American Guild of Organists

Blue Ridge Chapter

October 2026

From the Dean



Dear members,

I hope you are enjoying this change of season as much as I am. In South Carolina (and even in Tryon) temperatures are a good five degrees warmer than most of you up the mountain, so it's always nice to head up and enjoy a true fall chill, especially in the morning or the early evening.

When we had our opening meeting of the year, we met in Waynesville Rhonda Furr was so gracious to us for opening up her church and giving us an opportunity to see hear and play their beautiful Casavant organ. Thank you Rhonda! I want to reiterate my apology from last month when I mentioned that I couldn't be there. However, Subdean Ed Hauck presided fantastically over the meeting.



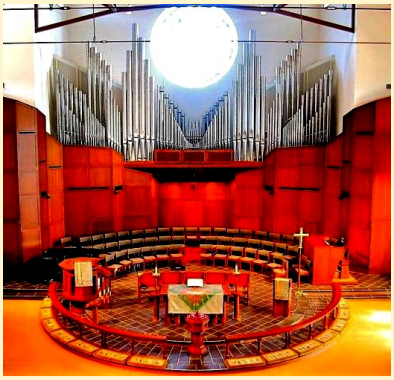
This month, I invite you down the mountain to my church in Tryon, Holy Cross Episcopal. On Sunday October 25th at 4 pm, you will get to hear a recital of organ and piano music by renowned 20th century composer Leo Sowerby. "Uncle Leo" was known for his quirky and jazzy harmonies, and his music truly embodied the spirit of the roaring twenties. The pianist will be Steven Graff, a professor at Converse University in Spartanburg, and the organist will be yours truly. Steve and I will perform both together and separately. An added treat will be an opportunity to meet members of the Spartanburg AGO chapter, since Spartanburg is only 40 minutes away from Spartanburg.

See you all at the end of the month!

Your Dean,

Brennan Szafron

From the Sub-Dean



Greetings friends and colleagues.
Thank you to Rhonda Furr for hosting our first event of the season a First UMC in Waynesville. We had a great time together, especially lunch at the Main Street Diner. It was a great time to get to know each other a bit better.

This month we head to Tryon to Holy Cross Episcopal Church where Brennan Szafron will be hosting our October meeting with the Spartanburg chapter. Information for this event is in his column. **November 21** at **2pm** will be **Hauptwerk Revisited**. Earlier this year member John Beaver invited us to his home to discover more about Hauptwerk. The weather was not very cooperative, so we are trying again. Hauptwerk is an advanced software sampler for a virtual pipe organ, named for the German name of the main part of a pipe organ: 'das hauptwerk'. The program was developed by the mathematician Martin Dyde, at that time owner of the company Crumhorn Labs Ltd. in Birmingham. Look for more information about this in next month's newsletter.

Ed Hauck, Sub Dean



The Music of Leo Sowerby

Holy Cross Episcopal, Tryon NC · October 25 · 4:00pm

Organ and piano music by renowned 20th century composer Leo Sowerby
Pianist Steven Graff · Organist Brennan Szafron

More Blue Ridge Chapter Events

Hauptwerk Revisited · November 21 · 2:00pm
At the home of John Beaver, 1010 Windsor Drive Asheville, NC 28803

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



SMOKY MOUNTAIN BRASS BAND

AT ST MARKS LUTHERAN CHURCH

SUNDAY, OCT 18 @ 4:00PM

10 N Liberty St Asheville, NC

British Brass Band standards

Soloists

Arrangements, including "Batman" original soundtrack

Led by: Dr. JT Womack



YOU ARE INVITED

"LET'S SING!"

A CHORAL ADVENTURE
IN THE HEART OF THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS

4H Center, Abingdon, VA, Sun-Sat, Oct 4-10, 2026

Calling all singers with some choral experience and reading music skills, including those who are retired or near retired, looking for an exciting week of creating the choral magic that keeps you coming back for more — with relaxing down time in the country. Enjoy daily rehearsals, social times and events, including an evening at the Barter Theater, "Classic Movie Musicals" night, closing concert at local venue. Come for the music. Stay for the friendship. Leave with your spirit renewed. The music is chosen to fit this year's theme:

"Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue"

Director: Andrew Walker — directed 30+ Choral Workshops with the Elderhostel/Road Scholar organization; recently retired from 45 years as Director of Music at St. Michael's Episcopal, Orlando; final choir trip: St. Paul's Cathedral, London, UK, Five Evensongs, post-Christmas 2025.

The Abingdon 4H Center: located in the Blue Ridge Mountains; rolling meadows, that crisp, clean, and invigorating mountain air, comfortable accommodations, Appalachian Comfort Food — it's medicine for your soul.

"Enthusiasm, energy, and a zest for living, living life to it's fullest potential — I see it in these singers in their 60's thru 90's, and it is SO, SO inspiring! WOW! We have the best time together!"
Andrew Walker, Director

LET'S SING

Similar to that which Road Scholar and Elderhostel offered, we will enjoy a week of singing balancing inspiration, fun, with a touch of challenge. Each day provides a joyful, creative experience where music becomes community, and your passion is shared with kindred spirits.

CONTACT

Rebecca Mullins, 4H Center Events Coordinator: rebeccam1415@vt.edu / 276.676.6180
Andrew Walker, Director: ajw@ajwmusicservices.com / 407.619.0967

REGISTRATION:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf_jyRLDtLjhvhD8nA_6eSyfIkCVZWo9TZlmCos8foZv2jlew/viewform

For more information about the repertoire for this event, contact Blue Ridge AGO chapter member Philip Newton at signalphilip (@) gmail.com

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

Pan Harmonia: Celtic Corner

Friday, October 16, 7 pm · Black Mountain Presbyterian Church
117 Montreat Rd, Black Mountain, NC 28711

Pan Harmonia returns for its 27th season with its wonderful compliment of adventurous and eclectic programming this October with Celtic Corner. Directed by multi-instrumentalist **Rosalind Buda**, who is both a piper and bassoonist, this fall's Celtic Corner presents **Glencoe**, Asheville's own Scottish Supergroup!

Rosalind Buda, pipes · Robin Bullock, guitar · Sue Richards, harp

Welcome back to the Celtic Corner of the world this fall, exploring the tunes and traditions of the isles with Asheville's own Scottish Supergroup, Glencoe. Dance and groove with guitar, harp, and Celtic winds ringing out with melodies both ancient and modern!

A Music Webinar Series!

Serving Through Song

A WEBINAR SERIES FROM **Augsburg Music**

A FREE Music Webinar Series from Augsburg Fortress Publishers! Join us for a journey through hymnody, improvisation, the church music community, and so much more! Serving through Song is a webinar series born from the requests and interests of our cherished customers. Thank you for submitting your ideas and questions!

View these webinars, featuring David Cherwein, Anne Krentz Organ, and Tom Trenney, at: https://go.augsburgfortress.org/serving-through-song-a-music-webinar-series-from-augsburg-fortress



"Very good. Now try reading it in alto clef"



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 Yamaha C6X – 7ft. with polished Ebony finish.

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.
Our church organ is a Casavant Frères, Opus 3806, with a three manual console and 47 ranks. Our sanctuary grand piano is a Yamaha C6X – 7ft. with polished Ebony finish.

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 actively seeking to fill this position 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

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American Guild of Organists
National Office:
475 Riverside Drive
Suite 1260
New York, NY 10115
www.agohq.org

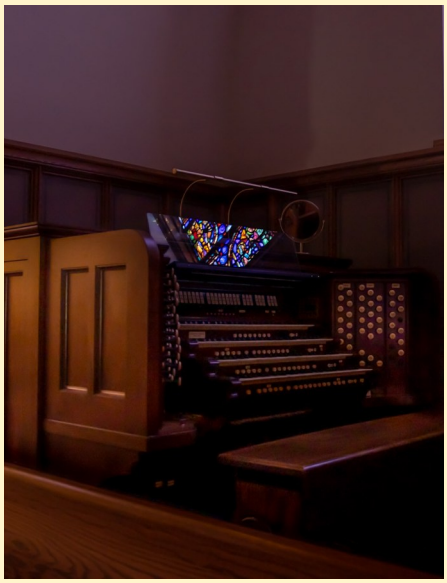
About Us

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 Organs

The Episcopal Church of the Holy Cross, Tryon NC





John Dower & Co · 4 manuals, 43 ranks · 1994
Originally Möller (Opus 7260, 1946)

Come hear this organ at our October 25 event!

