

Tales From The Choir Loft

June 2024

The Lancaster United Methodist Church Donkey

Every now and then, usually around Christmas and Easter, a life-size version of a small donkey keeps appearing around the church. I don't remember the details, but somewhere around 2011 I must have said something to someone asking about the origins of the donkey. Somehow this question got to **Cathy Swords**, who typed up the following and passed a paper printout of it to me. For years that paper lived in my choir folder, eventually moving into the Choir Archive Binder when that was created.

- **Russ Erb**

A Bit of Church History

For many years we have enjoyed the papier-mâché donkey and sheep at Christmas and sometimes the donkey at Easter. They were made several years ago by Sunday School teacher Leslie White, her husband Ed, and her second grade Sunday School class. For years Leslie and Ed White were active members of the Lancaster United Methodist Church. They have three children, Chris, Tim, and Beth. Ed was a highly respected Biology teacher at Quartz Hill High School. Unfortunately, his life was cut short by brain cancer. After his death Leslie went back to school to obtain her teaching credential and taught at Sunnysdale Elementary School for many years. Leslie now lives in Des Moines, Iowa near her daughter Beth, a physician, and her son Tim who works in medical records. Chris White and his wife live in Santa Rosa, California.

When asked her recollection of the donkey and sheep, this is the letter Leslie wrote February 2007:

“I think we made the donkey in 1971 for Easter. The second grade children could sit on it. We costumed them and they waved palms. It was just for play-acting -- and I love papier-mâché.

The donkey was modeled after the Hummel figurine. Eddie built the armature and we formed chicken wire on the wood frame in our garage. In the classroom, we covered it with paper towel strips dipped in wall paper paste. The eyes are ping pong balls. The mane and tail are made from raveled rope. I made a BIG mistake in painting it with acrylic paint (some of the children got paint on their clothes).

Our Grandpa Ed helped us make the sheep later. We thought we needed some sheep for the shepherds at Christmas.”

Leslie and her family probably had no idea that almost 40 years later the beloved animals would still bring such joy to us at Christmas and Easter.

- **Cathy Swords**