

Excerpt from the Worship & Liturgy Committee report in 1991
on purchasing a Moller organ from the old Congregational Church in Sheldon.

The worship and liturgy committee has been working on an interesting and fun project, and now have some exciting news to report!

At a meeting last Spring, a motion was made to begin a search for a new organ. Soon after, Sharon Visser and Pam Van Ginkel told us about a pipe organ they had seen in Sheldon. It was located at Children's World, a daycare center located in the basement of the former Congregational Church. When the committee went to see it, the pipes were covered by insulation to protect them from extreme temperature changes since the sanctuary has been used only for storage. The organ itself was out of tune, and two of the six ranks weren't working because of broken air bladders, but considering that and the insulation, it still had a lovely sound. After getting inside the pipe case, it was obvious what fine shape the organ was in, and many were impressed with the beauty of the oak facade covering the pipes. The Moller organ was made and installed in 1949, and used for 27 years before the church disbanded. A few years ago it was appraised at between \$8,000.00 and \$12,000.00.

Next the committee contacted Kieth Gottschall of Mid States Pipe Organ Co. in Kansas City, who tunes, repairs, and rebuilds Moller organs in the upper midwest. For free of charge he looked at the organ in Sheldon, appraised it, took along the original blueprints and then came to our church. The easiest and least costly location to install the organ in our church would be the front. Once everything was measured we realized the oak facade and pipes would fit exactly into the alcove at the front of our sanctuary. Kieth later sent a letter with all of the specifications. The depth of the case is 6', width is 22'½", and height is 12'. The cross would be rehung in front of the casework. For removal, reinstallation, tone regulation and tuning they would charge \$11,700.00 (if we would help in transporting the pipes).

This information was presented to the consistory, and a few members along with the minister went to see the organ. However, the committee wanted to know what the organ would sound like with all the ranks functioning and minus the insulated covering. Some members traveled to a church in Laurel, NE to hear a 5 rank Moller. Their organist was very helpful and informative. They have had theirs for approximately 50 years and have been very pleased with it. They did have a French Trumpet rank and some couplers which gave their organ more brilliance and depth. The Sheldon organ would be "adequate" for our sanctuary, but some committee members feel as long as the organ could be purchased and installed so cheaply that it would be wise to add some ranks or couplers now, since the labor would be less costly. The committee also looked into electronic organs, with the



New pipe organ at Trinity Christian Reformed Church. (Photo by RT)

Trinity Christian Reformed installs pipe organ

Sitting in an old church in Sheldon Iowa, was a beautiful pipe organ. The Congregational congregation that had once used the organ in its services had disbanded around twenty years ago. The building was now used as a day care center. A couple of women who were at the day care center as part of a college class happened to be members of Trinity Christian Reformed Church. They told the chairman of their church's music committee, Walt Blom, about the organ. He, and an organ expert from Kansas City named Keith Gottschall went to look at the organ. Gottschall says that almost every time he makes one of these trips he ends up advising a congregation against buying the organ, usually because it won't fit properly in their church. But this time was different. "This is amazing," he said. "It will

work." Blom says, It fits about perfectly into their church. It was just a matter of moving it from one location to the other. The congregation voted to buy the organ last September, with 70 percent of the members voting to make the purchase. Actually the organ is being donated by the owners of the church building in Sheldon; the expense comes from hiring an expert to take it apart, do necessary repairs, up-grade the six rank organ to a ten rank organ, and put it back together again in its new location. That expense will come to approximately \$45,000, about a third of what it would cost brand new. In early January, Gottschall began the task of taking it apart. Members of the congregation moved it to Rock Valley in four trips with a truck. About a month later, the church began using it in their services

Gottschall loves pipe organs with a passion, and he has been working with them ever since he was about 14. In addition to studying them in school, he has apprenticed with other experts to learn his craft. He first fell in love with the music when his mom sent him to sing in the choir. That turned out to be one of first times he had heard a pipe organ being "really let out." The organist was playing Bach, and Gottschall says, "It really blew my mind." He says his work can be tedious. "Of course you have to love it" to do it, he says. He has "brought up" the volume on this organ because Reformed congregations have a reputation for singing louder than some other denominations. If you want to hear the stirring music of a pipe organ, visit this friendly congregation some Sunday morning.