

September 27, 2015



## Recognition of Dr. James E. Smith, Music Director

Homily by Rev. Patricia Farris

### **Psalm 150**

*Praise the LORD!*

*Praise God in his sanctuary;*

*praise him in his mighty firmament!*

*Praise him for his mighty deeds;*

*praise him according to his surpassing greatness!*

*Praise him with trumpet sound;*

*praise him with lute and harp!*

*Praise him with tambourine and dance;*

*praise him with strings and pipe!*

*Praise him with clanging cymbals;*

*praise him with loud clashing cymbals!*

*Let everything that breathes praise the LORD!*

*Praise the LORD!*

Jim Smith. Jim and Barbara Smith. Santa Monica First United Methodist Church. 50 years! Wow. It's a semicentennial. It's a quinquagenary. But my favorite name for it is a Golden Jubilee.

50 years of making music in this congregation and in this community. 50 years of making music happen in this congregation and in this community. 50 years of opening the door to the presence and glory of God through the gift of music to this congregation and this community. This is indeed a Golden Jubilee.

### **INVITE YOU NOW TO SHOW YOUR LOVE AND APPRECIATION—JIM AND BARBARA STAND**

A Golden Jubilee indeed.

We've just completed a five-part series on the Marks of a Methodist—a Methodist loves God, rejoices in God, gives thanks to God, prays constantly, loves others. But I've decided that today we should celebrate the 6<sup>th</sup> Mark of a Methodist. The 6<sup>th</sup> defining characteristic of a Methodist—a Methodist praises God in music.

John Wesley said it in his instructions to the Methodist people—"Sing lustily and with good courage. Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing God more than yourself or any other creature. ...see that your heart...is offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will appear here, and reward you when he cometh in the clouds of heaven."

Jim, you have created a congregation known for its music, music precious to us and shared freely with all who hear. Music that invites all people to lift our hearts and come into the presence of the Holy. Music that shouts for joy and whispers prayers of healing and comfort, music that awes and music that draws us closer to one another and to God. We read in the Book of Leviticus that the Jubilee year shall be holy to God's people. And so mark this day, we mark these five decades of music ministry, as holy, as acceptable and pleasing to God. James Edward Smith—well done, good and faithful servant.

A Golden Jubilee. Jim, that means that you have endured, or enjoyed, or survived, or molded four senior ministers, six organists, countless choir members and community singers and instrumentalists, innumerable Santa Monica College students, and I wonder how many pianos in desperate need of tuning? There have been rehearsals, concerts, theater productions, Mid-Week Recitals, Sunday worship services, Christmases and Easters. And there's all the behind-the-scenes work that most of us take for granted—choosing and planning and arranging the music, setting the stage, securing singers and musicians, rehearsing, and wielding the fine art of diplomacy to hold it all together and make miracles happen. Your "Rolodex" as they say contains the name of just about every musician in the area it seems. It's a constant joy to welcome them here and see how delighted they are for another opportunity to make music with you.

How grateful we are to commission today's special anthem in your honor for this Golden Jubilee. The composer, Kirk Mechem, himself 90 years old, is considered to be one of the preeminent contemporary American composers. We are privileged to have commissioned two anthems from him over the years. "Glory," based in the writings of Martin Luther, is so beautiful and fitting for this day, this Golden Jubilee: "Glory to God! his angels sing with joyful song, Music is the gift of God, His angels sing with tender mirth. Nothing on earth is so well suited to make the sad merry and the merry sad as music. Glory to God! His angels sing with joyful song."

And three choral responses for this day, also specially commissioned, by Craig Naylor, of our long-time Naylor family members. How blessed is our worship this day by the beauty and faithfulness of this special music.

A Golden Jubilee, Jim. I know you have a big birthday coming up this week as well. I'll let you tell people how many, but let's just say it's your dodranscentennial, which translated from the Latin, pretty much means, as Bob Hope once said: "You know you're getting old when the candles cost more than the cake."

In the run-up to this Golden Jubilee celebration, Jim, I've said that, as I see it, perhaps your greatest gift is the way you are able to make ordinary folks sound and feel like God's own heavenly choir, coaxing gorgeous music from mere mortals week in and week out to the praise and glory of God. You give us the great gift of experiencing ourselves as something bigger than ourselves, of feeling ourselves part of something wondrous, of offering our gifts, whatever they may be, knowing that together we will create something that gives honor to God.

So in that spirit Jim, I offer back to you and the congregation today, a new hymn for the church, written in your honor for this Golden Jubilee. The choir and Ty are now going to assist us all as we join together in "Sing We Now to God."

**(present hymn to Jim)**

**SING**

In that same spirit, Jim, we look forward to the next however many God grants us. We're going to give you a chance to say a few words at the Reception which immediately follows our worship today. I invite everyone, immediately following the Postlude, to go directly over to Simkins Hall in the Shelby Center that our celebration of this Golden Jubilee may continue.

May the music of this congregation continue to touch hearts and change lives and invite us all, far and wide, into the grandeur and the beauty and the love of our God.

Thanks be to God.