



AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

Chapter Leadership News

February 2023

23 in 2023

Dear Chapter Leaders,

A few weeks ago, I received a phone call from Michael Varnadore, dean of the Charleston chapter. He wanted to run an idea by me that he and his board had been discussing regarding launching a member recruitment campaign, “23 in 2023.” He said that they had identified at least 10 prospective members who, for whatever reason, had not joined the chapter – and he was sure there were more in the area. As you might guess, nothing thrills me more than hearing a chapter wanting to recruit new members. I suggested that he might want to share a recruitment tip for each month in their newsletter, website and Facebook page, similar to what we did during the Year of the Young Organist. He thought it was a great idea, that could become a creative and fun way to encourage non-members to join the chapter. So, now I am going to challenge each of you, as I know that between your board members and the people you work with, there are prospects in your area that have not yet been contacted. Who do you know that knows someone who knows someone, who might be a new organist, a choral director, or a new piano teacher in your area? It’s the connections between people you yourself may not know, but through others, that can make recruitment easier and more fun. Are you up for the challenge?

If you have not yet done so, I encourage all of you to register for **Leadership 2023**, which will take place the evenings of Sunday, February 5, and Monday, February 6. This conference has been designed to address the many challenges and issues that you have shared with me. This year, there will be no keynote speakers; however, we are planning on kicking off with a *Jeopardy!*-style icebreaker. A Zoom after-party has also been planned. Full program details can be found on page 2 of this newsletter.

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

- ✓ Leadership Profile:
- ✓ Leadership 2023: Adventures in the New Normal . . . Or Is It *Abby* Normal?
- ✓ Register for the January 30th Webinar on Women Composer Sunday
- ✓ Nassau Chapter’s Highly Successful Benefit for Ukraine
- ✓ Space Coast Chapter’s Pedals, Pipes & Pizza
- ✓ Travels through Texas
- ✓ Congratulations to Phylcia Ross!



Elizabeth George
Chief Membership Officer
elizabeth.george@agohq.org

Adventures in the New Normal... or is it *Abby* Normal?



Leadership 2023

SUNDAY, FEB. 5 & MONDAY, FEB. 6
7– 8:30 P.M. EST / 4 – 5:30 P.M. PST



Your life has changed—and so has your leadership experience.

Are you facing challenges with your board regarding governing expectations and accountability? Are you dealing with troublesome board members and attempting to manage conflict?

Are your board meetings *bored* meetings?

Are you struggling to get everyone to work cohesively as a team?

Are you frustrated by low attendance at your programs?

Are you worried that your current officer position is becoming a life sentence?

Find some answers, solutions, and relief by registering for a conference that will focus on these and other issues that are impacting your ability to lead effectively and get things done. We've created the same agenda for both nights to help with any scheduling conflicts you may have.

Sunday and Monday leadership sessions:

Breakout #1: Board Development and Teamwork: Who's in Charge? How do you create one team with one voice out of many diverse voices? Who on your board makes critical decisions that will impact your members? This session will address how a board of officers can work successfully as a team, and how all leadership actions impact this. Facilitators: Sue Mitchell-Wallace and Vicki Schaeffer. Recommended for all chapter officers. Please refer to pages 7, 9, and 11 in *The Board Team Handbook*.

Breakout #2: Board Meetings—Where the Action Is: Creating Board Policies and Meeting Procedures to Stay on Track. What you do in meetings usually makes the difference between an effective or an ineffective organization. Your bylaws are not your board policies. Learn why it is important to create a set of written policies that anticipate issues and problems, alleviating the need for “crisis management” when problems occur. Facilitator: David Vogels. Recommended for those serving as dean. Please refer to 22, 26, and 45 in *The Board Team Handbook*.

Breakout #3: Dealing with the Problem Board Member and Managing Conflict on Your Board. When a diverse group of volunteer leaders comes together, there are bound to be elements of potential conflict, and with it, board disruptors. This session will focus on how to promote healthy debate during your board meetings, and why compromising is not a defeat. It will also provide tactics and solutions to subvert problem board members. Facilitator: Mark Andersen. Recommended for those serving as dean and sub-dean. Please refer to pages 13 and 15 in *The Board Team Handbook*.

Breakout #4: Programming, Member Engagement, and Fostering Inclusivity. Many chapters continue to struggle with encouraging members who have not had formal training—and fear not being accepted—to attend programs and events. Is your chapter programming focused only on recitals and organ crawls? This session will be an open discussion to identify successful strategies that foster inclusivity. It will share ideas for events that can encourage stronger program attendance. Facilitator: Rodney Girvin. Recommended for sub-deans, registrars, and membership and education coordinators.

Breakout #5: Help! Our Nominations Committee Cannot Find Anyone Interested in Serving as a Chapter Officer: Creating a Succession Plan to Avoid Leadership Burnout. This session will describe how to build a leadership pipeline. It will discuss the importance of creating an ambassador program to strengthen member engagement, and how creating micro-volunteer opportunities can grow your volunteer base. Facilitator: Elizabeth George. Recommended for all those serving in leadership positions.

Breakout #6: The Power of Publicity: Promote Your Events through Media Relations. You presented a spectacular program that should have received larger attendance. How could you have better promoted it to influence more people to attend? The AGO's marketing communications specialist J.W. Arnold will share practical strategies to identify and engage your local radio and television contacts, pitch producers and reporters, and further leverage the coverage on your social media channels.

Please register here: <https://onlinexperiences.com/Launch/QReg.htm?ShowUUID=5AB5A4B8-2BE8-4B29-9453-1451E6F43274>



Monday, January 30th at 7 pm ET

Can you name five women composers for the organ? If you're struggling, consider that women composers, particularly of sacred music, have been overlooked for centuries. That's changing. The AGO, the Society of Women Organists, and the Royal College of Organists will celebrate organ and choral music by women by inviting everyone to play or sing something by a woman on March 5th, 2023. Record your performances and post them to social media with the hashtag #womancomposersunday.

This webinar will explain how to participate, give repertory suggestions, and discuss the significance of expanding the canon of organ music. Join Eileen Hunt, Nancy Cooper, Michelle Kardos, Lyn Loewi, and special guest from the Society of Women Organists, Alison Howell, the creator of Woman Composer Sunday, to learn more. Please register [here](#).

The Nassau (N.Y.) Chapter's Successful Benefit for Ukraine



Nassau dean Meredith Baker shared the following:

Our last meeting for 2022 was a Benefit for Ukraine—something that I felt we could do to help **World Central Kitchen**. On Friday evening, November 4, in the lofty Victorian Gothic space that is the Cathedral of the Incarnation in Garden City, an audience of over 200 experienced a most moving and beautifully presented concert. This project drew interest from many areas and groups, and we had already collected \$2,400 before the concert even began. The program started with Larry Tremsky, music director at the cathedral, who led us in a stirring, soaring singing of “All My Hope on God Is Founded,” showing us that the newly reconditioned 1986 Casavant double organ was back, sounding better than ever! Meredith Baker, organist choirmaster at Christ Church, Manhasset, played the Ukrainian National Anthem. The handbell choir of St. Luke’s Lutheran Church in Farmingdale, under the direction of Gene McCoy, performed “Timbrel and Dance” and “Carol of the Bells.” Those bells rang out with joy in that resonant space! Elizabeth Bailey, immediate past dean and organist at St. Bernard’s Catholic Church in Levittown, favored us with “The Cossack Rode beyond the Danube,” a Ukrainian folk song. A combined choir of 24 seasoned singers performed John Rutter’s “Ukrainian Prayer,” which was composed shortly after the start of the Russian invasion as his salute to the Ukrainian people. This was one of the most deeply moving portions of the program, with the choir’s voices filling the stone vaults. We were thrilled that the final total of donations was \$5,980!

*The AGO wishes to congratulate the Nassau chapter for its hard work and outreach in supporting humanitarian José Andrés’s work through the **World Central Kitchen**. Donations can be submitted through their website: <https://wck.org/>.*

Space Coast (Fla.) Chapter's Pedals, Pipes & Pizza

Claire Klein, Space Coast chapter registrar shared the following:

The Space Coast chapter’s Pedals, Pipes & Pizza event was held on Saturday morning, November 19, from 10 to 11:30, followed by a pizza lunch. Our host was Rockledge Presbyterian Church in Rockledge, Fla. Member-at-large Lori Jahn coordinated the event. Publicity chair Curtis Lanoue gave a talk about the organ. Jerry Davidson, dean, Roberta Stocksdale, sub-dean, and Betsy Stansifer, treasurer, handled logistics for the event. Member Steve Knecht donated backpacks containing our chapter’s logo and procured the literature and T-shirts from national, plus public-domain Christmas music handouts and treble clef knickknacks to stuff in the backpacks. Four piano students attended the event. We would like to have had a stronger attendance, and next year we may employ a publicity professional to help with promotion. The program was well received. We are saving leftover booklets and brochures for use at next year’s program.



My Ambitious Texas Road Trip

When I found out that the Dallas chapter was planning a special recital featuring organist Thomas Ospital on Sunday, November 6, and that the Fort Worth chapter had a program featuring original compositions and improvisations by Zvony Nagy scheduled for Friday, November 11, I decided to see if I could schedule some additional chapter visits between both of these events.

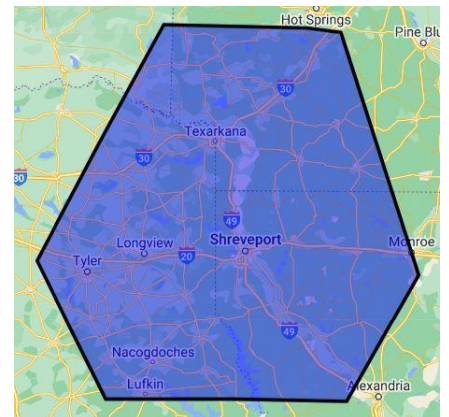
Day 1: Dallas



Dean Conner McMains along with board and chapter members hosted a lovely reception prior to Ospital's recital at Southern Methodist University. I was so delighted that Southwest regional councillor Sheryl Sebo could also join us. The recital featured works by Buxtehude, Bach, Franck, Ravel, and Duruflé; it ended with an extraordinary improvisation.

Day 2: Shreveport

The next day, I drove to Shreveport to meet with one of our newest chapters, ArkLaTex. Bryan Bierbaum, dean, Ray Peebles, treasurer, and Aaron Wilson, secretary, joined me for lunch to strategize about potential programs and opportunities for recruitment. What's interesting is that the chapter's territory, while centered in Shreveport in northern Louisiana, extends into the southernmost part of Arkansas and far eastern Texas.



Day 3: Waco

Waco is home to the Central Texas chapter, although a great majority of its members reside in Temple, about 30 miles south. I was thrilled to learn that Dallas member Margaret Harper is now spending part of the week in residence at Baylor University, serving as visiting part-time lecturer of organ. The instrument in the university's Markham Organ Studio was designed by the recently departed Joyce Jones, a legendary organist at Baylor and a dear friend of many AGO members in the area. Although I was unable to meet with Margaret, I enjoyed touring Baylor's beautiful campus.

Day 4: Temple

I enjoyed meeting with Central Texas dean Wayne Bachus, sub-dean Leon Couch, membership coordinator Carl Bradley, and secretary Jack Martin. They are extremely enthusiastic that Margaret Harper is now teaching at Baylor and that this will provide an opportunity to recruit some new young organists. I learned that they had recently held a dinner in honor of Margaret and her students, with the desire to make them feel welcomed and engaged in the life of the chapter. I want to thank Wayne, Leon, Carl, and Jack for taking time to meet with me and for sharing their goals to grow the Central Texas chapter.

Day 5: Austin



The indefatigable Sheryl Sebo joined me in my visit with Austin chapter leaders: Chris Oelkers, dean; Danny Brooke, membership coordinator; Andrew Langley, young organist member; Keith Womer, sub-dean; and Gregory Eaton, district convener. They shared details about their upcoming Advent Organ Recitals, and we discussed opportunities to partner on future events with other churches and arts organizations in the area. The city of Austin has such a great vibe, and I was sorry that I couldn't stay longer to enjoy its vibrant downtown area.

Day 6: Fort Worth

What would have been a three-hour trip ended up being close to five hours, as I drove north with white knuckles through one of the worst rainstorms I have ever encountered. The rainbow at the end of the day was having dinner with chapter dean Peggy Graff at Angelo's Bar-B-Que, a true Fort Worth institution, and attending an extraordinary recital presented by the chapter in partnership with the department of music at Southwestern Adventist University, featuring Zvony Nagy, one of their teachers and an extraordinary composer. It was so wonderful to see such a large audience, comprised of chapter members, students of Dr. Nagy, and parishioners from All Saints Episcopal Church, Crestline, where the recital took place. Kudos to sub-dean Devon Howard for coordinating both the recital and the lovely reception that followed. I want to thank Peggy and all of the chapter leaders who made me feel so welcome.



Little did I realize that when I returned my rental car the next day, its odometer would show that I had driven over 850 miles. My apologies to the Alamo, Houston, Corpus Christi, Permian Basin, Lubbock, and Victoria Crossroads chapters for not being able to meet with you. I look forward to scheduling another visit with these chapters and experiencing more of the vast state of Texas!

Congratulations to Phylcia Ross!

I also want to take a moment for recognize Phylcia Ross, manager of member engagement and chapter support, for obtaining her **CAE** certification. Most of you may not know this, but the Certified Association Executive (CAE) credential is the marker of a committed association professional who has demonstrated the wide range of knowledge essential to manage an association in today's challenging environment. Phylcia, everyone at HQ is so proud of what you have accomplished!

