

Cathedral of the Sacred Heart Foundation Pipe Organ Campaign

“Sing praise to him, play music; proclaim all his wondrous deeds!” Psalm 105:2

Cathedral of the Sacred Heart’s pipe organ investment will enrich the community through inspirational music and ongoing engagement

Connecting with the Community

Great cathedrals of the world are a lasting legacy of local communities that were moved by faith to gather, worship, lead, and serve. Cathedrals serve as vital cultural and community centers. The Cathedral of the Sacred Heart has always been a beautiful and inspirational setting for worship, and a place for musicians to share their gifts.

Since its dedication in 1906, the Cathedral has enjoyed a reputation for hospitality, community service and welcoming all who seek spiritual support and growth. The Cathedral is renowned for its Italian Renaissance Revival architecture, but music has played an equally important role in distinguishing its identity. As an expression of worship, a means to celebrate and a vehicle for creative engagement with the community, the Cathedral’s beautiful acoustics and outstanding music program have inspired people from throughout the Richmond area and visitors, especially through the highly acclaimed presentation of *Music for A Cathedral Space: The E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Series*.



Artist's rendition of new gallery organ for Cathedral of the Sacred Heart

Cathedral’s Music for the Centuries ...

Music continues to play a key role in the welcoming mission of the Cathedral, which lives by the simple and heartfelt motto: “Bless us with your presence.” The original pipe organ has required many re-builds, modifications and repairs. At this point, the instrument is near the end of its useful life and requires constant maintenance to function at all. In recent years a Cathedral-commissioned organ committee evaluated the condition of this instrument, studied the cost of maintenance and repairs, and considered various options for sustaining the pipe organ. The committee engaged several respected, independent pipe organ experts to study the instrument and make recommendations. After these experts each concluded that the organ is beyond repair, the committee began to identify options for moving forward. Following a thorough analysis, the committee concluded that the organ must be replaced with a new instrument capable of serving the Cathedral and community for hundreds of years to come.

The gallery organ is patched together and many of its pipes are leaning or falling over.



A Comprehensive, Respectful and Thoughtful Process

The committee evaluated every type of organ: digital, hybrid, electric/electro-pneumatic (like the current instrument), heritage, and mechanical action. After extensive interviews with builders and experts, committee members agreed that the most prudent, responsible option is to purchase a new organ built with top-quality materials and reliable components -- and played with mechanical action, the original pipe organ technology that has proven itself for centuries.

The organ committee also investigated the possibility of acquiring a “heritage” organ from another church. This option may appear to be a cost-effective solution, but that is not always the case. While the initial purchase price of an existing organ may be lower, modifications to the instrument and renovation of the new space raise the total cost substantially.

Cathedral of the Sacred Heart is a Virginia Historic Landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The new organ, like the Cathedral, should be designed and built to last over the ages. Old-world, mechanical action organs are still functioning in 15th and 16th century churches. In fact, an organ in Sion, Switzerland at Valère Basilica is still playing and sounding the same as when it was installed ... in 1435!

After completing interviews and an evaluation of organ builders in the U.S. and abroad, the committee found an ideal partner in Juget-Sinclair Organ Builders of Montreal, Canada. This small company is noted for its well-built mechanical-action organs and the warm, pleasing sound they create.

Pipe Organs for the Gallery and the Choir

In 2018, the Foundation purchased a two-component choir organ, which will be delivered in late 2021. This smaller, complementary organ is needed for sung prayer, liturgies when attendance is small, and events when a choir is singing in the front of the Cathedral. Fundraising continues for the balance of the project. When funds have been secured for the large gallery organ, the Cathedral intends to sign a contract for that instrument in early 2020, with the anticipated delivery and installation in early 2024.

If the current gallery pipe organ becomes inoperable, the Cathedral will use the choir organ as the source of organ music until a new gallery pipe organ can be installed in the rear of the building and “voiced” (tuned) for the Cathedral space.



Juget-Sinclair's pipe organ artisans in the Montreal shop.

Funding the Pipe Organ Campaign from Multiple Sources

The Cathedral of the Sacred Heart Foundation has already secured three-quarters of the funding (\$2,325,000 of the \$3,150,000 needed) from gifts and pledges for the investment in these organs. These funds come from a bequest made by a deceased parishioner, three families that have pledged to make substantial donations, and other individuals (and families) who are excited about this project and providing lead gifts and leadership.

Although a contract to purchase the choir organ has been signed, a contract for the gallery organ will not be signed until funding is in hand or pledged. Additional major gift appeals are underway, with the aim to have the remaining funds in hand or committed by April 2020. The Cathedral of the Sacred Heart Foundation is working to be at 80% of goal by July 1 so that a broader public appeal can be launched in September.

Ongoing Commitment to The Cathedral's Mission

The Cathedral's ongoing commitment to social justice is central to its mission. The need to replace the deteriorating pipe organ is not a situation of “one or the other,” but a case of “both/and.” The Cathedral continues to serve the poor by partnering with organizations such as CARITAS, The Daily Planet, and ACTS (Area Congregations Together in Service). This pipe organ campaign is also essential for sustaining the Cathedral's role in serving and inspiring the community. The Cathedral feeds not only the body; it also feeds the soul, imagination and spirit.