



Delaware AGO Chapter Officers

Mike Bareham, *dean*

Jane Van Valkenburg, *sub-dean*

Barb Bayers, *secretary*

Ryan Pryslak, *treasurer/registrar*

Members-at-large

Robert Furr

Joe Loudon

Steven Patchel, *newsletter*

Keith St. John

T.J. Thomas

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The Windchest

Newsletter of the Delaware Chapter,
American Guild of Organists

MAY 2025

www.delawareago.org

Renew, Recruit, Relax

Can't believe I am writing my last Dean's column of the 2024-2025 season. It has been a wonderful year for our chapter, filled with well-attended and well-received events. The 2025-2026 programming committee is hard at work finalizing events for next year and these will be revealed at our end-of year dinner following the organ crawl in Dover the first Saturday in June.

Nearly half of all AGO members renew on July 1, including many of our chapter members. Beginning with this membership cycle, dues will increase by \$7. Do not fret as this increase will provide \$5 more for national operations and \$2 more for our local operations. Go online to AGOhq.org and renew your membership. If you haven't visited the national website since the new IMIS management system was put into place last year, please go online and create your new login credentials. (If you are uncertain about how to do this, visit <https://conta.cc/4j@f8LZ> for an easy, step-by-step tutorial.)

AGO National has turned the membership category of Chapter Friend over to its local chapters. Therefore, your Board of Directors has set a fee of \$75 (payable to DE AGO, c/o Ryan Pryslak, Treasurer, Immanuel Highlands Episcopal, 2400 W. 17TH St. 19806) for those who wish to remain in this category. Please know that for only a few dollars more, you can be a full-fledged member of AGO and receive *The American Organist Magazine* (online or print version) and have access to the national website and all it has to offer.

If you know someone who is an organist but is not a member of the AGO, I encourage you to invite them to join us and be a part of what is offered locally and nationally as we strive to foster a community of musicians who share their knowledge and inspire passion for the organ.

That being said, as we approach the start of summer, with Memorial Day just around the corner, I hope you have wonderful plans with family and friends to find time to rest and relax. Whether it be a much needed vacation or one of the conferences and music clinics being offered over the next couple of months, I pray you find renewal and rejuvenation that prepares you for the fall and all you plan to do with your ministries.

Mike Bareham, Dean

Pedals, Pipes, and Pizza

On Saturday, April 5, we offered Pedals, Pipes & Pizza to thirteen very enthusiastic children and youth at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Newark. The 2001 J.W. Walker tracker organ was open for playing by all and literally open for all to see inside. Cameron Kuzepski adeptly described and demonstrated the voices of the organ for students, parents, guardians, teachers, and chapter members. Vincent Ryan's *OrgelKids* presentation was a highlight of the morning as teams assembled different parts of a small tracker organ, then put it all together for everyone to play. The S.T.E.A.M. stations had kids and adults beaming with delight as slinkies, tuning forks, and lasers exhibited different aspects of sound and sound production. Then it was off to the console where David Schelat and Dana Brehany, along with Dalaie Choi, helped young pianists and budding organists with registration for the pieces they brought to play. The event ended with a pizza lunch where key chains made out of old Austin organ stop tabs were distributed as a memento from the day. Thanks to Michael Davidson for creating these.

Exciting POE News

The Harrisburg Chapter of the American Guild of Organists is sponsoring a Pipe Organ Encounter from June 22-27 at Lebanon Valley College in Annville, PA. Dr. Shelly Moorman-Stahlman, POE Director, has arranged for young musicians ages 13-18 to receive daily lessons from some of the best concert organists, church musicians, and educators on the East Coast. They will play some of the finest instruments in the area, with important faculty recitals in Harrisburg. They will get a taste of college life by living in the dorms and eating in the dining hall. They'll enjoy field trips to see David Tannenberg's organs in Lititz and visit an organ builder's shop in Lancaster. Most of all, they will make friendships that will last a lifetime. Our chapter not only contributed financially to the event, but we provided partial scholarships to seven local students who will attend next month! We are asking them to join us at our September event to share their experiences and perhaps play a bit for us.

No Chapter Election Necessary

At this time of year, you normally would be asked to vote for members to join the chapter's board of directors. However, this year our three-year rotation of members serving as executive officers and members-at-large has been delayed by a year. When I (Mike Bareham) became Dean and Jane Van Valkenburg became Sub-Dean, and Ryan Pryslak stepped into the role of Treasurer/Registrar, the cycle got thrown off a bit. The current board members are all willing to remain in office, and the only change this year is that Rob Furr will become Sub-Dean and Jane will return to the role of Member-at-Large. Simply put, there will be no chapter election this June.

Organ Crawl and Closing Banquet

Plan to join colleagues from all over the state (and even some from Pennsylvania!) at our Organ Crawl and Closing Banquet on June 7 at Christ Episcopal Church in Dover. We will begin at 3:00pm in the nave to hear, hear about and then play the Moeller organ. Patrick Murphy will be on hand to talk about the mechanical improvements he made to the instrument and David Christopher will demonstrate the tonal capabilities. Bring your music and shoes because you will have the chance to try it out.

At 5:00, after time for visiting, strolling the grounds, or walking the labyrinth, we'll reconvene in the Parish Hall for wine, hors d'oeuvres and a delicious dinner, provided by Gia Bella Catering. Following dinner, next year's Chapter Officers will be introduced, and the 2025/2026 programs will be unveiled. The evening will conclude by 7:00pm, allowing everyone to drive home before dark. Members and friends are invited, so you are welcome to bring a guest. Cost is \$30 per person and can be paid that evening by cash or check. By Friday, May 30, let Jane Van Valkenburg know by email (JAVan211@gmail.com) or text (979/220-0168) that you are coming.

Jane A. Van Valkenburg

It's Been a Very Good Year!

As our program year and my term as Sub-dean comes to a close, I'd like to thank the creative and thorough members of the Program Committee. They not only generated wonderful ideas, but they made them happen. This year would not have happened without David Christopher, Rob Furr, Melissa Heieie and Dean Mike Bareham.

Mike hosted our September Welcome Back party at his neighborhood club house in Rehoboth Beach, then in October, Rob arranged for Sandor Kador, our Improvisation clinician and Melissa hosted at Silverside Church. I stepped out of my comfort zone to arrange the Music Notation Software Seminar in November. Thanks to Mike and Wilson Somers for demonstrations and to Barb Bayers for hosting at The Presbyterian Church of Dover.

David arranged for tickets and played holiday selections on the organ at Longwood Gardens in January and Tony Thurman arranged for a Service Playing Workshop and Recital by Bryan Anderson at Westminster Presbyterian in February. David and Melissa recruited, curated and hosted the March Members Recital at SsAM and Mike planned and hosted Pedals, Pipes and Pizza at St. Paul's Lutheran in April. Our closing meeting in June is being planned by David and me. Julie Allport, Mike Bareham, Barb Bayers, Paul Fleckenstein, Melissa Heieie, M.P. Moon and David Schelat have all provided goodies at our meetings. It's been a joy to see so many of you at our meetings - we've had great meetings because we have great people. Thanks to all!

Jane A. Van Valkenburg

Remember to



Like

our Facebook page



Delaware AGO!

NOTABLE EVENTS



Key Locations

- Christ Church, Christiana Hundred 505 Buck Rd, Wilmington
- First & Central Presbyterian, 1101 N Market St, Wilmington
- Immanuel Church on the Green, 50 Market Street, New Castle
- Immanuel Episcopal Church Highlands, 2400 W. 17th Wilmington
- Saints Andrew and Matthew, 719 N. Shipley St. Wilmington
- St. Paul's Lutheran Church 701 S. College Ave, Newark
- Trinity Episcopal Church 1108 North Adams St. Wilmington
- Westminster Presbyterian 1502 W 13th St. Wilmington

JUNE

Sunday 1 June 4:00 pm

Choral Evensong

Christ Church Choir (Church)

Organ Prelude: Bruce Barber.

Christ Church Christiana Hundred

Friday 6 June 7:00 pm

Singposium:

Composers, Directors, Pianists

Joseph Martin, Heather

Sorenson, Joel Raney

with orchestra and choir
at Brandywine Valley Church
in Wilmington

Contact Rob Kennan

rkennan@newark-umc.org

for a link to sing with the choir
on Friday night (rshl 5:00 – 6:30).

Read through of new music with
composers on Saturday
June 7 at 8:30–4:00

Brandywine Valley Church

Friday 6 June 7:30 p.m.

Cooch's Bridge: The Battle

Pre-concert conversation 7:00

Original music composed

and performed by

Jonathan W. Whitney, Percussion

with David Christopher, Organ

Commissioned by The Friends of

The Cooch's Bridge Historic Site

Saints Andrew and Matthew

Member Spotlight:



David Christopher

Organist and Director of Music at Saints Andrew and Matthew, Artistic Director of Delaware Choral Arts

What are your earliest musical memories?

My family attended a large Methodist church in southern Delaware, and I remember as a first or second grader, going up to the organ during the postlude and watching the organist, who also happened to be my first grade teacher. I was absolutely fascinated by how she played with her feet! I also have fond memories of singing in the children's choir. We wore little white cottas and big colorful bows, and I even remember that my favorite anthem was Mary Caldwell's "The Yodler's Carol!"

I remember taking piano lessons in first grade with a jazz organist that was a friend of my mother. I practiced on this big old upright piano in the basement that my aunt gave us. It was originally speckle-painted, so my dad decided to "antique" it in Wedgwood blue! It was something to behold! I have to say, at that age I was never very fond of practicing, but my mother was quite the task master and every day she set the required time on the egg timer. It was probably only 15-20 minutes, but I remember it seemed like hours before that darn bell would go off!

What were some of your other musical experiences as you were growing up?

By the time I was in High School, it seemed like I was playing the piano for everything! I accompanied all of the school choirs, played in the jazz band, accompanied school and community musicals, and played for ballet classes. I was playing so much that the high school decided to give me a private practice period every day! My instrumentalist career was short lived, but I did play the oboe and English horn in high school and county band for a couple of years. Shortly after I started playing oboe, the band was scheduled for a parade, but the director came to me and said "you

can't march with an oboe ... you'll cut your lip!" So he handed me an alto sax, a fingering chart and the third sax part to "Trumpet Voluntary!" It wasn't my favorite, but we made it work!

When did you start playing the organ?

In my early teens I started dabbling around with the newly installed Moller pipe organ at church. At first, they let me play it as much as I wanted, but then someone decided that I might break the organ, so for a while I wasn't allowed to play it at all. That is ...until one fateful Christmas when our church organist ended up having the flu and couldn't play for Christmas Eve services! I'll never forget the call from our pastor asking if I could possibly play for the services. At that point, I didn't have any formal training on the organ, so my repertoire was extremely limited to say the least. I told him I would have to think about it, plus I was still unhappy that my organ privileges has been revoked. I called him back and said that I would only play if I could have a key to the church and would then be allowed to practice the organ as much as I wanted going forward. He agreed, and I suppose the rest is history!

You have conducted a number of musical ensembles and founded several of them.

Tell us about that!

Actually, the first musical ensemble that I started from scratch was a junior choir at my church when I was about 14 years old. The cherub choir that I loved as a grade schooler was long gone and there were no musical opportunities for grades 3-6, but lots of children at the church. I saw a need and it turned out to be a huge success, at least while I was still around to lead it. In undergrad, I resurrected and conducted a number of choirs including West Chester's Musica Antiqua and the Bel Canto choir, both of which hadn't been around for a while. After undergrad, I was living in Newark and working with several amateur string players, and we formed a pilot group hoping to become the Newark Chamber Orchestra. We did one concert which I conducted at the University of Delaware, but once I had a taste of the politics involved, I decided that wasn't for me! In my more recent past, I founded Delaware ChoralArts (previously known as Delaware Valley Chorale) and in 2002 founded the Wilmington Children's Chorus. As far as orchestral

conducting, I conducted several operas for Opera Delaware and conducted an ensemble called the All-American Tribute Orchestra which played for the 4th of July and other outdoor celebrations sponsored by the City of Wilmington.

When did you start playing the organ at Longwood Gardens?

My first official church job (I was just 17) was at St. Peter's in the Great Valley in Paoli, PA during my time as an undergrad at West Chester University. We had a concert series at the church that was organized by this lovely lady from the congregation named Audrey Bauer. She was a real class act and was great at organizing musical and social events. One day I saw an announcement in the paper that Clarence Snyder was retiring as the organist at Longwood Gardens and they were going to hire a director of performing arts instead of another organist. I thought that Audrey would be perfect for the job so I urged her to apply... and she ended up getting the job! Part of her job was to arrange for organists to play concerts every weekend, so whenever she couldn't find someone else, she would get yours truly to play. This was back in the early 80's and there was very little security to speak of, so when I would play there, they would give me a key and I could stay all night and practice as long as I wanted. It was an organist's dream! There was about a decade when I didn't play the organ much because of an injury and a resulting muscular condition, so my relationship with Longwood fizzled out for a while. Thanks to an amazing teacher and physical therapy I was able to overcome and re-gain my playing ability, which led to a graduate degree at the Peabody Institute in Baltimore, followed by a sort of "reunion" organ concert at Longwood. Since then, I have been one of the staff organists for playing concerts during the Christmas season as well as occasional recitals and programs throughout the year.

You have been at The Episcopal Church of Saints Andrew and Matthew (SsAM) for quite a long time. Tell us about your experience there.

It was the spring of 2001 and I was living in NYC where I was on the faculty of the American Musical and Dramatic Academy, a voice therapist for the Rudolf Steiner School, and a private voice teacher

with huge number of students. After retiring from my position at Red Clay Creek Presbyterian Church in 1999, I had decided I was done with church music and wanted to focus on voice and my vocal studies with Cornelius Reid. One day I got a call from my friend Quentin Lane in Wilmington saying he was leaving his position at SsAM after Easter Sunday and asked if I would consider filling in for a while until they could find a replacement. It wasn't the most convenient arrangement since I was living in NYC, but I reluctantly agreed to cover for a few weeks. I visited the church on Palm Sunday and was totally blown away! I'll never forget during the dramatic reading of the Passion that the congregation yelled "crucify him" and started banging on pots and pans that someone had brought up from the kitchen. What!?! Clearly, this place was different! I have always enjoyed playing in an Episcopal church, but SsAM's combination of high church liturgy mixed with a broad range of diverse musical styles immediately piqued my interest. At first, I was just going to be an interim and work as a consultant to help them conduct a national search to find a candidate with the necessary skill set, but somewhere along the way they convinced me to just take the position myself. I think the reason that I have stayed with the parish through the ups and downs over the past 24 years is that we are bound by several common values around diversity, social justice, and musical excellence, plus they really know how to sing! I have had the opportunity to work with several amazing rectors and to collaborate with Michael Quimby to design an amazing pipe organ that really suits the needs of the parish while reflecting my own musical taste and preferences in organ building and design.

What do you do for fun in your spare time?

To be honest, there isn't a lot of spare time, but when time allows, I do enjoy swimming, exercising, and spending time on the Markell Trail at the Wilmington Riverfront! My husband Florentino and I had this crazy idea to adopt our two nephews about 10 years ago, so being a husband and a parent (the boys are now 18 and 23) at my advanced age doesn't leave much time for extracurricular activities, but if I had to do it all over again, I wouldn't change a thing!



Piano For Sale

Yamaha baby grand piano
1985-87 - GH1 in black ebony
Price: \$7,500
Text only (610) 390-9066
Karen

Substitute List

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



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Have a Wonderful Summer!