

## ❖ Organ Committees and Consultants ❖

**Presented by Scott R. Riedel**

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**For The National Conference on Worship, Music & the Arts of  
The Commission on Worship of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod**

1. Purchasing an Organ
  - a. Establish criteria/requirements (musical, acoustical, spatial-architectural, visual, workmanship-durability-longevity, value-cost)
  - b. Understand all options
  - c. Inspect & hear options
  - d. Weigh options against criteria/requirements
  - e. Identify "preferred" organbuilder candidates
  - f. Submit "Functional Needs List" or "Specification/Requirements" to organbuilder candidates
  - g. Submit church photos/drawings to organbuilder candidates
  - h. Meet with organbuilder candidates
  - i. Receive/evaluate proposals/prices from organbuilder candidates
  - j. Select organbuilder and final specification
  - k. Communicate with congregation throughout
  - l. Develop fundraising plan
  - m. Presentation for approval to purchase from congregation
  - n. Contract for purchase of organ
  - o. Site preparations/installation coordination
  - p. Approval/acceptance of finished instrument
  
2. Why a consultant?
  - a. Experienced in process.
  - b. Source of technical information.
  - c. Source of musical information.
  - d. Objective appraisal of needs.
  - e. Independent from sales.
  - f. "Up-to-date" resource.
  - g. Comprehensive knowledge of options/possibilities/limitations.
  - h. Advocate for the church's interests.
  - i. Inspects on behalf of church.
  - j. Saves time of staff/committee members.
  - k. Saves money.
  
3. Who are consultants?
  - a. Independent Professionals
  - b. Music teachers/professors
  - c. Recitalists/performers
  - d. Organbuilders
  - e. Clergy

4. What are the qualifications of a consultant?
  - a. Play the organ
  - b. Understand registration
  - c. Practicing church musician or recitalist
  - d. Understand organ mechanisms
  - e. Knowledge of materials
  - f. Knowledge of architecture
  - g. Knowledge of acoustical science
  - h. Independence from sales representation
  
5. How to select a consultant?
  - a. Check references
  - b. Fair fee/payment arrangement
  - c. Broad base of experience
  - d. Broad variety/creativity in previous projects
  - e. Availability/Responsiveness
  - f. Trust/Confidence
  
6. General notes on organ projects
  - a. The organ has the potential to be the largest and most expensive furnishing in the church. It has the potential to serve the church from 20 to 100 years. Unless a church staff or congregation member has recent experience in the process of purchasing an organ, outside advice is warranted.
  - b. "Consumer Reports" advises against purchases based on price primarily.
  - c. In close budget situations, it is generally advisable to purchase *a smaller instrument of greater quality* instead of *a larger instrument of lesser quality*.
  - d. Don't presume what organ prices are.
  - e. Don't underestimate your ability to raise funds.
  - f. Don't expect a consultant to simply "rubber stamp" your previous decisions.
  - g. Plan schedules and meetings as far in advance as possible.
  - h. Keep constant communication with the congregation about committee progress.