



Delaware AGO Chapter Officers

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St. Andrew's School, Middletown



The Windchest

**Newsletter of the Delaware Chapter,
American Guild of Organists**

FALL 2025

www.delawareago.org

Refreshed and Empowered

Are you prepared for the rigors of autumn and the start of academic and institutional programming? Are you returning to your church or synagogue, classroom or teaching studio refreshed and renewed after much needed vacation? Were you edified and inspired by attending a conference or convention? Have you taken the time to study and prepare for fall services and festivals? Have you completed rehearsal schedules for your ensembles, as well as upcoming concerts? Have you contacted your singers and ringers, and hired the necessary instrumentalists?

I write this to you as my September dean's column because these are the questions I am asking myself as summer comes rapidly to an end. It is easy to fall back into the daily grind and forget the mountaintop experiences that empower us to lead those with whom we serve and work.

I have been at the beach while on sabbatical this August. Yes, I am blessed to receive a one-month leave from work, exempt from my regular duties, every three years at my place of employment. This time away allows me to pursue my passion of writing music for children and setting it to printable manuscript. It is my hope to assemble a collection of music for the liturgical year to be published for use in Christian schools and faith formation programs for young singers and musicians.

I share this with you because what I have accomplished in this dedicated time off has been greatly rewarding to me, and well-received by those with whom I have shared my latest compositions and arrangements for voice, piano, and instruments. While my next step is finding a publishing house and completing the lesson plans that I expect to accompany these anthems, it is easy to get distracted by the list of items with which I questioned you at the start of this message.

Even though I am not supposed to be "working," I am. I am sure you know that all too well, too. If you are like me, listening to a choral or organ work is unofficially a time of study. Is it something within the choirs' reach within the time allotted? Is it a piece worthy of learning and sharing at the console? While the text of that new hymn is purposeful, timely, and filled with meaning, is the tune singable and will they be received together by the assembly? The list goes on as do our lives, our work, and our leisure.

Take time to care for yourself so that you can be good to others in your various ministries, vocations, and careers. And if you happen to be retired, finding yourself doing substitute or interim work (if you so choose), remember the highlights and times of great joy that got you there!

Mike Bareham, Dean

Annual Appeal

It is that time of year when we are grateful for a very successful past program year and are looking forward to all this one has to offer; albeit an expensive season. Once again, even with increased dues, income from our growing membership is slightly down. Therefore, our budget exceeds our expected apportionment from AGO National. What does that mean for us as we provide what I hope you will agree is a really exciting year of programming?

See complete listing below.

As your Board of Directors, we are very aware of being good stewards of our resources and we are committed to finding the ways and means to support and further our cause. Your Board of Directors have all agreed to make an additional contribution to the chapter because we believe in the work we do and the work we have yet to do. Won't you consider making a tax-deductible gift to support our upcoming plans and sustain funding for the future? Donations, no matter how

large or small, will make a huge difference as we strive to enhance your skills, and provide access to relevant and meaningful performances and educational opportunities.

Please send a check to: Ryan Pryslak, DE AGO Treasurer, at Immanuel Episcopal Church, 2400 West 17th Street, Wilmington, DE 19806. Does your place of employment provide matching funds? Would the organization where you play be willing to make a contribution to support you and others out of respect, appreciation, or admiration? On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. Never fear. We are financially stable and have funds in reserve; however, to be fiscally responsible for years to come, we need to be creative and inviting, collaborative and collegial. As your elected leaders, we continue to concentrate on do-ability, flexibility, measurability, accountability, and vision.

Mike Bareham, Dean

Delaware AGO Programs 2025-2026

Saturday, September 13, 9:30–noon

St. Andrew's Episcopal School Chapel

POE Students and Members' Bake-off

350 Noxontown Rd., Middletown

Sunday, October 19, 1:30–6:30 pm

Wilmington's Hidden Gems

Organ Crawl

First Unitarian, St. Peter's, St. Elizabeth's

Start at 730 Halstead Rd., Wilmington

Sunday, November 23, 4:00 pm

Presbyterian Church of the Covenant

Hymn Festival in gratitude for the church's ministry

503 Duncan Rd., Wilmington

Saturday, January 10, 1:00 pm

Piano Lab, Location TBD

Kevin Benjamin: Playing gospel music

Lunch beforehand

Saturday, January 17, 2026 all day

Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church

January Jumpstart

Saturday, March 14, 10:00–noon

Westminster Presbyterian Church

Adapting Orchestral accompaniments

with Paul Fleckenstein & Julie Allport

1502 W 13th St., Wilmington

Friday, April 24, 7:00 pm

St. Anthony's of Padua

"The King of Instruments and the Instrument of Kings"

Organ, Trumpet, and Multi-media

Chuck Siepp and Todd Fickley

901 North DuPont St., Wilmington

Tuesday, June 9, 6:00 pm

Delaware Park

Dinner and No-risk Casino Night,

with Paul Fleckenstein

777 Delaware Park Blvd, Wilmington

See you in September

Saturday, September 13 marks the opening meeting of our Chapter's 2025-26 Program Year. We have the rare opportunity to visit Saint Andrew's Episcopal School in Middletown, see the stunning chapel, and hear and play the organ.

You may know that Saint Andrew's is an all-boarding high school, and that its scenic campus was a location for the movie "Dead Poets Society." This is your chance to see it for yourself.

We will gather at 9:30 am at the entrance to Founders Hall, then move on to the chapel.

The organ will be demonstrated by some of the students whom our chapter sponsored for the Harrisburg Chapter's Pipe Organ Encounter at Lebanon Valley College this past June.

Our social time will feature a Members' Bake-Off (see below), so there will be plenty of goodies to enjoy while reconnecting with colleagues.

Finding your Way

Saint Andrew's Episcopal School is a private boarding school with a Security Team who will be expecting you on Saturday morning, September 13. Please arrive between 9:15 and 9:30 am.



The address you'll plug in to your GPS is 350 Noxontown Road -- the main entrance to campus. It's nearly across from the end of Silver Lake Road, just a little zig zag. Please proceed up the drive to the guard house. Open your window and let the guard on duty know that you are here for the AGO meeting! You will be directed to continue down the drive, turning left at the first possible opportunity. Following the signage, please

park in any available spot in the two parking lots on your left. Enter Founders Hall (the main building) through the left-side doorway. From there, someone will be available to direct you to Classroom 18 where the reception will be held, and to the Chapel downstairs.

The Great AGO Bake-Off

We know that many of you in our AGO chapter have been known to spend some time in your kitchens baking up all sorts of good things to eat; so this will be the day to "show your stuff!" Following our time in the chapel at St. Andrew's School, we'll enjoy a spread of (no doubt) scrumptious treats provided by you, our chapter members. Whether you're an experienced, aspiring, or wanna-be baker, we encourage you to whip up a batch of finger-food-type treats (cookies, bars, etc.) and bring them to share with everyone. A distinguished, impartial judge will perform the formidable task of tasting each of the goods and awarding the proverbial Blue Ribbon to the winning entry.

If you're willing to bring some goodies to share (finger food only please), kindly notify Jane Van Valkenburg by Saturday, September 6, so we'll know how to organize tables, etc. Contact info: javan211@gmail.com 979-220-0168.

Calling all Singers

Our Chapter will be hosting a Hymn Festival at 4:00 pm on Sunday, November 23, at Presbyterian Church of the Covenant on Duncan Rd. The theme will reflect the season of Thanksgiving, with special gratitude for the ministry and witness of PCOC through the decades since its founding in 1945.

We would like to have a choir to lead the congregation and to sing some selected stanzas and descants, so you and your choir members are invited to participate. Singers will receive the music in early October and the choir will rehearse on Nov. 23 from 1:30 – 3:30 pm.

By September 15, please let Jane Van Valkenburg know how many copies of the music you will need for your singers. Email JAVan211@gmail.com or text 979-220-0168.

Wilmington Organ Tour Sunday, October 19

Paul Fleckenstein

It's been a number of years since we've embarked on an organ tour (in organ lingo, "organ crawl") one of our chapter events. So this fall we're going to take a little journey through Wilmington and visit three somewhat off-the-beaten-path pipe organs, each notable in their own right, in venues that perhaps a number of us have never visited. All are 3-manual instruments in varying styles.

First stop: First Unitarian Church

730 Halstead Road

At 1:30 pm, we'll meet at Wilmington's Unitarian church, just off Concord Pike (Route 202).

Here we'll see the interesting, totally mechanical-action instrument built by the Austrian firm of Rieger Orgelbau.

Next stop: Cathedral of St. Peter

500 N West Street

At 3:00 pm, host organist Michael Davidson will welcome us to St. Peter's, the cathedral for the

Roman Catholic diocese of Wilmington. Located at the corner of Sixth & West Streets, this stunning building houses a vintage Austin organ, which has seen various renovations and additions over the years.

Final stop: St. Elizabeth Catholic Church

1500 Cedar Street

At 4:30 pm, we'll descend upon another large and stunning space, St. Elizabeth Church, at Cedar & Clayton Streets. Here we'll encounter the newest instrument of our tour, built by C. M. Walsh of Prospect Park, PA.

If you can't join us for the whole tour, join for whatever you can. We'll adhere to the above schedule as much as possible, allowing for about an hour at each church and a half-hour between each stop for travel time. Transportation is on your own, as ample street parking should be available at each site. Carpooling, of course, is encouraged.

Extra: At 6:00 pm, join us for a casual dinner (Dutch treat) at Mrs. Robino's Restaurant, at 520 N. Union Street in Wilmington's "Little Italy."

NOTABLE EVENTS



SEPTEMBER

Sunday 14 September 2:00 pm

Double Shot Rock'n Roll Band

Concert held outdoors, weather permitting.

Bring your own lawn chair.

Silverside Church,
2800 Silverside Rd, Wilmington

OCTOBER

Sunday 12 October 3:00 pm

Augustine Mercante, *countertenor*

Performing an eclectic repertoire of arias and art songs to spirituals and cabaret songs.

Silverside Church,
2800 Silverside Rd, Wilmington

Sunday 12 October 6:00 pm

Jazz Vespers for Friendship House

Music with a Mission,

Wilson Somers

The Rt. Rev. Kevin Brown,

Diocese of DE, Homilist

Immanuel Highlands Episcopal Church, 2400 W. 17th St.,
Wilmington

NOVEMBER

Sunday 2 November 3:00 pm

Dave Posmontier Quartet

Philly-based jazz pianist and his ensemble perform a dynamic mix of swing, funk, gospel and Latin jazz.

Silverside Church
2800 Silverside Rd. Wilmington

Sat. Nov. 15 & 22, 2:00 pm

Sun. Nov. 16 & 23, 2:00 pm

Fri. Nov. 21, 7:30 pm

Ardensingers Fall Shows

Portrait of a Young Woman

Director/Librettist Selena E. Molina

Music Director Helene Furlong
historical fiction based on Parmigianino's
"Portrait of a Young Woman"

Paired with Sir Arthur Sullivan's

Cox and Box, A musical comedy

Sean O'Donnell, Director

Arden Gild Hall 2126 The Hwy. Arden

DECEMBER

Sunday 7 December 4:00 pm

A Jazz Christmas

Music with a Mission, Wilson Somers
Cab Calloway Performing Arts Center,
100 N. Dupont Rd. Wilmington

Member Spotlight:

Emily Ballentine Erb



Emily Ballentine Erb
*Organist and Director of
Music at First and Central
Presbyterian Church,
Wilmington*

A Harmonious Journey in Sacred Music

In the serene halls of First & Central Presbyterian in Wilmington, DE, the name Emily Ballentine Erb resonates with a profound sense of dedication and artistry. As the Director of Music Ministries, Emily's journey through the world of sacred music is a testament to her unwavering commitment to her faith and her craft.

Emily's connection to music began at an early age, deeply influenced by her family's strong musical and religious background. Her father, a retired Lutheran pastor, and her mother, a church musician and music teacher, instilled in her a love for music and a deep understanding of its spiritual significance. This foundation set the stage for Emily's lifelong devotion to sacred music.

Her academic journey is as impressive as her professional one. Emily holds a piano performance degree from James Madison University and a master's in music education from Columbia University. She recently completed her second master's degree in Organ Performance and Sacred Music at the Jacobs School of Music in

Indiana. This extensive education has equipped her with a rich and diverse musical repertoire, which she brings to her role at First & Central Presbyterian.

Emily's career in sacred music began in earnest when she joined St. Mark's Lutheran in Conshohocken as a part-time church musician. Her passion for the organ and sacred music grew, leading her to take lessons with Michael Krentz at the Seminary in Philadelphia. This period of intense study and reflection helped her understand the depth and breadth of sacred music, shaping her vision for her future career.

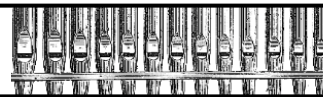
At First & Central Presbyterian, Emily's role is multifaceted. She thrives on the variety of her day-to-day responsibilities, from practice and administrative tasks to leading the congregation in worship. Her work is not just about performing music; it is about creating a spiritual experience for the congregation. Emily believes that the relationship between the pastor and the music director is crucial, especially during times of transition, such as the current clergy change at First & Central.

Emily's dedication to music education is evident in her innovative teaching methods. She is a proponent of the Kodály and Orff music teaching methods, which break down music to its elemental level and build up to complex performances. These methods are not only useful for her own practice but also for teaching choral repertoire to choirs and congregations.

by Robert Furr, Sub-dean

Substitute List

KEY: (S) Sunday, (C) choir, (HB) Handbells, (SS) Special Services, (W) Weddings, (F) Funerals



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Happy Autumn

Remember to



our Facebook page:



Delaware AGO!