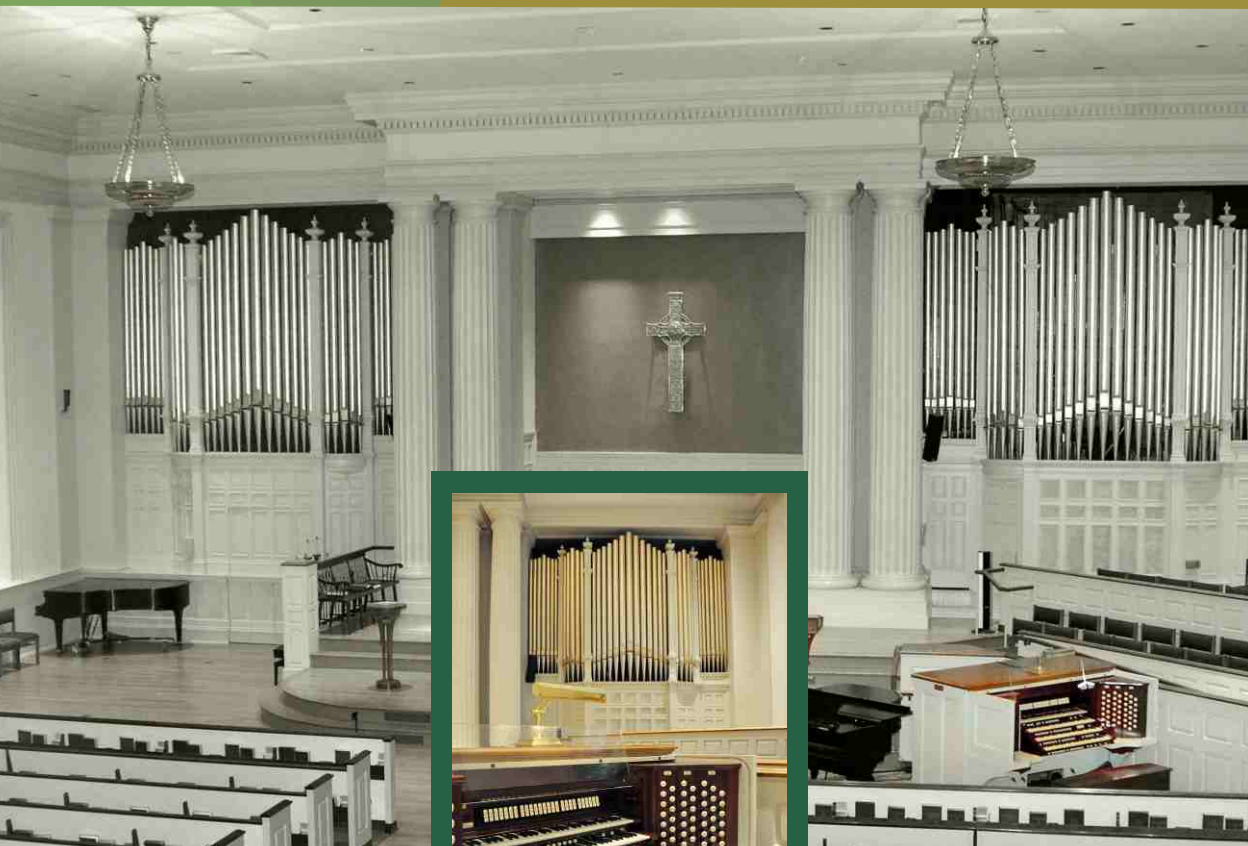


"Soli Dei Gloria"

The Historic Aeolian-Skinner Organ
of First Presbyterian Church
Lancaster, Pennsylvania





“Behold, I Make All Things New”

Fragrances of early fall filled the air. The dark clouds of World War II had lifted and a new, refreshing spirit spread through the land. All things seemed possible, reminding some of the word of God recorded near the end of the Bible: “Behold, I make all things new” (Revelation 21:5).

The voice of God reveals what God is doing and will do in us and through us. Making all things new, both for individuals and society, is the overarching mission of the church. Music at First Presbyterian, Lancaster plays a significant role in this mission by encouraging, expressing and enriching our lives together. God is glorified in our worship as music lifts the soul, soothes the heart, and stirs the spirit. We are renewed and called into action.

For some years, but especially during the throes of World War II, the musicians of the church and the session were acutely aware of the limitations and failing strength of the grand three-manual Austin organ that had served the congregation faithfully since 1912. But, like a severely wounded war veteran, it had become unfit for service.

The session determined to take action as soon as it was financially feasible after the war. A committee was formed to study the issues, and four organ builders were contacted for proposals. On June 12, 1946, the church contracted with the Aeolian-Skinner Company of Boston, MA to build a new organ. The company referred to the contract as “Opus 1070A.” Aeolian-Skinner organs, and those of its predecessor, E. M. Skinner, are considered exemplars of the organ builders' art. They are revered and coveted.

Building an instrument is a time-consuming project. It took a year to complete the task. Over 4,000 pipes, some of metal and some of wood were prepared. Wind chests were built. Finally, all the parts were assembled and the organ was tested at the shop. It was then disassembled and removed from its place on the assembly room floor

Aeolian-Skinner Organ Co. Boston Mass.

where it stood next to its larger sister – a five manual, ten thousand pipe organ made for the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. The new organ was loaded into three large trucks and sent on its way to Lancaster.

Reassembling the organ in its new home took three months. The voicing and finishing of the pipes was done by the President of Aeolian-Skinner himself, Mr. G. Donald Harrison. Then the organ was dedicated to the glory of God on Sunday, September 21, 1947. Organist and Choirmaster Gordon Young was at the console. The choir sang Caesar Frank's Psalm 150 which includes the phrase: "Praise Him with the organ and instrument of string" (KJV).

"Praise Him with the Organ"

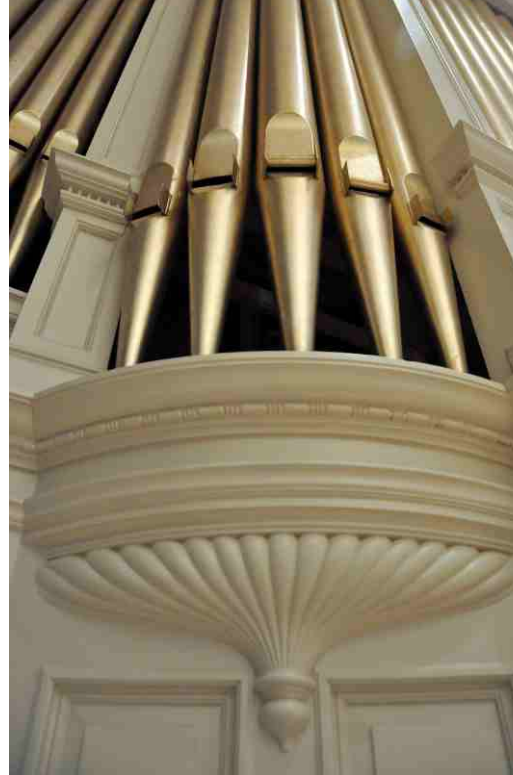
Most people associate pipe organs with churches, but it was not always so. The first organ was likely built around 246 BCE by Ctesibius of Alexandria. It was a flute-playing mechanism using water pressure to sustain wind pressure. It looked little like the organs of today and could play only one note at a time. The machine was called a hydraulis and was used at banquets, games, and circuses.

Over a thousand years later, organs began to appear in some churches. Now using bellows to supply the wind pressure

needed to play the pipes, they were used mainly for festivals. It took another three hundred years for the church organ to be well established. A parish church in Sion, Switzerland, has the oldest playable instrument. It took up residence in the church in the early 15th century. The church itself has portions dating back to the 11th century.

Over the next five centuries, organs grew in size and complexity, including the organ in Sion. More than one note at a time became playable and multiple rows of pipes (ranks), each producing a distinctive sound, added variety to the tonal palate. "Pulling out all the stops" allowed all the ranks of pipes to play, providing the loudest, fullest sound. Using different stops allowed the organ to produce sounds of different auditory colors and textures, affecting the emotional impact of the music.

By the 20th century most churches had at least a modest instrument. Numerous organ building firms in many countries sprang up, vying for contracts. Aeolian-Skinner was a dominant builder of organs in the mid-part of the 20th Century in the United States. Their instruments were characterized as the American Classic Organ, designed to play the wide range of organ compositions. The sound of these instruments is characteristically round and full, even lush. There is considerable power in the full sound of the instrument, while the quieter strings, flutes, and celeste voices have surpassing beauty and serenity.



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It is likely the organ committee listened attentively when Gordon Young spoke. He was new to the post of organist and choir director, having been enthusiastically recommended by the legendary Alexander McCurdy, head of the Organ Department at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. At Curtis, Young had played on a large Aeolian-Skinner which had been installed just before World War II broke out. The final specifications agreed upon for First Presbyterian, Lancaster created a smaller but quite similar version of the Curtis organ. For more than sixty-eight years the congregation has enjoyed and been blessed by this significant American instrument.

Pipe organs, like humans, require nurture and care. Two significant bequests targeted to the music ministry allowed for long-desired work to be done on the organ. Over the years, wind pressure to many ranks had been either raised or lowered, changing the overall sound of the instrument as some ranks were intensified while others were diminished. The skilled craftsmen of S.D.G. ORGANS [for Soli Dei Gloria, "To the glory of God alone," the superscript that Bach wrote on his compositions] were contracted to restore the organ to as near to its original design as possible and to add a vintage 8' Skinner Tuba to the Echo Division. This commanding reed can bring out a solo line or add power to the ensemble sound. The console was completely refinished but the original ivory keyboards were left intact. Refined solid state electronics give new flexibility to the organist. The instrument is a joy for both player and listener.

Experiencing Aeolian-Skinner Opus 1070A

Duffield Harsh grew up in Ronks, PA and attended the Leacock Presbyterian Church. He knew about the music program at First Presbyterian, Lancaster where a couple of his cousins sang in the choir. Peg Jervis was from Bryn Mawr and called the Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church, which has an exceptional music program, her home church.

The two of them met in Philadelphia. Music was important to both of them. Indeed, Peg had two degrees in music. When they decided to meet Duff's family in the "hinterlands" of Lancaster County, Duff chose a concert at First Presbyterian to demonstrate there was musical life in this area. The year was 1956. The new organ was just nine years old. The evening was a success. They married the next year, moved to Lancaster, joined the church and sang in the choir for more than fifty years.

Singing the Durufle Requiem, with M. and Mdm. Durufle in attendance, was one of their peak musical experiences. Duff also remembers a Sunday when a guest organist played the passion chorale *O Sacred Head* with a marvelous combination of musical sensitivity and selection of organ stops. Good music attracts and retains members, and the organ is a continuing joy to hear.

Nathan Laube, an internationally acclaimed organist played the rededictory recital in 2015. He wrote of his experience: "There's considerable beauty in the many gentle color and imitative stops





(numbering six pairs of celestes). The Tutti has a certain understated but very full ring, underpinned by a quite effective 32' Bourdon polyphone and one of those chameleon 32' Fagottos (enclosed in the Swell). Vintage G. Donald Harrison indeed.” Mr Laube also noted that the more than 400 in attendance did a credible job of hymn singing with the organ in “pulling out all the stops” mode.

In a bow to the dedicatory recitalist of 1947, E. Power Biggs (a world renowned organist and the personal choice of G. Donald Harrison), Mr. Laube concluded his recital with the Reubke Sonata on the 94th Psalm which Mr. Biggs had played some 68 years earlier in his recital.

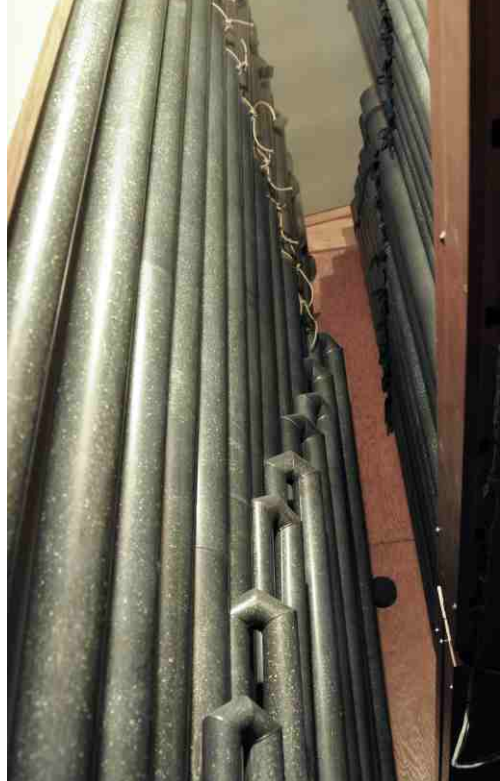
Mr. Biggs wrote to the Rev. Dr. Henry Strock, First Presbyterian's pastor, that he had an “enjoyable visit to Lancaster” and sent his “sincere congratulations on the splendid instrument you have.” He said, “No finer instrument could be found for the church service and organ music generally.”

In its years of service, several outstanding musicians have presided over the console. Gordon Young was the first, followed by the

longest-tenured, Reginald Lunt. Others include Gary Garletts, James O'Dell, Agnes French, Dr. Timothy Sidebothom and Matthew Weaver. Each has contributed significantly to the music ministry of First Presbyterian.

Writing of his experiences with the organ, Dr. Sidebothom noted: "My first exposure to the organ at first Presbyterian Church, Lancaster was in an audition to be an interim director of music. Before we even got to Widor's *Toccata in F*, I was improvising for the pastor, Randy Riggs. That is where my attraction for the instrument first began. Every imaginable stop spoke with clarity – the strings on every division had such warmth, but spoke distinctly; the flutes, available on every division, sparkled in every register; the reeds

evoked such pathos or charm for any melody – from the warmth of the English horn to the poignancy of the oboe, to the regal majesty of the trumpet. Each melody bloomed because of the beauty of the stops. The flutes offered such joy speaking at 8 and 4 foot pitches as well as being used in 16 foot or 2 foot octaves to highlight a melody. As time went on, these were my favorites during communion meditations—highlighting the melody of "When I survey the wondrous cross" on the Koppelflöte 4' supported by the Erzähler and its Celeste on the choir division. "Adding to the joy of the tonal resources— 20 general memory pistons (buttons that allow you to set up stops for the entire organ) as well as the three levels of memory (system that allows saving preset stops to be recalled at the push of a button) – providing multiple choices across any number of pieces whether Bach or Widor or Duruflé or my own improvisations for the postlude. My mind spins at the thought of having 99 levels of memory as installed in the renovation.





“While all of the music performed during worship services is meant as an offering to God, nothing quite matches the intimate connection improvisation creates for offering my worship. I am so grateful for the grand Aeolian-Skinner organ at First, the vehicle that sparked my musical connection to that worship.”

The current organist, Matthew Weaver, has a before and after restoration perspective. He writes, “In Psalm 2:11, the psalmist admonishes us to 'serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.' I was in my early 20's and serving at another downtown church, when Simon Andrews (my former professor and First Presbyterian's Director of Music) first asked me to substitute for an 11 a.m. service at the church. Sitting at the console, with 70 ranks and infinite tonal combinations at my disposal, I remember experiencing a fair amount of fear and trembling myself. I played the Boellman Toccata from Suite Gothique as a postlude, and I hoped that the rapid figurations concealed just a bit of that trembling. (Luckily, I hadn't looked in the pipe chambers beforehand, where posters hang from recitals by legends like the Durufles, Pierre Cochereau, and Catherine Crozier on that very instrument. No pressure!)



“Now in my seventh year as the organist at First Presbyterian, that fear and trembling has been counterbalanced by the grace the Aeolian Skinner offers. The sublime nature of the sound itself lends an ever-present element of forgiveness to my own gaps in technique or human failings. Never was this more obvious to me than during the 18 months in which the organ was undergoing renovation. While versatile, the electronic substitute instrument made me more appreciative of the Aeolian Skinner's rare combination of intimate clarity of solo voices and gloriously balanced ensemble sound.

“Several people asked whether I can tell a difference since the organ has returned. Those who are aware of the magnitude of the cost will be glad to know the answer is yes! Perhaps most immediately audible is the clearness of the sound quality, thanks to the cleaning of the instrument. The tutti (or full organ) has taken on a more present brightness—voiced never to be loud, but rather, as surrounding the listener with an ever-growing intensity of sound. “Each week, the movement of wind, thousands of moving parts, and our “conquering ranks combine” to remind us that the church comes together as the body of Christ to worship – and not merely a collection of individuals in the same room

singing private, solitary songs. The bellows of the organ move air through flue and reed pipes in a similar way as our lungs move air through our larynx and vocal folds. Consider that as you stand in the balcony and hear our new antiphonal rank of Skinner Tuba pipes (the rank of pipes which receives the highest wind pressure), the air that rushes through the pipes reminds us that the Holy Spirit breathes life and orders our song into one of corporal praise for God's goodness and glory."

Soli Dei Gloria!

Dr. Bruce Wittmaier, Ph.D.

The Rev. Dr. Robert Larson, D.Min.

Nancy Elledge, Photography

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**Many internationally known organists have performed at
First Presbyterian Church. Among them are:**

Marie Claire Alain	Anton Heiler
Timothy Albrecht	Christopher Herrick
Gail Archer	Fred Hohman
David Arcus	Jeanne Joulain
Walter Baker	Ralph Kneeream
Robert Baker	Marek Kudlick
Diane Bish	Jean Langlais
E. Power Biggs	Nathan Laube
Pierre Cochereau	Joan Lippincott
Claire Coci	Scott Montgomery
Ken Cowan	Eric Plutz
David Craighead	Daniel Roth
Catherine Crozier	John Scott
Georg Dieterich	Haskell Thompson
Vincent Dubois	Gordon Turk
Maurice & Madeleine Duruflé	Clarence Waters
Robert Elmore	John Weaver
Virgil Fox	Carl Weinrich
Fernando Germani	Ernest White
Gerre Hancock	William Whitehead

Aeolian-Skinner Opus 1070A

GREAT	SWELL	4' Unda Maris
16' Quintaten	16' Lieblich Gedeckt	4' Koppelflote
8' Principal	8' Geigen Principal	2 2/3' Nazard
8' Spitzflote	8' Viole de Gambe	2' Blockflote
8' Bourdon	8' Dolce Flute	1 3/5' Tierce
4' Rohrflote	8' Echo Viole	1 1/3' Tierce
4' Principal	8' Viole Celeste	16' English Horn
2 2/3' Quint	8' Dolce Flute Celeste	8' Cromorne
2' Super Octave	8' Echo Vile Celeste	8' Tuba (EC) ^
III-IV Fourniture	8' Rohrflote	8' Trompette Harm++
III Cymbel	4' Flute Harmonique	4' Clarion Harm++
Zymbelstern +	4' Octave Geigen	
	2' Fifteenth	Tremulant
Great 16	III Plein Jeu	Choir 16
Great Unison Off	16' Fagot	Choir Unison Off
	8' Trompette	Choir 4
	8' Vox Humana	
COUPLERS on RAIL	8' Hautbois	++chests restored to e.p. action
16 Swell to Great	4' Clarion	
8 Swell to Great		
4 Swell to Great		
16' Choir to Great	Tremulant	COUPLERS on RAIL
8 Choir to Great	Swell 16	16' Swell to Choir
4 Choir to Great	Swell Unison Off	8' Swell to Choir
16 Echo to Great	Swell 4	4' Swell to Choir
8 Echo to Great		16' Echo to Choir
4' Echo to Great	COUPLERS on RAIL	8' Echo to Choir
	8' Choir to Swell	4' Echo to Choir
PISTONS	16' Echo to Swell	PISTONS
Great 1-6	8' Echo to Swell	Choir 1-6
	4' Echo to Swell	
GENERAL PISTONS		ECHO
General 1-16	PISTONS	8' Viole
	Swell 1-6	8' Viole Celeste
GENERAL		8' Fernflute
TOE STUDS	CHOIR	4' Principal
General 1-16	16' Dulciana	8' Vox Humana
	8' Viola	8' Trompette Harm CH)
	8' Erzahler	4' Clarion Harm (CH)
	8' Erzahler Celeste	8' Tuba (12" pressure)^
+ two random speed	8' Cor de Nuit	Chimes

Tremulant
 Echo 16
 Echo Unison Off
 Echo 4

 ^addition of appropriate
 vintage E.M. Skinner
 pipework on new
 e.p. windchests

 NO COUPLERS on RAIL

 PISTONS
 Echo 1-6

 PEDAL

 V Harmonics*
 32' Sub Bass**
 16' Quintaten (GT)
 16' Bourdon
 16' Contre Basse
 16' Gedeckt (SW)
 16' Dulciana (CH)
 8' Still Gedeckt (SW)
 8' Principal
 8' Gedeckt Pommer
 5 1/3' Quinte
 4' Choral Bass
 4' Nachthorn
 2' Blockflöte
 IV Mixture
 32' Fagotto
 16' English Horn (CH)
 16' Posaune
 8' Trompette
 4' Clarion
 Chimes (EC)

COUPLERS on RAIL
 8' Great to Pedal
 8' Swell to Pedal
 4' Swell to Pedal
 8' Choir to Pedal
 4' Choir to Pedal
 8' Echo to Pedal
 4' Echo to Pedal

 PISTONS
 Pedal 1-6
 V Harmonics
 32 Fagotto
 32 Sub Bass
 Echo to Pedal
 Swell to Pedal
 Great to Pedal
 Choir to Pedal

TOE STUDS
 Pedal 1-6
 V Harmonics
 32 Fagotto
 32 Sub Bass
 32 Off
 8' Great to Pedal
 8' Swell to Pedal
 8' Choir to Pedal
 8' Echo to Pedal

SPECIFIC PISTONS

 Alternate Crescendo
 All Swells to Swell
 Transposer
 Manual Transfer
 General Cancel

SPECIFIC TOESTUDS
 Tutti 1
 Tutti 2
 Up/Down
 Zymbelstern +

RIGHT DRAWER BUTTONS
 Up/Down
 Sequencer
 Record/Play
 Setup/ALT
 Pause/File

LEFT DRAWER BUTTONS
 4 MIDI Stops for each division

MEMORY LEVELS
 256

* derived stop
 ** polyphonic bass



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