

Brief Introduction to Our New Organ

I. The Gift

On October 31, longtime parishioner Dr. Martin Nash had a surprise for Father Matt when they sat down for a meeting. The retired pediatric nephrologist said he wanted to make a donation for a new organ. The donation will cover all costs related to buying and installing the instrument -- from removing its predecessor and re-wiring the space, to tuning what will be the fifth organ in the church's 175-year history. The instrument will be named in honor of Jack Hennigan (see photo on right), Martin's long-time partner, who served as the church's organist and choirmaster for 16 years through 1990.



II. Why Now

Organs are gorgeously complex instruments, with thousands of pipes and sadly limited life spans. Our current instrument has served us well. But at 49 years old, it has already exceeded its predecessors' average life span by five years. It is in failing health despite numerous repairs. Back in 2005, a committee first met to seek a replacement. After studying detailed bids from six builders, a winner was selected. But the onset of the recession in 2008 forced those plans to be put on hold – until now.

Since then, our organ has deteriorated steadily, as Jeffrey Hoffman found out in his first appearance as the church's new organist/choirmaster in 2007. That morning a complete organ breakdown forced him to switch to the piano for the service. Today he points to a litany of issues ranging from a growing number of sounds the organ can no longer produce to the hissing sounds it makes whenever it is turned on.

III. Meet the New Organ

The new organ's specifications, and the choice of builder, were largely set by the Organ Committee led by Jack Hennigan over a decade ago. The new instrument, like the present one, will have two manuals and over 2,000 pipes. Yes, the neatly arrayed army of pipes looming behind the choir is only a fraction of the total. Some pipes are so long they must be mounted horizontally, while others are the size of drinking straws. Although the new organ will boast more big pipes and other new features, its largest advance will be that all the parts will work! Many components needed to keep our present organ operating are no longer made. It will also boast movable louvers that will improve volume control, so that it can be used for everything from accompanying parishioners, to working with the choir, and in concert recitals.



While the plans for the new organ's inner workings are complete, sketches of its case are still being prepared, along with proposals for wood stains, finishes, etc. In a day-long visit to Christ Church in December, executives from the organ's maker took photos of the church's interior and spoke with several people, including art historian and parishioner Kim de Beaumont. All stressed the need to stay true to the church's Bolton-family legacy, from our lovely stained-glass windows to original wood carvings.

IV. Made in Montreal

The new organ builder, Juget-Sinclair, is based in Montreal. Those curious about the company can explore its website: <http://www.juget-sinclair.com>. Since its founding in 1995, J-S has built 47 instruments in Canada, the US, Germany, and Japan. The company's three partners and eight employees work on one organ at a time. Currently, that means an instrument for a seminary in Nebraska, followed by home organs in Vancouver and Hong Kong. Our organ stands fourth in line. Most of the work, from pipes to the organ case, is done in-house; exceptions are the blowers and electronics, which are outsourced.

V. Kicking the Tires

Within days of getting the news of Martin's generous donation, the Organ Committee sprang back to life. It is chaired by parishioner Margaret Young, and includes Fr. Matt, Kari Black as Sr. Warden, Jeffrey Hoffman, Martin Nash, and parishioner Allison Bodenmann. In November, it began a detailed analysis of the proposal as well as J-S's record. Before signing the contract on January 12, 2018, the committee checked J-S's references, which Margaret reported were "all stellar"; reviewed private financial statements and publicly available credit reports; spoke with Huguenot Church about its recent experience buying an organ; reviewed the contract with attorneys on the vestry; and consulted regularly with the vestry as a whole. The firm that advises us on building-related issues, Parish Property Management, is weighing needed steps to remove the current organ and prepare the site.



In addition, Fr. Matt and Jeffrey went to Massachusetts in December to look at a J-S organ in a church there (see photo on left).

VI. Coming and Going

Our new organ will be built in J-S's shop in Montreal (see photo on right); delivery is scheduled for fall 2019. A team of six J-S employees will spend two weeks installing it. Then two staffers will remain for another six weeks to tune and "voice" it – to define its sound.



Over the course of those eight weeks, we hope to house these staffers in parishioners' homes. It is something the company has done happily on projects around the world. For the record, the three J-S customers that we spoke with as references all reported their parishioners had enjoyed sharing their homes. Bottom line: Watch for a future call to open your doors.

Meanwhile, the search for a buyer for our present organ has begun. Finding a buyer would save us the cost of removing it ourselves. Once the space is cleared out, we will need to evaluate potential electrical, plastering, HVAC, and painting needs before the J-S team arrives. In the gap before we fire up our new organ, we will either use the piano for services or rent a small digital organ.

Thanks to Martin Nash, the next 18 months will bring much excitement, culminating in decades of enjoyment for all who worship, sing, play or simply listen to our music.