

COVER FEATURE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

REUTER ORGAN COMPANY



From the Director of Music

When I came to this position in 1989, I realized the organ was in need of major attention. The Aeolian-Skinner dated from the late '60s, but subsequent additions and alterations had not been done well. The music committee agreed to consult outside firms to appraise the situation. Jack Bethards was in Lincoln to work on the proposed Schoenstein for First-Plymouth Congregational, so we asked him to submit a proposal. Although we ultimately went to Reuter for rebuilding, Bethard's study provided the knowledgeable evaluation we needed to present this project to the congregation. Throughout the process, the friendship, support, and counsel of a close friend and fine musician, Jack (John) Carter Cole (previously music director of the First Baptist Church, Detroit) was invaluable as an affirmation of my ideas and as a bridge of support between me and the congregation.

Initially we looked at "repairing and improving," but the scope expanded as the committee and congregation became better educated. The previous installation placed Swell, Choir, and Pedal divisions in crowded chambers, and the Great and Positif on chests cantilevered into the chancel. These chests acted as "roofs" above the divided choir and impeded sound projection.

We narrowed our focus to three organ companies, visited their work in several states, then selected Reuter. We were particularly impressed with the Reuter rebuild of an E.M. Skinner in St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Allentown, Pa. We didn't choose Reuter because of its proximity to Lincoln (about 200 miles), but this did prove to be a definite advantage.

A project like this can be personally intimidating; often these efforts become known as the organist's own colossal failure

or glorious achievement. Fortunately, our committee had a wise chair (Steve Henderson, an accomplished musician who works in the business world) who garnered congregational and committee ownership of the project so that it became a visionary effort supported by the church as a whole. The committee kept the congregation informed of progress and decisions through church publications and a series of open meetings. The financing for the organ project was very wisely incorporated into a capital fund drive that included a new slate roof, an update of the church's audiovisual equipment and television studio, the purchase of new vans, and a strong mission component. As a result, pledges covered the entire cost before the project began, with the exception of a special gift added later for the Trompette en Chamade.

Albert Neutel Jr., president of Reuter, is responsible for most of the specification and tonal design. I am accustomed to playing a variety of instruments, discovering what is best in each, but not designing. Based on what I had seen and heard in Reuter's recent work, I was comfortable with this arrangement. We needed an instrument that would provide colorful support for congregational singing, accompany young children as well as professional adult singers in all styles and periods of music, and also play great organ literature. I was concerned that putting the previous Great Principal chorus in the Choir would be overwhelming, but this has proven to be a tremendous asset. I now have a full, rich principal accompaniment that, via expression shutters, doesn't bury the choir sound. What I did want was an encased Great on the east wall, speaking directly into the main axis of the nave. We now have a magnificent centerpiece that warms the nave with rich, lush sound.

A major element of our project was the complete renovation of the chancel. Our key word was flexibility. The church wanted to be able to adapt the chancel for dramas, for teen bands, and for pageants, so we needed more space for instrumentalists. We didn't want to compromise the integrity of the 1927 Ralph Adams Cram building, so we insisted on preserving original carvings and woodwork, and duplicating, as closely as possible, the original style and materials. The architects perceptively suggested a double chancel—a larger area at the east end to hold the Great case, a choir riser, movable choir chairs, organ console and grand piano (both on casters)—and a slightly shallower and lower second chancel, closer to the congregation, that would be the visual focus of worship, containing the Communion table, pulpit and lectern, font, and clergy seating. All of these elements are movable. Lighting is designed to highlight the appropriate spaces (musical or liturgical). This work has made considerable improvements in the chancel acoustics.

As I listened to David Higgs's masterful dedicatory recital recently, I felt assured that we had provided the best instrument for meeting the needs and potential of this congregation and its fine building. My thanks to JR Neutel, in particular, and Bill Klimas and Roger Banks for the design, installation, and voicing. All of the Reuter personnel were diligent, attentive to our needs and requests, and thoroughly cooperative in the entire process.

MURRAY FOREMAN

From the Organ Reconstruction Committee

"To expand the worship experience at First Presbyterian Church through the rebuilding of the organ and the enhancement of the worship space." The Organ Reconstruction Committee relied on this mission statement to guide its activities over the last three years. It was the foundation upon which decisions were made within the committee, and the basis for presenting issues for consideration by the Session (the governing body) and by the congregation as a whole. The results now manifested in the newly rebuilt organ and the remodeled sanctuary are a testimony to the abiding influence of these words.

Each member of the Organ Reconstruction Committee brought special skills to the table. As a result, the wonderfully balanced committee enjoyed a rich diversity of perspectives and opinions that ensured that decisions were carefully and thoughtfully contemplated as the project progressed. Musicians carried the weight on some days; architects forged ahead on others. Business people kept a clear picture of financial reality in front of the group throughout the project. Realists kept the dreamers grounded, yet dreamers forced the realists to stretch their imaginations.

What was life on this committee like? More than 50 meetings were held since the committee's commissioning in early 1999. At times the range of issues and related decisions seemed almost overwhelming. What organbuilder would be the best fit for our church? After a number of committee members traveled the United States to assess the craftsmanship and musical results of several organbuilders, Reuter emerged as our final choice. What design changes could be made and still maintain a respectful approach to the wonderful architectural heritage of the Ralph Adams Cram building? Clymer Vidlak Architects was the best choice for our circumstances. Was there a company with appropriate experience to help make the necessary construction changes? What business could help faithfully reproduce furnishings and trim pieces? Builders Inc. had an impressive résumé of restoration and preservation work that seemed well suited for our situation. Could the dreams of possibility be matched with the reality of finite financial resources? A two-phase financial campaign conducted within the congregation, along with support from the foundation established within our church, provided the necessary funding. With time, prayer, and the silent guiding hand of God, one by one these (and other) questions were answered.

I know all of us felt the weighty importance of the opportunity we enjoyed in serving on this committee. For most of us, this literally was the chance of a lifetime. Churches like ours make changes and improvements like these only once every few generations. We've made efforts to improve the organ, add flexibility to our worship space, increase the quality of sound and visual elements of our broadcast mission, and bring about a greater sense of connectedness between our worship leaders and the congregation. We've tried to do this work in a manner that involved not only our committee but also the Session and the general membership of the church. We owe a special debt of gratitude to all our partners—Reuter, Clymer Vidlak, and Builders Inc.—for the remarkable efforts they have contributed to this project. Because we con-



ducted this project without a general consultant, we relied heavily on the professionalism, flexibility, and cooperation each of these firms demonstrated. We've taken a long and challenging road, but it's been a wonderful journey. Our sincerest hope is that our children's children will look back at this undertaking and believe it was a positive chapter in the history of the First Presbyterian Church.

STEVEN L. HENDERSON, Chair

Katie Bruning, Jack Cole, Murray Foreman,
Mark Hoistad, Don Shafer, Suanne Stange,
and Ruth Stephenson

From the Pastor

I have long believed that the chancel/sanctuary and the congregation occupying space are in a dynamic relationship. One cannot change without the other changing. The congregation's personality is reflected in the way the worship space is designed, and what takes place in worship through creative use of that space forms and transforms the congregation.

At First Presbyterian, we are becoming much more open with empowered laity and the creativity they bring to the table. This openness we now also see in the renovated chancel. Everything is movable! Not one thing on either the upper or lower chancel area is permanently fastened except, of course, the beautiful organ case.

Already we are mixing the beauty of sight and sound with other educational activities. One of our high schools is discussing the book, *Plainsong*, as part of their study of arts and humanities. The musical concept of plainsong is being explained by our organist, and the theme of "preservation" will be discussed by the class led by the pastor—all after the students hear the organ being played as they come into the space that has been "preserved." While the book, *Plainsong*, is about loss and redemption, we have not sensed any deep loss by those who questioned the proposed changes, and we certainly have experienced redemption of the renovated organ and chancel. The new and renovated furnishings of worship have in-

fused an excitement and wonder about the purpose of worship and the need for God's children to put forth their best as participants in that worship.

The opening up of the chancel is a potent symbol of the opening of this congregation to the neighborhood and the wider musical community. This is our mission: to be open, welcoming, and not perceived as an impenetrable fortress. The rigidity is gone, the sight lines are not blocked as much, yet the architectural integrity of this unique building has been maintained. As we now look at the front of the chancel and see the beautiful pipes accentuated by the renovated stained glass windows, we gaze upon, in my estimation, the crowning jewel that has been waiting for 75 years to be put in place.

We truly feel we are "worshiping the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

THE REV. RAY LARSON, Senior Pastor

From the Builder

When a builder accepts a commission to design a new instrument that includes existing pipework and mechanical components, there are two questions to be answered: (a) are the components of historic value; and (b) are the components of quality construction, where scaling and physical condition can achieve uncompromising tonal results under another builder's hands? In such cases, our confidence must lie not only with our talents but also with the abilities of those who crafted the original pipes and chests. Elements of the 1969 Aeolian-Skinner installed in this church met either one or both of these two standards. What was deemed as their best work deservedly lives on as part of our best work.

Over the years, our firm has successfully completed numerous instruments often referred to as rebuilds or betterment projects. Noteworthy in this list are St. John's Lutheran Church in Allentown, Pa.; First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, Pa.; Grace Episcopal Church of Charleston, S.C.; and St. John's Episcopal Cathedral in Albuquerque, N.Mex. Sharing these successes was important as we built a relationship with our friends in Lincoln.

Opus 2211 presented our staff with both unique challenges and opportunities. Most notable was the inclusion of 23 existing stops, as well as the Skinner pitman chests. When assimilating existing pipework in a dominant role, such as a principal chorus, we usually attempt to keep as much of the original ranks together as possible. Stops such as flutes, strings, or reeds can more easily be incorporated into the new choruses. As well, the tonal design also included consideration of how the existing chests, completely refurbished, would be dispersed throughout the organ.

The construction and repair process went smoothly, thanks in part to our new manufacturing facility. Because of limited space in our previous shop, construction of encased organs was difficult. Armed with lots of working space, our artisans skillfully crafted and erected this organ, taking advantage of a roomy assembly area complete with a ceiling height of 47 feet and a high-capacity hoist. We were honored to feature this instrument in our inaugural open house, where over 1,500 people from around the world joined us in celebration of our new plant and our 85th birthday.

An experienced builder knows pipe organ projects come with a few surprises. We encountered our fair share on this job, particularly during the tonal finishing. The sounds of the Swell and Choir divisions, located in chambers along the side of the chancel, projected into the room much better than anticipated. Rather than be stifled by this, we took full benefit of this unexpected advantage. We were pleased with the colors that the wind pressure offered, so we decided to alter the scaling of Swell and Choir Principal choruses, as well as revoice the Swell Trompette. Other minor scaling alterations and many days of delicate voicing brought a wonderful refinement to the Swell and Choir that was very pleasing, if not astonishing. Even more impressive to our ears was the beautiful blend achieved between these chambered divisions and the Great and Pedal, both located in the stunning case, which sits on the main axis of the room.

Another surprise was the former Swell Viola Pomposa and Celeste. The new tonal design located these stops in the well-endowed Choir division. Given the greater depth of the new Choir chamber, as well as the placement of these two ranks within the division, the desired results could not be achieved initially. Further working of the undersized Celeste rank brought an exquisite string tone to the quiet 8' stops in the Choir. With the concurrence of the organist, Murray Foreman, and his trusted adviser, Jack Cole, it was decided to rename it Salicional, tune it to the unison, and allow it to take its place accordingly. Likewise, the ambitious Viola Pomposa, its former mate, found a new partner in the Choir 8' Principal as a Voce Umana.

This organ has an abundance of well-blended color and nuance. The Great chorus builds up handsomely, with a Cornet III available to offer added intensity. The Choir chorus of existing pipework is particularly well suited to choral accompaniment. The division is awash in soft, muted timbres with elegant colors that may be blended from the Erzählers, Spitzflute, Salicional and the delicate, small-scaled Quintaton. The Swell Flute Celestes and Strings contrast well with the soft Choir stops, and the full Swell has a tasteful fire. The effect of the thick shutters

of the Solo division can be exhilarating. With shades closed, the Tuba can be drawn undetected into a full registration; as the shutters open, the subdued might of its heroic sound gradually intensifies, and the weight of this solo reed is ultimately thrown into a blaze of full-throated fortissimo. The fine E.M. Skinner Clarinet and French Horn are likewise colored by the Solo shades. The combination of the Harmonic Flute and French Horn creates a poignant, almost haunting tone, especially in the upper registers.

We were pleased to collaborate with our fellow contractors, Clymer Vidlak and Builders Inc. We wish to extend our thanks and appreciation to the good stewards of the First Presbyterian Church. May this instrument serve you splendidly for generations to come.

WILLIAM KLIMAS
Vice President and Tonal Director
Reuter Organ Company

REUTER ORGAN COMPANY
Artisans on Opus 2211

Monty Amick	Bill Klimas
John Bechen	John Leach
Trace Bunker	Robert Leach
Ted Burgess	Katherine Leach
Kim Burgstahler	Chris Leaver
Dave Cording	Brian McGuffin
Marvin Curtiss	Connie McGee
Rod Czerniak	Kay Miller
Ed Dorssom	Albert Neutel
Jamie Durand	JR Neutel
Eric Farnsworth	Jeff Noll
Robert Fort	Rorie Orgeron Jr.
Don Gauthier	Mike Phelps
Don Glover	Ron Randles
Fred Grammer	George Renault
David Hadl	Dorothy Schaaake
Paul Harris	Andy Siler
Ian Hargraves	Louezelle Smith
David Hase	Gilbert Stone
Justin Hodson	Karl Swoyer
Steve Hoover	Robert Vaughan
Mary Hulse	Tom Watgen
Megan Hulse	Tristan Westphal
Lloyd Jensen	Steve Westphal
Christine Kaplan	Aaron Young
Norm Kinnaugh	

Reuter Installation Crew

Roger Banks	Jerry Kinsley
Mark Langdon	Ken DeJong
Kris Harris	Bob Cotton
Bill Harris	David Salmen

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LINCOLN, NEBRASKA
REUTER ORGAN COMPANY
LAWRENCE, KANSAS

GREAT

16	Violone (1-12*)
8	Diapason
8	Violone
8	Bourdon+
8	Harmonic Flute (Solo)
4	Octave
4	Spillflute
2½	Twelfth
2	Fifteenth
	Cornet III
	Fourniture IV
8	Trompette en Chamade
8	Trumpet
8	Tuba (Solo)
8	French Horn (Solo)
8	Clarinet (Solo)
	Tremulant
	Chimes*
	MIDI

SOLO (floating, enclosed)

8	Harmonic Flute
8	Tuba
8	French Horn+
8	Clarinet+
	Tremulant

SWELL

16	Chimney Flute (1-12+)
8	Geigen
8	Violo de Gambe
8	Violo Celeste
8	Flauto Dolce+
8	Flute Celeste+
8	Chimney Flute
4	Principal
4	Hohlflute
2½	Nazard
2	Blockflute
1½	Tierce
	Plein Jeu IV
16	Contra Trumpet (1-12+)
16	Oboe
16	Trompette en Chamade (Gt.)
8	Trumpet
8	Oboe
8	Vox Humana+
8	Trompette en Chamade (Gt.)
4	Clarion
	Tremulant
	MIDI

CHOIR

16	Quintaton+
8	Principal+
8	Voce Umana+
8	Stopped Diapason
8	Spitzflute
8	Harmonic Flute (Solo)
8	Quintaton
8	Salicional+
8	Erzähler+
8	Erzähler Celeste+
4	Principal+
4	Koppel Flute+
2	Doublette+
1½	Quinteflute+
	Mixture III
16	Tuba (Solo)
8	Fagot+
8	Krummhorn+
8	Tuba (Solo)
8	Trompette en Chamade (Gt.)
8	French Horn (Solo)
8	Clarinet (Solo)
	Tremulant
	Harp*
	MIDI

PEDAL

32	Gedeckt*
16	Open Diapason
16	Open Wood*
16	Violone (Gt.)
16	Subbass+
16	Chimney Flute (Sw.)
16	Salicional (Ch.)
8	Octave+
8	Principal (Ch.)
8	Violone (Gt.)
8	Subbass
8	Chimney Flute (Sw.)
4	Choral Bass+
4	Nachthorn+
4	Subbass
2	Nachthorn
	Mixture III+
16	Bombarde
16	Double Trumpet (1-12*) (Gt.)
16	Contra Trumpet (Sw.)
16	Oboe (Sw.)
8	Bombarde
8	Tuba (Solo)
8	Trompette en Chamade (Gt.)
8	Trumpet (Gt.)
8	Oboe (Sw.)
4	Bombarde
4	Schalmey
4	Clarinet (Solo)
	Chimes (Gt.)
	MIDI

Three manuals, 57 stops, 65 ranks, four digital voices
* = Digital; + = Existing Pipework