

THE WINDCHEST

OMAHA CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS



AUGUST 2020

Inside this Issue:

- 1 From the Dean
- 2 Board Meeting Summary
- 2 2020-2021 Schedule
- 4 Achievement Awards and Certification
- 5 Promotions Committee
- 5 Board Bios

FROM THE DEAN

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven”. Ecclesiastes 3

Right now we find ourselves in a time when we need some intentional care for, and about others, while at the same time doing the same for us. It is unusual for us to feel out of control of our lives. We feel it now. I received word recently that a college friend, who was an organist and many other things at a large church in Texas, died from COVID. You may know personal stories of this virus. As we live through this, our lives are being altered in ways we could not have imagined 4 months ago.

facebook

Please like the Omaha Chapter Facebook page. Information is posted regularly! Our page name is: Omaha Chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

The Executive Board originally thought our fall programming could be handled with social distancing, which is not possible now. We were excited to welcome Elizabeth George from Florida to be our national office guest, now that is out of the question. But, we have Zoom and will welcome her that way. Steve Bartelt has made arrangements and Jeff Hoffman will send the Zoom link for the September 13 meeting. (Details elsewhere) As I visit with some of you, I know that a few churches are opening slowly to just a few attendees, and many who have learned about and acquired equipment so the live-streaming can go on for a long period. There are many things to consider as we serve our congregations. We hope our first meeting will help you as you think about the fall.

We welcome to Omaha, Zach Hastings, who fills the organ position at Pacific Hills Lutheran Church.

The Board is working on committee assignments and other changes as we begin this new year. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact me. We hope you help yourself to all the AGO has to offer - for you personally and for your church.

Jean Johnson, Dean

MISSION

The mission of the American Guild of Organists 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.

OMAHA AGO BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

Omaha Chapter Board Meeting Summary - July 7, 2020

Plans are being finalized for the fall meetings. 2021 meetings are set but are not being published until the protocols for the Pandemic at that time are learned.

Advertising procedures are changing, for those who pay for an ad with their dues. This also will apply to business advertising without membership. Business card sized ads will appear in the *Windchest*, the website, and the Directory. Letters explaining changes will be sent following the August 11 Board meeting. If you are interested and have never had an ad, please contact Jean.

Directories this year will change somewhat. They will include the membership roster, officers, committee chairs, substitute organist list and national office information. Additional information will be found on the website. The program list for this year will not be published in the Directory.

Long-time member, Arline Henni, has moved and will not belong to the chapter. If you knew Arline, it is suggested she might enjoy your sending a card to her assisted living facility.

Arline Henni
Heritage at Legacy
2961 South 169 Plaza #213
Omaha NE 68130

2020-2021 SCHEDULE

Sunday, September 13: Virtual Happy Hour! 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Program will be conducted on the Zoom platform with Jeff Hoffman as facilitator. Login details, below, will be sent by email closer to the date. Jeff Hoffman is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Omaha AGO September Meeting
Time: Sep 13, 2020 03:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84708517665?pwd=bWs5YWFLa1N5VFYxeTJjZWZ1L1pWZz09>
Meeting ID: 847 0851 7665
Passcode: 889692

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

Dean Jean Johnson
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Sub-Dean Stephen Bartelt
stephenbartelt@yahoo.com + 402-496-6140

Secretary Gregory Johnson
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Treasurer David McCain
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Immediate Past Dean Dr. J. Gordon Christensen
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Member-at-Large Jeff Hoffman - 2018/2019 - 2020/2021
omahaago@gmail.com + 402-317-8887

Member-at-Large Laura Rau - 2018/2019 - 2019-2022
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Member-at-Large Sr. Claudette Schirati - 2020/2021 - 2012 - 2023
cshiratti1@gmail.com
+ 913-530-0960

Theme: "Organ and Choral Realities in a COVID World."

We are excited to welcome Elizabeth George, Director of Member Engagement and Chapter Development from the National AGO office. She will be part of our Zoom conversation. She will be speaking about the chapter support resources that are available on the AGO website, chapter program collaboration and the importance of staying connected and engage your members during this time of social distancing.

Additionally, chapter members will offer a short discussion starter on the following topics. The floor will then be open for any of us to share, question, or comment.

"Involving Congregation Members Safely."
Kantor Zachary Zieschang, Zion Lutheran

"The Realities of a Musician in a Closed Building"
Mark Kurtz, First United Methodist

"Music in a Functioning Cathedral during COVID Times."
Marie Rubis-Bauer. St. Cediaia Cathedral

Pour yourself your favorite refreshment, get out the snacks, and be part of this experience!

Watch your email for the Zoom instructions. If any need some help with Zoom, let Stephen Bartelt know, and we can do a practice session with those unfamiliar with Zoom.

Saturday, October 10, "A New Instrument: Start to Finish."

10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. If you are comfortable, you can attend this presentation in person, and it will be streamed on Facebook Live for those wishing to participate virtually.

Location: Countryside Community Church, 13130 Faith Plaza (132nd and Pacific), Tri-Faith Campus

Host Alex Ritter will talk about the process the church went through to acquire their new instrument: design, bidding, construction, installation---in short, all the steps, the joys and frustrations, along the way. The organ may or may not be ready to demonstrate but reviewing the process of acquisition will make a fascinating program. Additionally, if time permits and the group is interested, Alex will give us an introduction to the Tri-Faith campus.

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Allen Organ
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Fax: 402-593-1104
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keyboardkastle.com
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Lincoln, Ne. 68504
Gerald Oehring
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Be sure to bring your mask if you plan to attend in person, and we will certainly space ourselves out sufficiently to minimize COVID.

November: "African American Organ Music"

Watch for details on date, time, and program in the September Windchest.

December: No program planned.

ACHEIVEMENT AWARDS AND CERTIFICATION

Let me introduce myself. My name is Sr. Claudette Schiratti, RSM and I have been asked to be the chair for Certification for the Omaha Chapter of the AGO. Before moving to Omaha, I chaired Certification for the KCAGO chapter for a number of years. I have achieved the CAGO and AAGO Certificates. Why pursue certification you may ask? It's great personal and professional development. Right now you might have more time than usual to pursue an organ achievement award or certificate because of the pandemic. It's easy for the days to slip by without a goal. I encourage you to pursue a goal of organ Achievement or Certification.

In addition to the longstanding Certificates of Service Playing, Colleague, Associate, Choir Master, and Fellow, the AGO has now introduced nationally AGO Achievement Awards. The Omaha Chapter of the AGO was one of six chapters who piloted the program last year.

I encourage you to go the agohq.org website. Search under the education tab where you will find Achievement Awards and Certification descriptions. Everything that you need to pursue for further growth is there. If you have questions, I am happy to assist you.

AGO Achievement Awards can be taken at any time and are free to any Omaha AGO member.

The July 2020 issue of THE AMERICAN ORGANIST lists the dates, eligibility, application procedures and deadlines for entry, and fees for the Professional Certification Requirements for 2021.

Encourage and motivate yourself to pursue personal and professional growth through the discipline of study and practice and contact me if you have questions.

Sr. Claudette Schiratti, RSM, AAGO, CAGO, MM
Cschiratti1@gmail.com

OMAHA AGO PUBLICITY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers are needed to fill the following roles in promoting the Omaha Chapter of the American Guild of Organists publicity needs:

WebMaster: Update and maintain the chapter's website.

Windchest Editor: Publish the chapter's monthly newsletter

Facebook and Social Media: Publish items of interest on the Chapter's Facebook page, and other platforms as may be deemed necessary.

Advertising: Promote the chapter's events using print, radio, and television news media.

Email Management: Explore the use of MailChimp or Constant Contact for enhanced email communication.

Please contact Jean Johnson, Dean, if you are able and willing to help in these areas.

OMAHA EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

JEAN JOHNSON

DEAN

Jean Johnson is a retired Deacon in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, having served under call at Trinity Lutheran Church in North Omaha. For 32 years she directed adult and children's choirs, handbell ensembles and played for both traditional and contemporary services and led Bible studies along with other duties. Since retirement Jean and her husband, Lee, volunteer at 2 food pantries. Jean substitutes on the organ bench and teaches a few piano students. She is honored to be serving as Dean, and feels the new board will be encouraging to, and supportive of, members as we explore the new normal of worship and what it means for today's organists.

STEPHEN BARTLET

SUB-DEAN

As a Lutheran minister with an advanced degree in music, Stephen Bartelt has led worship from the chancel, from the organ bench, and from the choir director's podium. Most recently, he was choir director and substitute organist at Zion Lutheran Church, 144th and Ida, for over a decade. Previously an active member of the AGO in Milwaukee, he "retired" in Omaha in 2006. He sang with at least two community choral organizations in Milwaukee and with the Omaha Symphonic Chorus, as well as with the "backup chorus" for the Omaha Symphony's Christmas celebrations. He chaired the chapter's presentation on clergy/musician collaboration. He was Pastor of several Lutheran parishes in Kansas and Illinois and for a number of years chaired the Worship Committee of the Kansas District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Prior to retirement, he

was CFO for the Lutheran High School Association of Greater Milwaukee and served thirty-one years as a Chaplain in the US Army Reserve and National Guard.

GREG JOHNSON SECRETARY

Greg's been making music virtually his entire life. From a young age he's been enamored with the organ in its various forms--pop, theatre and classical. Growing up on a farm just outside Mead, NE he played "dinner" music for numerous local functions during his early school years.

During junior high and high school (early 70's) he got a job in the Fremont Mall working as a "demonstrator" for a regional organ and piano company during the "home organ craze" and at the ripe old age of 17 became the first employee of Keyboard Kastle here in Omaha when they opened and where he has been for the last 42+ years.

Currently Manager and in charge of Institutional Sales for the firm, Greg enjoys helping congregations, institutions, families and individuals find the right keyboard instruments to allow them to express the joy of making music. Over the years he's been the firm's representative for Conn, Wurlitzer, Rodgers and now, the ALLEN Organ Company of Macungie, PA.

Greg is past president of the River City Theatre Organ Society and has played programs and cued "Silent Films" over the years here in Omaha. He, for over forty years, has played organ/piano/keyboard and directed choirs for his home congregation of Trinity Lutheran Church in Fremont, NE where he and his wife of just over twenty years, Stacia reside and, he is Music Vice-President and Associate Director of The Pathfinder Chorus a Men's Barbershop chorus that has been invited eight times over the last decade to compete at the Barbershop Harmony Society's International Competition.

DAVID MCCAIN TREASURER

David McCain's pathway through a maze of organ-related interests never followed a straight line. In his early years, he didn't envision the organ as being more than a sideline diversion – something to do when not engaged in the mass marketing field for which he had been trained. Nonetheless, the powerful attraction (Siren call?) of the organ has managed to occupy the center of his attention for nearly 60 years. It has been suggested that if the whole story of McCain's experiences were to be told it would be a book, not a biographical sketch. So, for the sake of brevity, this report will touch only on a few of the highlights of David McCain's organ-related experiences.

During his Chicago years, David McCain's musical education was gained through a combination of private study and independent coaching on both the organ and the carillon. Also, joining a

prestigious choir of Men and Boys where solid musicianship was expected yielded a comprehensive knowledge of choral music and direction.

In the mid-1970s Mr. McCain took on a challenging position at a small Episcopal church where he realized that there was a lot of untapped potential. Within a few years he was able to transform five "singers" that sang only at Christmas and Easter into a 20-voice choir that sang every Sunday. (Here the urge is being resisted to include matters related to McCain's work with the organ building firm of Robert L. David & Associates.)

It was also during this time that McCain joined the staff of The Diapason, first as the publication's business manager, later as managing editor, and finally as editor.

McCain was also instrumental in forming the Chicago/Midwest Chapter of the Organ Historical Society. A charter member, he was elected as the chapter's first President. Through a strange set of circumstances he also found that he would be serving as Co-Chair for the OHS National Convention barely two years after the founding of the Chicago chapter.

During those halcyon days David McCain once remarked that between his church job, his work at The Diapason, and his activities with the OHS, he often didn't know if he was working or just having fun!

Moving on to Orlando, Florida in the early 1980s, McCain accepted a position as Chapel Music Director for the Orlando Naval Training Center. "Chapel" was, in fact, four chapels: three on one base, and a fourth chapel on another base nearly four miles away! In addition to playing organ and directing choirs at two of the chapels, he was required to see that other musicians filled the required needs of the other two chapels. McCain remained in this position until the bases were closed, in the 1990s. He soon accepted a position at a large Roman Catholic church where a new tracker organ was being installed.

During his Orlando years, David McCain remained active in the Orlando Chapter of the AGO, serving first as Historian of the Chapter, and later as Sub-Dean. He also served three terms as Dean of the Orlando Chapter.

A long association with a Georgia-based organ building firm led to McCain providing technical support services to the company. Through that affiliation there remain several pipe organs in Georgia, Alabama and Florida that were designed by David McCain.

Now retired and living in Iowa, McCain's musical services are limited to being an Associate organist at All Saint's Episcopal Church, Omaha. There he regularly plays the organ for the weekly 5 p.m. Saturday service.

J. GORDON CHRISTENSEN DEAN

J Gordon Christensen was raised on a family farm near Dannebrog, which, by legislative action of the Nebraska State Unicameral, is the "Danish Capital" of Nebraska.

Dr. Christensen holds a Bachelor of Music degree in piano performance from Hastings College; a Master of Music degree in piano performance from the University of Colorado-Boulder; a second Master of Music degree in music education from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; and a Ph.D. with an emphasis in organ and liturgical music from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where Dr. Quentin Faulkner and Dr. George Ritchie were his organ instructors.

Dr. Christensen taught elementary music in Imperial, Nebraska, initially moving to the Southwestern Nebraska community to carry out a three-year pilot project sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts placing a performing musician in a public school music classroom. The Imperial community quickly embraced the idea which led to a 41-year career as an elementary music educator. Support and encouragement for a highly developed elementary music program by the Imperial community led to recognition as the "National Teacher of the Year" in 2000, sponsored and presented by NORTEL NETWORKS, a nation-wide communications business.

Very early in my Imperial tenure, I became the organist at Zion Lutheran Church, an additional tenure that lasted 41 years. During those years, my AGO membership was in the Denver chapter, earning the SPC, CAGO and AAGO certificates under the guidance of Dr. Joyce Shupe Kull, a long-time member of the Denver chapter. Due to growth in membership at Zion Imperial, a new church building with a capacity of 400 was built in the late seventies. Housed in the west end balcony of the new building is a 3/33 pipe organ, mostly Reuter including seven ranks of re-voiced pipes from the earlier instrument.

Prior to my retirement I was practicing organ at Zion Lutheran Church, Imperial, when their present pastor introduced me to one of his long-time friends, Pastor Nathan Sherrill of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Council Bluffs, Iowa. Upon retirement from the 41-year teaching position in Imperial, I became the organist and Director of Music for St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Council Bluffs. During those 10 years, St. Paul's has developed the parish-based "St. Paul's Music Conservatory," with more than 125 studio students taught by 12 teachers. As the organ instructor, I teach 18 organ students weekly, some of whom are members of AGO, successfully earning guild certification through their organ lessons at St. Paul's Music Conservatory.

My personal hobbies include collecting original paintings by significant Nebraska and/or Mid-western artists, gardening, and driving my Corvette convertible.

As an organist, I have traveled and presented organ recitals and Bach-related workshops in Russia, the Republic of Slovakia and the Czech Republic. I always had the good fortune of knowledgeable translators. These trips were organized by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod when I was still in Imperial.

Organ recitals include one at the Tchaikovski Conservatory of Music in Moscow, and conservatories in three major cities in Russia.

JEFF HOFFMAN MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Jeff Hoffman is a native of West Point, Nebraska, where he served as organist at Grace Lutheran and St. Paul Lutheran churches. He attended Midland Lutheran College in Fremont, Nebraska and served First Baptist Church as organist. He continued his education at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln studying organ performance and has since served as Director of Music at Salem Lutheran Church and on the staff of First Lutheran Church, both in Fremont, directing the Handbell Choir and contemporary worship ensembles, and as an accompanist for the Fremont Public Schools. Mr. Hoffman also served as Director of Music at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Fremont, the Archdiocese of Omaha as an organist at St. Cecilia Cathedral and Accompanist and Administrator for the Archdiocesan Children's Choir. He served as Executive Director for John C. Fremont Days for ten years and is currently Organist and Choir Master at St. Barnabas Church in Omaha, Nebraska.

Mr. Hoffman has served in leadership positions on the board of directors of the Omaha Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, Friends of Keene Memorial Library, Fremont Area Art Association Board, John C. Fremont Days, The Jefferson House Advisory Board, and was active in the Fremont Area Chamber of Commerce as a member of the Membership and Professional Development Councils and founder and co-chair of their Youth Leadership Academy.

Mr. Hoffman currently serves on the Parish Council of St. Cecilia Cathedral, Omaha, NE, as Secretary and Program Chair for Cathedral Arts Project, and as Member at Large on the Omaha Chapter of the American Guild of Organists Executive Board.

LAURA RAU MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Laura Rau is the Director of Sacred Music for Christ the King Catholic Church in Omaha. In this role, she helps children, youth, and adult volunteers reach their highest potential in music making so that the wider parish community may be formed by excellence in sacred music. She plans music for all worship services, directs rehearsals and music theory lessons for children and adults in the

parish choirs, prepares high school cantors to lead congregational singing, and accompanies Masses for the parish and school.

She previously held positions at St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church (Leawood, KS), St. Lawrence Catholic Campus Center (Lawrence, KS), and Basilica of the Sacred Heart (Notre Dame, IN).

She studied at Wichita State University (Bachelor of Music), University of Notre Dame (Master of Sacred Music), and the University of Kansas (Doctor of Musical Arts).

CLAUDETTE SCHIRATI, RSM MEMBER AT LARGE

Claudette Schiratti, RSM, AAGO, has recently moved back to her hometown of Omaha after spending 38 years in the Kansas City area. As an educator she has taught in high school and at the College of St. Mary in Omaha and served as music director in parishes in Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. As a performer Claudette has performed as an organist, pianist, member of a piano trio, member of NewEar Contemporary Music Ensemble and free-lance musician. After retiring as Director of Music for the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph in 2010 Claudette has continued to be a freelance musician, teacher of organ students, and has subbed in churches of various denominations as well as having directed music in a synagogue. As an active member of the Kansas City Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, she served as dean, Bachathon chair, secretary, youth chair and the KCAGO Board. Ecumenical and interfaith activities are of interest to her as well as fine arts pursuits and collaborations. She enjoyed volunteering for 9 years at the new Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts in KC. Claudette is a Sister of Mercy of the Institute of the Americas. The Mercy community advocates for critical concerns of immigration, nonviolence, racism, women, and the environment. Claudette holds a Master of Music Degree in Sacred Music with concentration in Organ from Kansas University, a Masters in Piano Performance Degree from Catholic University of America and has achieved the AAGO (Associate Certification of the American Guild of Organists.)