

MULLER PIPE ORGAN COMPANY

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First United Methodist Church London, Ohio

**Three manuals, 25 stops, 28 ranks
1894 Johnson & Son
Rebuilt 2010**

In 1894, the seventeen rank Johnson & Son organ was installed in First United Methodist Church. The mechanical action organ faithfully served the church for sixty-five years. In 1959, the original mechanisms were completely replaced with new (electro-pneumatic action), although all original pipework was retained. At this time, the pipe façade was replaced with a brown grille cloth screen and a large, back-lit cross. In 1976, the sanctuary was redecorated, including floor to ceiling drapes to replace the brown screen covering the organ chambers. In 1988, a new 16' Trumpet and IV Mixture were added to the organ and the console was again replaced.

In the mid-1990s, plans were made to restore the sanctuary. Muller Pipe Organ was commissioned to design and build new casework, which was then handcrafted at our shop by John Muller.

The new casework is constructed of quarter-sawn white oak. The lower panels from the original Johnson & Son case (also quarter-sawn white oak) were retained. Two decorative onlays grace the case at impost level, and hand-carved oak pipe shades artistically complete the five pipe towers. The non-speaking façade pipes are made of polished zinc with Romanesque style mouths. The Swell division is covered by a clover pattern plaster grillwork, incorporating a motif found in the beams of the sanctuary. On August 25, 1996, First Church celebrated a Jubilant Consecration of their restored sanctuary and its inclusion into the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2002, the organ was completely releathered.

Most recently, as part of a Capital Improvements Project at the church, a new 4-rank Antiphonal Organ was installed to support congregational singing in the far reaches of the sanctuary, and additions and revisions were made to the chancel organ. Other work included mechanical improvements.

In the Great Organ, a 1-3/5' Tierce was added. Although it might seem an inappropriate addition to an 1894 instrument, it is interesting to note that many mixtures of this period included a Tierce rank. These mixtures often functioned as tonal “glue” to seamlessly blend reed stops with flue stops. This Tierce is voiced accordingly, although it can also function as a composed Cornet with the Great principals or flutes.

In the Swell, some stops were retrofitted with unit actions to allow appropriate borrowing. The Oboe-Bassoon and Diapason now play at 8' & 4' pitches. Also, a 1-1/3' Quint replaced the 4' Violina.

In the Pedal, the 1894 Open Diapason was a full compass of open wood pipes. While typical of the period, more definition and clarity is now generally appreciated in the treble ranges of this stop. To rectify this situation, new open metal pipes replaced the open woods from 8' C. The 16' range retains its original open wood pipes. Also, a new Trombone replaced an inadequately scaled 1980s addition.

The flues of the new Antiphonal division are treated as an unenclosed Choir. In the original Johnson & Sons organ, the Great and Swell diapasons possess similar power, so we voiced the Antiphonal principals to complement the 1894 tonal philosophy. A new, capped metal flute was chosen as the 8' foundation of the division. This pipe construction is not found elsewhere in the organ, and these pipes are voiced with color and warmth and a modest amount of articulation. The crowning glory of the instrument is the new solo Tuba. Full and round, the Tuba soars over the full organ.

The Antiphonal division is located in a small balcony that was closed off from the sanctuary in the 1950s. The space had been most recently used to house sound equipment. The room was appropriately prepared for the Antiphonal installation. Mounted on the wall in front of the chamber, the new casework was designed to match the chancel casework. Featuring duplicated onlays and hand carved pipe shades, the case was handcrafted and finished at our shop by fifth-generation Jack Muller.

A vintage, three manual console of solid mahogany was purchased to accommodate the addition of the Antiphonal division. The console cabinet was stripped, repaired, and refinished. New interior wood accents were constructed of mahogany, and the retained keyboards were completely restored. The operating system was updated to solid state. Minor mechanical improvements included rewiring the entire organ and replacing the 1980s flexible windline with rigid, metal line.

A testament to the faithfulness of this congregation, it is fitting that the program for the Concert of Celebration for the completion of the Capital Improvements Project concludes with Ezra 7:27:

Praise be to the Lord, the God of our fathers, who has put it into our hearts to bring beauty to the house of the Lord.