me sing with the adults at Masses. I first learned to play the organ on a Pump organ, then the church bought an electric organ when I was in high school and I was one of the first musicians to play it. I also played the organ in 7th and 8th grade at Holy Cross Catholic Church in Emmett for the grade school student Masses. I continued to do music at Sacred Heart in Delia until I moved to St. Marys in the spring of 1972. I no more than moved to town and Fran Royer asked me if I would start playing at some of the 8AM Masses on Sunday mornings. Who knew back then, I'd still be doing music at Immaculate Conception in 2022! Over the years at Immaculate Conception as an organist and pianist, I have had the privilege and honor to work with many priests, a nun, Religious Ed Directors, Religious Ed teachers and many gifted and talented singers. I've worked with several groups of singers, from an all Men's group to children's groups for Children's Masses. Most of the groups included ladies, men, teenagers and young adults! In the past 20 years or so, I have directed the Combined Choir group of IC and St. Stanislaus for the Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday Masses during Holy Week. Lots of wonderful memories for me with these groups! I have my parents to thank for my love of music. They took me to and paid for many piano and voice lessons. To this day, I can still hear my Mom saying, "God gave you a talent of music, share it with others"! I know they're always watching over me from Heaven when I do music at Church with a smile! I feel that having music, complements the Mass in many ways. It engages everyone in singing to Our Lord through Worship and Praise! I like that I can select Hymns that go along with the Readings and Gospel as well as the Celebration of the Mass for that particular liturgical day. By doing this, I've added my part in a special way to that Mass when doing the Music Ministry for our Parish. I have several favorite Mass songs that I like to play and hear: Among my favorites are: "Miracle of Grace," "Come, Receive Christ, " and "Take and Eat This Bread".

Anita Marstall (retired): I began singing with the group in the mid-1980s and retired in 2020. I have my mother to thank for the love of music. She sang in the church choir and had two sisters who play the church organ. I volunteered for those many years because of my love for singing. My favorite Mass songs are, “Open My Eyes, Lord “ and “On This Day, O, Beautiful Mother.”

Diane Budden (current): My music ministry began in our home, learning to harmonize to hymns with my Mom. I began as a Cantor at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Delia when I was in high school. Rick and I were married in that church and joined forces in providing music. We then went to Holy Cross in Emmett through most of the years of raising our 4 children, and their voices helped carry the music ministry. Finally, we arrived at Immaculate Conception and nothing brings greater pleasure than encouraging others and having family come together to raise their voices to praise God in all His glory. Thank you, Rick, for being such a wonderful husband, father, and music minister to me.

Rick Budden (current): I started as a singer in our church’s Children Choir at the age of 6 or 7. I continued singing in the choir until I was 13 or 14. I also sang solos and duets for church. After I graduated from college, I sang in the church choirs in the communities that I taught in. When I came to St. Marys, I was asked to direct a choir for Thanksgiving made up of members of the St. Marys United Methodist Church and Immaculate Conception. After the Thanksgiving Service, I continued to direct the St. Marys Methodist Choir. When Diane and I were engaged, I began helping sing at Sacred Heart in Delia. As Diane mentioned, we went to Holy Cross in Emmett when Delia services ended. We then came full-time to Immaculate Conception. Music was always part of my life. My dad sang in the church choir, my mom sang and played the organ, and I taught Music in school for 41 years, singing or playing piano or organ. Gloria Dei!

Theresa (Bertels) Booker (current): I joined Marty’s group back in 2012, ten years ago this year! First and foremost, God is Who I have to thank for my love of music. My passion for all things music was definitely given to me by His Hand, as well as my parents who encouraged and nourished the interest from the start. While they didn’t have any music background themselves, they found people who did to help that love grow. This love developed from piano lessons with Diane Budden, to band and choir practices through grade school and high school, and then on into college with many different music professors; and, last, but not least, Marty Ronnau also help develop that love. In the last ten years, she lovingly became my “Music Mom” and took me from the timid singer in the back of the choir who was just singing along with other classmates to announcing the Love and Word of God to song during Masses, weddings, and funerals. She also taught me many lessons, but the one that stands out the most is, “Those who sing, pray twice!” Out of the various roles that I have had the honor of experiencing while a part of the Immaculate Conception Ministry, my absolute favorite has been part of the Music. Not only is it another way to hear the Word from God, you get to feel the Word, as well. It brings a level of peace, reflection, and understanding of the Scripture that I hadn’t found elsewhere. It becomes a place of awareness for the unconditional joy God has in knowing us. The missal also becomes a great resource to finding His Word — that helps with all troubles! Having a bad day? Listen to, “It Is Well With My Soul.” Missing a loved one? Listen to, “How Great Thou Art.” Feeling lost? Listen to, “Amazing Grace.” There are too many to name to select a favorite song but I love, “Servant Song,” “In Christ Alone,” “The Jesus Song,” and “It is Well.”

Anita Aubert (current): I began singing at Immaculate Conception in 2016. I have always enjoyed singing at church as a child, and it continued into adulthood. Someone once mentioned to me about singing in the choir, and I just had to get past the fear of singing in front of people. My mother’s side of the family had some singers that even made a record back in the day, and my grandfather used to play a saw. The praise and worship that comes from singing makes Mass complete for me. Music inspires me. It seems that just the right song will always hit home and give me hope when I am feeling low or give me joy in my sorrow. Sometimes, it just feels awe-inspiring. That’s a God-wink! I continue to volunteer because God gives us gifts and it’s our responsibility to share them with others. It’s one way of sharing my Faith with others. Sing out for all to hear! Although, at times, it is difficult to fit it into my schedule, it never disappoints! I have many favorite songs for the Mass, but “The Jesus Song” and “Fill My Cup, Lord” are two of my top ten!

Tina Schindler (current): I began by directing a Classroom Children’s Choir, a Christmas musical for kids, and sang adult Choir over the years. I have the following people to thank for my love of music: my piano teacher and elementary school and choir teachers all the way from Pre-K through my college performances. What draws me to volunteer in Music Ministry is singing the Message with others, sharing the joy of musical worship, and the way I feel the music deep in my soul. My favorite Mass song is, “Ave Maria.”

Luke Trausch (current): I began helping with the Music Ministry in 2019. I have my parents to thank for making me stick with piano lessons and I am so glad that I did. I also thank Diane Budden for being the best piano teacher that I could have. The reason I am committed to serving in Music Ministry is the fact that we need people to volunteer and it is something that I enjoy doing. My favorite Mass song is the “Gloria!”

Evelyn Jones (current): I began singing when I was in Fourth Grade in 2019. I was asked to perform in a class group for an Advent Mass. I fell in love with that then. I have my mother, who used to do everything in music, to thank for my gift of song and love for music. I volunteer in this ministry because I can serve God while I do something that I love at the same time. My absolute favorite Mass song is, “Gentle Woman.”

Zachary Fox (current): I began volunteering for Music Ministry in the Fall of 2021. I have Mr. and Mrs. Budden to thank for my love of this Music Ministry. What draws me to this ministry is singing songs that are nice and have meaning. My favorite Mass song is, “Let Us Build the City of God.”

Immaculate Conception Parish would like to extend our profound appreciation to all those who, in the past and currently, have served in Music Ministry for our Church! Your dedication and untiring commitment has been wonderfully filling the rafters of this beautiful church with song and praise for years. The personal accounts shared here are excerpts from interviews, emails, and conversations with these Music Ministry Members who were able to participate. It is meant to be a glimpse of the devotion and beautiful recollections of those who have made Music Ministry a formal part of their daily lives. If you have a desire to serve in this way—please reach out to any Music Ministry Member!

St. Cecilia, Pray for Us!

Feast Day: November 22