"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.
Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,
always giving thanks to God the Father for everything"
--Ephesians 5:19, 20

Grace Church Organ Task Force
Questions & Answers

10.30.17

1. What is wrong with the current organ? It sounds fine to me.

A: When the organ was switched on Saturday morning, October 3, 2015, it sounded like a broken circus calliope – about 50 or 60 discordant notes were sounding at the same time! In the weeks preceding, the Charlottesville area had been inundated with an unprecedented amount of rain. We discovered that rain water had entered the church from the roof and had come through the tower directly into the organ chamber behind the set of big pipes in the church balcony.

After everything had dried out and some strategic repairs had been made while the full damage was assessed, only about half the instrument was in working order. Parishioners may not notice that because our extremely talented organist has employed more liberal use of devices that cause the organ to sound as if the entire organ is still working. But in fact there are various notes missing among the "ranks" of pipes that would not be obvious to the untrained ear. Significantly, only one of the two keyboards (the Great manual) has pipes that play, so our organist is also limited in the literature that can be played – he can't play anything that requires both keyboards, and it's more difficult to avoid overpowering the choir.

Some of the "sounds" that are missing are the angelic and shimmering strings, the robust trumpet, the oboe, and some other flutes and flues (the traditional organ tone). Finally, all of the unaffected pipes are "out in the open" and not behind the shutters of the Swell division so there is also no way for the organist to control volume or create a crescendo effect other than by reducing or increasing the number of stops and couplers engaged.

There are other, multiple problems with the organ, including: 1) high pitched "whistles" (or ciphers, as organists call them) where the wind to certain pipes plays continuously, or intermittently, causing an annoying whistle; 2) the number of non-playing pipes continues to grow, as the only way to stop the ciphers is to remove the offending pipe from the rack; 3) many electrical components in the organ console still do not work; and 4) the organ is out of tune – a product of its location high in the rafters, the lack of insulation, and the decision to limit maintenance until the organ task force makes a recommendation. So, in short, our organist is "working-around" the problems so the instrument can continue to play for worship services.

2. **I still don't understand why there's a problem. Can't we just live with what we have or make repairs?**

   A: Less than half the organ works now, and it's falling apart bit by bit. The organ is now almost 60 years old, having had a major renovation in the mid-1990's, and it's reached the end of its useful life. The insurance company made a generous settlement, partly to encourage us to invest in a new organ, and partly because they couldn't quantify the cost to make our organ workable and to give it a long life after those repairs. If we repair the organ, the risk of its failing in the near future falls on us; insurance doesn't cover an organ that just wears out. The Organ Task Force believes it's much wiser to invest the proceeds in a new organ, using the insurance settlement as a down payment.

3. **What kind of organ is the Organ Task Force recommending?**

   A: The Organ Task Force (OTF), formed in summer 2016, has done extensive and thorough research considering all possibilities for replacing the current organ. This research includes: 1) numerous meetings and conversations with organists, a world-renowned acoustician, world-renowned organ builders, insurance adjusters and executives, organ technicians, and church musicians; 2) researching, reading, and discussing numerous articles, brochures, and other documents on all types of organs (both electronic and pipe), acoustics in the worship space, organ builder histories and philosophies, organ and church music, etc.; 3) numerous field trips, both locally and to locations in Virginia, Washington D.C., and (for some) North Carolina, to see, hear, and play a variety of organs, to meet with reputable organ builders, and to learn about and actually see what quality organ building craftsmanship looks and sounds like.

   The OTF has had several meetings with the principals and associates of Taylor & Boody Organbuilders of Staunton, VA. This company has several decades of experience, a proven record of high quality and low maintenance instruments, and is one of the most respected organ builders in the world today. Taylor & Boody is renowned for the construction of mechanical action, or tracker, organs.

   Taylor & Boody introduced the OTF to noted architectural acoustician Dana Kirkegaard of Downers Grove, IL who visited Grace Church three times (so far). Dana has served as consultant to over 250 churches and concert halls and recipient of numerous architectural design awards by the American Institute of Architects and architectural critics.

   After several meeting with George Taylor, John and Erik Boody, and Dana Kirkegaard, the OTF recommends accepting the Taylor & Boody proposal for a mechanical action organ of 3 manuals (keyboards), 29 stops and 1,826 pipes.

4. Why should we buy a mechanical (tracker) action organ?

A: Of all the pipe organ types (and there are several), mechanical-action organs have the best record for longevity and lowest maintenance costs. The Organ Task Force felt that both longevity and low maintenance were among the top priorities in our recommendation. While mechanical-action organs may be more costly to build initially, in the long-term, they are less expensive.

5. Why can't we just buy an electronic organ?

A: This topic is quite controversial among church musicians, organists, clergy, and manufacturers, as you might imagine. As Michael says: "Before I came to Grace, I played on an electronic instrument for 14 years while I was at Hinton Avenue United Methodist Church. I came to that church in 1992, and the organ had been purchased in 1984. By the time I arrived, the technology already was vastly improved. But there are differences, and there are many reasons why a pipe organ is preferred to an electronic organ: 1) A pipe organ is an acoustical, wind instrument; it produces sound much like the human voice, and, like the human voice, has "breath." Therefore, a pipe organ encourages and supports congregational singing. Electronic sounds (including organs) are scientifically proven to cover and suppress singing. 2) Pipe organs use the natural acoustics of the instrument and room to fill the space *around* the congregation with sound. Electronic organs must be amplified through loudspeakers; their sound is artificial and is directed *at* the congregation with negative impact and results. 3) Despite what electronic organ advertising states, it is quite easy to hear and tell the difference between a pipe organ and an electronic organ, even for those with little music background or experience. 4) The average lifespan of an electronic organ is only 15-20 years before it needs to be replaced."

Organ Task Force member Bill Adams researched the question and offers the following articles as a generally objective view:

https://hubpages.com/entertainment/churchorgandebatepart1#

https://hubpages.com/entertainment/churchorgandebatepart2#

6. Why not buy a used organ?

A: High-quality, used pipe organs for sale are rare. Typically, such instruments only become available if a church is closing and planning not to relocate or reopen. With these instruments, most are sold or given away before the instruments are even advertised. The other difficulty with used instruments is that pipe organs are constructed and designed for a specific room and space. If the space and dimensions of a used organ do not match the dimensions of our available space, the used instrument must be redesigned and configured to fit. This process greatly increases the cost of the used organ often to the cost of a new instrument. Christ Church in

downtown Charlottesville purchased a fine old instrument (Hook Opus 472, 1868) which the Andover Organ Company refurbished. They also undertook renovation of their chancel and addition of a new basement. The organ cost $475,000 with another $450,000 for renovation and installation; the cost of sanctuary renovations was $417,000 (a total of approximately $1.3M in 2010-11).

Michael did become aware of an organ for sale by the reputable Canadian firm Casavant Freres around March 2015 (coincidentally *before* the water calamity). The Casavant proposal was for a used, refurbished organ, somewhat larger than wanted, the cost of which (including moving, reconditioning and installation) was estimated to be about $650,000. This cost would not include any structural or construction work necessary to accommodate the new instrument. The Casavant proposal would preserve the present arrangement of console at the front, pipes in the back.

7. What benefits will a new organ bring?

A: A high-quality pipe organ provides many long-lasting benefits to a congregation including: 1) As a major investment for a congregation, a new pipe organ generates tremendous excitement as it is constructed in the sanctuary, and after many months of putting it together and voicing every pipe, eventually plays. 2) Pipe organs are considered architectural and engineering marvels that excite even the non-musical person. 3) Pipe organs are works of art that are designed to visually enhance the worship space. 4) A high-quality pipe organ will last many generations. Well-built organs in Europe are centuries old and still playing, the oldest at the Basilica of Valère in Sion, Switzerland (built around 1435, most of the case is original and 12 pipes are original, the rest have been replaced during restorations – see photo below). 5) A high-quality pipe organ attracts high-quality organists and church musicians to lead worship. The world's best organists will feel honored to have the opportunity to play at Grace Church.

The organ could enhance the outreach of Grace by serving as the catalyst for the creation of Grace as the musical center of the Keswick community, serving as the venue for a concert series with visiting instrumental and choral ensembles. We could host evensong services with visiting choirs. A more flexible chancel could create a chapel-like space for smaller worship services and provide capacity for varied forms of liturgy (e.g., liturgical dance, etc.).

8. **What are the cost benefits of a new mechanical action pipe organ?**

A: A new mechanical-action pipe organ has many benefits that make it a sound investment for a congregation: 1) A quality pipe organ will last for generations. 2) A quality, mechanical action pipe organ stays in tune or requires minimal tuning. 3) The technology that underpins electronic organs changes at an alarming pace (think of your iPhone) and, to "keep up" should be replaced approximately every 20 years. A pipe organ will likely outlast the building in which it is placed (see photo above), and can be disassembled for relocation. 4) Mechanical-action organs require the least amount of maintenance and have the longest lifespan since these instruments have the fewest electronic components that eventually need replacing. Greater longevity means lower cost. Take a period of 100 years: in the worst-case scenario, the well-built pipe organ might require one or two refurbishments. Electronic substitutes usually fail after one generation of use, or less. Over a century, the electronic organ might have to be replaced four or five times. On this basis alone, the pipe organ is an excellent investment. Electric assist or electro-pneumatic pipe organs fall somewhere in between; pipes last longer, but electric/electronic components fail and

become obsolete within less than a generation and require major and expensive renovations.

9. Why can't we fit a new or used organ within the existing space?

A: Pipe organs are built to fit and play in specific spaces with specific dimensions—width, depth, and height. The lack of depth and height in Grace Church's current balcony poses many challenges for any used or new instrument. Most organs have pipes that are 16-ft. in length. These pipe ranks were simply omitted from our instrument due to the height constraints. Additionally, several compromises (borrowings, duplications) were made with our current organ that limit the clarity of tone and give it its tone an anemic quality.

10. If I attend the 9am quiet service, why should I care about the organ?

A: Grace Church is a congregation that offers many diverse ministries to help its members and countless others who come to the church experience and feel God's presence and love in their lives. Investments of both time and finances to any ministry benefit the entire congregation and its mission to the community and beyond. The organ at Grace is the primary instrument used for weddings and funerals as well as all the regular services throughout the year. Having a high-quality pipe organ is vital to these worship services and benefits the entire congregation and its ministries.

11. How much will a new organ cost?

A. The initial proposal from Taylor & Boody is priced at approximately $40,000 per stop. The organ as designed contains 29 stops and is priced at $1,140,000. Members of the Organ Task Force will tell you two things about such a number: at first they thought it was astronomical, but after visiting two organ builders workshops, seeing/hearing numerous other organs and crawling around in the interior, they have a greater appreciation for the workmanship and craftsmanship that goes into building and installing of a well-made pipe organ, as well as the enduring and lasting value of such a significant investment.

Moreover, the present configuration of the organ, with the console at the front of the nave and the pipes at the back, means that it is not instantly responsive to the organist and that it fights with the choir. The only thing to be said in favor of repair is that it is the most economical option. This is not a small thing, but the Task Force believes it is far outweighed by considerations that favor a new organ.

We all know that quality costs money. With the exception of some modern materials (like epoxy and electricity), a new, mechanical action organ relies on organ building techniques that have been around for centuries. The pipe construction and key action in particular have stood the test of time. Even with

modern materials (such as carbon filament for trackers), pipes are still made from wood and metal, keys with cow bone and wood, and bellows with modern simulations of animal skins. A pipe organ is made of solid materials which have proven their durability. Pipe organs have proven to operate with no repair, except for routine tuning and minor adjustments, for at least two or three generations. If refurbishment is required, it costs a small fraction of the organ's replacement. Then, another two or three generations of trouble-free performance await the church that is wise enough to have invested in a fine pipe organ.

The proposed new pipe organ case has been thoughtfully designed to harmonize with Grace's architecture and, in fact, enhance it. For example, the wood carved crenellations at the top of the organ case echo the features at the top of the stone towers on the outside of the church, to bring a unity of design.

A well-constructed pipe organ will last as long as the building in which you place it – perhaps longer. Some organs are moved to second and third buildings to continue service. Can that be said of the church's computer, heating system, kitchen equipment – or an electronic organ? We know the final product will serve our congregation and community well for generations to come.

12. Isn't the Organ Task Force going beyond its original remit (to recommend repair of current, or purchase of new, pipe organ), as it's now proposing significant alterations to the interior, which is sure to add to the cost?

A. There are changes in the chancel which would be necessary for the installation of a new organ. In addition, there are changes proposed to enhance both the acoustics and the aesthetics of the space. Everything proposed would be in keeping with the architectural integrity of the existing building and, in some ways, would work to "complete" the chancel and make it seem more integrated into the nave rather than appear as a box added onto the nave. Everything proposed would be permitted within the context of Grace's historic landmark status.

The changes proposed to the rear gallery would actually be an historically accurate *restoration* to what would have been there before the current organ was installed in the late 1950's. While we have been unable to unearth any photographs of the rear gallery from before this time, we know that all the pipes that are there *now* were not there *before*. Restoring the gallery would allow for interesting musical possibilities, with instrumentalist and choristers/soloists placed antiphonally from other musicians at the opposite end of the building, a common practice in European churches and cathedrals.

The total costs for the interior alterations would depend on the extent to which we address the steel beams in the chancel ceiling. We are currently working to nail down the exact amounts, but for planning we estimate $300-500,000.

13. How are we going to pay for all these projects?

A. The good news is that, to date, we already have over half of the cost of the new organ from the following sources: $212,000 from the insurance settlement and $421,500 from pledges and donations by generous parishioners (including 100% participation by members of the organ task force), for a total of $635,500. We would request the assistance, advice, guidance, and direction from many in the parish and surrounding community to assist with fundraising for the balance.

14. What's the timetable for all this?

A. Taylor & Boody's production schedule would allow detailed design to commence as early as January 2018 with organ installation in the summer of 2019. Such a time frame is relatively fast considering the usual lead time for organ builders. We would want to have as much of the construction work done as possible to be done in the summer of 2018.

CONCLUSION

Grace Church is an unusually historic and beautiful church, located in a scenic and culturally sophisticated area, and deserves an organ of corresponding quality. A new, custom-designed, high quality instrument would be a fitting addition to the church. Such an organ would be a long-term investment, capable of serving the church reliably for a century or more. But its benefits would be larger than that. It would serve to showcase the talents of our fine music director and organist; it would enhance the physical environment and the spiritual atmosphere of our worship; it would stimulate congregational singing, support the development of our musical programs and encourage participation in them; it would promote Grace Church as a popular regional venue of recitals and concerts, both instrumental and choral. In all these ways, a fine new organ would not only enrich the Grace community and enhance its congregational life; it would also reach out to the larger community and draw it toward Grace. The Task Force believes that the damage done to our organ by an "act of God" should be construed as a God-given opportunity for the parish to accomplish something bold, beautiful and beneficial for this and future generations.

The following comments, included in an organ dedication brochure for a Midwestern church, are from the son of a Lutheran pastor who studied with Martin Luther at Wittenberg. His comments indicate something of the rich heritage Grace would share as a new pipe organ is dedicated to the glory of God and the service of his people:

> "Almighty God can never be given sufficient thanks for having granted to man in his mercy and great goodness such gifts as have enabled him to achieve such a perfect creation and instrument of music as is the organ in its arrangement and construction and to play upon it with hands and with feet in such a manner that God in heaven may be praised, his worship adorned and man moved and inspired to Christian devotion."
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> - Michael Praetorius, 1619