

First German

Evangelical Lutheran Church and School

Pipe Organ Project Question & Answer

*Let every instrument be tuned for praise!
Let all rejoice who have a voice to raise!
And may God give us faith to sing always:
Hallelujah! Amen.*



Why a new organ?

First German Lutheran Church has a rich heritage of worship music and the organ plays an integral part. As a congregation, we love our organ...the majesty and grandeur of the instrument adds so much to our worship. Preserving our musical heritage by making improvements and important repairs and updates while keeping with the integrity of the instrument will allow us to move forward into the future for generations. We desire a fully functioning organ that will be available for use for years to come. Our present organ is close to 103 years old and is showing many signs of wear. A number of these issues have been addressed (or attempted to be repaired) several times by various organ technicians, however we seem to be revisiting the issues over and over while they continue to grow worse. (Issues included but are not limited to: noisy when motor is turned on due to air leaking and cyphering across pipes, stops sounding and sticking at inappropriate times, a number of stops/pipes not function properly or at all, pedal board needing to be overhauled to work properly, leathers wearing out.) Much a like a car, regular maintenance and repairs will keep an organ functioning well, but after a while, there comes a time when a point of no return is reached and a greater need arises for a bigger renovation project.

Is this a renovation or a new organ?

This proposal is to refurbish the organ. It will put the instrument in "like-new" condition. The original mechanism – windchests, reservoirs, and winding – is at the point needing replacement. The age of the mechanism (103 years), the design of the windchests (ventil), and some of the choice made during updates and restoration efforts (1970-2000) really point everything in this direction. When completed, the organ will be ready to serve First German congregation for another 100+ years.

The Blessings of a New/Renovated Organ

Embarking on this organ project will provide our congregation with many blessings. We will have a fully functioning organ lasting many years with regular maintenance. The organ will be enjoyable to play and listen to as the extra noise factor will be gone. By adding a pedal coupler stop, more of our keyboardists in the congregation will have the option to play the organ as this will allow them to play on the manual keyboards and not be required to use the pedals. Over time, there will be less repairs to be made and only tunings and regular maintenance will be required. We will have consistent sound and use as opposed to wondering if the organ will be working at important times in our worship calendar. The stops proposed will allow the organ to sound more in line with the German history of our church. And most importantly, we will be able to continue to praise our Lord with beautiful music led by our organ. To God Alone Be the Glory!!

What does the work include to make the First German “like-new” again?

- *Completely removing the pipe organ and servicing it at the Schantz organ workshop in Orrville, Ohio.*
 - ✓ *All pipework will be cleaned, repaired, dents removed, and repainted/re-lacquered per the original design.*
 - ✓ *All new tuning sleeves*
 - ✓ *Everything will be completely tested at their shop to ensure the highest quality*
 - ✓ *Façade will be restored and the façade pipes will be restored and repainted.*
 - ✓ *Console shell will be stripped, repaired, and refinished.*
- *New windchests*
- *New blower*
- *New swell shades and engine*
- *Peterson Electro-Musical combination system*
 - ✓ *Multiple locking memories*
 - ✓ *MIDI integration with record and playback*
 - ✓ *Automatic pedal coupler so that piano players can use the organ without using their feet!*
- *Any flooring or wall repair that needs to take place when the organ is removed.*

What is the estimated cost?

The all-inclusive package for refurbishing the First German organ to “like-new” condition is \$560,000.

- *A major emphasis for funding would be the “Thank Offering” for the 150th Anniversary of our Sanctuary (1873-2023)*
- *Three gifts (\$20,000 + \$20,000 + \$7,000) have been verbally offered to begin the project.*
- *There is also funding in our First German “Gifts & Memorials” that could be used for the downpayment.*

Who will do the work?

The organ committee unanimously recommends Schantz Organ Company of Orrville, Ohio. Their entire plan is in keeping with the historic integrity of our First German organ and then adding to the sound of the instrument in keeping with it’s historic sound. In working with us, Schantz did an incredible amount of research, listened to our thoughts, and their proposal works hard to recognize and respect our musical heritage. They have refurbished many historical organs and have worked favorably with other WELS ministries (examples: Martin Luther College and Our Redeemer – Madison) in the recent past.

When will the work be started and finished?

Currently the company is 18 months to 2 years out on projects. If approved soon, work would commence in late 2023 or early 2024.

When the project begins, what is the timeframe for them to return the organ and we can begin using it again in worship?

Any work on the organ would have down time for us. Schantz estimates that the timeframe would be somewhere between 6-8 months. They always try to give the outside parameters on this, so it could be a month or so less than that.

What will be the maintenance and upkeep of the new organ?

Regular tuning and upkeep on a pipe organ will continue to be needed. We should be free of major repairs for quite some time since we will be refurbishing the organ to “like-new” condition. The Schantz Company does provide a 10-year warranty on all new parts, materials, and workmanship. In addition, the solid-state electrical components manufactured by Peterson carry a 10-year warranty as well.

Are there organists, and will there be organists in the future, who will play the organ?

Currently, we are blessed with a number of organists here at First German and a number of WELS members in the area who are also willing to play here at FG. The WELS is actively training musicians and organists within our educational system. Organ lessons are offered at MLHS, our preparatory schools, and Martin Luther College has a robust training program for future organists. While it is true that there are currently fewer organists than in the past, the tradition within the Lutheran/Christian church is not dead. We also need to encourage our young people to study piano and then organ within our Lutheran Elementary School and high school. In addition, it is important for us as a congregation to always consider calling someone with organ abilities when placing calls for new teachers for FGLS.

Do you have additional questions? Please email organ committee chairman, Joel Ungemach, at jungemach@mlhslancers.org and we will make every effort to answer your questions.