

The St. Barnabas Organ

2021, 46 Ranks

In 1978, St. Barnabas learned that St. Phillip's Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC was installing a new pipe organ and looking to sell their 25 rank Austin organ, built in 1921 in Hartford, CT. Thirteen members of the congregation traveled to Charleston to haul the Austin organ back to Bay Village for installation.

In 1980, local organ builder Tim Henry was hired to “bring some order to things” and expand the original Austin organ from 25 ranks to 38. That iteration of our pipe organ served the congregation for forty years. Over time, however, it fell into disrepair and by 2020 fewer than 30 ranks were functioning.

In February 2021, Smith & Gilbert organ builders in Portageville, NY became aware of an available pipe organ that could replace parts of our organ which had not aged well and expand its artistic depth and range. We purchased the pipe organ from the former Immanuel Lutheran Church in Jamestown, NY along the south shore of Chautauqua Lake. Over the last nine months, Smith & Gilbert achieved several goals:

1. Customizing the organ to our space: Because the Austin organ was built for another church it failed to account for challenges particular to St. Barnabas, namely the location of the organ chamber relative to the long nave. Smith & Gilbert repositioned and rebuilt the swell with vertical shutters to address acoustic challenges presented by our space.
2. Replacing components that had not aged well: The ranks of pipes built and installed by Tim Henry in 1980 have been maintained, but very little of the 100-year-old Austin organ remains. The Immanuel Lutheran organ has largely replaced the original Austin.
3. Expanding our organ's artistic depth and range: Our large organ chamber allowed the inclusion of additional ranks of pipes. Most came from the Immanuel Lutheran organ, but others were purchased from various second-hand sources – including a rank of pipes from Trinity Church, Wall Street. Our current 46 ranks offer significant possibilities for artistic expression.
4. Replacing the aging console and bringing the organ's electronic relay (between the console and the pipes) up to modern standards, dramatically increasing reliability.

Our pipe organ is now well-suited to aid our congregation in the worship of God for many generations to come.