



HOME MORAVIAN CHURCH

Welcome Home

History of the Moravian Band

For more than its first century in Salem, the Band was an important communications tool, to announce important events such as births and deaths in the congregation.

Typically, the Band would play from an elevated position where they could be heard throughout the community. When the sanctuary was built in 1800, a special band platform was included high above the front door on Church Street. Different chorales, or tunes, signified the news being communicated. For deaths, the specific chorales indicated the age, gender and marital status of the departed member.

The importance of the Band continues today. It has grown from a small group of trombones to a larger collection of brass and woodwind instruments. The platform above the door, rarely used now for music, is still called the Trombone Balcony. Chorales for death announcements are now typically played on the organ during worship services, although for funerals, the band plays during the procession to God's Acre and at the gravesite for the Burial Liturgy, including the appropriate chorales.

Today the Band plays in a variety of locations. The Band plays preludes – either outdoors or in the sanctuary – before worship for major events and festival days in the church calendar, such as Palm Sunday, Pentecost, Advent and Christmas.

For the Easter Sunrise service, attended by thousands of worshipers from throughout the region, band members from all of the Salem Congregation churches gather on the periphery of Old Salem to play antiphonally, then mass together – hundreds-strong – for the conclusion of the service in God's Acre.

The Band has also played on July 4 since the nation's first Independence Day celebration was held in Salem in 1783.

Most of the Band's four-part music is selected from two part-specific chorale books, available from the Moravian Music Foundation (www.moravianmusic.org)