

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHRIST CHURCH ORGANS, 1788-2010
Christ Church, 5 Paterson Street, New Brunswick, NJ
Mark Trautman

PARISH MISSION STATEMENT

Historic Christ Church is a mutually supportive Christian community worshipping in the living Anglican tradition of beauty in liturgy and music. Christ Church bears witness to the love of Christ in prayer, service and fellowship. EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE.

THE FIRST ORGAN AND CHOIR

The tradition of “beauty in liturgy and music” was established at Christ Church within the first forty years of its existence. The first organ used in Christ Church was purchased for \$100 and installed in 1788. The organ was probably imported from England, and replaced by a new organ built by Hall & Erben in New York in 1826. The Right Reverend John Croes became Rector of Christ Church 1801 and was ordained Bishop of New Jersey in Philadelphia in November 1815. Bishop Croes told the NJ Diocesan Convention in 1826 that “by the long exertions of some of the ladies, the Church has been furnished with a new and sweetly-toned organ, the largest in the Diocese.” Christ Church was known in those years as a “black gown” parish, meaning that the priest had the credentials to compose and deliver his own sermons. Bishop Croes would leave the chancel during the sermon hymn (in previous Prayer Books this happened after the creed and the announcements), go to the “vestry” (now the bell tower), exchange his surplice for a black preaching gown, and return to the pulpit to begin his sermon.

Charles Deshler, in *Old Christ Church and Bishop Croes* (1896) described the music program of the 1820s and 30s:

With all its simplicity, however, the old [Christ] Church had its alleviations. Among these were its music.... In those primitive times, the music was usually confined to a “voluntary” on the organ at the opening and closing of services while the congregation were gathering or dispersing; to the “Te Deum,” the “Venite,” the “Gloria in Excelsis,” the “Jubilate” or the “Benedicite,” the “Gloria Patri” at the end of the Psalter, and a psalm before and a hymn after the sermon. This at the morning service. And at evening service, the “Cantate” or the “Bonum est,” the “Miseratur” or the “Benedic Anima Mea,” the “Gloria Patri” at the end of the Psalter, and again a psalm before and a hymn after the sermon.... The only deviation from the above was on Christmas Day, when the service was begun...by the choir and congregation voluntarily joining with great spirit in the favorite “Portuguese Hymn” [e.g., “O come all ye faithful.”]...

At the period of which I speak, Christ Church was the only church in New Brunswick which had an organ. It was a small, but sweet toned instrument, having only a single bank of keys and but six stops. It had no pedal key-board, and was supplied with air by means of a foot pedal, under the bank of keys, which was worked by the organist by leg-power when he was playing.... The regular organist was the venerable and excellent William L[e]jupp.... The choir then consisted, first, last, and all the time, of Miss Ann S. Croes, the eldest daughter of the Bishop, whose

pure and wonderfully sympathetic contralto, with its rare faculty of touching the sensibilities of her hearers.

Charles Leupp presented the parish with a new organ built by Henry Erben and a church bell on April 4, 1842. In 1852 the old church was pulled down (the tower was left in place) and the Erben organ was transferred to the new building.

LEVI U. STUART, NEW YORK CITY

In 1869, an alcove on the north side of the church near the chancel (now the Clarke Chapel) was built to house a new, 21-stop organ built by Levi U. Stuart of New York. This instrument was inaugurated with a special concert on May 13, 1869, given by Arthur Messiter, organist and choirmaster of Trinity Church, Wall Street, accompanied by Trinity's Choir of Men and Boys and local organists. The program included an organ sonata by Mendelssohn, and choral works by Handel, Lefébure-Wély, Mozart, Tallis, Tye, and Wesley.

GREAT ORGAN

1. Open Diapason 8'
2. Melodia 8'
3. Salicional 8'
4. Principal 4'
5. Harmonic Flute 4'
6. Twelfth 3'
7. Fifteenth 2'
8. Trumpet 8'

SWELL ORGAN *enclosed*

9. Open Diapason 8'
10. Stopped Diapason 8'
11. Dulciana 8'
12. Principal 4'
13. Piccolo 2'
14. Hautboy 8'

PEDAL ORGAN

15. Subbass 16'
16. Violoncello 8'

MECHANICAL STOPS

- Full
- Chorus
- Solo
- Swell to Great
- Pedal to Great
- Pedal to Swell
- Tremulant
- Bellows Alarm

(Dedication program, May 13, 1869)

At the time of the dedication of this organ, Professor Franz Schneweiss was listed as Christ Church's organist and the choir consisted of a paid quartet of two men and two women. The quartet was also located near the new organ, and a screen was installed around the singers after parishioners objected to seeing women sing in public.

The new organ and its situation were in conformity with late nineteenth-century Oxford Movement principles. G. Edward Stubbs, son of the then-rector Alfred Stubbs and later instructor of music at General Seminary wrote in his *Practical Hints on the Training of Choir Boys* (1888):

Under this heading, a point of primary importance is the position of the church organ, which (it would seem almost unnecessary to say) should be in the chancel. In modern church buildings provision is generally made for this. There are, however, numbers of churches where the old gallery organ is left in its original position, after the "quartette" has given place to a vested choir of men and boys....Instead of

taking the old organ down and setting it up again...a better plan is to sell it, and have a new one build expressly designed for chancel use.

Indeed, the “quartette” gave way to a choir of men and boys under the direction of George Wilmot, choirmaster of the parish from 1885-1930. The chancel was reworked and expanded to include a traditional divided chancel in 1885. Wilmot had been a pupil of Joseph Barnby in his native England, and his newly formed choir of men and boys sang for the first time on Easter Day 1894. Mr Wilmot was also the founder of the Rutgers Glee Club and Music Supervisor of the New Brunswick Public Schools.

Not everyone was happy with the new organ in the front of the room. In June 1877 a group of parishioners approached the Vestry asking that the new organ be removed “to the original organ loft, at the end of the church,” and that the problem should be referred to the Music Committee. “Progress” on the question of whether to move the organ to the gallery was reported that September, and the organ and choir remained in the front of the church. Risers with pews firmly attached to the floor were installed in the old choir gallery to accommodate African American parishioners, probably in mid 1869.

By 1892 the organ needed \$175 worth of repairs, and in 1903 the rector “called attention to the completely worn-out and unsatisfactory condition of the organ.” Later, choirmaster George Wilmot reminisced that the Stuart organ “had as many tricks as a small boy, and would frequently stop with a dismal groan.” More than likely, however, the Stuart organ had simply fallen out of fashion as the twentieth century began.

J.W. STEERE AND SON, 1904

A contract for a new organ was signed July 6, 1904 for a new J.W. Steere organ. This organ cost \$5,000, and the church was given an allowance of \$200 for the Stuart organ. The Steere organ was tubular-pneumatic.

The Steere organ was dedicated in 1905 by organist John W. Durham. Durham had been a pupil of Alexander Guilmant in Paris. When he and his new wife discovered they were pregnant, they quickly returned to the United States. Their daughter, Elizabeth (“Betty”) was born in New Brunswick on February 14, 1900 and was a member of the parish until her death in 2003. At her passing, she was the oldest-living alumna of the New Jersey College for Women (later Douglass College) at Rutgers University. She established a number of scholarships offering financial assistance to young musicians to this day.

GREAT ORGAN

1. Open Diapason 8'
2. Gamba 8'
3. Doppel Flute 8'
4. Flute d'Amour 4'
5. Octave 4'
6. Twelfth 2 2/3'
7. Dulciana 2'
8. Trumpet 8'

SWELL ORGAN *enclosed*

9. Bourdon 16'
10. Open Diapason 8'
11. Aeoline 8'
12. Salicional 8'
13. Vox Celeste 8'
14. Stopped Diapason 8'
15. Flute Harmonique 4'
16. Violin 4'
17. Flautino 4'
18. Oboe and Bassoon 8'

CHOIR ORGAN *enclosed*

19. Violin Diapason 8'
20. Viol d'Orchestre 8'
21. Melodia 8'
22. Dolce 8'
23. Flauto Traverso 4'
24. Clarinet 8'

PEDAL ORGAN

25. Double Open Diapason 16'
26. Bourdon 16'
27. Lieblich Gedackt 16'
28. Violoncello 8'

normal couplers

(Original contract)

The Junior Warden of the parish wrote to Steere in 1909 demanding replacement of numerous pneumatic tubes that were increasingly wreaking havoc in the playing of the organ. By the 1920s, it was clear that the parish needed to find an alternative to the Steere organ.

CASAVANT FRÈRES, LIMITÉE, NO. 993

The Steere organ was replaced by opus 993 built by Casavant Frères, Ltd. of St.-Hyacinthe, Que., Canada. The original contract, dated January 15, 1923, bears the signatures of the Rev. Dr. Herbert Parrish, Rector, Nicholas G. Rutgers, Senior Warden, and James Deshler, Junior Warden. The new organ first used on Thanksgiving Day, 1924, was installed in the original choir gallery, and the console was placed in the space now occupied by the front pews on the lectern side of the church. The old organ chamber was converted to a sacristy. According to the original contract the organ had three manuals and 21 stops and pedal and cost \$10,392. The Rule Company was engaged to install two supporting pillars underneath the gallery, and a façade with non-speaking pipes and carving matching that of the new altar and reredos was installed a year later.

In 1930 George Wilmot retired as choirmaster after forty-five years of service. George Huddleston was hired as organist and choirmaster that year. His job offer came about largely through the efforts of G. Edward Stubbs, son of the former Rector, who then served as the organist and choirmaster of St Agnes Chapel of Trinity Church in New York City (no longer extant). In 1932 the console was moved to the chancel, an agreement Mr. Huddleston had secured from the Rector upon his acceptance of the position. In 1937 the Rangertone Company, Inc. of Newark, New Jersey was hired to install a "resonance amplifier system" to alleviate the delay between the choir in the front and the organ in the gallery.

In the 1940s, the organ was apparently showing signs of severe wear. A letter written to Mr. Huddleston by organ builder Ernest M. Skinner makes clear that Huddleston believed that the best solution to organ/choir problems would be a set of pipes installed in the front of the church. Ernest Skinner had done rebuilding work on the Casavant console, as well as extensive revoicing in 1941. By 1949, the console was apparently in a “state of disintegration.” In a letter to the vestry dated July 28, 1949, Canon Walter Stowe, Rector, wrote about a recommendation to the Vestry that a new four-manual console built by the M.P. Möller Company of Hagerstown, Maryland be purchased for \$7,030 and that further repairs and alterations be made to the organ for a sum of \$7,615. The console was installed with enough room to accommodate further stops and more divisions that would, it was hoped, be installed in the chancel, thus relieving the constant problem of delay between the choir and the organ. It is likely that the “severe wear” was more a reflection of the difficulty encountered playing and accompanying the organ from the opposite ends of the room, as well as the changes in fashion and style in the aftermath of the two World Wars.

On November 4, 1955, the church entered into an agreement with the Æolian-Skinner Company of Boston, Massachusetts. Under the direction of Joseph Whiteford, Æolian-Skinner was to rebuild the Casavant organ for the sum of \$15,000.

GREAT ORGAN

- 1 Quintade 16
- 2 Spitzprinzipal 8’
- 3 Orchestral Flute 8’
- 4 Oktav 4’
- 5 Quintade 4’ *ext. from 1*
- 6 Oktav 2’
- 7 Fourniture IV

SWELL ORGAN *enclosed*

- 8 Bourdon 16’
- 9 Gedeckt 8’
- 10 Viole de’ Gamba 8’
- 11 Gamba Celeste 8’
- 12 Spitzflöte 4’
- 13 Octavin 2’
- 14 Plein Jeu IV
- 15 Fagot 16’
- 16 Trumpet 8’
- 17 Clairon 4’
- Tremulant

CHOIR ORGAN *enclosed*

- 18 Geigen Principal 8’
- 19 Cor de Nuit 8’
- 20 Rohrflöte 4’
- 21 Zimbel II

SOLO ORGAN *enclosed*

- 22 Bombarde 16’
- 23 Harmonic Trumpet 8’ *ext. from 22*
- 24 Clairon 4’ *ext. from 22*

Pedal Organ

- 25 Untersatz 16’
- 26 Bourdon 16’
- 27 Quintaton 16’ *same as 1*
- 28 Lieblich Gedeckt 16’ *same as 8*
- 29 Principal 8’ *ext. from 25*
- 30 Flute 8’ *ext. from 26*
- 31 Quintade 8’ *ext. from 1*
- 32 Super Octave 4’ *ext. from 25*
- 33 Phyfe 2’ *ext. from 25*
- 34 Cymbel III
- 35 Bombarde 16’ *same as 22*
- 36 Trumpet 8’ *same as 23*
- 37 Clairon 4’ *same as 24*

5 divisions (four manuals and pedal)

24 stops

34 ranks

Normal couplers

Seven new stops were added, most of the old stops retained were revoiced, and the console was left virtually “as-is.” The new organ had 25 stops, and bore the opus number 1315 of the Æolian-Skinner Company. By 1957, the church had spent more than \$30,365 on repairs, upgrades, and additions to the organ (not including regular repairs and maintenance).

Whiteford’s rebuild was done in haste and largely on-site; by the late 1960s the organ began to deteriorate rapidly. The Church Organ Company of Edison reworked the organ again in 1964. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Kenneth Wolfe of Princeton completed substantial revoicing and repairs. The Petty-Madden company rebuilt the swell reservoir in late 1993. Æolian-Skinner opus 1315 had four manuals and pedal and 24 speaking stops.

George Huddleston retired in 1974 after a long and distinguished 44-year tenure, followed by John van Sant who served from 1974-1978. After a short interim, Clifford Hill was appointed in 1978 and served as organist and choirmaster until 1990. During Hill’s time, the men and boys choir gave way to a semi-professional mixed choir, the church adopted regular Sunday Eucharists and the Book of Common Prayer 1979, and the music program continued to be known for its high standards of choral excellence. Martha Para (now Ainsworth) formed a choir school using the principles and techniques advocated by the Royal School of Church music. The choir school was highly successful, and a number of the children from this program went on to have highly successful careers as professional musicians. John I. Spencer served as organist and choirmaster from 1991 until the fall of 1993.

RICHARDS, FOWKES AND COMPANY, OPUS 12

Mark Trautman began his 17-year tenure at Christ Church on January 1, 1994. The Vestry approved the formation of an Organ Committee in September 1994. In May 1995 the Committee recommended to the Vestry that the parish purchase a new organ, and that the year 2001 be set as the year by which a new organ should be installed. The organ sustained severe damage during an electric storm on July 15, 1995, and remained unplayable until the end of January 1996. In November 1996 the organ sounded for the last time. It was dismantled and removed from the church by the Organ Clearing House of Harrisville, New Hampshire in February 1998.

The Christ Church Organ Committee, under the leadership of Andrea Cunnell, selected Richards, Fowkes and Company of Chattanooga, Tennessee, to build a new organ for Christ Church in May 1996. The committee inspected instruments built Richards, Fowkes for churches in Greenwich and Stanford, Connecticut, and was impressed by the company’s high level of craftsmanship and dedication to the art of organ building.

Fundraising for the new organ was initiated by a challenge grant from the late Peter T. Joseph, and the contract for Richards, Fowkes and Company’s opus 12 was signed on October 20, 1997. One year later the contract was enlarged through a generous gift by parishioner Helen H. Torrey in memory of her late husband, Henry.

By the new century, Trautman had been appointed the first full time musician since the 1990s and Christ Church had a large program including two children’s choirs, two adult choirs, a small women’s schola, and a schola to support a regular Vespers and Concert series—about 40 programs annually. The organ was dedicated in the spring of 2002 in a

series of programs: five Lenten choral vespers with recitals played by Mark Trautman, Dr. John Sheridan, Timothy W. Harrell, Hyung Jung Park, and Dr. Gwendolyn Toth; a full-length recital by Dr. Thomas Spacht of Towson University; a chamber music recital by Eugene Roan of Westminster Choir College and John Burkhalter; and a recital of improvisations by Dr. William Porter of New England Conservatory. The final concert and dedication took place on May 19, 2002, featuring the Christ Choir and Orchestra under the direction of Mark Trautman and featuring organist Dr. Antonius Bittmann Professor of Organ and University organist, Rutgers University. The organ was blessed and dedicated by the ninth bishop of New Jersey, The Right Reverend G.P. Mellick Belshaw.

The Richards, Fowkes organ is one of a handful of individually made, modern mechanical action organs in the New York-New Jersey area. Its design is based on historical principles used by modern organ builders today throughout the United States and Europe. In addition to services, it has been featured in numerous recitals and is used as the primary teaching instrument for the organ students at the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

Richards, Fowkes and Company
Ooltewah, Tennessee
Opus 12—2001

GREAT	13.	Octave 4'
1. Bourdon 16'	14.	Rohrflöte 4'
2. Principal 8'	15.	Gemshorn 2'
3. Rohrflöte 8'	16.	Nasard/Tierce 3'/II
4. Octave 4'	17.	Scharf IV
5. Spitzflöte 4'	18.	Dulcian 8'
6. Quint/Sesquialtera 3'/II		
7. Octave 2'	PEDAL	
8. Mixture V	19.	Subbaß 16'
9. Trompet 8'	20.	Octave 8'
	21.	Gedackt 8'
SWELL <i>enclosed</i>	22.	Octave 4'
10. Principal 8'	23.	Posaune 16'
<i>(in façade—tenor c)</i>	24.	Trompet 8'
11. Gedackt 8'		
12. Viol de Gamba 8'		

Couplers: Swell to Great, Swell to Pedal, Great to Pedal

Compass: Manuals, 58 notes; Pedal 30 notes

Suspended key action; Mechanical stop action.

Well tempered tuning after Kellner, 1979

The Quint/Sesquialtera and the Nasard Tierce are double-draw stops

—Mark Trautman
Director of Music, January 1, 1994-September 15, 2010