



American Guild of Organists

Chapter Leadership News

May 2020

Dear Chapter Leaders,

Another month has gone by and most of us are still sheltering in place. Some of us have been fortunate enough to work from home; many of us are still adjusting to the new normal of how to successfully teach online classes and by now, several of us (if we haven't already) just might be ready to scream. I recently saw a T-shirt that said "what a week this year has been." Yes, it's true that "we are all in this together," however, I would like to add: "and we have the ability to change the world."

Words cannot express how deeply grateful I am to each of you who reached out to your members to find out how they were doing and to let them know that you cared about them. Much of this newsletter, or should I say love letter, will be focused on acknowledging as many as of you as I can by posting the feedback you shared and sharing how you strengthened your connection to your members.

This issue will cover:

- ✓ **Members connecting with members**
- ✓ **Greater Hartford Chapter Member Relief Fund**
- ✓ **ONCARD and Impexium updates**
- ✓ **Annual FTC information**
- ✓ **Payroll scam targeting churches**
- ✓ **RCYO Chapter Competitions**
- ✓ **Free access to the Royal College of Organists website**



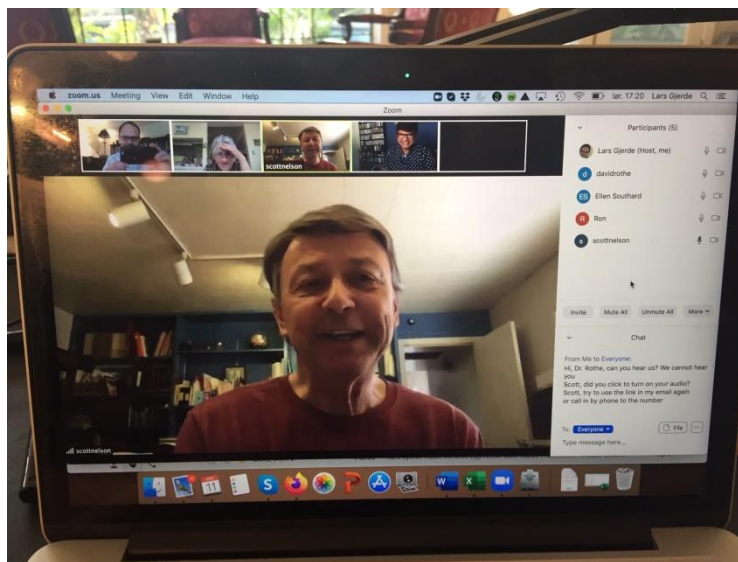
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Chapters Staying Connected to Their Members

Member feedback from Cathie Ruppi, Dean of the Northern New Jersey chapter regarding member care calls:

- *Members are concerned whether there will be a job when they return.*
- *Concern was shared regarding getting paid for a church using archival recordings; YouTube recordings.*
- *Dealing with online worship; using prerecorded and live streamed music for weekly services. Getting used to technology: iPad, smartphones, zoom choirs.*
- *Wondering when we will get back to actually seeing each other.*
- *What will we do to plan fall music programs?*

Photo of members signing on for AGO Sacramento's First Online Happy Hour



An excerpt from chapter dean Ron Sidhu's, Dean's Message:

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.

From the Baltimore Chapter's April Pipes & Pedals, President's Message

Henry J. Lowe:

So, the question, "are we shut down?" continues to loom. Our world, as we have known it, is feeling somewhat that way. But I submit that we, as ministers of music are not shut down. However, we need to rethink how we can channel our energy and efforts to those who are in such profound need. My prayer for everyone, but particularly those in our chapter, is for your safety and good health, along with your steadfastness in helping to heal our troubled and broken world. Yes, this is perhaps a tall order, but I feel confident that it is not an unrealistic goal.

Update from Roberta Rowland-Raybold, Dean, Grand Strand Chapter:

I have had such a wonderful response from the Jackie Lawson e-card that I sent to the choir members and musicians in my church (this allows you enough space to write a long note to everyone), that I will also be sending this card out to all of our AGO members during Holy Week. Staying connected is paramount.

From Jane Otte, Dean, Southern Illinois Chapter:

We are a small chapter with 41 members. I have heard from 38 members. This "heard from" includes phone calls, texts, and e-mails. I think that is pretty good! Everyone is doing well. They are taking care of themselves. Some are playing services, but the majority, are not. Honestly, I am impressed with the oldest members. They have grit. They are all living alone and are determined to make the most of this situation. They are amazing.

Greater Hartford Chapter Member Relief Fund

Vaughn Mauren, Dean, notified me that last month the Greater Hartford Chapter set up a relief fund for their members. They chose to repurpose \$15,000, originally appropriated as a grant towards the Albert Schweitzer Organ Festival Hartford (now postponed to 2021). He shared that the applications speak to two challenges: those who have lost income from regular Sunday morning positions, and members who've lost significant income from supplemental freelance work, critical to bridging a gap between full-time salaries and making ends meet. As of mid-April they had received six applications for the one-time \$500 payment. The chapter hopes this might inspire other chapters to do something similar, perhaps by repurposing money that had been budgeted for cancelled events and recitals. Congratulations to Vaughn and his board for seizing this opportunity to provide for their members in need!

Antitrust Compliance and Chapter Certification

In 2017 the AGO agreed to change its Code of Ethics, and will not adopt or encourage its members to follow or enforce any Code of Ethics provision relating to limitations on competition by organists or choral conductors to provide services, including price competition, that does not comply with the FTC Decision and Order. It is important that you annually review the AGO Chapter Certification form with your executive committee, to ensure your chapter is in compliance with it. This document can be found on our website [here](#).

Payroll Scam Targeting Churches

Wanda Griffiths, Seattle chapter officer, recently shared information regarding a new payroll scam that is targeting churches. One of their members posted to their Facebook page that someone emailed their church administrator making it appear that it came from Wanda.

Hi [name omitted for privacy reasons] I wish to change my banking information before the next payroll is completed. What details do you need?

The administrator believed that this email had been sent from Wanda but (fortunately) did not respond. She contacted Wanda a week later saying she needed Wanda's new payroll information. Wanda was confused, as she had not changed anything and wanted to know why they needed this information. The administrator went back to the email in question and although it looked and sounded completely legal, when she took a closer look at the email address, she realized that it was a fake one. Emails and contact information can be accessed from public websites, such as church websites. Please inform your own church administrators that this is happening and ask that they should very carefully look at the email address. Thank you, Wanda!

Using ONCARD for Renewals and Impexium Software Update

By the order of our governor, the AGO office in Manhattan has been closed since mid-March. AGO staff are now working from home and as I write this newsletter, we are uncertain when we will be able to return to our office. Mail is being held, therefore, if a check for membership renewal is sent to our office, we will not be able to process it in a timely manner. We have extended a member's expiration date with a three month grace period, however, when a membership becomes inactive, it will result in suspended delivery of TAO. During this time, we urge you to encourage your members to renew their membership by credit card, utilizing

ONCARD. A video with instructions on how to renew through ONCARD can be found [here](#). Please let everyone know that if they are not comfortable using ONCARD through our website, our member services team is here to help! Please call 212-870-2311 and follow the voicemail prompts. We are most happy to help in processing anyone's membership renewal by credit card!

I also want to update everyone that the AGO has decided not to move forward in migrating our database to Impexium software. We do not feel that Impexium will adequately serve our large chapter structure, and most importantly, serve *your chapter's needs*. I look forward to keeping you updated, as we continue to research other membership software that will provide the capabilities needed to service 287 chapters and their members and leaders.

RCYO Chapter Competitions

The RCYO competitions are held in odd-numbered years, in two separate stages. The 2021 competitions will be administered by various chapters in each of the seven regions of the American Guild of Organists. After winners have been identified, they will then compete at the 2021 regional conventions, where winners will be awarded.

Chapter competitions will be added to the AGO national website page as the applications are received. The Chapter Application Form for hosting a 2021 chapter competition can be found [here](#).

Technology Webinar Scheduled for May 15th

The response from chapter leaders to the "Online Meeting Tools" webinar was so positive, that we have scheduled another technology webinar. "Successful Online Streaming to Avoid Online Screaming," will be presented on Friday, May 15th at 3:30 pm ET. This will cover options for streaming from a home office or recording from a church and will address the software and hardware needed to produce both successfully. Do not worry if you are unable to attend the webinar, as it will be recorded and uploaded to the Chapter Leadership Toolkits on our website.

Royal College of Organists Provides Free Access to iRCO Web Site

During the UK's lockdown period, and at least until the end of June, the Royal College of Organists (RCO) is generously giving everyone free access to iRCO, its outstanding website. The RCO, which operates without a national office,

describes iRCO as, “the College’s virtual campus – an online environment where members and guest users can explore and engage with a wide range of resources.”

Launched in 2016 under the banner ‘the first stop for every organist,’ iRCO encompasses a broad mix of material and services. In a recent conversation with AGO Executive Director James Thomashower, RCO Chief Executive Andrew Parmley enumerated the range of resources available at the iRCO site, which include educational materials, examination materials, films, “lockdown learning,” webinars and the RCO Journal. Many more such resources are currently being developed as part of the response to the lockdown.

Access to the iRCO is normally available only to dues paying members of the RCO. However, the RCO has offered to make available to all AGO members full access to the iRCO at a special discounted rate of £25 per year (approximately \$31) when the RCO reintroduces its pay wall. The AGO National Council warmly embraced this offer and in exchange will provide RCO members with access to the online edition of TAO for the same rate. The logistics necessary to achieve this collaboration are currently being studied pursuant to their implementation.

To learn more about the iRCO, visit their welcome page here:

<https://www.rco.org.uk/irco.php>

For complimentary access to the iRCO site while it is temporarily open to all, create your own user id and password by logging in here: <https://i.rco.org.uk/>

Question of the Month:

If chapters are still unable to meet face-to-face in the fall, what topics and/or workshops would you like the AGO to produce that could be used for monthly online programming?



Let's stay safe, stay well and stay connected!