



Regional Update

Southwest Regional Ambassador Sheryl Sebo, DMA, AAGO

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(Courtesy Pipe Organ Database photographs by Patrick F., 2019)

One of the “Painted Churches” of Central Texas, St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Fredericksburg, Texas houses a 153-year-old George Kilgen 1873 mechanical action pipe organ (2 manuals & pedal, 13 stops). Some work was done to preserve its integrity, and it continues in full use for worship and concerts in fine condition. There are quite a few historic pipe organs in this lovely “Hill Country” town!

SHERYL’S NOTES:

As my time as SW Regional Ambassador comes to an end in July, I want to thank you all for your amazing work within your chapters and for your support as we have worked together on behalf of AGO’s vision and purpose. It has been a wonderful six years representing you and getting to know new friends across our six states! Thanks to those who have invited me into your homes, those who have led events, and for all who have worked hard to bring about growth, change, and resolving of challenges! We have come through the COVID pandemic, held two regional conventions, and brought groups back into more activity. I have written over 20 letters of congratulations to those who passed

guild exams, with more to come this season, along with support from our Regional Education and Exam Center Coordinators! We have purchased, built and put to work several new *OrgelKids* kits, hosted numerous Pedals, Pipes, & Pizza, several POE events, and several colleges have offered summer organ camps for young people. We have come through busy seasons of celebrations and remembrances in our Christian, Jewish, or other faith traditions, and have presented hymn festivals and organ recitals!

Before the deadline arrives for turning in applications for the new AGO Chapter Achievement Awards, I hope many of you will consider applying! JW Arnold's next Chapter Leader News will include a reminder of that deadline. If a chapter applies and is not recognized the first time around, hopefully they will be rewarded the next time, but the greatest value is in the motivation of applying! With all the excellent chapters in this region, I am proud of all so many of you have accomplished! From the last Chapter Leader News, came this information on Chapter Achievement Awards:

The 2026 AGO Chapter Achievement Awards recognize creativity and leadership by chapters of all sizes and resources. Judges will review your activities in Programming, Education, Outreach, Membership, Communications, and Chapter Operations, and recognize entries with gold, silver, bronze, and commendation awards.

Deadline to enter is Friday, May 15 at 5 p.m. PDT. [Click here](#) for the entry form. You can also refer to this [Sample Entry Form](#) as a guide. It takes less than an hour to complete.

I've been "on the road" a lot this spring, visiting chapters! It was a joy recently to perform recitals of music by women composers in both Midland's Permian Basin/Concho Valley and Amarillo, Texas' Chapters, and to visit with a Lubbock Chapter officer on the way. I attended a weekend in New Orleans to help celebrate St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church's Letourneau Organ Dedication, with Ken Cowan, guest concert organist and Master-Class clinician (Steven Blackmon, Director of Music/Organist), then had a meeting with that chapter's officers. I helped install Ft. Worth Chapter officers at their end-of-year dinner and recital by Dong-ill Shin. I am excited this next week to be present for AGO's annual Gala to honor Craig Phillips, in support of our hugely foundational AGO Endowment Funds, and to attend National Council and Regional Ambassador meetings. Prior to the Gala trip, I will help organize a dinner for our Austin Chapter program, a workshop on how to perform with more musicality and awareness, led by Dr. Christina Hargis. The next week, I will attend a hymn festival in Little Rock, Arkansas, given by Central Arkansas Chapter and led by Graham Schultz, FAGO, then will attend Dallas Chapter's final year's program dinner and recital by Jan Kraybill!

I hope to see many of you in St. Louis, July 6-10, and for our SW Regional meeting that week. Please send me any names of members in your chapter who have died this past year, for me to add to our Moment of Remembrance at that meeting. The committee appointed to seek a highly qualified person to become the new Executive Director of AGO, following stellar James Thomashower's retirement, is busy vetting finalists prior to

making the final decision. We have been greatly blessed to have James for such a lengthy tenure – he will be hugely missed! The St. Louis Convention will offer occasions to celebrate James and wish him well! I have had several online meetings with Dr. Melissa Plamann, who will become our newly elected Southwest Regional Ambassador as of July, to help prep her for her new role. I look forward to supporting her and to cheering all of you on in the future as I resume my humble, local perch! Have a joyful spring, no doubt filled with exciting end-of-season activities!

Sheryl

CHAPTER ONGOING DUTIES

- Chapters holding elections this year, hopefully by now have a slate of officers to vote on, or have already held elections. Be sure to send the new list of officers to JW Arnold (jwarnold@agohq.org) or Andrew Basta (abasta@agohq.org).
- In preparing end-of-year budgets, treasurers need to send a copy to Eric Birk (eric.birk@agohq.org) and/or Erik Eickhoff (erik.eickhoff@agohq.org) for AGO record-keeping.
- AGO's Membership, Marketing, and Communications Specialist, J.W. Arnold, recently held training sessions for all new and ongoing national leaders, called "AGO-U." Similar training sessions will be offered to incoming and returning local chapter officers. It is so important to be equipped with crucial information for any leadership position. Most of you are busy in other areas of your lives, so having tools to help make jobs easier and clearer is a great asset. I urge all to attend or view upcoming training Zooms, webinars, or recordings that are offered!
- If chapters do not have an up-to-date Chapter Operating Procedures document, please update the existing one or write one, easily produced from the recommended template in AGOHQ.org's Document Center. That will go a long way to ensure long-term health for your chapter, with guidance for officers.
- Because our members also are busy people, it is a great idea to have your program committee, led by the Sub-Dean or designated officer, plan their year's programs during the summer, then decide specific dates by end of summer or early fall, to get them in folks' calendars. That helps avoiding program conflicts with other events in other churches or organizations. It is important, though, to accept that, in AGO and our musical world, situations will tend to arise where conflicts are inevitable, perhaps when an event needs to be scheduled when best for one's own congregation. In such cases, it is important to understand and support each other's unavoidable conflicts!

- Many of our newer AGO member benefits and offerings are listed in TAO and on the website, but it never hurts to lift them up in your own newsletters and messaging! In addition to a growing list of webinars, Zoom certification tutorials, and other educational tools, we now have: a networking community, The Loft – connect.agohq.org/theloft, which includes among other groups, a chat group for Chapter Leaders; new online directory of substitutes and freelance organists – agohq.org/sub-organists; online listing of upcoming recitals, programs, concerts, conferences, and other events; list of jobs available, accessible online only for members; and the TAO archive – agohq.org/magazine. You will want to add your Chapter or local events to this new listing area! It is great to have a way to share such events without the longer lead-time needed in TAO, although that avenue is still a great way to gain national exposure and advertisement of your events!
- I hope some of you will consider applying for consideration in the “Call for Nominations” as future National Council and Council of Regional Ambassadors! Information is available at nominations@agohq.org!
- Also note in The Chapter Leader News the links to current memberships about to lapse. It is never too late to reach out to our current or lapsed members and invite them to renew and become more active again! Chapter nurture is so important!

In any of these or other duties, if you need help, just contact me or any of our outstanding AGO staff, who are eager to offer assistance and encouragement! Never be afraid to ask for help with any task! Also, our National Council members are ever eager to offer their support and expertise, such as: Sue Mitchell-Wallace, FAGO, Membership Coordinator and future Coordinator-at-Large, is knowledgeable in a wide area of membership topics and situations: membership@agohq.org.

EDUCATION & CERTIFICATION

We are approaching the busy time of year for Certification and exams! If you have questions on any aspect of offering, proctoring, or taking an exam, please reach out to Peggy Graff, AAGO, our Southwest Regional Education Coordinator. She is eager to help and has many years of experience in the many levels and details concerned with all the exams. Also, a new manual for Pedals, Pipes, and Pizza was recently placed on the AGOHQ website, and our National Certification Committee, with help from staff Education Director, Dr. Michelle Kardos, CAGO, and National Council Coordinator for Education, Dr. Russell Weismann, AAGO, is in process of updating several aspects of exam-taking, to improve, streamline, and make exams more consistent and fair across the spectrum. The next offering will be a training Zoom for those involved with coordinating or proctoring CAGO exams, on Tuesday, May 5 at 7:00 pm Eastern time zone. Contact Dr. Michelle Kardos, CAGO for more information, and see agohq.org/education for more details and recent updates!

IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO REGISTER FOR THIS YEAR'S CONVENTION!
AGOSTL2026.org - click [HERE!](#)



Meet us in
ST. LOUIS
2026 AGO National Convention