

OF PIPES & PEDALS

St. Peter Lutheran Church
Organ Committee Update #3

This is the third in a series of updates from the organ committee discussing our journey of learning about our organ, its problems, and possible solutions for the future. These reports can also be found on our website at www.stpeterhemlock.org/organ.

From April through June our committee was unable to meet in person. We resumed meeting in July and discussed the importance of acoustics and their effect on singing and music in the church. Numerous handouts were distributed for our committee to read and study. (They can be read online at www.riedelassociates.com.) Acoustical deficiencies in our church mainly result from too much sound absorption from soft materials such as carpeting and pew pads. We learned that if acoustic improvements are to be made, they must be done before changes are made to the organ. Our committee voted to request up to \$15,000 from the organ fund so that Scott Riedel and Associates from Milwaukee, Wisconsin might do an acoustical study for our entire worship space.

At our July meeting, we contacted the John-Paul Buzard Pipe Organ Builders of Champaign, Illinois and invited them to evaluate our organ and draw up a proposal based on the space available in our balcony. We also provided them with a suggested list of stops, including the sounds we feel our organ is missing.

On August 18, seven members of our organ committee visited four different churches in Saginaw to see and hear organs of different sizes, styles, and eras, and to compare them to our own organ. The "touring members" reported very perceptively on the four organs and locations. At one point during the tour, we also received an organ proposal from the Scott Smith Organ Company in Lansing, MI that was previously put together for St. Peter. After visiting the Saginaw area organs, our committee expressed a desire to hear other organs, especially ones by the Buzard Organ Company.

On August 31, Keith Williams from the Buzard Organ Company traveled to our church to examine our organ and put together a proposal for us to consider. From his visit, our committee was made aware of additional items that needed to be given consideration: pipe height, tuning issues for our current instrument, current HVAC issues, air flow and circulation in the balcony, proper placement of pipes, and balcony space. We took our meeting to the nave in order to look at possible balcony expansion to better accommodate the organ, choirs, handbells, piano, and instrumentalists. The possibility of an elevator was mentioned. We observed that our balcony is actually quite small for any developing music program.

A trip was planned in October to travel to Indiana and Illinois to hear organs built by the Buzard Organ Company. We will share the observations from that visit in our next report, as well as a list of six options we considered to address the problems of our current organ.