

Free concert will showcase St. Mark's organ, organist

Tim Bibelheimer's concert shows organ music is anything but dull

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St. Mark Lutheran Church organ: Tim Bibelheimer plays the organ at St. Mark Lutheran Church in Salem on Wednesday, Nov. 28, 2012.

Written by **Barbara Curtin**
Statesman Journal

The organ at St. Mark Lutheran Church has an extraordinary sound, and its ranks of graduated pipes resemble a work of art.

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Guests will have a chance to enjoy both at Friday's Advent Concert by Tim Bibelheimer, who just celebrated his 20th anniversary as the church's organist.

"Our world is so hectic and unsure and constantly changing," said Bibelheimer one late afternoon in the quiet church. "I want to give (visitors) a sense of something that is stable and unchanging, something that is good that they can take with them. We don't get that much any more.

"I think that is something that people of any faith or walk of life can take with them."



Appearing with him will be Judith Linder, lyric soprano and church choir director; Marjory Lange, violin/viola; and Brett Randolph, trumpet.

The program will include classical works (J.S. Bach's "Sleepers Wake" and Ralph

Tim Bibelheimer plays the organ at St. Mark Lutheran Church in Salem on Wednesday, Nov. 28, 2012.



Tim Bibelheimer plays the organ at St. Mark Lutheran Church in Salem. / DANIELLE PETERSON / Statesman Journal

At a glance

What: Advent Concert 2012 by Tim Bibelheimer

When: 7 p.m. Friday

Where: St. Mark Lutheran Church, 790 Marion St. NE

Admission: Free, but any donations will go to repair a bell in the church's bell tower

Dinner: The church's Adventfest dinner, featuring Scandinavian meatballs with all the trimmings, starts at 5 p.m. Dinner tickets are \$5 for adults, \$3 for children ages 3 to 10, available in advance at the church office

Information: (503) 588-0141

St. Mark organ

The first pipe organ of Saint Mark Lutheran church was a 1913 Emmons Howard tracker instrument, originally built for the First Presbyterian Church in Salem. The organ builder Balcom and Vaughn made substantial changes to the organ, enlarging it to three manuals in 1951.

In 1981, the pipe organ was replaced with a new pipe organ of American Classic design by the Schantz Organ Company. The pipe organ was a large two-manual instrument of 38 ranks.

In 1999, the Schantz Organ Company completed a significant enlargement project, including re-voicing the Great division, a new three-manual console, Choir and Antiphonal divisions, with a total of 57 ranks.

In 2009, organ builder Lanny Hochhalter was commissioned to design and install the Herald Trumpet set of pipes, to be included in the Antiphonal division on the gallery rail. The pipe organ is now 58 ranks, five divisions.

— From the church's website

Vaughan Williams' Fantasia on "Greensleeves"), contemporary ones (Diane Bish's "O Come, Little Children") and favorite carols and hymns.

When Bibelheimer, 51, sits down at the church's organ, it's clear that neither organist nor instrument is run-of-the-mill.

He started piano lessons as a kid in Salem. "My mom required four years of piano, and then we could quit," he said — but young Tim never looked back.

He began playing the organ in church at age 14. After graduating from McNary High School, he went on to study business at Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa, Idaho.

By day, he works as a claims analyst in Portland. He plays organ on Sundays and festivals at St. Mark.

The advent concert got its start when Tim invited work colleagues to an informal recital. He wanted to quash their preconceptions that organ music was dull.

The tradition has grown over the years, until he now plays for packed houses.

A well-funded renovation in 1999 added more ranks of pipes and another console to the organ. The balcony gained an antiphonal division, making back-and-forth effects possible. Additional work fixed the organ's tendency to overwhelm a choir.

"I got to design the entire instrument the way I wanted to," he said. "You never get the chance to do that."

Now Bibelheimer can create sounds as soft as a whisper. He can make towering chords that rumble the pews and quicken heartbeats. He can add an over-the-top effect, the ringing bells of the zimbelstern, to turn joyful music into outright jubilation.

"I love to play the organ," he said. "I love the ability to reach people through their heart and soul through music. This organ does it so well. It soothes the inner being."