



NPM Wichita Noteworthy

Member Check-In Meeting

Plan to attend one of the upcoming member meetings where we can check in with each other. It's been some time since we last met.

These meetings will be virtual or online. Pick one of the available options as both meetings will have the same agenda. They are just being offered at different times so you can pick the most convenient one.

Sunday, October 25 – 4 p.m.
Monday, October 26 – 7 p.m.

We will use a Zoom platform. Specific meeting links will be emailed a few days before the meetings.

St. Cecilia Sing

At this time, the St. Cecilia Sing is still planned for November 22. Student musicians will offer a variety of instrumental and vocal performances. The event will be held at St. Cecilia, Haysville. (See details in the meeting calendar.) If that changes for any reason, we will update the website and send an additional communication.

The chapter celebrated its 5th Anniversary in July, but we haven't been able to hold a public event to recognize it. We will have cake and ice cream following the St. Cecilia Sing program.

Youth Musician Recognition

We will again recognize student musicians through the chapter Youth Musician Initiative at the St. Cecilia Sing. Nominations are being sought through the NPM Wichita Website. More details will be provided in a separate member email.

Long-Time Parish Musicians

Along with recognizing our aspiring youth members, the chapter will recognize parish musicians who have served the church for 25 years or more. Please nominate those in your parish who have been faithful stewards in the music program. Nominations will be taken through the NPM Wichita website. Additional details will be provided in a member email.



Tom Wierman,
Chapter Director



Upcoming Events

Sunday, November 22, 2020

St. Cecilia Sing
2:00—4:00 p.m.

- St. Cecilia Sing
- Musician Blessing
- Youth Musician Recognition
- Long-time Musician Recognition
- Chapter Anniversary Celebration

St. Cecilia Church
1830 W Grand
Haysville, KS 67060

Saturday, January 30, 2021

Pastoral Musician Workshop

Does your parish have a music position opening?

Send an email to admin@npmwichita.org to list your parish's open position on the chapter website and Facebook pages.



Anatomy of an Organ Transplant

Blessed Sacrament Celebrates its Brand New (Old) Pipe Organ

By Carol Crissey Nigrelli

So *that's* what a pipe organ sounds like.

Parishioners at The Church of the Blessed Sacrament in Wichita basked in the full, rich tones that surrounded them during Dedication Weekend of the church's newly renovated and refurbished pipe organ. For the first time in over two years they heard the *Gloria* sung with organ accompaniment. The clear and confident soprano voice of music director Rachel Dugan emanated from the choir loft in the back of the church, in perfect aural balance with organist Patrick Harms.

Several people turned their heads during the course of the Mass to look up at the loft, trying to pinpoint the source of the beautiful sound that filled the church. They saw rows of gleaming silver pipes, previously hidden, attached to walls on either side of the loft and facing forward. They saw new cabinetry that encased the organ, much more decorative than the original. They saw what stewardship can accomplish.

Seventy years ago, another act of stewardship brought the organ to Blessed Sacrament. Miss Tillie Rosenberger, a wealthy spinster whose father had made a fortune manufacturing brooms in Wichita (back when Wichita was known as the Broomcorn Capital of the World), purchased a Kilgen pipe organ for the brand new parish on Douglas Avenue in her College Hill neighborhood. Church records show she paid \$14,000 for the two-manual organ—a tidy sum for 1951, but a low figure for a pipe organ. Today, pipe organs run upwards of \$500,000.

“It was new, but it was cheap,” explains Dugan. “Organs are supposed to be specifically made for their acoustic space.”

The Kilgen Organ Company had built the organ for the Cathedral here in Wichita and for other prominent churches around the country, so the brand had a good rep.

“But for whatever reason, toward the end of their business in the late '50s, they were making premade organs that came in boxes,” Dugan says. “Ours was just a mash-up of parts.”

Through the years, with little or no maintenance performed on the organ that Miss Tillie had donated, the quality of sound and the mechanics began to suffer. By the time Rachel Dugan became music director ten years ago straight out of college, the organ had deteriorated badly.

“The leather diaphragms that push air into the pipes were cracked and dried out,” she says. “The wiring system was fabric-coated, which was a fire hazard. Some of the stops sounded really terrible.”

Blessed Sacrament's current organist, Patrick Harms, continues the litany of woes.

“The pipes didn't respond well to the console. We had issues with memory settings,” he says. “People in the parish didn't realize we actually had a pipe organ because they had never seen the pipes. It didn't have much sound.”

Long time choir members Jennifer and Dan Hickerson bring a 40-year perspective to the trials and tribulations of dealing with an ornery organ. Jennifer recalls, “Our beloved, deceased organist David Spatz played it for years. He'd joke that when he turned the organ on, it sounded like an airplane preparing to take off.”

Jennifer says the congregation used to crane their necks toward the loft back then, too, but for an entirely different reason. “David would hit one key and something else would play. Or he'd hit a key and nothing would play. People would



look up when it was really bad, as if he was making mistakes,” she recounts.

Spatz died in the spring of 2018. The organ he so carefully pampered and cajoled through its wheezes, misfires, hiccups, pitfalls, squeaks and squawks gave up the ghost a few months later-- an irony not lost on the congregation.

How could the church afford the basic work to get the organ singing again, especially since its new pastor, Father Drew Heiman, had just started at Blessed Sacrament?

Rachel Dugan, force of nature that she is, took it upon herself to raise the necessary funds. She knew it would take \$250,000 to repair the mechanics, replace the leather diaphragms, and integrate some new pipes. She secured several donors, including two who proved critical to her efforts. Dugan reached her goal, then set her sights on a bigger picture. “Once the office realized that the parish was behind the organ project, they took over the fundraising,” Dugan says.

Remembering those days so early in his tenure, Father Heiman smiles, gently shakes his head, and says, “I just gave it over to God. Plus we have wonderful parishioners here.”

Pledges kept coming in. At the \$500,000 mark, plans for the organ expanded to include a new console, new cabinetry, and a mechanical system called electro-pneumatic action to feed air into the pipes--no diaphragms required. When the dream of a whole new organ seemed secure, people started to look upwards.

“The ceiling was just ugly, flat acoustic tile that absorbed all the sound,” says Dugan. “Everybody hated the way it looked anyway. They didn’t want a beautiful new instrument in a place that didn’t sound good.”

Not surprisingly, given the church’s track record to this point, more people jumped on the bandwagon once the ceiling became part of the equation. “For both projects, we raised over \$1.6 million,” says Dugan, with no hint of gloating. “And we did it all before COVID hit, which just had to be the work of the Holy Spirit.”

Workers from Berghaus Pipe Organ Builders in Chicago arrived in Wichita in August. They took about four weeks to assemble the hundreds upon hundreds of organ parts and pipes that had been sitting on the church floor. Patrick Harms could barely contain his excitement.

“The new console has three manuals instead of two. When it comes to repertoire, the sky’s the limit with three,” he explains. Was anything from the old organ salvaged? “Just the pipes,” Harms says. “Out of 17 ranks (sets) of pipes they took out, only two ranks didn’t go back in. And since a rank of pipes can run anywhere from \$17,000 to \$60,000, we saved a ton of money.”

The journey won, the time came to unveil the fruits of the fundraising labor the last weekend in September. The new, coffered ceiling--sunken square and rectangular panels in neutral tones-- provides an aesthetically pleasing and acoustically superior addition to Blessed Sacrament. Eight large pendant chandeliers and eight smaller ones hang from the ceiling, their brightness making the space look much bigger.

But the new organ shined the brightest of all. Harms pulled out all the stops for the postlude, playing the rousing Toccata in G by Theodore Dubois. Parishioners stood and listened, and looked up. When Harms finished with a flourish, the onlookers broke out in spontaneous applause, acknowledging not just the young organist’s artistry, but perhaps their own role in giving back to the church they love--just like Tillie Rosenberger did all those years ago.