



Carmel Presbyterian Church

A Beautiful place to enjoy an Easter Morning Service

The Easter season has always been an important time for me. As a kid in school, this usually meant Spring Break or at least a few vacation days if we did not use all of our snow days. It also served as a pseudo introduction to Spring. It seemed Easter Sunday was filled with great Spring-like weather with the hope of the season to come and the thought that the cold snowy days were behind us. As I grew up and learned more about my Christian Faith, I began to appreciate and revere Holy Week for a much different reason. A much more important one. Each event during Holy Week has significant meaning to me and it has changed who I am today.

One great joy I have each Easter Sunday is to perform for the Easter morning service at the *Carmel Presbyterian Church* in Glenside, Pa. I've had the privilege to play at the church since 2012 along with trumpeter Chris Ballentine. Both Chris and I are very ably accompanied by organist Abby Palmisano. Abby is a very talented organist and choir director who has a great vision of the music program at Carmel. She is very attentive to detail demanding the best from everyone yet is very kind and gentle to work with. She is fortunate to get to play the great Carmel Organ. Dating back to 1926, the Austin Organ had 18 ranks. Twelve more ranks were added in 1955. The 30 ranks left much to be desired tonally. The church was Blessed in 1993 when renowned organ-voicer Bruce Shultz rescaled and revoiced the organ without removing any of the pipes. The final touch was the addition of digital ranks by Walker Technical Co., with voicing by Mr. Walker himself along with Mr. Shultz to produce a glorious sound that truly rings to the Heavens inside the church.

The church has so much character as it a wonderfully constructed of brick and stone with high ceilings and exquisite stained glass windows. But, not just single pain windows. Several areas have full-scale artistic motifs and designs that are works of art themselves. The original church dates back to 1872 when it was sponsored by the Abington Presbyterian Church. The first church building, the chapel, was constructed at the corner of Mt Carmel Avenue and Edge Hill Road, and dedicated on February 15, 1876. The formal organization of Carmel Presbyterian Church took place on February 15, 1882, with 26 charter members. As things grew, it was determined that a full-scale church needed to be built. So, in 1894, ground was broken and on January 26, 1896 the first church was dedicated. As the area was growing, so was the church. The tiny church of 1896 could not hold the explosion of growth. This led to it being torn down and the building of the current structure in 1924-25. Amazingly, by 1924 church membership had grown to 662 and the Sunday school had 825! Carmel's membership grew to its highest in 1952 as it welcomed 2256 members weekly to service. Even more amazing was that the Sunday school or church school, had an incredible 1,816 in 1949. Needless to say, a new church school had to

be built. With this incredible history, you can see why I enjoy making the trip to Edge Hill Road in Glenside to be able to take part in a wonderful service of a church with such great history. This year, an elevator was added to assist guests with the 2 floors of steps. However, in great Carmel tradition, the design and implementation is not gaudy and filled with a modern look. The construction echoes the craftsmanship and look of the existing building with a beautiful design reminiscent of its original design. To learn more about the church and all the great things it does for the community, please visit their website at www.presbycarmel.org.

