

“Happenings”

## **St. Stephen Church to Bless New Organ at September 29 Service**

9/22/2019

A lovingly rebuilt Woodberry & Harris pipe organ with more than 120 years of providing beautiful music in churches around Massachusetts has found a new home at St. Stephen Lutheran Church, 537 Bolton St., Marlborough. The organ will be blessed and officially heard in its new home on Sunday, September 29, during the 10 am worship service. The public is invited.

Stan Hanson, St. Stephen's organist and musical director, says the organ "is exquisitely voiced to lead our worship services and interpret organ music from all periods. For a small tracker instrument, there are sufficient tonal resources to accompany congregational singing and interpret some of the 'grand' music composed for the organ," he added.

The organ is a gift of Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church in Shrewsbury, which recently closed. Not only the organ, but other worship items, including a sanctuary cross, candle holders, and paraments were given to St. Stephen.

One of about 30 organs the Boston-based Woodberry & Harris made, it was constructed in about 1892 and served its first congregation in Abington for 60 years before it wore out, was sold and stored for Andover Organ Company employee Richard Westerdale in a garage until he moved in 1981. John Morlock, another employee, was a friend of the Reverend Cliff Gerber, pastor of Mt. Olivet who hoped his church could acquire an organ, but knew the budget would be tight.

Mt. Olivet purchased the organ in 1981, but beautiful music at that point was just a idea, since the antique tracker organ required extensive and expensive rebuilding. Morlock suggested an economical alternative, a combination of professional rebuilding of the chests and working parts and skilled, loving labor by parishioners who refinished the organ and lent a hand with the literally heavy lifting.

A local artist with knowledge of early decorative arts, Molly Porter, took on the task of restoring the original designs that had been painted on the organ's case pipes, and decided to volunteer her time and materials as a labor of love. The organ served the Shrewsbury congregation from 1982 until this spring.

### **Fine Tuning**

With the gift of the organ to St. Stephen Lutheran Church came the need to disassemble the instrument, transport it from Shrewsbury to Marlborough, and reassemble it. Once again, John Morlock of Andover Organ Company, along with his wife, Fay, became involved. Morlock says although his work was "primarily taking the organ apart and putting it back together," it also included manufacturing some new parts and modifying older parts. "The original pitch of the organ was sharper than what is used today," he added, so he revised the pedal mechanism, moved the trackers that play the pipes, added a pipe and moved notes to add one at the bottom. "I took many of the pipes back to the shop,

and made them speak better.” Morlock said they also made modifications to the upper structure, “so we’d have something to lean on as we tuned the organ.” Tracker organs should be tuned once or twice a year, he added.

“I am really glad the folks of Mt. Olivet saw fit to keep the organ in playable condition and the folks of St. Stephen wanted to give it a home,” Morlock said. Just like the people of Mt. Olivet, who treasured the instrument, Morlock has a special place in his heart for the Woodbury & Harris pipe organ. John and Fay were married at Mt. Olivet, and the organ played.

At the September 29 service, parishioners will give thanks for the generosity of the people of Mt. Olivet and bless the organ to the Glory of God. This festival services will feature the organ as the church commemorates St. Michael and All Angels.

### **November Concert**

A special organ concert will be held at St. Stephen Lutheran Church on November 24, at 5:00 pm, when music director Stanley Hanson will showcase the sounds of this fine, small tracker organ.



Saint Stephen Lutheran Church Music Director Stan Hanson demonstrates some of the capabilities of the new organ.

---



The Woodberry & Harris organ, fully assembled at St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Marlborough, ready for the September 29 service.





Close up of 3 pipes from the organ at Saint Stephen Lutheran Church, painted in its original 19th Century design.