

## **An Appreciation of Gregory Eaton**

By Jacqueline de Weever

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On April 2, 2014, our Rector, the Reverend John E. Denaro announced that because of budget constraints, our wonderful organist Gregory Eaton would be leaving the parish on June 30. Although many of us, the parishioners, knew that our finances are strained, we could not really anticipate this news. Difficult as it is to absorb and accept, such is the case. This short appreciation cannot hope to express all the feelings, emotions and deep sense of loss that many of us feel simply because Gregory has been so intimately bound up with our parish life.

Gregory Eaton came to St. Ann & the Holy Trinity in 1993 as Director of Music and Organist. Gregory quickly realized that serious efforts at restoration of the landmark E.M. Skinner organ, numbered Opus 524 and a gift to the church in 1925, were absolutely required. Over the years, Gregory has raised thousands of dollars and secured the philanthropy of the late Dr. Robert Vadheim and very many others, whose names were always printed on a program's last page. I cannot say how very much this restoration has added to the beauty of our Sunday services for which music is an integral part and how great is our debt to Gregory for his efforts. In addition, he has played multiple concerts, including four with the theme title "Raise-the-Roof" to restore the north- and south-side aisle roofs.

Gregory's repertoire spans the ages, from medieval to modern, from Palestrina to Scott Joplin, and the great organ masters from every century, and he has had special care for the choir. Members of the choir absolutely love singing for him; patient and encouraging as he is, he gets the best from everyone. Such devotion makes our most sacred services, Holy Week and Easter, very special experiences. Gregory paid special attention to liturgical seasons as every organist would: a special string quartet for Christmas Eve, trumpets for Easter, and he did not forget secular Halloween when he played a concert of "spooky, eerie, scary pipes," calling himself the Undead Organist. Sometimes there were tambourines and light drums. Our newsletter, *The Good News*, usually carried a column from him, "Notes from the Console." Our May 19, 2013, issue also included a moving essay by a new alto member, AC Haley, telling how Gregory welcomed her warmly, describing the loving way he rehearsed the choir.

Usually, at the end of a concert, Gregory would invite the audience to go up to the organ loft and get a view of the instrument. This year, on April 1 and 2, students from Public School 40 in Manhattan paid visits, had a chance to play a few keys and learn something about organs from Gregory, elegant as always in his signature bowtie.

We must add to this our appreciation for Gregory's work as Parish Administrator, scheduling the many ensembles who like to use our sanctuary because of its wonderful acoustics, and recall those times when he was our rock of Gibraltar, grounding us through troubled seasons, very often without our being conscious of his stabilizing work.

Gregory's commitment to the parish and its history made him a church historian, especially concerning the glorious Bolton windows. He has compiled a record of the windows with their

history at his own expense, available whenever the parish takes part in the New York State Open House Exhibitions of Sacred Sites. After 21 years of such close relationships with parishioners, strangers and new audiences, this is a very painful moment for all of us. His final concert on Sunday, June 15, at 7:00 PM, will give us all an opportunity to wish him our very best in his future endeavors.