



AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS

Chapter Leadership News

October 2021

Contingency Planning: *Plan for the Worst; Hope for the Best.*

Dear Chapter Leaders,

Just when we all thought it was safe to go back in the water, COVID has once again reared its ugly head. In the September issue of the *Clarion*, Timothy Beggs, Seattle chapter dean, shared, “While we have developed tools to connect, that’s not helping me to get choir members taking care of vulnerable loved ones to come in person. It’s not helping me balance lightening the stops to not overpower the 25 people singing through their masks in pews, with the needs of those attending virtually to hear thrilling renditions of hymns. And, it’s not helping me spend time with you in person, celebrating our common interest and love of the organ. While we have plans to celebrate live music and be in each other’s presence, we are forced to wait until it is well past the threshold of safety, when a venue will feel safe to let us in.” I think we can all relate to what Tim is dealing with. As a singer who has just returned to singing with a live choir, I know that those masks do not make it easy to articulate, and I have begun to wonder if our parishioners can even understand what we are singing. As Chattanooga dean Sarah Harr wrote in the *Chattanooga Organ*, “As we move forward with this proposed program year, I ask for your patience, diligence, and flexibility. We may have to quickly shift events to a virtual platform or cancel events altogether. It will depend on the rise and fall of COVID cases/hospitalizations in our area.” My friends, stay strong, be nimble, and pivot as needed! We must keep moving forward. If in-person meetings cannot occur, I encourage you to collaborate with other chapters that have planned virtual programs.

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

- ✓ Profile of the Month: Matthew O. Thomas, Dean of the Berkshire (MA) Chapter
- ✓ Hong Kong Chapter’s Young Organist Recital
- ✓ Updates Regarding the AGO’s Member Assistance Program
- ✓ The Year of the Young Organist Scholarship Program
- ✓ The Year of the Young Organist Recruitment Contest Tip #4
- ✓ Auto-Revoked Chapters, EIN Numbers, and IRS Year-End Filing
- ✓ Celebrating the Red River Valley Chapter’s 75th Anniversary
- ✓ AGO Charlotte Chapter’s World of Weddings
- ✓ Chapter Leader Town Hall, October 25: Save the Date!
- ✓ Staff Spotlight: Leah Semiken



Elizabeth George, CMM
Director of Member Engagement & Chapter Development
American Guild of Organists
elizabeth.george@agohq.org
212-870-2311 ext. 4307

Profile of the Month: Matthew O. Smith
Dean of the Berkshire (MA) Chapter



What's sitting on my desk right now: A stack of choral music for consideration, music packs for Sunday's choir, a stack of music for some upcoming weddings, a large iced coffee, and an even larger to-do list.

If I weren't doing this, I'd be a comedian. Making people laugh is good for the soul too!

When I'm not at work I'm conducting a rehearsal, playing a gig, or hiking through the Berkshires.

The best advice I ever got: It never hurts to be a gentleman.

What keeps me motivated serving as chapter dean: The amazing artists and educators that I am honored to meet and develop professional partnerships with, young members joining AGO chapters, and the community of like-minded music enthusiasts.

AGO Hong Kong's Young Organist Competition



Former dean Anne Lamm shared the following: *Beginning in May through August, the chapter held its 2021 Young Organist Competition, the first-ever competition for local organists in Hong Kong. The competition consisted of three rounds: a preliminary recording, a semifinal round on the III/9 Fisk at the Chapel of SKH Tang Shiu Kin Secondary School, and a final round on the IV/51 Rieger at the concert hall of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. First Prize (HK\$5,000, sponsored by C.B. Fisk, Inc.) was awarded to Carlos Li, a senior at the Chinese*

University of Hong Kong. Second Prize (HK\$3,000, sponsored by Ms. L.K. Chan) was awarded to Zoe Lei, a DMA student at the University of Michigan. Third Prize (HK\$2,000, sponsored by Mr. & Mrs. Roger Lee) was awarded to Ivan Leung, an MM student at the Royal College of Music. Judges of the competition included Stefan Engels, Clive Driskill-Smith, Johnny Poon, Felix Yeung, David Gwilt, and Dr. Chiu Siu-Ling.

Congratulations to AGO Hong Kong for supporting young organists with this competition and for successfully recruiting two new young organist members to their chapter!



AGO's Member Assistance Program Comes to an End

As the saying goes, "All good things must come to an end." With that in mind, I am sorry to inform you that the donations we received from **OrganFest 2020** have been exhausted. I am proud to share that, over the past 14 months, we have helped over 90 members with their renewals! If your chapter still has funds available to support members in need, please help them in renewing their memberships.



YEAR OF THE
YOUNG ORGANIST
"Investing in the Future"
July 1, 2021–June 30, 2022



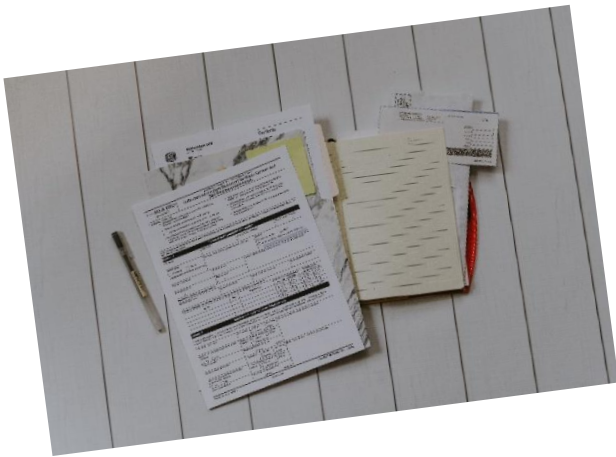
**The Year of the Young Organist
Chapter Recruitment Contest
Win \$1000 for Your Chapter!**

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/>.

Tip #4: Our special thanks to Wesley Hall, sub-dean of the Worcester chapter, for creating a fun video promoting the Year of the Young Organist TikTok: <https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMRxoUVQ5/>.

AGO's Organ Scholar Program: October 15 Deadline

The AGO has created an **Organ Scholar Program** that offers two young people the opportunity to experience a one-year internship at a significant music ministry program in the United States. This gap-year program will take place during 2022–23 and 2023–24 (one recipient per year for a total of two recipients in two different locations) and will provide \$30,000 in salary, as well as housing and health care for the organ scholar. Full details about how to participate in this program can be found [here](#). Please note that if your chapter cannot afford to contribute the full amount of \$10,000, we encourage you to collaborate with other chapters, so that collectively, you can subsidize this important initiative. Online applications can be accessed [here](#). **The deadline for submissions is October 15.** Please make this a priority to discuss with your chapter officers ASAP!



Don't Forget to File Your 990N E-Postcard!

AGO executive assistant Eric Birk has assisted many chapters who have lost their tax-exempt status with the IRS. If a chapter has not annually filed a 990N e-postcard for three years in a row, their tax-exempt status is auto-revoked. Trust me, you do not want to go there!

If this happens:

- Your chapter will owe income tax on all revenue (dues, contributions, advertising, recital/concert ticket sales, etc.).
- Donations to your chapter will no longer be tax-deductible.
- In states where sales tax exemptions are granted, your chapter would be ineligible for them.
- AGO National will not financially support any local events presented by the chapter (grants for conventions, POEs, January Jubilees, etc.).

You will also be dealing with a multitude of forms to request reinstatement, which can take a great deal of time. In all cases it is *strongly recommended* that a chapter find a lawyer who has the expertise to help them through the process of regaining their tax-exempt status.

Your chapter should have on file:

- Your EIN (Employer Identification Number) confirmation letter from the IRS. No, you cannot use the AGO's EIN number or that of any other chapter.
- State registrations (tax-exempt certificates, charities bureau registrations).
- At the end of your fiscal year, normally June 30 for most chapters, you must file a 990N (or 990, 990-EZ for larger chapters whose income exceeds \$50,000). This must be submitted to the IRS by **November 15** for chapters with a fiscal year ending on June 30.
- A certifying packet from AGO National Headquarters is available upon request.

Being auto-revoked makes the rest of AGO look bad. Maintaining tax-exempt status is just the right thing to do. Please check out the online training for maintaining tax-exempt status, provided by the IRS: <https://www.stayexempt.irs.gov/home/existing-organizations/existing-organizations> .

There are at least 10 courses appropriate to AGO chapters which provide tools and knowledge necessary to keep your chapter's exempt status intact.

Happy Anniversary, Red River Valley (MN) Chapter!



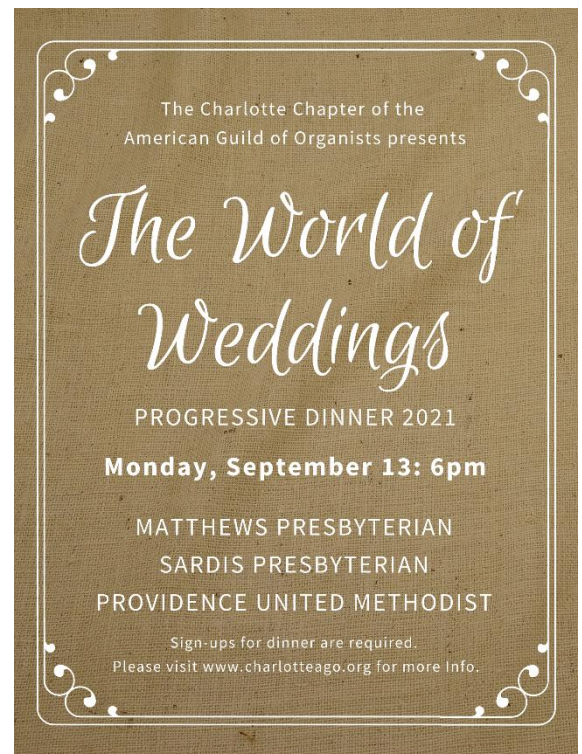
On behalf of everyone at National Headquarters, we wish to congratulate the Red River Valley chapter for their 75 years of great leadership and support of the AGO.

Here's to another wonderful 75 years!

Charlotte AGO (NC) Chapter's Annual Progressive Dinner

Sub-dean Zach Bowyer shared the following:

The Charlotte chapter hosted our Progressive Dinner, which serves as our annual kickoff event for our programming year, on September 13. We have discovered that our members and community friends love a theme, so we titled the evening "The World of Weddings" and revolved the music and even the food around weddings! Our first church served hors d'oeuvres and we heard some lovely preludes. At the following church, we had the main course and listened to some bombastic processions. To end the evening at our final church, we had wedding cake-flavored cupcakes and heard exciting recessions. We were extremely cautious regarding the pandemic and only removed our masks when actively eating. Also, to encourage more participation, we made a sign-up for performers instead of only getting one person to play at each church, as we had done in previous years. Honestly, this made the evening much more relaxed and helped incorporate a larger sense of appreciation for each other, the host, churches, and our instrument.



Kudos to AGO Charlotte for creating a truly unique, clever, and fun event!



**Save the Date! Monday, October 25, 2021, 4 p.m. EDT
Chapter Leader Town Hall Meeting**

Joshua Freeman, AGO's chief technology officer, will share updates about the new membership database. James E. Thomashower, executive director, will present the AGO's new three-year strategic plan. Elizabeth George, director of member engagement and chapter support, will review the **Year of the Young Organist Chapter Recruitment Contest**. There will be plenty of time for Q&A. We strongly encourage all chapter officers to attend this event. Please register here: <https://bit.ly/3nEHYWv>.

Staff Spotlight: Leah Semiken



Leah Semiken has served as chapter relations manager with the AGO for the past nine years. She has worked countless hours helping chapter leaders to better serve their members. Her expertise in managing our database, pulling key reports, and designing compelling membership dashboards that communicate important data by region and member segment have helped everyone get a clearer picture of AGO's membership status each month. Leah will be leaving the AGO on October 1 to join The Animation Guild in Burbank, California, where she will continue to use her expertise in member relations. On behalf of everyone at National, we want to thank her for all her hard work and dedication to the AGO, and we wish her much success in her new position!