



OUR SAVIOUR'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

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For Immediate Release

Our Saviour's Acquires Historic Pipe Organ ***Rare New England-Built Instrument Donated by Shuttered New York Church***

FAIRFIELD, Conn., June 2, 2014 – Our Saviour's Lutheran Church has acquired a rare 19th-century tracker pipe organ from a shuttered Lutheran church in Glendale, N.Y.

The instrument was moved to Our Saviour's this weekend from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Ascension, which closed its doors in 2011. It is being reassembled over the next two weeks by organ builder and restorer Jeremy Cooper of Concord, N.H., and is expected to make its debut at Our Saviour's on Sunday, June 14.

"This organ is ideal for our church in so many ways," said Dr. Alice Caldwell, music director at Our Saviour's. "Primarily it will accompany congregational singing of hymns and liturgy across a diversity of styles, but it also will be used to accompany the choir, chamber music ensembles, soloists, and in solo organ repertoire."

The 1875 organ, built by Hutchings, Plaisted & Company of Boston, features a one-manual-and-pedal mechanical action and nine stops. It is a gift from the former members of Ascension, which closed after eight decades of ministry in Glendale, Queens, once home to a vibrant German immigrant community and a strong Lutheran presence. The congregation merged with nearby Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Middle Village, N.Y., in 2011.

The move to Our Saviour's is the latest chapter in the organ's long history. With some internal parts dating to the 1840s, the original organ was refurbished in 1875 by Hutchings, Plaisted, which added a pedal board and a black walnut case. After several decades of use at a Congregational church in York, Me., the organ was disassembled and stored in a barn in New Hampshire.

Cooper acquired the instrument in the 1970s and began the work of restoration. While the case and mechanical key action were still in good condition, most of the metal pipes had been damaged beyond repair. Cooper had the pipes melted down and made new again by R. V. Anderson Sons of Brattleboro, Vt. Other damaged pipes were replaced with new ones from the German firm of Gebrüder Käs.

"The restored pipes were given the sound of a northern European Baroque instrument, generally acknowledged as ideal for the music of the Lutheran Church today," said Caldwell, who holds a degree in organ performance from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and a doctorate in music history from New York University. "Thus, it combines the best of nineteenth-century American workmanship with the best practices of contemporary organ-building."

Cooper's restored organ was acquired by Ascension in 1979, after the church's 1927 electric-action organ had failed and a replacement was sought.

When Ascension closed in 2011, church administrators tried unsuccessfully for two years to find a new home for the small but high-quality instrument. The right connection finally was made when Caldwell met Ascension's former pastor, George Detweiler, at a national conference of Lutheran church musicians in Valparaiso, Ind., last year.

Familiar with Our Saviour's from the time he served in a Bridgeport church in the 1980s, Pastor Detweiler described the available organ at Ascension. Caldwell immediately recognized the value of the rare organ, which was not only substantial enough for the musical needs of Our Saviour's – a congregation that has long made excellence in music an important part of its ministry – but also small enough to fit the limited space of the church building in Fairfield.

While finishing up a building project to enlarge and improve the main entrance and narthex, the people of Our Saviour's discussed how the sanctuary might be adapted to accommodate the Ascension organ. A five-foot-by-13-foot alcove was built at the back of the chancel to house the instrument, and it is there that Cooper is rebuilding the organ he restored and then tuned and maintained for 33 years.

“The beautiful tonal design of this instrument will accommodate organ music from the early Baroque period, through the Classic and Romantic periods, right up to the music of contemporary composers,” Caldwell said. “We are fortunate indeed to have found an instrument so well-suited to our needs.”

Note to Editors: A biography of organ builder Jeremy Cooper and a brief history of Hutchings, Plaisted & Co. are included with this release. To arrange an interview with Mr. Cooper or photo/TV coverage as he reassembles the organ, please contact Will Thoretz at (203) 912-5192. Contributed photos are available on request.

About Our Saviour's

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), reaches out to the world and to its local communities with the Good News of the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The congregation receives strength for this mission through Worship, Christian Education, Service, Benevolent Giving, Witness, Mutual Support and a commitment to grow in faith and participation. Our Saviour's is guided in the belief that, “As God Gives to Us, So We Give to Others.”

Holy Communion is celebrated during worship at 9:30 a.m. each Sunday during the summer. The church's regular schedule of worship (two services), along with Sunday School and Adult Discussion, resumes on September 7. For more information, please call (203) 255-0545 or visit us at www.oursaviours.net.

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