



# American Guild of Organists

## Chapter Leadership News

March 2020

Dear Chapter Leaders,

These are challenging times for our world, our families and our friends. The “new normal” keeps changing so quickly that it is difficult to think beyond the moment of what our lives will look like tomorrow, a week or a month from now. Last night a friend said to me that she felt as if the earth was just standing still.

During this sense of “stillness,” it is vital that as chapter leaders we seek opportunities to stay connected to each other and to our members. Ask your board to initiate an old fashioned call chain, to find out how both younger and older members are feeling, what they are doing and if they need assistance. Scheduling a weekly virtual meet-up can help combat anxiety, depression, a sense of helplessness and isolation. We may not be able to host face-to-face chapter meetings or recitals but we can provide online opportunities to support connectivity and collaboration.

This issue will focus on:

- ✓ **Staying Connected with Modern Technology**
- ✓ **Resources for Freelance Musicians**
- ✓ **Recent Chapter Visits**
- ✓ **New Hampshire Chapter’s Black History Month Program**
- ✓ **St. Louis Chapter’s February Flourish**
- ✓ **Demystifying the Chapter Nominations Process**
- ✓ **Indianapolis Chapter Pipe Organ Festival**
- ✓ **Do Your Chapter’s Communications Look “Spammy?”**

To paraphrase the lyrics of Carole King, “Just call out my name and know that I will be there; all you have to do is call.” Please let me know how you are doing and know that I am here for you, to help in any way that I can. Together, we will get through this.



Elizabeth George, CMM

DIRECTOR OF MEMBER ENGAGEMENT AND CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT

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## Stay Connected with Modern Technology

Chapter leaders and members stay in touch with free online platforms such as:

### G Suite/Google Hangouts

<https://cloud.google.com/blog/products/g-suite/helping-businesses-and-schools-stay-connected-in-response-to-coronavirus>

### Zoom (free sign-up)

<https://zoom.us/signup>

### Skype

<https://www.skype.com/en/get-skype>

## Resources for Freelance Musicians

With thanks to John A. Wolfe, dean of the Brooklyn (N.Y.) Chapter, for bringing it to our attention, the AGO Committee on Career Development and Support shares this “aggregated list of FREE resources, opportunities, and financial relief options available to artists of all disciplines” [online](#).

*Resources for freelance musicians experiencing reduced work and income loss from cancellations due to COVID-19*



New York City Chapter member (and former dean) Christopher Creaghan shared [this link](#) with about how some nonprofit employers of musicians are handling cancellations.

Other career resources are available on the [Career Development and Support page](#). If there are helpful resources you would like to suggest for inclusion on this page, please [click here](#) to send a message.

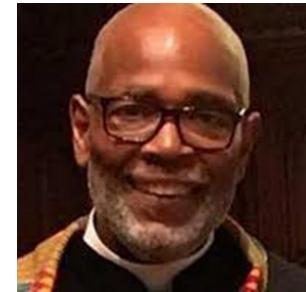
## Recent Chapter Visits

In February I had the opportunity to visit the Charlotte (N.C.) Chapter and attend a wonderful workshop, *Energizing Congregational Song*, led by Bobby Hobby. Bobby facilitated a lively discussion about the opportunities organists have within each stanza of a hymn to inspire worship and enable a congregation to sing out without hesitation. I want to thank AGO Charlotte for their warm hospitality and congratulate them for producing such an insightful program. I also had the pleasure of attending the Palm Beach (Fla.) Chapter's Member Recital that took place at *Bethesda-by-the-Sea*, the awe-inspiring cathedral located in Palm Beach, situated just a block from the ocean. More than 200 organ enthusiasts attended this beautifully designed program that featured ten gifted chapter members. Congratulations to Daniel Bayless, dean, and his committee for executing such a superb program!

## New Hampshire Chapter's Black History Month Program

A Concert of Spirituals in Recognition of Black History Month

Congratulations to the New Hampshire Chapter for presenting a concert of spirituals with the Reverend Robert Thompson, vocalist, on February 9 at St. John's Episcopal Church. This historic church built in 1807 in Portsmouth is home to the famous Brattle organ. The Brattle Organ (pictured in the upper right hand corner of the photo below) is thought to be the country's oldest playable pipe organ. It was imported from England before 1708 and was given to King's Chapel in Boston by Thomas Brattle, treasurer of Harvard College, where it was used for forty years. St. John's Church purchased the organ in 1836; it was last renovated in 1963 by C.B. Fisk. The church also houses a large gallery organ by Létourneau (left photo, below). Learn more about both instruments [online](#). This extraordinary church is part of the guided walking trail featured by the Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire.



## St. Louis Chapter's February Flourish

The Saint Louis (Mo.) Chapter's 2020 *February Flourish* was proof of continued success that develops over time. This year was noteworthy for the collaboration with the local chapters of the Association of Pastoral Musicians and the Handbell Association of Greater Saint Louis.

Jim Henry, director of choral studies at the University of Missouri presented a keynote address that addressed foundation elements of choral singing. Organ workshops offered entry-level and advanced topics such as, "Help! I Am a Pianist" and "They Want Me to Play Organ!" to "Improving Your Improvisation I and II." Choral and vocal workshops included kinesthetic approaches to choral techniques, working with children's choirs, and a chant workshop. Three handbell workshops were also featured. Finale music software and hymn harmonization sessions were offered by Kevin Uppercue, Managing Editor for ECS Publishing Group.



As the day ended, David Sinden, organist and director of music at St. Peter's Episcopal Church improvised an introduction and accompanied the singing of "O Praise Ye the Lord" (Laudate Dominum) on the Wick's organ at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Exhibitors from Concordia Publishing House and ECS Publishing/MorningStar Music provided valuable resources for browsing and purchase. Over lunch, the chapter registrar and new member coordinators opened the floor for introductions that included non-AGO members. AGO North Central Regional Councillor Karen Black gave a brief update on current initiatives at the national level.

Seventy-six people attended the February Flourish, including 28 non-member registrants, of which nine are now participating in the Guild's complimentary six-month membership. Congratulations to February Flourish director and sub-dean, Dawn Riske for producing such an inspiring event!

## Demystifying Chapter Nominations and Elections

Are you: A) Struggling to put together a nominating committee? B) Panicking about the elections process? C) Due to lack of clarity, deciding to create your own voting and election process? (Rumor has it that this has happened.) If you have answered “yes” to any of the above, take a deep breath and a moment to realize that conducting face-to-face elections this year is probably not realistic.

***AGOHQ strongly recommends using on-line voting software as noted below.***

AGO national by-laws allow electronic balloting. Ballots including the Chapter Nominating Committee slate and candidates nominated by qualified petition shall be prepared by the Secretary and distributed either by email or by using an online voting service. The following reminders and recommendations are offered:

- ✓ Sufficient care must be taken to ensure that ballots reach every eligible Voting Member. Some members who do not have email service may need to receive their ballot by the postal service.
- ✓ Any form of online voting should be completed before any in person voting takes place.

It is recommended that voting by email not be used, as it does not provide adequate security nor anonymity in most situations. Instead, options are available for free online voting through services that can provide secure and fair election results such as:

<https://www.opavote.com/nonprofit-elections>  
<https://electionrunner.com>

### Upcoming Chapter Election Deadlines:

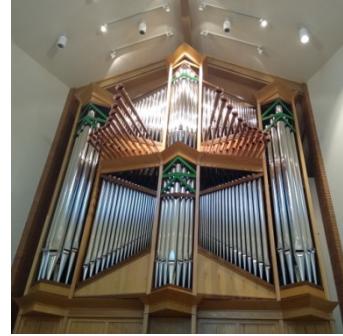
- ✓ **April 1** Deadline for nominations made by petition.
- ✓ **May 31** Deadline for elections.
- ✓ **June 30** End of term for chapter officers and executive committee members.
- ✓ **June 30** Officer Roster updates are due through ONCARD.
- ✓ **July 1** New officers and executive board members begin their terms.
- ✓ **December 1** Deadline to appoint a nominating committee.
- ✓ **March 1** Deadline for nominating committee's slate to be announced.

For the complete guide to Chapter Election and Voting Procedures, [click here](#).

## Indianapolis Pipe Organ Festival

Travis Pearson, dean, Indianapolis (Ind.) Chapter

The Indianapolis Chapter's Pipe Organ Festival that annually features chapter members drew an attendance of more than 175 people. This year's concert featured the Buzard organ at Pilgrim Lutheran Church in the suburb of Carmel. The theme was Organ + (Plus) and included trumpet, piano, saxophone, flute, and two hymn arrangements. Two of the six featured organists were new members of the chapter.



## Do Your Chapter Communications Look “Spammy?”

Eric Birk, FAGO, executive assistant, AGO National Headquarters

Every email message you receive has the following elements in the Header of the message: Display Name (the prose wording of the source of the message), Email Address, and Subject. If you want people to recognize your message as legitimate communication that is relevant to them, those three elements should have a clear correlation to each other. The display name could be the full name of the chapter, the name of the dean, or other chapter leader sending the message. The email address should have an obvious connection to the display name, so it's best not to use your personal or church (or other work) email address as the "send from" email account. The subject of the message should be chosen carefully to be logically relevant to both the display name and the email address in such a way that it is something expected and welcomed by the reader.

If your chapter is promoting events (chapter elections, concerts, conventions, POEs, master classes, competitions, etc.) to more than 99 people at a time, you should be using an email platform like MailChimp, VerticalResponse, ConstantContact, or any of the other such tools, some of which are free, like HubSpot. Personal email accounts should be avoided even with email platforms like these. If you use a personal email account with a domain that is either an ISP (internet service provider) domain, such as att.net, rr.com, comcast.net, etc. or is a public domain, like gmail.com, yahoo.com, etc., your messages to more than 99 persons will be identified as spam and you may be blocked by your ISP or the public domain that you are using for your email account.

The best practice for promoting an organization by email is to use a "send from" email account which is at the organization's domain. Does your chapter have its own website (not hosted by AGO Headquarters) for which it pays for web hosting? If so, your chapter most likely has its

own domain, such as something like “AnyChapterAGO.org.” If your chapter does not yet have its own hosted website with a chapter-named domain that the chapter owns, it can still purchase a domain with an email address hosted by the domain registration organization very economically simply for the purpose of having an email address that has chapter name recognition to email recipients. As a nonprofit, AGO chapters can use Google for Nonprofits without charge, which enables them to use all the resources of Google’s G Suite of products which would normally cost as much as \$25 per month.

Which would you more likely open, read, and/or reply to? A message from:

- Music Dir <music@firstchurch.net / Subject: Meeting Next Week
- Susie Organist, Dean <dean@citychapterago.org> / Subject: City Chapter AGO Meets Next Week – Please RSVP!

The recipients of the message with the second chapter header above will know that the dean of their chapter is sending them relevant, time-sensitive message that contains information they will probably want to know about. If you don’t look “spammy” by carefully considering what your email message headers communicate to your recipients, your messages will likely get the engagement results you want.

## Question of the Month:

Due to COVID-19 many chapter programs have been canceled or postponed.

**Has your chapter live-streamed any member or visiting artist recitals?  
Have you recorded any workshops that you presented at a chapter meeting?**

If these will not conflict with any contracts or agreements, please send me this information and the links to these events, so that they may be placed on the AGO website for chapters to use as online programs.

Please reply to [elizabeth.george@agohq.org](mailto:elizabeth.george@agohq.org).