

# JOHN & ELIZABETH PARSONS

Members since 1991

## John Parsons

**Birth Date:**

March 6, 1932

**Place of Birth:**

Willow Hill, PA

**Military Service:** U.S. Army  
(Korean War)

## Elizabeth Parsons

**Birth Date:**

February 21, 1933

**Place of Birth:** Shade Gap,  
PA

## Did You Know?

John has taught Sunday School classes in every church he has ever attended.

John and Bunny started the Open Door and Faith & Fellowship Sunday School classes here at FUMC.

## Favorite Hymns:

Just a Closer Walk With Thee

His Name Is Wonderful

Onward, Christian Soldiers

Have Thine Own Way, Lord



John and Bunny were born during the Great Depression and remember their families having very little money when they were growing up. As children, they both remember working hard around the home. John grew up on a farm in Blairs Mills, PA and helped with the planting and harvesting, as well as milking, feeding, watering, and cleaning out the stalls of the farm animals. Bunny remembers doing a lot of chores around the house, and by the age of twelve she was helping to earn money by setting hair and giving perms.

John and Bunny remember music always being an important part of their lives. John played the trumpet and sang in the high school choir, while Bunny played the clarinet and the piano. Bunny recalls that she began learning to play the piano from her neighbor, Jessie Montgomery, who gave her free lessons. But as she improved and needed a more advanced teacher, her mother managed to scrape together the 50 cents they needed in order to pay for a weekly lesson from Miss Speck. It proved to be money well-spent, as Bunny used her talents to serve as school accompanist and church pianist.

Although Bunny dreamed of pursuing a career in music, she knew that her family didn't have the money to send her to school for it. Instead, she enrolled in Thompson Business College in York, PA, borrowing the \$500 she needed to pay the tuition from her dad. She remembers his loan as a great kindness, because he had to completely empty his savings account in order to make the payment. After graduating, Bunny worked for the Bell Telephone Company, while John served in the Army for two years of the Korean War. When John returned home from the war, he and Bunny were married at Shade Gap Presbyterian Church on October 23, 1954.

John enrolled at Shippensburg College in order to earn a degree in business. During this time, he worked side jobs selling ice cream and cars on the weekends. When one of John's finance professors encouraged him to consider staying on to earn his masters degree and become a professor, John decided against it. He felt that he needed to get a full-time job in order to support his growing family, which would soon include three daughters: Sharon, Deborah, and Donna.

John began working for the United Telephone Company, a job that required the family to move frequently. Bunny says that she would often no more than get schools and doctors and other things lined up for their family than they'd be moving on to the next place. They moved homes a total of fourteen times, from Chambersburg to Bedford to New Jersey to New Bloomfield and then several times back and forth between Chambersburg and Carlisle. With all of this moving, the church was always the constant in their life.

John and Bunny both light up when they talk about what they see as their most purposeful work here at FUMC. Bunny's experience begins when they became a part of a group that reached out to older adults within the church, having them for dinner and taking them on trips. She recalls that soon Rev. Bill Brown approached her about beginning a singing group for people over age 55. Despite her misgivings that she was unqualified to become the leader of such a group, she eventually agreed to give it a try. According to her, God took it from there: "The Lord helped me. Otherwise, I don't think I could have done it. It was such a sacred group." The group, which came to be known as the Merry Methodist Choir (3M Choir), performed concerts for the residents of local nursing homes every Christmas and Easter and also sang anthems in the Sunday worship services. Looking back, Bunny sees her involvement with the 3M Choir as one of God's great blessings in her life: "The Lord knew how much I loved music. I think he gave me the choir because He knew I wanted music so badly."

In addition to his many years leading Sunday School classes, John is most proud of the work that he spearheaded with the Endowment Fund. It all started with a request from Dianne Salter, who asked John if he would be willing to use his financial knowledge to benefit the organization and long-term planning of the church. John accepted the challenge and began researching best practices. This search lead him to the idea of an endowment fund. When John took a proposal to church leadership, he remembers facing a fair amount of opposition: "They told me we can't afford that here. I told them, oh yes you can. You can't afford not to do it here." Remarkably, the opposition simply increased John's resolve, making him even more determined to get a fund established at FUMC. Since its creation in 1994, the Endowment Fund's reach has been extensive. In addition to paying for needed repairs and upgrades to our church facility and off-setting other organizational expenses during periods of lower giving, scholarships have been provided to several people who have entered full-time ministry, and donations have been made to support ministry around the world.

John and Bunny testify to God's love and care throughout their lives, especially during one of their most difficult experiences. At the age of four, their youngest daughter, Donna, was diagnosed with cancer and had to be rushed to the children's hospital in Philadelphia for emergency surgery. Thinking back to that time, Bunny says: "The Lord blessed us in so many ways. So many people came to our rescue." Because John was at an out-of-town training, their close friends, Bill and Joyce Baker, stepped in to help. Bill drove Bunny and Donna to Philadelphia, while Joyce kept Sharon and Debbie. During the drive to the hospital, Bunny remembers hearing God's voice reassuring her: "Elizabeth, Donna is going to be fine." Remarkably, when Bunny told John about this later, she found out that both he and Bill had heard the very same thing. And they felt the love and care of the Lord through so many other people, from the Christian doctor who performed the surgery to the head doctor who sat with them while they waited for news. After recuperating, Donna returned home to an enormous outpouring of dolls and other gifts for their church friends and community members.

Based on a lifetime of faith experience, Bunny's advice to others is simply: "Trust in the Lord, because He will take care of you. And remember to thank Him for all that you have and enjoy." John adds that we should practice what we preach: "Be a good example for what you should do and how you should do it."

It would be hard to find any words that are more true of John and Bunny, whose lives are a beautiful example of faith and love.