American Guild of Organists
Blue Ridge Chapter
November 2026

From the Dean



Dear Blue Ridge AGO chapter,

In this month of gratitude, I'm sure that many of us can find plenty of reasons to be thankful. On a personal note, I'm going to start my Dean's letter with an apology and an expression of gratitude. Admittedly, I also started last month's article with an apology, but this month's apology has to do with the cancellation of the recital at my church Holy Cross in Tryon on October 25. There was an unexpected roadblock due to a tree covering the road that I normally take to church. Many cars were slowing down, but not the one behind me — said car not only hit me, he hit a roadside sign and also kept riding down the hill after he hit me. The only reason he stopped was because he crashed into a construction vehicle at the bottom of the hill.

Needless to say, this incident was terrifying and it left me feeling grateful that I wasn't hurt badly and I was still alive other than a little bit of neck pain. I felt perfectly OK; in fact I wanted to play for church that very morning and also give the recital that afternoon. However, many choir members wisely advised me to go to the emergency room which I dutifully did. I am highly grateful to my boyfriend Tyler, who was my chauffeur that day among many other things.

If that incident didn't give me cause to be grateful, I don't know what would!

Moving forward, it's no secret that life is full of detours, both literal and figurative. Now that I've spoken about my incident, I'm going to remind all of us of what happened back in January and February when mother nature prevented all of us from gathering at John Beaver's house. We're going to be very fortunate to gather in South Asheville on November 21 of this month to see his Hauptwerk organ on display. There is further information in this newsletter.

Surely to God, I will be at this meeting. It's not been a great track record so far, but I look forward to whatever November has in store and I know that December is going to be a busy month for so many of us myself included with that in mind, I wish you a happy early holiday season happy Thanksgiving to all and advance greetings for a blessed Advent season.

Sincerely,
Brennan Szafron

Hauptwerk Revisited

November 21st · 2pm · 1010 Windsor Drive, Asheville

On Saturday, November 21st at 2pm we will gather at the home of John Beaver for **Hauptwerk Revisited**. We had tried to do this last winter, but the weather didn't cooperate too well. So we are taking a second shot at learning more about Hauptwerk.

John has asked that you **RSVP** directly to him at johnbeaver@charter.net. He will have **cheesecake** to share along with a **door prize.** The address is 1010 Windsor Drive, Asheville 28803.

So…bring some music along with your organ shoes and let's see what we can learn about Hauptwerk. See you there!!

Ed Hauck, Sub-Dean

More Blue Ridge Chapter Events

Free Music for Limited Choirs · January 9 · 10:30am
St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 337 Charlotte Street, Asheville NC 28801
Lunch provided at the church · snow date: Jan. 16th

Members Concert · February 7 · 3:00pm
Brevard Davidson Presbyterian Church 249 E. Main Street, Brevard NC

Monty Bennett Organ Concert · March 14 · 4:00pm
Lutheran Church of the Nativity · 2425 Hendersonville Rd, Arden NC



Thomas Keesecker in Concert

Piano Concert with Hymns and Poetry

Thomas Keesecker is known around the country for his sensitive, delightful, and meditative piano arrangements of hymns. At this concert we'll sing some of those hymns together, and listen to his interpretations. Interspersed will be poetry by Mary Oliver and Wendell Berry, two of the most beloved and profound poets of the 20th and 21st centuries.



November 14 · 4:00pm

St. Mark's Lutheran Church · Asheville, NC

www.stmarkslutheran.net

Organ Bench Available

Free to a good home! Please contact Margaret Schakel: mmschakel@gmail.com







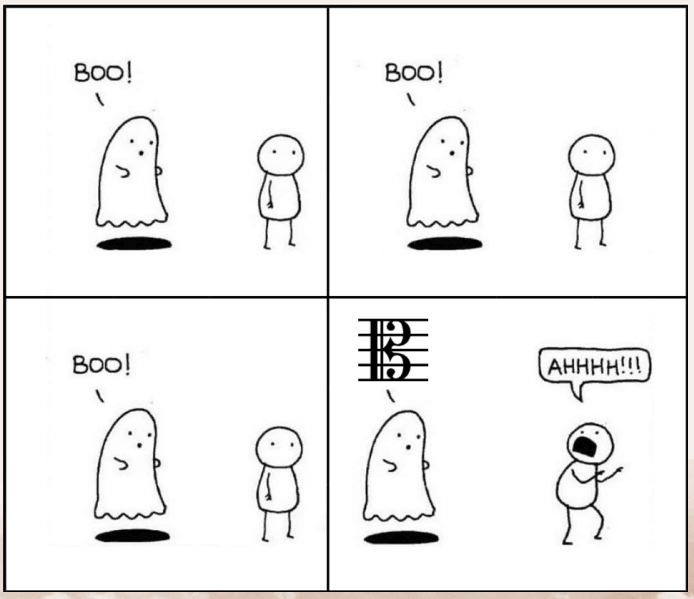


Is your membership current? In addition to the superlative programming you've come to expect from the Blue Ridge chapter, your membership includes a subscription to *The American Organist,* the **glossiest professional publication in the lower 48!** Please visit www.agohq.org to check on the status of your membership, or contact chapter registrar Tom Bernard: Tbernardjr1949 (at) gmail.com

Sherman Clay Organ

Free; very low usage. Please contact Richard Saunders: richards70@gmail.com






News
639-year-long John Cage organ piece changes chord for the first time in over two years
CLASSIC fM

Open Positions

First Presbyterian Church – Newton, NC
Organist/Pianist/Accompanist staff position (Part-time)



First Presbyterian Church of Newton, NC (www.fpcnewton.org) is seeking a part-time Organist/Pianist/Accompanist. Our active congregation of 320 members has a deep and long-standing love for what music brings to our worship, and we appreciate the same diversity of musical styles that we see represented in the diversity of Christ's church. The Organist/Pianist/Accompanist position requires 10 – 12 hours weekly with a salary commensurate with training and experience. This staff person supports the Director of Music in the church music ministry. He/she serves as accompanist to the Chancel Choir in weekly rehearsals and worship services and accompanies soloists, duets, and instrumentalists who are participating in worship. He/she prepares liturgically appropriate music for the worship services to share as preludes, voluntaries, offertories and postludes. Our church organ is a Casavant Frères, Opus 3806, with a three manual console and 47 ranks. Our sanctuary grand piano is a 7ft Yamaha C6X.

First Presbyterian Church – Newton, NC
Director of Music staff position (Part-time)

First Presbyterian Church of Newton, NC (www.fpcnewton.org) is seeking a part-time Director of Music. The Director of Music position requires 15 – 18 hours weekly with a salary commensurate with training and experience. This staff person works alongside the minister to plan thematic worship services that incorporate appropriate and varied music through both choral and instrumental participation. He/she is responsible for the directing of the chancel choir that practices weekly and participates in weekly worship, and the handbell ensemble that practices weekly and participates in worship quarterly or more either together or as a few members for special accompaniments. Also, he/she is responsible for copyright compliance for livestream services and bulletins, serving as staff representative on some committees, maintenance of the church organs and pianos, and supervising and supporting our staff organist/pianist/accompanist.

To apply for these positions, please send a resume, references and contact information to
First Presbyterian Church, Director of Music Search Committee
701 N. Main Ave. Newton, NC 28658 · kberry@fpcnewton.com
A full job description can be requested. We are seeking to fill these positions as soon as possible.

Trinity Presbyterian Church, Hendersonville, North Carolina
Minister of Music: Part-Time (20 hours)
Position Overview

The Minister of Music will provide leadership and oversight to the music programs of Trinity Presbyterian Church, including the Chancel Choir, and assist the Pastors and Worship Ministry with planning and providing appropriate music for worship services and other special services as needed.

About Trinity Presbyterian Church

Trinity is a family of faith, trusting and following Jesus Christ, welcoming and nurturing all people, reaching out to serve the needs of our communities near and far, and doing these things humbly and joyfully, believing that the greatest commandment is LOVE.

Qualifications
Documented skills in keyboard performance or choral conducting (e.g. pertinent degree or years of experience). 3+ years of experience leading sacred music programs. Strong proficiency in organ and piano, choral leadership and worship planning. A team player who works collaboratively with sta., clergy, and volunteers to enhance the church's worship and music ministry. Good written and oral communication skills, interpersonal skills; the ability to work independently.

Accountability
Accountable to the Pastor/Head of Sta. and the Worship Ministry.

Worship Planning & Leadership Responsibilities
Directs the Choir Section Leaders during the 8:30 service and the Choir during the 11:00 service, with a warmup 30 minutes prior to each service. Collaborates with pastors to select music appropriate to the lectionary for each service. Performs prelude, postlude, and appropriate service music as well as accompaniments for Section Leaders and the Choir at church services. Reviews and approves Section Leader time sheets for numbers of services/rehearsals attended and submits to the Financial Secretary for payment. Plans and coordinates music for additional services like weddings, funerals and other special services specific to the liturgical year, i.e., Christmas Eve/Day, Maundy Thursday, Easter. Conducts Choir rehearsal weekly on Wednesday evenings for the Choir; conducts additional separate rehearsals as needed. Collaborates with the pastors and the Worship Ministry with the general planning and leadership of the Church's music program. Identifies the need for purchase of music and related supplies to support the music program; consults with the Worship Ministry to assure adequate budget funds for such purchases. Provides names/contact information for substitute directors/organists in the event of illness or inability to perform duties (worship/ rehearsals) Communicates music details for inclusion in service bulletins.

Resources
Sanctuary - Allen 2 Manual Organ & Mason & Hamlin 6ft Grand Piano. Choir Room - W Zimmer & Sons Organ and Kawai 6ft Grand Piano. Extensive music library. Worship space with excellent acoustics for vocal music

Relationships
Relates to Pastor for musical selections and relates to the Worship Ministry for funding related to the music program. Also, relates to the Section Leaders and Choir members.

Musical Ministry Administration
Maintain and oversee the care of the church's musical instruments. Manage and maintain the church's music library. Ensure compliance with copyright laws (e.g. submit regular usage reports to appropriate licensing agency). Work with Worship Ministry to oversee the church's annual music budget.

Professional Development & Continuing Education
Participate in professional organizations and continuing education programs. Stay informed on trends in church music, worship arts and technology. Attend church sta. meetings to support church leadership.

Compensation & Benefits
Salary to be negotiated; commensurate with education and relevant work experience. Four weeks of paid vacation annually. One week of study leave for continuing education. Benefit package through Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (USA), including health insurance, defined-benefit pension plan, death and disability coverage, EAP and more.

How to Apply
We will conduct initial interviews virtually. Finalists will be invited to participate in a group call and then if applicable and audition/interview on site. The successful candidate will need to pass a background check prior to hiring. Please send application materials to: worship@trinitypresnc.org.
A PDF containing a letter of application and resume/CV. URL links to videos of the applicant: Conducting a church anthem with an SATB choir; Playing prelude/postlude repertoire music (organ and piano); Congregational singing of hymn on organ.
Names and contact information (email/phone #) for three professional references.

Open Positions cont.

Brevard First United Methodist Church is seeking a part-time choir accompanist to serve our music ministries. The ideal candidate would be an experienced accompanist capable of sight-reading and familiar with United Methodist hymnody. The ability to accompany on the organ and a music degree is desired, but not required. Availability for regular Wednesday night choir rehearsals and Sunday morning services occasional rehearsals with other ensembles is necessary. Interested applicants should email questions and/or resume to musicdirector@brevardfumc.org



First Church of Christ, Scientist, Asheville
First Church of Christ, Scientist in downtown Asheville - 64 North French Broad, needs an organist to begin in October. The services are held from 10:30- 11:30 on Sunday mornings. The job includes: 7 min. prelude, 3 hymns, accompany a soloist, 2 min. collection and 5 min. postlude. Compensation negotiable based on experience. Would even consider two organists, each taking 2 or 3 Sundays a month.

St. Philip's Episcopal Church, Brevard
St Philip's Episcopal Church in Brevard, North Carolina 0is seeking an Organist and Collaborator to nurture music ministry. St. Philip's is the only Episcopal Church in our county and is composed of a wonderful mix of retirees and families who bring a great diversity in musical tastes and sensibilities. The Organist will be adept at employing music in liturgy. This person will work in tandem with the Director of Music Ministry. Important to the position is a well-versed background in the literature of choral music and the ability and willingness to accompany and rehearse church music of various styles from the Anglican tradition and beyond. We seek a creative and professional musician with inclusive tastes and a passion for encouraging active participation in the liturgical life of the congregation.



Job Summary: As a partner in ministry, the Organist will promote the Vision and Mission of St Philip's Episcopal Church and strive to embody Christian values and be a friendly, welcoming presence to all who come in contact with St. Philip's Church. The Organist is charged with assisting the Director of Music Ministry in the planning and implementation of music in worship programming at St. Philip's Episcopal Church. This collaboration will facilitate active participation of the congregation in the liturgical life of the church and to encompass the wide tradition of sacred music. Reports to the Director of Music Ministry 15-18 hrs /week Salary: $30,000 annually. If interested, please contact Brittnee Siemon, Director of Music Ministry, at music@stphilipsbrevardnc.org.

Substitutes Available

The Blue Ridge AGO maintains a list of chapter members and friends who are available to substitute in the western North Carolina area. Please contact newsletter editor David Anderson for more information: cantordavid@stmarkslutheran.net

Blue Ridge AGO Chapter

www.blueridgeago.org

Founded
August 15, 2013

Chapter Officers

Brennan Szafron
Dean

Ed Hauck
Sub Dean

Thomas Bernard
Treasurer and Registrar

Daniel Gainey
Secretary

Burton Bumgarner
Hunter Holbert
James Taulbee
James Cassarino
Members at Large

Timothy Shepard
Past Dean

David Anderson
Newsletter Editor

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www.agohq.org

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.

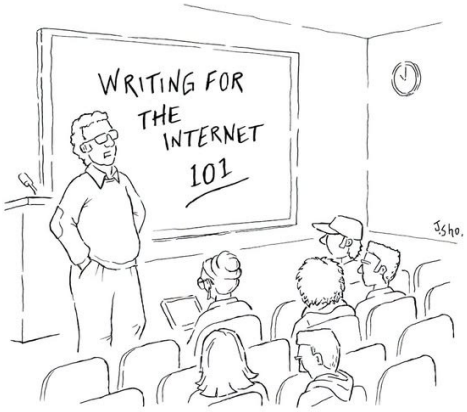
Area Organ Highlight

Brevard-Davidson River Presbyterian Church





Cornel Zimmer Organ Builders Opus 21, 1997
Originally Casavant Frères Ltée. (Opus 3082, 1970)



"Your next assignment is to stretch a recipe for baked squash into a rambling 5,000 word essay."







"Eggnog? Already?"