

LIVES OF DEDICATION

Hanna & Bill Schock

BY ANDREA WHITEHEAD

Many thanks to Renee Harmon for sharing her insight for this article.



Few couples have given more of their time and talents to First Methodist than Hanna and Bill Schock. Their efforts have been more recently focused in the children's department, the youth program, the New Feast/Loft worship service, and on working actively with Arts Camp in the summers. But along the way they each served on various committees helping guide the church in a meaningful direction of inclusion for all.

Hanna first came to our church as a student attending Birmingham-Southern College. In 1988 after she and Bill married and moved to Birmingham they thought First Methodist might be a good fit, and we are most grateful that they chose us! Hanna has served on the Staff Parish Committee, the Executive Council, taught children's and adult Sunday School classes, and led a spiritual discernment group entitled "Companions in Christ." Her training as a school psychologist, public school teacher, and Christian educator proved to be fortuitous in all these leadership roles.



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In 2011 Hanna was asked to write a children's Bible literacy curriculum based on Manna and Mercy for the children's Sunday school hour. Linda Underwood Thorne, then the director of children's ministries, wanted it to incorporate children from all cultures since our church youth had merged with the youth of Church Without Walls and Church of the Reconciler. The curriculum was based on the lectionary series and offered ways to teach children scriptural lessons that related to their daily lives. Our church and many others use this series still today. This endeavor led her to research high quality children's books that encouraged critical thinking, and in 2014 she launched her website www.PictureBookTheology.com. which has now profiled over 900 books. Not all the books are religious but her selections are all designed to prompt children to think about the deeper questions in life. This project is currently ongoing, with a weekly posting.

Never one to sit idly by, in 2018 Hanna began another undertaking by launching a series for preschoolers entitled "Trinity Treasures" that is also lectionary based and has four ritual components in a God box: a heart, a figure of Jesus, the Holy Spirit in the form of wind chimes, and a Bible. Since the program is designed for very young children there are multiple activities based around a scripture or book chosen for that particular weekly lesson. Hanna is currently sharing this program with our church and several more, including a church in Australia.

Bill's employment as a systems analyst for an insurance provider seems an unlikely match for his talents in the realm of Christian education, but he clearly breaks down the big picture ideas into implementation on the ground, a talent that is sorely needed by anyone. His early life started in the Disciples of Christ church, and he toyed with the idea of becoming a minister. After serving as a youth director while in college at the University of South Alabama, he decided that role would not be a good fit, but the call to serve oth-



ers remained a constant in his adult life. At the request of Trent Ramsey, our then youth director, Bill became a youth mentor, a role he relished. He had served on the Nominating Committee, but found the youth role a much better fit. About the time that Dream Garden Bible School transitioned to Arts Camp, Bill found his calling working with the committee to create a new approach to teaching school-age children Biblical lessons in a way that related to their lives. Ever the analyst, Bill could grasp the big picture and implement the lessons of inclusion from ideas on paper into real life activities. For ten years he helped write curriculum, build sets that involved caves with hanging stalactites, tunnels that resembled a carwash, and dressed as characters from these stories. Often the lessons had him dressing as John the Baptist, a bird from the theme Take Flight, the people of Gees Bend, enslaved people on the Underground Railroad, or a photographer teaching about the workings of a camera. Many summers Bill used his vacation time to spend the entire week with the camp participants. Currently, Bill has found great joy in the tap dancing class offered by Kathy Draper and the men's retreat recently held at Camp McDowell.



As a couple Bill and Hanna were two of the founding members of the New Feast contemporary worship service started twenty years ago. They were looking for a way to involve their children, Julianna and Josiah, in a meaningful worship experience rather than having them sit in the nursery. One of Josiah's early memories is getting to help put away the chairs while singing and listening to the last song of the service. The last song was always his favorite, since he got to help. In

the beginning Bill ran the technical aspects, while Hanna sang onstage. They were instrumental in bringing Sara Groves, a contemporary Christian recording artist, to the service as a way to raise awareness of this new endeavor. This contemporary service continues today as the Loft and draws a full house of participants.

Hanna and Bill became part of a core group of friends helping to provide a fountain of support to Renee and Harvey Harmon after Harvey's diagnosis with younger onset Alzheimer's disease. Those strong ties exist today and speak volumes about their dedication to living in ser-



vice to others. Truly this couple understands and lives in the examples of Nehemiah, Mary, and Martha from the Bible. They show personal commitment, courage, passion, and a willingness to freely share their talents. We are a much better church because of their leadership.

STORIES FROM
15 
YEARS