



TRYON TRUMPET

Tryon Presbyterian Church

A Stephen Ministry Congregation

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Wes, Makena add vitality to TPC

Wesley Elam and Makena James have made amazing contributions to our worship experience, and these two talented young people are just getting started in their professional lives.

As digital technology associate since October, Wes produces high-quality live and recorded broadcasts of all our services and Midweek Moments, maintains our social media channels and takes photographs – many of which end up in the Tryon Trumpet. And he does much more over and above his part-time job description. For example, he dressed as a hot dog to participate in Trunk or Treat. He helped assemble the set for our Christmas Pageant and portrayed Joseph – with his girlfriend Marissa Carpenter as Mary.



Wesley Elam and Makena James pursue creative activities outside church.

(See Wes and Makena, Page 2)

(From Wes and Makena, Page 1)

Makena took over in December as interim organist and pianist, playing for all our services and practicing with the choir on Wednesday afternoons. She, too, has exceeded her part-time role. She played piano for our Christmas party and offered a Christmas concert, performing on organ and piano and singing – all beautifully.

Pastor Allan Purtill praised them both for their dedication in his Christmas Day sermon.

While we've all enjoyed their gifts on our behalf, most of us might not know much about what Makena and Wes do outside Tryon Presbyterian Church or their professional aspirations. So, we asked them to tell us.

Makena hopes to earn a doctoral degree

Makena, 23, is a graduate of Houghton College and hopes eventually to earn a doctoral degree and become an organ professor as well as a full-time organist and choir mistress at a large church. She actually entered college as a pre-med student but was inspired to change career goals by Dr. Brennan Szafron, an adjunct professor of organ at Converse College and organist and choir master at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Cross in Tryon. Makena takes organ lessons from him.

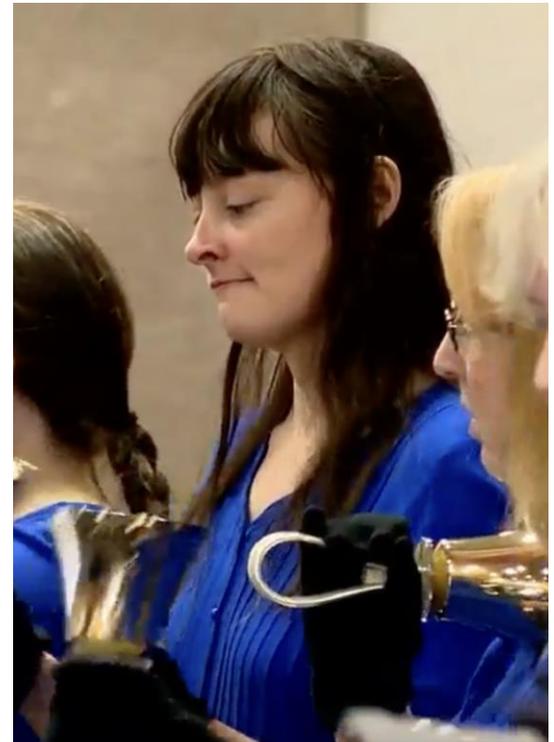
"His quirky style of teaching really suits me," Makena says. "I'm learning far more now under his instruction than I ever did in college, and it's a blast. There's never a boring time when Dr. Szafron's around."

Makena adds that she is very happy with her work at our church.

"I highly enjoy the experience upgrade I have at TPC," she says. "At my former church, there was already a pianist who had been there for years, and I was just the organist. I was definitely on the back burner there, as the pianist got to accompany all the choir anthems and special music, while I never got to play any of that. I enjoy the fact that I am promoted at TPC to being organist and pianist, and that I get to spend time every week preparing the choral anthem accompaniment. Being able to do this now will no doubt give me more of the skills I need to someday become a choir mistress and direct from the organ or piano."

With all her musical ability, it's interesting to note what Makena has in common with Wes. On her Facebook page, she describes herself as a "digital creator" – and it's easy to see why. In some of her spare time, she creates what she calls "mashup" videos in which she records herself playing and singing many individual parts of a musical piece that she then assembles into a whole. The resulting videos, which you can see on her [YouTube channel](#), are brilliant.

Her favorite, at least recently, was "[Masters in This Hall.](#)" "I learned about this piece while ringing in the Blue Ridge Ringers and was up to the challenge of learning all the bell parts, plus doing a piano transcription and

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Makena plays with the Blue Ridge Ringers.

(From Wes and Makena, Page 2)

having one of my friends sing the words,” she says.

These projects are complicated.

“I first have to record all the tracks, and with handbells those can quickly add up,” she explains. “It can be a hassle when you make mistakes and have to do multiple takes. The hardest part, though, for me would be editing. So much goes into editing so that every part flows together. I record everything to a base track, but even then, not everything may be quite together, and that’s where you have to sometimes edit timing. I’d say I spent around 10 hours total, three hours recording all the tracks and seven hours editing and compiling the video all while worrying about keeping enough space free on my computer to handle all the video and audio tracks.”

Makena counts 250 subscribers to her YouTube channel, but sometimes her videos attract many more viewers. Sometimes there are fewer. Even if she’s occasionally “underwhelmed” by the response, she says she’ll continue making her “mashups” “because I enjoy doing them and sharing them with the world.”

TPC may have to share Makena with the world before we’d like, but it’s a pleasure to have her here now.

Wes plans video production career

Wes is only 20 and a student at Isothermal Community College, where he does a lot of video production work.

“I’d love to be a video editor for a large-scale company,” he says. “Even if I don’t reach this desired position, I will strive to stay in the video production industry.”



Wes Elam and Marissa Carpenter portray Joseph and Mary in our Christmas Pageant.

While Wes has produced news programs and other initiatives, he says his favorite video project so far “would have to be my parody of the Brady Bunch open I did for my school, called [‘The BPT Bunch.’](#) The BPT Bunch took months of planning, shooting and editing to ensure the quality was up to standard.”

BPT is Broadcast Production Technology.

At TPC, Wes most enjoys the Sunday livestreams and Midweek Moments. The work for Sunday starts much sooner than you might think.

“The Sunday livestreams take about three days in total to put together,” Wes says. “This requires gathering pictures and putting together a slideshow, tinkering with the cameras (which is mostly always needed), putting together the artwork such as thumbnails and worship announcements that go out on social media, then livestreaming and uploading the worship online for everybody to watch.”

(See Wes and Makena, Page 4)

(From Wes and Makena, Page 3)

Wes finds it very satisfying.

“The responses I get from people who’ve watched online are amazing. Each person says I’m making a difference in both quality and viewing experience. For those who physically can’t attend worship, I feel as if I’m making the most significant impact, as they now can enjoy worship from home.”



Wes Elam shares God’s word online.

When asked what he likes about working at TPC, Wes answers in a way that indicates he is fully in tune with our mission: “Letting the message of TPC and the word of God be accessible to anybody who has an internet connection,” he says.

“The community is inclusive of anybody and welcomes with open arms,” he adds. “It’s such a beautiful church and an honor to be a part of the staff.”

We are fortunate to have Wes, as well as Makena.

Doug Clark, editor

Alex Harrelson brings familiar voice to TPC

Our New Year’s Day service brought a familiar face and voice to our church. Alexander Harrelson sang “Who Would Send a Baby?” by Mary Kay Beall. He was accompanied by Makena James on piano.

Although Alex lives in Salt Lake City, where he is pursuing a Masters of Music in Vocal Performance at the University of Utah, he can’t be called a guest soloist. The son of Edward and Petra Harrelson grew up in our church.

As recently as August, he presented a well-attended “special afternoon of music” at TPC, performing opera arias by Giacomo Puccini, Jules Massenet and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, as well as compositions by Franz Schubert, Dan Forrest and Stephen Sondheim. He was accompanied by Lesley Bush.



Alex sang ‘Who Would Send a Baby?’ on January 1.

It was a pleasure to see Alex on the first day of 2023 and to have him share his gifts in worship.

Chancel project prompts accessibility review

The project to enlarge the chancel and add risers for the choir has prompted a new look at accessibility issues throughout the church. Some church members expressed concerns at an informational meeting led by Chancel Task Force Chairman Hank Sibley in the sanctuary January 4 that the current plan doesn't improve accessibility for people in wheelchairs or who otherwise have difficulty navigating steps.

Responding to those concerns, the Session on January 8 approved a recommendation from Pastor Allan Purtil "to form a Disability Accessibility and Inclusion Task Force. This task force will conduct an audit to determine short- and long-range goals to make our programs and property more accessible and inclusive," Allan said. He will bring names of proposed task force members to the Session at its next stated meeting.

The current project is expected to take about four weeks. The organ console has been moved to the back of the sanctuary for safekeeping and won't be used for worship during the work, which began in earnest January 9. The pipes have been covered. The piano is on the floor, with some seating removed to make room for it. The choir will occupy seating nearest to the piano.



Hank Sibley leads an informational meeting about the chancel project.

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Three risers will be added across the back of the chancel, with handrails on the sides. The chancel will be extended forward over the existing steps, and two new sets of stairs will be built with handrails. The completed project will result in a larger chancel, allowing more options for the placement of the organ and piano. The three-level risers will help choir members see the director and project their voices over singers in front of them. It all should be finished in early February, Hank said.

But that should not be the end of the changes, leaving stairs as the only means of access to the chancel, three church members said at the meeting. Physical barriers should not prevent anyone from singing with the choir or lay reading, they said. Families with children who use wheelchairs should not perceive that their children won't be able to fully participate in all activities. It should be a goal to overcome this problem, they said.

Hank said no one disagrees that accessibility is important. Unfortunately, the need to minimize the incline of a ramp would make it too long for the available space, and a lift system isn't practical at this time, he indicated.

Allan agreed that the concerns are appropriate. "The church has made great gains on accessibility, but we have a long way to go," he acknowledged. He also noted the time on the church calendar: "The message of Epiphany is that all nations may come."

Doug Clark, editor

Small group initiative will launch in early 2023

You will hear a lot about “small groups” soon. As one of its goals, the Strategic Planning Committee decided to form more small groups in 2023 to encourage the entire congregation’s participation. The Christian Growth Committee has been at work preparing to make this goal a reality.

The groups will take many forms, such as:

- Growth in faith and fellowship
- Bible study
- Mission focus

Dr. David Hosick, a former pastor at TPC, has been leading a group study for church members who will serve as facilitators for these groups.

It was my good fortune to become part of a small group soon after joining the church. We meet twice monthly in the morning at church to pray, study, connect, encourage, discuss, chat, laugh, listen and love one another. I believe this group has helped us to grow spiritually and is important to each of us.

A special event is being planned as an introduction to the various groups. More information is coming soon.

Cherie Brooks, Christian Growth Committee



Become a Tryon Trumpet contributor during 2023

There are many ways to help your church newsletter become a more valuable resource for all of us.

One way is to submit articles. You can write about church “news” and a lot more. Do you have a story to tell about your faith journey or a special mission or ministry? Sharing it may inspire others or help fellow church members get to know you better. Or perhaps you’d like to write something about someone else in our congregation who deserves recognition. Maybe you’d like to write a short Bible commentary. What is your favorite parable, and why? Your favorite psalm? What miracle most amazes you, and how does it relate to your own experiences? What does it teach you?

If writing isn’t the way you best express yourself, pass on story suggestions to the Trumpet editor, Doug Clark, at dougclark55@gmail.com. Maybe he can help. Or maybe you’d rather submit artwork or photographs. We can even link to videos in our digital format. The Trumpet can be better, and with your help it will be!

Help needed for January 14 veterans' breakfast

Our church will host its first 2023 breakfast for area veterans Saturday, January 14. The meal will be served from 8:30 to 10 a.m.



DeAnne Zaeske invites veterans to quarterly breakfasts at TPC.

DeAnne Zaeske continues to organize the events, which are also planned for April 15, July 15 and October 14 this year – but she needs help. Volunteers should arrive by 8 a.m. and probably will be finished with clean-up by 10:30. Helpers can join Pete Bellamy's food prep team or contribute as servers and "KP," for kitchen police.

This is a good opportunity for us to show our love for our Polk County neighbors who served in the armed forces on our behalf.

Veterans can enjoy more than a meal. While many are active in local veterans' organizations, some may

find Saturday mornings the most relaxing time to share each others' company, trade memories or exchange information about veterans' issues.

DeAnne is working hard to make these breakfasts successful. Please consider helping and, if you can, let her know by email at dzmombo@gmail.com.

Bring your best chili to church on February 4

Warm up a winter evening at a Chili Cook-off in TPC's Fellowship Hall Sunday, February 4, at 5:30 p.m. This will be a family event for members and guests with good food and lots of fun and fellowship.

If all goes well, it may become an annual favorite.

It's not necessary to bring an entry, but if you're up for it, please sign up in the Narthex by January 29. Then bring a crock pot of your best chili, or other items such as cornbread, a salad or dessert.

There will be entertainment following the meal – and not just listening to rumbling stomachs.

Prizes will be awarded for the Judge's Best Chili and the People's Choice Chili. Which means, this is a competition!

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Organizer Alan Zaeske seems to think his chili will be in the thick of it. He says, “I have two recipes, both of which have placed second and even first in prior events back in Illinois. I am a formidable competitor. Either recipe I choose will probably be a finalist.”

Alan directed a barb at another possible competitor, whom he did not name: “I understand one entrant may present two chilis for the competition. This may be an act of desperation on his or her part. I think it shows a lack of confidence. And then there’s Purtill. He may well be a fantastic pastor. But a chef? Not so much.”



Ouch.

Susan Speight says she must be considered a contender.

“My friends know that I don’t spend too much time in the kitchen,” she says. “However, I love to make chili in the wintertime. I only use the best ingredients – chili beans and black beans from my brother-in-law’s company, Bush’s Beans, an old East Tennessee, family-owned company. Chili cook-offs across the country have been won with Bush’s Beans as the main ingredient.

“Disclaimer: The secret family

recipe will NOT be revealed.”

Doug Clark says he lets others do his talking for him, as follows:

- “Heavenly, with a side of fire and brimstone” – Pope Francis.
- “Every year, I hope I don’t have to play in the Super Bowl so I can attend Doug’s chili party instead” – Tom Brady.
- “Doug’s chili is driving global warming” – John Kerry.
- “I would trade my Yankees contract for Doug’s chili recipe” – Aaron Judge.
- “We use it in our rocket fuel” – NASA.
- “After tasting Doug’s chili, I just gave up” – Guy Fieri.
- “It’s what chili is meant to be” – Rachael Ray.
- “My best hope is second place behind Doug” – Alan Zaeske.

For those who prefer alternatives to NASA rocket fuel and other chili dishes, soup and salads will be available.

Come hungry and leave with warm feelings from head to toe.

Strategic plans include focusing on at-risk youth

Our strategic planning process, commenced in 2021 and completed in 2022, resulted in a number of recommendations for Session to consider. In previous communications, I shared the core values deemed essential by the Strategic Planning Team (SPT), which were Grace, Worship, Diversity, Community and Stewardship. The SPT identified new residents, musicians and artists, retirees and working families as some of the groups we should specifically try to reach. We were asked by the facilitators, Elemental Churches, where we should focus our efforts to impact others in a meaningful way.



TPC aims to help address the needs of at-risk children.

The team felt we are called to make a difference in schools, and to focus on at-risk youth and families. While the school system in Polk County is ranked high among North Carolina systems, there is a significant disparity in our county between the “haves” and “have-nots.”

One can argue that all youth in our society are “at-risk,” but we recognize that the children at Black Mountain Home for Children and those served by Steps to Hope, Thermal Belt Outreach and others have particular needs.



Some people first encounter our church at Harmon Field.

Our church can support those in need by assisting with education resources, reading materials and other means to help build hope and confidence in the knowledge that these individuals are valued.

We felt called to reach those in retirement communities and those in nursing homes. Many retirees remain very active in the community. But there are those who are lonely, grieving and even isolated. We want to increase visitation to those who may be lonely, cultivate relationships with them and ensure that opportunities for worship are available.

Harmon Field is a great resource and gathering place for our community, and it is next door to our church. We want our church to be a good neighbor to this park and its patrons. This is an area where we can gather for walks or other activities. We can continue to minister to those using the park with our lemonade stand. We should continue to brainstorm to find ways to create a Tryon Presbyterian presence at the park.

Edward Harrelson, Church Development chairman

An unexpected Christmas blessing lives in memory

My sister and I often joked that when we got married, we had prenups drawn up stating that we always had to be at our parents' house on Christmas morning. And, for more than four decades, we always were.

Over the years, as our lives took many twists and turns, the one thing that never changed was our holiday tradition. In fact, being at Grammy and Pop-Pop's house was the only Christmas my daughter had ever known.



In 2001, our parents died unexpectedly right before the holidays. What were we going to do? Where would we be on Christmas morning? That first year we used some of "Daddy's money" and treated our husbands and children to a stay at the Richmond Hill Inn in Asheville. Despite the luxurious surroundings and the impeccable service, the holiday felt raw – the loss of our parents was still so new. The next two Christmases were happier times and, since I lived in South Carolina and my sister lived in Tennessee, we met halfway and rented houses in the mountains of North Carolina. By the fourth year, I had used my part of "Daddy's money," combined with a generous contribution from Charlie, to purchase a rustic stone cabin at Camp Skyuka. There was no need to rent a house for Christmas anymore.

I worked hard that first Christmas at our cabin to create the safe and cozy retreat our parents' home had always been. I hosted a party for our new friends on the mountain. We enjoyed a lovely Christmas Eve dinner at the Pine Crest Inn. Some of us attended the candlelight service at the Episcopal church, and I fixed a delicious brunch on Christmas morning. When my sister left to return home, she announced that, "I think we have definitely found our new tradition!" It felt exactly right.

However, Christmas was not over. Once my family left, Charlie and I drove to Columbia to visit his elderly parents. After we exchanged gifts and shared the events of the day, I picked up a magazine lying on the couch next to me. It was an issue of *Colonial Homes*. My mother-in-law explained that she saved all the Christmas editions – that one was 14 years old, published in 1992.

As I flipped through the magazine, the pages fell open to the *Letters to the Editor* section. I looked down and there was my mother's name lifting off the page – Frances Barber Story.

In 1992, my mother had written to the editors of *Colonial Homes* and there was her letter! Was it simply a coincidence that I found her letter on Christmas Day 14 years later? I don't think so. Though I can't explain it, I believe that my mother was sending a message – a message that, yes indeed, we'd found our new tradition.

It was the best present I've ever received.

By Susan Speight. This story was published in "Feathers Brush My Heart, True Stories of Gifts from the Afterlife," by Sinclair Browning, 2013.

Christmas season fills TPC with joy



Christmas season activities included the pageant, a party and dinner and Christmas Eve and Christmas Day worship services.

