

COVER FEATURE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

REUTER ORGAN CO.

From the Pastor

When representatives of the organ committee and I met with the architect to have preliminary discussions about a redesign of the chancel to accommodate the new Reuter organ, I made the comment that it would be most desirable if the finished product would appear to a visitor, who had never been in the sanctuary before, as if this is the way it had always been.

A lot of concern about the project from the beginning was centered over the proposed changes to the chancel of the sanctuary that was built in the colonial architectural style popular in the 1950s. The split chancel with the choir seated on opposite sides facing each other with the Communion table and cross visually centered was an image that had welcomed the congregation for nearly 50 years. To make a long story short, the architect and the design team from the Reuter Organ Company successfully created a new organ and a refurbished chancel that is visually appealing and significantly contributes to the quality of sound from congregational singing and choral anthems and responses. And while there have been significant changes to the formal chancel, the architectural integrity of the sanctuary has been maintained, while giving worship leaders and musicians more flexibility in planning worship experiences for the future.

The new organ is magnificent in eye appeal and in musical enhancement, and when it was dedicated to a full sanctuary on Sunday, November 6, 2005, the response was overwhelming. As members and visitors left the sanctuary that day, there was a chorus of praise and gratitude for this grand addition to the worship life at First Presbyterian Church. The text for the service that day was from Ephesians 1:12, "so that we . . . might live for the praise of his glory." This is our mission as we strive to be a worshipping, serving community of God's people.

DWIGHT O. CHRISTENBURY JR., Pastor

From the Committee

The replacement of the sanctuary organ began in earnest in February 2002 with the formation of an ad hoc committee. That group was charged with determining the viability of the existing pipe organ, which had been in place since 1958. A unanimous decision was reached to replace the organ, and the committee was enlarged to develop a proposal. Several firms were researched and the results narrowed to include three companies from which we would solicit formal proposals. Part of the review process was to travel to various churches and listen to organs that had been recently installed by those companies. Our travels included a trip to Ardmore Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, to hear the 44-rank Reuter organ installed in October of 2003. The committee returned to the session, the governing body of our church, with the recommendation to re-

place the existing organ with a three-manual and pedal organ of 68 ranks and 53 stops.

Part of Reuter's proposal included case-work on the front wall, which resulted in the extension of the chancel by five feet. Permanent risers were also added in the chancel. The tonal openings for the organ chambers were enlarged. Wall-to-wall carpet was removed from the chancel and sanctuary and replaced with hardwood flooring with carpet in the aisles.

On Sunday, August 28, 2005, the first shipment arrived from Lawrence, Kansas. Over 200 members stayed after the service to help unload the tractor-trailer. It was remarkable to see a line of volunteers extend from the truck all the way down the center aisle of the sanctuary. A process that normally takes all day was reduced to about three hours. Most of that shipment was in place within a week, and on Labor Day, September 6, a second shipment arrived and was installed over the next two weeks. Our completion schedule was met, and a dedication service was scheduled for November 6, 2005.

My overall impression of the process was surprise over how much time some issues took and how quickly others came together. The approval process was longer than I expected. The scope and breadth of the project overwhelmed many members, and it took some time for most to process. However, the project took on incredible speed from contract signing to the dedication. The coordination among Reuter, the Barnes Design Group (architects), and E.T. Gresham (contractors) was impressive. We dealt with small issues on many occasions that required input from both sides, but I was pleased with the ability of both to get them resolved quickly and amicably.

Our trip to the factory was a highlight for me. Through that trip and the installation process, I realized that Reuter employees needed to have many different talents, from metalworking and woodworking to electrical and mechanical engineering to an understanding of music. It was amazing to see how much of the process from beginning to end is handled at the company's workplace. Reuter far exceeded the goals we set for the project.

When we met initially, the committee's goal was to support the legacy of sacred music in our church for this and future congregations. With this in mind, we sought to provide the congregation with a high-quality instrument that would last many generations. We also wanted to improve the acoustics of the sanctuary to support congregational singing. And we wanted the new organ and the changes to the sanctuary to look as though they had been there from the beginning. We're grateful to the Reuter Organ Company for their part in achieving our goals and for the magnificent pipe organ, Reuter Opus 2225.

JEFFREY SHEATS, Chair
Organ Committee

From the Music Director

The sanctuary of the First Presbyterian Church of Virginia Beach was built in 1957. Upon completion, a fully enclosed pipe organ of 17 ranks on three manuals was installed. The console was located under the Great/Choir division with an access door to the hall outside the sanctuary. An antiphonal chamber was completed in the back of the sanctuary over the balcony, but nothing was installed inside, except chimes. The chancel was split with room for about 25 singers, ten on one side and 15 on the other. In the 1980s, the entire sanctuary (including the chancel) was carpeted, and eleven ranks were added to the organ. By the 1990s, it was apparent that the organ was reaching the end of its natural life and that, at the least, a new console was needed. By 2000, the 50-voice choir was bursting the seams of the chancel each Sunday. Because of the dry acoustical environment, neither the choir nor the congregation sang to their potential. Additionally, the location of the console caused problems in accompanying both the choir and soloists and made conducting from the bench an impossible feat. The problems were officially addressed by the session in 2002, and in 2003 an organ search committee was formed.

The committee's first step was to set and prioritize our goals and objectives for the project:

- a. to enhance congregational singing;
- b. to provide an organ suitable for accompanying the choir;
- c. to provide an instrument that could be used for recitals and concerts; and
- d. to accomplish the above without changing the beauty of the sanctuary.

Kirkegaard Associates were contracted to survey our sanctuary and suggest changes that would improve the acoustical properties of the room. We also hired a local architectural firm that specialized in church redesign and refurbishment. They provided us options for reconfiguring the chancel. At the same time, we were working through the process of choosing an organbuilder.

We had decided early on that a mechanical-action organ was not practical for our physical situation and not in the best interest of our church. Organist Jim Swiger and I prepared a list of about a dozen builders that we thought could and would meet our needs. That list was pared down to three by the committee. Then came the travel and study. The committee made several trips, and individual members made some private trips as well. As the various members of the committee began moving toward the Reuter Organ Company, I made several personal trips to hear and see Reuter organs during worship. I was impressed by the visual beauty of their casework, i.e., the organs seemed to be perfectly suited to the rooms in which they were placed. I was also impressed by the way in which the organs worked in the room to enhance congregational singing, as well as their sound in general. The committee unanimously and enthusiastically recommended that the church engage the Reuter Organ Company to build a new instrument of 68 ranks.

From the beginning, the Reuter people were wonderful to work with in the many details that preceded the arrival of the organ. And their customer service did not decline

in any way following the signing of the contract. Their tonal designers provided an appealing stoplist, and their architectural designers provided pictures and plans that won over even the most reluctant congregation members.

Reuter factory personnel came to Virginia Beach in May and removed the old organ. We worshiped in the sanctuary until the beginning of July and then moved into Fellowship Hall while the rugs were all replaced with hardwood flooring, the pews were removed and reconditioned, and the room painted. The first truckload of the new organ arrived on a Sunday morning, and, about 200 members of our congregation spent a few hours helping to unload the equipment. We have a priceless collection of pictures taken that day of our members of all ages, dressed in their "Sunday best," carrying pipes, windchests, and other equipment into the sanctuary. Somehow, the Reuter installers had everything in place by the following Sunday, so that we could worship in the sanctuary and then repeat the process with another truckload of equipment. Installation was completed in several weeks. Tonal finishing and tuning were completed by the beginning of November, just in time for our dedication service on November 6, 2005.

The new organ has had a significant impact on both our congregation and the community at large. Each Sunday morning, we have had visitors who have come to "check us out" after hearing about the new instrument. The choir has improved with the new seating arrangement, the new acoustical properties of the room, and the crucial element of support the new organ provides by surrounding them in sound. The organ now "sings" down the length of the nave and, with the full division in the balcony, supports and encourages the most reluctant of congregational hymn singers. Our services have taken on a new vitality, and our church looks to the 21st century with optimism and enthusiasm.

DAVID S. KUNKEL, Music Director

From the Builder

BRIEF COMPANY HISTORY

Since its founding in Trenton, Illinois, some 89 years ago and relocation to Lawrence, Kansas, in 1919, the Reuter Organ Company has grown into one of the country's leading and most respected pipe organ builders, with a highly skilled and dedicated work force of craftspeople, designing and constructing instruments in a state-of-the-art manufacturing and corporate complex—the largest new building project for a major pipe organ builder in the last 50 years. The firm, which in its first year of business in 1917 had but a single contract, has become an international concern with organs in Canada, Taiwan, Korea and nearly every U.S. state. The first Reuter organ is still playing today in Mattoon, Illinois. Since that first installation, Reuter has created over 2,200 new instruments for cathedrals, churches, chapels, schools, synagogues, concert halls, theaters, and residences. These many different stories are a mosaic of American musical and religious life and one company's role in that heritage. The pieces come together in the Reuter Organ Company of today: a pipe organ builder compelled by a *singular unwavering vision*—to craft the best the industry has to offer, dedicated to artistry and integrity, and built to the Glory of God.



ON TONAL DESIGN AND OPUS 2225

Tonal direction at Reuter is driven by a conscious effort to gain an understanding of a particular church music program as it relates to worship—this work is done with an appreciation of the acoustics and architecture of the liturgical space—and the project at the First Presbyterian Church is a fine example. Working with David Kunkel and Jim Swiger, the committee was able to make early determinations about what would be required for a pipe organ installation to be successful. When Reuter joined the group as the builder of choice, those expectations were discussed. Given those considerations, the committee, the consultant, and Reuter were able to decide on an appropriate course of action designed to achieve the artistic results everyone wanted. This work shows what is possible in a partnership between church and builder when a well-informed musical decision makes creative and efficient use of available resources. When cooperation and collaboration define an organ project, the results are dramatic. We believe the efforts in Virginia Beach are a testament to this collaborative pursuit of excellence.

It seems to be an increasingly rare honor to work with churches that support the great traditions of sacred music by making the pipe organ integral to the worship experience. Not only was this evident with the organ committee, the pastor, and the music staff at the First Presbyterian Church, but with the congregation as a whole.

A shared vision of a fine church organ was the centerpiece of early discussions, and fortunately, there were no established constraints. Simply put, we had license to dream. The church asked us to consider the possibility of retaining some pipes from the existing instrument. Upon careful study, we decided to retain six stops in their entirety and use portions of three others.

The specification presents a plethora of colors from which the organist can call upon—open flutes, capped flutes, harmonic flutes, wooden flutes, chorus reeds of vari-

ous timbres, solo reeds, and a wide selection of principal tone using a variety of wind pressures and mouth widths. All along in our discussion, the musicians kept referring to our installation at the First Presbyterian Church in Lincoln, Nebraska (see the February 2003 cover feature of *THE AMERICAN ORGANIST*), a project that incorporated the best portions of that church's Aeolian-Skinner organ. Both the Virginia Beach and Lincoln organs contain an ample supply of stops at varying gradations of power and color. This allows for a seamless crescendo from the soft Flute Celeste to full organ, all capped by the Trompette en Chamade, and then further reinforced by drawing the Tuba voiced on ample pressure.

While much has been said about the creation of a church organ, this instrument is also an orchestra. The imitative orchestral voices melded with the carefully voiced traditional stops of a church organ allow this instrument to play an expanded repertoire of literature, in either solo or accompaniment use. This ability is displayed in our recent installations of the last five years or so, where one is able to hear a musically advanced, refined, and silky sound, but with the clarity one expects from a Reuter organ. Today, careful attention is paid to not over-voice a pipe to the point its harmonic development is squelched and the sound becomes lifeless, or unnatural. It is quite easy for one's ear to become accommodating during an extended period of voicing, thus our tonal staff makes multiple visits in the first year of a new organ's life. This, in turn, gives the church and musicians time to become familiar with the new organ and put it through its musical paces. They are then able to share with us specific desired tonal characteristics to further refine.

At Virginia Beach, the Great and Pedal divisions are located behind the facade, on the front wall of the chancel and speaking down the main axis of the room. The Swell and Choir are located in chambers on either side of the chancel. The hard plaster walls and

excellent tone openings (a nave opening was added during the renovation) create a swell box capable of wide dynamic ranges and effects—from caging the fiery beast to propelling batteries of sound forward into the church.

Anyone familiar with a barrel-vault ceiling is aware of the complexities of that particular acoustical environment. We chose the scales accordingly, based on the idiosyncrasies of the space, assumptions about how the chancel redesign would create new acoustics, and our prior experiences in similar rooms. Since we build all of our own pipes, it was no problem to fine-tune the scales during the on-site tonal finishing—UPS loves Reuter!

Towards the end of the on-site tonal finishing process, the annual Presbytery meeting was held and the organ was used unofficially for the first time. What a treat to hear a group of some 200 ministers and delegates sing hymns with the new organ! We were all inspired listening to multiple verses played with such variety—starting with one 8' Diapason, then to all the manual 8' stops drawn together, and finally full organ.

SOME WORDS OF THANKS

A project like this is gratifying on more than its artistic merits. The nature of our work—and one of the most rewarding aspects of being in a business like this, with such a great cast of characters from near and far—is forging relationships. Organbuilding is people. When we ask a customer to trust our vision, our artistic philosophy, our business practices, we are asking for more than a check and a contract. We are asking for a partnership, a mutual understanding about what is important in the life of the parish community. Our people share that vision.

From Ted in the pipe shop casting the first metal, to Rod in the assembly area testing and fitting, and his crew installing the whole project on site, to Bill and JR's work in the chamber and at the console, the instrument in Virginia Beach is a collection of personalities. These personalities belong to the incredible artisans who build Reuter pipe organs. They do this work for more than the unexceptional monetary rewards it offers. They do it because they want to be part of something larger than themselves. We believe our artisans consider it a privilege in today's world to be employed by a company that offers the opportunity to touch the hearts of so many. Those are the rewards of our work at the Reuter Organ Company.

As we announce Ken Cowan's dedication recital scheduled for April 23, 2006, at 4:00 P.M., we take the opportunity to thank all those who have made this instrument possible, including our friends at the First Presbyterian Church and everyone on the Reuter team. In a busy environment, when we don't often take enough time to offer kind words and congratulations for a job well done, we get the opportunity, at venues like dedication recitals and in publications like this one, to extend our gratitude to the wonderful people at the Reuter factory in Lawrence, Kansas. It is a pleasure to work with them on a daily basis. We thank them all in a small way by listing them here.

ALBERT NEUTEL JR., President
WILLIAM KLIMAS, Vice President and

Artistic Director
S. CHRISTOPHER LEAVER, Vice President and
Chief Operating Officer

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA
REUTER ORGAN COMPANY
LAWRENCE, KANSAS

OPUS 2225 • THREE MANUALS • 68 RANKS

GREAT

16 Sub Principal
8 Diapason
8 Principal
8 Harmonic Flute
8 Bourdon
4 Octave
4 Spillflute
2½ Twelfth
2 Super Octave
Cornet III (TC)
Furniture IV
16 Bombarde (Sw.)
8 Trumpet
8 Tuba (Ch.)
8 Trompette en Chamade
8 Fagotto (Ch.)
8 French Horn (Ch.)
8 English Horn (Ch.) (prep.)
Tremulant
Chimes*
Cymbelstern
MIDI

SWELL (expressive)

16 Rohrflute
8 Geigen Principal
8 Viole de Gambe
8 Viole Celeste (CC)
8 Flute Dolce
8 Flute Celeste (TC)
8 Rohrflute
4 Geigen Octave
4 Hohlflute
2½ Nazard
2 Recorder
1½ Tierce
Plein Jeu IV
16 Bombarde
8 Trompette
8 Oboe
8 Vox Humana
8 Trompette en Chamade (Gt.)
4 Clarion
Tremulant
MIDI

THE ARTISANS

REUTER OPUS 2225
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

ADMINISTRATION

Dorothy Schaake
Kay Miller
Chris Leaver
Bill Klimas
JR Neutel
Albert Neutel Sr.

ASSEMBLY

Rod Czerniak
Chris Ruhlman
Mike Morgan
Paul Benner

CASE AND CONSOLE BUILDING

Ed Dorssom
David Hadl
Steve Major
Justin Hodson

CASE DESIGN

Tom Cashen
Frank Friemel

DESIGN AND ENGINEERING

Robert Vaughan
Tom Cashen
Eric Farnsworth
Chelsea Demars

FINISHING

Monty Amick

INSTALLATION

Rod Czerniak
Mike Morgan
Aaron Young
Ed Dorssom
Bard Wickkiser

PIPE MAKING

Don Gauthier
Aaron Young
Ted Burgess
Trace Bunker
Fred Grammer
Robert Leach

CHOIR (expressive)

16 Dulciana (1–12*)
8 Principal
8 Gedeckt
8 Concert Flute
8 Dulciana
8 Unda Maris (TC)
4 Spitz Principal
4 Harmonic Flute
2½ Nazat
2 Principal
1½ Terz
1½ Larigot
Scharf III–IV
16 Tuba (TC)
16 Fagotto
8 Tuba
8 Trompette en Chamade (Gt.)
8 Clarinet
8 French Horn
8 English Horn (prep.)
8 Fagotto
Tremulant
MIDI
Harp*

ANTIPHONAL (floating)

8 Principal
8 Gedeckt
4 Octave
2 Flachflute
Chimes

PEDAL

32 Bourdon (1–12*)
16 Principal
16 Sub Principal (Gt.)
16 Open Wood*
16 Subbass
16 Rohrflute (Sw.)
16 Dulciana (Ch.)
16 Gedeckt (Antiphonal, 1–12*)
8 Principal
8 Sub Principal
8 Subbass
8 Rohrflute (Sw.)
8 Dulciana (Ch.)
4 Choral Bass
4 Sub Principal (Gt.)
4 Subbass
Mixture IV
32 Trumpet (1–12*)
32 Fagotto (1–12*)
16 Posaune
16 Fagotto (Ch.)
16 Bombarde (Sw.)
8 Posaune
8 Bombarde (Sw.)
8 Fagotto (Ch.)
4 Posaune
4 Fagotto (Ch.)
4 English Horn (Ch.) (prep.)
8 Tuba (Ch.)
8 Trompette en Chamade (Gt.)
Chimes (Gt.)
MIDI

* = Digital

CHESTS AND HANDWORK

John Leach
Andy Siler
Mary Hulse
Fred Whitehead Jr.
Lloyd Jensen
Kay Leach
Karl Swoyer
Rorie Orgeron Jr.
Vincent Perdue

CONSOLE ASSEMBLY

Jeff Noll
George Renault
Gilbert Stone

TONAL FINISHING

Bill Klimas
JR Neutel
Proctor Crow
Tom Watgen

VOICING

Tom Watgen
John Bechen
Proctor Crow
Paul Harris
Megan Hulse