

Cover feature

Bedient Pipe Organ Company, Roca, Nebraska, Opus 81 First Congregational Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

As organbuilding and organ performance evolve in the beginning of the 21st century, as financial resources of churches are often limited, there is renewed incentive to incorporate the good of past American organbuilding into new instruments. That is what we have done at First Congregational Church, Sioux Falls.

Although the practice of incorporating elements of former instruments into new ones has been perhaps shunned by some of our better builders in past decades and certainly by me, it was common in earlier times of organbuilding history for organbuilders to recycle functional components. Look at many stoplists of Arp Schnitger as reported by Gustav Foch and more often than not, some stops on a new instrument will be attributed to an earlier builder, or simply "vor Schn."

This practice has certainly occurred in American organbuilding throughout our history and with varying degrees of success. The advisability and resulting success depends on the style of organ being built and the skills of the organbuilder.

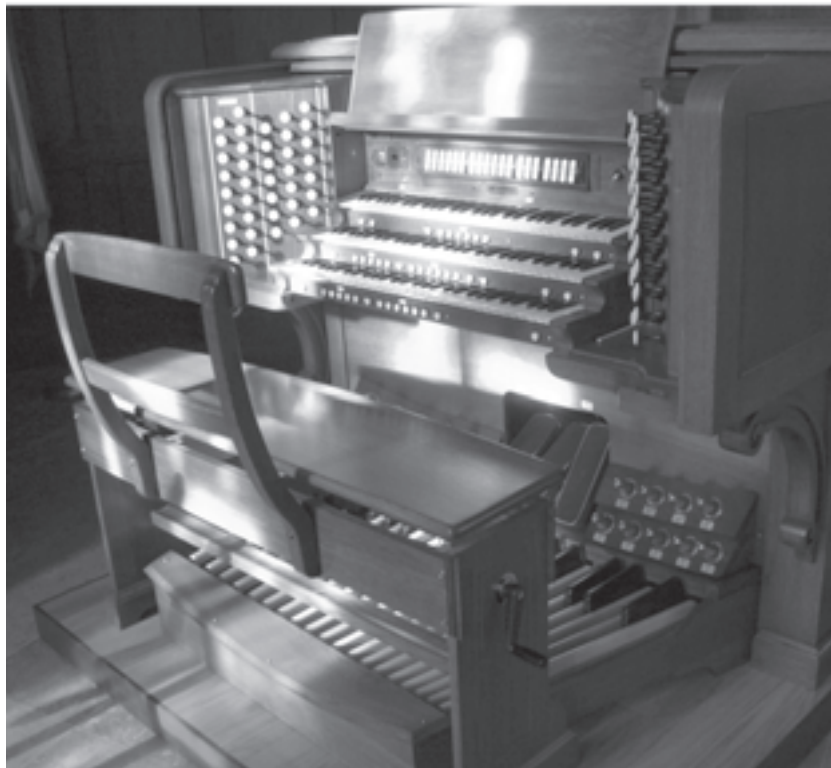
Based on our successful combination of new and old in our Opus 81, the practice of "reuse and renew" continues to be a logical organbuilding technique.

Our goals were: 1) To rebuild and enhance the existing organ to make it reliable and visually attractive; 2) To create an organ rich in fundamental sound that would generate a wide dynamic range for various accompanimental tasks as well as lead hymn singing; 3) To create a variety of beautiful sounds for playing organ literature; 4) To integrate the old with the new in such a manner that the two work together seamlessly; and 5) To improve the internal layout of the organ to make it an easy organ to tune and service.

The lack of a comprehensive approach to work that had been done over the past 40 years had left things in a state of disarray. A new control system had been installed a few years before our involvement. The main control panel had been removed from its wooden packing crate, set on top of the crate, leaned against a windchest leg and wired in place! There was a nightmare of cables and individual wires running helter-skelter. Pipes were leaning to and fro. The layout of main windchests and offsets was illogical and used the space inefficiently. The Great windchest had serious defects and had to be replaced. This allowed us to totally reconfigure the Great and Pedal organs and their related offset chests. Some offset chests were retained, and a new Pedal windchest was made, allowing us to clean up the Pedal division and organize it in a meaningful way. The available space behind the façade for the Great and Pedal divisions was limited, but we were able to make a very good and serviceable layout.

What most people know about an organ is what they can see. We were able to make a dramatic change in this instrument by replacing the uninteresting façade of non-speaking pipes with one of dynamic appearance that also creates inviting, living sounds. If an organ looks beautiful, the viewer is more inclined to want to hear the instrument. If it sounds great *and* looks beautiful, the viewer's expectation is realized and it sounds even better than anticipated.

Besides the non-speaking façade, the organ we inherited was characterized by a marked lack of harmonic interest. Thankfully, there were individual stops with potential that served a meaningful place in our new tonal scheme. We were able to provide an almost totally new Great division, and that was an important advantage—being able to present the core of the organ as a new division of beautiful sounds with a rich principal ensemble. Having said that, we did retain the old Great Mixture. We were able to improve it by increasing the cut-ups and making it a darker, less edgy, and gen-



Console



View of sanctuary and organ before renovation

erally very satisfactory sound. The new Great is an amalgamation of Germanic and French ideas from our varied tonal palette at Bedient. The Great Trompette is a dark German reed that blends well with the ensemble. When used with the Great principal chorus based on 16' pitch or 8' pitch, it makes a grand but not overwhelming sound and is very suitable for supporting hymn singing. The Flûte harmonique, straight out of the Cavallé-Coll tradition, is a wonderful addition—especially in the renewed, live acoustic.

The Swell division was greatly enhanced by some revoicing and the addition of a new Trompette 8', Clairon 4' and a new Mixture. The Swell is now a very effective division, and there is quite a dramatic difference between Swell shades open and closed. The Choir division, previously lacking in fundamental, was greatly improved by the addition of a new Principal 8'. Adding a Mixture gave the Choir a complete chorus. The completed specification includes a principal chorus in each division.

The original specification called for a new solo trumpet stop. Well into the design, it occurred to me that this stop would be more usable and effective if it were placed *en chamade* instead of in the Choir chamber as planned. For those of us who have spent much of our lives clinging to ladders trying to reach and service *en chamade* reeds, we offer relief in this installation. Flats of pipes directly under the *en chamade* reed hinge outward and the stop can be tuned conveniently from a walkboard behind the façade by reach-

ing out and up a short distance.

The Pedal division was enhanced by the addition of new reed stops as well as a Pedal Mixture. There are always many judgment calls in organbuilding. The Pedal Bombarde, Trompette, and Clairon began life in our shop as typical French, parallel shallot reeds of the French trompette tradition. It was apparent upon hearing them in the new, lively acoustic that they created too much sound. We took all of the lower registers back to the shop and put brass plates on the shallots to reduce the openings and thus the amount of sound created. They are still very prominent reeds, but fit the ensemble and help create a very exciting tutti. The bottom eight notes of the old Pedal Principal 16' were retained as well as treble pipes of the Pedal Principal 8' and a Choral Bass 4'.

The Möller console had been modernized at least two times before our involvement in the project. We were able to make a good stopknob layout and add the stops needed in a logical way. Piston slips were replaced to make a better piston layout. We added a "tracker touch" system to the keyboards to improve the feel. The entire console was disassembled and the finish carefully restored to match the beautiful oak woodwork in the sanctuary.

The organ has three manuals and pedals, 45 speaking stops, 57 ranks of pipes, totaling 3,138 individual pipes. The wooden organ pipes are made of sugar pine, fir, and poplar, and the metal pipes are made of zinc as well as various alloys of tin and lead. With the exception of the



Church exterior



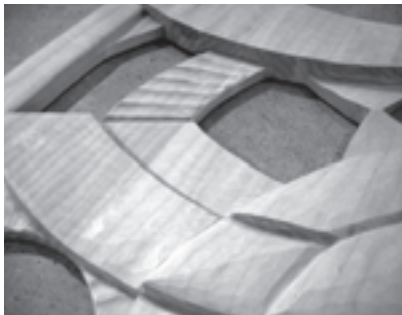
Woodworker Ed Stibal fits molding to the impost



Woodworkers Ed Stibal and Todd Znamenáček prepare to install one of Todd's carvings



Woodworker Jon Taylor finishes capitals



Carving closeup



View of en chamade reed access



View of reconfigured Swell division



Gene Bedient voices the Swell Trumpet

façade pipes, the new pipework was fabricated in the Bedient shop.

The organ façade is made of red oak and employs decorative motifs found in the decoration of the nave and its furnishings. It is enhanced by pipe shades carved of basswood, giving the organ a depth of artistic visual character.

The organbuilders who made the instrument:

Arden Bock
Jasmine Beach
Gene Bedient
Gwen Bedient
Duane Grosse
Chad Johnson
Todd Lange
Paul Lytle
Mark Miller
Eric Smith
Jason Smith
Edward Stibal
Jonathan Taylor
Fred Zander
Todd Znamenáček

The organ was dedicated on February 8, 2008 by Douglas Cleveland, who played to a capacity audience. Special thanks is offered to Eric Grane of the J. F. Nordlie Co., who worked with me in the tuning and voicing of the instrument. It is our hope that this new instrument will provide inspiration and worship enhancement to all who see and hear it over the coming generations.

—Gene R. Bedient, Organbuilder

Like so many downtown churches, First Congregational United Church of Christ has had to ask the question, "Who are we and what are we doing here?" Circumstances such as space for the activities of ministry, adequate parking, and maintenance of our historic building keep these from being just philosophical questions. During the past decade, several groups of dedicated church members have again wrestled with these issues. These discussions have brought together and empowered a wide variety of special interests and focused them into a vision that has guided us in addressing our challenges and facing our future.

Drawing on the historic traditions of the Congregationalists in America, we seek to create an environment that encourages people to come together, not only for worship, but for learning, public discourse and the sharing of ideas. We believe that it is in the honest exploration and expression of our own creative gifts that God still speaks in our world today. Our remodeled sanctuary is reminiscent of the early meeting houses in that it is a simple, versatile space. Yet, it also inspires and enables a creative spirit with colors in the walls and windows and the magnificent new façade of the Bedient pipe organ.

Since this building was first constructed in 1907, the organ has always had a central place in the sanctuary and a central function in the things that happened there. The most recent organ was a 1932 Möller, rebuilt and enlarged in 1967 by Reuter. It seemed that about every 20 years some major maintenance and improvement was undertaken, but the organ was never fully completed. It served the congregation very well, but was missing some basic components including a swell mixture and independent pedal reeds. The console controls needed updating, as well.

An organ committee was formed to review the situation and develop a proposal. As the committee did its work, it became clear that there was strong sentiment for a more involved project to not only address the problems, but complete and expand the instrument as a significant part of the evolving sanctuary renovation that was also being planned. A preliminary specification was developed and builders were contacted for their input.

Upon the recommendation of Dr. Larry Schou, Professor of Organ and Harpsichord at the University of South Dakota, the Bedient Organ Company was on our list of builders contacted. Initially Gene Bedient was not interested in the project as it had been presented. When he was contacted for further discussion, our conversations revealed a

depth of care and concern for the art of organbuilding that impressed everyone. Further discussions, as well as a visit to the Bedient shop and several new and rebuilt instruments, convinced the committee that this was the builder we wanted to work with.

As we continued to work with Bedient, the project evolved further. The most notable suggestion that was enthusiastically adopted by the committee was the replacement of the existing "picket-fence" non-speaking façade with fully functional pipework arranged in a beautiful new oak case that complemented perfectly the existing woodwork in our century-old sanctuary. This new feature brought the organ into the mainstream of the larger sanctuary renovation project, providing a striking visual element that appealed to many who had not been particularly invested in the organ before.

The specification was finalized and the contract signed, and on November 11, 2007, nearly 50 members of the congregation gathered to help unload the truck containing the new Bedient organ. The organ was dedicated with a weekend of celebration February 8–10, 2008. Events included a concert by Douglas Cleveland, a Pedals, Pipes and Pizza event, and festival worship services including a formal Rite of Dedication on Sunday morning.

The organ has inspired us in our worship and attracted a great deal of interest in our developing Arts Ministry. The combination of the open versatile chancel space, excellent acoustics, and the organ located in the front of the room have already attracted several area choral groups to perform here. We hope to continue to reach out and encourage people to develop and share their creative expressions with us and each other.

Finally, I want to express my deepest gratitude to former Pastor Arlan Fick, whose leadership encouraged and inspired us to dare to dream this big. Thanks also to former music associate Brian Williams, who did a great deal of work in the early stages, to Rev. Norm Shomper for his leadership throughout this project, to Dave Sellers and the members of the organ committee, to Rev. Kathryn Timpany for her enthusiastic support, and to Gene Bedient, Paul Lytle and the rest of the Bedient crew for sharing their creative artistry with us.

—Jack Mohlenhoff
Minister of Music and Arts
First Congregational Church
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

When Washington High School closed its doors in downtown Sioux Falls in 1992, the citizens of this thriving Midwestern city recognized an opportunity they could not pass up "to contribute to the artistic and cultural well-being of our community and state." The native quartzite stone building is now the Washington Pavilion of Arts and Sciences. It houses the Kirby Science Discovery Center, an Imax theater, a black box theater, a Visual Arts Center, Leonardo's Cafe, and the Husby Performing Arts Center, whose jewel in the crown is the stunning Great Hall.

First Congregational United Church of Christ sits directly across the street from the Pavilion. Made from the same native quartzite, it is home to a visionary congregation. For several years we have been developing a mission that is reflected in our motto—"God's hands at work in the heart of the city"—that includes offering our meeting house as a place where people can experience the intersection of faith and the arts. Our recent renovation of the sanctuary, including the completion of the organ, symbolizes our investment in that vision.

Our weekly worship services are joyous occasions. The Bedient organ, under the expert artistic direction of Jack Mohlenhoff, our Minister of Music and Arts, sings us into praise and soothes our anxieties with its rich arrays of sounds and moods. The visual panorama the organ provides, together with our vibrant stained glass windows, draws us out of ourselves and turns us toward transcendent mystery. There is a creative spirit that is active in our midst, and our organ is the breath beneath our ribs, the

vehicle of our song.

It is a great privilege to serve such a congregation, one in which traditional forms of worship and instruments of artistic expression are deeply valued, and generosity is understood as a joyful mark of Christian discipleship. The Bedient organ builders have given us an instrument crafted with the same sense of reverence and perfection that we bring to all aspects of our community life. The congregation and the community will be blessed by this gift for generations to come.

—Rev. Kathryn Timpany
Senior Pastor

**Bedient Opus 81
First Congregational Church
Sioux Falls, South Dakota**

GREAT

16'	Principal	1–8 Reuter, 9–61 new, 9–37 in façade
8'	Principal	new, 1–25 in façade
8'	Bourdon	Reuter
8'	Flûte harmonique	new
4'	Octave	new, 1–10 in façade
4'	Spitzflute	new
2½'	Quinte	new
2'	Fifteenth	Reuter
IV	Mixture	Reuter
8'	Trompete	new
8'	Solo Trumpet	(Choir)
	Carillon	
	Zimbelstern	
	Chimes	

SWELL

16'	Gedackt	Möller
8'	Viola de Gambe	Reuter
8'	Voix céleste	Reuter
8'	Gedackt	Möller
4'	Principal	Reuter
4'	Harmonic Flute	Möller
2½'	Nazard	Reuter
2'	Blockflöte	Reuter
1½'	Tierce	Reuter
IV	Plein jeu	new
16'	Contrafagott	Reuter
8'	Trompette	new
8'	Fagott	(ext)
8'	Oboe	Reuter
4'	Clairon	new
8'	Solo Trumpet	(Choir)
	Tremulant	
	Carillon	
	Swell 16	
	Swell Unison	
	Swell 4	

CHOIR

16'	Quintaton	Reuter
8'	Diapason	new
8'	Holtzflöte	Reuter
8'	Viola d'Amore	Reuter
8'	Viola celeste	Reuter
4'	Spitzprincipal	Reuter
4'	Koppelflöte	Reuter
2½'	Nazard	new
2'	Octave	Reuter
1½'	Tierce	new
1½'	Quinte	Reuter
IV	Scharf	new
8'	Krummhorn	Reuter
8'	Solo Trumpet	new, 13–54 en chamade, 1–12 inside
	Harp	
	Tremulant	
	Choir 16	
	Choir Unison	
	Choir 4	

PEDAL

32'	Contrebouillon	(from Bourdon 16)
16'	Principal	(Ct)
16'	Bourdon	mixed
16'	Gedackt	(Sw)
10½'	Quinte	(from Principal 16)
8'	Octave	1–12 new in façade
8'	Bourdon	(ext)
8'	Gedackt	(Sw)
4'	Choral Bass	Reuter
4'	Bourdon	(ext)
IV	Mixture	new
32'	Contrebombarde	(prepared)
16'	Bombarde	new
16'	Fagott	(Sw)
8'	Trompette	new
8'	Fagott	(Sw)
4'	Fagott	(Sw)
4'	Clairon	new

Couplers

Great/Pedal
Swell/Pedal
Choir/Pedal
Great 16
Swell/Great 16, 8, 4
Choir/Great 16, 8, 4
Swell Unison Off, 16, 4
Choir Unison Off, 16, 4
Swell/Choir 16, 8
Reverse Choir/Great