

About the new Pilgrim Schantz-Berghaus organ:

Pilgrim’s Wangerin pipe organ, installed in 1941, was known for years to be gradually failing. In December 1999, an organ committee was formed. Scott Riedel, our organ consultant, came on board in 2000. During the next few years the committee went on many “listening tours” of local organs to determine the kind of organ that would work best for Pilgrim. At first, a new organ was recommended, but in 2009, interest developed seeking out a high-quality used pipe organ that could be refurbished, revoiced, and installed at Pilgrim for approximately half the cost of a brand new organ. A 1986 Schantz pipe organ became available at an excellent price, and it was unanimously decided at a special congregational meeting on Nov. 21, 2010 to go forward with the organ project, along with two other Legacy Projects, a new metal “green” sanctuary roof and renovations to the lower level. Pilgrim contracted with Berghaus Pipe Organ Builders of Chicago in November 2010 to purchase, refurbish, revoice, and install our new pipe organ. To refurbish and repurpose an existing organ was another “green” choice for Pilgrim.

In early 2011, the Schantz organ was dismantled at its original church, Community Reformed Church in Zeeland, Michigan, and moved to the Berghaus factory in Chicago, where it was completely taken apart and rebuilt. On October 2, Berghaus delivered the organ to Pilgrim, and began the painstaking process of installing the instrument and voicing every pipe. On November 20, Pilgrims heard the organ sing out for the first time.

The organ has 31 ranks (sets of pipes), 29 stops, 31 ranks, and 1712 pipes and is a two manual and pedal pipe organ, with electro-pneumatic action. It was installed and voiced to match both the visual and aural characteristics of Pilgrim’s sanctuary, including the beautiful new casework visible at the front of the chancel. The organ console is on wheels and can be moved almost anywhere on the main chancel platform, in keeping with the flexibility of our chancel area. The organ also has a set of chimes and a zimbelstern, which is a wheel on which several small bells are mounted, producing a tinkling sound. The pipes of the old organ were hidden from view by coverings over the openings in the loft, adjacent to the chancel. The new installation doesn’t have coverings over those openings and therefore many of the pipes are visible from the chancel floor and east transept seating. While our previous organ served Pilgrim for 70 years, this new organ could well be expected to serve our congregation for at least 100 years.

Through support of the Legacy Projects Fund and many Pilgrims, this organ has become a reality. What a wonderful way to make joyful and thankful music to God. The organ was dedicated to God’s praise during our morning worship on Sunday, Dec. 4, 2011.

About the photos: On Sunday, October 2, 2011, Pilgrim’s new pipe organ arrived on a very large semi truck from Chicago. Over a dozen Pilgrim volunteers met the truck and helped to unload pipes, casings, windchests, wood work, metal infrastructure and a beautiful organ console. Within six days, the pipes at the front of the church were up and looking as though they had always been there.

