



AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

## Chapter Leadership News

December 2020

*Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul  
and sings the tune without the words and never stops at all.*

Emily Dickinson

Dear Chapter Leaders,

As 2020 draws to an end, I am sure that over the past 11 months serving as chapter officers, you have felt as though you were tilting at windmills. Many of you have had to seek employment outside of your profession, often working two jobs to make ends meet. Houses of worship have asked you to take pay cuts, they have requested service recordings for which you have not been properly compensated and you've had to adapt to new technologies for recording and streaming music. You have lost loved ones, friends and colleagues to this wretched pandemic. To say that "this has not been the best of times to serve as a chapter officer," would be a huge understatement. I wish that I could give each of you a special "endurance medal," or better yet, a big hug, to say thank you for your perseverance, tenacity and resolution in striving to stay connected to your members through countless Zoom meetings. Please know that what you have accomplished has not gone unnoticed. On behalf of everyone at the National office, we want to express our deep gratitude for your hard work and steadfast leadership.

As we light our Hanukkah, Christmas and Kwanzaa candles, my wish for each of you is that 2021 will bring good health, job stability and a deep sense of hope that things will get better.

This issue of **Chapter Leadership News** will cover:

- ✓ Leadership 2021
- ✓ Chapter Leader Profile of the Month
- ✓ 2020: A Snapshot of the Life of the AGO and its Chapters
- ✓ The New York City Chapter's Virtual Musical Tours
- ✓ January's Webinar
- ✓ AGO Wilmington Chapter's Program: The Quality of Life in Older Singers
- ✓ AGO Los Angeles' Certification Club
- ✓ Leadership Spotlight: Dianne Rechel



Elizabeth George, CMM

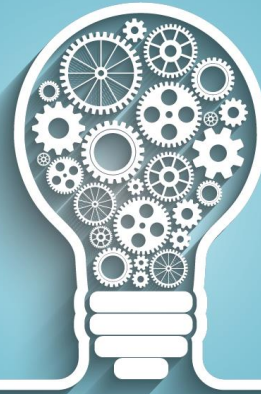
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# AGO Leadership 2021

Virtual Conference  
January 24-26  
7:30 - 9:00 pm ET



Connect, Collaborate, Create!

- **Connect** with other chapter officers to discuss pressing issues and identify successful practices to help you in your leadership roles.
- **Collaborate** by mutually working together to identify programs and workshops that chapters can share with each other.
- **Create** goals and a game plan for your chapter to increase member engagement over the next five months of leadership.

This three-day leadership conference is open to all chapter officers. There will be breakouts for those serving as Deans, Sub-Deans/Programming, Membership, Communications (website, newsletters, social media) and Treasurers. It will focus on strategies to jumpstart your chapter, motivate your board and deliver best practices to keep your chapter running effectively throughout the remainder of the year and beyond.

**Register in advance for this meeting:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZApduCurjMoGdV8Qo0KxGK8m07v50yaTR3O> .

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

## Profile of the Month: Rene Zajner Sub-Dean, Gateway Confluence Chapter

**What's sitting on my desk right now:** a mess with lots of things. With one church we have been videotaping worship services one week in advance, while at my other (which has been worshipping "in person") we keep to the liturgical schedule. I'm perpetually scratching my head wondering which day of the week it is, not to mention which week of the year it is.

**When I'm not at work:** I am the Social Media Coordinator for both the Gateway Confluence, and St. Louis Chapters of AGO. I love that work because I also love photography, videography, and audio capture.

**If I weren't doing this:**  
I'd be skiing!

**The best advice I ever got:** You should be more self-motivated. Just do it!

**What keeps me motivated serving as Sub-Dean:** We are a brand-new chapter, so there's plenty of motivation just in being here. I especially want members of the public to know what our instrument is, and what our musicians are capable of doing.

A sample of Rene's creative videography can be found in the "Roses Are Red" promotional video for the St. Louis Chapter's February Flourish:

<https://vimeo.com/475676970> .

## 2020: A Snapshot of the Life of the AGO and its Chapters

The following shares just a few of the many ways AGO chapters strived to stay connected to their members throughout the pandemic and how technology has strengthened member engagement.

### Member Care and Engagement

- Kudos to the Harrisburg and Palo Alto chapters for sending each member a birthday card! What a simple, yet heartfelt way to let a member know that you value and appreciate them.
- Congratulations to all officers who participated in April's "Member Care Month," where each chapter reached out to members to find out how they were doing. From Dean Ron Sidhu, AGO Sacramento: *I very much want to know that you are doing well – and if you're not, please tell us, we want to help you if we can. If you need help with grocery shopping, getting various items, we are here to help. I, among others, will volunteer to help you. We care about you, our valued Guild members, and we want to make sure you are safe and well cared for.*
- **Chapters that Developed Member Relief Funding:** Greater Hartford, Twin Cities, Central Hudson, New York City and Northern New Jersey Chapters.
- **The inception of the AGO Member Assistance Program**, providing membership renewals for those who have been financially impacted by the pandemic.

### Technology



**March:** Congratulations to the Los Angeles Chapter for their quick thinking in presenting a live stream of a chapter program that had been scheduled on March 16th. Due to the order from the Los Angeles County regarding sheltering-in-place, the monthly dinner had to be cancelled, however chapter officers

were unwilling to cancel the performance. Within 24 hours they went from never having thought about how to live-stream a chapter program to successfully presenting one. The church had no Wi-Fi, however they were able to use a member's iPhone that had unlimited data, while another chapter volunteer handled the camera.

<https://www.facebook.com/262400873791162/videos/502189950687921/>

**April:** AGO Sacramento's first Zoom Happy Hour!



**June:** Northern New Jersey Chapter's first **Virtual Progressive Recital.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9k1rG5qSzNw&feature=youtu.be>

- **November:** New London County Chapter's **Virtual Check-In**, where each board member produced a short video of how they were doing, and future plans for their chapter: [https://youtu.be/UOXD\\_hokdks](https://youtu.be/UOXD_hokdks) .



## **2020 Webinars, Workshops and Online Programming for Chapters**

At the onset of the pandemic, it became clear that the AGO needed to ramp up its online resources for chapters. Beginning in April, monthly webinars and workshops were presented on Zoom, to address the immediate needs of our members.

- **Technology** webinars with topics that included best practices for online streaming and recording, various software options for effective vocal collaboration and recording, Bandlab workshops, maximizing Zoom for chapter meetings and examples of software for digital editing of recordings.

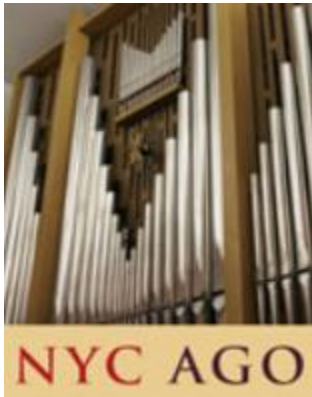
- **Leadership Development** webinars:
  - **Leadership onboarding** regarding the benefits and challenges of serving as Dean.
  - Instructions for **treasurers and registrars** regarding dues reconciliation and consistent record keeping.
  - **Keeping Chapters Healthy During COVID-19**, that focused on best practices to strengthen member communications, opportunities to better utilize the Member-at-Large position and how to build a leadership pipeline to nurture future leaders, avoid officer burn-out and off-set the recycling of officer positions.
  
- **Professional Development**
  - Tips and best practices in creating a smoother environment for substitute organists and how to best work with the houses of worship in which they will be playing.
  - Hymn playing workshops
  - Streaming Music Legally in Churches and Recitals
  
- **Organ Teaching Webinars** presented by the Committee for Continuing Education.

All webinars and workshops can be found in the menu under the **Education** tab:

<https://www.agohq.org/ago-webinars-and-supporting-documents/> .

- The creation of an **Online Programming Library**, where chapters can access recordings of organ crawls, workshops, as well as links to many excellent chapter recitals and the engaging **AGOYO Fridays at Noon** series. This library continues to expand and can be accessed in the menu under the **Membership** tab: <https://www.agohq.org/online-programming-for-chapters/> .





Congratulations to the AGO New York City Chapter for presenting a series of virtual musical tours of some of NYC's most impressive organs. The five tours featured the organs of Saint Patrick's Cathedral, St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue, Grace Church, The Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, Saint James Church, the Church of the Resurrection, Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church and The Riverside Church. **Second Hand Splendor: The Organ Clearing House at 60** was also presented. Links to the entire series can be found here: <https://www.agohq.org/online-programming-for-chapters/> located under the Membership menu on AGO's home page.

These recorded musical tours would be perfect to use for virtual chapter programs.



**Sign up for January's Webinar  
Monday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 4:00 pm EDT**

**How We Worship: The Ever-Changing Environment**

Join organists David Enlow, Leslie Wolf Robb, Matthew Burt, Meaghan King and Alex Oldroyd, in a panel discussion that addresses the unique challenges they face based on state and denomination restrictions in their houses of worship. To attend this webinar, please register [here](#).



**AGO Wilmington Chapter's November Meeting  
The Quality of Life in Older Singers**

The Wilmington, N.C. Chapter recently held a zoom program that featured a PowerPoint presentation by local resident, Judith Nichols. Judith completed a MS in Applied Gerontology in 2019. The presentation, "The Quality of Life in Older Adult Choral Singers" was a summary of her master's thesis. The purpose of the research was to evaluate choir participation and quality of life for older adults in the Wilmington area, and to identify the motivations, effects, and difficulties in the pursuit of this activity, so that appropriate programs for older adults can be designed and recommended. Choir singers from local choirs, aged 60 years and older, were recruited to participate in a one-time, mixed-method survey to assess Quality of Life. The research was completed prior to the current pandemic. You can view the video here: [Wilmington, NC AGO Meeting](#).

## AGO Los Angeles Chapter's New Certifications Club

Thank you, Linda Brown, Certifications Coordinator, for sharing this wonderful initiative!

*Have you ever felt stuck in a rut with your musical progress and wondered how to get to another level of mastery? If that is the case, and I know that it is for me, then the American Guild of Organists' Certification Program maybe just the spark you need.*

*There are six graduated levels of certification:*

- *Service Playing Certification*
- *Colleague Certification*
- *Choir Master Certification*
- *Associateship Certification*
- *Fellowship Certification*

*The Choir Master, Associateship and Fellowship examinations are in several parts and require several sessions to complete. There is a written test and a practical performance test for each level. The written exams are proctored, and the practical performance exams require two in-person examiners who complete written comments and grades.*

*All of this can seem quite overwhelming. I must admit that every year I looked over the requirements, I decided; "well, maybe next year." After all, successful certification requires a lot of work. However, here is an idea that may help you through the process.*

*As the Chapter's **Certification Coordinator**, I have formed a **Certifications Club**. This group is designed to assist certification candidates every step of the way. The content for the club will be organized in modules. Candidates may access the modules they need. The modules will include live instruction via Zoom with instructors from our own chapter, who are well experienced with teaching the topics, and practice materials. If candidates require an organ teacher to help prepare repertoire, I will assist in matching you with one. You tell me what you need, and I will find a way to help you.*

*Right now, there are several chapter members working toward the Associateship Exam, several more working toward the Colleague Exam and one working toward the Service Playing Certificate. I have instructors lined up who are willing to help. Detailed information about all AGO certifications can be found [here](#).*

If you are interested in learning more about how to start your own **Certifications Club**, email Linda at [lindawestbrown@gmail.com](mailto:lindawestbrown@gmail.com).





**Saluting Dianne Rechel  
Membership Coordinator  
AGO Springfield, MA Chapter**



Dean Martha Sienkiewicz shared:  
*Dianne Rechel has tirelessly worked on keeping things going during the pandemic. She single-handedly organized a remake of our website <https://agospringfieldma.org/>, organized monthly zoom chats and helped produce a master class in Bach ornamentation with Balint Karosi, that was live streamed on Oct. 17, 2020. She is a high-energy woman with lots of wonderful ideas for using technology.*



Editor's note: I recently received an email from Dianne and loved the graphic under her signature line.

**Do you have a chapter leader you would like to recognize? Please send me a photo and brief description of how she/he has enriched and positively impacted your chapter. [elizabeth.george@agohq.org](mailto:elizabeth.george@agohq.org) .**