THE DEAN’S LETTER TO MEMBERS

Dear Richmond AGO Chapter,

I hope y’all are having a good summer! This July/August issue has information about our upcoming Zoom Chapter Meeting in September, the upcoming Organ Repertoire Recital Series concert, now featuring Robert McCormick, as well as a section devoted to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and some resources we hope will be helpful.

There will be a September edition of the Stoplist, so please send any information about events (including links to livestreamed concerts, special services, etc.) to Ryan Tibbetts at ryan.tibbetts@gmail.com.

Stay safe, and best wishes as you start your fall seasons!

Christopher
creynolds@stpaulsrva.org
804-643-3589

SEPTMBER 2020 CHAPTER MEETING

SHARING OUR WEALTH ……….
of funny, heartwarming, embarrassing, unbelievable, and/or memorable stories, that is. We all have at least one, probably many more than one. Our September meeting will be our chance to share, laugh, roll eyes, and cry over them. The meeting date is still TBD, but will be announced soon!

We’re planning the September meeting to be a virtual one, meaning we’ll use the internet-based Zoom meeting service. No meal, a quick business meeting, and then we start sharing. Here’s how it’s going to work.

KENNA PAYNE will coordinate the program. Please contact her if you have a story to share. She’ll need to know the basic details of the story (to estimate the time you’ll need and plan the overall program) such as

Was it a wedding / funeral / recital / etc.?
Were you playing or was someone else?
What happened?
Etc.

There are, of course some ground rules –

Don’t identify any Richmond churches or organists / music directors / soloists by name, especially your predecessor!
Don’t embarrass colleagues in Richmond.

Additional details would help us enjoy the story – what music was involved? Is the couple still married? Was there an odd music request? Did you get combat pay?

If you have a story but don’t wish to tell it yourself at the meeting, consider writing it out and getting it to her by September 1st – Kenna will be glad to read it out loud to the group. And if you haven’t used Zoom during this pandemic season, let Kenna know – she’ll help you try it in advance. You can call her at 272-9656 or email at kennajohnp@aol.com.

Come on, join the fun and jocularity!
EDUCATION CONCERNS

Dear Richmond Chapter AGO members,

Please be sure to look at the organ certificate testing items in the July issue of *The American Organist*. They will be listed by test: Service Playing, Colleague, Associate, and Fellow. With our Covid-19 rules still in place, those under 65 years of age may be granted access to the church organ you still play. If so, then try out some of the pieces. You may just decide you can do this and try for the certificate of choice.

I have been thinking lately about the Standards of Learning in the public schools. I have helped write, back in 1974-75 school year, the Standards of Quality for math for Kindergarten, from which the Standards of Learning for that grade are derived. There are standards for each subject taught in public schools. Music is one of them. My little ones were to be able to clap the beat of a song and the beat of the melody. Our rhythm instruments were good for that. We did walking notes and running notes, as well. By the time fourth grade came along that grade had a recorder band and everyone was to play in it on that grade level. That means they were reading music! It would be great, if you had any youngsters to work with, to have them use what they are learning in school in the various church programs like hand bells, choir, and whatever else you have music wise to have them participate in. It would reinforce what they are already learning and may have them realize the music goals are really worthwhile.

Enjoy your summer!

*Mary Campbell*
(804) 288-4098
Education Chairman

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ORGAN REPERTOIRE RECITAL SERIES

presents Robert McCormick in concert

Friday, October 2, 7:30 PM
St. Bridget Catholic Church, 6006 Three Chopt Road, Richmond

For the first recital in the 2020-21 Organ Repertoire Recital Series, we are very pleased to be able to present Robert McCormick in his Richmond debut. Described as “indomitable and immensely gifted” (Choir & Organ) and as “an artist of rare sensitivity and passion” (The Macon Telegraph), Mr. McCormick is widely heralded by his colleagues and deeply admired for his creative and ethereal abilities in organ improvisation and his commanding, eloquent performances of repertoire of all styles. He is the Organist and Choirmaster of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, having previously served at St. Paul’s K Street in Washington and St. Mary the Virgin in New York. His program will include works by Alfred Hollins, Jehan Alain, J.S. Bach, Joel Martinson, Clara Schumann, Calvin Hampton, David Hurd, and Marcel Dupré’s brilliant Ave Maris Stella. He will end the recital with an improvisation on submitted themes.

Due to the pandemic, there will be limited seating, and those attending must reserve seats (free) in advance through the church's website. Specific directions for doing this will be sent later. Masks will be required during the concert. For those unable to attend in person, the concert will be live-streamed as well as be available for later viewing online.

Although all are grateful during this extraordinary time to be able to enjoy concerts online, hearing the pipe organ through computer speakers is only a pale substitute for hearing it live and experiencing in person a fine recital played brilliantly. We are so grateful to be able to resume offering such evenings of live music soon!

(Note: Johann Vexo, originally scheduled for a recital on this date, had to cancel his U.S. tour due to current travel restrictions between France and the U.S. Consequently, we have postponed his appearance in Richmond until the fall of next year.)

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MEMBER NEWS

With July 1st comes the end of a six-year run for our own chapter member, *Mary Stutz*, as she completes service as the Secretary and Councillor for Communications on the AGO’s National Council. During that time, she also served on the Chapter’s Steering Committee for the 2017 Mid-Atlantic Regional Convention and remained the Chapter’s webmaster. I hope you join me in thanking her for her service at the national level.....serving at that level is a labor of intense work and love!

*Kenna Payne*
Chapter Treasurer; 2017 Regional Convention Coordinator; Member, National Committee for Conventions
COVID-19

From the Editor: As we approach the start of our program years, school years, and concert seasons, I think it’s fair to say that many of us are likely still attempting to feel our way forward in the midst of this unprecedented situation. What follows is an attempt to compile some resources that might be helpful to our members in terms of how choral rehearsals might work, good hygiene at the organ, and so forth. This is by no means exhaustive, and I invite anyone who has other materials or suggestions to share to e-mail me at ryan.ribbets@gmail.com.

One of the resources that I have been waiting on is a study sponsored by a number of major musical organizations of aerosol spread while singing, playing wind instruments, and speaking. The second round of preliminary results from that study was recently released, and can be found at the following link: https://www.nfhs.org/articles/unprecedented-international-coalition-led-by-performing-arts-organizations-to-commission-covid-19-study/

The page above has links to a YouTube presentation of the latest results (which is about 80 minutes long, so budget your time accordingly), as well as a PDF summary. The major takeaways from the study as concerns choral singing so far are as follows:

- Singing outside is preferable to singing inside, but regardless, well-fitting face masks should be worn at all times while singing and speaking. Having a canopy of some sort over singers outside is probably fine, but an enclosed tent would not be safe, as it would effectively contain any aerosols.
- For rehearsals, each singer should be positioned in the center of a 6x6 foot square, with all singers in straight lines and facing forward. This is just my own speculation, but if you are working with enough singers that you need more than one row (and particularly if you need more than two), it would probably make sense to stagger rows of singers, both for sight-lines and so that in a three-row situation there is a 12-foot gap between one singer's mouth and the back of another singer's head.
- Even outside, a maximum of 30 minutes of rehearsal is recommended at this stage. Outside, ensembles should then allow at least five minutes for the air to clear before continuing or beginning a rehearsal with another ensemble; inside, the wait should be for at least the amount of time that it takes to complete one complete HVAC air change in the rehearsal room, and ideally the time it takes to complete three air changes.
- Hand sanitizer and access to soap and warm water are still encouraged for rehearsals. It's probably worth reiterating to your singers that they should not come to any potential rehearsal if they have any possible COVID symptoms, have been exposed to someone who recently tested positive, or are running a fever.

Dr. Marty Wheeler, President of the Association of Anglican Musicians (and newly on the faculty at Virginia Theological Seminary) has also prepared a longer summary, which you can read at this link: https://anglicanmusicians.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/COVID-19-Aug_2020.pdf.

The National AGO website has a list of COVID resources here: https://www.agohq.org/responding-to-covid-19/.

It is important to remember that all of these results are preliminary – they have not yet been peer-reviewed and will be investigated further over the coming months (a final report is anticipated later in the fall). However, the initial results are encouraging in that it does seem that wearing a well-fitted mask does a good job of reducing aerosol spread, and a carefully planned, well-spaced (and ideally outdoor) 30-minute rehearsal appears to be viable. What the implications are for congregational singing are less clear, so it seems likely that restrictions on that practice will need to continue for the time being. And of course, anyone thinking about resuming choral rehearsals should do so in dialogue with their singers and other stakeholders (clergy, relevant church bodies, and so forth) to assess risks, logistical issues, and so on.

The aerosol study obviously doesn’t address concerns around organ playing, particularly in situations where multiple players are using a single instrument. However, Chapter Member Ardyth Lohuis sent along these suggestions, which came from the Omaha AGO Chapter:

There has been much discussion about organ sanitization among organ builders lately, especially as churches begin to reopen and resume in-person worship. The consensus is that properly disinfecting an organ console isn’t really practical. There are too many surfaces that fingers come in contact with in order for the sanitizer to be effective (think about not only the key tops, but also the sides of each key and all the way back to the thumb rail between the sharps; fronts and backs of the stop knobs, the power switch, memory level keypad, etc...). There are also numerous materials and finishes that could react adversely to disinfectants (wood, ivory, plastic; varnish, lacquer, shellac; sensitive electronics, or delicate action parts). I don’t know of any product guaranteed to not damage finishes. Hand sanitizer is safe, as long as it has dried completely before the organist touches the keys.

The general recommendations are to:
1) Have as few people play or touch the organ / piano as possible
2) Wear a mask, and certainly avoid sneezing or coughing onto the keys or your hands
3) Use hand sanitizer before and after playing
4) Do not touch your face, eyes, hair, or scratch an itch while at the organ. If you do need to do these, use hand sanitizer again.
COVID-19, continued

The various churches and denominations in the Richmond area are at different places in terms of whether or not they are allowing in-person, indoor services. At St. Mary’s Episcopal Church, where I’m the music director, we’re currently having one outdoor service with a 50-person cap each week while continuing to provide a pre-recorded service that plays on Facebook and YouTube on Sunday mornings at 10am. For a different perspective, Joel Kumro sent this detailed description of how services are functioning at Saint Benedict Catholic Church:

-The total number of people in church cannot exceed the indoor capacity percentage of 50%.
-Physical distancing is understood to be more important than the capacity percentage, and capacity numbers will reflect that. In the case of Saint Benedict, our total capacity is roughly 600. With the distancing requirements, our limited capacity is about 108 people. We calculated our distancing to be sure that there is a minimum of six feet between families or individuals seated in the pews, as well as anyone who may be in the aisles during processions, the reception of communion, etc.
-Families and households can manage their own distances and are seating accordingly. The distancing applies to family/couple units being distanced from one another.
-The church is divided into two major sections: the left side of the church, looking toward the altar, is reserved for individuals and/or couples. There is room on this side for 23 of these units. Additionally, we have space for one extra individual. The right side of the church is reserved for families. Our measurements have allowed each family unit to be roughly the size of four grown adults. This means that families with adults and children can fit more. Some of our large families of 6–11 need to be separated into two family sections, or perhaps a family and individual/couple section.
-We have created some additional seating in our two side chapels. Both were created ensuring physical distancing from the aisles and other pew sections.
-Face coverings are required for entrance to our facilities for any event, including and especially liturgies. Anyone over the age of ten (10) is required to wear a face covering and must kindly but unfortunately be asked to leave if they do not have one, or refuse to wear them.
-Parishes in the Catholic Diocese of Richmond are not allowed to distribute face coverings to those who do not have them.
-Lectors and cantors must wear masks and may only remove them to read or sing.
-Ushers and altar servers must wear masks at all times.
-Altar servers are permitted, though it is suggested that this ministry be suspended. Here at Saint Benedict, we generally have suspended this ministry, except for solemnities where an altar server may need to be a thurifer.
-Hand sanitizer is encouraged to be used whenever it is available. We have sanitizing stations at all entrance and exits.
-Those in a vulnerable category are encouraged not to attend Mass. A provision has been made for a Mass specifically targeted toward those in these categories, though we have not done so.
-The Catholic obligation to attend Mass has been dispensed and will likely remain so for quite some time.
-Live-streaming is still encouraged. We are live-streaming all daily Masses (not yet open to the public,) and one of our weekend Masses (Sunday, 11:30) is live-streamed. The diocese would like for us to notify the parish in advance of any Mass or event that will be live-streamed.
-We have designated entrance and exit doors.
-When parishioners arrive, they will follow a path with distance marks from the parking lot to the front (Sheppard St) doors. Handicapped parishioners are escorted personally to specially designated spaces, through our glass door ramp entry.
-There is a minimum of three hours between Masses to allow for cleaning. All touch areas are sanitized. Pews are sprayed with disinfectant.
-Use of public bathrooms is discouraged at this time. Ours have been closed. A family bathroom remains for emergency use. There are detailed instructions for use. Parishioners are kindly asked to wipe the toilet seat with a cleaning wipe before and after use. The bathroom is sanitized after each Mass.
-All Mass attendees MUST sign up prior to arriving. This is primarily for contact tracing purposes. Unfortunately, anyone who presents themselves for Mass without signing up must not be permitted to attend. This may change.
-Upon arrival, parishioners are asked three questions about flu symptoms and fevers. If they answer yes to any of these questions, they must be turned away.
-Parishioners are encouraged to arrive 30 minutes before the start of Mass, and are seated personally by an usher.
-Once Mass begins, the doors are closed and locked. Unfortunately, latecomers are not permitted.
-Congregational singing is discouraged. Hymnals and worship leaflets are not available.
-Choirs are to be suspended. Only one organist and one cantor may be present for any liturgy at this time.
-The process for reception of communion is guided by the ushers. One side of the church is guided at a time. Each family or individual/couple unit is guided up at once. They receive communion from the priest, step to the right, remove their mask, consume, replace their mask, and return to their pew utilizing a side aisle.
-Reception from the chalice is suspended at this time.
-It is strongly encouraged to receive communion in the hand. Those who still wish to receive on the tongue may do so. It is announced at the end of the Communion Rite. They will present themselves, remove their mask, and the priest will carefully administer on their tongue. After each communicant, the priest must sanitize his hand.
-At the conclusion of Mass, ushers will dismiss each pew in such a way that families, individuals, and couples do not pass each other down the aisles.
-We kindly ask that parishioners refrain from gathering or socializing after Mass at this time. As they are dismissed, they return to their cars, or walk home.
Lastly, here is one other link to resources that might be useful:

The Virginia, DC/Maryland, and Delaware ACDA Chapters sponsor an annual summer conference called Voices United. This year, the conference was held virtually, and all of the video sessions are available online for anyone to view – you can find them all at this link: https://www.youtube.com/c/ACDAVoicesUnited/videos. Several relate directly to the current situation, including a presentation discussing the making of virtual choirs videos.

Once again, if you have suggestions, resources you’ve found helpful, or information to share about how your church or other performing arts organization is dealing with the pandemic, please send them to ryan.tibbetts@gmail.com so that we can continue to help each other as we all attempt to manage this ongoing crisis.

-Ryan Tibbetts
Stoplist Editor, Member-at-Large

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**CHAPLAIN’S MESSAGE**

**Uncertainty, Mystery, and 2020**

The church was divided.
The incumbent pastor left after two years.
Meeting the payroll was in doubt.
I was the new pastor.

I was at a loss, but my understanding of United Methodist Church polity was that UM clergy go where they are sent. So I went to a church I never would have sent myself. I was certain that my strength was administration, not imagination.

Shortly after I arrived, the men’s group met. It was an older crowd, many of whom opposed my predecessor. I was on probation and knew it. Nerves jangling, I resorted to an old Methodist standby: Gospel hymns. When the bulk of the group arrived, they found me pounding on the fellowship hall piano with more enthusiasm than accuracy.

To my surprise, a few started singing along. Others joined in.
Then it happened. Someone said: “Hey, we sing well enough to sing in church!” The Men’s Gospel Choir made its inaugural offering the following Sunday.

And so began the most productive years of my pastoral ministry.
It was an accident. I was nervous, started playing piano, someone said something, and it snowballed from there. No committee suggested the founding of a Men’s Chorus as part of a plan to revitalize the congregation. I certainly didn’t plan it. It simply happened with a particular group of men meeting in a particular place on a particular night.
I was simply there. As Cowper wrote, “God moves in a mysterious way.”

2020 has been an awful year so far. Covid-19 hijacked everything. One thing soon became apparent: No one was prepared for this. On the other hand, many have developed an amazing range of skills in recent months. Some claim that the pandemic in just a couple of months fast-forwarded our living and working as a technological society by five years. Few would deny that the pace of change is accelerating, challenging, inspiring … and exhausting.

Many are probably growing weary of hearing about the opportunities presented by “the new normal.” For some, the demand for creative approaches to ministry is accompanied by an unspoken “… or else.” The past few months have been a whirl, the future is decidedly uncertain.

All of which brings me back to that moment of a quarter-century ago. I had no plan, no imaginative approach for church revitalization, and no answers except my faith. As it turned out, all that was required was availability coupled with a desire to move forward.

In these uncertain, exhausting times, we may not need all the answers.

Gregory Hayes
Chaplain
SUBSTITUTES

The persons listed below have indicated a desire to be called for substituting at church services. No specific qualifications are implied by their inclusion on this list. The employer is responsible for determining that a substitute will adequately meet the needs of the church. Questions should be addressed to Betty Girardeau. If you no longer wish to be included on the substitute list, please ask that your name be removed from the list by emailing Betty Girardeau at bettyg@redfamiliar.com or by phone at 804-647-0825.

Substitutes Available (Including Sundays)

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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Substitutes Available for Special or Non-Sunday Morning Events Only

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MOVING?

Be sure to notify us of any changes in your mailing or email addresses so that you will continue to receive your copy of the “Stoplist” without interruption.
POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Listings in this column appear for a maximum of 90 days and then are removed unless an extension is requested. When a listing is removed, therefore, it does not necessarily mean that the position has been filled. To submit a listing, please contact our Referral Service Director, Betty Girardeau, at bettyg@redfamiliar.com and phone 804-647-0825.

FARMVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
200 West Third Street, Farmville, VA 23901
Seeking part-time organist/director for one Sunday morning service and one weekly adult choir rehearsal. During the school term, there are four Longwood University music majors who are paid to supplement the choir. Special services Maundy Thursday and Christmas Eve. Occasional funerals. Weddings by agreement only. Two manual Beckerath tracker pipe organ. Annual salary $15,000 per year with four weeks paid vacation. Book and music allowance. Candidate should have good people skills and a willingness to work with college students. Interested candidates should contact John Arehart, Chair, Organist Search Committee via email at arehartje@longwood.edu or by phone at 434-603-0073. Or Ed Kromer via email at kromerer@gmail.com or phone at 434-547-7997.

The Richmond AGO is on FACEBOOK

Stay connected with Richmond AGO members and notices of meetings, recitals, and other events through the chapter's official Facebook page. Look for us on Facebook: Richmond Chapter - American Guild of Organists, or go to the Richmond AGO web page www.richmondago.org and click on the Facebook icon.

FOR PHOTOGRAPHS AND ORGAN SPECIFICATIONS OF CENTRAL VIRGINIA CHURCHES, PLEASE VISIT

The Churches Of Virginia
Web Site Available at

www.ChurchesOfVirginia.org
The organ can be delivered to your performance venue two days prior to use. It is tuned the day prior to use and then picked up not later than the day after use. Renter is responsible for the safe keeping of the organ while in possession and arranging ready and easy access for delivery, tuning and pick up. Mileage for delivery is extra when outside Baltimore City.

C-d'' (51 notes) transposing keyboard
A - 392, 415, 440, 465 hz
8' Gedackt
4' Flute
2' Principal
- Organ is mounted on a stage dolly for easy moving
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- Volume controlled with opening panels
- Equal Temperament
- Unequal Temperament Tuning is available for additional charge
- Set-up and Tuning included in rental
- Gentle tone, perfect for chamber and choral music
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410-889-3800 – davidmstoreyinc@gmail.com
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A beautiful beach and retirement area is the home of Seaside United Methodist Church. Replacing an Allen Organ from 1994, the new Rodgers 599 was installed in the fall of 2019. The organ search committee, headed by Kathy Parker, Director of Music and Organist, began their search for a new organ by visiting some Rodgers and Allen installations. The incomparable Rodgers Sound, features, and advanced technology won out over the competition. The decision was to purchase a new Rodgers Artist 599, with 16 channels of audio. The organs diverse specification thrilled the committee and is serving all of the worship needs of the congregation.

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