

## OUR JOURNEY TO THE INGRAM -HELE -WILLIS ORGAN

Huguenot Memorial Church Organ Dedication, April 3, 2016,

On behalf of the Music Ministries Task Force I have been asked to share a few reflections with respect to the organ that we are dedicating today and the journey that we have taken together to get here.

Today is a BIG DAY for Huguenot - it is not that often in the life of a church that a new organ is dedicated - there have only been 3 other congregations before us - in the nearly 100 year history of this sanctuary - to do what we are doing today . Our last organ, the Gress-Miles organ, was in service for over 50 years from 1963 until we decommissioned it here last June. Before that the Aeolian Skinner was installed in 1943 and the original, Odell organ, was installed just after end of World War I - in 1918 when the sanctuary was completed. Officially this new organ is now known as the: The Ingram – Hele –Willis organ – the name is derived from the makers of the pipes that comprise this instrument , with the oldest first.

Today we are blessed to welcome the Ingram – Hele – Willis organ into the physical embrace of Huguenot Church. In so doing we also honor and embrace the continuation of the role that organ music has played in the Music Ministry of Huguenot. We will witness our new organ as it fills this space with beautiful music, with sounds and notes which we hear not only with our ears but also with our hearts, as the air of this sanctuary vibrates, moving our core, energizing this as a place of worship & reflection.

Today - Organ music will be played, as it has been for so many years but now begins a new Legacy, New music on a New organ sustaining future generations, beyond this day, beyond those of us here today –Huguenot will move forward.

Now, you may be looking around wondering where exactly is this amazing new instrument ? You can see that the original 1918 Odell pipes facing you have not changed and those from 1943, that face the chancel, while they have now been returned to active service, still look the same – thanks to very clever planning by the organ builders there are almost no changes to visual aspects of this space.

BUT behind these familiar façades is the real story... behind these pipe are even more pipes – a lot more pipes – nearly 2500 pipes in all, weighing 11,000 pounds - 5 ½ tons of organ – pipes made from lead, zinc and even wood , pipes from England and the US, from 1943 and 1950, most dating from 1901, some from 1875 and even a few from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, the longest is 16' the shortest ½". These pipes have been reconditioned and refurbished, fitted into the loft like in a submarine, they are connected to new wind chests and swell boxes, with cloth and



leather and wood supports, all controlled by a new modern console – that features not only an adjustable bench but also built with an adjustable pedal board , one of only a few in the US - for organists of all sizes to comfortably play. To make this all work there is almost 3 miles of electrical wiring installed - enough wire to get from Huguenot Church to the Bartow Pell Mansion and back. To breathe life into it all, a new blower can now deliver 1800 Cubic feet of air per minute – imagine filling 4’ balloon in 1 second!

So - how did we actually get here? It’s been an amazing journey. You may recall that 7 years ago, in May of 2009, the Session formed a Task Force to study the Property Use of Huguenot Church. In spring of 2010 the Session approved the Task Forces’ recommended strategic plan for: A Sustainable Huguenot. The first phase was the physical plant and the Geothermal project was undertaken. Then, in Feb of 2014, Session formed the Music Ministries Task Force to undertake Phase 2. This Task Force, chaired by Kathy Jones, was comprised of volunteers Jeff Marcks, Jeff and Beja Keyser, Martha Sterner, Bill Hoare, Louise Middleton , Bob Rendon and myself , joined by Jacob and later by Krystin. The charter of the Task Force was to identify the major capital investment needs of the Huguenot Music Ministries in order to sustain and grow our program .

The Task Force then set about to evaluate the existing instruments, to research alternatives to offer a sustainably high quality of music and with respect to the existing organ, to investigate potential restorers and / or organ builders to recommend a suitable solution for that aging instrument. In June of 2014 Session approved the recommendation to replace the existing organ and to hire the Dutch organ builder, Adema, to provide us with a refurbished organ of historic origin.

Fund raising began that summer and into the fall when Adema was formally contracted to start work. Through last summer, Adema continued in their shop refurbishing the pipes, building wind chests, the swell boxes, adding ranks, and constructing the console - the entire organ was built piece by piece in their shop, tested, then disassembled piece by piece taking some 4000 manhours .

Meanwhile, last summer, here at Huguenot, after the decommissioning, the Adema team came to site and removed the old organ – salvaging quite a number of pipes. PPM then, with a team of engineers and subcontractors, quickly went to work – the interior of the existing organ loft was completely renovated– new steel support beams were installed, a new electrical service was brought to the loft, the interior of the original stone Tower walls were repaired and parged, new insulation was



installed as was new lighting, humidification and plywood linings needed to install the new organ. All completed in time to be available for the Rally Day service.

By last Sept. Adema was done, the organ was packed and put on a ship - it and they arrived here in early November to begin the installation. Working 6 - 7 days a week the Adema team led by their President, Ronald van Baekel with the help of Huguenot volunteers who not only helped with extra labor but also provided the Adema team with lunches, organized dinners and put the team up in their homes. By Dec 21<sup>st</sup>, remarkably, Adema had installed the literally thousands of organ pieces, the new supports, wind chests, swell boxes, the new console and nearly ALL of the 2500 pipes. With some initial tuning, the organ was available for a few short pieces at the Christmas Eve service. With a return visit in January by Ronald and Sander, the pipe installation was completed, the pipes were voiced and tuned and today, this journey has brought us to a completed organ - ready for Dedication.

On a special note, throughout this journey the Task Force worked under the strong leadership of Kathy Jones - on behalf of the team, Kathy without your vision and knowledge we would not be here today. We Thank You!

But - it was not only the efforts of a task force or of the Adema team that have brought us here today ....it is YOU, the Huguenot Congregation, YOU who responded with amazing Huguenot enthusiasm and support for this project - not only acknowledging the role that Music plays in your lives at Huguenot and the desire to create the legacy of a sustainable Music program but it was you who also responded with such generosity - over 100 families contributed to this project raising over \$865,000... and if you have been meaning to still contribute there is time - we have about \$15,000 more to go to meet the overall fund raising goal.

Nonetheless, I am pleased to report on behalf of the Task Force that the project has come in on time, on budget and sounds incredible. Without you - none of this would be possible and on behalf of the team, the Session and our staff - thank you!

So, now we get to share this wonderful new organ, to enjoy beautiful music not only every Sunday as Kathy accompanies our amazing Choir, but also for the weddings, memorials, the future pageants, the concerts being planned. Starting today and continuing with the Dedication concert next Saturday we get to broaden our outreach, as we celebrate and give thanks for the Huguenot Music Ministry.

Eric J. Smith