

Chiff Chat

Springfield, Massachusetts Chapter
American Guild of Organists
December 2010



A message from the Dean...

As the Thanksgiving hymns fade into the distance, every church organist now turns to thoughts of Advent and Christmas. What a wonderful time to be an organist and/or choir director! Many classic composers have written for this season and all at different levels of play, so there really is something for everyone. Many of us have seen years of Christmases and the question becomes ever "how can I make this Christmas a little different? A little something special?" Here are two suggestions that may be useful you:

Hymn variations: First you need to convince your clergy person to sing more than two verses of the hymn; four verses is ideal. Then pull out a variation on verse three and/or four. There are many publishers who produce hymn variations--I rely on an old warhorse of 64 hymn variations by T. Tertius Noble. Because I serve a Lutheran church, I also have hymns that have Bach variations and charming renditions by Paul Manz. Be careful, however, of the beloved Christmas Carols. My congregation enjoys variants on "Joy to the World", Adeste Fidelis, and "First Noel" but it's best to leave "Silent Night" alone. This is a lesson from experience. Another lesson I learned is that my congregation is not musically astute and giving out the hymn with a mere intonation is not good enough. They want me to give out the hymn in its entirety in exactly the meter and rhythm with which it should be sung. Then they are confident to start singing with the first note.

Hire an instrumentalist: This is a secret as old

as Bach himself, especially if you plan to indulge in variations. Then you can put the instrumentalist on melody while you do your fancy footwork and everyone is happy. The instrumentalist can also provide descanting counter melodies, even for the choir, which makes everything glorious. My church has no money, you say. Go to the local high school or college and ask the music director to recommend someone. A high school trumpeter or flutist is usually quite happy with \$50 and if you pay it yourself, you can claim this expense as an income tax deduction. Young people are excited to have a professional "gig" and find that practice does have its rewards.

The Guild wishes you all sleighloads of inspiration for this holiday season, baskets of patience with your choirs and stockings of skill that make every footnote accurate!

- **Martha**



Martha and Rev. Ted Thornton at the Pastor-Organist dinner in November.

Springfield Chapter Leadership

Dean	Martha Sienkiewicz
Sub Dean	Don Hooton
Secretary	Mary Jeanne Tash
Treasurer	James Barnes
Directors	Barbara Boudo, Quentin Faulkner, Alan Dickinson, Mark Jacobson, Roger LaCross, Larry Picard
Chaplain	Fr. William Wallis
Education	Martha Sienkiewicz, Don Hooton
Membership	Karen Banta
Chiff Chat Editor	Larry Picard
Web Site	Allan Taylor
Investments	Charles Page, E Lary Grossman, William Czelusniak, James Barnes

Next Chapter Event: Anthem Reading at the Church of the Atonement, 36 Court Street, Westfield, February 19 at 10 a.m.

And more chapter events...

March 20 (Sunday) 3:00 PM, **Members' Recital** at All Saint's Episcopal Church, South Hadley.

April 9 (Saturday) 7:00 PM, **Peter Krazinski accompanies the silent movie "The General"** at United Congregational Church of Holyoke.

June 5 (Sunday) 2:00 PM, **End-of-year cookout** at the home of Charles Page, Enfield, Ct.

Organist/choir director wanted: Epiphany Episcopal Church in Wilbraham seeks someone to play one service each Sunday, rehearse and direct the choir (currently 10 voices, SAB), and cover holiday services two on Christmas Eve, two on Easter Sunday, plus Maundy Thursday and Good Friday). The salary is \$12,000 a year with four Sundays vacation. The organist has right of first refusal for weddings and funerals. Instruments include a Wicks pipe organ, a Yamaha piano and a two-octave set of hand bells. We use the Hymnal 1982, Lift Every Voice and Sing, and a self-published hymnal with a mixture of praise music and other contemporary music. Ideally, there is a blend of music within each service. Contact the Rev. Merydyth Wessman Ward, Priest-in-Charge, Church of the Epiphany, Highland Ave., Wilbraham MA 01095. 413-596-6080 (office) 508-353-2099 (cell).

Position Open: Vibrant, music loving Episcopal church, rich in tradition, seeks part-time (8-12 hours per week) musician to direct and develop choral and congregational singing and enhance worship. Familiarity with liturgical forms, flexibility, and availability for 2 Sunday services and major holy days required. The successful candidate will demonstrate proficiency on organ and piano and in choral conducting and will understand this ministry as a way to glorify God and serve God's people. Salary will be based on experience and AGO guidelines. Position available beginning January, 2011. Please send resume and letter of interest to The Rev. Nancy Webb Stroud at rector.atonement@verizon.net or The Episcopal Church of the Atonement, 36 Court St., Westfield, MA 01085.

Editor's note: I need a vacation! As in the past, there will be no January issue of Chiff Chat. Please submit your listings for the February issue by January 20. Thanks!

For the love of Jack...



Jack Hague learned at an early age that his classical organ training was not going to put food on the table. His parents were blind and he had many siblings, so he decided to go the contemporary route, and play music anywhere there was an organ or keyboard. (Even aboard ship in the Navy.)

Providentially, one of his early organ teachers trained him using left hand only to play melody. A couple of years ago, Jack fell off a ladder just

before Christmas. As I prepared to cover Mass for him, he showed up and played left hand and pedal, his right arm useless in a sling. Few people downstairs knew.

Jack's midlife heart attack cost him much of his memory; he relearned his music. A few years ago, he had a 25% survival rate due to complex medical conditions. No matter, weddings, funerals, Sundays, special events, sing-a-longs, once out the hospital, Jack played anyway. He said if he could play at Mass that maybe God would keep him alive.

In Jack's last few years, I was his Sherpa; carried his oxygen tank, climbed the loft stairs with him, turned his pages, lifted his books, woke him from his naps between Masses, listened to his breathing...you get the idea. Jack was as stubborn as he was talented. One example, he would drive from Athol to Northampton in nasty weather to play for a handful of people in the church. Even the pastor could not dissuade him from coming in.

Jack's beloved Blessed Sacrament Parish, Northampton closed Jan. 2010. At the newly formed St. Elizabeth Ann Seaton, a Choir Director created a new music program from the 5 closed parishes. Jack was no longer in control of his musical destiny; his health deteriorated and his spirit was crushed. He died in September at age 70.

Jack Hague came from poverty to live the high life. He touched thousands of lives in his 60 years of playing in local townhouses, banquet halls and churches. He was a Holyoke boy with a prize winning smile and dancing fingers. You just had to love Jack...I know I did. - **Mary Jeanne Tash**

January Jubilee – January 15, 2011

The AGO national committee on Musicians in Part-Time Employment and the Potomac Chapter AGO is presenting a one-day workshop for part-time church musicians on January 15, 2011 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Christ Congregational Church in Silver Spring, Maryland. Class offerings will include Organ Literature, African American Music, Service Playing, Public Relations, Pastor/Musician Relations, Choral Music and Worship Planning, the Digital Organ, Handbells and Wedding-Funeral Music. A registration form is available by PDF on the national website, www.agohq.org, or by contacting Dale Krider at 301-864-8880. Registration deadline is Jan. 5.

Getting to know our new members: Roberta and Chuck Morkin:

Tell us about your Church position(s) and other work, musical or non-musical: I am the Organist and Choir Director at United Congregational Church of Holyoke, Holyoke, MA. And together, Chuck and I are the pastoral team there. We answered the call to a settled ministry position in August, 2007. Late in 2008, our organist/choir director left the position for a teaching job, and that was at the time when budgetary concerns and cutbacks were in full swing everywhere, including UCCH. Until twenty years ago, I spent many hours at the organ bench in school and doing church work. After several weeks considering it, I, actually we, volunteered to re-work our schedule and work patterns, so that I could take on the organist/choir director position in addition to our work as the pastoral team. It's not exactly like riding a bike - there are some things that come back almost immediately, but most of it, although it feels really familiar, takes a little time to become reacquainted with. And it has been a joy!

When and how did you start playing the organ? I have been playing the organ since I can remember. I started piano lessons when I was 8 years old. Three of my relatives, where I spent great amounts of time, had organs in their homes, and instead of doing things everyone else did, I sat at those keyboards and entertained myself. I began taking organ lessons in addition to piano lessons, and my first "official" church job started when I was 15 years old.

What's the funniest, worst, or most moving experience you've had as an organist? There's a good deal of overlap in these three situations, and there are so many events to choose from..... so just to name a few: having one of the pastors say, "I think Bobbie is going to give us the introduction to the hymn now- -" as I was busy figuring out what was going to be happening after the sermon; accidentally nudging a pre-set so that the sound made a dramatic change, very obviously, when it wasn't supposed to; trying to get to church for an Easter sunrise service during a blizzard; losing my place in the music while playing Bach's *g minor Fantasia & Fuga* during a recital; listening to the amazing music of the French Romantics; and beyond everything else is playing the instruments!

Who or what inspired you to join the Springfield Chapter, and what are you hoping to gain from membership? When I began as Organist and Choir Director, I was encouraged to join the local AGO Chapter as part of the job. I was happy to do so, knowing there would be opportunities to meet other people doing this work, and share experiences. It's also a great way to find out about the concerts, etc. going on in the area through the Chiff Chat. And it's a big plus to once again be getting the AGO magazine. I look forward to getting to know more of the people who are part of this group.

Upcoming Events

December 2010

Friday, December 3, 2010 at 8:00 p.m.

Schola Nova performs a service of Lessons and Carols at Saint Michael's Catholic Church, East Longmeadow.

www.scholanova.org

Sunday, December 5, 2010 at 2:30 p.m.

The Trinity Chamber Singers and Handbell Choir perform at Providence Place in Holyoke. Becky Isaacson directs with guest musicians Felice Swados, harp, Janet Dixon-Metcalf, flute, and the Trinity Chamberettes.

Sunday, December 5, 2010 at 3:00 p.m.

Schola Nova performs a service of Lessons and Carols at the Church of the Acres, Springfield. www.scholanova.org

Sunday, December 5, 2010 at 4:00 p.m.

Christmas with Novi Cantori at the Basilica of St. Stanislaus, 566 Front Street, Chicopee.

www.novicantori.org

Saturday, December 11, 2010 at 4:00 p.m.

Novi Cantori Carol Festival at First Congregational Church, 18 Broad Street Westfield. www.novicantori.org

Saturday, December 11, 2010 at 5:00 p.m.

Immanuel Lutheran Church, 867 North Pleasant St., Amherst, presents an open dress rehearsal of Menotti's, "Amahl and the Night Visitors." A free-will offering will be received. Directed by Dr. Anne Weaver, accompanied by Dr. Matthew Cron, the cast includes Brandon Dallmann, Yvonne Field, Junius Harris, Jack Stebbins, Bob Weaver, Jon Niedzielski and the Immanuel choir and others (shepherds chorus). 413-549-0322 or www.immanuel-amherst.org.

Saturday, December 11, 2010 at 7:30 p.m.

the Cathedral Choir of Boys & Adults will present their annual "Candlelight Festival of Lessons & Carols" at St. Michael's Cathedral directed by Ladislav Pfeifer. Musical selections will vary from Gregorian chant to jazz, with seasonal hymns and carols; major

works by composers Handel, Mozart, and Robert Weaver. Admission is free and open to all. For more information, please contact Jessica Hill at (413) 452-0839 or worship@diospringfield.org.

Sunday, December 12, 2010 at 1:00 pm

Christmas with Novi Cantori at the Old Meetinghouse, Granville.

www.novicantori.org

Sunday, December 12, 2010 at 2:00 p.m.

The Holyoke High School choirs perform at United Congregational Church, Holyoke.

www.uccholyoke.org.

Sunday, December 12, 2010 at 3:00 p.m.

The Trinity Chamber Singers and Handbell Choir perform at Trinity United Methodist Church, 361 Sumner Avenue, Springfield. Becky Isaacson directs with guest musicians Felice Swados, harp, Janet Dixon-Metcalf, flute, and the Trinity Chamberettes.

Sunday, December 12, 2010 at 5:00 p.m.

Immanuel Lutheran Church, 867 North Pleasant St., Amherst, presents Menotti's, "Amahl and the Night Visitors." See December 11 entry for details. 413-549-0322 or www.immanuel-amherst.org.

Sunday, December 19, 2010 at 4:00 p.m.

The Christ Church Adult Choir, Janet Duffe, Director, presents a Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols at Christ United Methodist Church, Rocky Hill Rd., Northampton. www.gbgm-umc.org/christ-ma



Grant Moss accepts the Past-Dean's pin from Martha at the Pastor-Organist dinner.

CHIFF CHAT

**American Guild of Organists
Springfield, MA Chapter**

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Chiff Chat Newsletter

**Springfield, Massachusetts Chapter of the American Guild of Organists
Celebrating 62 Years as a chapter!**

To submit information regarding positions, upcoming concerts, recitals, or area events, please email newsletter@springfieldago.org. Submissions are due by the 20th of each month. Also, visit our website at www.springfieldago.org!

No Chapter Events in December or January - Happy Holidays! Next event is the Anthem Reading February 19.