




GROVE CHURCH
LIVING FOR JESUS. CHANGING LIVES.
A United Methodist Congregation

History of the Sanctuary Organ

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“Every house of worship deserves a musical instrument of unquestionable quality. None should tolerate a mere musical toy, for which little indigenous literature exists, and whose severe limitations frustrate pianists and organists alike. We urge churches to reject any design for an organ that would seriously limit its capabilities for presenting all the significant literature to the Glory of God.” V. Earle Copes

Brief History

Grove United Methodist Church, one of the oldest churches in Chester County, was founded on its present site in 1773. The present building erected in 1888 and expanded in 1959, replaced a building erected in 1844. The church has grown over the years of its existence and now serves a large active membership. An important part of the church ministry is its dynamic music program.

When Fred N. Buch of Buch Church Organ Company first met with Craig Rider to discuss the requirements of a new organ for Grove Church, it was evident that the church worship service and music program would demand a large versatile instrument. A problem however existed. Where do you install an organ of that size which will support the choirs and congregation, yet preserve and enhance the architectural integrity of the beautiful 1888 building? It was mutually agreed that a Rodgers Classic Series Electronic Organ with pipes would meet the requirements. After much research, Buch Church Organ Company presented the church with a set of drawings for wall mounted chambers to cover most of the front chancel wall. The chambers are only 12” deep, but permit the entire front wall to project sound from speakers and pipes. The pedal tone cabinet and all amplifiers were installed in the existing ceiling chamber. The organ not only supports and leads congregational singing, it reinforces the choral ministry and at the same time enhances the appearance of the chancel area.

Before and After

In 1978 the 45 rank Rodgers “Specification 250 Two Manual (Keyboard) Modified Pipe” organ was installed in the Grove Sanctuary. The installation was a result of a year’s study and research culminating in the final proposal for replacement of the existing ceiling enclosed Baldwin two manual Model 8-A organ.
1978 “Spec 250” Console

Standards and Criteria for Selection and Installation

Prior to the final purchase and installation of the new 1978 pipe organ, it was unanimously agreed to by the Director of Music, Staff Organist and Special Organ Task Force that the instrument meet the following criteria for Grove Church:

1. The instrument should inspire the hearts and minds of the congregation and encourage a better quality of congregational singing.
2. The organ should be a versatile instrument capable of rendering anthem accompaniments as originally conceived by the composer.
3. The organ should be an instrument of integrity worthy of “Recital Classification”.
4. The organ should enhance our historic sanctuary through artistic design in the “classic tradition”.

Renowned Concert Organists at Grove Church

Grove United Methodist Church has proudly featured such outstanding Organ Recitalists as:

- Dr. Keith Chapman (Concert Organist and former Wanamaker Organist)
- Dr. Edward H. Wetherill (Concert Organist and former Organist and Choir Master of Drexel Hill United Methodist Church)
- David Hearn (Concert Organist)
- Beverly Davis Moore (Concert Organist)
- Daniel Smith (Concert Organist and former Minister of Music of Central Presbyterian Church, Downingtown)
- Norman McKenzie, Jr. (Concert Organist)
- Richard VanAuken (Concert Organist)

The Beginning of a New Era in Musical Worship

V. Matora Christy Memorial Sanctuary Organ

After 30 years of dependable service, the 1978 Sanctuary Organ fell into an extended period of major repairs. These repairs were requiring replacement of costly and significant internal components, many of which were at best difficult to obtain due to the aging technology of the instrument. Because of the increasing frequency of technical problems it was determined that the time had come for a complete replacement upgrade. In April of 2008 the Rodgers “Specification 250” organ was completely replaced and upgraded with a three manual 85 rank customized “Specification 351 Aeolian Skinner-Walker Digital Pipe Organ” The organ represents the most advanced digital technology in combination with wind generated pipes. The three manual (keyboard) console has been designed for total logistical mobility to enhance service and concert presentation. The installation of this grand instrument has been generated by the over-riding theme of the original selection criteria: “Instrument Integrity, Worship Integrity” providing a quality aesthetic, spiritual and musical worship experience for our congregation.

Dedication

In Acknowledgement and Appreciation

It is with great excitement that we celebrate the completion of installation of the new eighty five rank Buch/Walker Digitized Aeolian Skinner Pipe Organ. The acquisition and installation of this grand instrument has been made possible by the generous provision of funds from the V. Matora Christy Bequest Fund. A new era in worship, congregational singing and future programs of musical presentation will now begin.

~Dedication occurred Feb. 22, 2009~