

What was I thinking?

March 14, 2021



**The pipes, the pipes are calling
(in more ways than one)**

Part I

We Presbyterians aren't really into saints, (maybe with the exception of St. Andrew), but I think it's safe to say many of us will in some way observe St. Patrick's Day next week. It probably won't have anything to do with church, it will have more to do with wearing green and possibly consuming adult beverages than it will be about honoring a saint. People in liturgical churches, especially the Catholic Church, may mark the day with religious services, and ironically Lenten restrictions on drinking alcohol are often lifted for the day. But again, it's not a Presbyterian thing in church. We will save our pipes and celebrate our Scottish Presbyterian roots in May. More about that later.

Patrick was a 5th-century missionary who worked to convert the pagan Irish to Christianity. According to tradition, he died on March 17, so we celebrate on that day. While we don't celebrate St. Patrick himself in the service, around this time, IF (and only if) it fits with the scripture and theme of the service, I try to include music and texts that give a nod to Patrick and to Ireland. This Sunday, I will play a prelude by the Irish composer, C.V. Stanford, which is actually a new piece for me. It's beautiful and I don't know why I haven't played it before. Though we're not singing the hymn, because we did so recently, I will play an offertory on the tune SLANE, known to us as *Be Thou My Vision*. We are hearing about Lazarus and the rich man, so the stanza "Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise" seems appropriate. As our benediction response, John Tsao will sing the *Prayer of St. Patrick* set to music by my friend Mark Schweizer. The postlude has an interesting story behind it, and it's based on an Irish

tune called ST. PATRICK'S BREASTPLATE (adapted by C.V. Stanford). The text, attributed to Patrick, begins:

I bind unto myself today
the strong name of the Trinity
by invocation of the same,
the Three in One and One in Three.

It's a Celtic style hymn known as a *lorica*, from the Latin word "armor" or "breastplate." It's a prayer asking for God's protection, and by doing so, we symbolically put on the armor of the Triune God. It was traditional to say a prayer while getting dressed in armor before battle. Today, we could consider this something said as we clothe and prepare ourselves to face the day, with whatever difficulties it might bring.

I've told this story before, but in a previous church (not this one!), we had a particularly grumpy choir member. At first I thought it was just me she didn't like (and she didn't like me), but it didn't seem like she liked anyone. There was always a scowl and a negative word. We all got used to it. Once in a choir rehearsal, out of nowhere, she said, "It's a tradition in this church, on the Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, for the organist to improvise a jig for the postlude." She said it without a smile and the choir and I sat in stunned silence. Was she joking? Was this some kind of challenge? We didn't know. I didn't know what else to do, so I said, "OK." I don't know that I had improvised a jig before that, but I thought if there was any chance of finding some sense of humor in this woman, I was going to do it, and I did. These were Lutherans and I didn't know if I would get in trouble with the church for doing this, but I based the jig on the tune ST. PATRICK'S BREASTPLATE just to make sure it was sacred. I don't remember if it was the woman or someone else, but afterward, someone said they didn't think I would actually go through with it. I think I've done it every year since. Hopefully I've gotten a little better at improvising jigs. I have studied jigs for organ written by Bach and other composers, so there is historical and liturgical precedence.

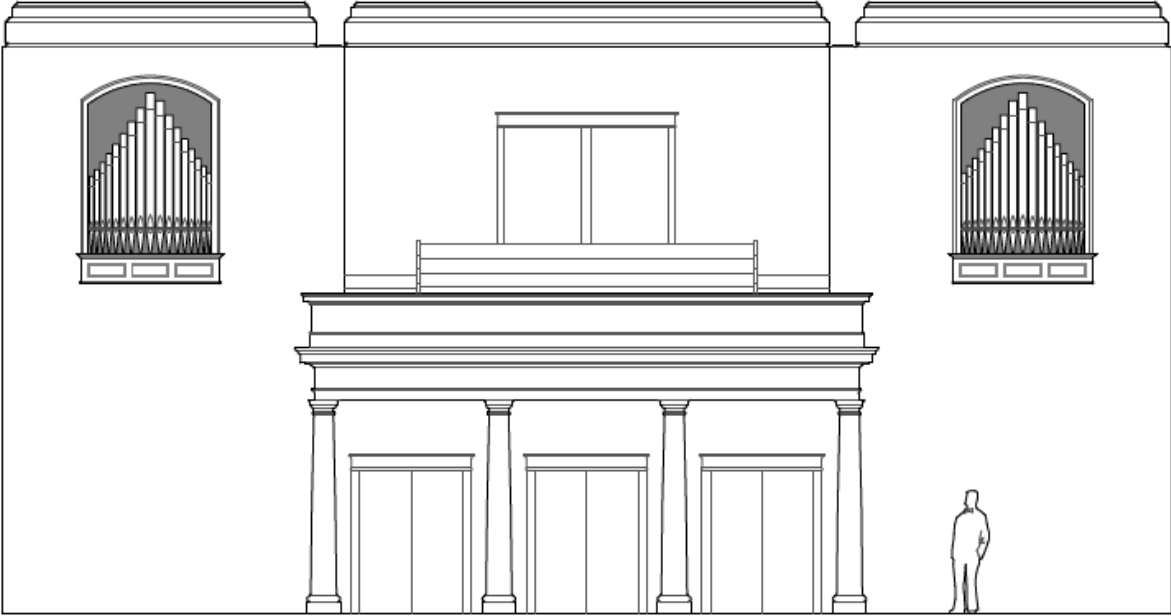
Part II

Our sense of time over this last year has been compromised, and it's been a while, so some of us may not remember we're getting an Antiphonal Organ! A what? We already have an organ. Why would we get another one? (See the Newsletter archives, June-July 2020 issue, for more information.) This new addition will be in the back of our sanctuary, so that it can be played antiphonally (back and forth) with the main organ, and it can be played coupled with the main organ, creating a kind of "surround sound." While I say "new," if you look at the picture below of our organ console, you

will see that this is something that was planned for when our organ was built and installed in 2002, so we're just finishing the original project, with the addition of one new stop and rank of pipes.

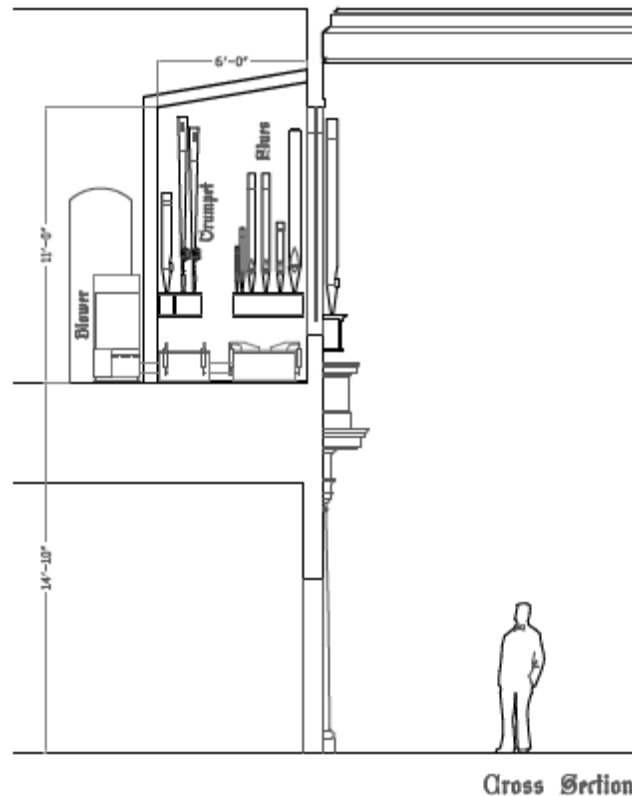


The chambers for this new addition were built by Smith Wilson and his crew over the summer. The pipes, windchests, etc. will arrive next week and installation will begin. Here is a sketch of what the Antiphonal Organ will look like:



Elevation

A side view (if we could see through walls) would look like this:



This Antiphonal Organ is being given by Dr. William E. Barry in honor of The United States Military Academy, and we are grateful to Dr. Barry for his generosity.

To clear a few things up, if you panicked when you read that we're getting an Antiphonal Organ, let me explain that our organ already has four divisions, sometimes called organs: Great Organ, Swell Organ, Choir Organ, and a Pedal Organ. Each of those is controlled by its own keyboard (or pedal board) and its own set of stops. If you look again at the earlier picture of the stops, at the top, you'll see plates that read, Great, Choir, and Antiphonal. Those are the organs or divisions. They can be played separately or coupled together. They are each like a smaller organ, but they are all built together like rooms in a house, to make up a larger organ.

Our new Antiphonal Organ will not require another keyboard to be built on, it will be made playable on any of the keyboards we already have.

As I write this, our Antiphonal Organ is loaded on a truck in Ohio and is scheduled to arrive here Monday. Once here, the experts from Schantz will unload it and begin assembling the windchests, pipe racks, and many other small mechanical and electrical

parts, connecting the wind supply to the blower motor, and connecting the electronics to the console in the choir loft (where the keyboards and stops are) making it all playable.

When will we get to hear it? I don't know yet. It will be installed the week of March 15, but once installed, it will need to sit and acclimate to our sanctuary (not an easy thing to do in with our constantly changing March weather). Experts from Schantz will come back, probably the following week, to voice (adjust the sound and loudness) and tune the new Antiphonal Organ. Hopefully, it will be playable by Palm Sunday.

Our new addition will include seven stops/ranks of pipes, including a majestic Trompette Harmonique, which I assume (judging by the spelling) will speak with a "French accent." How will that sound? I don't know yet. We'll have to see (or hear) when it gets here. Looking at a list of stops and sketches gives us an idea of what we're getting, but it's kind of like looking at a menu in a restaurant; the description and picture look good, and we might have an idea of what we're ordering, but until we taste it, we don't know for sure. So, we have good surprises in store.



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
ATHENS, GEORGIA

ADDITION TO
SCHANTZ ORGAN #2206 (2002)
SCHEME C
7 stops / 7 ranks

ANTIPHONAL ORGAN
[Unenclosed in Gallery]

1.	8'	Præstant	1-17 IN FAÇADE	61 pipes
2.	8'	Hohl Flute	1-17 IN FAÇADE	61 pipes
3.	4'	Octave		61 pipes
4.	4'	Chimney Flute		61 pipes
5.	2'	Fifteenths		61 pipes
6.	1-1/3'	Quinte		61 pipes
7.	8'	Trompette Harmonique	HIGHER PRESSURE	61 pipes
8.		ANTIPHONAL ON MANUAL I		
9.		ANTIPHONAL ON MANUAL II		
10.		ANTIPHONAL ON MANUAL III		

I admit, I'm just a little nervous about losing maybe one or two weeks of practice in our sanctuary, especially with Palm Sunday and Easter coming, but we wouldn't want things to get too easy and predictable.

Once it's in, the fun will begin:



God be with you till we meet again.

John