

# MUSICIANS IN PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT

JANUARY JUBILEE 2013: LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

Peter Bates



Christopher Cook leading his session

**T**HE COMMITTEE on Musicians in Part-Time Employment sponsored its third January Jubilee pilot program in Long Beach, Calif. This one-day conference featured workshops geared to assist organists at all skill levels. It was also an opportunity for the AGO to reach out to organists who are not members of the Guild. On January 26, 2013, a rare rainy day in southern California, 97 people gathered at Covenant Presbyterian Church to teach and to learn.

The day began with fellowship and continental breakfast during registration. The cost to attend the full day of activities was \$20, which included nourishment in the morning and a hot lunch. Following registration, participants adjourned to the sanctuary for a brief but inspiring service, which included joyful hymn singing, prayer, scripture, and a homily delivered by the Rev. Dr. Robert S. Langworthy, senior pastor of the host church.

Langworthy spoke about “Becoming What We Are Caught Up In,” suggesting that organists, like clergy, should strive for something bigger than themselves. In part, he said, “Our calling is to facilitate worship of God by creating beautiful and elevating music (and words). As we seek the highest and the best, the highest and the best also seeks us—and reshapes us into its likeness. As we draw close to what is beyond us, we absorb some of the divine glory and power, and we pass it on to people by what we offer in support of worship. . . . If we are preoccupied with little things—like being liked, admired, or recognized—we become smaller; and, paradoxically, in our smallness, we block out sightings of God and drown out the music of heaven. Conversely, if we are preoccupied with big things—like beauty, truth, and God—we are enlarged, and, paradoxically, in our enlargement, we fade into the background and connect people with

God. . . . Who we’ve become determines what we can accomplish. Attending to the highest and the best, we are uplifted, and our art becomes both elevated and elevating.”

Some participants (including the faculty of presenters) traveled great distances to participate in this exciting event. Four came from Texas (including two who attended January Jubilee 2012 in Albuquerque, N.Mex.), two from Nevada, and one from Ontario, Canada. John Walker, AGO vice president, flew from Baltimore, Md., to make his presentation and participate in the day.

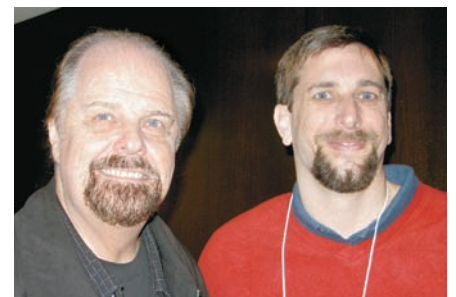
Although the host church possesses two fine pipe organs in its worship spaces, we supplemented those instruments with a Rodgers digital organ provided by Nelson Dodge, president of Church Keyboard Center in Pasadena. This organ was brought into the chapel and used for three of the four sessions held there. Break times and



Glendale Presbyterian organist MacKenzie Reed and former Glendale Presbyterian organist Mark Thallander



Chapter member Lee Lassetter



David Feit-Pretzer (Long Beach chapter dean) and Matthew Morrison

the lunch period offered an opportunity for attendees to try this new organ as well as visit a display of organ music provided by J.W. Pepper's Norwalk store. Most of the music demonstrated by the presenters was available (along with other organ music) for sale during the day.

January Jubilee 2013 offered ten workshops during four blocks of time. One negative comment heard throughout the day was that people had to choose between two, or sometimes three, wonderful sessions.

Morning sessions included the following: John Walker ("In Search of the Lost Chord—Creative Hymn and Service Playing") demonstrated ways of bringing new life to hymn playing. Robert Tall ("MIDI and the Modern Organ") addressed new and adventuresome sounds that can be created through MIDI connected to pipe and/or digital organs. Frederick Swann ("Adapting Piano/Orchestral Scores to the Organ") gave attendees the opportunity to hear our former national president share a lifetime of experience in oratorio and anthem accompaniment, demonstrating at the console how best to manage challenging piano reductions of orchestral scores. Christopher Cook ("Techniques for a Lifetime of Music Making") led a discussion on living your calling; keeping body, mind, and spirit together for the long haul; and creating good practice habits—spiritually, mentally, and physically.

Afternoon sessions included the following: Peter Fennema ("Organ Registration—Achieving the 'Right' Sound"), who is organist of Westwood United Methodist Church, where a large pipe organ has been augmented by a number of digital stops, gave a multimedia presentation on the process of selecting appropriate registrations. Hanan Yaqub and Frances Johnston ("The Art of Collaboration") discussed how organists and directors work together for the greater good of the choir and demonstrated how this collaboration works in their church's music ministry. January Jubilee 2013 host and coordinator



Peter Bates ("Music for Organ and Instruments"), along with five instrumentalists, presented some new and some unfamiliar music, scored for various instruments with organ, that is easily accessible. David York ("Accessible Organ Music") demonstrated a broad selection of organ music with minimal or no pedal part. Regional Councillor Leslie Wolf Robb ("Use of Technology") shared resources available on the Internet that makes the organist's jobs a lot easier. Former national AGO chaplain Rev. Gregory Norton and host church pastor Dr. Langworthy ("Pastor/Musician Relationships: Can't We All Just Get Along?") intriguingly discussed the

role of pastors and musicians working in the church and how to forge a good working relationship for the good of their congregations.

During the course of the day, participants had one-on-one access to members of the faculty in order to address more specific details pertaining to their own situations. One participant described the entire day as "pure joy," and many suggested this become an annual event. All in all, it was clear that a one-day forum such as this is needed and is a valuable use of time.

As coordinator for January Jubilee 2013, I am grateful for all the presenters who were so willing to give of their time, imparting their knowledge and experience to participants. When the blowers and amplifiers were shut down at the end of the day, the AGO gained seven new members through a program created by National to offer a free six-month membership in the Guild to any nonmember attending January Jubilee. This program also asks that the local chapter provide a mentor to each new member, in order to shepherd them into active participation and make them feel welcome at the local level.

We must also thank the officers, members, and friends of the Long Beach AGO Chapter who handled much of the behind-the-scenes work in preparation for the January Jubilee.



**Peter Bates, the Rev. Robert S. Langworthy (host pastor), and the Rev. Gregory Norton following discussion on "Pastor/Musician Relationships"**

**Peter Bates** is in his 16th year as minister of music and resident organist at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Long Beach, Calif.

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