

Lehigh Valley Chapter

# American Guild of Organists

August 2025

[www.lvago.org](http://www.lvago.org)



## Chapter Officers 2024-2025

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610-730-0328

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Treasurer: Stephen Bueker

610-657-4188

[sfbueker@rcn.com](mailto:sfbueker@rcn.com)

### Executive Committee

Marisa Deshler (2026)

Jeffrey Raub (2026)

Charles Glandorf (2027)

Gary Raish (2027)

Robert Riday (2028)

Michael Fister (2028)

## Notes from the Dean

Dear Colleagues,

Greetings from your Officers and Executive Board! We've been enthusiastically planning another year of interesting and educational events, with ample opportunities for fun and fellowship. See some intriguing peeks into the coming attractions, courtesy of our Sub-Dean, Janice Butz, in this issue...

In June your Lehigh Valley Chapter officers and board invited the Reading Chapter to meet with us. Unfortunately they have been experiencing severely declining membership and lack of participation for several years. I would like to share with you the results of that joint meeting. The following members of the Reading Chapter met with the Lehigh Valley officers and executive board on July 22, 2025: Dean Joyce Maurer, Sub-Dean Joanne Lutz, Secretary Carla Bell, Treasurer John Brewster, members Matt Wary and Tom Busteed. The Reading Chapter includes Schuylkill and is down to about twenty members, most of whom are semi-retired and don't drive at night. Many of their members are juggling serving multiple churches because of a shortage of organists. Many churches have either closed, or now use guitars to lead worship, meaning fewer organists are attracted to the area. The same six or eight members plan/attend chapter events. The Reading Chapter's most successful projects have been Pedals, Pipes and Pizza every three years, annual members' recitals, and their yearly scholarship program funded by those members' recitals and administered by the Reading Music Foundation. After an honest and lengthy discussion, the Reading Chapter proposed a sort of "trial marriage" for our 2025-2026 program year, during which we will include them in our programs and communications, and schedule one of our events geographically closer to them. At the end of the year we will meet together again to evaluate the possibility of absorbing Reading into our chapter. Of course, we would need to go through national approval and procedure. Please keep the Reading Chapter as well as the Lehigh Valley Chapter in your prayers, as together we face challenging decisions about the future.



## Meet Our New Members

Melinda Kelly is a graduate of Lebanon Valley College and holds a Music Education degree, majoring in voice, minoring in piano. After graduation, she studied organ with Corinne Eckert, Grace Lutheran Church, Shillington, PA, and Thomas Nase, First Presbyterian Church, Reading, PA. Six months after beginning organ studies, she was offered the position as Organist/Choir Director at her home Church, St. John's Lutheran, Gibraltar, PA, remaining there for two years. Following that, Melinda became Director of Music at Calvary Lutheran Church in Laureldale, PA for 32 years. During her time there, she reports, "we installed a three manual, 38 rank Schantz organ, which was 'heavenly'!" Melinda has also taught General and Vocal Music at Boyertown Area School District, at both the Elementary and Junior High and levels. In the past she has been a member of the Reading Chapter AGO since the mid-1980's, during which her church hosted a Hymn Festival with area vocal choirs, hand bell choirs and brass ensemble. In 1996 they hosted a recital celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the AGO. Presently Melinda serves Jacob's Church, Jacksonville (New Tripoli area), as Organist/Choir Director (since November 2023). She confesses, "I thought that I had 'retired' from church music, but the Lord had other plans for me, and I am so delighted to be playing and directing again!" So are we, Melinda - so are we! Welcome to the Lehigh Valley Chapter!

Sarah Fabian had been playing the violin for many years, but when her church, Holy Family Catholic Church in Nazareth, was in need of an organist, she began teaching herself how to play the organ. Later she took the position as Music Director at St. Rocco's Catholic Church in Martin's Creek and began officially studying the organ with our chapter's sub-dean, Janice Butz. After graduating from Nazareth Area High School in 2023, she began her studies at Moravian University where she currently is a student of Barbara Thomson. Continuing her responsibilities at St. Rocco's Church and starting her junior year at Moravian, Sarah

has a busy schedule with piano, organ, violin, and Celtic fiddle lessons. In addition, she participates in chamber strings as well as numerous vocal choirs at the University. Outside of her student life, she is often found playing her violin at nursing homes and this past summer performed at DeSales University for the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival's outdoor entertainment "On the Green." She continues to also be involved with the music ministry at the Cathedral Church of Saint Catherine of Siena in Allentown where she at times plays her violin and sings with the Diocesan choir and Angelorum, the women's choir. Sarah looks forward to playing her junior organ recital this coming academic year, as well as eventually pursuing the American Guild of Organist's Service Playing Certificate.



## Sacred Voices Annual Concert

Sacred Voices, a fifty-six voice unauditioned summer choir directed by founder Susan L. Frickert, will present its yearly concert on Sunday, September 28 at 4:00 p.m. at Union Lutheran Church, 5500 Route 873, Schnecksville, PA 18078. This year's theme, "Get On Board, Little Children - African-American Spirituals", features a variety of familiar and not so familiar spirituals from the rich cultural legacy of enslaved Africans, which grew into the uniquely American music forms we know and love as Blues, Jazz, Rock and Roll, and Gospel. Included are fresh arrangements by black composers such as Moses Hogan, Andre Thomas, Undine Smith-Moore, Stacy Gibbs, Eurydice Osterman, Rollo Dillworth, and Victor Johnson. Featured guest vocal soloist, Evelyn Stewart, is well-known to music circles in the Lehigh Valley. She will be the highlight of many of the choral pieces, as well as perform two spirituals by herself. Susan Frickert will perform an Organ Toccata based on "Lift Every Voice and Sing" by composer Mark Miller. Ticket donation is \$10, and may be purchased on the church website <[www.ulclv.org](http://www.ulclv.org)> or at the door the afternoon of the concert.

## A Glimpse at Our Upcoming LVAGO Program Year

The LVAGO Chapter Board has been busy planning events for 2025-26, and here are some of the highlights and ideas for the coming season.

**OCTOBER**—Octibiafest on Friday, October 10, at the home of Bob Riday and Gary Raish in Stroudsburg, features theatre organist Ian Fraser. We had such a great time last year, that Bob and Gary are graciously opening their home to us again to enjoy good food, fellowship, and great music. Look for the details in this newsletter!

**NOVEMBER**—Favorite Anthems will be shared by our chapter members on Sunday, November 16, at 3:00 p.m., and we'll enjoy a light supper following the program. The location is at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Bethlehem Township. Watch for more info in upcoming newsletters.

**DECEMBER**—No program, as we “deck the halls with music” in our own local churches.

**JANUARY**—Chapter members are encouraged to be inspired for the new year by attending the Philadelphia Chapter's annual January Jumpstart, a day filled with workshops and a featured organ clinician.

**FEBRUARY**—A workshop in observance of Black History Month.

**MARCH**—A celebration of women composers, hearing perhaps some organ works, choral anthems, or hymns composed by women.

**APRIL**—On the road for an organ crawl, possibly showcasing historic organs in our area or traveling further to Philadelphia and vicinity.

**MAY**—Our annual meeting with a banquet and young artist's recital.

### Newsletter Editor

Marta Oberlin, [martasgig@gmail.com](mailto:martasgig@gmail.com)

### Placement Service

Please visit the Placement page on [www.lvago.org](http://www.lvago.org) for information and the Placement Service Information Sheet.

### Newsletter Deadline

(October issue) Thursday, September 18, 2025

## 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](mailto: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	Mon-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
Dennis Varley	Sun-Sat	610 739-3567
Matthew Wary	Mon-Sat	610 743-0921
Stephen Ziminsky	Mon-Fri	610 417-2669
Freda Zimmerman	Mon-Fri	610 381-3089

## Pocono Flute Society

Do you know a flute player who is looking for exciting new opportunities to learn and perform? The Pocono Flute Society would welcome them to join in their activities. They sponsor a flute choir which meets about twice a month on Sunday afternoons. They also host reading sessions and private lessons with a NY pro musician.

For information about the Pocono Flute Society, visit their website at [www.poconoflutesociety.org](http://www.poconoflutesociety.org), or contact Marta Oberlin: [martasgig@aol.com](mailto:martasgig@aol.com).





Your Lehigh Valley AGO Chapter  
Invites You To  
Its Second Annual

# Oc**TIBIA**fest!

Featuring Acclaimed Theatre Organist

Ian Fraser

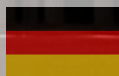
Friday, October 10, 2025  
6:00 PM

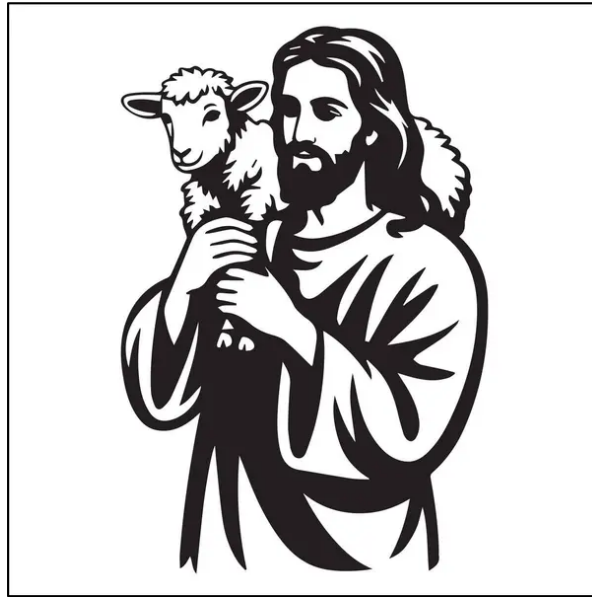
The concert and social gathering will be at the Stroudsburg home of LVAGO Chapter members Bob Riday and Gary Raish, and is open to Chapter members, spouses, partners, and friends.

A German Oktoberfest buffet will be presented, with various dishes and beverages to be provided by attendees. Food suggestions and sign up sheet TBA.

There will be no charge for this event, but please RSVP to Gary Raish by Friday, October 3. We hope to see you at the **Fest!**

Gary Raish: [garyraish@hotmail.com](mailto:garyraish@hotmail.com)  
570-460-3816





*Jesus, the Good Shepherd!*

*A Hymn Festival of  
Guidance, Love, and Trust  
Featuring Guest Musician*

*Mr. Alex Wilson*

*September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 5:30*

*Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church*

*3219 Santee Road, Bethlehem, PA 18020*

*If you are interested in singing, please  
contact Jeffrey Raub at*

*[jeffrey.raub@my-olph.org](mailto:jeffrey.raub@my-olph.org) OR*

*610-867-8409 ext. 102*