



Pastor Nate's testimony and vision were presented in last month's Scattered Seeds. This month, we focus on three newly hired staff members. While this trio represents different ages, backgrounds and skills – in food, music and communications – we share a common bond in our service to this congregation and to the Lord. Just as there are many roads to Christ, there are many paths to ministry.



Jen Tan

MINISTRY ASSOCIATE FOR HOSPITALITY



In Malaysia, where Jen's husband Kevin is from, a common greeting is "sudah makan," which means: "Have you eaten yet?"

As Jen made clear in her talk, if you haven't eaten yet while in her presence, you will soon.

She considers food, and the hospitality it conveys, essential in the sharing of God's love.

"In every culture of the world sharing a meal with someone is an act of fellowship as well as intimacy," Jen said. "In many cultures food is equated with love. We all have those stories of the Italian grandmother or the Jewish grandmother or in my children's case, the Chinese grandmother. Those ladies are never satisfied until you are fed."

"Food is love," Jen said.

Jen started the job in September, succeeding Holly Lefever, whose advice was simple: "Always be ready."

In terms of changing how meals are prepared,

there will continue to be a gradual shift away from processed foods to a more family, home-grown approach. She plans to make regular use of the fresh herbs that will be grown in a garden in back of the church.

She made a plea for volunteers. "I could not do what needs to be done without the volunteers who show up. If you see them, thank them because they are incredible," she said.

Jen cited Romans 12:13, "contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality," as the motto for her ministry.

"Food is love."

"The way I am contributing to the needs of the saints – that's you guys – is serving meals similar to the ones I would serve my family. ... As I mentioned I'm from Cape Cod which is 600 miles away. Kevin's family is 10,000 miles

away [in Malaysia]. You guys are my family. You are who I want to bless, who I want to care for and who I want to serve," she said.

Jen noted that hospitality incorporates at least three of the church's five ministry essentials: discipleship, fellowship and mission. The missional aspect of hospitality was driven home to her recently when a woman came into the church looking for a meal.

"I was able to pray with her and give her leftovers to take home for her family. That made a huge impact on me," she said.

This event reminded her that when food is shared with a person, you do more than simply feed them. You communicate and mirror God's love for them.

"I can't think of a better explanation of what I do and why I do it," she said. "Thank you for allowing me to do what I love in service to God and this church."



Elissa Winkler

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC IN WORSHIP



The trajectory of Elissa’s life changed 23 years ago, in a moment she recalls vividly.

Elissa was raised in a religious Connecticut home. She was 13 years old, halfway across the continent, attending a conference in Indianapolis called “Sound Foundations,” a music bootcamp for kids who had been home schooled.

Elissa, then the oldest of five children in her family (a sixth arrived four years later), called home with exciting news.

“I remember calling my family from a pay phone in the conference center, because this was way before cell phones, saying, ‘Mom and Dad, I have fallen in love with music,’” Elissa said.

“I want to do something with music. I don’t know what, I don’t know how but I need to do music with my life. My parents said, ‘Okay,’ and by the time I had flown home, they had found me a piano and voice teacher.”

Elissa began voice lessons with that teacher shortly thereafter and sang her first solo, “On Eagle’s Wings.” Within a year, she had her first gig conducting a children’s choir called “His Voice.”

“They were like my own little Von Trapp singers,” Elissa said. “It was a lot of fun.”

A fire was lit back then that burns to this day. Elissa is passionate about vocal performance and the pursuit of quality and excellence, in how she speaks about music and conducts it, as anyone in the adult choir will tell you.

The job she assumed at Beverly Heights last year was wider in scope than that of her predecessor, Mary Wolling. Elissa’s new duties include that of choir director and more, combining all aspects of worship

music, and its administration, under a new title and job description.

Elissa’s entry into the job was made easier thanks to the high quality of the Beverly Heights music ministry, for which she is grateful.

“I came into this saying, ‘Wow, what a blessing. Things are running smoothly. I don’t have to fix anything. I don’t have to create anything. Things are well established here,’” Elissa said.

In response to a question about the children’s choirs, she noted the spiritual formation of children “is one of my big passions.” To that end, she strongly believes in teaching children the hymns of the faith. She also works with the children’s ministry team to encourage memorizing scripture through song.

Elissa met her husband Chad at the Christian family resort Camp-of-the-Woods in upstate New York. They began leading worship together at summer chapel services there while in college.

Now a trumpeter with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Chad is her “rock.” He provides contacts, advice and performance to Elissa and is a constant source of support. “He is vital to everything I do here,” she said.

I remember calling my family from a pay phone saying, “Mom and Dad, I have fallen in love with music.”

The full audio recording of Jen, Elissa and Tom’s “Meet the Staff” talk is available at beverlyheights.org/audio-archives.



Tom O'Boyle

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS



Introducing himself as “the third leg of the stool,” Tom began with a question: “Raise your hand if you’ve ever visited our website.” There was near 100% response. But when asked if they visited the website once a week, only 10% kept their hands raised.

“We’re gonna fix that,” he said. “And the way we’re gonna fix that is we will regularly put content on the site which is of interest to you.”

Tom retired last November after a 40-year career in print and digital media. He first worked for The Wall Street Journal in Pittsburgh and Germany, then spent the final 25 years at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette as a senior manager in content, digital strategy, marketing and audience development.

a chance. It’s a little unorthodox and I recognize that.”

After quickly summarizing his bio (which can be accessed at www.beverlyheights.org/ staff, along with all other staff bios), Tom offered a strategic and tactical overview of his plans.

“I consider what I am doing now the capstone of my career as a communicator of Good News,” Tom said.

The document he prepared while applying for the job cited a passage from Habakkuk 2:2. It reads, “Then the Lord replied: Write down the vision and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it.” That passage set three missional directives, he said.

crier or newspaper hawker who runs into the marketplace shouting: “Extra, extra, read all about it!”

“That’s my view of the proclamation of the Gospel,” he said. “We have to be out there with urgency and enthusiasm.”

As an evangelical church, “we have a conviction that Jesus Christ changes lives. He has changed my life, he has changed your lives. That must be reflected dynamically and vividly in our storytelling” on the website and in other communications channels.

That explains why in the January issue of Scattered Seeds, Tom’s first, pastor Nate’s testimony was split out as a separate sidebar story. “Nate’s testimony and your testimonies are very, very important. We must communicate that to a fallen world,” he said.

Whether in the church or secular media, stories must be told compellingly to be viewed, read, heard.

“There’s a popular expression in media circles that content is king,” he said. “That same principle applies to a church. Content matters. ... The better the content, the greater the probability that you’ll engage with it. It’s that simple.”

Tom made a closing appeal for feedback from and dialogue with his audience. “The worst offense to any publisher is silence,” he said.

“We have to be out there with urgency and enthusiasm.”

He thanked colleagues and the congregation for embracing him and his hire into the new position.

“I’m thankful you are taking a chance on me. I won’t sing the ABBA song for you,” he joked, “and I don’t think it’s a big chance because I’ve been doing this professionally, communications, for 40 years but it is

First, communications must be clear and accessible. Second, it must be modern in its concept, therefore viewable not just on tablets but tablet devices. Third, it must proclaim the word of God with great urgency and enthusiasm.

The image that evokes to him is of a town

World•Views

a message from Tom O'Boyle

Part of my job as your new communications person is to promote dialogue among our members and also to encourage new ideas.

So when I received an email after publication of the last Scattered Seeds from a member of the congregation which at once addressed both subjects, I was thrilled.

Thus was born a new online forum now on our website which we have christened World•Views.

The email was from Art Flickinger. A pharmacist by vocation and avid reader by avocation, Art is a student of history who appreciates the power of ideas.

The idea he pitched was this: Could we create a communications forum that would promote more thoughtful, and perhaps less discouraging, engagement with the media we all consume?

After refining the idea with Art, pastor Nate and my friend Bill Mehaffey (the most voracious consumer of web content I know), we arrived at a concept and title which we think has merit and we hope you will embrace. A Pinterest of sorts for our Beverly Heights community but instead of sharing fashion tips and recipes, we'll share points of light as well as enlightenment.

Perhaps that's found in a book or article you've read; a movie you've seen; a website you regularly consult; or a program or podcast you listened to. The common theme here is media which informed or solidified your Christian worldview. Content you'd forward to a friend. It may have been inspirational, hopeful, encouraging or illuminating.

As pastor Nate mentioned in his eCare last week, his go-to site for the intersection of media and culture is Mars Hill Audio Journal under the direction of the brilliant Ken Myers. Their mission, according to the website, is "to assist Christians who desire to move from thoughtless consumption of modern culture to a vantage point of thoughtful engagement."

This missional statement strikes me as a good objective for our more modest offering, World•Views. Art has volunteered to maestro the site and aggregate its content.



"Hopefully we will create a space that people can use as a resource to encourage one another in Christ," he says.

A member of this congregation for 34 years, he and his wife Tracey raised four children here.

"I enjoy reading about ancient cultures as well as European and American history," he notes. "The greatest influences on my

spiritual life have been John's gospel and the Psalms. A book by R.C. Sproul, *The Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*, started me on a journey to understand what I believe and why I believe it."

Art also thinks contrarian thoughts, a trait I especially like. One piece he has posted to the site illustrates this.

You may have heard the sad news that the New York state assembly in Albany passed a new abortion law on Jan. 22, the 46th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the subject pastor Nate wrote about in his eCare.

Art found a piece on the new law, from The New Yorker. Although this is not a source I would typically consult, I'm glad I did. Art's recommendation provided useful insight into the perspectives of people whose opinions oppose mine. The story also conveys a clear warning. As bad as many of us in the evangelical community may think the new law is, its advocates believe it didn't go nearly far enough. Read the piece and you'll discover, shockingly, what abortion advocates regard as the final legal frontier.

You can read for yourself this chilling yet illuminating article by visiting the new blog World•Views on our website at this address: www.beverlyheights.org/world-views.

The site will benefit from your attention and engagement. Submissions should be sent to Art's email: arthur.flickinger@gmail.com. He'll manage the site as a first reader and I'll act as general editor, so one needn't worry about theological orthodoxy not being maintained.

Thank you in advance for consideration of this new and exciting idea.

Looking for church Updates? Check the bulletin each week or visit beverlyheights.org/updates.