

Date of Hire: Saturday 1 December 2018

JOB SATISFACTION

What do you like most about your position as Church Musician at New Hope Lutheran Church? And/or what is most energizing?

The facility is of high quality. The organ is a treasure of an instrument. The two operate in balance very well.

I have found the congregation to be receptive to what I have offered on the organ as well as on the piano. They have also shown their receptivity to a wide range of compositions including my arrangements and original works. They have shown to me their willingness to open horizons.

As primarily a composer, this is very stimulating, enriching and, of course energizing.

What is the most difficult or most challenging?

My skills on all the instruments need continual practice and improvement. I've found the responsiveness to my needs in improving or changing things to be timely and supportive. For example, the improvement to the organ bench by providing a heel bar was carried out quickly and well. Having things set up for rehearsals has always been met with speed and results.

My computer where I have stored and scanned music, is showing age. My challenge is to stay ahead of that and make sure that there is a backup plan in case of its failure.

All situations where there is live music has an element of unpredictability that comes with the moment. In that regard, I work hard to plan ahead as much as possible so as to accommodate those possibilities that emerge.

ANALYSIS OF STRENGTHS

Please provide a summary of your strengths. Is there a way we can make better use of your strengths?

My theory and compositional skills are those musical attributes that I have worked hard on being in the forefront of what I can offer. I can arrange and adapt to the abilities of those who have talents to share at all ability levels.

Part of this is the ability to transpose, edit and create for each individual member of the congregation willing to contribute to the worship experience by showcasing their talents as they can be best presented.

Time is my constant detractor. Preparation is necessary and planning as far ahead as possible is a major challenge.

SUGGESTIONS

If you could change one thing about your experience at New Hope, what would it be and why?

Being in the position for two months makes it very difficult to answer this in an effective way. I am just getting to know the membership and there is much there to glean. I have no grip on the skills and

abilities of those that can be resources, other than information shared after the fact, which can be disconcerting. I think that will improve as time passes.

GOALS/ACTION PLAN

What is/are your work-related goal(s) for the upcoming year? How do you see these goals being accomplished, e.g., plan of action?

I have a programming goal with the hymnal in adding the introductions and re-harmonizations that have been created for both the piano and organ by Augsburg in connection with the Evangelical Book of Worship. Although they are not all appropriate, having a plan for their utilization and use by the congregation would support the text understandings under which they were drafted and created.

My last position involved our expansion into the singing of the psalmody. That was enhanced by the projection of the material on a screen. Although I would like to pursue this, the only way presently I see it is to print the individual psalm of the day in the bulletin as an insert. This is an admirable goal but one I'm not pushing very strongly.

I would like to see more of the facility and its instruments contributing to the musical community of Great Falls. For example, an Advent or Lenten luncheon recital series utilizing various organists from the area. Audience development is a key to this. I believe that could be accomplished for the 2019-2020 season.

I would like to also expand the educational exposure of major works to the congregation with possibly presenting such a composition once a month beginning 15 minutes before the service time. That will also take some re-direction of current practices of congregational socialization.

Planning is an issue so that quality materials can be prepared and presented, not only for myself as the church musician, but for those who could contribute to the musical life of all.

Communicating with the loft is an issue I'd like to address in the next few months. A wireless light with a remote would be a good way of indicating when the ushers have concluded their offering duties and to move on to the next segment of the service.

There is an awkwardness in receiving the elements that I need to think through as well.

OTHER COMMENTS:

I have found the quality of materials utilized by the congregation, the other staff members and presentation groups to be of high quality and respectful. Outreach is necessary. Making the good things known is a challenge but can be a way of improving community connection and valuing of what New Hope has to offer to all.

James F. Rickley

