

Cover feature

Johannes Klais Orgelbau, Bonn, Germany, Opus 1881
First Church Congregational, Fairfield, Connecticut

From the Director of Music

Serving at First Church as interim director of music and organist, I soon discovered some of the shortcomings of the almost forty-year-old electronic organ. Played for weekly worship services, weddings, funerals, and a variety of other events, it became apparent that this instrument was nearing its final days. The organ committee, having been expertly guided by Justin Bischof as organ consultant, in addition to the considerations for the instrument, also addressed their concern for the acoustics and the importance of the spoken word, and the musical sound of the choirs and the organ.

The organ will fill several roles. Most importantly, it will provide musical leadership for worship through congregational singing and will be used to accompany choirs and soloists. It can also produce a glorious sound that has the power to move the souls of the faithful. Additionally, it will serve as a concert instrument capable of hosting a wide variety of organ literature from all periods.

Visually, the organ case is a beautiful architectural element in the worship space. Klais Orgelbau, the pipe organ committee, and their consultant have designed, built, and installed a magnificent instrument that will not only fill these roles but far surpass them.

—Dr. Paul Knox

From the Architect

A renovation project such as this one, involving an historic building with a strongly defined character, is always challenging. People tend to resist any change to a space with which they are so familiar. Therefore, I was extremely aware of the need to be sensitive in my approach, and my goal was to accomplish the necessary changes in such a way that they respected the original design without being constricted by it.

The major thrust of the project involved a reconfiguration of the chancel and nave spaces to allow for the installation of the Klais pipe organ. The new instrument was placed in the area formerly occupied by the pulpit, the choir, and the old electronic instrument. As a result, the pulpit and choir were pushed forward into the nave space. Our mandate was to accomplish this while removing as few pews as possible in the process.

The design concept incorporates a gently curving raised platform for the pulpit, the choir, a piano, and the new organ console. This platform was designed to be used as a stage for weekly worship services, as well as for non-religious events such as concerts and plays. To accomplish the design, it was necessary to remove an existing proscenium arch at the front of the nave, which presented major acoustical and visual impediments for the new instrument. In addition, it was necessary to remove and relocate three stained glass windows designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany. These windows would otherwise have been buried within the confines of the pipe chamber. They will be moved to the rear of the nave, where they will replace three of the original “catalog” glass windows.

The project was accomplished in two phases. Phase one, completed in the summer of 2009, involved modifying the physical layout of the sanctuary to accommodate the new organ, as well as some necessary rehabilitation of the venerable nave space. Phase two, completed in the summer of 2010, involved the installation of the instrument itself—and it was indeed a marvelous thing to watch.

—Neil Hauck

From the Organ Consultant

Every pipe organ installation is a unique journey. Countless considerations contribute to a very complex process that includes aesthetic, liturgical, fi-



Klais Opus 1881, First Church Congregational, Fairfield, Connecticut



Console

nancial, and technical components. The First Church Fairfield ten-year journey has been exciting, at times daunting, and ultimately, fulfilling beyond what any of us could have imagined. The Burr gift enabled the church to explore the

dream of having a world-class pipe organ in their historic church, thereby forever changing the worship fabric in so many wonderful and meaningful ways.

The new Klais organ has been a source of joy and inspiration since the first notes



Lifting façade pipes into place (photo: Margaret Gettig)



Adjusting façade pipes (photo: Margaret Gettig)



Façade pipes (photo: Margaret Gettig)

were sounded last October, and will be for literally hundreds of years to come. The instrument is a joy to play and experience, as it feels as if it has “always been there” in the room. It is an ideal instrument for hymn playing and accom-



First Church Congregational, Fairfield, Connecticut



Drawknobs and manuals (photo: Stefan Hilgendorf)



Drawknob detail (photo: Stefan Hilgendorf)

panying, with its warm and rich principal choruses. As a concert instrument, it is versatile and very exciting in the room, in playing repertoire of all periods.

So many fine people had the vision, passion, and love that saw this project through to its glorious conclusion: David Spollett, pastor, who was tireless in his support and guidance; Charlotte Dyslin and Margaret Gettig, committee chairs, who ensured with their exceptional leadership that the project came to fruition; Neil Hauck, architect, who was a sympathetic and inspired aesthetic leader; Heather Hamilton, the former director of music, who helped get the project off the ground and brought me into the process; and finally, Philipp Klais, whose world-class expertise in the ancient art of organbuilding and generosity of spirit was an inspiration to all of us throughout our journey.

It has been an honor to be a part of this historic and joyous process, as it has

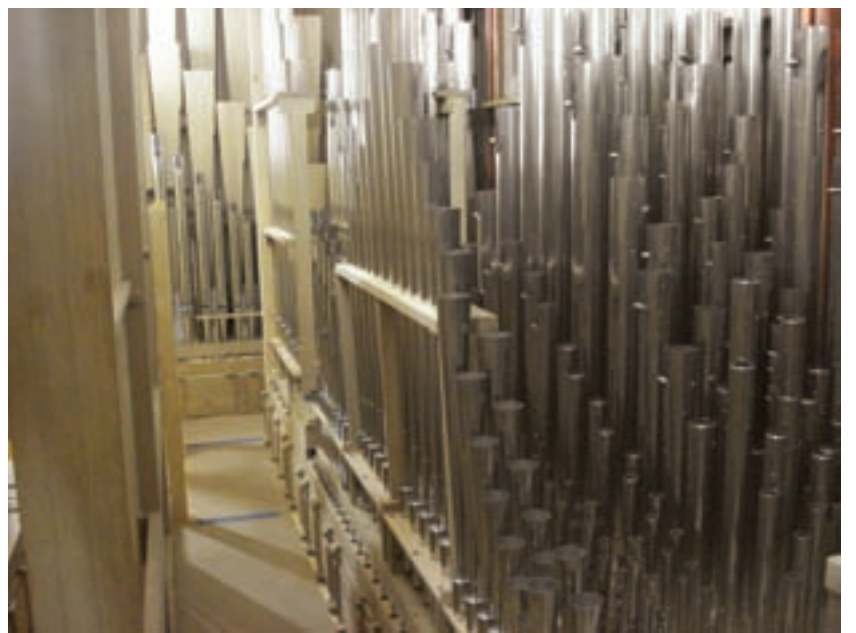
allowed me to become a part of the First Church family. I will always be eternally grateful for our time together and look forward to watching their music program grow over the years as a result of this fine instrument.

—Justin Bischof, D.M.A.

From the Organ Builder

Our intention for the new pipe organ in First Church Congregational, Fairfield, was to design and build a pipe organ that would become an integral part of the church as well as a singing church member. Positioned in the front of the church, right behind the altar, it was very important for us to create an instrument that would be an independent sculpture but at the same time an integral part of the church—an instrument designed in a way that the church would look incomplete without the pipe organ.

The instrument consists of 36 stops on three manuals and pedal (two stops



Great pipework (photo: Margaret Gettig)

have been prepared), slider windchests, mechanical key action, and electric stop action. It has a very clear layout following historic traditions. From the free-standing console, trackers run straight into the lower part of the instrument. On the level of the front pipes, one finds the Great in the center, surrounded on both sides by the Pedal divided into C and C-sharp sides. On the level above, the two enclosed divisions, Swell and Choir, are placed side by side to each other. The blower with the big main reservoir is placed in the basement of the church, below the organ.

The organ does have a generous staircase in order to guarantee optimal tuning and maintenance access to every part of the instrument. Our intention was to build a pipe organ based on the traditions of the past with a vision for the future, a singing servant to the liturgy.

—Philipp C. A. Klais

From the Pipe Organ Committee

The installation of our new Klais pipe organ represents the culmination of ten years of study, discussion, decision-making, and prayer. The pipe organ committee, formed in the fall of 2000, with a generous gift from Lewis and Alice Burr, was charged with the task of finding a pipe organ to replace our failing electronic organ. Surrounded by the beauty of our church, we were reminded during our deliberation of everything we owed to those who have gone before us. Decisions were made by previous generations to expand, improve, and maintain what has been given us, and our decisions, in turn, needed to serve the generations that will follow us.

With this in mind, along with the wishes of the Burr family, our first major determination was to recommend to the congregation that the existing electronic organ be replaced with a tracker pipe organ, an instrument that produces superior sound and one that will be more cost effective in the long run, as its life expectancy is over 200 years. The mechanical action of the tracker organ provides the most sensitive touch for the organist and requires less expenditure in maintenance. We also concluded that we needed a versatile organ with a warm sound that would provide enough flexibility for congregational singing, anthem accompaniments, and a broad range of solo organ repertoire.

By the end of the summer of 2001, after considerable discussion, we had narrowed the field of potential organ builders to two companies, both with the recommendation for placement of the organ along the center axis of the church. Because one person serves as both organist and choir director, it was necessary that the choir and organ be placed together, centrally located at the front of the sanctuary.

During the following years, a number of essential repairs and improvements to the church buildings were identified, along with the necessary sanctuary renovations to prepare for a pipe organ, which necessitated a three-year capital

campaign. Finally, in February 2008, near the end of the campaign, the congregation voted to enter into an agreement with Johannes Klais Orgelbau, Bonn, Germany. The enthusiasm of the Klais team for the project, the creativity of the design team, and Philipp's true un-

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Johannes Klais Orgelbau, Bonn Opus 1881, 2010

I. CHOIR C-c4

- 8' Burrdon (sic!)*
- 8' Dulciana
- 4' Flötenprincipal
- 2½' Quinte
- 2' Waldflöte
- 1½' Terz
- 8' Coreinette (sic!)*
- Tremolo

* original names Bourdon and Clarinette have been modified

II. GREAT C-c4

- 16' Violon
- 8' Principal
- 8' Flute harmonique
- 8' Gamba
- 4' Octave
- 2' Superoctave
- 2' Mixtur IV
- 8' Trompete
- 8' Tuba (prepared for)

III. SWELL C-c4

- 16' Burrdon
- 8' Geigenprincipal
- 8' Rohrflöte
- 8' Aeoline
- 8' Vox coelestis
- 4' Traversflöte
- 4' Violine
- 2½' Harmonia aethera IV
- 16' Basson
- 8' Trompete
- 8' Basson Hautbois
- Tremolo

PEDAL C-g1

- 32' Flute (prepared for)
- 16' Open Wood
- 16' Subbass
- 16' Burrdon (from Swell)
- 8' Principal
- 8' Burrdon
- 4' Octave
- 16' Posaune
- 16' Basson (from Swell)

Couplers

- Choir to Great
- Swell to Great
- Swell to Choir
- Swell Suboctave
- Swell Superoctave
- Choir Suboctave
- Choir Superoctave
- Choir to Pedal
- Great to Pedal
- Swell to Pedal
- Swell Superoctave to Pedal

36 stops on three manuals and pedal
Slider windchests
Mechanical key action (electric coupling action)

Electric stop action
Setter combination system with 1,000,000 combinations, divided into 1,000 levels with 100 groups each featuring 10 Generals and 6 Divisionals for each division

derstanding of the part that a pipe organ plays in worship and his genuine interest in our church led us to this decision.

All of our subsequent dealings with Klais have reinforced our initial decision. They have designed, constructed, installed, and voiced a magnificent instrument that has exceeded our expectations. We are grateful to the entire Klais team of organbuilders, whose superb workmanship has produced an instrument that will inspire singing and enable our church to continue an exemplary ministry of music in our community for many years to come.

—Charlotte Dyslin and Margaret Gettig

From the Pastor

First Church Congregational of Fairfield, Connecticut, an Open and Affirming member of the United Church of Christ, was called together by God in 1639 to live in covenant, repair a broken world, and build a society founded on justice and peace.

Everything in that life begins with the worship of God, which fills us with joy, lifts our spirits, informs our minds, and empowers us to go forth as Christ's servants in the service of others. Music plays a key role in our worship, inspiring our souls, warming our hearts, and moving us to action.

The Klais pipe organ has greatly enriched our worship of God and strengthened our service to the community. Its beautiful sound, created by the rushing wind moving in our midst like the Holy Spirit, motivates and encourages us in our ministries. Its power, beauty, and versatility have greatly deepened the spiritual experience of all who join us in worship,

inspiring us to deeper faith as followers of Christ. The Klais pipe organ has also enriched the community of metropolitan Bridgeport and Fairfield County and will be an asset for the congregation and community for generations to come.

We note with the deepest gratitude the gifts and bequest of Lewis W. Burr and his wife Alice Bulkley Burr. Lewis and Alice were dedicated to our church and community, and their generosity has borne great fruit in so many areas, not least this pipe organ. Their commitment has inspired hundreds of others to join them in supporting this project, and we honor their memory and give thanks to God for their faithful and loving generosity.

We also express our deepest thanks to the pipe organ committee, co-chaired by Margaret Gettig and Charlotte Dyslin. The committee members diligently labored for almost eleven years to bring the dream of a pipe organ to reality. Their dedication, creativity, indefatigable spirits, and complete faith in God inspired me throughout this process. We owe them our heartfelt thanks. We are also profoundly grateful to our consultant Justin Bischof and to Philipp Klais and his entire team from Klais Orgelbau. It was a joy to work with Philipp throughout the process.

We are delighted and thrilled to be the recipients of this remarkable instrument and honored to be entrusted with its care, a gift for the ages. Our prayer is that the rushing winds of the organ will fill our hearts and spirits as a holy inspiration for greater living.

—The Reverend David W. Spollett

Photo credit: H. Durston Saylor (unless indicated otherwise)

New Organs



Klais drawknobs and façade pipes (photo: Stefan Hilgendorf)

**Dobson Pipe Organ Builders,
Lake City, Iowa
St. Andrews Lutheran Church, Park
Ridge, Illinois**

Dobson Pipe Organ Builders of Lake City, Iowa, has completed its Op. 88 for St. Andrews Lutheran Church in Park Ridge, Illinois. St. Andrews' church building was designed by Park Ridge architect Charles E. Stade, who would gain fame for his design of the Chapel of the Resurrection at Valparaiso University a few years later. Originally designed for a location on the main floor at the rear of St. Andrews' sanctuary, the organ, together with the choir and other musicians, moved to the front when costs to remove the existing cramped balcony proved prohibitive. In addition to the organ, Dobson designed and constructed complementary chancel furniture as part of the reconfiguration of the church.

The new organ is housed in a free-standing case of American white oak that is enriched by painted color accents. Employing mechanical key action for the Pedal, the organ has a low-profile detached console to permit a variety of arrangements for a choir and other musicians. The Great is located on the left side of the case and the Swell on the right, with the Pedal behind. The tin façade pipes are drawn from the Great Prestant 8' and the Pedal Principal 8'. The organ is voiced on a wind pressure of 80 millimeters, and is tuned in equal temperament.

Stephen Tharp, a native of Park Ridge, whose first public appearance as a church organist was at St. Andrews at age nine, presented the dedication recital on May 22, 2011.

—John Panning

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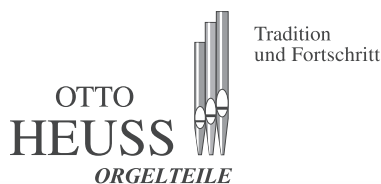
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GREAT

- 16' Bourdon (prepared)
- 8' Prestant
- 8' Chimney Flute
- 4' Octave
- 4' Spire Flute
- 2½' Twelfth
- 2' Fifteenth
- 1½' Seventeenth
- 1½' Mixture IV
- 8' Trumpet
- Swell to Great

SWELL

- 8' Bourdon
- 8' Viole de Gambe
- 8' Viole Celeste (FF)
- 4' Principal
- 4' Harmonic Flute
- 2' Gemshorn
- 1½' Larigot (prepared)
- 16' Dulzian (prepared)
- 8' Oboe
- Tremulant

PEDAL

- 16' Subbass
- 16' Bourdon (Great)
- 8' Principal
- 8' Gedackt (ext. Subbass)
- 4' Super Octave (ext. Principal)
- 16' Trombone
- 8' Trumpet (ext. Trombone)
- Great to Pedal
- Swell to Pedal

Zimbelstern

19 registers, 22 ranks, three preparations

Photo credit: John Panning