

PIPE ORGAN REPORT

April 15, 2007

Our pipe organ is an old theater organ used to accompany silent movies. We think it was acquired (used) from a movie house, possibly the Warner Bros. Hollywood theater, when the “talkies” came along in the 1920s.



What do the technicians say about its present condition?

- A. The condition is poor. Wind-chests and reservoirs need re-leathering. One is literally held together with duct tape. Many valves have now failed, so those notes are “dead” until the valves are repaired or replaced. The swell chamber shutters fail intermittently, so the sound is unpredictable.
- B. Some enhancement is critical. There is no cooling and no insulation in the organ chamber. On warm days it goes out of tune, and is very noticeable when played with the grand piano or handbells (which do not change pitch). On hot days it is so far out of tune as to be unplayable.
- C. It has limited and inappropriate sound. Even if all deteriorated and failed parts are repaired (\$20,000 or more?) the organ is still a small theater-style organ inappropriate for congregational singing and concerts.

What are our current needs and realistic expectations?

- To support congregational worship, including Lutheran liturgy, hymns, anthems, preludes/postludes, etc.
- To bring the organ into good condition for weddings, etc.
- To attract other musical groups, performances, tours, events, etc.
- Generate some revenue from organ lessons, etc.
- Explore possible relationship with Silverlake Conservatory of Music, etc.

What are our current options?

1. Do nothing. Hold off until the organ breaks down or just won't work.
2. Abandon it if it breaks down; just use the piano.
3. Do only remedial repairs to keep it functioning as it is. (More duct tape if necessary.)
4. Repair the organ as it is (estimates received: \$20,000–40,000); don't change anything.

5. Replace with an electronic organ which imitates the sound (\$50-100,000 for a Rogers; Allen organs are more expensive).
6. Repair and enhance with some additional pipe ranks (“stops”) to create sound more suitable for church use.
7. Replace with a new pipe organ (typically \$15,000 per rank; 12-ranks would cost \$180,000; 25-ranks, \$375,000!).

What is being recommended?

The Worship & Music committee has been gathering information and doing research on condition, repairs, alternatives, enhancements, and qualified local builders. We have gone to hear other instruments built or refurbished by local builders. We have also listened to and examined an entire organ that may be for sale, and gathered leads on two others that are dismantled and may be available for a token amount.

Although our research is still preliminary, the following general principles will be part of our recommendations.

- Ask an Organ Committee to develop a comprehensive plan for organ repair, maintenance and enhancement so that it will be here for future generations.
- Set aside a portion, such as 20% or \$58,000, of the available Arlene Reed funds for repair and strategic enhancement.
- Request proposals for repair and strategic enhancement from qualified local organ builders.
- Attempt to raise additional funds from our members and other donors.

Committee Members

Staff: Pastor Dan Hooper, Eldon Turner, Janet Weber

Council: Ray Huff

Choir: Susan Tapia, Ron Jahn

Consultants: Roger Hardesty, organist and organ voicer

Barbara Hoffman, organist and Associate in Ministry, ELCA