

***Oak Meadow
United Methodist Church***

*2740 Hunters Green
San Antonio, Texas 78231
(210) 492-3902*

<http://www.oakmeadowumc.org/>

Pastor Larry Scharmann

Laity Notes

*by
Chuck Hall*

March 28, 2004 – Number 19

ANNA CRAM...THANK YOU

While she was “church shopping” in the spring of 2001, Anna Cram’s nephew suggested that she call that little church on Hunter’s Green. Three years earlier, Anna had moved to Shavano Park, but when her nephew made his suggestion, she was unaware that Oak Meadow UMC existed. She called our church to get directions and then paid us a visit. One of our members asked Anna to attend a women’s “lunch bunch” luncheon. While at this luncheon, Anna sat next to Susan McCormick who at the time was our church’s music director and pianist. In talking with Anna, Susan learned something of her music ability and invited her to join our church choir. Anna promptly joined our choir. In short order, Susan McCormick was on her way to Germany with her husband and children. Before she left, Susan made our pastor aware of Anna’s talent and Reverend Emet Huntsman invited her to become our church pianist. She graciously accepted that invitation and for the past three years has been our church pianist on a voluntary basis. Anna has been a blessing to our church and we want to thank her appropriately.

Oak Meadow is the fourth church for which Anna has played. She played for twenty years as organist for a Brethren in Christ Church in Des Moines, Iowa, twenty years as organist for a Methodist Church in Des Moines, thirteen years as pianist for Oxford UMC in San Antonio and three years as pianist for Oak Meadow UMC. Put all these together and you have fifty-six

years of music provided to four congregations along with all of the weddings, funerals and special church events that accompany life in the church.

Anna is the sixth of seven children, and when she was nine she began taking piano lessons at home in Des Moines, Iowa. Her older brothers and sisters had taken piano lessons before her and her younger sister took lessons after her, but little fruit came from those efforts. By the time it was Anna’s turn, her parents were somewhat skeptical about whether or not to make another piano lesson investment in a child (at the time twenty-five cents for a half hour lesson), but fairness dictated that they give Anna a chance, and this seed bore great fruit.

Anna not only stuck with those early piano lessons, she added to them. As a seventh grader, Anna played the piano for a gym class in a public school. Though the Brethren in Christ Church strictly forbade dancing, Anna played music for children to dance at school. When she was a senior in high school she parlayed her piano skills into teaching herself how to play a “pump organ” in the Brethren in Christ Church at which she had been baptized in the Des Moines River and which she had then attended all her life. At the time the organ was being played by an elderly woman who was finding it increasingly difficult to pump the organ with her feet. A youthful Anna stepped in, taught herself how to play the organ, and laid the foundation for becoming the church organist. Upon graduating from high school, she moved to California to study piano at a Brethren in Christ College near Los Angeles. Her formal education was interrupted by her mother’s illness, and Anna returned to Des Moines after a year in California to care for her mother. She continued taking private lessons for four years. One of her teachers played for barn dances which were broadcast over the radio. Another teacher was a professor at a Pentecostal college in Des Moines.

When Anna returned to Des Moines to care for her mother, she also returned to the telephone company for which she had earlier worked and to the Brethren in Christ Church which she had always attended. At the church, Anna played the organ for worship service, weddings, funerals and special events and occasions. This service she provided to the church on a voluntary basis. Of her fifty-six years of providing music for the church, Anna has volunteered thirty-six.

She remained with the telephone company until her retirement in 1985, but she left the Brethren in Christ Church of her childhood in 1964. In 1959 Anna began to care for her nephew, Gary Cram. By 1964 Gary was five years old and the Brethren in Christ was struggling. Like Oak Meadow UMC, the Brethren in Christ church was quite small and at that moment had no children. Anna found a Methodist church somewhat larger which had a bevy of children and a Bible school summer camp. Anna made the move and became the church organist, and Gary was taken in by the pastor and a number of other men in the church, one of whom taught him how to hunt. For the first time in her experience in playing for a church, Anna was compensated for her services. During her time at this Methodist church, Anna became a Methodist. Anna remained church organist in this Methodist Church until she retired from the telephone company in 1985 and moved to San Antonio.

Her move to San Antonio was prompted by her nephew's move in 1984. Gary attended Bartlesville Wesleyan College (since changed to Oklahoma Wesleyan University) in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, and returned to Des Moines after graduation. Those were difficult days in the Midwest, and in 1984 Gary struck out for opportunities in San Antonio. Anna came the following year. Shortly after arriving in San Antonio, Anna became the church pianist at Oxford UMC, about six miles west of Oak Meadow UMC on Huebner Road.

God does indeed work in strange and mysterious ways, and Anna's introduction to Oxford UMC bears all the signs of His hand at work. Not long after her move to San Antonio, Anna and a friend decided to attend a special church service at University UMC. They happened to sit behind two people who were members of Oxford UMC. When a music teacher who belonged to University UMC arrived at the same service, Anna's friend introduced the music teacher to Anna. When the two people from Oxford UMC overheard these introductions, they told Anna that their church was looking for a pianist and asked Anna to become the pianist at Oxford UMC. The two individuals who extended this invitation told Anna that they wanted to pay her for this service, but that they did not have the money to do so. Once again Anna provided her service on a voluntary basis. There she spent the

next thirteen year until moving to Shavano Park in 1998.

While Anna was pianist at Oxford UMC, Gary married Kimberly Lane on March 24, 1990. They now have three sons, Steven, Stewart and George. Gary Cram owns Cram Roofing in San Antonio.

One of the highlights of Anna's career as a church musician was the combination of playing for her oldest sister's wedding, for her oldest sister's daughter's wedding, and for her oldest sister's granddaughter's wedding. One of the most humorous experiences for Anna was the time when she played for the wedding of one of her cousins. This cousin's brother was supposed to pick up their mother for the wedding. This he failed to do, but no one bothered to tell Anna. Anna began to play at the specified time in anticipation of a cue to begin the processional. Since the mother did not come on time, the cue did not come on time, and poor Anna found herself improvising music for about half an hour before the mother could be retrieved. Over the years, Anna's deepest source of satisfaction has been the response of congregations to her musical efforts.

For the past three years, Anna has faithfully served Oak Meadow UMC, giving freely of her time and her talent. At a time when our church struggled financially to the point of nearly going broke, Anna served as church pianist on a voluntary basis. During a critical period when our church literally could not afford a pianist, Anna stepped forward with grace to fill our need for music in our church.

In the book of Exodus God told Moses to tell the Pharaoh to "Let my people go, that they may serve me." Each time in that same book that one finds the phrase "Let my people go," it always is followed by "that they may serve me." We thank Anna Cram for the service she has provided to God and to our congregation over the past three years by making available to us her talent that we might rejoice at the sound of music in our sanctuary each Sunday morning.

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Please email comments or suggestions to cjhall_45@yahoo.com or leave a telephone message at 404-1894.