

## Super Saturday Keynote Address

given by Carol Dean, April 27, 2013

### FORGE AHEAD WITH FAITH

It's wonderful to look over the group today and see kindred spirits. I know many of the reasons you are here to this "Super Saturday" workshop, because I have been where you are . . . and, for that matter, still am in many ways. Knowledge is relative. No matter how much training and experience you have been blessed to attain, there are always others who have more training and experience than you have. However, it is healthy for our spirits to stay humble, and we need to realize that talent, even highly developed, without a desire to share it and to serve others is quite useless. So we should be anxiously engaged in gaining knowledge – **today knowledge regarding the organ** – and then "forge ahead with faith" in sharing with and serving others with that increased knowledge.

I've always loved the parable of the labourers in the vineyard found in Matthew 20:1-16.

1 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. 2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. 5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? 7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. 8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. 9 And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. 10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. 11 And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, 12 Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. 13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? 14 Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. 15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? 16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

There are many ways to interpret this parable, but the way I like to interpret it in relation to you and me and the way we serve others using this wonderful instrument – the organ – is as follows:

It makes no difference whether we were exposed to the organ early in our lives (like those labourers who were hired the first hour of the day), or whether we started to study the organ in the middle of our lives (like the labourers hired at the third, sixth, and ninth hours of the day) or whether our chance comes at the eleventh hour of our life, what we learn, develop, and share with others regarding the organ will bring us the same sense of joy and fulfillment no matter at what age we start.

Let me relate an experience I had while teaching at the Church Music Workshop years ago. After one of my classes, a sister, probably in her late 40s, early 50s, came up to me. She had tears in her eyes and said something like this: "I've had callings to play the organ in the different wards I've lived in since I was first married. Now I come to this workshop and find out that I've been playing the organ completely wrong all these years. I feel like my service has all been a waste and of no value." Of course, I assured her that all her years of service on the organ had not been a waste, and that she had done the best she could with the knowledge she then had. Her willing service would be rewarded regardless of whether she was using correct organ technique or not. However, now that she had come to the workshop and gained information regarding proper organ manual and pedal technique and registration, she would be accountable to continue to develop her talent in a more informed way so that she could serve her congregation more effectively.

So I say to all of you, it doesn't matter how old you are when you first are made aware of how the organ should be played. What does matter is that once you understand how to better fulfill your stewardship and give a better offering of a more perfect organ technique to your Lord who gave you your talents, then you become accountable from that moment onward to do everything in your power to become the best organist you can become, thus allowing your quality of service on the organ to become so much more effective.

I know we all experience feelings of fear when we are called upon to serve in a calling or accept an assignment where we feel very inadequate. Please do not let these feelings of fear and inadequacy stop you from serving. Our Heavenly Father has endowed us with talents and abilities that he expects us to develop, and He and our Savior are there waiting to help and encourage us as we start on the path to developing these talents. I also believe that our relatives who have passed on before are our "cheering section" in the spirit world. They also do

everything they are allowed to do to help us. I have had many experiences in my life where I have felt their presence regarding the development of my musical talents, especially in relation to my organ service. (I'll tell you of an experience in that regard in a few moments.) Let me now go back and give you a little of my background, since Brother Micheal Carson gave me instructions to do so when he came to my home and asked me to fulfill this assignment.

I grew up in Southwestern Colorado on a small dry farm, the only girl in the family of six children. My father was an amazingly hard worker, and it was a rare, but lovingly remembered evening when he would come in at dark when his other work was done, take the top off our only source of heat – a wood and coal stove in the living room – and pop popcorn over the hot coals in an old aluminum kettle with a handle and the bottom cut away, replaced with a screen. Then he would take out his violin and Mother would accompany him on the piano as he played old World War I songs such as “Keep the Home Fires Burning” and “Let the Rest of the World Go By.”

My mother also came from a very musical family. I was weaned on stories of her great grandfather, Joseph Harris Ridges, who built the original Tabernacle organ; her grandfather, Joseph H. Dean, who wrote hymn 158 in our hymnal, “Before Thee, Lord, I Bow My Head;” and her Uncle Harry A. Dean who taught at Snow College for many years and wrote the music for three hymns in our current hymnal – my favorite being “Lord, We Come Before Thee Now.” (In case any of you are a little confused about all these “Deans” on my mother’s side of the family, just know that my husband, Dana, was the only beau of mine she ever approved of, and I know it was because he had the same last name as her maiden name – different Dean line, however.) Mother had been playing for dances since she was twelve years old, mostly by ear, but she was an amazing sight reader as well. She never had an organ lesson in her life, but could make the old Hammond in our chapel sound better than anyone else could. She played for everything and everybody. I remember one Sunday when Joseph Fielding Smith and his second wife Jessie Evans showed up at our sacrament meeting and Mother accompanied Sister Smith singing, “He That Hath Clean Hands and A Pure Heart.”

But even with such a rich musical tradition in my DNA, and in my environment, my love for music did not extend to my wanting to share it with anyone else. I was a painfully shy and insecure child. Accompanying or singing with a group never bothered me; however, every time I was asked to sing or play in a solo setting, I became physically ill and could hardly function. And

to have to give a talk was stark terror. One day when I was twelve years old, the Stake President called. I happened to be the one to answer the phone; and when he asked me to be a youth speaker at the upcoming stake conference, the assignment was so far beyond my ability to even think about that I burst into tears, dropped the phone, and ran, leaving my mother to pick up the pieces.

Another event occurred when I was twelve which changed the course of my life in a major way. That was the opportunity to take a few organ lessons. Prior to that at age eight, a piano teacher had finally moved into our small community, but she stayed only one year. She hadn't had much training herself, but she taught me to read notes and instilled in me a good sense of rhythm by making me count out loud every piece I played in the eight volumes of the John W. Schaum series. Although I never had to be asked to practice (in fact my brothers often begged me to stop practicing), I didn't realize what a passion for an instrument was until Church Headquarters sent Darwin K. Wolford out to our stake to teach group organ and music directing classes. Mother enrolled me in these classes which lasted for six weeks. During those six weeks, Dr. Wolford was the "match that lit the flame" of my love for the organ that I knew would last my entire life and on into the eternities. I also knew there had to be organs in Heaven, otherwise it definitely wouldn't be Heaven for me.

When it came time to attend university at BYU, I wanted so badly to be an organ major as I had been trading off with Mother as ward organist since Dr. Wolford gave me such a good start in those early days. But all my shyness and insecurities were still very much a part of my psychological makeup, and I didn't dare even consider that I could survive as an organ performance major, so I became a business major instead, back in the days of shorthand, ten-key adding machines, and correction tape for the typewriters. The college years passed quickly. I took every music class I had time for and participated in choirs and even sang in the slave chorus in the opera, Aida. In 1970, I met my hubby, graduated from college, got engaged, and got married all in that one year. In 1974 we moved to Alaska as a result of seeing an aerial photo of the Matanuska Valley (located northeast of Anchorage) in a Time-Life book at the Helena, Montana Public Library where we were spending a typically economical date night. (Dana was in aircraft mechanics school in Helena at the time.) We fell in love with what we saw, knew that we must go there, and a few months later we were there. Up until that time in every ward I had lived, my callings had always been in music. It wasn't until I moved into the Palmer Ward in that beautiful Matanuska Valley that I really learned the meaning of trusting in

the Lord to help me fulfill my callings. As many of you who have lived in the smaller units of the Church know, it is common to serve in three, four or more callings at once. Palmer was no exception. In addition to serving as organist, choir accompanist, Relief Society pianist, and visiting teacher, I was also called as a Relief Society social relations teacher. That calling terrified me so badly that I had to rely on a husband's blessing each month to get me through the trauma. Just as I was getting to where I could function halfway adequately teaching once a month, I was called as Laurel advisor, teaching every week. From there I went to serving as Young Women's president, and then to early morning seminary, teaching every day. My church experience in that little ward in Palmer taught me one of the greatest lessons of my life – that if you are willing to take the first step of accepting a call or assignment, then working as hard as you know how to fulfil that assignment, and trusting absolutely in the Lord, He will lift you and fit you for the task he has called you to do.

So when my husband's work brought us back to Provo in the fall of 1986, I was a little more mature and much more emotionally, mentally, and spiritually prepared to take advantage of the opportunities which awaited me here. Now almost 27 years later, I know that the Lord brought me back to Provo to prepare me for the most important mission in this life (that is after my calling of being a wife and mother) – that of being an organ teacher, especially to teach the hymns of the Church. It took some miracles, the patience, love, and encouragement of wonderful teachers, and the inspiration of a magnificent instrument to bring me to this point in my life.

The first miracle is the story of how we ended up buying a house in Provo Central Stake where the magnificent Bigelow, Opus 16, organ now resides. As soon as Dana found out he was being transferred to the Provo area (he supervised Maverik convenience stores at the time), we made a trip here from Colorado where we were then living, to do some house hunting. We found a house on Grandview Hill that fit our needs quite well and put down earnest money. The very week we were to close on the house, however, the owners changed their minds and backed out of the deal. Dana was at that point already working the Provo area, living in a motel during the week, and coming home to Colorado on weekends. The week before we were to move here, he found out about the house deal falling through and went house hunting all by himself. I received a call later that week telling me that he had found a house, had had a very strong impression that this was to be our house, and had gone ahead and signed the contract.

I don't know how you women would feel if your husband bought a house you had never even seen, but Dana is an amazing man and I've always trusted him implicitly, so it really didn't bother me.

The first Sunday we attended meetings in the Provo Central Stake Center, which housed the stake offices and two units at that time – there was no organ in the chapel at all and the hymn singing was being accompanied on the piano. So I asked my visiting teacher, who came over that very day to welcome us into the ward, why there was no organ in the chapel. She proceeded to tell me all about Dr. Douglas Bush, organ faculty at BYU, and also a counselor in our stake presidency who had been the driving force behind getting a new organ in the building that was being built by the Bigelow Organ Company in American Fork. Dr. Bush traveled to Europe every year playing wonderful historic organs there, and we would be getting a mechanical action “tracker” organ similar to the ones Bach played while growing up in the Thuringian province of Germany. She didn't know all the technical information about the new organ, but Dr. Bush told me all about it when I started studying with him shortly thereafter.

The next twenty years or so were in many ways the most exciting and fulfilling years of my life. Dr. Bush helped me perfect my hymn-playing technique, he exposed me to the music of great organ composers throughout history; and being a musicologist with a near photographic memory, he gave me background information on each piece I learned as well as pertinent information on the composer of each piece. His specialty is the organ music of “Papa Bach” as he always calls him. I don't have over a hundred books about Bach in my own personal library like Dr. Bush has, but his knowledge of and respect for Johann Sebastian Bach and his love for the great man and his music have changed my life forever. My “four” favorite “B” composers as far as organ music is concerned are: Bach, Brahms, Buxtehude, and Bush, Dr. Bush's hymn arrangements being by far my favorite of any of the hymn arrangements available.

Dr. Bush, knowing that music will be perfected to a greater degree if the student has opportunities to share what he or she is learning with others, strongly suggested that I give my first solo recital less than one year after I started studying with him. I was obedient, but so apprehensive and worried as the time for the recital drew closer because I had never performed even one piece in a solo setting on either the piano or the organ before, let alone an entire hour of organ music in a solo recital setting at age 40. I was so sick with fright the day of the recital that I asked my hubby for a blessing. In that blessing it was given to him by the Spirit

to tell me that the reason he had had such a strong impression about the “rightness” of moving into our current home was because my Grandfather Ridges wanted his great, great granddaughter to have the experience of playing a wonderful “tracker” organ similar to the one he built for the Salt Lake Tabernacle. (Some of you may not have known that the original Ridges organ in the “Tabernacle” was a mechanical action organ.) This blessing made me realize just how much our ancestors on the other side of the veil are looking out for us.

Because of Dr. Bush’s encouragement I completed levels three through six of what was then called the “Organ Certification Program” – now “BYU Independent Organ Study Courses”. And the next miracle occurred in 1989. Playing the Bigelow organ awakened my old desire to study organ on the university level and to better qualify myself to share my love and knowledge of the organ with others. I had been teaching what Dr. Bush taught me to a good friend who played the organ for the other unit in our building from just a couple of months after I started my own lessons. Now I always encourage my students to never be afraid to share what they learn with others any time they have opportunities to do so. Nothing teaches you to be a better teacher than the experience of trying to teach others. Just be sure to thank your students for allowing you to experiment on them during those early days. Anyway, I applied for readmission to BYU early in 1989 to start working on music pre-requisites towards a Masters Degree in Organ Performance and Pedagogy. They actually let me back in even though I already had a Bachelor of Science in Business. From Spring of 1989 until the end of Winter semester 1997 when I earned my Masters degree in Organ Performance and Pedagogy, I basked in the wonderful privilege of acquiring knowledge from the greatest faculty on campus – the BYU School of Music faculty. In addition, to studying privately with Dr. Bush, I studied with Dr. Richard Elliott for a couple of years before he replaced Dr. Robert Cundick, the retiring Tabernacle organist, and also Dr. Cook for one semester. When I took Dr. Belnap’s graduate organ pedagogy class, I was the only student in his Tuesday/Thursday class that semester. So on Tuesday he would teach me, and on Thursday, by assignment, I would research and “teach” him. He became a “father” figure for me during that time, as my own father had been dead for several years. The scariest and most humbling part of the university experience though was performing in master class in front of young, very talented organ students. The lesson I learned from this experience was that “you must never compare yourself to others but only keep track of the progress you, yourself make.”

Because I was taking care of my mother with Alzheimers disease in our home (we brought her with us from Colorado when we moved to Provo) and could only leave her for two hours at a time, so it took me, as I mentioned before, from Spring of 1989 until Fall of 1995 to complete all my undergraduate music requirements. In addition to getting to teach at the Workshop on Church Music, I also had the opportunity to teach group organ 115 and 116 for several semesters, which turned out to be the most defining preparation I could have possibly had for “my calling” to teach the hymns, especially to beginners. My philosophy of teaching and the examples I used to help young people understand the techniques and skills needed, came in large part from working with the hundreds of young people who represented such a wide variety of musical backgrounds and abilities. Many times I felt pure knowledge and inspiration flow into my mind as I searched for just the right way to explain a concept so it could be understood and implemented. I still don’t enjoy performing in a recital setting, but I came to realize that I didn’t need to “beat myself up” because of that. I know where my mission in relation to the organ is and that’s to serve in the church setting and to help as many pianists as I possibly can to become proficient service playing organists. If many of my students love to perform as well as play well for services, that’s an additional bonus and I always expose them to the great organ literature in our lessons.

In summary, it doesn’t matter at what age you come to the organ. I’ve had several students in their 60s and 70s who’ve made significant progress. What matters is that you in this room already have a desire to learn to play the organ correctly, otherwise you wouldn’t be here today. Do not let fear keep you from progressing! Trust in the Lord to help you develop your talents. He most certainly will. Do you realize that fear and faith cannot occur simultaneously in your heart and mind? If you have fear, you do not have faith. If you have faith, you will not fear. Dive in with all your heart, might, mind and strength and get really excited about the organ. Learn everything you can as quickly as you can. Getting a private organ teacher is the best thing you can do; but if that is not possible, get online and read, attend workshops, join the American Guild of Organists in your area. Expose yourself to this wonderful instrument in every possible way. Gain your own testimony of what your calling of service is as pertaining to the organ and then **joyously “forge ahead with faith”!**