



John-Paul
Buzard
Pipe Organ Builders

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Preliminary Report and Recommendations for
Trinity Lutheran Church,
Sheboygan, WI

The organ in the church was inspected on September 21, 2010 by Keith Williams, Service Director of Buzard Pipe Organ Builders. It is a three manual and pedal electropneumatic instrument of 29 stops and 39 ranks.

The rather involved history of the present instrument is well documented both on the church's website, and in material contained in the church's files which were made available the day of inspection. As is often the case, the successive involvement of multiple organbuilders and consultants has resulted in an instrument that is not truly representative of any one artistic vision. The most comprehensive rebuild actually dates from 1983; a new (but already mechanically outdated) console was the last major work in 1993. This console needs to be electrically updated or replaced if the present instrument is to continue to provide reliable service.

The recent renovation of the sanctuary has dramatically altered the acoustics (for the better!) from what was the situation when the last tonal work was performed on the instrument. No tonal reregulation has yet been performed to adapt the organ to the changed and improved acoustics, so the sound of the organ is even more unfocused and tonally unbalanced than it was before.

Mechanically much of the instrument still uses its 1927 Moller windchests, with the subsequent additions also being made using electropneumatic windchests that are similar in style and construction. The maintenance history of all this equipment is unknown. However, the ongoing deterioration of reservoir leather (two reservoirs have recently been releathered; others are need of it at present) would indicate that a complete mechanical overhaul of the existing mechanical systems will be necessary within the next five to ten years. Because of the design of Moller windchests the most practical way to releather them is to remove them entirely from the organ to the organbuilder's factory for restoration.

Some improvement in the overall tonal balance could be achieved by onsite reregulation to match the existing pipes to the changed acoustics. There are one or two sets of pipes that are far less successful than others (the Great 8' Trumpet is too loud to serve as a chorus reed and not loud enough to serve as a Solo register; the pedal 16' Principal makes a tremendous roar behind the organ but because of its location is actually loud enough only in the stairwell.)

In general, the reasoning behind the congregation's decision in 2000 to proceed with purchase of a new pipe organ are still valid. In order for there to be a significant improvement in musical versatility, an entirely new organ (or one using only a small fraction of the existing pipework, and therefore costing about the same amount as an all-new instrument) will be required.

Evidently, in 2000, the church had decided to purchase a new, three manual and pedal organ of 38-stops and 48 ranks once a sufficient level of funding have been obtained. With electric key and stop action, at the time the cost was to have been just under \$630,000. Using the U.S. government's inflation calculator, this same organ today can be expected to cost at least \$825,000, and from several builders the cost would be closer to \$1,400,000..

An approach that might be worthy of consideration, which would result in a more reliable instrument mechanically and could address the tonal shortcomings to some degree, would be to upgrade the console, and replace the mechanical systems of the organ (winding and windchests) with new reservoir and new electric action slider and pallet windchests. (Slider chests do not require releathering and have other significant tonal advantages.) The Great and Pedal 8' Principal ranks could be replaced with new pipes of better scale, the basses of which would be located in the façade, retaining the original casework from the impost down.. The more efficient use of space provided by slider chests, along with the relocation of bass pipes into the façade, could allow for a more sensibly designed layout within the existing footprint that could eliminate some of the present confusion. Rescaling of some ranks and replacement of others would need to be included in the process, along with comprehensive revoicing to bring all sounds within the instrument into genuine harmony. The exact number of ranks that could be retained would be determined only after detailed examination and discussion. Some new ranks could possibly be included as a result of this more efficient use of space. This would be making the best of the existing situation, but could still end up costing an amount very close to the cost of an all-new instrument.

We encourage congregations, as a consensus is being developed about the general approach to be taken, to select their organbuilder early in the process, and work with that firm to jointly develop a common artistic vision. This invariably results in a far better result than asking several builders to bid to a preplanned specification and then choosing the lowest bidder. Organs, after all, are not roofs, and all reputable organbuilding firms strive to build (or rebuild) instruments so that they will last a long, long time without further major investment.

Our firm would be honored to be asked to work with you in determining what is the best approach for you now, in 2010. This may or may not mean that you will work with the builder you had decided upon ten years ago. Whether your project ends up being an all-new organ, or a significantly rebuilt one, we have considerable experience to bring to the table and would be pleased to be given serious consideration.

What seems most important at this point is to make sure that the entire process is transparent, and that a decision about how to proceed is reached through careful consideration and discernment. We look forward to working with all concerned to assist in any way that we can to provide a satisfactory outcome.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Keith Williams". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Keith Williams, Service Director
Buzard Pipe Organ Builders