

New Organs



**Johnson Organ Company,
Moorhead, Minnesota
Bethlehem Lutheran Church,
Fergus Falls, Minnesota**

Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Fergus Falls, Minnesota, purchased the first pipe organ for their new church, built in 1922, after the previous building was demolished by an F-5 tornado in 1919 that destroyed two-thirds of the city of 8,000, killing 54. M.P. Möller built the organ, of two manuals and twelve ranks, which was placed to the side of the chancel.

A used 1906 Möller organ of two manuals and sixteen ranks replaced the twelve-rank organ in 1952 when the church was enlarged. The old instrument was sold to a rural church. The organ was moved to the balcony in 1961–62 by Lance E. Johnson, who was then an organ major at Concordia College of

Moorhead, Minnesota. Placed in front of a large stained-glass window, the organ was a tuning nightmare with the resulting sunlight. With the 1962 installation went new supply-house chests, additional principals, and all new reeds, for a new total of 22 ranks.

In 2004, with the deterioration of the chest leather, the church contracted with Johnson Organ Company, Inc. (Lance E. Johnson) to rebuild the organ—all-encased, with new Johnson-made electric-slider chests and three manuals. The unique swell box design, in the form of a horseshoe, allows the window to show through without adversely affecting tuning. The roofs of the box can be lifted for better tuning access.

Since the balcony floor was on five levels, the engineering was very complex and required fourteen pages of drawings, which included plans for the remodeling of the balcony organ space. The new footprint is about half its previous size, allowing more space for the choir.

Gold decorations are of gold-metal foil, which has better color longevity than gold leaf or paint. The case finish is a combination of blond, like the rest of the nave, and a darker shade to reflect the original woodwork still evident in the balcony end of the church. The console is the French type, featuring Johnson-made rosewood with mild tracker-touch keys. The switching system is Peterson. Much of the 1906 Möller pipework was retained, which blended unusually well with the newer principals, for a total now of 28 ranks.

Among employees on this project were Michael Johnson, Skip Johnson, Sonia Carlson, and Estera Favalora, who made the 8' Copula and the 4' Rohrflöte for the Positiv. Tonal finishing was performed by Michael Johnson and Fred Heffner. During the installation, Rev. Paul Nelson was senior pastor, and Carol Andstrom, organist. The rededication concert was performed by Michael Olson of Fargo, North Dakota. Later, a special open house was hosted for the Red River Valley AGO chapter.

—Lance E. Johnson

Photo credit: Mark Anthony of Visionaries Photography

GREAT (unenclosed)

8'	Principal	56 pipes
8'	Lieblich Gedeckt	56 pipes+
4'	Octav	56 pipes++
4'	Flute Harmonique	56 pipes+
2'	Fifteenth	56 pipes++
III	Mixture	168 pipes
16'	Trumpet (Pedal)	
8'	Trumpet	56 pipes++
	Zimbelstern	

SWELL (expressive)

8'	Stopped Diapason	56 pipes+
8'	Salicional	56 pipes+
8'	Vox Celeste	44 pipes+
4'	Gemshorn	56 pipes++
4'	Flute d'Amour	56 pipes+
2'	Flautino	56 pipes+
II	Sesquialtera	112 pipes++
8'	Oboe	56 pipes+
	Tremulant	

POSITIV (unenclosed)

8'	Copula	56 pipes
8'	Dulciane	56 pipes+
4'	Rohrflöte	56 pipes
2'	Lieblich Principal	56 pipes++
1 1/2'	Quinte	56 pipes++
III	Cymbal (prepared)	
8'	Krummhorn	56 pipes++

PEDAL (unenclosed)

16'	Principal	12 pipes++
16'	Bourdon	32 pipes+
8'	Octav	32 pipes++
8'	Gedeckt	12 pipes+
4'	Choralbass	12 pipes++
II	Rauschquint	64 pipes++
16'	Posaune	12 pipes++
8'	Trumpet (Great)	
4'	Klarion (Great)	

Unison couplers only
Full complement of pistons
+ 1906 retained
++ 1962 addition
28 ranks, 31 stops

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