

The Story of EUMC's Miracle

The History: Edmonds United Methodist Church's (EUMC's) Organ Task Force has been working since 2004 to facilitate replacement of the church's aging and deteriorating organ. The Task Force had been consulting with Philipp Klais of Orgelbau Klais of Bonn, Germany (<http://www.orgelbau-klais.com>) for several years to design a spectacular new pipe organ specifically for the EUMC Sanctuary. When this proved (at the start of the economic downturn in early 2008) to be too expensive a project, the Organ Task Force and the Music and Arts Team began to think about alternative options. Recommendations came in to check the Organ Clearinghouse website (<http://www.organclearinghouse.com>) for potential used instruments, and Stephen Marshall-Ward, EUMC's Music & Arts Director did so, only to find many that simply would not work for EUMC. After a couple of weeks an instrument appeared that looked perfect. After studying the information on the website, Marshall-Ward called John Bishop, the Executive Director of Organ Clearinghouse. To his surprise, all of his questions were answered positively and the instrument seemed more and more like a possibility for EUMC.

When this information was presented to the Organ Task Force and the Music and Arts Team, they quickly decided to send Marshall-Ward and EUMC's Associate Director of Music & Arts, Wanda Griffiths, to visit Vero Beach, Florida, where the organ was still being used at The Community Church. They met The Community Church's Music Director and Organist, Jose Daniel Flores, and spent two days thoroughly studying the instrument. Simultaneously, they were communicating with Philipp Klais to garner his opinion about the instrument as well. Having spent so many years studying EUMC's space he would have valuable input into the final decision. Klais was extremely enthusiastic about the Vero Beach instrument and confident that it was a good fit for the EUMC Sanctuary.

The Gift: The organ's selling price on the Organ Clearinghouse website was \$275,000, plus the costs of dismantling, shipping, and installing it. At almost exactly the same time, the economic crisis of 2008 began. EUMC church leaders began swiftly reacting with appropriate caution regarding any large expenditures. And with pledges down for 2009, staff salary cuts and forced periods of "leave without pay," implemented, leaders were resistant to any plans for purchasing a pipe organ of any kind. The project came to a screeching halt. The Administrator of the Vero Beach church, Robert D. Neel, was completely understanding of the situation and continued to contact Marshall-Ward with the hope that something would work out before he needed to remove the organ to make room for the new one they had purchased for their new 1000-seat Sanctuary. Though they had other parties who expressed interest, it seemed most "perfect" for the Edmonds church and EUMC staff had shown the most enthusiasm, visiting and studying the instrument so thoroughly. Marshall-Ward actually said to Neel, "We just need a miracle. Otherwise, it's never going to happen."

Then, during Holy Week, 2009, Bob Neel called and asked, first, if anything had changed in EUMC's situation. When told no, he explained that the Trustees of The Community Church had decided that it would be better to gift the instrument than dismantle it and put it into storage. This, indeed, was EUMC's "miracle!"

