

**From our history: Remembering Mrs. Evelyn Meredith Crowell Peckham, a member of St. Matthew's United Church**

I met Mrs. Evelyn Peckham the first Sunday my family attended church at St. Matthew's in the fall of 1975. We were looking for a church to attend in Halifax, having moved here from Fredericton. We were drawn to St. Matthew's as a first stop as Don had attended worship here while a student at TUNS (Technical University of Nova Scotia) during the late 1960s and he had been impressed with the intellectual sermons delivered by Dr. Allan Beveridge. We discovered that he was still the minister here and he welcomed us warmly at coffee hour after the service. In those days, coffee hour was held in the Ladies' Parlour, an indication of how small the congregation was then. The next person to speak to us was Mrs. Peckham, a lady in her 80s, who impressed us with her warm welcome and genuine interest in our family. She spoke to me of my music career and suggested that I join the choir and the Jubilee Group. Mrs. Peckham is the reason that we stayed at St. Matthew's and did not go any further in our search for a church.

Mrs. Peckham was a musician, a noted soloist, pianist, and composer, who graduated from Dalhousie University with a Bachelor of Music degree in 1917. As an indication of the respect she had in the community, I quote from an article in the paper at that time:

“Miss Evelyn Crowell, who holds high rank among the pianists and vocalists of Halifax, has now won honours in a new field, that of composing. Miss Crowell has been awarded the Ladies Musical Club prize for the best original composition for two entries – song and quartette.”

This composition, an SATB anthem with piano accompaniment, was entitled *Come Unto Me*. She also wrote another SATB anthem with piano accompaniment called *Awake Ethiopia*. In addition, she wrote secular songs, such as *The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise*, and a string quartet.

She was a soloist in the choir at St. Matthew's for many years and she continued to be an active member of St. Matthew's until about a year before her death. When I knew her, she was a member of B Group of the UCW (United Church Women), preparing many items for the craft table at the annual bazaar, being actively involved in their meetings as well as the general UCW meetings, and always welcoming new members to the church. Even in her late 90s she could be seen at coffee hour seeking out new faces. She delighted in young people and was always interested in what they were doing.

On a personal level, she was a great friend to me and my mother-in-law and delighted to have us in for tea at her home on Connaught Avenue. She came to our house for several years on December 27 for tea to see our tree and to spend some time with our children and their new toys. Before she moved to Saint Vincent's Guest House, she

invited me once more for tea and presented me with her music library, including her compositions. I was deeply touched and honoured.

With this article, I would like to celebrate this woman in her own right. Mrs. Evelyn Peckham was a woman of great character who added so much to our community with her talents, time, and nurturing abilities. I would also like to celebrate her life as representative of other women of St. Matthew's, those women who, over the years, have brought their strengths to this congregation and have added so much to the feeling of community. These are people who bind us together with a sense of belonging, and who help the community to grow.

Margaret Fay  
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