

Lehigh Valley Chapter

American Guild of Organists

April 2025

www.lvago.org



Chapter Officers 2024-2025

Dean: Susan Frickert
484-788-9476

sfrickert2001@yahoo.com

Sub Dean: Janice Butz
610-730-0328

janicebutz@gmail.com

Secretary: Linda Maule
610-258-5006
maule@ptd.net

Treasurer: Stephen Bueker
610-657-4188
sfbueker@rcn.com

Executive Committee

Robert Riday (2025)

Michael Fister (2025)

Marisa Deshler (2026)

Jeffrey Raub (2026)

Charles Glandorf (2027)

Gary Raish (2027)

Dean's Article

Dear Colleagues,

On the night before Easter I usually find it difficult to sleep - so many little details for the next morning's service, singers and handbell ringers to worry about...you're all familiar with the season's stress! Have you ever considered the "Marys" - the women who were the first witnesses to the resurrection? What raced through their minds that Saturday night two thousand plus years ago, as they gathered the things they would need to clean and anoint Jesus' bloodied body the next morning? The women had already been traumatized by the horrors inflicted on Jesus by the Roman soldiers on Friday, and now they would have to face soldiers posted at Jesus' tomb. Would the soldiers let the Marys through or would they arrest them for trespassing? Would they ridicule and harass them when they unsuccessfully tried to move the huge stone barring the tomb's entrance? Would the guards even physically abuse them, vulnerable Jewish women alone and unaccompanied? Those worries and fears did not deter them. The women's love for Jesus and their strong faith gave them courage in an untenable situation. When they arrived at the tomb, imagine their shock to find the soldiers had run away, and the huge stone had been moved from the entrance. What joy when they entered the tomb and were told, "He is not here - He is risen as He said!" The women ran back to tell the disciples, and we know the rest of the life changing story. How many times has God "cleared the way" for you? God has given each of us the precious, powerful gift of music to be used to spread the Good News of Jesus' resurrection. Because of our dedicated ministries, music softens hearts to receive the truth of the Gospel. Music provides healing to the hurting. Music returns prodigal people to God. You have a holy ministry in the place to which God has called you. May Easter joy and love fill your heart always, and may you continue to do God's work with faith and courage. A blessed Easter!



UPCOMING LVAGO EVENTS

April

No LVAGO Event

May

Organist/Clergy Dinner

Sunday, May 18, 2025

Carriage House, Hellertown

Invite your pastor to hear our guest speaker, the Rev. Dr. Karyn Wiseman from United Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia and to enjoy fellowship and a delicious meal. Our annual meeting and installation of officers will follow the program.

(Information and registration on last 2 pages)

LVAGO Organist Substitute List

If you would like to be included in the Organist Substitute List please forward your Name, Contact Information (phone/email) and Availability (Sundays, weekdays, etc) to Stephen Bueker, 2520 Clark Place, Easton, PA 18040; sfbueker@rcn.com.

Dale Bonenberger	Mon-Fri	917 328-9041
Ruthann Brandt	Mon-Sat	610 262-3304
Janice Butz	Mon -Fri	610 882-9388
Alan Birney	Sun-Sat	610 653-8097
Ellen Erb	Mon-Sat	570 350-0343
Charles Glandorf	Mon-Sat	610 416-1055
Eric Gombert	Mon-Sat	610 435-1641
Gail Hanzl	Mon-Sat	610 264-5859
Susan Hartney	Mon-Sat	610 360-6934
Joe Kaczmarek	Mon-Sat	484 433-4336
Jacqueline Kuba	Sun-Sat	570 386-4480
Michael Kuhnert	Mon-Sat	215 536-4345
Cristina Dinella Makowicz	Sun-Sat	585-732-8017
James Matz	Sun-Sat	610 367-8094
Linda Maule	Mon-Sat	610 258-5006
Richard McIntyre	Mon-Sat	908 283-4691
Jeffrey Raub	Saturday	484 541-8322
Michael Seroka	Mon-Sat	570 516-7207
Barbara Thomson	Sun-Sat	908 591-4499
Bruce Tonkin	Sun-Sat	610 220-5457
Matthew Wary	Mon-Sat	610 743-0921
Stephen Ziminsky	Mon-Fri	610 417-2669
Freda Zimmerman	Mon-Fri	610 381-3089

In Memorium

We announce with sadness the death of a long-time AGO chapter member, Hope Anna Kunkel, 78, who died on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, at Northampton Post Acute, Easton. Hope was an organ student of AGO chapter member and former Dean, Marvin Beinema, now deceased. In 1972, she earned an MA at New England Conservatory of Music, Boston. She served as an organist in several local churches and was a member of St. Thomas UCC, Bethlehem. She sang for 16 years with the Lehigh University Choral Union. Hope dealt with deteriorating blindness during her lifetime but nonetheless persevered with her musicianship as an organist and singer. Her funeral service took place on Wednesday, March 19, 2025, at the Reichel Funeral Home in Nazareth. Memorial donations may be made in Hope's memory to "Sights for Hope," 845 W. Wyoming Street, Allentown, PA 18103.

Positions Available

Director of Music/Organist(2)

Church: Augustus Lutheran Church, 717 W. Main St., Trappe, PA 19426

Website: augustustrappe.org

Contact: Pastor Warren Weleck, 610-489-9625, pastor@augustustrappe.org

Weekly services: 2

Ensembles: Adult Choir - 12 members, Adult Handbells - 11, Assisting with Sunday School Music - avg. 13

Instruments: Brick: 2008 Walker Technical Aeolia-Skiner Organ (3 manuals, approx. 90 ranks), Steinway baby grand piano; Chapel: Kawai electric piano; Old Church: 1990s Allen organ (2 manual, approx. 10-15 ranks)

Music budget: \$2350

Weekly attendance: 100

Position fill date: May

Deadline: Until position is filled

Total hours per week: 20

Salary: \$32,000

Weeks vacation: 4

Benefits: Sick leave, continuing ed

Notes: Augustus Lutheran Church in Trappe, PA is seeking a passionate and talented Director of Music and Organist to lead and enhance our worship music program. This position offers an opportunity to honor our strong liturgical traditions while inspiring and guiding musicians of all ages.

Rattle The Rafters

As a church musician, it doesn't seem that long ago that the criteria for choosing what music to play or have the choir sing were as follows:

- What season or Sunday of the church year is it?
- What particular scripture passage from the Common Lectionary will be read?
- What level of difficulty is appropriate for our choir?

Well gang, it seems as if we are, in some ways, on a different planet regarding music selection for worship these past few years. We find ourselves in a period of unprecedented division in our country during our lifetime. We are experiencing deeply held divisions on how we see the direction our country is taking, and which path forward is best. Just a few years ago, we had friends and family members with different political affiliations, with whom we were almost always able to respectfully and even passionately discuss and even argue differently held beliefs. At the end of such discussions, there was usually a chuckle, a hug, and maybe even a light hearted "how did two siblings from the same family evolve such different political beliefs"? We were all able to go on from that discussion still respecting and loving each other.

Perhaps you, like me, have had similar situations develop in recent years (months?) within our congregations, specifically our musical ensembles? Longtime choir or handbell choir members who have become like family to us have embraced and support leaders of our country that we personally disagree with very strongly. Unlike the respectful bantering about politics we used to actually enjoy a few years ago with family members, we find ourselves experiencing anxiety, tension and fear regarding the eight hundred pound gorilla in the room that we cannot discuss for fear of turmoil in the choir room or congregation. We do not want to be perceived as a trouble maker or divider. We have also been raised to follow the general church rule of thumb:

"We leave our politics at the door".

So...what do we do? Most of we church musicians have clergy as close friends. We even

socialize regularly with them. The worship planning dilemma just mentioned above seems to be present at all our weekly worship planning meetings, as well as around the table when socializing. It seems as if I hear from all clergy friends "I just preach the gospel", whenever this topic comes up. We all read social media posts from clergy of all denominations stating the same thing. "I just preach the gospel". That little phrase seems rather simple, but it seems to hold the key to success in worship music selection.

When we select music with text that reflects compassion, justice for all, kindness, reaching out to strangers, feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, we are simply projecting the words, actions and behavior we hear in the gospels and other scripture each week. We can also choose texts for our choir anthems that approach social divisions through the path of love and kindness, and not in-your-face or abrupt texts. As I write this, I am hearing in my head well-known, modern church music composer Mark Miller's song "Love Has Broken Down The Wall", and also his "Draw The Circle Wider". His words are powerful, the music uncomplicated enough to reach everyone in the congregation. Perhaps that is the key to our common calling as church musicians: Choose music that lifts our congregations above personal divisions and reaches points of common hope and belief. Perhaps we can choose texts that use the pronouns we and us, rather than I and me? Many contemporary worship songs tend to use I and me quite often. We might like the music and the basic message they provide, but maybe singing I and me can tend to create division rather than commonality? There are plenty of contemporary worship songs that use plural pronouns that subtly, even subliminally can help provide some joining together.

In conclusion, let's keep on doing what we have been doing for years! (Recapitulation of the original motif):

- What season or Sunday of the church year is it?
- What particular scripture passage from the Common Lectionary will be read?
- What level of difficulty is appropriate for our choir?

(continued on next page)

CODA: In addition to the original motif, let's augment the theme by thinking of ways to "shake it up" by finding music that discusses social justice and kindness, and love, etc., that perhaps obliquely, and without hitting the congregation over the head, reaches a place that all those for whom we provide worship music can relate.

We can all benefit from regular and ongoing communication with our clergy colleagues regarding upcoming lectionary readings and sermon topics and cohesive, comprehensive presentations of those topics in worship. Yes, I believe we can successfully step across the line a bit with regard to social justice when we coordinate with clergy and music colleagues. In fact, I believe that we need to put our toes across that line. Best wishes as we navigate the modern world of worship planning. We all love to rattle the rafters with our music (hello, fellow organists with 32' pedals). Let's remember that we can also rattle those same rafters with the harp, and not only the timbrel when we do it properly. Peace, love, and more flats, less sharps!

Bob Riday



LVAGO chapter members celebrated Bach's 340th birthday with an inspiring and informative lecture-recital at St. John's Lutheran Church in Allentown on Sunday afternoon, March 23. Guest performer Dr. Shelly Moorman-Stahlman, Professor at Lebanon Valley College, shared insights into Bach as The Synthesis, The Pedagogue, The Theologian, and The Innovator. Works performed included the Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue in C Major, the Trio Sonata in G Major, several of the chorale preludes from the Orgelbuchlein, and the E minor "Wedge" Prelude and Fugue.

Your evaluation of the past year's program:

Which of this year's events did you attend?
Any favorites?

- Octibia fest at the Home of Gary Raish and Bob Riday
- November Choral Workshop with Sun Min Lee
- January Jumpstart
- February Choral Workshop with composer Mark Miller
- March J.S. Bach Organ Recital/Commentary by Shelly Moorman-Stahlman
- Organist/Clergy Dinner with Speaker Karyn Wiseman

What types of events would you like to see scheduled during 2025/2026?

You may send your comments to Dean Susan Frickert at sfrickert2001@yahoo.com

Newsletter Editor

Marta Oberlin, martasgig@gmail.com

Placement Service

Please visit the Placement page on www.lvago.org for information and the Placement Service Information Sheet.

Newsletter Deadline

(May issue) Tuesday, April 22, 2025

~ *Better Together* ~

Featuring guest speaker

Rev. Dr. Karyn Wiseman

ORGANIST and CLERGY

BANQUET & ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, May 18, 4:30 p.m.

The Carriage House at Heintzelman's

326 Main Street (rear), Hellertown, PA 18055

Please invite clergy friends and colleagues for an evening of socializing with AGO friends and clergy, a delicious meal served by Brooklyn's Catering, our annual meeting and election of officers, culminating with Rev. Wiseman's stimulating words about collaboration among and between church musicians and clergy.

Dinner Menu

Hors d'oeuvres & Wine

Tossed Green Salad

Chicken Française

Signature Roast Beef

Penne Alla Vodka

Roasted Redskin Potatoes

Vegetable

Assorted Desserts

Water, Soda, Iced Tea, Hot Coffee & Tea

Cost is \$25 per person for chapter members and guests.

Reservation for LVAGO Annual Banquet and Meeting, May 18, 4:30 PM

Name(s) _____

of persons attending _____ Amount enclosed _____

Please send a check for \$25 (per person) payable to: "Lehigh Valley Chapter of the American Guild of Organists" and mail to Gary Raish, 110 Meadow Run Lane, Stroudsburg, PA 18360 by **Saturday, May 3**. (garyraish@hotmail.com or 570-460-3816 with any questions)

REV. DR. KARYN WISEMAN

The Rev. Dr. Karyn L. Wiseman is an ordained pastor in the United Church of Christ. She is the Stuempfle-Folkemer Professor of Homiletics at United Lutheran Seminary, where she teaches on both the Philadelphia and Gettysburg campuses. Preaching is her main teaching focus, but she also teaches several Queer Studies courses. Karyn has taught seminary courses for 19 years. She grew up in Texas and received her MDiv at Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City.

Karyn also has 20+ years experience pastoring churches in Kansas, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. She has a Ph.D. in Liturgical Studies/Preaching from Drew University. Her first book, *I Refuse to Preach a Boring Sermon: Engaging 21st Century Listeners*, was published by Chalice Press. Her newest book, just published by Cascade Books, is *Queering the Pulpit: A Sexegetical Approach to Preaching an Inclusive Word*. She is currently working on her next book, *Delivery Matters*.

She is married to Cindy Clawson, a social worker in Philadelphia and has a son, Shelby, who lives in Pittsburgh. Karyn loves action movies, social media, Broadway musicals and plays, New York Yankees baseball, and the Dallas Cowboys.