



## **Chiff Chat Part 1**

### **February 2022**

#### The Dean's Message:

Election time is coming up. We invite any member to run for any office. Current officers Karen Banta and James Barnes are willing to stay on in their positions. One board member will retire and anyone willing to be a board member is welcome. The biggest problem is that I (Martha Sienkiewicz, Dean) will step down and we need someone to lead us for the next two years. The major duties of the Dean are to promote the growth and education of the membership, help to manage and/or support 4-6 events a season (Sept.-June), oversee the newsletter and write a dean's message. The Dean convenes with the board when necessary either virtually or in-person, passes on relevant information to the membership, and calls for an election every two years.

Because of Covid, these past two years have been challenging. Most events have been virtual. The chapter

will finance a zoom subscription for the Dean to facilitate board meetings. I will be glad to mentor anyone taking the position if requested. We have a membership of very talented people, many of whom are willing to sponsor events of interest. Please take the time to think about this seriously. Our chapter has enough money so that raising funds is not a problem like so many of our fellow chapters. I am living proof that you do not need to be a world class organist to fill this position...you need only a few management skills, an abiding love of the organ and a serious commitment to the membership for education, communication and growth. The election will take place in May.

#### **Dean:**

**Martha Sienkiewicz**

#### **Directors:**

**Klaus Becker**

**Lori Bourret**

**Joe Geehern**

**Dianne Rechel**

#### **Treasurer:**

**James Barnes**

#### **Secretary:**

**Karen Banta**

#### **Chaplain:**

**Rev. William H. Wallis**

# Interview with Michael Carney

Michael Carney is celebrating six months as the newly appointed music director at Trinity United Methodist Church on Sumner Ave. in Springfield. It is never easy to follow in the footsteps of a larger-than-life personality like Becky Isaacson who held that position for decades, but Michael seems delighted to be playing a dream organ and conducting choirs that Becky built and trained. He's thankful to be serving with the Rev. René Perez who is energetically envisioning a continually diverse future. He's excited about conducting an adult chancel choir of many highly talented singers, a high school choir called "Chamberettes" and a younger choir called "The Choristers". He also conducts the Trinity Handbell Choir that recently held a successful Night of Worship in the chapel. He plans to restart a youth handbell choir during these covid times. Methods of conducting are a focus for Mike as he is finishing a doctoral dissertation on the subject, receiving his DMA this coming May from the University of Hartford.



Michael is a graduate of UMass with degrees in music and computer engineering. While he started a computer career, his love of music prevailed and he made the switch. Mike is a fine organist and he served on the Guild board 2015-2017. He calls the 48 rank Skinner organ at Trinity "phenomenal" with a memory function and midi installed in 2007 which enables him to record and then listen to his playing with a critical ear. Trinity has one main service on Sunday morning and his goal is to make each event 'phenomenal' as well.

Like everyone else, Trinity has been hit hard by covid. Congregational singing is suspended at the moment with the recent Omicron surge. Programs have had to be modified; a prime example is this year's iconic Boar's Head Festival. They intended all speed ahead early on, which was stymied by the Delta variant. Then they were going to film most of the event without a live audience which had to be scrapped because of the raging Omicron. The choir met to rehearse for the festival and he said it was a 'magic' rehearsal; everyone knew the music and it was a delightful evening





concert rehearsal at First Church Monson

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## *Reminiscences of “Our Convention”* (and a really big legacy) by Karen Banta

Newer members of the Springfield Chapter hear references to “our convention,” usually with a smile from Jim Barnes, treasurer. What was that? As part of our chapter’s 75th anniversary celebration, I’m remembering this grand event and what it meant to our chapter and to me personally. Confession: I had some help with my recollections. I had saved the 120-page Convention book, rich with musicians’ bios, civic tributes, concert programs, restaurant suggestions, and other treasures.

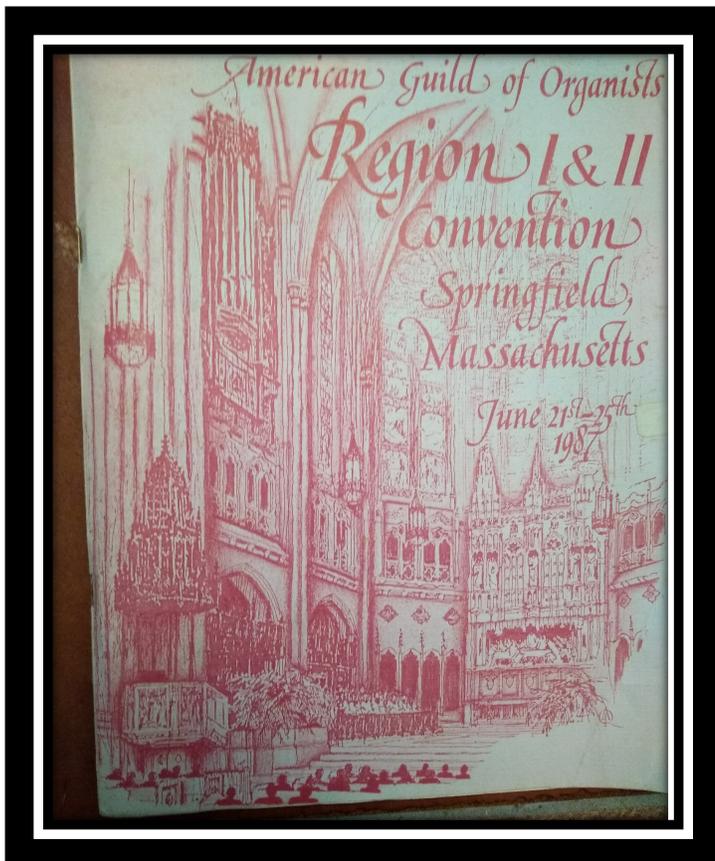
The AGO Region I and II Convention was held on June 21-25, 1987. Our chapter had of course been planning every detail for several years, under the leadership of deans Peter Beardsley and then Warren Amerman. It was housed at beautiful Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley. I have a funny memory of Peter Beardsley, Meals and Housing, dashing around the Registration Desk much like John Cleese in the British TV comedy “Fawlty Towers.”

Charles Page was the General Chairman, and as longtime Minister of Music at Old First Church, Springfield, he was well-positioned to make things happen. Both the city of Springfield and OFC were marking their 350th anniversaries in 1987, which added to the celebration. The opening Festival Service was held at that church, with sub dean Allan Taylor at the organ. I was very impressed that our chapter and OFC commissioned William Mathias (whose anthem I loved at Charles and Diana’s wedding) to write an anthem for our humble event. Hmmmm...I seem to have kept a copy of “Rejoice in the Lord,” with its commission notice in tiny print at the bottom.

Standout events were too numerous to name. The Canterbury Cathedral Choir performed *twice*, in concert one night and at Choral Evensong the next. Major recitalists included Frederick Swann, Gillian Weir, Guy Bovet, Brian Jones, and Thomas Murray. A panel discussion “First Women of the Harpsichord” and a concert “Baroque Music By and For Women” shone much-needed light. CONCORA performed the Durufle *Requiem* in the splendor of Trinity Methodist Church. For late-night entertainment, we had fun with “Baker’s Dozen,” a musical satirical revue company directed by Stephen Hays.

What did this convention mean to me personally? In 1987, I was exactly half the age I am now and a newish AGO member. My academic degrees are not in music, so AGO events have always been my pathway into learning and growth. For instance, at this convention, I learned much about Dietrich Buxtehude (it was his 350th birth anniversary) from Lynn Edwards. Bruce Neswick illustrated the sublime sound world of Herbert Howells. I’m profoundly grateful for these experiences and many more.

What did “AGO ‘87” mean for the Springfield Chapter? In addition to producing a stellar convention, we generated a lot of income. Jim Barnes’ financial records indicate that a certificate of deposit was opened in 1987 with \$42,000. In 2000, this was transferred to a Vanguard account. Thanks to careful management, its current balance is \$181,000. This allows our board to be generous in such areas as memorial donations, organ rebuilding fundraisers, and more: a fine legacy



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A359  
S.A.T.B.  
Words selected from  
Psalm 33

Rejoice in the Lord

WILLIAM MATHIAS  
Op. 99 No. 1

Lively and rhythmic (♩ = c. 84)

ORGAN

Man.

5

10

SOPRANO  
ALTO  
TENOR  
BASS

Re - joice in the Lord, O ye right - eous:

10

Ped. 4 - 16

Man.

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