



AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

## Chapter Leadership News

July 2022

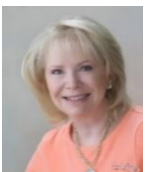
### Merci, Grazie, Gracias, Domo Arigato, Vielen Dank, Thank You!

Dear Chapter Leaders,

As many of you are preparing for officer installations, it's important that we take a moment to recognize outgoing leadership. I'm sure that many of you who are leaving are breathing a sigh of relief. I don't blame you. You haven't had it easy. I can't keep up with the number of new COVID variants we've had while you were in office. A few of you decided to take a sabbatical; however, the majority of you kept going, using Zoom to stay connected to your members, producing online workshops, and presenting recordings of recitals. To paraphrase Plato: "Necessity is the mother of invention." When something becomes imperative, you are forced to find ways of achieving it—which is what the Portland chapter was able to accomplish, as shared in this newsletter. You made lemonade out of lemons and proudly served it to your members. In spite of experiencing resilience fatigue, you recognized your new young organists through presenting virtual recitals, hosting special dinners in their honor, and featuring them in your newsletters. As I write this, I am thrilled to tell you that during this Year of the Young Organist <https://www.agohq.org/year-of-the-young-organist-recruitment-contest-2/>, we have recruited 774 new young members and reinstated 358 individuals who had not been members for some time. We surpassed my personal goal of recruiting 1,000 new organists! Additionally, we have renewed 488 young organist members. This would not have been possible without your hard work, fortitude, and dedication. Please give yourselves a hand. You deserve it! I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for all that you have achieved. You are not just survivors; you are winners. So, I will end by asking each of you: What do you want your legacy of leadership to be? My hope is that you have paved the way for those now following you, and that you realize that the initiatives you worked on that may not have happened this year, will come to fruition in the future.

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

- ✓ Leadership Profile: Elizabeth Wong, Dean, Hong Kong Chapter
- ✓ Fox Valley's "Simply Splendiferous" Visit with Jan Kraybill
- ✓ June 30 Deadline to Update Your New Officer Roster in ONCARD
- ✓ Chapter Visits and Anniversary Celebrations
- ✓ Southern Illinois Chapter's Collaboration with the SIU Music Festival
- ✓ Programs in a Box
- ✓ Portland (Oreg.) Chapter Programming in the Time of COVID—Take 2
- ✓ Leadership Mondays in the AGO's Online Social Lounge



Elizabeth George, CMM  
Chief Membership Officer  
American Guild of Organists

## Profile of the Month: Elizabeth Wong, Dean of the Hong Kong Chapter

**What's sitting on my desk right now:** A laptop and piles of paper. Music school never told me that I would spend more time at my desk than on the bench after I graduated.

**If I weren't doing this, I'd be** on the bench teaching or practicing; contacting and staying in touch with friends, family, and chapter-related contacts.

**When I'm not at work,** I'm watching tennis, playing with my dogs, having good food. No music!

**The best advice I ever got:** When you dream, dream big.



**What keeps me motivated serving as chapter dean:** I want to promote the pipe organ back home and share my experience with them, training and teaching the next generation, and the next, continuing the tradition of good organ music, both at church and in the concert hall.

## Fox Valley Chapter's Visit with Jan Kraybill



*Fox Valley dean Mark Downey shared the following in the most recent chapter newsletter.*

The rector at my former church would often come up to me after a special liturgy or program, extend his hand, and proclaim, "Mark, that was simply splendid!" I admit that I'd never heard that expression before, but it has always remained in the back of my brain as something to say when a truly memorable occasion has occurred. The word *splendid* implies a level of perfection, and I think this evening came as close as one could hope! On May 20, 42 members of the Fox Valley chapter gathered for prayer, conversation, fellowship, outstanding food and wine, and most importantly, the opportunity to hear one of the most accomplished organists of our time, Jan Kraybill. Her performance was musically satisfying—and significantly better than sipping some Eagle Rare with just one round ice cube. She is personable, friendly, and

engaging. However, I think her best trait is her ability to make the music come alive. She bares her soul when she performs. She feels the music and tells a story every time she plays! There were times when I didn't think the Annual Meeting and Dinner would ever return. May 20 is a day I will not soon forget.



### Reminder: Update Your Officer Roster in ONCARD by June 30!

We realize that you may not have a full list of new officers by June 30 because of having to delay your chapter elections; however, **if you have confirmed one officer**, such as your registrar, for the new year of leadership, please ask them to update their information in ONCARD, so that you will have an active officer in your chapter who can receive important communications from AGO Headquarters. If you need a refresher on how to access membership reports, Molly Davey, education program manager, did a great PowerPoint presentation that can be accessed in the Chapter Leadership Toolkits under the ONCARD membership menu <http://bitly.ws/s9Cr>.

Please continue to retrieve your member roster from ONCARD each month to review the list of active members, as well as those who have canceled. Identify new members who need a welcome call or email, remind members to renew, and don't forget to reach out to previous members to encourage them to rejoin your chapter!

## Chapter Visits

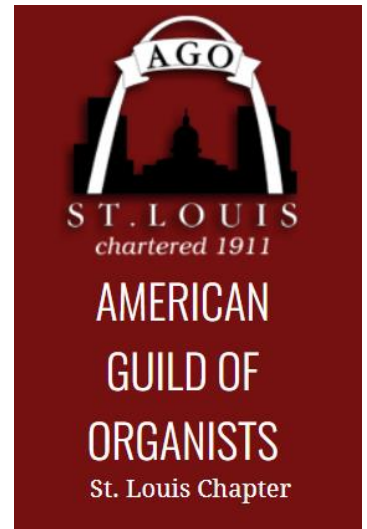


### Palm Beach County Chapter Member Recital

On Sunday, May 22, I had the pleasure of attending the Palm Beach County chapter's member recital. This much anticipated program took place at a renowned Palm Beach Episcopal church, **Bethesda-by-the-Sea**. Each year, the recital not only attracts chapter members and church parishioners but also is recognized as a not-to-be-missed event by those who live in the area.

The program featured diverse repertoire by Florence Price, Dvořák, Bach, Hebble, Pelz, Langlais, Frey, and chapter sub-dean Phil Lehenbauer. It culminated with chapter member Michael Murray requesting that the audience text him a favorite hymn for improvisation. "All Creatures of Our God and King" was the winner, and for the next five minutes Michael's improvisation showcased an amazing variety of styles; he eventually brought down the house. I suggest that next time, rather than using a basket for donations, chapter members consider placing a large tip jar on the console. This organization is blessed not only with the dedicated leadership of dean Jan Fulford but also with some extraordinary organists.

The following morning, I made a whirlwind visit to the St. Louis chapter to speak at their annual banquet and meeting. This was the first time I had ever visited St. Louis, and Burnell Hackman, former dean and coordinator for the 2026 National Convention, gave me a fabulous tour of the city. We visited the Gateway Arch, venues for convention recitals, the host hotel, and Forest Park, one of the largest urban parks in the United States. As a former New Yorker, I couldn't imagine anything being larger than Central Park; however, this park is 1,300 acres and features the Muny, the largest outdoor musical theatre in the country. It was an honor to meet so many talented and devoted members at the banquet. I encourage you to mark July 6–10, 2026, in your calendars, for what I know will be a thrilling national convention.





I want to thank Burnell Hackman for rolling out the red carpet, and St. Louis members for making me feel so welcome!

## Nassau Chapter Celebrates Its 90th Birthday



On Friday, May 13, Phylcia Ross, manager of member engagement and chapter development, visited the Nassau (N.Y.) chapter, to present them with a certificate honoring their 90th anniversary. Their celebration included a special recital by Peter Richard Conte, Wanamaker Grand Court Organist and a Nassau native. Congratulations to the Nassau chapter—here's to another wonderful 90 years!



## Programs in a Box

Each month, we will be providing you with ideas, tools, and resources that you can use for a monthly chapter program. We welcome suggestions for future programs in a box!

Host a chapter watch party on Zoom. The AGO's Committee on Career Development and Support recently presented an outstanding webinar that received wonderful member feedback. **Know Your Skill Set: Job Searches and Job Descriptions** discussed how to read between the lines of job descriptions, to fully understand and be prepared for your interview. It discussed calculating your weekly hours and identifying specific skills outlined in the job description that you should highlight in your cover letter. It's a remarkable webinar that will prompt lively discussions among your members. You can view the recording [here](#) and download the **Employing Musicians in Religious Institutions** handbook [here](#).

## Southern Illinois Chapter Partners with the Southern Illinois University Music Festival

Congratulations to the Southern Illinois chapter for its collaboration with the Southern Illinois University Music Festival, which took place on June 7 at Shryock Auditorium and featured Michael Hey in concert. Over 100 people attended the program. The chapter's great PR efforts prompted a local TV station, KFVS, to schedule a live interview with Hey.

<https://www.kfvs12.com/2022/06/06/st-patricks-cathedral-organist-perform-siuc/>



AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

*Welcome to the City of Roses*

## Portland (Oreg.) Chapter Programming in the Time of COVID— Take 2

By Susan R. Werner Reiser, Dean

The COVID-19 pandemic initiated a wave of changes to churches and music organizations that we had not expected and were unprepared to address. In March 2020, as the virus spread, we thought this would be a short-term disruption in our worship practices, public concerts, and recitals. As the number of cases grew, it became apparent that we had no idea how long this would last or when a vaccine would become available.

This had us looking for ways to replace in-person musical events. We had to cancel our annual Bach-a-thon, a live three-hour event that was the main fundraiser for our Organ Lessons Scholarship. When the virus showed no signs of waning, we also had to cancel our April and May programming due to the closure of our churches. We ended our 2019–20 program year with a whimper.

I was elected sub-dean in June and was handed the programming that had been planned for the 2020–21 season from the outgoing sub-dean. In July, I concluded that we would never be able to do any of the fall programming in the original plan without modifications. The PAGO board typically does not meet in June and July, but I asked the dean, Walter Krueger, if we could meet to discuss our programming for the fall. That meeting was key to identifying how we could produce a virtual program year for chapter members. This brainstorming event provided ideas for prerecorded programs that we could produce if the pandemic continued. We were truly fortunate that the churches our board members serve had invested in equipment that enabled them to livestream and prerecord worship. In addition, our webmaster/media board member was knowledgeable and experienced in video and audio recording.

Working in small groups, we created a program year that was prerecorded for the most part. The programming started slowly, but we were able to produce six recorded events. We sent information to members of the chapter about other online programs, as well as what we found on the national AGO website. We moved our “Last Tuesday Luncheons” to Zoom, which enabled members who live farther away to participate in the previously in-person lunches held at a local restaurant.

The 2020–21 program year provided the following:

- A prerecorded opening service and installation of officers.
- A two-part prerecorded program on Hauptwerk organs. The first part, broadcast in January 2021, was “Hauptwerk 101,” with videos prepared by two members of the chapter on how they built or were building their home Hauptwerk organs. The second installment was broadcast in February and highlighted larger, more extensive Hauptwerk organs owned by chapter members. It included musical examples of the organs that they had uploaded to their systems.
- March was our first three-hour prerecorded Bach-a-thon. Members of the chapter and their friends were invited to choose a piece to record, and the response was outstanding. We had organ pieces, piano pieces, organ and instruments, vocalists, and instrumentalists. Recordings were done on home, church, pipe, electronic, and Hauptwerk organs. Players were students, a number of whom were recipients of our Organ Lessons Scholarship, as well as others who live outside the Portland metropolitan area. The outreach of this program was so extensive that we raised double the money for the scholarship fund than what we previously collected. This program is now on our YouTube channel and has 567 views.
- April featured a program on the history of the E.M. Skinner Organ, Opus 265. The instrument was built in 1916 for the Portland Civic Auditorium, later installed in the Alpenrose Dairy Opera House, and sold to a church in Wisconsin after the dairy closed.
- Our first ever prerecorded member’s recital, “Comfort and Joy,” was broadcast in May 2022. It featured member recordings on instruments of their choice and highlighted student recipients of our Organ Lessons Scholarship.

Each of these programs, with the exception of the Bach-a-thon, were one hour in length, followed by a Zoom “Afterglow” discussion, to raise a glass and just talk about whatever came to mind. Our 2021–22 programming discussions resulted in a number of new ideas for programming that we had never before envisioned. We realized, however, a need for some in-person fellowship, so this program year has had not only in-person events, but also hybrid events that have been livestreamed, as well as prerecorded events. This past March we raised even more money for our Organ Lessons Scholarship. The Bach-a-thon has had over 2,000 views. The members’ recital has over 1,100 views.

Going forward, we will continue to reevaluate our programming and balance the number of in-person-only events with prerecorded programming to keep all members of the chapter engaged.

*The AGO wishes to congratulate the Portland chapter for its collaborative creativity and ingenuity, challenging themselves to take a radical leap and achieving some outstanding outcomes!*

## Leadership Mondays in the AGO Social Lounge



At last month’s Chapter Leader Town Hall, we discussed the option of opening the virtual social lounge once a month over a 24-hour period, which would allow chapter leaders from different time zones to network and collaborate. The social lounge has 50 tables that seat up to 15 people; these could be used to host chapter focus groups or committee meetings, conduct strategic planning, enable quarterly deans’ calls hosted by regional councillors, etc. The possibilities are endless. Participants at each table have the ability to screen-share documents and websites. Tables can also be named by topic, making it feasible for those serving in various officer positions to discuss specific

issues that affect their responsibilities. You can also reserve more than one table so that your leadership can move from one table to another.

The responses from the survey we received after the town hall indicated that Mondays might be the best day to do this. There is no need to preregister, and everyone can use the same link to enter the social lounge. The only requirement is that you use Google Chrome as your browser. Desktops and laptops will provide you with a better experience than tablets; phoning in is not an option. I’d like to suggest that we schedule this on a monthly basis; however, if you wish to do this bimonthly or weekly, it can be arranged. The first Leadership Exchange will be scheduled for Monday, July 25. The link to the social lounge will be sent out a week prior to the date and will also be posted on the Chapter Leadership Toolkits page. If anyone has any questions, comments, or ideas on how to enhance this experience, please contact me at [elizabeth.george@agohq.org](mailto:elizabeth.george@agohq.org). Let’s give this a try!