

American Guild of Organists

Blue Ridge Chapter

February 2026



From the Dean: Breaking News!

Due to the winter snowstorm warnings this weekend, we must again postpone our Hauptwerk demonstration at John Beaver's home. We are grateful for John's patience with the weather. We have decided to postpone the demonstration to Saturday, April 11, when flowers are blooming, to attempt this event. Mark your calendars for this new date. We will provide the pertinent information again in the April newsletter.

OPPORTUNITIES UPCOMING THIS SEASON

February 15 is our popular **members' recital** at **First United Methodist Church** in **Hendersonville** at **3:00 PM**. I know several are lined up to play. I will be playing a couple of pieces by Craig Phillips. Dr. Phillips is being honored at this year's AGO Gala in Beverly Hills, a good excuse to pull out some of his music. I know that a few more players would be welcome. If you would be willing to offer a 4-6 minute piece, loud or soft, new piece or old friend, or last Sunday's Prelude, contact Daniel Gainey (gaineyd at gmail.com) to express your interest and discuss. Thank you, Michael Brannon, for hosting us and including us in your Music Series. There is plenty of parking in the lot behind the church.



Wesley Hall Weekend is our big ticket item for BRAGO this year. Mark your calendars for March 21 & 22. Organist & Influencer Wesley Hall will present a workshop in Fletcher on Saturday morning, and a concert/reception in Waynesville on Sunday afternoon. His story will show us the importance and rewards of social media. TikTok, X, and Facebook are where we broaden appreciation for the pipe organ in our modern world. Tell your favorite people about this opportunity; look for a flyer in a few weeks. We are excited and proud to present this outstanding artist to our members and the WNC public.

The nominating process for next year's Executive Committee will soon begin. A new Dean, sub Dean, and a few other offices will be installed on **Tuesday, May 19** at our concluding dinner, meeting, and Installation Service at Nativity Lutheran Church. Are you interested in serving? Would you be willing to step up your involvement in our local chapter? Let me know at TimShepardNC@gmail.com.

The National AGO Convention will be held in St Louis, Missouri July 6-10. Is anybody considering attending? I am honored and excited to be installed as your Southeast Regional Ambassador. I look forward to being a cheerleader for the Pipe Organ world in our southeast states. It will be my mission to celebrate and lift many of the success stories I see. BRAGO in Asheville is certainly something to brag on. Don't you think we should host a regional convention here? I continue to be grateful for all of the support that I see in our ranks to make this chapter a strong organization.

Tim Shepard, Dean

Blue Ridge AGO Members' Recital

February 15 • 3:00pm

First United Methodist Church, Hendersonville NC

Casavant Opus 3124 • 3 manuals, 43 ranks

Wesley Harrison Hall

March 21: Workshop at 10am, Fletcher United Methodist

March 22: Concert at 3:00pm, Waynesville United Methodist



On March 21 and March 22, the Blue Ridge AGO chapter is privileged to welcome Wesley Hall, an accomplished organist from Worcester Massachusetts. For several years Wesley has been the organist at first Baptist Church of Worcester. He has also created several social media accounts which have created a lot of followers and garnered interest in the pipe organ among younger generations of people.

Wesley's name on the social media app TikTok is "Westpiper". As part of Wesley's visit to our chapter he will present a workshop and recital. The workshop will be at Fletcher United Methodist Church on Saturday, March 21 at 10 AM. The title of the workshop will be "Organ and Social Media" Wesley will talk about how he has created interest in the organ through several catchy and quirky videos on social media apps such as Instagram and TikTok.

The following day, Sunday, March 22 at 3 PM, Wesley will give a recital at first United Methodist Church of Waynesville. At the time of printing, Wesley's program is unknown however, he specializes in an early music — on a personal note. I have heard Wesley play before and he plays music of 18 century German composers with refined elegance.

We are creating a flyer which will be available soon. Please spread the word! I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible that weekend in March. Your Subdean,

Brennan Szafron

www.blueridgeago.org

Nathan Laube Recital

St. James Episcopal Church, Hendersonville · May 14, 7:00pm

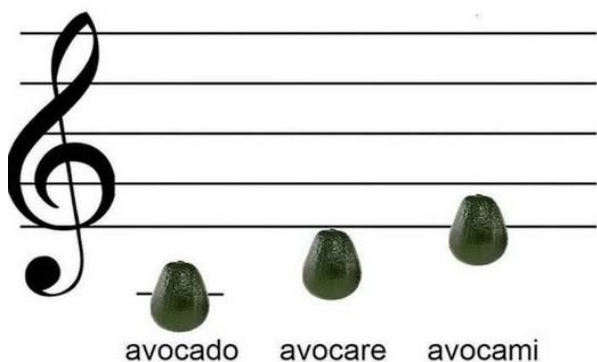


World-renowned concert organist Nathan Laube will give a recital at St James on Thursday, May 14 at 7:00 p.m.. Mr. Laube is Associate Professor of Organ at the Eastman School of Music and has given recitals worldwide to great critical acclaim. He will be playing the church's Harrison & Harrison organ in the beautiful neo-Gothic splendor of St. James with a stunning reverberant acoustic. No tickets are required for this event. The audience is cordially invited to a catered reception in Stillwell Hall following the program. This recital is part of the Linda Lassiter Hill Organ Recital Series which is in memory of Roy Lassiter, Jr., Linda's father and William J. Hill, Linda's late husband, for his unfailing support of her musical career.

Save the Dates!

To prevent any possibility of further winter weather interference, the **Hauptwerk program** will be held at John Beaver's house on **April 11**.

Our final spring 2026 chapter program will be a **dinner and installation of 2026-2027 chapter officers on May 19** at Nativity Lutheran in Arden.



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YOUNG Organist Competition

Sponsored by the
Greater Columbia AGO Chapter

Saturday, March 7, 2026
Columbia, S.C.

Open to grades 8–12

First Prize \$3,000
Second Prize \$2,000
Third Prize \$1,500
Hymn Playing Award \$1000

For rules and application see
Young Organist Competition 2026
at www.columbiaago.org



Is your membership current? In addition to the excellent programming you've come to expect from the Blue Ridge chapter, your membership includes a subscription to *The American Organist*, **the only professional journal visible from space!** Please visit www.agohq.org to check on the status of your membership, or contact chapter registrar Tom Bernard: Tbernardjr1949 (at) gmail.com

This monthly feature from the Blue Ridge AGO explores ways that our organization provides resources for your real-world challenges. Get ready to get practical with:

SOS - Someone Offers Solutions!

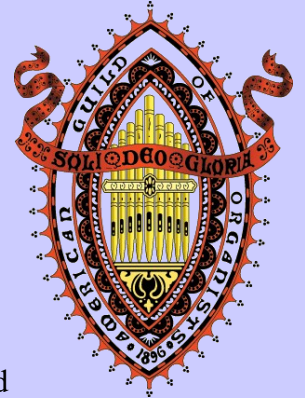
with Dr. Rhonda Furr

Copyright!?!? Of course you don't copy music - it's illegal!! But as churches increasingly livestream their services, are you (or your church) guilty of copyright violations? What can you do to protect yourself, your church, and your integrity? An AGO Webinar tackles this thorny issue!

Streaming Music Legally for Churches and Recitals

This video covers copyright basics for church musicians, synchronization for church worship services and seeking permission and securing copyrights for music videos and livestreaming through One License.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xV51vnmQxm4>



A big thank you to these members and friends who contributed to our 2026 matching challenge grant. We exceeded our goal and raised \$775! Donors as of January 7 are:

Thomas Bernard, Denise Bernard, Tim Shepard, Robert Kinter, Brennan Szafron, Michael Helman, Lesley Bush, Michael Brannon, David Anderson, Scott Coates, JC Cecconi, Ann Mcalpin, Paul Wolfe, Sharon Boone, Rhonda Furr, Kathryn Rivers, John Beaver

Open Positions

Abiding Savior Lutheran Church, Fairview NC

Lutheran (ELCA) congregation in Fairview, N.C. seeking pianist to support Sunday morning worship.

Abiding Savior Lutheran Church in Fairview is searching for a pianist (or pianist/guitarist) to play for our services Sunday mornings at 11 a.m. Worship is casual and cozy with an average attendance of 20 people. Worship music consists of a mix of contemporary and traditional music, generally this is a prelude, three hymns/songs, a psalm refrain and postlude as well as some liturgical service music. We welcome all types of people to Abiding Savior and are an LGBTQ+ affirming church. The accompanist will work with the interim pastor to choose songs and play on Sunday mornings, as well as Christmas Eve and Wednesday evening services during Lent.

Qualifications

- Skilled piano player
- Guitar playing would be a definite plus but is not required
- Experience with church music - both traditional and contemporary – is preferred
- Small church experience or desire to work in a small community preferred
- Flexibility, sight-reading and willingness to collaborate are desired

For more information or to apply for this position, please email president@abidingsaviorlutheranchurch.org

First Presbyterian Church, Greeneville, Tennessee (Presbyterian Church, USA)

First Presbyterian – Greeneville is endeavoring to hire an organist for the two traditional services each week. Salary: \$ 17,000 per year, 10 hours per week, contractual part-time employee, under the supervision of the Director of Music. Responsibilities for this part-time position include providing accompaniment for our choir and congregation as well as voluntaries during services. Music is one of the hallmarks of our congregation and we support efforts to continually grow this ministry. Music is a tool for leading people to Christ, for strengthening our faith, for helping persons experience true worship, and for glorifying God.

Qualifications Include: A high level of musical talent, proficiency, education, and experience playing the organ in liturgical services is required. Proficiency playing the piano is required. A Bachelor's degree in organ, piano, or sacred music is preferred. Five years' experience as an organist in a liturgical, mainline protestant church is preferred.

Applications should be sent to the attention of the Organist Search Committee at fpcscty@gmail.com. The church telephone number is (423) 638-4533. For more information on our church community, or to stream a live service, please visit us at www.firstpresgreeneville.org.

A candidate qualified as an organist, and also as a choir director, may apply for a part-time (20 hours/week) combined position: Director of Music. Please contact fpcscty@gmail.com for the description of the choir-related and administrative duties for the combined position.

Blue Ridge AGO Chapter

www.blueridgeago.org

Founded
August 15, 2013

OFFICERS

Timothy Shepard
Dean

Brennan Szafron
Sub Dean

Thomas Bernard
Treasurer and Registrar

JC Cecconi
Secretary

Rhonda Furr
Hunter Holbert
Michael Helman
Tate Addis
Members at Large

Vance Yoder
Past Dean

David Anderson
Newsletter Editor

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About Us

Our mission is to enrich lives through organ and choral music. To achieve this, we encourage excellence in the performance of organ and choral music; inspire, educate, and offer certification for organists and choral conductors; provide networking, fellowship, and mutual support; nurture future generations of organists; promote the organ in its historic and evolving roles; and engage wider audiences with organ and choral music.

Area Organs



First United Methodist Church, Waynesville NC
Casavant Frères Opus 3774, 1998 · 50 ranks, 3 manuals



Blue Ridge AGO Substitute List

The Blue Ridge AGO maintains an active list of musicians who are available to play. Please contact us at www.blueridgeago.org, or email newsletter editor David Anderson [cantordavid \(at\) stmarkslutheran.net](mailto:cantordavid@stmarkslutheran.net) for more information.