

AGO Chapter Message For January And February, 2021



During our Chapter Zoom meeting on January 18th, 2021 we discussed the possibility of an in-person, in-auto event in late May or early June. Our program committee will pursue the idea of an outside carillon concert at the Venice Performing Arts followed by a tail-gate picnic. Stay tuned!

Check our website at www.agosm.org for newly listed Lenten noon concerts and other events that may interest you and watch for another invitation to a member zoom in February.

A New Member - David Patrick

My husband, Thomas Tryon, and I just retired from long careers at the Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, FL. Sarasota has long been our choice for retirement and we are happy to have begun this new chapter.

For me, it is a bit of a homecoming. I graduated from Sarasota High School where I sang under Andy Wright and played in the Band, Orchestra and Circus Band. I attended Manatee Junior College prior to transferring to Rollins College. While at MJC I studied Organ with Franz Engle and piano with Sandra Lawler. After graduating from Rollins College I toured the Country for two years as a singer and instrumentalist with Fred Waring and his Young Pennsylvanians and was a founding member of Gloria Musicae.



While in Central Florida I played piano and vocal coached at Walt Disney World for numerous shows and special events. For several years I served as the Director of Music and the Arts at First Presbyterian, Orlando. I also taught at Rollins College and served as Chapel Organist there for three years. My company, Keynote Arts Associates, produced choral festivals nationwide including the Children in Harmony Choral Festival at WDW.

We are enjoying getting settled in our new home in the Cascades and look forward to becoming active in the local arts community.

A Topic Of Interest To All Church Musicians

By Nancy Siebecker

Over the decades I, as perhaps many of you, have had limited contact with National AGO beyond questions about memberships, input for the TAO and related subjects. I confess that I have not adequately understood National's support or lack thereof for topics important to church musicians. Having said that, my experiences as a lifelong church musician and my role as dean in two different chapters have caused me to raise concerns about the dilemmas facing church musicians and the future of our beloved calling to serve God and our congregants.

Many recent events have sharpened my mission to communicate and, hopefully, pursue some solutions.

1. As many of you may know, AGO agreed to a Consent Agreement with the FTC (Federal Trade Commission) in 2017 which resulted in AGO members being prohibited from laws, codes, policies or membership requirements that restrict competition, and restricting chapters from publishing documents such as fee schedules and model employment contracts. This came home to our chapter when, during a member zoom last fall, we discussed the possibility of gathering data about a range of local fees for substitutes for worship and other services in our area. I offered to contact National to ask if we could informally share such data (no recommendations or suggestions solicited or specific churches or names mentioned.) I subsequently had a zoom meeting with Eric Birk (AGO Executive Assistant) and Elizabeth George (Director of membership engagement and chapter development). I was told, in friendly but forceful language, that AGO cannot be a part of any such range of local fee comparisons and that if we as a chapter want to solicit such data, it needs to be communicated verbally and not on paper. Our chapter leaders will need to decide if we wish to pursue this collection of data verbally.
2. During my Zoom meeting with Eric and Elizabeth I brought up the topic of how National AGO might be willing to address the increasingly important question facing AGO members, the future of music ministry and church musicians in parishes nationwide.

From numerous accounts of shared frustrations and unsuccessful musician/clergy relationships, the most critical need that has emerged is for offering opportunities for clerics to learn not only the basics of the history of music in worship, but as important, how to develop a fruitful partnership with the musician (s) as they together plan the worship experiences for their parishes.

Such continuing education classes could include: guidelines for planning music according to the liturgical year, practical suggestions on timetables, criteria for selecting forms and styles of music, all of which would best be experienced through exploring musical examples.

Eric Birk told me that National does not involve itself with clergy/music education, and he referred me to two other entities:

CMI – Church Music Institute

AGO Task Force on Denominational Music Organizations

I then contacted Charlotte Kroeker at CMI and had an informative zoom with her in November. She subsequently sent me syllabi of two continuing music education classes CMI has developed that are being offered to clergy. The courses are: “Congregational Song” and “Music in Christian Worship”, and CMI is attempting to market them to seminaries. Charlotte asked if I knew individuals in these institutions because she has learned these connections to be the best method of gaining an audience for the classes.

I reviewed the syllabi, and while impeccably designed with extensive bibliographies by well-known scholars, I found both too heavily weighted on the history portion with less time devoted to practical clerical concerns. For example, “Music in Christian Worship” devotes three of its four sessions to history with the last one to vocation and reports, and asks students to write six abstracts on various chapters in Paul Westermeyer’s excellent book, *Te Deum*, and other sources. From my experiences interacting with clergy, I sense a need for more time devoted to everyday practical concerns.

Charlotte Kroeker is receptive to future revisions, but says that it is too late to revise the syllabi for the summer of 2021.

Eric Birk at National also directed me to Craig Dobbins, chair of the AGO Task Force on Denominational Music Organizations, and after email introductions, Craig invited me to participate in the next virtual session of the Task Force, and to present my syllabus idea for a continuing education class for clergy on the subject of Music in Worship.

Craig agreed that many AGO members advocate for a change in perception at the top of AGO in order to address the critical need for it to become more involved in the church musician's future.

3. Although I do not know the percentage of AGO members who are present or retired church musicians, it appears obvious that the majority of us fit into that category. Privately, we musicians share our continuing frustrations and relationship problems with clergy, but how many of us dare to bring the subject into the open for full debate?

During my church music career, I personally have suffered two devastating severed relationships, one that turned positive after a monumental effort over a period of ten years, and the other that did not.

As your dean, I wanted to bring you, our members, up to date about my concerns facing the future of our beloved profession, and my attempts to advocate for National AGO to expand its focus.