



# American Guild of Organists

## Chapter Leadership News

July 2020

Dear Chapter Leaders,

This past June, 98 chapter leaders participated in a Town Hall meeting on Zoom to discuss programming ideas for the future months. The consensus was that it might be wiser to plan virtual programs for the next six months, as COVID-19 continues to rise in many areas where chapters are situated. Everyone agreed that through chapter *collaboration*, much could be offered. Jillian Gardner, AGOYO board chair, and recently elected Councillor for Young Organists, explained that they will be presenting many virtual programs that will be available for chapters to utilize. A library of online programs with links to recitals and workshops will soon be available on the Leadership Toolkits page. Please continue to update me about what you are planning, so that additional information can be added to our online library. Several participants expressed interest in the AGO presenting a webinar about our certification programs. AGO's virtual *Organfest*: <https://agoorganfest2020.org/>, will include a series of *PipeTalks* videos that will feature information about the AGO certification programs and Achievement Awards: <https://agoorganfest2020.org/pipe-talks/>.

This issue will cover:

- ✓ Upcoming webinars
- ✓ Officer Updates in ONCARD
- ✓ Filing IRS forms (990-N, 990-EZ, 990)
- ✓ A Fun Ice-breaker to Foster Member Engagement
- ✓ New York City and Northern New Jersey's Member Relief Funding
- ✓ Best Practices for Hosting Virtual Board Meetings
- ✓ Leadership Spotlight: Kitty Allen, Newsletter Editor, Baltimore Chapter



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## Past and Future Webinars

The link and handout for **Building on Your Chapter's Best Practices; As You Seek, Encourage and Respect One Person at a Time**, presented by COMDACS, can be found in the Leadership Talks/Webinar Toolkit: <https://www.agohq.org/chapter-leadership-toolkits/>.

The link and handout to the webinar **A Smoother Experience for Substitute Organists and Hosts** presented by Dr. Sarah Bereza, can be accessed through the Education tab: <https://www.agohq.org/ago-webinars-and-supporting-documents/>.



**Thursday, August 13<sup>th</sup>, 4:00 pm EDT**

**Virtual Choir for the Rest of Us**

**Workshop: Part 1**

Carol Spradling, Presenter

Carol Spradling, director of music at First Congregational Church of Essex Junction, decided that the COVID "stay at home" order was going to mean that her small but mighty choir was going to adapt, rather than disband. Using Zoom rehearsals, smartphones, electronically distributed music, and the online digital audio workstation BandLab, she and her choir started scaling the learning curve between live choral singing and digital recording. This is a hands-on, nuts-and-bolts course in how to produce socially distanced audio recordings of your choir or ensemble (from home), using smartphones, laptops, and free software. To attend Part 1 of this workshop, please register [here](#).

**Thursday, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 4:00 pm EDT, Virtual Choir for the Rest of Us, Workshop: Part 2**

Part 2 of this workshop will include participant follow-up discussions of hands-on software utilization, sharing of success stories and challenges. To attend Part 2 of this workshop, please register [here](#).

## Please Remember to Update Your Officer Roster in ONCARD

Based on the calls that AGO Member Services has recently been receiving, it is evident that many of you did not take time to update your officer roster prior to June 30<sup>th</sup> and therefore, no longer have access to ONCARD. Instructions on how to access ONCARD and update your roster have been uploaded to the Board Management and Governance Toolkit that is located within Chapter Leadership Toolkits: <https://www.agohq.org/chapter-leadership-toolkits/>. Please make this a priority, as we want to ensure that all new officers will be able to receive emails from national headquarters, have access to monthly membership reports through ONCARD and can register for AGO webinars.



### Filing IRS Forms (990-N, 990-EZ, 990)

For chapters using the calendar year of July 1 to June 30 as their fiscal year with the IRS, the 990-N e-postcard filing is due by November 15. Those using the calendar year of January 1 to December 31 as their fiscal year will be required to file by May 15. (The due date is always the 15th day of the 5th month following the close of your chapter's fiscal year.) Regardless of whether your annual filing is currently due, we recommend you log in to the IRS website to verify that the IRS has the same fiscal year for your chapter that you have previously been using to file the 990-N e-postcard. For chapters with income of \$50,000 or more, you will need to file IRS form 990, as form 990-N will not satisfy this requirement. **Chapters that fail to file for three consecutive years will lose their tax-exempt status.** In fact, the IRS has previously revoked the tax-exempt status of approximately 55 AGO chapters for failure to file the e-postcard. Of the 55, fewer than 20 remain auto-revoked. The others were either previously disbanded or have been reinstated. Active chapters that have had their tax exempt status revoked must pay taxes on their income, as they are no longer able to accept charitable contributions as non-taxable revenue and their donors are not eligible to receive a tax deduction on gifts made to the chapter. Moreover, foundations typically will not provide funding to for-profit organizations.

Full details regarding the forms to file and process can be found on our website <https://www.agohq.org/irsfilinghelp/>. I strongly encourage you to take time to read through the information and add it to the agenda for your next board meeting so that all officers fully understand IRS compliance for your chapter. Should you have additional questions, please feel free to call Eric Birk at AGO headquarters, 212-870-2311 x4304.

## **A Fun Ice-breaker to Foster Member Engagement**

**Denise Lanning, Denver Rocky Mountain Chapter**

The membership of the American Guild of Organists reflects an amazing mosaic of people: organists, choral directors, clergy, friends, spouses and partners.

The paths that lead the lovers of organ and choral music to membership in the AGO are as numerous as the total population of the organization. We have members who have learned their craft through university study, and members whose study has been independent. We have members who do not play at all, but who lend support. We have members who have been playing the organ since their teenage years, and members who came to the instrument later in life.

Chapter leadership faces the challenge of creating a collegial, comfortable environment for all of our valued members, recognizing and affirming the skills and experiences that each brings to the organization.

How do we find common ground? Here's one idea. At your next large chapter gathering, such as an annual meeting that may be accompanied by a dinner, go around the room and ask members to introduce themselves, and then ask each one to describe the funniest thing that ever happened to them in a worship service, either as organist, director or congregant.

## **Membership Programs to Help Those in Need**



*The Executive Board of the Northern NJ chapter is keenly aware that Covid-19 has strained many of our members' financial positions because they have been released from their responsibilities or had their salaries reduced. Because the NNJ chapter is in a secure*

*financial position, the board, at their recent June meeting, expressed a desire to aid those members who find it difficult to pay their AGO dues. Therefore any member of the Northern NJ chapter may request a one-time payment of their dues for the coming year (2020-2021). If you wish to take advantage of this opportunity, you must contact David Macfarlane by email or by phone. Of course all members of the Executive Board are available to answer your questions.*



*The Chapter Board recently voted on a motion to approve an emergency relief fund for current members of the Chapter (all categories, including dual membership) financially affected by the coronavirus and its aftermath. Funds will be allocated on a first-come basis up to a total of \$350 per person. Applications and disbursements will be handled as discretely as possible.*

Thank you, NYC and Northern NJ chapters, for your ability to make a difference in the lives of your members and show them how much you value their memberships.

## **Best Practices for Hosting Virtual Board Meetings**

I'd like to share with you a great article by Tirrah Switzer, Product Marketing Manager with Community Brands, that addresses how to hold efficient virtual board meetings.

### **1. Always Have an Agenda**

Your board members are volunteering their time, and that time should be valued. Preparing an agenda (and sticking to it) is crucial for an efficient board meeting. You should match the length of the agenda to the length of the meeting. Don't overload or underload the agenda. With virtual meetings, you might consider a few less agenda items as online meetings typically require repetition and clarification. The agenda should be focused on topics that support your organization's strategic goals.

## **2. Start on Time**

Your agenda has a start time. Stick to it. Most of your board members have “real” jobs and busy lives, which sometimes means they’ll run late. Don’t feel as if you have to wait for everyone to login before starting the meeting. If you continuously push back your meeting start time, you’ll encourage board members to arrive later and later. When you start every meeting on time, you convey the importance of punctuality. You also show board members and guests that you value their time.

## **3. Send Materials in Advance**

Make sure you send out any materials at least five days ahead of the meeting. Items such as the agenda, minutes from previous meetings, financial statements, membership reports, staff reports, and any other documents can be sent to board members prior to the meeting.

Good board members know their responsibilities and will read what you send them. Assume board members did their homework and reviewed the updates. This will make the meeting more productive by allowing more time for strategic discussions.

## **4. Focus on Strategic Discussion but Also Allow for Personal Time**

We’re all busy. Your board members are no different. Wasting time with a board meeting that doesn’t provide value frustrates your board members. The last thing you want your board members thinking is “I wish I were anywhere but here right now.” It does nothing to help move your organization forward.

Your board’s job is to help move your mission forward through governance and strategy. Make your board meetings about strategic discussions and decisions. Non-controversial or routine items can easily be reviewed via email prior to the meeting.

With today’s changing times, allow for personal time during your board calls. Taking time to recognize how everyone is navigating through the changing times, will provide your board with support and help build community.

- Ask them how their organization is handling the “new normal”

- What challenges are they facing at their organization?
- How have the changing times impacted their family?

## 5. Offer Vision and Inspiration

Your board members are there because they believe in the mission and vision of your organization. Try to book-end your meetings with mission, vision, and inspiration to keep the board connected with your organization's purpose.

Searching for a chapter vision and mission? Head to the AGO website.

***The mission of the American Guild of Organists is to foster a thriving community of musicians who share their knowledge and inspire passion for the organ.***

***The vision of the American Guild of Organists is to engage, support, and uplift every organist.***

As a reminder, I am always available to assist your board with strategic planning. Due to the "new normal," if you feel like your ship is rudderless and has headed off-course, please contact me. Let's brainstorm and identify SMART strategies to better assist you to engage and retain your members during this challenging time of social distancing.

**S**pecific

**M**easurable

**A**chievable

**R**ealistic

**T**imely

**Pipe and Pedal Newsletter Editor**

**Baltimore Chapter**

**Kitty Allen**

**Celebrates 35 Years of Leadership**



Chapter Dean Henry Lowe shared: *Kitty has been involved and engaged in so many aspects of this chapter, collaborating on the annual production of the yearbook, tracking ballots at election time, sending out announcements and reminders of local events or just being there to function as chapter historian. She has always been eager to help answer questions about the ways our chapter has functioned over the last three and a half decades. Her valued wisdom has been responsible for providing much-needed continuity as chapter leadership continues to change. While it is everyone's responsibility to help*

*disseminate information, she has been the glue that keeps communication flowing accurately and freely amongst our members.*

**The AGO wishes to congratulate Kitty Allen for her 35 years of outstanding leadership to the Baltimore Chapter!**

**Do you have a chapter leader you wish to recognize? If so, please send a photo and brief description of how she/he has impacted your chapter to**

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