

## Church organist Louise Worley still making music after 62 years

Written by Darci Tomky

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“I love it,” was the only way Louise Worley could describe her passion for playing the church organ, and this passion is what has driven her to 62 years of commitment to church music. She was recently honored at Zion Lutheran Church in Holyoke for her years of dedicated service.

Worley began piano lessons when she was 9 years old, but never touched an organ until one Sunday in church. The minister’s wife and regular church organist was ill that day, and 14-year-old Worley was asked to fill in on the organ. She and a friend took turns playing songs for that church service, helping each other pump the pedals on the old pump organ in the church balcony.

That day started it all. Worley was head organist by the time she was 15 and was playing on a regular basis. Other than time away for college and having children, Worley has been playing at Zion Lutheran ever since.

Because she knew how to play piano, organ playing came fairly easily to Worley. She explained some differences between the piano and organ are the use of the pedals on the organ as well as holding the keys down and using a cross-over motion with the fingers instead of lifting them up off the keys.

“It takes so much patience when you start out,” said Worley. “But the congregation just has to go along with you when you are learning.”

Worley has studied organ with Mrs. Niehaus and Dr. Christensen among others. She learned both classical and hymn music which she can alternate during church services.

After learning on the church’s pump organ, Worley played on two different electronic organs at the church. In 1978, they installed the seven-rank pipe organ with 535 pipes from Vaughan Organ Co. out of Holdrege, Neb. Worley still plays this organ today, alternating with Diane Rahe.

One of the biggest time commitments is picking out the music each week, but Worley says she enjoys it and likes to practice it on her organ at home.

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For her, playing the organ is relaxing and a good way to get her mind off other things. She likes how the organ can produce so many different sounds as opposed to the one sound produced by a piano, but Worley noted organ playing has become somewhat of a lost art in today's world.

After 62 years of service to her church, organ playing became more than simply a hobby for Worley. She is still very much excited and energetic about being the church organist and said she will be playing for as long as she is able.