



# American Guild of Organists

## Chapter Leadership News

January 2020

Happy New Year!

It is hard to believe that we have now entered the third decade of the 2000's. My wish for you is that 2020 will provide you with robust leadership, financial stability and many opportunities for membership growth and sustainability.

As we embark on the new year, I look forward to scheduling several chapter visits. If I can facilitate a strategic planning session, attend a board meeting or chapter event, please let me know as soon as possible. Meeting with AGO chapters is one of my most favorite jobs — so please don't be afraid to ask for a visit!

This issue will focus on:

- ✓ **Creative programming from the Holland Area Chapter**
- ✓ **Planning productive board meetings**
- ✓ **Los Angeles AGO's annual Christmas party**
- ✓ **Tips to bring in more volunteers**
- ✓ **AGO Philadelphia's Pedals, Pipes and Pizza**

Wishing everyone a happy, healthy and most successful 2020!



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## Clergy-Musician Forum

Rhonda Edgington, Holland (Mich.) Chapter Dean

Each year local clergy-musician teams are invited to speak to our chapter on the topic of musician-clergy relations. We approach those who we know have collegial and productive relationships. Often, they have worked together for quite a number of years. Each team has approached the assignment differently. Some have prepared a more formal presentation, while others prefer an informal conversational setting. This program provides attendees the opportunity to ask nitty-gritty questions about how clergy and church musicians work productively together, who picks the hymns, how often do they meet and how they plan the worship service. It's been great to hear healthy, happy examples from musicians and clergy who clearly respect and enjoy one another!

## Planning Strategic Board Meetings

Thank you for your responses to my question in last month's newsletter regarding how often your board meets. The majority of you meet monthly, as you believe it supports stronger communication. So, my next question to you is, are your board meetings productive? I hope the answer is "yes!" If, however, you are less than satisfied with what you are able to accomplish during your board meeting, please ask yourself these questions:

1. Is a board packet emailed a week prior to your meeting that includes the minutes from the previous meeting?
2. Does the packet also include updated financial and committee reports, enabling every officer to read them before the board meets?
3. Do your meetings last longer than 90 minutes and if so, is this because you find yourselves stuck having a "to-do" list of committee action items that takes up most of the time, leaving discussion of critical "new business" rushed and frustrating?

If you answered "no" to any of the above and "yes" to question #3, I encourage you to re-think about the way you are currently conducting your board meetings. Let's face it, between church jobs, day jobs, teaching, etc., the majority of you have minimal volunteer time, so when you do meet, your board needs to make this time as productive as possible. Utilizing a Consent Agenda (example follows) helps you to accomplish this.

**AGO Chapter Agenda  
Date and Time  
Location**

- I. Roll Call and Introduction of Guests**
  - a. Present
  - b. Absent
  - c. Do we have a quorum?
  
- II. Approval of Consent Agenda: all matters are considered to be routine and will be approved by 1 motion**
  - a. Motion to approve minutes from previous meeting (submitted prior to meeting for review)
  - b. Second
  - c. Discussion
  - d. Vote
  
- III. Approval of Monthly Financials**
  - a. Questions?
  - b. Motion to approve financials
  - c. Second
  - d. Discussion
  - e. Vote
  
- IV. Old Business**
  - a. Review of Committee reports (submitted prior to meeting for review).
    - i. Questions?
    - ii. Updates regarding works in progress
  
- V. New Business**
  
- VI. Open items – discussion**
  
- VII. Confirmation of date, time, location for next board meeting**
  
- VIII. Motion to adjourn**

A consent agenda provides approval of all routine matters within one motion. Using a consent agenda can save boards anywhere from a few minutes to half an hour and is an efficient tool to help boards make productive use of their meeting time. It moves routine items along quickly, so that the board has time for discussing more important issues, such as new business. Anyone may request to remove an item from a consent agenda. It's important to make sure that all board members understand the consent agenda process to help expedite the meeting. If a

board member needs clarification on a consent agenda item or if he/she just has a question, it should be asked to the appropriate member before everyone gets together. It is possible that others may have the same question, so this gives the member being asked, time to prepare an answer and distribute it to all, *prior* to the meeting. Problems in using a consent agenda occur when members approve consent agendas without first reviewing documents, such as financial reports, so it is very important to review all documents before you head to your board meeting.

**Chapter leaders: If you are not currently using a consent agenda, I encourage you to utilize one, so that every board meeting can be as productive as possible.**

## Los Angeles Christmas Party

Nelson Dodge, Los Angeles (Calif.) Chapter Dean



The 2019 annual Los Angeles Chapter's Christmas dinner is free for members and \$15 for guests and Los Angeles Theatre Organ Society members. For several years we have been using the proceeds from our endowment to subsidize the catering cost to keep the dinner price at a reasonable \$15 for non-members. We believe that attending the dinners is an important part of the membership experience and want to make it as accessible as possible. It's a

great way to engage chapter members, fostering collaboration with another industry organization and also provides the opportunity to recruit new members. More than 100 people attended this year's event that included a concert at the Founders Church of Religious Science with organists Rob Richards and Alex Zsolt playing a Wurlitzer/ Crome organ.

## Tips to Bring in More Volunteers

### **Tip #1: Build a team dedicated to improving the volunteer pool.**

Whatever you want to name it, use this team to seek "talent" (aka volunteers) and match them to "exciting opportunities" (aka jobs). Consider calling members to learn more about their skills and expertise, so that you can match them with something they will enjoy, based on your volunteer needs.

**Tip #2: Try Micro-volunteering.**

Members are busy and might not have the time to commit to a long-term volunteer program. “Micro-volunteering” is small, bite-sized volunteer opportunities that can take anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours to complete. Letting a volunteer know the estimated amount of time the task will take, makes it easier for them to commit.

**Tip #3: Make it easy for members to raise their hands.**

If members don’t know volunteer opportunities exist, they can’t sign up. Get the word out about volunteer activities at each chapter event, and then provide everyone an easy way to sign up while they are there. As well, acknowledge a “volunteer of the month” or MVP at your event, recognize their accomplishments on your website, Facebook page and in your newsletter. A little recognition can go a long way to making volunteers feel valued and appreciated and can also lay the groundwork to initiate a pipeline of future leaders.

**Tip #4: Highlight Volunteering’s “Member Value.”**

Paint a picture of what the volunteer role is along with the desired outcomes. Sell the value of volunteering and create a compelling list of benefits that always include “having fun!”

## Pedals, Pipes and Pizza in Philadelphia

### Philadelphia Chapter and The First Presbyterian Church in Germantown

This past November, I had the pleasure of attending my first ever *Pedals, Pipes and Pizza*. The event took place at the First Presbyterian Church in Germantown, home to the largest church organ in the Philadelphia area. I was astonished to learn that the organ console, which sits on a hydraulic lift, gives it the opportunity to elevate or descend to a lower level. The organ has more than 7,000 pipes!

The program attracted more than 60 people, including 25 children who were treated to some superb organ playing by Clara Gerdes, winner of the AGO/Quimby Mid-Atlantic Regional Competition for Young Organists and assistant organist at St. Bartholomew’s Church in New York City. The children received a tour of many areas of the church where the pipes are housed and those students who had brought sheet music, were encouraged to play their piano pieces on the organ. During their performances Clara utilized several different stops to demonstrate the variety and complexity of different sounds and tones that an organ can make to enhance a particular piece of music. To the amazement of everyone, one very enterprising young performer utilized technology, playing his sheet music from his iPhone.



Congratulations to Philadelphia Chapter Dean Douglas Backman, Sub-Dean Charles Grove, and F. Anthony Thurman, the AGO's director of development and Communications, who is also the church's music director and organist, for presenting such a lively and successful event. The chapter received some great coverage of the event from ABC Action News.



## Question of the Month:

**What is your chapter doing to grow your membership?**

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