

MUSIC & LITURGY

Make A Joyful Noise

Jim Hess – Director

The liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church is a sung liturgy. The human voice is the “first” and most perfect instrument created by God to sing His praises. Other instruments also enhance the sung prayer of the church and the pipe organ “holds pride of place” according to the documents of the Second Vatican Council and, most recently, “Sing to the Lord, Music in Divine Worship,” prepared by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. As we strive to maintain the liturgical integrity of our Catholic faith, we work to ensure that all instruments utilized in services play a complementary role in our worship.

In 1996, a new church was built with space dedicated for a pipe organ. Building costs escalated and cuts were made to the initial building project, including the or-

gan. In its place, the electronic instrument used in the old St. Thomas More Church was moved to the new church structure. This instrument served for a few years until it no longer became playable. It was “temporarily” replaced in 2005 with the current electric organ that can no longer serve the needs of our growing parish and music program.

In considering possible options to meet our liturgical needs and be prudent stewards of the contributions that had been specifically designated by donors for the project, an Organ Committee was formed in 2006. The committee gave time and talent as they traveled to various cities to experience the beauty and liturgical presence of various pipe organs and consider cost and space issues by speaking directly to the instrument builders.

With escalating labor, shipping, and pipe metal costs, the building of a pipe organ, although preferred by the committee and the wider church, was not deemed possible. The cost of an all pipe organ instrument to adequately support our congregation could be well over one million dollars plus additional cost for structural changes that would be necessary to house the instrument. In prayerful consideration of the liturgical impact and stewardship of parish funds, a plan is currently underway to install a combination digital/pipe organ.

The combination digital/pipe organ was chosen primarily to enhance the liturgy in comparison to the current instrument. Second, the configuration matches the original space provided by the architect in 1996, placing it in the niche closest to where the choir is currently located.



The new combination pipe/digital organ will be built in the niche (highlighted by the two lights) closest to the choir.



Organ project rendering – left image – reveals a drawing of the organ viewed from the side; right image reveals the organ located in the niche closest to where the choir is currently located.

This would allow the completion of the church design without modification to the building or significant disruption of services. And finally, the cost is less than half of an all pipe organ.

St. Thomas More has enlisted the services of Burton K. Tidwell to coordinate the building of the instrument composed of 25 pipe ranks and 50 digital voices. The result will be a pipe organ that has significant extended sound capabilities. He expressed his enthusiasm by stating “This is one of the most intriguing and exciting projects with which I have been involved in a number of years. It is cutting edge on many levels and promises to be an instrument of integrity and extreme musicality to serve St.

Thomas More for decades to come.”

We would like to provide all parishioners with the opportunity to be a part of enhancing the liturgy by assisting with the building of the new organ. If you would like to make a contribution toward the project, please designate your gift to the St. Thomas More Organ Fund.

Gifts given in memory of a loved one have built a majority of the Organ Fund. With donations and pledges, St. Thomas More parish is within \$56,000 of the total project cost. If you have questions, you may contact either Jim Hess at jhess@stmore.org or Missy Eckenberg at missy@stmore.org or call either person at the parish office, 534.9000.

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Burton K. Tidwell

Biographical Information



Throughout a career spanning 38 years, Burton K. Tidwell has been involved in the crafting of more than 300 pipe organs, including the instrument at Broadway Methodist Church in Paducah 20 years ago. For the past several years he has focused on the building of instruments integrating the traditional organbuilding craft with the tools of digital technology. His expertise in organ design, pipe scaling, voicing and finishing has kept his career fresh, continually on the cutting edge of musical organbuilding. His skills are in demand more than ever as he works on the development of projects spanning the United States.

Tidwell is a native of Kansas. During high school, he was a student of James Strand, Southwestern College, Winfield. He later studied with Mildred Andrews at the University of Oklahoma and completed his BMus in Organ degree at the University of Kansas. He also did graduate work with Don Vollstead at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and in journalism at the University of Kansas.

His interest in organbuilding came at an early time in organ studies and particularly was influenced through the writing of organbuilder Lawrence Phelps. Tidwell worked as a voicer for a short period of time for Lawrence Phelps & Associates and eventually engaged in prolific correspondence with Lawrence Phelps as he sought to document Phelps' considerable contribution to organbuilding. To further his work on this project, Tidwell received a grant from the prestigious Clarence and Ruth Mader Foundation.

Tidwell has been a church musician since age 14, and presently serves as organist at Valley United Methodist Church, Marion, Kansas (through MIDI) and at Plymouth Congregational Church, Wichita.