

# *View from the Pew*

By Bruce Lindquist

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***A Christmas vocal tradition*** -- Our church claims a long history of solo and duet vocal performances for its Christmas, Christmas Eve and Easter services. The late **Emil Strachota** sang such favorites as "O Holy Night," "The Holy City," "In the Garden," and "Were You There?" on a regular basis for 20 years or more, in the 1970s, '80s and '90s, said his son, **Bruce Strachota**. And now Bruce, a tenor, follows in his father's footsteps, having been involved in presenting special Christmas and other holiday music to the congregation for the past eight or nine years, he said. Joining him for "O Holy Night" again this year on Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> is parish nurse **Renee Compo**, also no stranger to our members. In recent years, they have combined their sacred musical talents, and both have sung at many weddings and funerals through the years. Renee joined Ascension Lutheran in 1982, and became a soprano choir member the next year. Emil, **Virginia** and family became members of First Lutheran in 1977, with Bruce joining our choir in 1984. I'm going to burn up the calculator on this one, but combined they have a remarkable 67 years of public vocal experience between them! Bruce added that, several years ago, Advent Sunday at SOC used to be "a big deal." It included Christmas caroling, a large selection of crafts, card-making, a reading of the Christmas story, and even people dressed in lefse outfits(!)

***Appreciation to a 't'ea*** -- Another important event in SOC life is the annual Christmas Tea, this year to be held at 11 am Sunday, Dec. 17, following the Choir Cantata during the regular service that day. According to **Pat Latvala**, the tea was started by Pastor Wes Syverson and his wife, Pam, at their home about 12 years ago, following the cantata, and later moved to the church. Early on, it was handled "almost as a real high tea," she said. When the pastor left, "some of us wanted to keep it going, in appreciation of the choir's hard work, and as a way to wish a 'Merry Christmas' to our church members," Pat said. "And we are so thankful for our wonderful SOC volunteers. They decorate Fellowship Hall, bring Christmas treats and help set up and serve." Pat and Dave joined Ascension 1976. She has been a member of the choir, women's group, Sunday School staff and STEP board. Dave's involvement has included leadership roles, choir and the multitude of duties as a Properties volunteer.

***Highly-acclaimed music connection here*** -- Earlier this month at Central Lutheran in downtown Minneapolis, Augsburg University ushered in the Advent and Christmas seasons with Advent Vespers, a highly-acclaimed experience of music and liturgy, focused on the theme of preparation and culminating in the celebration of the Incarnation. Our own **Lowell Brandt** was one of the founding members of a group which spearheaded the development of what has grown into a Minnesota holiday tradition. He was in charge of the liturgy when the event was formulated back in the 1970s, while pastor at Augsburg College. And while he unassumingly involves himself in a variety of activities at SOC, he is most noticeable during our music programs as a talented accompanying flutist and tenor choir member.