

THE COUPLER

The Dean's Message



Our Thursday Rehearsal

I began preparing about two weeks ago by clearing out the choir folders and distributing three pieces that I knew the choir would easily feel comfortable with, even if only half of our group arrived. Since I would have only a pitch pipe, the pieces needed to be sung a cappella. I chose Alice Parker's "Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal," the setting of the Preces and Responses that we most recently had sung by Philip Radcliffe, and Robert Hugh's "How Can I Keep from Singing" -- just for the sheer pleasure and defiance of singing the words in these crazy days.

I have to admit that my expectations were moderately low, given that we had not sung together in person for such a long time, that we would be wearing masks and singing outside where the sound would disperse and the noise from neighboring fraternities would filter through, and that I did not know how many singers to expect. I also deeply questioned how satisfying it would be compared to our joy of singing together seven months ago. But it was time to begin again, though in a limited fashion.

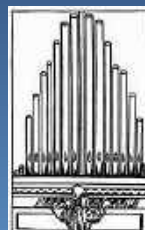
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Chapter members will play music suited to the Halloween season for the online Pipes Spooktacular on Oct. 30.

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Covid-19 or not, the organ music must go on! Area musicians are planning virtual events, as well as some live ones with special precautions.

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The DC, Potomac and Northern Virginia chapters installed officers in a joint Zoom presentation.

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The Aeolian-Skinner organ at Washington Hebrew Congregation is noteworthy because its tonal design by G. Donald Harrison has never been altered.

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Mark Your Calendar!
Tri-Chapter Pipes Spectacular
Online Sunday, Oct. 25
See Page 2

DC AGO CHAPTER EVENTS

Online Pipes Spectacular 2020

Sunday, Oct. 25, 5 pm

Washington National Cathedral

Thomas M. Sheehan organ

Archbishop's Fanfare - Francis Jackson

Praeludium in G major - Nicolaus Bruhns

The Trees Unfold - Judith Weir

Trio Sonata - Hugo Distler

"O God of Love" from *The Ghosts of Versailles* - John Corigliano,
arr. Richard Wayne Dirksen

Sonata eroica - Joseph Jongen

This is a tri-chapter event hosted by the Northern Virginia chapter. Watch your email for a link in where to watch the program. Or check our website, dcago.org.



Online Pipes Spooktacular

Join chapter members online on Friday, Oct. 30 at 7:30 pm for a program of delightful and frightful music to celebrate Halloween.

Watch live or later on the chapter's Facebook page,

www.facebook.com/washingtondcago/videos. You do not have to be a Facebook member to access the program.

Musicians will include Eileen Guenther, Rob Church, Sondra Proctor and Carol Feather Martin.

Host is chapter membership liaison Jeff Kempskie.

AGO Membership Assistance Program

Throughout the week of OrganFest 2020 in July the national Guild shared a Donate button, providing everyone with the opportunity to contribute to a fund that would help membership renewals for members who had experienced job loss due to COVID-19. If you know of a member who has lost income due to the effects of the pandemic and cannot afford to renew his or her membership, please send their information to elizabeth.george@agohq.org.

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THE COUPLER

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published by the District
of Columbia Chapter,
American Guild of
Organists

Pat Henry,
Editor

To contact the DC AGO
or for newsletter
submissions:
dcagochapter@gmail.com

Community Events

Saturday, Oct. 3, 3-4:30 pm: Fulbright Scholar and DC chapter member Joy-Leilani Garbutt presents a digital video program on the music of Jeanne Demessieux and *les compositrices françaises* on the Miller-Scott Organ of the Saint Thomas Church 5th Avenue, New York City. The program, a culmination of her research in France, includes rediscovered French organ music composed by Jeanne Demessieux, Elsa Barraine and Nadia Boulanger, as well as the world premiere of the Sonate pour Orgue by Marie-Véra Maixandau. Purchase tickets [here](#).

Sunday, Oct. 4, 5 pm: Concert organist Mark Laubach will play an online recital at St. Luke Lutheran Church in Silver Spring featuring works by Liszt, Sweelinck, Bach, Reger, Franck, Barber and Vierne. Watch via this [link](#).

Sunday, Oct. 11, 4 pm: Adam Scott Graham (First Presbyterian Church, Arlington, Va.) plays a livestream recital at the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in America in NE DC. Go to myfranciscan.org to view.

Friday, Oct. 16, 7:30 pm: Live organ recital with Jay Parrotta playing at St. Ann Catholic Church, 4001 Yuma St., Washington. Watch at stanndc.org/music or facebook.com/stanndc.

Sunday, Oct. 18, 5:30 pm: The Creation Story as told by the "King of Instruments" featuring music director Heather Adelsberger at the three-manual pipe organ at Grace Episcopal Church in Silver Spring, Md. Young readers from Grace's Sunday School program narrate the Genesis story as the organ's varied sound palette depicts the unfolding of God's creation. The program will be offered on the church's [Facebook page](#) as part of the 2020-21 Music of Grace Concert Series.

Sunday, Nov. 8, 4 pm: Samantha Scheff (St. John's, Lafayette Square) plays a livestream recital at the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in America Log onto myfranciscan.org to view.

Members are encouraged to submit recitals and concerts to dcagochapter@gmail.com for public listing on the DC AGO website as well as in the newsletter.

Music at Midday

Fridays, 12:15-1 pm at National City Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 5 Thomas Circle, NW
Concerts are offered live and also broadcast on the NCCC [YouTube channel](#). Free admission.

Oct. 2: Baltimore organist **Theodore S. Davis** will perform works of two 20th century composers – Florence Price (African American) and Henri Mulet (French).

Oct. 9: The organ duo of **Tyler Canonico** and **Jordan Markham** (Harrisburg, Pa.) will perform a program of music to delight you, including works of Joel Raney, Felix Mendelssohn, Charles Callahan and Robin Dinda.

Oct. 16: Chicago pianist **Mark Valenti** will perform a transcription of J. S. Bach's Organ Prelude in G minor along with piano music by Samuel Barber and Claude Debussy.

Oct. 23: Organist **Russell Weismann** (Washington, DC) will present a program of organ music by Arthur Foote, César Franck, J. S. Bach and Franz Schmidt.

Oct. 30: Organist **David Brock** (Zephyr Springs, Nev.) returns to his native Washington to perform works of César Franck and Dietrich Buxtehude.

DEAN'S MESSAGE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

A few days before that first rehearsal, I sent an email to the group establishing some guidelines: We would sing masked, for no more than an hour, out-of-doors in the church courtyard. The singers should bring a reading light and be prepared for cooler weather in the evening. In the event of rain, the rehearsal would be cancelled. I tried to observe the most recent guidance from the [American Choral Director's Association](http://www.acda.org) (www.acda.org) and the [National Association of Teachers of Singing](http://www.nats.org) (www.nats.org).

I began setting up about an hour before our rehearsal began. In the church courtyard, I set up chairs 12 feet apart and had music stands available for those who wanted them. When I was in the building, even just walking through, I wore my mask to limit the aerosol that I might leave lingering in the air. Additionally, in the courtyard, I wore my mask for the 20 minutes or so before anyone was scheduled to arrive.

As the singers began arriving it was clear they were very happy to see each other in person, yet mixed with the anticipation was a mild, nervous excitement tinged with fear. Then, as we began warming up, I realized it was very difficult for me to read them – it was hard to hear the nuances of sound and respond with my conducting and coaching. Even so, I knew that we needed to begin slowly and take our time. We did some basic warm-ups; sang through some simple hymns in unison, canon and harmony; and listened intently to hear one another as best we could.

I believe most volunteer singers are laid back enough to appreciate these experiences, though under normal circumstances we would regard such a rehearsal as unsatisfying if not a waste of time. But we sang together, and it was enjoyable and satisfying. Near the end of the hour, in the evening darkness, with our battery-operated lights, it was reminiscent of summer campfire singing – singing for the joy and pleasure of it. Granted, it was not to our usual standards, but for this first rehearsal together it was exactly what we needed.

For our next rehearsal, I've added some other elements: I've encouraged those singers who wish to remain farther away from other people to come and sing at the edge of our gathering, or to be inside the church nave by an open window to listen and sing along (only one person each rehearsal). I am encouraging our singers to purchase a "Singer's Mask" from www.broadwayreliefproject.com and will be able to offer one to those who cannot afford to purchase one. And I will set up a Zoom gathering during the rehearsal for those who wish to join us from home.

At the end of the evening, our singers once again prayed the phrases "O Lord, open thou our lips," "And our mouth shall shew forth thy praise!" and we were on the path to rebuilding. Yet in our efforts to return to normal (*which will never be the same "normal" as before*), we must make room for those who have been deeply impacted by this pandemic and also allow for those who are not yet comfortable with singing together in person. We should follow our pastoral instincts to bring all our singers along, working to maintain personal connections in the group while creating opportunities for music-making.

If you have a recent rehearsal or musical experience that you would like to share with your colleagues, please let us hear about it. Send it along in an email, either written, by video or by voice recording to dcagochapter@gmail.com and we'll share your stories.

Wishing you health and peace,
David Houston

Let me tell you...

One benefit of AGO membership that we are missing in the time of Covid-19 is in-person fellowship. Chapter get-togethers provide the chance to swap stories about the quirks of our sometimes lonely jobs — and we do have some stories!

We'd like to share some of your tales in upcoming newsletters.

Let's start with this question: **What's the funniest thing that happened to you when you were playing the organ?**



Keep your answers concise. There's no need to name names (except your own).

Email them to me at pathenry33@gmail.com. Include a photo if you'd like.

I will offer one to start:

Years ago I was the organist at a Methodist church in Houston.

One day, when I climbed to the loft to practice, I was astounded to find a certain cardboard funeral home fan on the bench. Such fans were common in the South — they were mounted on wooden handles and featured advertising on the back. But this one had been autographed "To my friend Pat. Love, Jesus."

That threw me for a while, until I remembered that our organ technician had visited earlier in the week.

Of course, I kept the fan.

--Pat Henry, Coupler editor

Competition postponed

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has forced postponement of the National Competition in Service Playing, sponsored by the DC Chapter of the AGO, Schoenstein and Co. Organ Builders, and St. Paul's K Street.

The competition — originally planned for January — is now scheduled June 10-12, 2021.

The submission deadline for the preliminary round is April 15, 2021. Candidates will be notified of their qualification by May 1, 2021.

For details on the competition, go to the chapter website, dcago.org, and click on Calendar.

Membership directory

Several members have asked us to compile a directory with contact information for others in our chapter.

If you would like to be included, please send the following to dcagochapter@gmail.com: your name, job position, email address (or postal mail address) and phone number.

The deadline is Oct. 31. The information will be shared electronically in November. Please indicate if you would like a paper copy.

Don't delay — do it today!

Tri-Chapter installation

The DC, Northern Virginia and Potomac AGO chapters installed officers Sept. 14 via Zoom. Region Three Councillor Wayne Wold officiated.

The board will serve until May 2021. Members are David Houston, dean (pictured on Page 1); Rob Church, treasurer; Jeff Kempskie, membership liaison; Tom Cowan, secretary; and Pat Henry, Coupler editor and website administrator.

The installation featured pieces played by organists from each of the three chapters. From the DC chapter, Samantha Scheff played [Prelude on Nettleton](#) by Gerre Hancock on the organ at St. John's Church, Lafayette Square.



ROB CHURCH



JEFF KEMPSKIE



TOM COWAN



PAT HENRY



Aeolian-Skinner Organ Co., Opus 1285

3939 Macomb St. NW

Washington, DC 20016

By Robert Church, CAGO

Treasurer of the DC AGO Chapter

The Washington Hebrew Congregation was originally formed in 1852. Construction on the current building began 100 years later when President Truman laid the cornerstone. The building was completed in 1955 and dedicated by President Eisenhower. The congregation's current organ, a large three-manual Aeolian-Skinner instrument of 69 ranks, was installed when the building was completed.

This instrument was one of the last organs completed by G. Donald Harrison (1889-1956) and it is especially important today because its tonal palette has never been altered. Unfortunately, most of Harrison's musical masterpieces have been altered, modified and even ruined over the decades since his death. Aeolian-Skinner organs built under Harrison's tonal direction are considered the company's finest instruments and the pinnacle of the American Classic organ design.

The American Classic design evolved from the Symphonic-style instruments that were popular in the early 20th century. (The Casavant instrument discussed in last month's article was a Symphonic-style organ.) The American Classic organ design preserved some of the Symphonic organ's features, like orchestral reeds, bold string stops and colorful flutes, along with multiple divisions under expression. On the other hand, the American Classic design also sought a return to earlier organ tonal design, with clear diapason choruses, mutations and brilliant mixtures.

While the Symphonic organ was good at orchestral transcriptions, its heavy tone and lack of brilliance was not well suited to other musical styles. For example, the delicate inner voices of a baroque fugue would be lost in the lush tone of the Symphonic instrument, and the American Classic design sought to remedy that shortcoming. By blending the best of American Symphonic organs, French Romantic organs and even some baroque stops, Harrison sought to create a versatile instrument that would be able to play music of all styles.

The Aeolian-Skinner organ at Washington Hebrew Congregation is installed in the ceiling above the choir loft at the front of the Kauffman Sanctuary. The local firm Lewis & Hitchcock was subcontracted by Aeolian-Skinner to install the pipes, windchests and other associated equipment into the chambers, which are about 25 feet above the sanctuary floor. Due to the extreme height and narrow openings in the ceiling, a professional rigging company was also employed to get all those heavy pipes and windchests into the chambers.

By the early 1990s the organ was beginning to show its age and the Di Gennaro-Hart Organ Company was contracted to undertake a renovation. The 20-month project was completed in 1993. It involved re-leathering, rewiring and other mechanical repairs. Peterson electronic controls were installed along with a complete rewiring of the console, relocation of the blower and new wind lines. No stops were altered or revoiced during this renovation, leaving the tone of the instrument unchanged. Di Gennaro-Hart was selected for the project due to the firm's recent work on other Aeolian-Skinner instruments at National Presbyterian Church, Westmoreland Congregational, and Bethlehem Chapel at Washington National Cathedral.

Today the organ remains in perfect working order and is used for weekly services in Kauffman Sanctuary at the temple. Unfortunately, the organ is not frequently used for recitals and is regularly heard

only by members of the Washington Hebrew congregation, leading many of us in the DC Chapter to overlook this wonderful instrument.



The Skinner console (left) remains in its original, somewhat bare-bones form, but with modern Peterson controls.

In a storage closet at the rear of the choir loft, a long, narrow ladder takes us up into the chambers, which are immaculately maintained.



The Great division is in the center of the chamber with dual Pittman chests on the right and left sides below. Note the tall, narrow pipes on the far right of the right photo below. This is the 8' Holzflöte in the original specification but styled as "Gemshorn" on the console drawknob.



The Great's offset pipes include the 180-degree mitered 16' Violone.



This is the Great's Trompette en Chamade, which is actually mounted vertically--but don't worry, it's still voiced to speak above the full organ.



Below on the left is the view across the vast ceiling structure with the large swell box in the background. To the left is the Pedal's 16' Bourdon unit and to the right we see the lower 8' pipes of the Pedal Octave. 25' feet or so below the structural beams lies the sanctuary floor. The picture on the right is taken from inside the swell box. The mitered 16' Gedeckt pipes lie just below the ceiling. In the front-center of the image we see the Vox Humana and the mixtures on an elevated chest. The 8' Geigen and the resonators of the 16' Bombarde frame the swell box door opening.



In another view across the vast ceiling structure beams we see the top five pipes of the 32' Bourdon, painted black and stacked horizontally on the ceiling beam. (The remaining lower notes in the 32' octave are resultants.) The swell box is to the right and the 16' portion of the Bourdon stop is to the left on the ceiling beams.



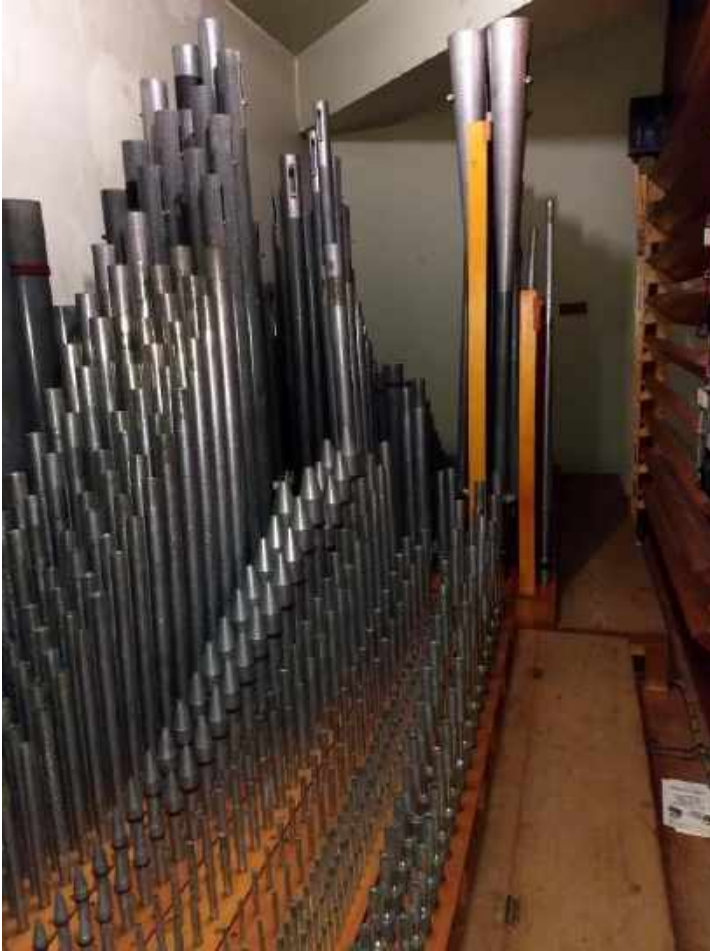
Continuing on with the pedal, the large, open wood 16' Contra-Bass is on the rear wall of the chamber. Check out the builder's handwriting with the stop name, opus number and wind pressure. This is quality workmanship.



The large scale 16' Ophicleide is to the right along the back wall of the chamber.



The choir box (below left) is on the opposite side of the ceiling structure from the swell box. Inside we see dual Pittman chests supporting all the pipework. The chest in the foreground features the very baroque styled 4' Rohr Schalmey, mixture, mutations, Blockflöte and half the 8' stops. The chest in the background houses the 16' English Horn, the 8' Cromorne and the more orchestral sounding stops. The capped pipes along the back wall of the box are the bottom octave of the 16' Sanftbass, which is available only in the pedal. Another beautiful example of the Sanftbass stop is on Skinner's organ at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City.



As we leave our tour of the chamber, one floor below lie the Peterson control boards and immaculate wiring connection boards from the 1992-1993 renovation (above right and bottom left).



And what good would a pipe organ be without wind? Downstairs is the single 10-horsepower three-phase blower that supplies all the air.



Aeolian-Skinner Organ Co., Inc. Opus 1285 1953
3 manuals, 51 stops, 69 ranks

GREAT ORGAN

16'	Violone	61
8'	Principal	61
8'	Holzflöte	61
8'	Bourdon	61
4'	Gross Octave	61
4'	Flute Harmonique	61
2 2/3'	Twelfth	61
2'	Fifteenth	61
IV-VI	Fourniture	282
III-V	Cymbel	203
8'	Trompette en Chamade	61
4'	Clairon en Chamade	12
CHOIR ORGAN		
8'	Concert Flute	68
8'	Cor de Nuit	68
8'	Viola Pomposa	68
8'	Viola Celeste	68
8'	Unda Maris II	124
4'	Montre	68
4'	Koppelflöte	68
2 2/3'	Nazard	61
2'	Blockflöte	61
1 3/5'	Tierce	61
1'	Sifflöte	61
III	Zimbel	183
16'	English Horn	68
8'	Cromorne	68
4'	Rohr Schalmey	68
	Tremulant	
8'	Trompette en Chamade	GT
4'	Clairon en Chamade	GT

SWELL ORGAN

16'	Rohrgedeckt	68
8'	Geigenprinzipal	68
8'	Rohrflöte	68
8'	Viole de Gambe	68
8'	Viole Celeste	68
8'	Flauto Dolce	68
8'	Flute Celeste (TC)	56
4'	Prestant	68
4'	Waldflöte	68
2'	Octavin	61
IV	Plein Jeu	244
III	Scharf	183
16'	Bombarde	68
8'	Trompette	68
8'	Hautbois	68
8'	Vox Humana	68
4'	Clairon	68
	Tremulant	
PEDAL ORGAN		
32'	Bourdon	5
16'	Contre Basse	32
16'	Bourdon	32
16'	Violone	GT
16'	Rohrbass	SW
16'	Sanftbass	12 CH
8'	Octave	32
8'	Pommergedackt	32
8'	Cello	GT
4'	Choralbass	32
4'	Spitzflöte	32
III	Fourniture	96
32'	Contra Bombarde	12 SW
16'	Ophecleide	32
16'	Bombarde	SW
8'	Trompette	12
4'	Clairon	12

Positions available

District of Columbia

Principal Organist, St. Dominic Church, 630 E St SW

Organist will serve as primary accompanist/instrumentalist for three designated weekend liturgies as well as other Holy Day, Feast Day and special event liturgies. Call or text J.C. Cantrell at 703-346-9969 for details. Include a résumé and two professional references/contacts with the initial contact message.

Catholic music director, Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling Chapel at 310 Angell St. SW

Contract position requiring minimum of one year of experience as music director in a parish environment. More information available [here](#).

Salesperson, R.A. Daffer Church Organs

Seeking a full-time salesperson for the DC-Northern Virginia market. Call on churches and synagogues, work with church committees, design organ installations, and follow up after sales. \$35,292-\$66,000 per year. Flexible schedule; health insurance. Apply at www.indeed.com.

Maryland

Full-time director of liturgy and music, St. Jane Frances de Chantal Catholic Church, 9701 Old Georgetown Road, Bethesda.

Duties include directing and accompanying the Parish Choir; directing the handbell ensemble; and supervising the assisting organist, contemporary choir director and five staff singers. Required: master's degree in music or equivalent education or experience, three to five years in a parish setting, experience in building a children's choir. Send letter of interest and resume to parish.office@stjanedechantal.org.

Organist, First Church of Christ Scientist, 7901 Connecticut Ave., Chevy Chase.

Organist will provide music for Sunday/Thanksgiving morning and Wednesday evening services. \$205 for Sundays/Thanksgiving and \$140 for Wednesdays, with 3 Sundays and 3 Wednesdays of paid leave. Position could be shared. No choir but a vocal solo every Sunday/Thanksgiving. Submit a resume, references, and three recent recordings to Joan Beecham at jmckenzieb@hotmail.com or call 301- 929-8624.

Part- or full-time director of parish music, Ascension Lutheran Church, 7415 Buchanan St., Landover Hills

Familiarity with Lutheran liturgy and experience with choirs desired. Salary negotiable depending on experience and skill set. Contact the Rev. Richard Cox at pastor.richardcox3@gmail.com or 240-440-9960.

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Maryland

Director of Music (organist/pianist/director of church choirs), Oxon Hill United Methodist Church, 6400 Livingston Road, Oxon Hill.

Director will oversee the music program of the choirs and congregation. A minimum of bachelor's degree in music or related training is preferred. Salary \$382 per week. Email cover letter and resume to oxonhillumcmd@gmail.com.

Virginia

Full-time music director, St. Mary of Sorrows Catholic Church, 5222 Sideburn Rd., Fairfax. \$31,000 - \$61,000 a year.

Director will oversee music for all six weekend Masses and important feast days; direct and accompany a four-part volunteer choir; and organize, direct, and accompany music for all funerals. Health benefits are offered. During COVID-19, director may work from home, except for weekend Masses, funerals, and major feast days. Apply [here](#).

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Catholic director of music and liturgy, Fort Myer, Arlington, Va.

Requires experience as a music director and/or liturgist in previous parishes, with extensive (5+ years) experience on organ and piano, working with and directing small musical ensembles and choirs. Master's degree in sacred music and/or organ required. This is a part-time position as a 1099 director with Music Ministry International. Compensation based on experience and qualifications. Apply [here](#).

Organist/choir director, Church of the Covenant, 2666 Military Rd., Arlington. Position estimated at 10 hours per week, \$30 per hour with time and a half for weddings and funerals. Applications and enquiries should be sent to resumecovenant@gmail.com.

Minister of Music, St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church, 4801 Ravensworth Road, Annandale. Contact Stephen Ackert at stephen@rkac.com for more information.

NEW MEMBER

We welcome Kenneth Kepler. Glad to have you join us!

LIFE MEMBERS

Blanche Curfman

Nancy Dodge

Robert Grogan

Eileen Guenther

Irv Lawless

Kenneth Lowenberg

Albert Russell

Donald Sutherland

David Hearne (deceased)

Rest in Peace

David Judge Wilson (1935-2020)

At deadline, the Coupler learned that David Judge Wilson, a longtime chapter member, died peacefully at home in Rockville Sept. 29 after a period of declining health. He was 85.

In years past, David was organist and choirmaster at Grace Episcopal Church in Silver Spring, where he oversaw a comprehensive music program for 30 years.

Plans for a service are temporarily on hold during the pandemic.

THE COUPLER

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Patrick J. Summers, M.S.

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