



AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

## Chapter Leadership News

February 2022

### Dealing with Disruption

Dear Chapter Leaders,

Omicron has thrown another wrench into our work and lives. In reading your daily emails regarding having to cancel Twelfth Night parties and postpone in-person workshops and recitals, I feel so badly for you and can truly sense your frustration! After Christmas Eve services at my church, the director of music ministries caught Omicron from our rector, and the decision was made to cancel choir for the month of January. Trying to find rapid-test kits has been a nightmare in south Florida, as I'm sure it has been for many of you. It's times like these that make you want to pull your hair out and just start screaming. So, how do we handle working in an environment that just keeps throwing us curveballs? I don't have all the answers, but I can tell you that, for me, doing yoga every morning with meditation, praying, staying closely in touch with my friends and family, and having the occasional adult beverage have all helped. What has kept me truly motivated during these difficult times has been speaking with so many of you and being able to join some of your board meetings on Zoom. Collaborating with staff planning Leadership 2022 has kept me on my toes. I am very psyched about this upcoming event. Utilizing Airmeet, our new meeting software, will easily foster chapter leader discussions, and I am very excited about the amazing keynote speakers who have been scheduled. I believe they will truly inspire you. In closing, they say laughter is the best medicine. Two years ago, at the onset of the pandemic, Stewart P. Holmes, chapter administrator, webmaster, and newsletter editor for Northern New Jersey, sent me a link to a video he had recorded. It still makes me laugh: <https://tinyurl.com/spholmes/>.

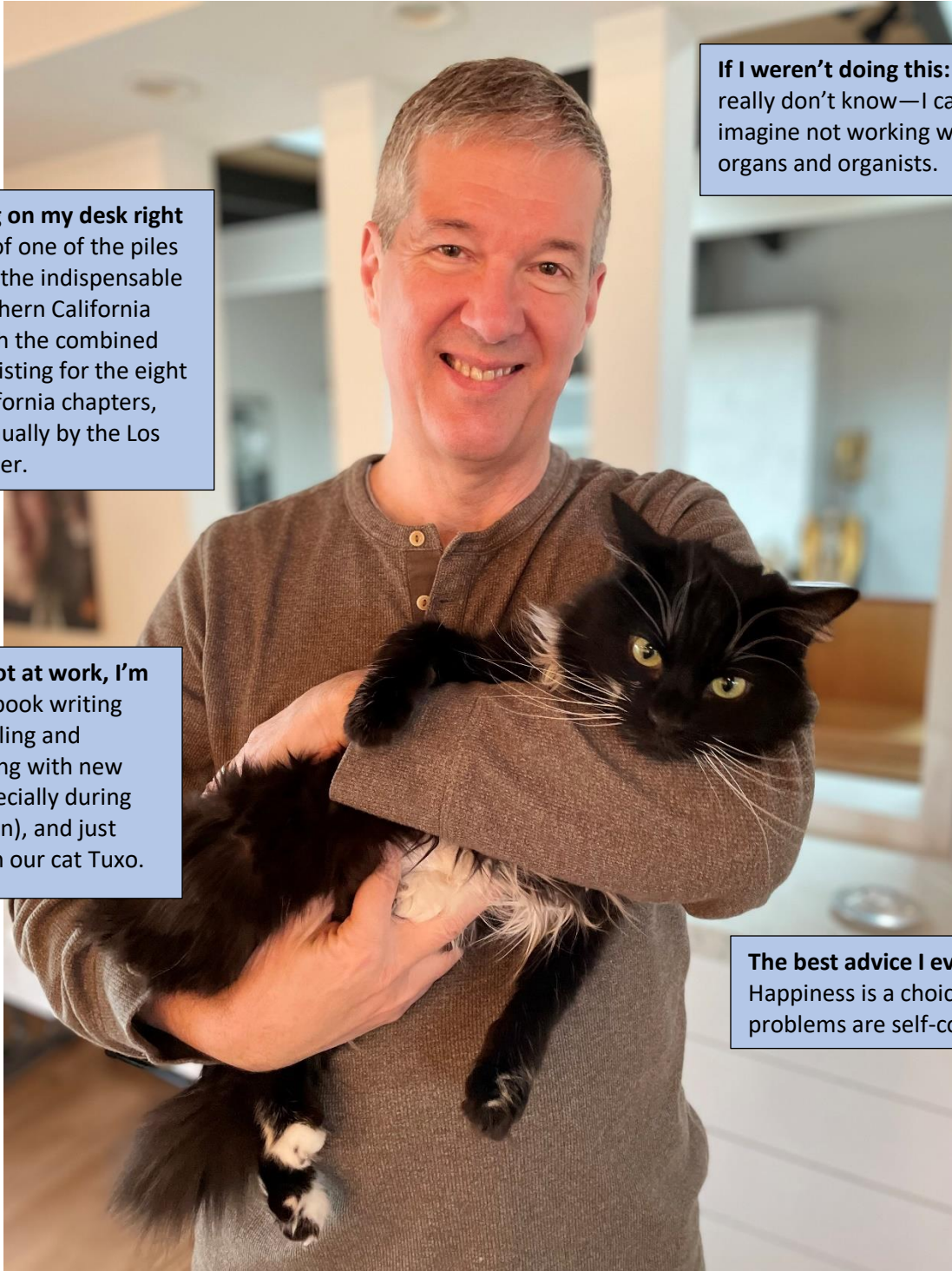
This issue of **Chapter Leadership News** will cover the following:

- ✓ Leadership Profile: Nelson Dodge, Dean, Los Angeles Chapter
- ✓ Leadership 2022: Experiencing the New Age of Volunteer Leadership
- ✓ Year of the Young Organist Recruitment Tip #8
- ✓ Upcoming Webinars
- ✓ Promoting Your Code of Ethics to Boost Member Retention and Recruitment
- ✓ Growing the Guild, Nick Martellacci, Brooklyn Chapter
- ✓ Woman Composer Sunday
- ✓ Northern New Jersey's OrgelKit Visit



Elizabeth George, CMM  
Chief Membership Officer  
American Guild of Organists  
[elizabeth.george@agohq.org](mailto:elizabeth.george@agohq.org)  
212-870-2311 ext. 4307

## Nelson Dodge, Dean, Los Angeles Chapter



**What's sitting on my desk right now:** On top of one of the piles on my desk is the indispensable 2021–22 Southern California Directory, with the combined membership listing for the eight Southern California chapters, published annually by the Los Angeles chapter.

**If I weren't doing this:** I really don't know—I can't imagine not working with organs and organists.

**When I'm not at work, I'm** working on book writing projects, grilling and experimenting with new recipes (especially during the shutdown), and just relaxing with our cat Tuxo.

**The best advice I ever got:** Happiness is a choice. Many problems are self-correcting.

**What keeps me motivated serving as chapter dean:** The realization that there is always more that we can be doing as a chapter to benefit, support, and provide opportunities for our members.



A lot has happened over the past two years that has radically impacted the leadership capabilities of chapter boards. Leadership 2022 will focus on revisiting your current board structure and identifying ways to help you work *smarter*—not harder! Each night there will be multiple opportunities for peer-to-peer networking that will address every facet of what it takes to help you support your chapter and engage your members.



**Sunday, February 6, Keynote Speaker: Rev. Dr. Andrea C. White**  
***Practicing Justice with Pedals, Pipes, and Stops***

Rev. Dr. Andrea C. White is associate professor of theology and culture at Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, where she teaches womanist theology and philosophy of religion. She is chair of the Columbia University Senate’s Commission on Diversity. Dr. White has served as executive director of the Society for the Study of Black Religion and chair of the American Academy of Religion’s unit in Black theology. Prior to her appointment at Union, she served on the faculty of Emory University’s Candler School of Theology and in the Department of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. She holds a PhD from the University of Chicago, a Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School, and a bachelor of arts from Oberlin College.

**Monday, February 7, Keynote Speaker:**  
**Arreon A. Harley-Emerson**

A native of Baltimore, Arreon A. Harley-Emerson was appointed director of music and operations of the Choir School of Delaware in June 2013. In this position, he is responsible for the musical components of the renowned choir school program, as well as day-to-day operations of the organization.



Committed to the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB), Mr. Harley-Emerson has established a thriving consultancy, Equity Sings, to assist arts and culture nonprofit organizations in remaining relevant in the 21st century. His work includes longitudinal studies, strategic planning, board excellence training, resource and asset development, and board diversification. Mr. Harley-Emerson currently serves as national chair of the American Choral Directors Association's Diversity Initiatives Committee. An active resident of the Wilmington, Delaware, community, Mr. Harley-Emerson is on the Delaware Arts Alliance's board of directors, where he serves as president of the board and chairs the Advancement Committee, which is tasked with fundraising, development, and DEIB initiatives.

**Virtual table topics will include the following:**

Extra-Small Chapters: Transitioning to AGO Membership Communities

The Benefits of Chapter Mergers

Small, Medium, and Large Chapter Discussions

Creating Board Policies and Operating Procedures

New Member Onboarding

For Chapter Deans:

Running Productive Board Meetings

Dealing with Conflict/Resolution

Dealing with Difficult Board Members

Redefining Members at Large: Put Them to Use!

Finance

Technology

Chapter Administration Wants and Needs

Using Social Media as a Marketing Tool

Keeping Your Members Engaged

Ideas for Unique Chapter Programs

Successful Chapter Collaborations

Diversity in Your Programming and on Your Board

Retaining Your New Young Organist Members

Inclusivity: Welcoming All to Your Chapter

Revisioning Your Chapter: If You Could Start Over Today, What Would It Look Like?

Chapter Achievement Awards and AGO Certifications

Successful Scholarship Programs

Creating a Chapter Ambassador Program

Developing a Leadership Pipeline


[Click here](#) to begin the registration process. Once you have submitted your email, you will receive a **unique link** to fully complete your registration. We recommend that you copy your unique link to your calendar, so that it will be easy to join the conference each night.

Additional details, including handouts, conference schedule, and instructions on using Airmeeet, can be found [here](#).



**The Year of the Young Organist  
Chapter Recruitment Contest  
Win \$1000 for Your Chapter!**

Beginning July 1, 2021, and ending June 30, 2022, how many young organists can you recruit? Each month, we will be sending you a *new recruitment tip* to help your chapter recruit as many young organists as possible. We've created a page on our website that will include each tip and additional resources: <https://www.agohq.org/year-of-the-young-organist-recruitment-contest-2/>.



**SEA 2022**

**AGO Young Organist Scholarships 2022**

The Young Organist Steering Committee is proud to announce the offer of \$10,000 worth of scholarships to the 2022 National Convention of the American Guild of Organists, thanks to the generosity of the Houston Chapter. These scholarships will cover Registration, Lodging assistance in the convention hotel, and Transportation during the convention.

Submissions (in PDF form) are due March 15th, 2022, and will be anonymously evaluated. Those with the highest ranking essays will be awarded scholarships, and will be notified no later than April 1, 2022. Recipients will have until April 7th, 2022, to accept their scholarship. Unclaimed and forfeited scholarships will be given to those with the next-highest ranked essays.


Please contact us with any questions at [info@ago22yo.org](mailto:info@ago22yo.org)

Go to [ago22yo.org](http://ago22yo.org) for the submission form.

Applicants must be between the ages of 16 and 29 at the time of application, must be full-time students, and must write a brief (250-500 words) essay outlining the following, preferably written using a professionally recognized writing style of your choosing :

- 1) Briefly discuss your past and current organ studies.
- 2) Why would attending this convention be beneficial for your professional development as a young musician?
- 3) Which events at a convention would you most like to attend? What makes the national convention more appealing to you as a young artist as compared with regional or denominational convention?
- 4) Provide an explanation of your financial need.

Submit applications at [ago22yo.org](http://ago22yo.org). Email applications will not be accepted.



**TIP #8:** The Young Organist Steering Committee of the National Convention in Seattle is offering \$10,000 in scholarships for AGO young organists to attend the convention. Details and an application form can be found at <https://www.agohq.org/scholarships/> . Be sure to include this promotion and application link on your Facebook page, website, and newsletter, and share the link when contacting local teachers and colleagues.

**As of January 13, we have welcomed 530 new Young Organist members!**

**Currently in the Lead:**

**Small Chapter:** Central North Carolina has a net growth of nine new young organists.

**Medium Chapter:** Denver Rocky Mountain has a net growth of twelve new young organists.

**Large Chapter:** Los Angeles has a net growth of twelve new young organists.

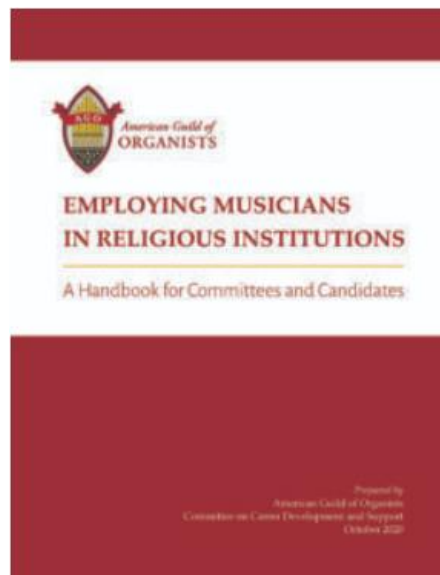
# Upcoming Webinars

Monday, January 23, 7:00 p.m. EST

Using the New “Employing Musicians” Handbook:

## Your Compensation Package

In this discussion, moderated by councillor for membership Vicki Schaeffer, members of the Committee on Career Development and Support will address all the elements necessary to help you evaluate, propose, and research the data for your compensation. Participating from the committee will be Nicole Cochran, Doris Dabrowski, Andrew Johnson, Anthony Rispo, and AGO executive assistant Eric Birk. Please register [here](#).



## Promoting Your Code of Ethics to Boost Recruitment and Retention

I recently read a great article published by Community Brands that made me think about how important it is to promote the AGO code of ethics with our members.

The AGO **Code of Ethics** and **Code of Professional Standards** can both be accessed [here](#).

A code of ethics

- ✓ Provides a common set of rules or standards for all in the profession to adhere to
- ✓ Defines best practices for the profession
- ✓ Provides a basis to meet compliance requirements for the profession
- ✓ Provides a legal standard for the profession
- ✓ Provides a “seal of approval” that those outside the profession can look for when using/selecting our services

The AGO’s Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Standards can be used as part of your new member onboarding process. It can be inserted into your newsletter to remind your members of the importance of ethical and professional behavior. It can be particularly useful to refer to if there is conflict on your board or if others are not acting in a professional manner. If you haven’t referred to it for quite some time, I suggest that you add it to your agenda and discuss both codes at your next board meeting.

## A Reminder to Chapter Deans and Treasurers

Please remember your chapter’s Annual Fund contribution for 2021–22. All gifts received by August 31 will be reported in the December issue of *The American Organist*. If you have any questions about your chapter’s current or past giving history, please contact Tony Thurman, chief development officer, at [tony@agohq.org](mailto:tony@agohq.org) or 212-870-2311, ext. 4308.

## Growing the Guild, Nick Martellacci, Brooklyn Chapter Registrar

*Nick Martellacci, Brooklyn chapter registrar, recently wrote an article in the chapter's newsletter about the importance of inclusivity in growing your membership. I'd like to share some excerpts from it.*

Toward the end of 2019, the question arose during a Brooklyn board meeting: "If there are close to 200 Roman Catholic churches in Brooklyn, why do we have so few of their parish musicians in the Brooklyn AGO?" I know the answer to that question. Because before I started high school I was your typical post-Vatican II Roman Catholic parish organist. Before continuing, I acknowledge that the AGO is not a Roman Catholic organization and that membership is open to all organists. I used Roman Catholic churches as a reference because (a) that was the denomination singled out in our board discussion, and (b) as I also stated, I grew up in the Roman church. I'm sure what I'm about to share applies to my fellow organists in all denominations. Also, colleague Steve Frank, who reviewed this article, pointed out that Brooklyn is known as the "Borough of Churches," with over 700 houses of worship. This even higher number of churches, when compared to our membership roster, once again begs the question, "Why aren't there more members in our chapter?"

How do we make room in the Guild to welcome church musicians of modest skills into our ranks? Consider carefully before you answer. If we welcome all to our chapters, we must be willing to accept the fact that our fellow organists may see no reason to "improve," because they believe they're already doing a good job. We need to craft articles and offer workshops that will be useful for them, without us sounding like we're talking down to them. When soliciting these organists as potential Guild members, our message should be, "We're here to help all our fellow organists. Is there anything you could use to help you do your job better?" And we must be comfortable when the reply that comes back is "No thanks. I'm good."

I want to state clearly, I am not in any way disparaging these organists who have been appointed without the benefit of formal lessons. What I'm hoping to do is offer the Guild officers tasked with growing our numbers a realistic picture of a large part of the organ world. Talk about competitions, tracker touch, commissioned works, and certification programs, and the listener will either walk away or look at you like you're speaking a foreign language—because to him/her, you are! When I took over as registrar of the Brooklyn chapter, I reached out to organists whose memberships had lapsed within the previous twelve months. One former member replied by explaining his current job as organist at a Unitarian church. For him, Sunday music could be anything from conducting a four-part choir anthem to playing jazz piano with the praise band. The beautiful instrument in the organ loft rarely gets used, and no one in the congregation seems to mind. Based on this reality, keeping up his membership in the chapter was not of value to him. As he put it, "I can't use what you're offering." Can't use what we're offering? I found this reply equally upsetting and useful. Upsetting, because I didn't have a Guild-positive counterargument ready. Useful, because I didn't have a Guild-positive counterargument ready, and I realized that before we can do any kind of mass-marketing campaign, either at the chapter or national level, we need to do our homework. Otherwise, we'll forever be what one friend calls us: a very expensive magazine subscription.

I applaud the Guild's programs for finding and guiding new talent: Pipe Organ Encounters, Pedals, Pipes & Pizza, Organ for Pianists workshops, and the Committee on the New Organist. Efforts such as these

will serve as feeder programs to find and train the next generation of organists, not to mention chapter leaders. The organists I'm focusing on in this article are keyboard players who "fell into" their church jobs without the benefit of formal training on the organ.

So, what is our elevator speech? What can we say in 90 seconds to justify paying dues to the AGO, especially when many of our colleagues are not being paid for their time and efforts? What benefits, other than collegiality, come with membership? How do we sell ourselves when the customer tells us, "But I just play hymns on Sunday morning. Everyone seems to like what I'm doing." The organ world, like the world of crossword enthusiasts, has room for all types of players. Some crossword fans enjoy the puzzle in *Reader's Digest*; others are only satisfied working out the *New York Times* Sunday puzzle in ink without the aid of a dictionary. Some organists are satisfied playing hymns; others, Baroque masterworks played with historical fingering and pedaling; still others strive to conquer Messiaen's massive *Dieu parmi nous* or the F-sharp-major pedal scales in Franck's *Grand Piece symphonique*. Each goal is worthwhile, and making a person feel "less than" for liking what they like is the surest way to keep our numbers small and have nonmembers call us out for being elitist.

**Nick's Elevator Speech:** *The AGO is an association of organists, each of whom is striving to become the best musician possible, to better serve the congregation that's engaged us and honor the Creator who gifted us with our talent. We fund programs aimed at skill building for our current members, as well as programs to promote the instrument to the next generation of organists. Last, but certainly not least, we occasionally get to socialize and make music together.*

## Woman Composer Sunday, March 6, 2022



The AGO, the Society of Women Organists (SWO), and the Royal College of Organists (RCO) will celebrate Woman Composer Sunday on March 6, 2022, as a lead-in to International Women's Day on March 8. Join in the celebration! Plan to program at least one piece of choral or organ music by a woman composer during your Sunday church service, or at any other time during that weekend, and help to highlight the talents of women in advance of International Women's Day (March 8). If possible, upload your performance on social media with the hashtags **#WomanComposerSunday** and **#SWomenOrganists**.

Lists of repertoire suggestions can be found [here](#) and [here](#).



## The Northern New Jersey Chapter's OrgelKit



This past year, the Northern New Jersey chapter purchased a small two-rank tracker instrument, an Orgelkids organ. Most recently, chapter administrator Stewart Holmes, who is also a retired fifth-grade teacher, returned to his school to teach the kids about the pipe organ, something he has done since he came to Northern New Jersey 33 years ago. However, this time, he had the chapter's wonderful OrgelKit to help explain how a pipe organ is constructed. Stewart shared that, since then, they have used the kit in various churches, with children actually constructing the organ and then playing it.

## Stylish and Safe COVID Protection That Also Promotes the AGO

The AGO store now has masks that you can purchase. Our masks have three layers, are washable and durable, have a wire insert around the nose, and are extremely comfortable to wear for long periods of time. They can be purchased from the [AGO store on our website](#) for \$10 each.

Please send me photos of you wearing the mask, so that I can share them in future issues of this newsletter!

