

# American Guild of Organists Blue Ridge Chapter

## June 2025

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



## Meet Your Executive Committee

**Tim Shepard, Dean** Tim Shepard has been Director of Music & Organist at Brevard FUMC since 2008. He is a charter member of the Blue Ridge Chapter and her second and fourth Dean. In addition to playing for worship on Sunday morning, he directs two adult choral groups, supervises children's choirs, directs 5 octave set of handbells, coordinates the annual Christmas Organ Recital Series at the church, and guides a Centering Prayer group. He is a composer and arranger for choirs, handbells, and keyboard music. His music can be found at [SacredMusicDownloads.com](http://SacredMusicDownloads.com). He has performed on pipe organs throughout western NC including with the Brevard Philharmonic, Brevard College, Blue Ridge Symphonic Brass, and a recital for the Brevard Music Center. He is excited about the growth of the Blue Ridge AGO Chapter, advocating for the vast musical possibilities of the Organ, and helping our chapter move into the future.



### **Brennan Szafron, Sub Dean**



A native of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, Brennan Szafron has served as the organist and choirmaster of Holy Cross Episcopal Church in Tryon, NC, since 2021. He leads a varied music ministry which includes an adult choir, a children's choir, and a handbell ensemble. Prior to that, he served for 18 years as the organist and choirmaster of the Episcopal Church of the Advent in Spartanburg, SC. He took the choir on many trips, particularly to New York City, Washington, DC and Lincoln, England where for a week in 2016 the choir was in residence at Lincoln Cathedral. He will be taking a group of singers to England at the end of this August, where they will be the choir in residence at Norwich Cathedral. He maintains his Spartanburg connections as an adjunct instructor of organ and university organist at Converse University and as the principal keyboardist with the Spartanburg Philharmonic. He performs frequently as an accompanist with the Spartanburg Master Chorale

and in North Carolina, he has rung for three years with the Blue Ridge Ringers handbell ensemble. In August 2024, he became the ensemble's assistant director. He holds degrees in organ performance and church music at the University of Alberta (B. Mus. with distinction), Yale University (MM), and the University of Michigan (DMA). Over the years, he has performed frequently as a solo recitalist both locally and nationally. Recently he worked solely as a choral conductor, having been the director of the Community Chorus of Polk County, NC in the spring of 2022 and 2023. He has several videos on YouTube, including the series "Pipe Organs of South Carolina". Dr. Szafron's non-musical passion is the great outdoors. He is an avid hiker and swimmer and has visited all 47 state parks in South Carolina and 90 percent of the state parks in North Carolina. He visits his parents and other family members in Calgary, Alberta whenever possible.



**Thomas Bernard, Treasurer & Registrar** Tom Bernard is a native of New Orleans, Louisiana. He attended Tulane University and after serving three years in the U.S. Navy he returned to Tulane Medical School and practiced Orthopedic Surgery for 35 years in Columbus, Georgia. He and his wife Denise joined the Columbus, Ga., AGO and were members for 15 years where Tom served as chapter treasurer. After retirement and moving to Asheville, the Bernard's joined the BRAGO and they currently volunteer providing music for Funeral Masses at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Hendersonville.

**JC Cecconi, Secretary** JC Cecconi received a BA from Harpur College, SUNY Binghamton, and an MBA in Hospital Administration from Baruch College, CUNY and the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine. He is a former naval

officer, has a private pilot license and is retired from a career in hospital and academic administration. He has held positions as Organist, and Minister of Music in NY churches, and served as the regular organist for several Masonic lodges and Eastern Star chapters. He is a past Dean of the Westchester Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. He resides in Connestee Falls.



**Vance Yoder, Past Dean** Vance Yoder, organist at Hendersonville First Baptist, is a retired college president with M.M. and Ph.D. degrees in music from Indiana U. and Ohio State U., respectively, teaching at both while a graduate student. Earlier he has been a college faculty member, dean, and academic V.P., and consultant-evaluator on 35 accreditation teams, chairing 18. He has given recitals in Hendersonville and Brevard, served as chair of the Henderson Co. Library Board and president of two local Rotary clubs. He and his wife, Marilyn, have three married sons and eleven grandchildren.

**David Anderson, Newsletter and Website Editor** David Anderson is the Cantor at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Asheville where he leads the song of the people by playing the organ and piano, and directing the choirs and handbell ensemble. A native of Woodstock, NY, David graduated from Concordia College New York with a BA in English, holds a Certificate in Sacred Music from Lenoir-Rhyne University in Hickory, and is a Colleague of the American Guild of Organists. Outside of church he may be found "delighting" his neighbors with a 1956 Vega 5-string banjo, trying to catch trout, and stewarding the largest collection of marginally-functional fountain pens north and east of the Swannanoa River.







**Michael Helman, Member At Large** Michael Helman is Director of Music/Organist at Brevard-Davidson River Presbyterian Church in Brevard, North Carolina where he directs the Chancel choir and handbell ensemble as well as a staff accompanist at Brevard College. Prior to moving to North Carolina, Michael served churches in Hockessin and Wilmington, Delaware and most recently was Director of Music/Organist for sixteen years at Faith Presbyterian in Cape Coral, Florida. He holds a degree in organ performance from Lebanon Valley College and graduate degree in Music History. He is an active composer of handbell, organ, and choral music with numerous pieces in print. For a number of years, Michael was on the Board of Area 3 of the Handbell Musicians of America as well as serving as Dean of the Delaware Chapter of AGO for four years. Michael has begun two community handbell ensembles: the Wilmington Handbell Ensemble in 2000 and in 2009 the Southwest Florida Handbell Ensemble. He is also the past Handbell Editor for the Lorenz Corporation.

**Rhonda Furr, Member At Large** Dr. Rhonda Furr, a Sylva, NC native, taught musicology and organ at Houston Christian University for 33 years. She was the university consultant for HCU's 58-rank Létourneau pipe organ and was the AGO National Convention Coordinator held in Houston. Rhonda has served as organist in Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopal and Methodist churches, serving at First Presbyterian Church, Houston, from 2004-2021. In retirement, she is the organist at First United Methodist Church in Waynesville, NC.



**Hunter Holbert, Member At Large** Hunter Holbert is a native of Hendersonville and found his musical passion through his studies on the violin. Today, he proudly owns and operates R&H Landscape/Development while actively contributing to the musical scene in Hendersonville, Western North Carolina, and Eastern Tennessee as a professional violinist. Hunter's commitment to his craft drove him to achieve both an undergraduate and graduate degree in music from Appalachian State University. He also possesses a passion for historically informed music and the captivating realm of the organ. As a member of the American Guild of Organists, he brings his expertise, enthusiasm, and love for music to the organ community.

**Tate Addis, Member At Large** Tate Addis currently serves as Associate Director of Music and Organist at First Baptist Church of Asheville and as Artist-in-Residence at St. James Episcopal Church, Hendersonville. He has concertized extensively throughout the United States and Europe and holds degrees from Wichita State University, Yale University, and Oberlin Conservatory. He makes his home in Asheville with his wife, Rev. Laura Addis, and their daughter Maggie.



## Summer 2025 Chapter Survey

The Executive Committee of the Blue Ridge AGO is preparing a brief summer survey to gather your valuable insights and suggestions. Your feedback will help shape future initiatives and programming for our local chapter. We encourage you to participate and share your thoughts. Please stay tuned for further details and take this opportunity to contribute to the direction of our organization.

Let us know how we can best serve and support you!

## For Sale

Allen CF15DK in excellent condition. Located in Greeneville TN. Contact us for information!

## Want to see your next event here?

If you're looking for the perfect place to publicize your sackbut choir's next concert of Messiaen transcriptions (and really, who isn't?) look no further! Just write the details on the back of a crisp \$100 bill and mail it to the editorial department today. Alternately, you may email your event information to: [cantordavid@stmarkslutheran.net](mailto:cantordavid@stmarkslutheran.net)

## Piccolo Spoleto Organ Recital

Blue Ridge AGO member and sub-dean **Dr. Brennan Szafron** will be playing a recital as part of the L'Organo series at Piccolo Spoleto in Charleston SC on Tuesday, June 3 at 10 AM. His program will include works by Widor, JS Bach, Bedard, Guilman, Muhly, Sowerby, and Hancock. All recitals at this part of this series are free.

## From AGO National Headquarters: Important Announcement Regarding Dues

Beginning with renewals effective on July 1, annual dues across all membership categories (Regular, Special, and Young Organist) will increase by \$7, with \$2 being distributed to chapters. This modest increase, approved by the National Council, will allow the AGO to continue offering high quality programs and services to our members, while providing additional financial support to chapters.



## Is your membership current?

In addition to the great programming you enjoy from the Blue Ridge chapter, your membership includes a subscription to *The American Organist*, the glossiest magazine around. Please visit [agohq.org](http://agohq.org) to check on the status of your membership, or contact chapter registrar Tom Bernard: [tbernard@reagan.com](mailto:tbernard@reagan.com)



Browse our collection of high-quality downloadable choral, handbell, and keyboard music today, including

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[http://sacredmusicdownloads.com/Catalog/Productdisplay.asp?item\\_number=AC-OR080](http://sacredmusicdownloads.com/Catalog/Productdisplay.asp?item_number=AC-OR080)

**SacredMusicDownloads.com**

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



# MUSIC WEEK

A mountaintop church music experience  
Adult Conference



THEME:

***Peace ~ Pax ~ Shalom***

Arden, N.C.

**JULY 6-11, 2025**

*Hands-on learning & daily creative  
worship experiences with  
outstanding clinicians*

- Adult Choir
- Organ Workshops
- Handbell Choirs
- Hymn Festival
- Reading Sessions
- HymnFest Choir

*Organ*



**ANDREW  
JACOB**

AUGUSTANA  
LUTHERAN,  
ST. PAUL, MN  
ST. OLAF'S  
SING FOR JOY

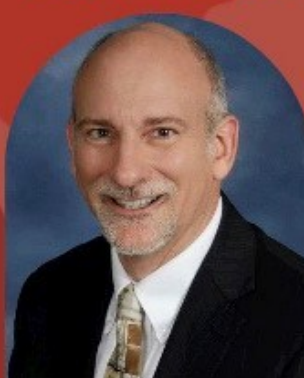
*Adult Choral*



**ROBERT  
HOBBY**

TRINITY ENGLISH  
LUTHERAN  
FORT WAYNE, IN

*Handbells*



**ED  
TOMPKINS**

ST JOHN IN THE  
WILDERNESS  
EPISCOPAL,  
FLAT ROCK, NC

*Chaplain*



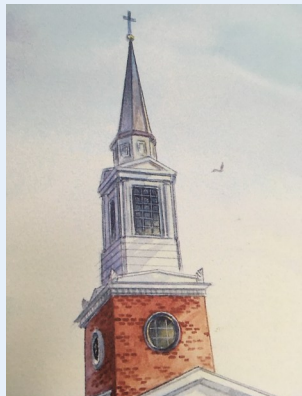
**PASTOR  
VERN KINARD**

BETHLEHEM  
LUTHERAN,  
HICKORY, NC

**LUTHERIDGE.ORG/ADULT-MUSIC-WEEK**

## Open Positions

### Hendersonville Presbyterian Church, Hendersonville, NC



#### Organ and Piano Accompanist Position Summary:

We are seeking a part-time, skilled organist and piano accompanist to join our worship team. This position will support our traditional worship services through music, providing accompaniment for congregational singing, choir anthems, and other special music.

**Primary Duties:** Provide accompaniment by playing the organ and/or piano to accompany congregational hymns, choir anthems, soloists, and other musicians during worship services. Select appropriate musical pieces in collaboration with the Director of Music or Lead Pastor and prepare adequately for services. Availability to attend rehearsals and services, which may include evenings, weekends, and holidays. Actively participate in rehearsals with the choir, soloists, and other musicians as needed. Provide music for special services including holidays and other church services upon request. Collaborate with the Director of Worship, Lead Pastor, Choir,

and other musicians to enhance the overall musical experience during worship. Provide or assist in arranging accompaniment for funerals, memorial services, and weddings on organ/piano as needed. For more information, contact Rob McClelland, [rmcclelland@hendersonvillepc.org](mailto:rmcclelland@hendersonvillepc.org) or 828-692-3211.

### Union Lutheran Church, Salisbury NC

Union is conducting a search for a Part Time Director of Music Ministries and a Part Time Church Organist. We are open to the same person filling both positions. Job descriptions may be found at <https://lcsalisbury.org/employment-opportunities/>. Contact the church office for more information.

### Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church

Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church ([www.laketoxawayumc.org](http://www.laketoxawayumc.org)), worshipping in a simple Gothic-Revival style frame building dating from 1912, is seeking an interim and/or permanent organist. The congregation meets each Sunday at 10am. There is no choir so the organist's only responsibility is selecting hymns for the week and playing during the service, with an optional prelude and postlude of his/her choosing. There are a few weddings and funerals each year. The church's organ is a 2 Manual Allen Digital organ, less than 10 years old and in excellent condition. It also has a system to utilize additional stops beyond the regular stop list. The church also has a similarly aged high end Roland electric piano, also in excellent condition. Please contact Stephen Wood, the church's Parish-Staff Committee Chair ([swwood50@gmail.com](mailto:swwood50@gmail.com)) for further information or to express interest in exploring this opportunity.

## 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](http://www.blueridgeago.org), or email newsletter editor David Anderson [cantordavid \(at\) stmarkslutheran.net](mailto:cantordavid@stmarkslutheran.net) for more information.

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# Blue Ridge AGO Chapter

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Founded  
August 15, 2013

## OFFICERS

**Vance Yoder**  
Dean

**Thomas Bernard**  
Sub Dean, Treasurer  
and Registrar

**JC Cecconi**  
Secretary

**Rhonda Furr**  
**Brennan Szafron**  
**Hunter Holbert**  
**Michael Helman**  
Members at Large

**Tim Shepard**  
Past Dean

**David Anderson**  
Newsletter Editor

**American Guild of Organists**  
National Office:  
475 Riverside Drive  
Suite 1260  
New York, NY 10115  
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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

Brevard—Davidson River Presbyterian Church, Brevard NC  
Cornel Zimmer Organ Builders Opus 21, 1997



Originally Casavant Frères Ltée. (Opus 3082, 1970)

