



## **The Dorothy Virginia Garman Blankenship Laurie Memorial Organ**

Our current organ is in a dire state. An independent expert consultant has confirmed that it will require significant and costly repairs in the near future. Also, due the architectural limitations when it was first installed over 100 years ago, it is no longer appropriate for the size of our church sanctuary in light of major advances that have been made in organ technology and design.

However, state of the art digital organ technology now provides the possibility for a full pipe organ sound completely appropriate for our worship space, without any architectural compromise, and at a fraction of the cost of a full pipe organ.

We now have a tremendous opportunity to obtain such an instrument. An anonymous donor has pledged \$100,000 to be used towards the purchase of a new organ for our church. A second donor has pledged an additional \$10,000 for this cause, and additional donors have also come forward.

---

### **Questions & Answers**

#### **Q: Why are we doing this now?**

A: Two generous donors have pledged a total of \$110,000 to be used towards the purchase of a new organ at St. Andrew's, with a stipulation that the project begin this year (before Dec. 31, 2009).

#### **Q: Who is this donor? Why have they made this offer?**

A: The primary donation of \$100,000 is from a friend of Dorothy Virginia Garman Blankenship Laurie, a St. Andrew's parishioner who passed away earlier this year. This donor wishes to remain anonymous, and desires that a new organ be dedicated to her memory. The Laurie family has pledged an additional \$10,000.

Additional advance donors have also come forward.

#### **Q: What's wrong with our current organ?**

A: There are two basic problems with the current organ: suitability and maintainability. Both of these issues are discussed in more detail below.

#### **Q: But the current organ sounds fine to me. What is the problem?**

The current instrument features only a fraction of the organ pipe ranks that would normally be included for an expanse such as our sanctuary. Furthermore, no pipe ranks were installed in the front of the church.

Today we assume that these design compromises were made to preserve the architectural integrity of the church, since a full set of pipes would have consumed at least the entire rear gallery (choir loft), and covered the rose window above it. It is also

## The Dorothy Virginia Garman Blankenship Laurie Memorial Organ

possible that the budget may have limited the installation at that time.

But these compromises came at the expense of the instrument's musical quality. The current organ is a small and incomplete specification for the expanse of our sanctuary. The organ sound does not project into the church proper to effectively support cantors or congregation in song. It is severely handicapped by not having complete ensemble choruses or solo stops necessary to play most liturgical and other musical literature accurately.

Our expert consultant has detailed these deficiencies in his report, and he strongly recommends that we take steps to correct them.

### **Q: Can't we just repair or upgrade the current organ?**

The current instrument is a Moller organ, first installed in 1907. Many additions and changes have been made since that time. Original spare parts are no longer available, so makeshift replacements must be custom made.

The combination action of the instrument is failing. The organist can no longer rely on this system to quickly change from differing banks of sound combinations so very necessary in playing liturgies.

The current organ contains no salvageable components for an upgrade. For years now, our organ technicians have recommended that the parish needs to 'start over' with a new instrument, and this has been confirmed by the expert consultant.

Over the last 10 years the parish has spent almost \$30,000 on repairs, and these costs are accelerating.

Our expert consultant has provided a detailed outline of the repairs we should expect over the next few years, with an estimated cost in the range of \$120,000 to \$175,000.

Note that even after these repairs the organ would produce the same sound as it does today; without any improvement with respect to suitability as described in the previous answer.

### **Q: What options were considered?**

#### **1. Repair or upgrade the current instrument.**

As described in the previous answer, our expert consultant advises that we should budget \$120,000 to \$175,000 if we take this option, with no increase in the performance of the instrument.

#### **2. Replace the current organ with a pipe organ sized appropriately for the space.**

Cost estimates for a moderately sized pipe organ for our church range from \$650,000 (absolute minimum) to \$1.2 million.

For reference, Raleigh Court Presbyterian installed a new \$600,000 pipe organ this year. And a church similar in size church to ours, Park Cities Presbyterian in Dallas, recently spent \$2.5 million for a full pipe organ.

#### **3. Replace the current organ with a new all-digital instrument.**

This option was chosen by our Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils, and is described in more detail in the remainder of this document.

**Q: What is the recommended option?**

Option 2 does not seem economically or architecturally feasible for us. Even if the funds were available, it would require significant architectural changes within the sanctuary; the new pipe ranks would consume most, if not all, of the rear gallery, and new ranks would need to be added at the front of the church.

And despite the high cost, a pipe-only organ would not include non-organ stops offered by a digital organ for increased musical variety.

Options 1 and 3 would both have roughly the same “out of pocket” cost for the Parish. However, Option 3 would provide a superior musical solution, with little to no long term maintenance expense.

Therefore, our Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils have approved Option 3, a new all-digital organ.

**Q: What are the advantages of an all-digital organ?**

A: It will be a complete instrument, appropriately sized for our worship space, with no need for architectural modifications within our magnificent sanctuary.

An all-digital organ can play all genres of music effectively. It will enhance and support the liturgies the way proper organs are designed to do. It will be a huge help (not a hindrance) in leading congregational song.

Such an instrument will benefit St. Andrew’s Church, a National Historic Landmark, with its tremendous acoustics that are heralded within the area musical community.

In short, it will sound like a true pipe organ, and our worship experience will be greatly enhanced by its superior performance.

It will also eliminate the routine maintenance and tuning issues and associated costs that we incur with the current instrument, or would incur with a new pipe organ.

**Q: How does an all-digital organ produce sound?**

A: Our new instrument will use state of the art digital sampling technology (*first developed in 1969 by the firm to be commissioned to build the organ*) to play back actual pipe samples from notable pipe organs from all over the world, with virtually no discernable difference in ‘realism’. This system eliminates tuning and routine maintenance associated with a windblown instrument.

Although the emphasis is on pipe organ tones, this instrument, through MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface), can also play a variety of non-organ stops for contemporary, orchestral, or other types of music.

The instrument simultaneously generates 42 independent channels of sound, voiced and amplified through the Audio Systems hidden in the rear and front of the sanctuary.

It will be customized and tuned for optimum performance in our magnificent acoustic space.

**Q: What company will supply the new organ?**

A: The primary donor has stipulated that the instrument be supplied by the Allen Organ Company.

## The Dorothy Virginia Garman Blankenship Laurie Memorial Organ

Allen Organ Company, established in 1937, is the world's largest builder of organs, with a large installed base around the USA and the world.

Parishioners and visitors are already familiar with Allen Organs, since temporary installations of all-digital Allen instruments have been used occasionally for special events at St. Andrew's, including the popular St. Lucy concerts.

### **Q: What are the components of the new organ?**

A: The new instrument is actually an integrated system consisting of the following major components:

- One new Custom Elite™ Opus VIII four-manual Organ Console, to be placed in the gallery at the same location as the current two-manual console,
- The Tone Generator, the highly specialized, self-contained computer system that produced up to 42 simultaneous channels of authentic musical sounds,
- Several rack-mounted Amplifier Units, located in the gallery,
- Several Audio Systems, hidden at strategic locations in the rear and front of the sanctuary.

The design is based on the manufacturer's standard components, although each will be customized as per the unique requirements of our installation.

### **Q: Will the existing pipes be re-used?**

A: Although it is technically possible to integrate the existing organ pipes into the new instrument, this would increase the system cost and complexity far beyond the acoustic benefit. Doing so would significantly increase the total price, and also

consume space in the gallery since there is not currently room for both pipe ranks and a digital organ.

The existing pipe facades and speaking pipes may be retained for decorative purposes.

### **Q: How much will it cost?**

A: The firm price quotation for the organ and its installation is \$256,538. Additional project related costs are estimated to be \$4,680. The difference between the total project budget and the pledges received to date is \$151,300.

### **Q: How will we fund the difference?**

A: The difference between the total cost and the primary donation will be funded by a combination of further donations and Parish funds.

### **Q: Who will install and commission the new organ?**

A: The installation and commissioning services for the new instrument will be the responsibility of the manufacturer, Allen Organ Company.

St. Andrew's will be responsible for some minor carpentry and related work to support the installation. This additional work is included in the project cost.

### **Q: What is the system warranty?**

A: The manufacturer's warranty is ten years for parts and two years for labor.

Service is provided by their local representative, Ridenhour Music.

### **Q: What modifications will be required in the church?**

A: The new Organ Console, Tone Generator, Amplifier Racks and rear

## The Dorothy Virginia Garman Blankenship Laurie Memorial Organ

Audio Systems will be located in the gallery. The expectation of both the manufacturer and our expert consultant is that little or no structural modification will be required in that area. The existing choir area will remain as it is today.

The Audio Systems in the front of the sanctuary will be hidden behind the reredos<sup>1</sup>.

### Q: How long will it take to install the new organ?

A: Project completion is estimated to take about 10 months after the instrument is ordered. Therefore it should be available by late Fall 2010.

### Q: Will we be without an organ during the transition?

A: The duration between the removal of the old organ and the installation of the new instrument is estimated to be about one month, during late Fall.

We will not be without an organ during the Easter or Christmas seasons.

### Q: Who is our expert consultant?

A: Mr. Rudolph (Rudy) Lucente recently retired as Director of Music and Liturgy at St. Rose Catholic Church in North Wales, PA. In addition to his forty-plus years as a church musician, he is also Assistant Organist at both the Grand Court Organ (formerly Wanamaker's) in Philadelphia and a holiday organist at Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square. He is a frequent recitalist, church music clinician, and is a member of the Philadelphia Organ Quartet.

---

<sup>1</sup> Reredos: The structure behind the altar that houses the tabernacle.

Mr. Lucente's report is available at [www.standrewsroanoke.org](http://www.standrewsroanoke.org).

### Q: What if I have additional questions, or would like to make a donation?

A: Please contact Dave Stocker, Co-Chair of the Buildings & Grounds Committee, or Kelly Wheelbarger, our Minister of Music.

### Contact Information

David Stocker

[stockerd@cox.net](mailto:stockerd@cox.net), 295-9278

Kelly Wheelbarger

[kwheelbarger@standrewsroanoke.org](mailto:kwheelbarger@standrewsroanoke.org)

344-9814

### Notable Nearby Allen Organ Installations

- Faith Baptist Church, Staunton
- Meadows Presb. Church, Charlottesville
- Our Savior Lutheran, Warrenton
- Randolph-Macon Academy, Front Royal
- Redeemer Lutheran Church, Bristol
- St. Athanasius Catholic Church, Vienna
- St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Herndon
- St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Bluefield
- Fellowship Presb. Church, Greensboro
- Richard B. Harrison Auditorium North, Greensboro (2009)
- Springfield Baptist, High Point, NC
- Winston-Salem Seventh-Day Adventist, Gastonia, NC (2009)
- Manassas, VA (2009)
- Mooresville, NC (2009)



Allen Elite™ Opus II at the Collégial Notre-Dame d'Écouis in France