



AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

## Chapter Leadership News

March 2021

### Spring Awakening – Heading in a New Direction

Dear Chapter Leaders,

As I write this issue, many of our Texas members have thawed out from freezing temperatures but are still dealing with burst water pipes and lack of heating in their homes. Chapter deans in Texas shared that although many were without heat for over 48 hours, they were equally concerned about the pipes in their churches, due to lack of heat. Please keep these chapter members in your prayers, as they are dealing not only with home and church repairs, but with the huge bills that they have received from electricity providers due to the state's unregulated energy market.

I often think of March as a month of transitions. The ground begins to thaw, bringing with it a hint that spring is not far away. For those who have been “cocooning” during the pandemic, the assurance of receiving a COVID-19 vaccination brings a sense of hope that, soon, we will all begin to transition into a brighter world. As the ends of chapter officers' terms draw near, new chapter leaders have time to transition into future officer positions, and chapters can reassess and re-envision their current leadership structure, perhaps streamlining their current operations and discussing new strategies to provide stronger member engagement. I know that we all long for the return of in-person meetings, but the look and feel of our world and our association have changed. Technology has altered how we operate and communicate, and new platforms offer opportunities to re-engage members who previously had difficulty attending in-person meetings. Now more than ever, “blue sky” thinking and daring to chart a new course will help everyone to move forward in a new direction. If you would like me to help facilitate a re-envisioning/strategic-planning session, please let me know.

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

- ✓ Profile of the Month: Bonnie Linder, Co-Dean, Colorado Springs Chapter
- ✓ Updates Regarding the 2021 AGO/Quimby Regional Competitions for Young Organists
- ✓ Chapter Collaborations and Innovative Programming
- ✓ A Review of the Chapter Nominations and Elections Process
- ✓ Upcoming AGO Webinars
- ✓ Beware of Scams
- ✓ Leslie Wolf Robb Shares What Her Chapter Legacy Will Be



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## Profile of the Month: Bonnie Linder Co-Dean, Colorado Springs Chapter

### What's sitting on my desk right now:

I am newly retired after thirty years as music director at a church. It's not the desk that is bothering me. It is the myriad boxes of files and music and books now overflowing in my living room. I'd show you a photo, but it would make you want to never retire.

### If I weren't doing this, I'd be:

When you retire, you get a new slate. What's ahead, you ask? I don't know, I reply. This is a reminder for us all that not just in retirement, but every day, we can choose to be intentional.

### The best advice I ever got:

Three leadership books that have been meaningful to me.

**Good to Great** by Jim Collins: Putting the right people in the right places.

**Showing Our True Colors** by Mary Miscisin: Relational tips for understanding people

**Leadership and Self-Deception** by the Arbinger Institute: Getting out of your own box

### When I'm not at work I'm:

Spending time with our grandchildren ten, six, and two. Learning to make rubber-band bracelets. Trying not to look stupid when the ten-year-old explains Minecraft to me.

### What keeps me motivated serving as dean:

Our field as organists and music directors can be very isolating. Most of us work in churches, where it should be a nurturing environment, but all too often, it isn't. During this COVID-time, I have delighted in my new connections made via email with members of our small chapter. There has been an openness to share their struggles, and to share mine, as well. I now feel as if I have many new friends, not just fellow organists.



# **2021 AGO/Quimby Regional Competitions for Young Organists**

**Harold Calhoun, Manager of Competitions and Resources**

The 2021 AGO/Quimby Regional Competitions for Young Organists began on February 20 with the first competition at the Central Arizona chapter.

There are 31 competitors distributed among the 16 scheduled chapter competitions listed below. This year, each competitor must create a performance recording of their selected repertoire to be submitted at least one week prior to the posted competition date. Those recordings will be shared in turn among the judges, and a chapter winner will be selected. Host chapters have been encouraged to share the competition experience with their members and friends via online broadcasts. The 2021 chapter competitions end on April 18.

The 2021 regional competitions will be conducted in a similar fashion. So far, sharing and judging the recorded performances has gone smoothly at the chapter level, and it should not pose a problem for the regions. In early May, each of the seven regions will judge their entries and select the regional winner.

The RCYO Committee is gratified that so many AGO chapters elected to host a chapter competition and appreciate how well they adapted to the improvised recorded format—we know it has been a challenge!

## **2021 AGO/Quimby RCYO Committee**

Vivienne McKay, Director; Sarah Martin, Ann Posey

### **Northeast Chapters**

Boston, Buffalo, Hartford, New York City

### **Mid-Atlantic Chapters**

Potomac, NOVA, Winchester

### **Southeast Chapter**

Knoxville

### **Great Lakes Chapters**

Indianapolis, Rockford

### **North Central Chapters**

Twin Cities, Lincoln

### **Southwest Chapters**

Dallas, Houston

### **West Chapters**

Central Arizona, Los Angeles, Salt Lake City

## Chapter Collaborations and Innovative Programming

In reading the most recent Fairfield West (Conn.) newsletter, Nathan Lively, newsletter editor shared:

*Details are being planned with the Central Maryland chapter to “buddy” with us this spring. We will be creating virtual joint chapter events, combine our newsletters, and gather for weekly socials and networking on Zoom. Central Maryland is the perfect chapter to partner with for several reasons; we share the fact that both our chapters are small and are located outside major cities, such as New York City and Baltimore. This will allow us to create events and collaborate as one chapter. This endeavor will expand our networking and will provide a great opportunity to strengthen unity within the Guild.*

Congratulations to the Fairfield West and Central Maryland chapters for deciding to join forces to provide stronger programming and richer engagement for all of their members! We have talked a lot about the benefits of collaborating virtually with other chapters and that geography need no longer be an issue. How are you collaborating with other chapters? Please email me so that I may share your initiatives in the April newsletter. [elizabeth.george@agohq.org](mailto:elizabeth.george@agohq.org)



I was thrilled when I received the following announcement from this chapter. They had previously shared that they planned to initiate this type of programming, and kudos to them for following through!

*Tonight, February 25th at 7:00 pm is the premiere of our first chapter-made **Digital Docufilm**, part documentary and part organ crawl, that will take us through the Old Stone Church in Gilbertville, MA. Included will be commentary from architects and historians, explanations from Stefan Maier, and a demonstration of the 1874 two-manual, 13-rank Johnson organ by our own Curtis Smith. Following the screening we'll have a digital reception, so be sure to bring a glass of your favorite beverage!*

What an innovative idea. I've asked the chapter that they share the link to the recorded video once it has been edited, so that I can include it in our online programming.



**REMINDER! TCAGO Virtual Meeting on Professional Concerns  
Know Your Value: The AGO Musician and Fair Compensation  
Monday, March 8, 6:30–7:30 P.M., Central US**

Led by David Jenkins and Carolyn Diamond, the meeting will include discussion of the findings from the members' survey and a report on the AGO's new Employment Handbook; it will also give participants time for conversation around professional topics.

Chapter leaders, have you used any of the recordings located on the AGO Website in the Online Programming for Chapters and past AGO webinars for monthly programs? If so, please share!

## Chapter Nominations and Elections — Start Now!

Those of you who attended **Leadership 2021** will remember that on Tuesday night we presented a skit about the dysfunctional chapter nominations and elections process that the fictional Copacabana chapter was using. Four scenarios of their board meetings were presented, where, during each meeting, the officers made some bad, unethical, and very unusual approaches to their upcoming chapter elections. While all were humorous, the content was derived from actual chapter experiences. Stephen Price, sub-dean, Indianapolis chapter; Vicki Schaeffer, councillor for membership; Leslie Smith, convener of regional councillors; and Leslie Wolf Robb, councillor for communications, played their parts with gusto!

### Scenario One:

The officers are frustrated, because of COVID-19 restrictions, that they didn't have the leadership opportunities they would have had if there had been no pandemic. They all agree that they should return to their respective officer positions for another term and that they will send out an email to their members notifying them about their decision.

**NOT!** While one can empathize with them, this is not an episode of *The Crown*, nor are chapter officers family members of the House of Windsor. Chapter officers cannot arbitrarily appoint themselves to serve another term, as much as they might like to. Our AGO bylaws state: "Each chapter must elect a Dean, Secretary, and Treasurer; other officers are at the discretion of the chapter. Incumbent officers may be nominated for re-election, unless restricted by chapter operating procedures." The key word here is *nominated*. So there's nothing wrong if current officers wish to be considered to serve another term, but they must submit their interest as candidates to the nominating committee, along with others who may also wish to serve.

### Scenario Two:

The board meets and discusses who will serve on the Nominations Committee. Two of the officers have agreed to serve on this committee and one other officer will chair it.

**DO NOT AGREE TO THIS!** Your current officers should not serve on the Nominations Committee because they could negatively influence the nominations process, especially if they're on the ballot. Chapter members who are in good standing, which means those whose memberships have not expired, may serve on this committee. Many nominating committees include a past officer, who can bring insight into the responsibilities required to serve and provide history regarding those who have expressed interest in serving. Additionally, Chapter Friends *are not voting members*, therefore they cannot serve on chapter boards or the Nominations Committee, nor should they be considered as candidates. Your Executive Committee can and should oversee the appointment of a Nominations Committee, but they should not serve on the committee.

### Scenario Three:

The officers meet to review recommendations received for members to serve on the Nominations Committee. Their committee includes the current dean, two candidates who are husband and wife, and someone else no one else knows, to serve as Treasurer. They discover that this person is not only a nonmember but is also the brother of one of their members at large.

**WHOA!** We have two clear conflicts of interest here. The first is that two family members will be serving as officers during the same term, providing them with the ability to sway decisions the board will make and motions that the board will vote on. The second is that the person nominated to serve as treasurer is the brother of a member at large (another family conflict of interest), and also, he is not even a member! As previously noted, to serve as a chapter officer, you must be a member in good standing of the AGO.


### Scenario Four:

The officers meet and are frustrated to learn that not one of their 25 chapter members has submitted their name to serve in a leadership position. The treasurer comments that she has already served for two years, but if needed, she will serve another term. The sub-dean remarks that she has served in this position for eight years, is frustrated, and has no desire to transition to serve as dean. The secretary states that, as she has previously served as treasurer, she'll do it again, if she absolutely has to. The dean complains that he has served in this officer position for ten years and is fed up and burnt out; he has decided that he will no longer serve in any leadership position. The sub-dean and secretary agree with him and decide that they, too, will no longer serve in any officer positions, leaving the treasurer as the sole survivor on their board. As you can imagine, she is not very happy about this situation.

Leadership burnout! How many of you have experienced this? It leaves you feeling frustrated, ambivalent, and trapped. Recycling of leadership is a surefire way to support leadership burnout—but it doesn't have to be this way! I encourage you to read "Building a Leadership Pipeline," located under "Board Management and Governance" in the Chapter Leadership Toolkits: <https://www.agohq.org/chapter-leadership-toolkits/>. It begins by asking people, and especially new members from the onset, to get involved in the life of the chapter through micro-volunteer opportunities. What does that mean? It means asking them to help with specific tasks that have a beginning and ending point. Another easy strategy would be to ask your members to serve as chapter ambassadors.

A description of this program can be found under "New Member Onboarding" in, you guessed it, the Chapter Leadership Toolkits: <https://www.agohq.org/chapter-leadership-toolkits/>. Also, be prepared to pick up the phone to recruit volunteers. Sending out an email

*continued*



asking for volunteers is not going to cut it. People need to be asked to get involved. And being as specific as possible about what you need (remember those micro-volunteer opportunities) will clearly deliver expectations for those who in the past did not want to volunteer for anything. Once you've identified people and they've worked on tasks and initiatives, invite them to a board meeting and make them feel welcome. The day you assume your leadership position, you should be looking ahead to scout people who can replace you, and training should shortly commence. I once heard someone say to me, "I've served on my board for six years and I still don't feel ready to serve as dean." Six years! By that time, I would have been looking for the exit sign. This is not rocket science, nor are you responsible for discovering the cure for cancer. If someone has the interest and desire, the AGO can provide her or him with tools, resources, and training. You have so many resources available to you through your regional councillors, district conveners, and Headquarters. We've got your back! What we cannot do is identify the members in your chapter who should be considered for leadership positions. That is your responsibility.

Details of the **Chapter Elections and Voting Procedure** can be found under **Board Management and Governance**. Located where? In the **Chapter Leadership Toolkits!** <https://www.agohq.org/chapter-leadership-toolkits/>.

## Upcoming Webinars



**Monday, March 15, 2021, 4:00 P.M., EDT**  
**Musicians and Clergy Working Collaboratively**  
Presented by the AGO and the Church Music Institute

How has the pandemic changed how clergy and musicians view their vocations to serve their congregation? What models of clergy and musician working relationships have shown strength during this time? Join CMI director Dr. Charlotte Kroeker and AGO past

president Dr. Eileen Guenther, author of *Rivals or a Team?*, along with a distinguished panel, who will address these questions and discuss best practices for successful clergy and musician collaborations. [Click here to register.](#)

## AGOYO Fridays at Noon, Eastern

**March 12, Panel Discussion: Board Positions in the Guild and Serving in Leadership Roles.** Join Grant Holcomb, moderator, and panelists Wyatt Smith, Nicole Marane, Laura Ellis, and Elizabeth George as they discuss why serving in an AGO volunteer leadership position is not only a rewarding but valuable experience, and as well, the ROI for young organists to serve as chapter officers. View this webinar at <https://www.youtube.com/user/GuildofOrganists>.

## Chapter Leader Webinars



**Monday, April 19, 4:00 P.M., EDT**  
**Re-Igniting, Re-Imagining, and Re-Emerging from COVID-19**  
Presented by the Committee on Membership Development and Chapter Support

Join chapter leaders who participated in breakout sessions during **Leadership 2021** as they share their innovations and new strategies to strengthen their chapters' programming and member engagement.

This interactive webinar will provide lots of peer-to-peer sharing, as well as lots of time to chat with the presenters. Register [here](#) .





**Monday, April 26, 2021, 4:00 P.M., EDT**

### **The Do-Re-Mi's of Website Design**

This webinar, presented by the AGO Technology Committee, will cover creation and posting of information and discuss the importance of keeping your website up to date. Register [here](#).

## **Beware of Scams!**

Mary Eileen Johnston, dean of the Southeastern Pennsylvania chapter, recently shared an email that she had received from a chapter member who received an email regarding obtaining a “free piano.”

*I have sent the moving company a message, all you need to do now is to contact them and make an arrangement as regards the moving process and please most importantly you have to assure me that you will take very good care of it and also, I will like you to take some pictures/pictures Videos when they arrive at your home and send them. Here is the movers' information. [www.gregoriesmoving.com/](http://www.gregoriesmoving.com/)*

*Gregoriesmoving@post.com with the Reference Numbers Code: WIN22121D. Make sure to Send an email for a faster response. They also have a customer chat platform. Please give me feedback as soon as you have scheduled for delivery.*



She emailed me saying that she was pretty sure that this was a scam. We both reviewed <https://gregoriesmoving.com/>. Nowhere on the website does it list their expertise in **piano** moving, nor on their “contact” page can one find “gregoriesmoving@post.com.” Unfortunately, one of our other members also received this email, assumed that it was legit, and sent money to cover the costs of moving the piano. They requested that National be responsible to reimburse them for their ill judgement. We will not be doing this. This chapter did not take the time to research the email that they received. I urge you to check the sender’s email address and any websites they reference, as well as test their contact information. If you have any concerns, you can contact AGO Headquarters to discuss these types of communications that you receive. Please take a moment to review this information: <https://www.movingscam.com/articles/how-moving-scams-work>.

## What Will Your Chapter Legacy Be?

**Leslie Wolf Robb, Councillor for Communications,  
Education Coordinator, San Diego Chapter**

*I've served on our chapter Executive Committee in many capacities, but the most rewarding has been as education coordinator, where I oversee our scholarship audition program, plan performance opportunities for organ students, and have chaired or been on the committees for each of our chapter's six **Pipe Organ Encounters**. My legacy will be seeing so many of the young people who have participated in our chapter organ study scholarship program (open to pianists and organists of all ages and levels) and the success of our chapter's six POEs. We have had the privilege of meeting and working with so many of those who are now established or building careers in the organ world: Chelsea Chen, Nicholas Halbert, Samuel Buse, Vincent Pham, Katrina Liao, Owen Reid, Joey Fala, as well as many more.*

**Chapter leaders, what will your legacy be?**



**Question of the Month:**

**How many of you have scholarship programs where those who teach are *not* compensated?**

**Please email me, [elizabeth.george@agohq.org](mailto:elizabeth.george@agohq.org).  
We want to hear from you!**