Assessing our options regarding our Organ

# Current Situation:

The current organ at St. John Lutheran Church is failing, leading to frequent breakdowns and increasing maintenance costs. This situation compromises the quality of music during services and events.

1. **Immediate Problems:**
   * **Pedalboard Issues:**
     + Solder joints on the pedalboard frequently break, leading to dead notes.
     + Options:
       - Rebuild the pedalboard ($5,000-$7,000)
       - Install a new pedalboard with better design ($5,000-$7,000)
   * **8' Trumpet Stop (Reed Pipes):**
     + Dirty and out of regulation, leading to tuning issues and uneven sound.
     + Repair cost: $6,000-$7,000
   * **Neoprene Gaskets on Windchest Bottom Boards:**
     + Failing, causing wind noise and potential drop in wind pressure affecting tuning.
     + Repair cost: $6,000-$8,000
   * **Wooden Pipe Stoppers:**
     + Seals are loose, causing quick tuning loss.
     + Repair cost: $4,000-$5,000
   * **Direct Electric Magnet Valves:**
     + Can "sag" out of field, causing random dead notes.
     + Repair involves significant disassembly, time-consuming.
     + Cost ???
2. **Less Immediate Issues:**
   * **Mechanical-Electric Switching System:**
     + Switch contacts corrode over time and might need replacement.
     + Options:
       - Clean current contacts (already done partially)
       - Replace with a solid-state system ($45,000-$80,000)
   * **Tonal Finishing (Voicing):**
     + The organ's sound can be refined to remove scratchiness and improve pipe speech.
     + Cost for tonal finishing: $6,000-$8,000
   * **Dust Accumulation in the Organ:**
     + Over time, dust affects pipe speech and tuning.
     + Cleaning involves removing all pipes for cleaning ($20,000-$30,000)
     + Must be done under organbuilder supervision to avoid damage.

# Solution Options:

1. Do Nothing - Use What We Have
   * Pros:
     + No immediate financial outlay, preserving funds for other church needs.
   * Cons:
     + Stress for accompanists due to unpredictable operability of the organ.
     + Possible emotional attachment to an organ that is no longer functioning optimally, leading to dissatisfaction or nostalgia.
     + Ongoing concern about when the organ might completely fail.
     + Sends a message that worship isn’t important.
2. Fix the Organ
   * Pros:
     + Emotional satisfaction in preserving a piece of church history.
     + Continuity of sound and feel that the congregation may be accustomed to, fostering a sense of comfort and tradition.
   * Cons:
     + Expensive: $100,000-$145,000+
     + Any repairs would not necessarily be guaranteed
     + Potential disappointment if the organ does not return to its former glory or requires frequent future maintenance.
     + Financial stress due to the possibly high and unpredictable cost of repairs.
3. Replace the Organ
   * Pros:
     + Intangible Benefits:
       - Peace of mind with reliable technology, reducing stress during services.
       - Excitement and enthusiasm about new capabilities for musical expression, possibly revitalizing the music ministry.
       - Sense of progress and modernization while maintaining traditional worship, which can be inspirational for the congregation, particularly younger members.
     + Tangible Benefits:
       - Modern technology offers consistent performance and sound quality.
       - Lower long-term maintenance costs compared to traditional organs.
       - Rodgers Organ Company is known for quality digital organs that mimic the sound of pipe organs.
       - Features like MIDI, recording capabilities, and various sound options for different musical needs.
       - Local (Stevens Point) technician
   * Cons:
     + Intangible Drawbacks:
       - Potential mourning or resistance to change from those emotionally attached to the old organ.
       - A sense of loss of historical authenticity if the current organ has sentimental or historical value.
       - Adjustment period for organists and congregation, which might cause temporary discomfort or dissatisfaction.
     + Tangible Drawbacks:
       - Initial investment can be significant, though potentially less than extensive repairs.
       - Adjustment period for organists accustomed to mechanical organs.

# Reviewing Two Models:

Rodgers Organ company presented the church with a very detailed proposal. We attempted to contact other organ builders who were less responsive. While Rodgers has a wide line of organs, the two that seemed to fit our needs most were the Inspire 343 and Imagine 359T. The prices below reflect 2024 prices and are expected to increase 3-5% in 2025.

1. Rodgers Inspire 343 - Priced at $76,700\*
   * Features:
     + 43 plus 8 Orchestral Stops
     + 223 total Voices
     + Black and White LCD Display
   * This organ meets our needs. The Inspire line is the base line. It doesn’t have additional features that the Imagine and Infinity lines have.
2. Rodgers Imagine 359T - Priced at $88,500\*
   * Features:
     + 59 (including 8 Library) stops
     + 331 total voices
     + 88 Voices in Built in Organ Library
     + “Next piston”
     + Wireless controller – remote playback of hymns and other onboard music.
   * This organ presents a substantial upgrade with additional features for both the organist and the congregation.

# Next steps

The Church Council will meet and discuss our options and present the voters with a proposal that includes a course of action, timeline, and financing. The voters will consider their proposal at the January voters’ meeting.