

Dr. Naki Sung Kripfgans was born in South Korea and grew up attending a Presbyterian Church there. She started playing the piano at the age of four, and sang in church and school choirs. Singing in choir was one of the main reasons why she decided to pursue music.

However, enthusiastic church members quickly put her on a piano bench soon after discovering her keyboard skills. Since then she has been playing the piano and organ - solo, chamber music and accompanying - as her main musical outputs, and pursued her education in piano and organ as well. Working with choirs for her entire life, she also started developing her interest and passion in learning conducting to become a more versatile church musician. Prior to the appointment at Bethlehem UCC, she served First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor for 20 years as their resident Organist, and later Minister of Music and Organist. She is absolutely humbled and honored to serve Bethlehem UCC as Director of Music Ministries.

Naki was hailed by Diapason magazine for her virtuosity and musicality, and was featured in an interview article "Women in Improvisation" in American Guild of Organists magazine. As an international concert organist/collaborative pianist, competition winner, competition judge and recording artist, she has concertized regionally and internationally, including Japan, Germany, Russia, and South Korea. Naki received her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Liturgical, Church, and Synagogue Music and a master's degree in Piano Performance from the University of Michigan, and a bachelor's degree in Music from the University of Northern Iowa. During her studies, Naki received numerous scholarships and awards in piano and organ performance. She won the 2015 UM Life Science Orchestra Concerto Competition to perform Poulenc's Organ Concerto at Hill Auditorium in 2016. As a virtuoso improviser, she also won 2012 the Robert Glasgow Award for Organ Improvisation Competition at the University of Michigan, and served as one of the judges for the 2019 competition. and a staff Collaborative Pianist for the String Departments at the University of Michigan since 2012. She has been teaching chamber music classes at the University of Michigan Residential College since 2016.

Naki enjoys cooking (including home-made meals for her family dog, Bella), family travel, movies, and a little bit of yoga. During the COVID pandemic, she found herself enjoying and becoming passionate about the amazing world of audio/video recording/editing technology, and she hopes to continue to develop her skills as her hobby in the future.

Naki wants to express special thanks to her husband and children who have been steadfast supporters of her and her journey as a church musician.