

True Boston Believers

In a small church whose sole instrumentalist is the pastor's wife – and the pastor leads services in song – the selection of a piano takes thoughtful, prayerful, collective consideration and support.

For that reason, when the Rev. Mike Carlson and his wife, Karen, felt it was time to replace their sanctuary's electronic keyboard with a real piano, they sought the blessing, guidance and wisdom of their congregation at Berean Baptist Church in Naples, Fla. Only then would they begin researching piano showrooms for the acquisition.

Truth be told, however, the Carlsons really needed little education on piano quality, having come to Berean from a church with a Steinway piano in the sanctuary. And that's why, when they got the go-ahead, Steinway Piano Gallery in nearby Bonita Springs, Fla., was at the top of their visit list.

There, they met Rob Meads, general-sales and interior-design liaison for this exclusive dealer for the family of Steinway-designed pianos in southwest Florida. And not long after that, the Carlsons knew that the "warm, full sound" of the 6-foot-4-inch, Steinway-designed Boston grand piano (GP-193) was the perfect fit for their church.

There was just one hitch, though: funding. The church, it seems, didn't have enough to make the purchase. But the church family knew where it must come from. Pastor Mike asked church members to donate to a piano fund "as they felt

Pastor Mike Carlson sings while his wife, Karen, accompanies him on the Boston piano in their church.

led by God." Well, in less than eight weeks, God led congregants to open their hearts and wallets to cover the full purchase price of the piano. In fact, so much divine leading had been done that the church actually received an even larger piano, a 7-foot-1-inch Boston grand (GP-215).

"Music is one of Karen's big loves," the minister says of his wife, a classically trained musician and his ministerial partner for the past 15 years ... the past two at Berean Baptist Church.

"The Lord also blessed me with musical ability," explains the minister, who leads singing at worship services with the help of a Praise Team. He performs a mix of contemporary praise music and selections from the hymnal, noting that he wants his children "to know and love both new and old songs."

Pastor Mike and Mrs. Carlson began studying piano when they were in second grade, and intend to introduce their two children to the piano when they're older. Daughter Meaghan is in the first grade and son Jordan is 5 years old.

Because the sanctuary ... spanning roughly 2,700 square feet ... has a few "acoustical problems," Pastor Mike is pleased with the larger Boston's "full sound."

"I didn't want the piano miked," he says, adding that the Boston grand certainly doesn't need such amplification. "We felt strongly that it was important to have a piano as the main instrument at the church, so when we started looking at Boston pianos, we liked the sound. Best of all, it fit our budget and we knew it was backed by Steinway."