

Musician reflects on lost organ

TOPEKA (AP) — Donna Osborne can feel the organ, still. Oh, how she felt honored to walk into the loft at St. David's Episcopal Church and slide onto the bench. Pipes rose around her as if she sat in a redwood forest. She would lay a finger to a key, a slider would release, air would rush through the parts — no electric organ here — and spill out the top.

Ah, music. "As an organist, you're so intimate with the instrument — there's a relationship there," she said.

Osborne had to say goodbye to that relationship when St. David's was hit by arson on Nov. 10. The organ was destroyed in the fire. The instrument, a one-of-a-kind for the area when it was built, was a defining feature of the church. It was a conduit for God for some, a friend to others like Osborne.

"It was certainly a pride of the parish," said Father Don Davidson, the church's rector.

Hellmuth Wolff had been in the organ business for nearly 30 years before starting on St. David's piece. He started with an apprenticeship in 1953 in Switzerland and worked in different European countries before opening his own business in Montreal in 1968.

He had met the organist for the church in Austin back in 1962, and when St. David's wanted an organ in 1980, church members went to Wolff.

The Industrial Revolution had brought electric organs into vogue, but mechanical organs, or tracker action organs, where a series of rods and wooden pieces actually produce the notes, made a resurgence after World War II.

For a full year, Wolff and four others labored on the mechanized organ, pouring more than 6,000 hours of work into the instrument. After building it in their Montreal shop, they dismantled it and drove it down to Topeka.

There, the pieces nearly took up the sanctuary as workers spent four weeks installing it.

When finished, St. David's organist at the time, Robert Danes, played a recital of Bach to initiate the instrument. Without the carpet the church now has, the notes reverberated through the hall.

At the time, there wasn't a mechanized organ like it for more than 600 miles.

Last year marked the 26th anniversary of the organ at St. David's. Davidson, the church's rector, said they had planned on a recital to honor the instrument, but ar-

sonists had other plans.

The fire was set in the early-morning hours of Nov. 10. Osborne remembers watching the flames spit through the roof.

She remembered her audition for the position two years prior, having the wow reaction to the pipes reaching skyward.

"I really had to go through a grief process," she said about the fire's aftermath. "It was a shock. 'How could this be?' I thought. Who could possibly understand this?"

Sylvia Hamilton understands what Osborne means. She was the organist at St. David's from 1987 to 2004 and felt that relationship with the instrument.

"It was the heart of the liturgy," she said. "It led the congregational singing. It was just such a presence in the church."

Talk of relationships and intimacy stems from the personification of the instrument. Organists will say the pipes "breathe." The organ has a "voice." It can "sing."

"A tracker organ is especially sensitive to how you release the key," Hamilton said. "You can make it light and intimate, or it can be filled with fire."

Now what?

As the resurgence in tracker-action organs swept across the Plains, St. David's organ was long ago joined by other similar instruments. Wichita State University has one.

The University of Kansas has a Wolff creation as well. The Kansas City area has a couple of mechanized organs.

But the church that started it all in the area might not have one again.

Davidson said they received a bid for rebuilding from Wolff, but Davidson isn't sure if the church will go with a mechanized organ.

"It's very important to have an instrument of note," Davidson said. "We just don't know what that will be."

Wolff said the instrument he built in 1980 cost \$125,000. He said that price would be much higher now.

Another concern is as churches shift to more and more contemporary music, the organ's place in church isn't as secure as it once was.

"How does an organ like that fit into evolving musical styles?" asked Hamilton.

But Davidson said people shouldn't worry too much.

"There's still a world of people out there who want to keep an ear to the classics," he said.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Thomas County Commissioner Ken Christiansen, standing, took ballots from fair board members Mark Anderson, left, Clair Schrock and Justin Alexander as they voted for a vice-presi-

dent during the fair board meeting Thursday. Mark Anderson was elected as the board president and Darrel Dible was voted vice-president.



Worship in the church of your choice this weekend.



CHURCH OF CHRIST, 510 E. 4th, Jay Kelley, minister, Sunday Bible Study 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m., Sunday Eve. Worship 6:00 p.m., Wednesday, Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

Schedule of church services

ASCENSION-ON-THE-PRAIRIE EPISCOPAL, Rev. Don Martin, College Drive & Wheatridge Rd., 462-3041, Holy Eucharist, 9:00 a.m. every Sunday. Evening Prayer, 5:15 p.m. Wednesday, September through May. Christian Education for Youth, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, September through May

COLLEGE DRIVE ASSEMBLY OF GOD, Pastor, Jeremy Gundling, 245 W. College Dr. - 462-8234, Early Service - 8:00 a.m.; Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Morning Worship - 10:45 a.m.

BEREAN CHURCH, 1000 S. Franklin, 460-2763, www.colbyborean.com; Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship 10:45 a.m. Awana Clubs, Wednesday, 7 p.m., Middle & High School, Wednesday, 7 p.m. @ the Heartland Christian School Gym

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, Rev. Carroll H. Morony, Grant & Webster Street, 462-2867. Sunday School 9:15 a.m., Morning Worship 10:30 a.m.

COLLEGE VIEW BAPTIST CHURCH (SBC), Pastor Tom Huffman, 1185 Wheatridge Rd. at College Drive, 460-7144, Sunday Bible Study 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship services, 10:45 a.m.

MINGO BIBLE CHURCH, 420 Main Mingo, 785-462-2992: An independent community church served by Village Missions Pastor Chris Shubert. Sunday School: 9:30AM - all ages. Sunday Services: 10:45AM. Sunday Nights: 1st Sunday of the month: potluck following morning service - no evening service; 2nd Sunday: services at 6:30 PM; 3rd Sunday: informal fellowship - bring a snack to share!; 4th and 5th Sunday: services at 6:30 p.m.

SACRED HEART CATHOLIC, 462-2179, Father Dana Clark, Pastor, Saturday Eve. Mass 5:30 p.m., Sunday Masses 8:00 & 10:00 a.m., Confessions will be heard Saturday 4:30-5:05 p.m. and from 7:30-7:45 a.m. and 9:25-9:40 a.m. on Sunday.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Rev. Carol Rahn, 515 W. 4th, 462-6342, Worship, 11:00 a.m.

WESLEYAN CHURCH, 320 W. Pine - 462-8391, Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship 10:40 a.m., Sunday Evening Cell groups at 6:00 p.m., Wednesday Youth Ministries, Kids Clubhouse 7 p.m.

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS, 1145 S. Franklin - 460-6605, President Gary Slavens, 460-2656; Rocky Robbins, 1st counselor, 460-1101; Tim Wilson, 2nd counselor, 785-846-7796. Sacrament meeting 10 a.m., Sunday School and Primary 11:20 a.m., Priesthood, Relief Society, YM/YW, 12:10 p.m.; Family History Center open to public, 7-9 p.m. Thursdays or by appointment. Call 462-3571.

COLBY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, Rev. James Mardock, pastor, 950 S. Franklin, 462-6521, Sunday Worship Services at 8:30 and 11:00 a.m., 6:30 p.m., Fellowship coffee 9:30 a.m., Sunday School, 9:45 a.m., KXXX broadcasts 11:00 worship. http://www.gbgm-umc.org/colby-umc/

REDEEMING LOVE MINISTRIES, INC., 345 N. Franklin, Dr. W.G. and Rev. Orvella Romine, Saturday Evening 7p.m. Worship, Equipping Class, Sunday, 10a.m., Sunday worship, 11a.m., Wednesday, R.L.M Training Centers (Bible School), 7p.m.

CHURCH OF CHRIST, 510 E. 4th, Jay Kelley, minister, Sunday Bible Study 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m., Sunday Eve. Worship 6:00 p.m., Wednesday, Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

COLBY EVANGELISM CENTER, Rev. Robert Cooper, 815 West 3rd - 462-2062, Sunday School 9:45; Sunday service 10:00 and 6:30 p.m.; Wednesday Bible Study 6:30 p.m.; Friday Youth Power Hour at 7:00 p.m.

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, (Disciples of Christ), Pastor Bradley L. Herndon, 385 W. 3rd - 460-2718, Sunday Morning Worship at 9:00 a.m.; Sunday School at 10:30 a.m. E-mail: fccolby@st-tel.net

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH, Rev. John L. Schmidt, East 5th & Country Club, 462-3497, Services, Sat., 5:30 p.m., Sunday; Sunday School and Adult Bible Class 9:15 a.m.; Services, 10:30 a.m. Visit us at www.trinitycolby.com

OUR SAVIORS LUTHERAN CHURCH, Brewster, Sunday worship 9:00 a.m.; 2nd Sunday of the month at 8:00 a.m.

PLEASANT HOME CHURCH, Pastor, Charlie Busch, 694-2242, 3190 Road 70, Edson, Worship, 9:00 a.m., Sunday School 10:00 a.m., Evening service, 6:00 p.m.

LEVANT COMMUNITY CHURCH, 205 1st St., Pastor Jerry Vincent, 586-2376, Sunday School (classes for 3 years & up and 3 adult classes) 9:30 a.m., Morning worship 10:30 a.m.

WINONA METHODIST CHURCH, Rev. Sheryl Johnson, Sunday School, 10:30 a.m., Morning Worship 9:15 a.m. (CDT)

BREWSTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, PO Box 250, Brewster. Pastor Dorine Chambers, 785-462-6044, Sunday School: 9:45 a.m.; Worship Service, 10:45 a.m.

THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF, REXFORD, Joan Dingwerth, Director, 687-2565

REXFORD COMMUNITY CHURCH, Rexford, Pastor Lane Purcell, 687-3305, Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

BREWSTER COMMUNITY CHURCH, Mike Pinkelman, Pastor, Brewster - 694-2720, Sunday School (all ages) 9:30 a.m., Worship Service 10:30 a.m., Bible Study 7:00 p.m., Wed. mornings 6:30 a.m. - Men's Bible Study, Wed. 7:00 p.m. - Children's Ministries (Royal Rangers/Missionettes), Wed. 7:15 p.m. - Intercersory & Prayer, Thurs. 4:00 p.m. - Women's Bible Study

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