

# What Is a Pipe Organ?

A pipe organ is a collection of separate wind instruments intended to fulfill particular roles in the playing of organ literature. These separate wind instruments (sets or “ranks” of pipes) are organized into divisions which are known by such names as the Great, Swell, Choir, Solo and Pedal or their French and German equivalent. As reflected in the adjoining specification, the three-manual (keyboard) organ at Aldersgate uses French nomenclature and consists of the Grand Orgue (Great), Récit (Swell), Chœur (Choir) and Pédale (Pedal) divisions. The Grand Orgue is located on the top of the right side organ case behind the lectern. The Pédale is split between the tops of the left and right side cases. The Récit is located inside the right side organ case and the Chœur is located inside the left side case.

Each division is made up of stops, each stop consisting of one or more ranks of pipes. At Aldersgate, there are 61 pipes in each complete rank of the organ’s manual divisions and 32 pipes in each complete rank of the Pédale division.

Organ pipes are divided into four tonal families. The four families are principal, flute, string, and reed. The principal tone, “montre” on our organ, can be best described as traditional organ sound. The other three categories are “imitative” tones which sound similar to orchestral flutes, various string instruments, such as a cello or violin, and reeds, which sound like trumpets, bassoons, trombones, clarinets and oboes.

There are two categories of organ pipes. They are flue pipes, which make up about 80 percent of the pipework, and reed pipes, which sound when a brass tongue vibrates against a hollow brass tube called a shallot. Approximately 85 percent of the pipes contain an alloy of tin and lead in varying proportions. The remaining pipes are made of zinc and wood. Each rank of pipes in the organ has a pitch notation corresponding to the length of the rank’s longest pipe. For example, a rank whose longest pipe is 8 feet long will produce a middle C pitch when the middle C key is depressed. A rank whose longest pipe is 4 feet long will produce a pitch sounding an octave above middle C when the middle C key is depressed.

All pipes stand on boxes called wind chests. These chests contain the mechanisms that control the wind entering the pipes. The under side of each chest has a pressure-regulation mechanism to ensure a constant supply of wind at the proper pressure. At Aldersgate, the wind chests are mounted on and inside the organ cases located on either side of the stone column.

The console is the part of the organ where the organist controls the speaking of the pipes and it has several components. The manuals or keyboards, one for each division, are placed in tiers at the center of the console. The pedalboard operates the Pédale division. The stop knobs by which the organist chooses the ranks of pipes that are to sound, are placed on either side of the manuals in angled panels. They are grouped to correspond with the divisions of the organ. Couplers are devices that enable one division of the organ to be played on a manual other than its designated one, e.g. when Récit division stops are played on the Grand Orgue keyboard. Couplers are normally located above the manuals in the form of tilting tablets. The organist may also set up various combinations of stops, called a registration, on a capture memory system. The memory system retains the registration and it may be recalled by pressing one of the thumb or toe pistons found between the manuals or directly above the pedalboard.

A suitable blower mechanism provides wind pressure to operate the organ. At Aldersgate, the blower is located in a loft above the sacristy.



# Gifts

Gifts from numerous donors to the Organ Fund made possible the purchase of this splendid pipe organ. These donations were given in generous spirit, often prayerfully and sacrificially. Many were contributed as memorials and honorariums for loved ones. All are deeply appreciated.

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