

About John Kemp...

Of the legendary Kemp family of musicians, John's parents John and Helen Kemp lead the sacred music program at Westminster Choir College, Princeton, NJ for two separate tenures. In between for nearly 20 years, they built an exemplary choral program at First Presbyterian Church, Oklahoma City, where John grew up. Both his parents were founding members of the Choristers Guild, which was founded based on the systematic development of Christian character and formation in youth through the medium of a church's children's choir. Simply put, John and Helen Kemp set the standard in American church music and children's choir education in the second half of the 20th century. Additionally, all of John's siblings followed in their footsteps and are professional musicians.

John studied Architecture at Oklahoma State University, opera stage design at Indiana University, music at Westminster Choir College and earned a BA in Architecture from Princeton University. Musically, John appeared as a tenor soloist throughout the country, singing the roles of the Evangelist in the Bach Passions and in Britten's St Nicolas. He conducted choirs in Brooklyn, NY and Princeton, NJ, notably the youth choirs at historic Nassau Presbyterian Church and Trinity Church, both in Princeton, and was a staff singer at the latter under renowned church musicians American James Litton (founder of the American Boychoir/Director of Music Emeritus at Trinity Church, Princeton/sacred music faculty at WCC) and Briton John Bertalot (Director of Music Emeritus at both Blackburn Cathedral, England and Trinity Church, Princeton).

Architecturally, John worked for Princeton architects Jerimiah Ford and Robert Martin Engelbrecht as a designer, illustrator and draftsman, before starting his own design and build company, Small Potatoes Construction Company, specializing in historical and residential renovation. He has completely renovated many homes in Trenton's historic Mill Hill district, done stage design work for the likes of Princeton's McCarter Theatre, Hopewell's Off-Broadstreet Theatre and the Open Air Theatre. He has also designed and built custom furniture and cabinetry for clients up and down the east coast for nearly two decades.

With his background, particularly his eye for church architecture and historical aesthetic, John was the ideal choice to assist us in this phase of the SMC organ project.