



“At the heart of Rooted and Reaching, we commit everything to our Lord Jesus Christ in prayer and works grounded in love. It’s when we love each other as Christ loved us that we truly reveal to the world we are His disciples. Through prayer and love, the Lord will fulfill His ministry calling for us and achieve a successful campaign.”

Camp Sommardahl- Spiritual Emphasis Chair

A Personal Perspective from Frank Whitehouse specific to the Organ Renovation Project:

I find it hard to believe that I have been listening to the organ in First Presbyterian’s sanctuary for 62 years and almost every Sunday for the last 40 years. It has never ceased to provoke joy, to underwrite the message of the day, to inspire, to be a lift for our spirit’s wings. It is the foundation under our choir’s lovely voices and the sonic backdrop for our meditations. Under Cory’s masterful hands (and feet) it soars and can provoke awe. Our organ has been a constant delight and one of the reasons I keep coming back to First Presbyterian for worship.

It has been such an integral part of my family’s worship that when the opportunity came to join the organ committee, I was happy to volunteer. I must say that being on the committee has been a journey. I did not realize how much I had been taking for granted all these years. Our organ is not out front, visible in the room, as so many elsewhere are. It hides shyly away behind the grates in the chancel. I had no idea how complex it was as an instrument until we began our committee’s inquiry into its condition. The masses of pipes, 3,347 in all, with their wind chest foundations, stagger when one goes behind the grates and sees their masses and complexity. The way in which each pipe is controlled, involving leather elements originally designed in the 18th century, is almost a mystery. That it works at all strikes me as something of a miracle.

But the miracle has been performed Sunday after Sunday, or so I thought. The organ committee, in the last stages of its process, traveled to see and hear organs recently built or rebuilt by the three companies whose proposals for renovating our organ we have reviewed. Listening to their organs was a revelation. I had absolutely no inkling how much better they would sound. The clarity of their voices, the harmony of the meshing of their pipes as if a harmonious choir, the range of their capability from whisper to shout, the swell as they built their harmonies to crescendo all simply blew me away. I found myself enraptured listening to each one. And in the process, I began to realize what I have been missing all these years.

I had not realized how much our organ has worn out. The changes have been so gradual that the ear has adapted and failed to note them. The note that should be there but is not. The note that starts and suddenly, awkwardly goes silent. The differences in timbre between the

electronic pipes and the wind-driven ones. The imbalances between the different ranks of voices, like a choir singing different parts but in different keys. The lack of precision in individual voices, rising too slowly and falling away too gradually. All these became apparent as I listened to newer organs in their prime, exquisitely adapted to the halls they were played in. It was a revelation.

I must say, I became envious. And I realized how masterful a job Cory has done in working around the problems that are developing at a rapidly increasing pace. But even Cory's ability to make it work will be exceeded soon. Our organ has been playing in the sanctuary for 68 years. Think of that for a moment. We have been patching and fixing it for a long time, and that will not suffice to solve the problems. Simple maintenance alone will not fix the many issues our organ has developed or repair awkward patches of the past. And simple maintenance will grow exponentially expensive as time passes. It is time our organ was brought up to a level where it can display its real potential, to inspire and elevate as it has the possibility to do. Having heard others that can, I so want that for us.