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Business carbon impact worksheet Household carbon impact worksheet

Sections

News
Editorial
Columns
Feature
Arts & Leisure
Outdoors
Sports
Obituaries
Photo Gallery
Classifieds

Directories

Government
Calendar
Links

TRR

About us
Supplements
Archives
Advertising
Photo Reprints
Subscribe
Newsstands
Contact us

Submission

Press release
Event
Classified ad

Amphibian

Amphibian
online

arts&leisure

A joyful noise unto the Lord

Many hearts and hands join to bring a Christmas gift to St. James

CALLICOON, NY — Just in time for Christmas, a “new” organ has been delivered to St. James Episcopal Church in Callicoon. The instrument is a Vocalion, considered by some to be the Rolls Royce of reed organs, built in 1898. It was meticulously restored over the past year by the Paul Carey Organ Company of Troy.

The organ has been a long time coming—over seven years since it was first decided that something had to be done about the old organ, which was found to be in such bad condition it was not worth repairing. The process of replacing the old organ ensued, led by then-St. James music director and liturgist Susan Treanor, aided and abetted by vestry member Nellie Burnham and the Reverend Joan LaLiberte. No longer living in the area, Treanor is now a student at General Theological Seminary. She returns to St. James as guest organist this Christmas Eve.

The team researched and led efforts to find just the right instrument for a small church with extraordinary acoustics. At one time it had been hoped that the Vocalion would be in place as early as last Easter, but restoration took longer than expected. The December delivery date, however, makes it the perfect Christmas present for the church.

“For a small church like ours, this is a huge undertaking,” said Mother Joan. It was an undertaking that included the efforts and goodwill of many people, including donations from parishioners and friends, fundraising events and a grant from the Bernice Gould Memorial Fund. Radio station WJFF FM also provided help, by lending recording equipment that was used to record the Vocalion’s sound and bring it back for the congregation to hear before they made the decision to purchase.

Another good neighbor that played a key role in bringing the organ to the church was the Delaware Valley Job Corps. Material handling instructor Thomas White and students Nia Tillman, Natasha Walls, Joshua Nunez, Eric Holder and Tomeshia Rivers worked for two days under the direction of Paul Carey and Peter O’Hearn of the Carey Organ Company to help bring in and install the organ.

“I cannot praise these young people highly enough,” said Mother Joan. “They’re intelligent, hard workers, and they were essential in getting this organ together. Tom White was the perfect supervisor, a very hands-on one. He led the way and had a great sense of humor.”



Contributed photo by Joan LaLiberte

Paul Hran of Carey Organ Company, left, and Eric Holder, material handling instructor Thomas White and Joshua Nunez, all of the Delaware Valley Job Corps in Callicoon, NY, move the pedalboard of a Vocalion organ into St. James Episcopal Church in Callicoon. The generous help of the Job Corps personnel was key in the final step of getting the organ installed. (Click for larger version)



Contributed photo by Joan LaLiberte

Peter O’Hearn, left, and Paul Carey of Carey Organ Company, Troy NY, assemble the 1898 Vocalion tracker organ at St. James’ Episcopal Church. (Click for larger version)



Contributed photo by Joan LaLiberte

Paul Carey connecting trackers on the Vocalion (Click for larger version)

Invented in England, the Vocation was introduced to America in 1885 and produced here until about 1910. It differs from traditional reed organs, operating on pressure rather than suction, and is characterized by enlarged tone and excellent pitch. It has the appearance of a small pipe organ.

The public is invited to hear the Vocation at St. James each Sunday morning at 10:30 a.m. On Christmas Eve, there will be a carol sing beginning at 7:00 p.m., followed by Holy Eucharist at 7:30. St. James is located on Route 17B, across from Roche's Garage.

For more information call 845/887-4742 or 887-5454.



Contributed photo by Joan LaLiberte

Delaware Valley Job Corps students Eric Holder (left), Joshua Nunez, Natasha Walls and Nia Tallman connect trackers on the 1898 Vocation organ at St. James' Episcopal Church in Callicoon. (Click for larger version)

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