

From the Music Director:

In my third year as choir director and first year as organist of the United Methodist Church of Westport and Weston, I was introduced to Edward Odell by K. Bryan Kirk, as we were in search of someone local to assume the maintenance of our Angell pipe organ. While I was not dissatisfied with the firm maintaining our organ at that time, I knew it was only a matter of time before a major overhaul was needed, and no one had ever made a complete inspection and report on our instrument. Given the current condition of our organ, I felt comforted in knowing someone local could resuscitate it at a moment's notice.

After a thorough tuning and evaluation of the organ, I was encouraged by Mr. Odell's report that although there were serious electrical and tonal issues present, the pipes themselves were well-made and could be repaired and voiced (apparently for the first time *ever*) if we had the means to fund an organ project. Having just completed a fund-raising campaign for a new grand piano, our church did not have extra money to start an organ building fund-raiser, and we felt uncomfortable asking the congregation to dig into their wallets again so soon. This was discouraging as we knew that time was close at hand; in recent years our organ had become increasingly undependable.

Not long after we began exploring these issues, it happened one Sunday morning that the entire organ pedalboard suddenly made itself unusable. Having little alternative, I decided to play that morning's service on the piano. This coming just a few weeks after Mr. Odell's presentation to our Trustees, there was (understandably) a certain degree of panic, since we were totally unprepared financially to fund an organ project this soon. Even though our organ was one of the longest surviving Angell pipe organs in the area, we had hoped (and expected) it to last longer. It was more and more apparent that something had to be done soon. Before we even had a chance to strategize, I received a call the next day from the Pastor informing me that a donor wishing to remain anonymous had left a very large check on his desk with the intention of funding the organ project.

As has been elsewhere stated, our previous instrument suffered from a lack of tonal finishing and the pipes themselves had never been voiced properly. The pipes being of relatively small scale, we were used to a thin, shallow sound that did not possess enough power to adequately fill our worship space, even when I registered full organ. At the start of the project, I had doubts as to whether or not any new organ would be strong enough, given the room's difficult acoustics, and given the location of the organ chambers. Mr. Odell assured us that once the new organ was installed, we would be amazed at the difference.

One of the most impressive enhancements with the new organ, aside from the exquisite façade, is the quality of sound as well as the power behind it. What we have now is an instrument that adequately leads our congregation in singing, as well as providing full, but subtle, accompaniment for the choir anthems. I can honestly say that at every step of the way, Mr. Odell and his firm have not only met, but exceeded my expectations with

our new organ and have gone above and beyond the call of duty to deliver an instrument which is even better than the original proposal stated.

It is a testament to his excellent work that not only do the trained musicians in the congregation appreciate this new pipe organ, even the *untrained* listeners have noticed a huge improvement over the previous instrument. One member (who at one time happened to be unsupportive of the project) admits that now she could not imagine our service without a pipe organ. The church is well pleased, as am I, and we celebrate at every Sunday service this work of art courtesy of the firm of J.H. and C.S. Odell.

- Todd Simmons, Organist and Music Director
- United Methodist Church of Westport and Weston