

## Cover feature

### Kegg Pipe Organ Builders, Hartville, Ohio Zion Lutheran Church, Wausau, Wisconsin

Zion Lutheran Church in Wausau, Wisconsin, has deep roots in Lutheran church music, laying claim to both Paul Bunjes and Carl Schalk in a distinguished lineage of musical leadership. Though less well known, Viola Bensa was also a part of that lineage, and we are delighted to give a wink in her direction with the name of the Swell 8' string. Virginia Giese is the current Kantor and Music Director, and Rev. Steven Gjerde is Pastor.

An organ that had served the church well in a previous space was moved to the new building in the 1950s and placed on platforms in the rear gallery that were to be surrounded with appropriate casework. The layout was tight at best, and the casework never materialized. As the musical understanding and requirements developed and changed over the years, so did the organ. Various revisions and additions were made, sometimes with little or no regard for scaling and even less for accessibility for tuning or repair. The organ lost its identity and virtually choked on itself.

Designing a new organ for Zion gave us an opportunity to exploit some of the effects of placement. There is no question that the focused sound of encased pipe-work in direct line of sight to the listener differs substantially from the reflected sound of pipes enclosed in a swell box perpendicular to the listener. Yet each of those placements can have distinct advantages. Our often-copied all-electric chest design with expansion chambers fitted to each note allowed us the freedom to locate pipes where they needed to be in the tonal strategy, and still arrange them for greatest ease of tuning.

The sounds most often used to lead congregational singing—Great and Positiv—are placed in the front of the cases in direct line of sight to the congregation. These two Principal choruses are nearly equal in volume, but are quite different in color and weight. Instead of the more usual front-to-back or up-and-down relationship of these two choruses, they dialog from side to side, complementing each other when used together.

The sounds most often used to accompany the choir—Swell and Enclosed Great—sit farther back, with the shades opening toward the choir loft. This placement gives the singers the advantage of hearing direct sound from the organ, but gives the congregation a perspective with the voices distinctly in the foreground.

The previous organ had the lowest nine pipes of the 16' Open Wood installed in the ladder shaft at the very back of the right organ platform, in what appeared to be a hopelessly buried location. Surprisingly, the room responds very favorably to bass frequencies generated there, and we followed the cue, successfully installing the 16' Subbass in the matching location on the other side.

The Festival Trumpet, with its resonators and flared bells of polished brass, was originally planned for a location high on the front corner of the chancel. In a decision made just hours before the organ left the shop, the church requested that it be relocated to the back with the rest of the organ. After some re-engineering and new chest construction, it now makes its dramatic statement from the gallery rail.

One might fear that such a mix of direct and reflected sound would result in chaos in the listener's ears. Such is not the case! The sound in the nave is rich, clean and bold—a sound with a depth of field that no speaker system can begin to reproduce.

One of the most important goals of the new organ project was providing a fitting visual design. After decades of exposure to naked organ parts, we wanted to reward the people of Zion with an organ case that doesn't just "clothe the naked," but also feeds those who hunger for beauty as



Kegg organ, Zion Lutheran Church, Wausau, Wisconsin



Console (photo credit: Mark Krambs)

part of worship. As with all of our designs, we aim to have the new organ appear to have been built with and for the building. It is deeply satisfying when parishioners tell us that the new organ looks like it has always been there.

Several elements make this case interesting. The four towers on each case, especially the large corner ones, appear to extend weightlessly over the edge of the organ platforms, even though their cantilevered supports are anchored securely by the weight of the rest of the organ. The effect is subtly enhanced by the fact that the bottom of the casework sits 1/8" above the platform and seems not to touch it at all.

Our use of CAD software, particularly in 3D modeling, was of tremendous help not only in engineering this much organ into the available space, but also in planning the many visual aspects.

The tower crowns have discreet polychrome accents of gold and aqua to coordinate with other decoration in the roof beams. Decorative bands across the flat sections are also polychromed and topped with carved crosses. The use of exaggerated foot and body lengths in these sections that face the choir lends the impression that these pipes are delicately scaled, greatly reducing their visual weight in the gallery.

The 100 façade pipes all speak, and are from the Pedal, Great and Positiv Principals, Octaves and Choralbass.

The pipe shades, hand-carved from basswood by Spirit Williams of Hocking Hills, Ohio, feature Archangels Gabriel, Michael, Uriel, and Raphael on the two large corner towers. The pipe shades on the remaining towers depict the traditional symbols of the twelve Apostles.

Pastor Steven Gjerde writes:



One of the large tower shades

Choral music has been a longstanding and cherished feature of worship at Zion. In the Lutheran liturgical tradition, choirs have often been likened to the company of angels: "Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts" (Psalm 148:2). For this reason, they are typically placed in a gallery at the back of the nave, where their voices can fall upon the congregation like a benediction and raise congregational singing to heights that it cannot reach on its own. This "celestial" role of the choir led to our suggestion that the pipe shades feature carvings of the archangels. It gives visible expression to our working theology of music, in which the Church joins the heavenly hosts in their unending hymn.

An additional, deliberately planned case decoration is brought about by the reflection of the large stained glass window in the highly polished façade pipes. This kaleidoscopic effect changes minute by minute, and we found it particularly beautiful in the early morning winter light during our January tonal finishing.

Kegg consoles are known for their luxurious comfort and ease of use. Whenever practicable, they are easily movable on integral casters. At Zion, space in the gallery is at a premium and there is really only one choice for console location. We chose to make it stationary, and actually narrowed our standard geometry slightly, without sacrificing anything, to make the new console fit precisely where the previous one had been.

Many parishioners turned out to help unload the moving van and carry all the pipes, pieces and parts into the church. In a scenario familiar to every pipe organ installation team, we watched as their joy in finally receiving their long-awaited new organ slowly faded to concern, then changed to all-out panic as every square inch of their spiritual home was covered with at least one layer of organ. By Sunday morning, 90% of those organ parts had been moved at least twice more, once up into the gallery, then up once more into place on the organ platforms. Ten days after the van pulled up in front of the church, everything was in place, working, and ready for tonal finishing.

The organ was dedicated during the morning liturgy on February 21, 2010, with a concert that afternoon played by Dr. David Heller of Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, who also served as consultant to the church.

As music director, Virginia Giese is putting the new organ through its paces, both in excellent support of the parish liturgies, and reaching out to the larger community through performance opportunities. An extensive concert series has already begun, featuring Kathrine Handford, Ken Cowan, Michael Burkhardt, Paul Jacobs, and Chelsea Chen, among several others. Details of these and other concerts on Kegg organs can be found at <[www.keggorgan.com](http://www.keggorgan.com)>.



The case from above

We laud Pastor Gjerde and the people of Zion for making this strong investment in the enduring importance of sacred music in our increasingly secular world, and we are grateful for having had this opportunity to practice our art.

—Fredrick Bahr

#### Kegg Pipe Organ Builders

Charles Kegg, President\*  
 Fredrick Bahr, Tonal Director\*  
 Philip Brown  
 Michael Carden  
 Joyce Harper\*  
 Philip Laakso  
 Thomas Mierau\*  
 Bruce Schutrum  
 \*members, American Institute of Organbuilders

#### From the consultant and artist

When a church makes the decision to purchase a new organ, it provides a golden opportunity to look at the situation from a new perspective. From the start, this congregation asked all of the right questions: What are our priorities? What are our expectations for this instrument in our worship services? The selection of Charles Kegg was a big decision for this congregation, which has a rich history of traditional Lutheran worship supported by a superb choral program. Rather than continue down a well-worn trail in tonal design, the decision was made to follow a slightly different path—and the end result was an instrument that provides a unique balance between “tradition” while embracing some ideas that were outside the box of neo-classic organ design.

One glance at the stoplist will make apparent the importance both the builder and the consultant placed on foundation tone. The rich abundance of 8' stops provides a wide palette of choice for the organist when accompanying voices

(solo, choral, and congregational), giving the instrument a great sense of breadth without sacrificing clarity. Each of the manual divisions has a distinctive Principal chorus with a strong foundation that is balanced by evenly voiced upperwork. Of special note here is the inclusion of a Principal-scale 1 3/4' stop on the Great, a color that enhances that division's plenum and is so useful in German music of the 17th and 18th centuries. The inclusion of an 8' Principal on the Positiv division is a nod to the builders of 18th-century middle Germany and the music of J. S. Bach. Not only is this division a perfect foil to the Great division, it is also one of the few contemporary instruments I have played in which the Positiv Principal chorus balances superbly with the Pedal Principal chorus at 16' – 8' – 4' pitch—and without coupling it to another keyboard!

Another glance at the stoplist will point out the generous number of flute stops throughout the entire instrument. Each one has a different character, providing the player with a wonderful array of color at a variety of pitch levels. The flutes are complemented by two different sets of strings on the Great and Swell, as well as a Gemshorn at 16' and 8'—all of which can produce some superb effects in both service repertoire as well as concert literature.

The number of reed choices for an instrument of this size is a delight. In the Swell division, one finds the typical work-horse chorus reeds (Trompette 8', Clairon 4'), but they are complemented with a Bassoon 16'/Oboe 8' unit that is of a smooth, darker color that opens up many possibilities not only for vocal accompaniment, but for the repertoire as well. A Vox Humana might be considered by some as non-essential or even a luxury—but in this case, its inclusion makes complete sense not only for the



Large tower shade being carved by Spirit Williams

literature, but for the added variety it can provide as a solo stop. The Cromorne, located on both the Great and Positiv divisions, possesses a beautiful, piquant quality that is superb for solo lines. And finally, the reed stop that gathers the most attention (both visually and tonally) is the Festival Trumpet, mounted on the rail of the gallery.

As a church musician, I look for flexibility in an instrument to provide me with as many tonal options as possible, particularly in the area of choral accompanying. One of the distinctive features of this instrument is that seven of the stops in the Great division are under expression, including the 8' Trumpet. The possibilities are endless with regard to accompaniment, and this use of a partially enclosed Great provides the perfect counterweight to the Positiv division, which is unenclosed.

As a performer and a church musician, I also look for ease in performance when I sit down to play a service or a recital. The layout design of the console of

this new instrument is a dream for the player; everything is where it's supposed to be located—from the order of the drawknobs and pistons to the location of the sequencer. This is one of the most user-friendly consoles you will ever find, which further enhances the experience for the player.

It goes without saying that the visual aspects of this instrument are matched by the aural experience one has in both playing and listening to the organ out in the room. At the dedication recital, I stated to the audience that if I could only work with this one single instrument for the rest of my professional life, I would be completely happy. I still stand by that statement today! Zion Lutheran Church and the city of Wausau can take great pride in their new instrument, which will lead future generations in worship and stand as a symbol of excellence and craftsmanship in North Central Wisconsin.

—Dr. David A. Heller  
 Trinity University  
 San Antonio, Texas

#### Zion Lutheran Church Wausau, Wisconsin 49 ranks, 2,903 pipes

##### GREAT (4" wind)

16' Gemshorn	12 pipes+
8' Solo Diapason IV**	
8' Principal	61 pipes+
8' Gemshorn	61 pipes
8' Rohrflöte*	61 pipes
8' Harmonic Flute*	49 pipes
8' Dulciana*	61 pipes+
8' Unda Maris*	49 pipes+
4' Octave	61 pipes
4' Sylvan Flute*	61 pipes
2 1/2' Twelfth	61 pipes
2' Fifteenth	61 pipes
1 1/2' Seventeenth	61 pipes
IV Mixture	244 pipes
8' Trumpet*	61 pipes
8' Cromorne*	61 pipes
Tremulant	
8' Festival Trumpet	
Zimbelstern (5 handbells)	
(adjustable speed, volume, delay)	

\* Expressive (4 1/2" wind)  
 \*\* Plays Gt. Principal, Octave, Ped. Principal, Choralbass all at 8' pitch

##### SWELL (enclosed – 5" wind)

16' Bourdon	12 pipes
8' Diapason	61 pipes+
8' Bourdon	61 pipes
8' Viola d'Bonsa	61 pipes
8' Voix Celeste	61 pipes
4' Octave	61 pipes
4' Spitzflute	61 pipes
4' Sâlicet (Viola)	12 pipes
2 1/2' Nazard	61 pipes
2' Flute	61 pipes
1 1/2' Tierce	61 pipes
IV Plein Jeu	244 pipes
IV Scharf (Plein Jeu)	
16' Bassoon	61 pipes
8' Trompette	61 pipes
8' Oboe	12 pipes
4' Clairon	61 pipes
Tremulant	
8' Vox Humana	61 pipes
(separate tremulant)	

##### POSITIV (2 3/4" wind)

8' Principal	61 pipes
8' Gedeckt	61 pipes
4' Octave	61 pipes
4' Koppelflöte	61 pipes
2' Blockflöte	61 pipes
1 1/2' Quinte	61 pipes
III Cymbal	183 pipes
8' Cromorne (Gt)	
Tremulant	
8' Festival Trumpet (7" wind)	61 pipes

##### PEDAL (4" wind)

32' Untersatz (resultant)	
16' Open Wood	19 pipes+
16' Principal	32 pipes
16' Gemshorn (Gt)	
16' Subbass	32 pipes+
16' Bourdon (Sw)	
8' Octave	12 pipes
8' Gemshorn (Gt)	
8' Subbass	12 pipes+
8' Bourdon (Sw)	
4' Choralbass	32 pipes
2' Cantus Flute (Gt. Harmonic Flute)	
32' Harmonics (derived)	
16' Posaune	32 pipes+
16' Bassoon (Sw)	
8' Trumpet	12 pipes+
8' Festival Trumpet	
4' Clarion	12 pipes+
4' Cromorne (Gt)	

+ Retained from previous organ  
 All standard American couplers

Photo credit: Charles Kegg, unless indicated otherwise

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