

**A Letter from Charles to Jeanne Holmquist, organist and choir director
at Prospect Park United Methodist Church upon her death (2003):**

Dear Jeanne:

I came to this church in 1959, when we were new in town. You were not the organist. I thought the church sanctuary was nice, but noted that the organ was not much. I knew nothing whatever about the staffing of Prospect Park's church or its equipment. But the next fall you appeared as the organist. And I thought, "Hey! They installed a new organ!" What an instrument! What music!

And I have reveled in it every Sunday since. But among all the wondrous music you have produced, nothing is more glorious than Handel's "largo." This piece fits the category of "old warhorse" because it is so popular that it has almost become trite. Every organist plays it. But at our church, with you at the keyboards, it is burnished with new glory every time you perform it. At each climax I am sure there can't be any greater heights to soar to, and then the next one rises. And then the next, and the next, and then the last. I know that no other organist has ever done this piece better.

If Handel were here, he would stand in tribute.

But you and I have something more together – your accompaniment of my solos. A few times I had a solo part in the larger choir anthem. Last month our six-year-old grandson Erik reminded me of that when he sang "Ye happy flock the sheep of Jesus." Our kids learned that one and all the others from my practicing at home. Every summer I would sing one of the old turn-of-the-century solos my father had sung, too. Between these and occasional funerals, I think we made music together perhaps fifty times. You would say to me, "Come over to church when I'm practicing." You would make some small suggestions that inevitably would make each one a more spiritual offering.

The music we made together nurtured my soul. Thank you, thank you Jeanne.

- Charles Backstrom