



## St. Stephen Protomartyr Ukrainian Catholic Church

### views from the pews

*How it all began*

February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018

I preface this article by simply saying “God definitely answers our prayers when we need a favor, we just need to ask and to trust. Linda thanks for listening when God tapped you on the shoulder”.

#### *A Reflection of the Last 35 Years by Linda Dudar*

I am often asked the question of how it came to be that I became the church choir director. I arrived at St. Stephen’s 35 years ago; one week after our Dauphin, Manitoba wedding in August of 1983. My husband Randy and I decided that Calgary would be our home given that he had moved to Calgary one year earlier and was already working in the field of electrical engineering. I had never been to either of the Ukrainian Catholic churches in Calgary so we decided to visit St. Stephen’s parish. Our first home was only a few blocks away. Father Muzyka was aware of my musical background after meeting with Randy for pre-marital classes. At the time, I was teaching high school in a rural community back in Manitoba. Elsie Shyba, the former choir director had been directing the choir as well as taking care of her husband who was quite ill at the time. Father Muzyka must have trusted that I would be willing to help Elsie so ... on that particular Sunday, one week after our wedding, and from the pulpit without any warning, he welcomed me as a new choir director along with Elsie. When he introduced me as Linda Dudar, a new choir director to St. Stephen’s....I was hearing my new married name for the first time as well as my new role in the parish!

My cantor role came quite naturally given that I was the daughter of parents who cantored for services in several parishes during my childhood. My father continues to cantor (over 50 years) and will be celebrating his 94<sup>th</sup> birthday. I can’t imagine!

The choir directing role was quite different. It was unusual to stand in front of a group of individuals in their 40’s and 50’s when you are 23 years old! That was almost 35 years ago (as of this August, 2018) and the journey has been incredible. Who knew that we would be blessed with a choir family and almost a dozen priests who I often refer to as “my brothers”. I cannot begin to count the number of weddings, funerals and events that I responded either solo and/or with the choir with more than a dozen priests, Bishops, and our Patriarch. Each of these have a story of their own, but for fun here are some of the facts:

- Practices- Typically twice a month on Wednesday increasing to every Wednesday in preparation for Christmas, Easter and special occasions.
- Weddings - some summers with as many as 25 or more, many with three on one Saturday. How many? Hmmm ... hundreds of weddings ... those who may be reading this may recall our choir singing for you.
- Languages - Ukrainian, English, Latin, Arabic and Christmas carols in various languages.
- Sections of the choir - Soprano, Alto, Tenors (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>), Bass.
- Soloists and performers - too many to count.

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- ❖ **Save the dates:** June 1 – June 3, 2018 for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary **Commemorative Events** – details coming soon!
  - ❖ Please don’t forget to sign up for this year’s **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** Edition of the St. Stephen’s **photo directory**.
  - ❖ **Recipe Collections** for the 50th Anniversary Cookbook - please send as many as you wish. Deadline April 1<sup>st</sup>. For more information contact Trish Popel at 50anivcookbook@gmail.com or 403-835-3077.

- CD's or recordings - 2 Liturgical recordings, For Our Children, Christmas, Magnify the Lord, Peace Be With You.
- Number of songs learned - 5 hymn books! Regular, Supplemental, Christmas, Easter and now the recent new binders.
- Performances or Road trips - Alberta, BC, Saskatchewan, Hawaii, Ukraine and the Holy Land.
- Number of choir members - to date on the record...over 70.
- Funny and interesting moments? Perhaps I need to write a book!

There are many highlights to share. The Patriarch's visit was definitely one of them and having our Metropolitan visit us this June for our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be another. Every Bishop's visit is a highlight, but then again so is every Sunday liturgy as well as weddings. It is also an honor to sing at funeral liturgies to support families as they say farewell to their loved ones. Every moment is special. We have done skits, dances, performances, pageants, outdoor performances, western performances, sing songs, carol festivals ... you name it!

Most recently, one of our parishioners commented that "having a good choir is one of the secrets to building a good parish". Hmm ... I am not sure how "good" our choir is, although we have been described as a music ministry, a choir of angels, some fearless sheep, congregational leaders and probably a few others. I know that we have wonderful support from our parish priests and eparchy as well as many parishioners for which I am most grateful. We could not have done it without their help. We have so many folks in the choir who dedicate their time and energy to help make our ministry what it is. This includes assistant directors who are always there to help out when I am away, our communications director who keeps us organized, informed and updated, gifted musicians for our various services, hymn book coordinators and translators, piano movers, parish maintenance support, event planners, parish and office staff, volunteer parishioners, donors, and even the lectors who make sure that I receive communion at the end of liturgy. The list is long and the names too many to mention! My husband Randy has stood by my side since that first Sunday and continues his support as he sings in the choir with the bass section. He did not sing very much when we first came to Calgary, but then I didn't golf very much. So, he agreed to join the choir and I agreed to take up golfing ... I know he is a way better singer than I am a golfer!

The journey has not always been easy, however, it has certainly been very rewarding. We are all blessed with a gift and I am grateful that along with the choir, we have been able to share our gifts of music and song in praise of God. We are always eager to welcome new choir members, so please feel free to join us in the loft anytime.

I welcome YOUR stories, so please contact me: [laurie.kindrachuk@shaw.ca](mailto:laurie.kindrachuk@shaw.ca) or cell: 403-614-5581

