

## **ST. JOHN'S CASAVANT FRERES PIPE ORGAN STORY**

In early 1972 the Vestry (now known as the Church Council) formed an Organ Committee of Richard Kressler, chair, Jane Blaylock, Patricia Bradt, Frank Stulz and Carl Veit to evaluate options for the organ at St. John's. First step of the Committee was to review studies of seven different organ builders and their recommendations concerning rebuilding versus replacing the Organ dating back to the 1880s. The organ had been patched and enlarged over the decades and had become nearly unplayable. In May 1972 the Committee recommended to the Vestry the organ "should not be rebuilt, but that it should be replaced".

From May 1972 through early 1973, the Committee explored the types of organ's available. The exploration involved nine Organ manufacturing companies and included both pipe organ and electric organ options. The study even included a private jet flight to White Plains, NY by the Allen Organ Company to hear an electric organ presentation. After much congregational discussion and conversation, it was decided to pursue a pipe organ. Casavant Freres, St. Hyacinthe, Quebec, Canada was selected through their presentation and by their reputation. In December 1973 the Congregation approved the Organ Committee's recommendation to accept Casavant Freres proposal for a new organ at a cost of \$72,000. (In 2008 the organ was valued at \$490,000.)

Early in 1973 a capital campaign was started with home visits creating the Christian Advancement Program (CAP) Fund. The focus of this campaign was to raise money for the organ, for needed renovations, and reduce the congregation's current debt. It was partial money raised by the CAP Fund that paid for the new organ.

During the Spring of 1974 drawings of the new organ were received and shared with the Congregation. A member of the Congregation, in a letter to the Vestry, raised structural concern about cantilevering the ruckpositiv from the balcony. All questions and issues were resolved and the organ was built over late Summer and early Fall of 1974.

All Saint's Sunday, November 3 1974 was the Service of Dedication for the new organ, followed by a Recital of Dedication with L. Eugene Roan, Organist. A Dedication Recital Series followed through November and January including an evening of music for Strings, Harpsichord, and Organ, four Advent Friday noontime Organ recitals, and a Choral Concert of Schubert's Mass in G.

St. John's has a long proud musical history. The organ has been a major piece of that history, along with Directors of Music, Choir Directors, choir members and talented musicians. Thanks be to God for these shared talents.

(Material for this article was gleaned from St. John's Archives and an interview with Pat Bradt, written by Steven Moyer.)