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American Guild of Organists District of Columbia Chapter

THE COUPLER

August 2026

In this issue:

Dean's message
Member spotlight on Randy Frye
New recording of monastery organ
Upcoming recitals

Dean's message

Dear Friends,
I am delighted to share that the Board held a highly productive and energizing first meeting as we begin this new chapter year. We accomplished a great deal, and I left the meeting excited about what lies ahead for the DC Chapter.



One of our major accomplishments was establishing our calendar of events for the coming year. We are putting the finishing touches on a few details and look forward to releasing the complete schedule very soon. I think you'll find there is something for everyone, from educational programs and performances to social gatherings and opportunities to connect with fellow organists.

Dean Robert Baird with Carolyn Hoff at the July AGO National Convention in St. Louis. Hoff was featured in recital after earning national recognition through the Regional Competitions for Young Organists.

The Board is also on track to adopt a new operating budget in August. Establishing a clear budget will help ensure that our resources are aligned with our priorities and provide a strong foundation for the chapter's continued growth.

To better serve our members, we have established several standing committees that will focus on important aspects of chapter life, including social engagement, competitions, events and hospitality, finance, communications, education, and membership. These committees will allow more members to become involved in shaping the future of our chapter, and I am grateful to those who have already volunteered their time and talents.

Please save the dates for two exciting events this fall:

Catered Reception, Installation of Officers, and Members' Recital
Friday, Sept. 25
Reception: 5:45 pm

Installation & Recital: 7 pm**New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, 1313 New York Ave. NW**

Join us as we officially begin the new chapter year with a catered reception, followed by the installation of our officers and a members' recital. The reception will be a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with colleagues, welcome new faces, and enjoy fellowship before an evening of music. **RSVPs are required.**

Click [here](#).

Halloween Spooktacular**5 pm Saturday, Oct. 17****St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 4900 Connecticut Ave. NW**

Hosted by **Caleb Bates**, this festive program promises an evening of thrilling organ music and seasonal fun. Details will be announced soon.

Finally, we still have a few vacancies on the Board, most notably the office of **subdean**. If you've ever considered becoming more involved in the chapter, I encourage you to reach out. Serving on the Board is a rewarding opportunity to help shape the future of our organization while working alongside a dedicated group of colleagues. To learn more about the subdean's role, send an email to dcagochapter.org.

I am deeply grateful for the enthusiasm and willingness of so many members to serve our chapter. Together, I believe we are laying the groundwork for an exciting year filled with outstanding music, meaningful fellowship, and renewed engagement across our membership. I look forward to seeing many of you this fall!

— Robert Baird

Member spotlight: Randy Frye

How did you become interested in the organ?

I was not exposed to a pipe organ until college. I grew up with a small electronic Allen in my church but



never played it. I was at a department-wide recital my first semester at university and heard the pipe organ being featured. I instantly knew I wanted to learn how to play. I played a lot of piano growing up and was very active in my church as a pianist.

What is your educational and professional background?

I have an undergraduate degree in music education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I was a dual concentration in voice and organ and also had four minors in religious studies, piano, clarinet, and musical theater. I was very active! From there I went to Kansas State University and pursued a graduate degree in vocal performance while still studying organ.

I taught school for eight years in Lawrence, KS, and four years in Canton, PA, before taking my current job as associate director of choirs at St. Albans and the National Cathedral Schools.

I have held organ positions in Pennsylvania, Kansas, and New York. In March I started as minister of music at Christ Lutheran Church in DC.

What are the organ's biggest joys and challenges for you?

They are leading congregational singing, accompanying the choir, and choosing registrations. Challenges include finding appropriate and new or cherished works to learn and staying current in the advancing technological world.

What do you like to do when you are not making music?

I enjoy reading, cooking, watching movies, and going to concerts.

What's an interesting fact you would like people to know about you?

I love collaborating with other artists. I enjoy solo repertoire, but collaborating fulfills my soul.

Tell us an odd thing that happened while you were on an organ bench.

One time a bird flew into the sanctuary and perched on the corner of the organ console as I was playing a prelude. That was pretty cool!



New recording of monastery music

A new recording from the RAVEN label, [*Capital Finds*](#), features chapter member Sonja Kahler playing the Lively-Fulcher organ in the church of the Franciscan Monastery in Northeast DC. It is the first solo organ recording of the instrument.

The recording was released in [CD form](#) July 1 and is also available on [Spotify](#), Amazon Music, and other digital platforms. An excerpt will be broadcast Aug. 24 on the nationally distributed weekly public radio program [Pipedreams](#) and air on member stations afterward (Program #2634, Keeping on Track: "survey of recent new and interesting recordings").

According to RAVEN: "All of the music recorded here has one or more connections to America's capital city, Washington, DC, to another nation's capital, or both. All of it comes from the 20th and 21st centuries. And, it's all capital music! Each piece is `a find'--surprising, attractive, useful, but not widely known--and so deserves a broader audience."

Sonja is a music associate at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Arlington.

Summer series at the Basilica

Recitals are offered at 6 pm each Sunday in August at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, 400 Michigan Ave. NE.

Aug. 2: Lynn Trapp of Baltimore

Aug. 9: John Mitchell of Reston, VA

Aug. 16: Andy Brown of Philadelphia

Aug, 23: Peter Latona of Washington, DC

Aug. 30: Adam Chlebek of Washington, DC

Other recitals

Sunday, Aug. 9, 4 pm: Paul Hardy, left, organist at St. Matthew's Cathedral, plays a recital on the newly restored 1891 Hook & Hastings organ at St. Joseph's on Capitol Hill, 313 2nd St. NE. Works of Bohm, Buxtehude, Mozart,



Durufle, Rheinberger, Mendelssohn,
Bach, Whitlock and Saint-Saens.

Sunday, Sept. 13, 4 pm: Adam Chlebek, assistant director of music at the Basilica of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, plays a recital at St. Joseph's on Capitol Hill, 313 2nd St. NE.

Sunday, Sept. 20, 4 pm: Nathan Laube plays a recital at St. George's Episcopal Church, 915 N. Oakland St.

Job openings

Listings are continuously updated on our website, dcago.org. Click on the Membership tab. To submit a listing, send an email to dcagochapter@gmail.com.

AGO chapter board

Robert Baird, dean
Rob Church, treasurer
Eric McAfee, assistant treasurer

Kevin Biggins, membership secretary

Justin Connors, social media director

Anna Elise Smith, chapter young organists coordinator

Paul Hersey, education coordinator

Caleb Bates, member-at-large

Sarah DeLacy, member-at-large

Patrick Merrill, member-at-large

Evelyn Simpson-Curenton, member-at-large

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Visit our website at dcago.org.

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