



KERRY JAMISON/AMERICAN PRESS

First United Methodist Church music director and organist, Marlene Mullenix, says that music is the focal point of Sunday worship and the church's eight choirs. During the recent church renovations the organ was also upgraded with computers and a synthesizer.

Church's pipe organ is one of only six like it in the U.S.

Thanks to the marvels of modern technology the 1964 Schantz Pipe Organ at the First United Methodist Church is one of only six such computerized organs in the U.S.

Earlier this year the organ console was trucked to the Peterson Organ Factory in Chicago where it was gutted of its mechanical and pneumatic controls. Solid state circuitry was installed, along with a Peterson Orga-Plex system, an SC-55 Sound Canvas and an MSP-1000 synthesizer. These modern additions give the instrument what church music director and organist Marlene Mullenix calls "a palette of electronically produced voices."

"This pipe organ has 39 ranks (complete sets) of pipes, totaling 2,290 pipes," Mullenix said. "Pipe organs have always been mechanical, very traditional instruments. But this organ now has a contemporary personality to complement its original glorious sound."

"The MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) is a lan-

guage for electronic instruments. It gives the organ 128 basic voices, from bird calls to the sound of ocean waves. In between are an incredible array of percussion sounds from timpani and tubular bells to strings, woodwinds, brass, harpsichord and various forms of guitars. The possibilities are endless. Hymns can truly be brought to life."

Mullenix and pipe organ specialist J. Adrian Cook have been working on the reinstallation for several weeks. Cook, who now lives in Thibodaux, brought several people over from his home in England to assist in two weeks of "revoicing" the organ's 2,000-plus pipes and reeds.

"We had to treat the sanctuary acoustically," Cook said. "A number of changes were made in the ceiling and a new slate floor was put in to help with the sound of the organ."

Cook, a native of Stockton-on-Tees, northwest of London, moved to the U.S. in 1983. He

recently sold his organ shop and business in England. Cook said the Peterson Factory, where the organ work was done, is considered the "Rolls Royce" of organ manufacturers.

Mullenix is a native of Calgary, Canada, and has an Associate diploma in piano from the Royal Conservatory of Music at the University of Toronto, and a Master of Music degree from Rice University in Houston, Texas. She has been Music Director and Organist at the First United Methodist Church of Lake Charles since 1989.