

**THANK YOU GRETTA BELLE SOMERVILLE**  
**Pentecost/ Ministry of Music/ Endowment –May 15, 2016**

**I Peter 1: 3-9**

**The Church of the Covenant**

I have often pondered what motivates someone to give. Why are some people so generous? Why do people give for the specific things they do? Why are some people created to be generous, kind and giving? What is in their heart to be this kind of person of faith?

One day in heaven I will search out Gretta Belle Somerville and ask her directly why she originally established the Somerville Handbell Fund, endowed it, and put it into place. Why did she love handbells so? Why did she love church music so? The praise of God so much? What was her motivation? Why did she give and in a way that established the legacy of handbell music in The Church of the Covenant, not just for a time, but forever? Our scripture from I Peter in the New Testament speaks of an *“inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (I Peter 1: 4)* Gretta Belle Somerville, you have established an inheritance set in heaven and forever, undefiled, unfading, imperishable. A value you loved in this life will live forever because of you. Your love for handbell music is imperishable, undefiled and unfading because of your generosity. A value that lived in your heart now lives forever because of your faith. There will always be handbell music at The Church of the Covenant and these hallways and this sanctuary will always ring with the praises of God because of your faithfulness and generosity, Gretta Belle Somerville. I want to meet this woman in person and say to her --Thank you, Gretta Belle Somerville.

Due to careful shepherding of the Somerville Handbell Fund over the years by our Endowment Committee the fund has grown to some \$65,000. When I first arrived at our church some seven ½ years ago there was no handbell choir. It had “gone out of business” some time before. But there was this wonderful and generous handbell fund established by this wonderful and faithful woman long ago. So of course, we reestablished the Jubilate Ringers, who are playing the service today. If we had not had the handbell fund would we have done this? Or would the beautiful White Chapel bells have remained silent, gathering dust in their cases? Would the handbell room have remained silent, the peel of bells silenced by the ravages of time? Would other Ministry of Music Sundays have come and gone without any handbell music? See, the value of what Gretta Belle Somerville has done is that the value that first lived in her heart, a love of handbell music, has been revived, and come to life again, because of her generosity. The legacy she gave has preserved a legacy she valued in her life. The church will have and promote handbell music because of the love and the faith of Gretta Belle Somerville. In another church I served we started a handbell choir, and we bought the bells, and we learned the music, but over time interest waned, and after I left that church the bells were put away, gathering dust in the cold basement. What is the difference? The Somerville Handbell Fund. The establishment of endowments promoting the values we hold dear establish them forever. Thank you, Gretta Belle Somerville.

By God’s great mercy we have been born anew through the Holy Spirit poured out at that first Pentecost. We are born anew by the power of Jesus Christ’s resurrection and HIM being raised from the dead into a living hope, that lives for us forever in heaven. Our hope is set for us as a hope which is imperishable, undefiled and unfading because it is eternal, it is set for us and held for us in heaven, it is guaranteed by Jesus Christ HIMSELF, who is the same yesterday, today and forever. It is sealed for us by the Holy Spirit here on earth. But it is held for us as an imperishable inheritance in heaven. The things we love in this life never die. The Church of the Covenant and what we value about it in this life never dies. The love we share in this church, the love we share with one another, that love never ends. The

values that live in our heart today can live forever. The things important to us today can live and be important to generations to come through us and our generosity.

A generous anonymous donor has this year established The Choir Fund, to help and promote our wonderful choir. Through donations to the Organ Maintenance Fund we are in the process of establishing an ongoing endowed fund to maintain our magnificent Skinner Pipe Organ, today, tomorrow and forever, that these organ pipes may never be silenced but always and forever give praise to the God who they were made to do so. A wonderful and faithful member has established a Camp and Conference Fund in memory of her son, who passed away, but who loved kids, himself a kid really. A generous family has established a Mission and Adoption Fund to help promote the value of adopting children from overseas. Another family is setting up a fund to address a debilitating disease affecting one of its grandchildren. The church established an endowment in honor of one of its Christian Educators to promote Childrens Ministry. The values that live today, live forever through the generosity of the saints.

I have never met Gretta Belle Somerville but one day through God's grace and Jesus' kindness I shall. I look forward to that day when I shall see my Savior, Jesus, face-to-face, and know fully even as I am fully known, and understand why all that happens in this life has happened. Without having actually seen HIM nevertheless I love HIM. Without having actually seen and touched HIM nevertheless I believe in HIM. And whatever else is going on today I can rejoice with "*unutterable and exalted joy*", knowing that the day is coming when as the outcome of that faith I obtain the salvation of my soul.

In Jesus Christ, in what HE has done for us on a cross and through an empty tomb, in the Pentecost Power of the Holy Spirit, we know that the values that live in our heart, live forever. Thank you, Lord Jesus. And thank you, Gretta Belle Somerville, for showing us the way. Amen and Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, Pennsylvania  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*