

The History of the Krafts Memorial Organ

Our Savior's Lutheran Congregation, established in 1947, had a piano as its first instrument for accompanying singing in its worship services. The first organ was an electronic instrument, purchased in 1958. It continued in use until the installation of the Hendrickson Pipe Organ in 1977. Mrs. Mary Jean Beck, the first organist, continues to serve as regular organist.

Early in the 1970's, when it was realized that the electronic organ was in need of replacement, interest grew in investigating the possible purchase of a pipe organ. Throughout 1973 and 1974, a committee composed of Mary Jean Beck, Ronald Prazak, and Eleanor Yackel visited churches, listening to instruments and interviewing organists and builders. By the time of the 1975 annual congregational meeting a recommendation was submitted to the congregation that a pipe organ should be purchased and built for Our Savior's Church. Charles Hendrickson was recommended as the builder because of his reputation for producing fine instruments for several regional churches and institutions, as well as for his reliable follow-up service. It was agreed that he would be well-qualified to build an organ specifically for the needs of Our Savior's Church.

In May, 1975, the contract with Mr. Hendrickson was signed by Council President Robert Zaske. It specified that an eight-rank, two-manual pipe organ, costing \$26,000, should be installed two years from the time of signing of the contract. The plan was to have the organ built in the balcony. Later, when the builder and the organ committee met to talk specifically about the design of the instrument, it was realized that the altar area would be a preferable location for reasons of better acoustics, space, and for better participation in worship by organ, choir, and congregation. Because of the change in plans, the installation was delayed until December, 1977. The organ "spoke" for worship services for the first time on Christmas Eve, 1977.

The organ was financed entirely by regular pledges and memorial gifts made by members and friends of the congregation. They had a conviction that a fine instrument would be helpful in worship life, an esthetic asset to the community, and a fitting memorial to a beloved former pastor, Rudolfs Krafts, who regarded hymn singing and other sacred music as one of the important means of worshipping God.

To God be the glory!