

Stop & Reed

February 2021
San Joaquin Valley Chapter American Guild of Organists

Dean's Message

Happy New Year everyone! Like most, I'm sure glad that 2020 is behind us and we can look to a brighter future. Kicking off the New Year with our annual 12th Night party was definitely missed, and alas we will be missing the annual Hymn-Sing that typically comes at the end of February. In the meantime, the SJVAGO board is working to provide some more virtual recital opportunities, and the chance for some online socials. Next month, we will also be releasing a special edition of the Stop and Reed Newsletter, celebrating the chapter's 75th anniversary. What a milestone! If you have a story you would like to share about our chapter in that newsletter, please do so! You can reach out to Mike Varlas or myself.

The AGO headquarters has also been doing a wonderful job of providing educational resources and webinars on a variety of interesting topics for all of us members. I invite you to take a look at the hard work they have put into these on their website, www.agohq.org, then click Education > Webinars on the main menu. There is lots of great information for all organists!

Best
Dean Cactus Harris
(805) 591-9680
cactus@upcfresno.org

Organist Wanted

Easton Presbyterian Church is looking for an organist/accompanist. Duties include a Wednesday evening choir rehearsal and one Sunday morning service. Contact Mark Lanford at marknjolanford@gmail.com for more information.

Executive Board 2020-2021

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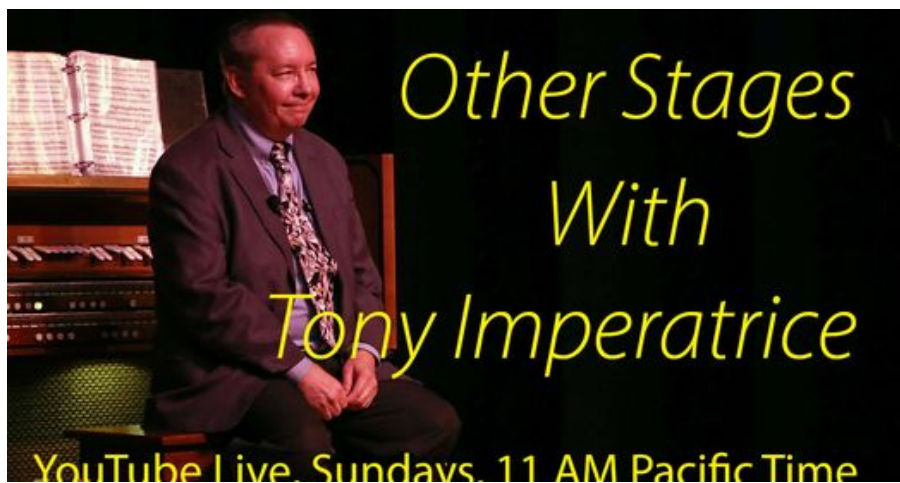
Drew Maddox

Chapter News

March Virtual Recital: Hymn Tunes and their Histories

You are invited to take part in our next virtual member recital! For this program, we are asking members to play a favorite hymn tune arrangement they may have, and share a bit of the history of it. Ever wonder what all of those Welsh tune names mean? Or where they come from? Take the opportunity to dive in and add some context to those melodies. Here's how to be a part of the fun:

- Email cactus@upcfresno.org with your selection (that way we won't get duplicates!)
- In your video recording, please start by introducing yourself, title/composer of the hymn tune arrangement you will be playing, and a brief history of the tune.
- If you are unable to record yourself, Cactus is here to help! Please reach out and he is happy to come record you. Upload your recordings to the following Google Drive link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1X3u_yStSnaT6iKTkuoA1MvqFk9CWtljg?usp=sharing
- Recordings are due by Monday, March 8th.
- The recital will premiere at 3pm on Sunday, March 14th.



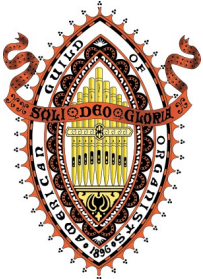
NEXT SJVAGO BOARD

MEETING:

Tuesday, February 23rd at
10:30 AM

Virtual meeting on Zoom. An
invitation will be emailed on

February 22nd with
instructions for joining the
meeting.



Substitute Organist

Jean Hays is available to substitute as organist
or accompanist for any group.

Phone 559.439.0280 or 559.313.7674

Email skyhorse35932@sbcglobal.net

Music during COVID-19

Lutheran Worship during Covid-19

Rather than focusing on the things we have had to give up in the last year, I am doing my best to concentrate on the things for which I am grateful:

- I am grateful that our church has continued to worship whether indoors, outdoors in the patio or online.
- I am grateful for my instruments: organ, piano and keyboard which enabled worship in all the different venues.
- I am grateful for my handbell ringers and other instrumentalists who practiced, recorded and performed with masks and “social distance.”
- I am grateful for the new music that has been generated for as few as 4 handbell ringers and piano.
- I am grateful for the technology that has allowed us to record and broadcast our worship services like never before and also Zoom our meetings!
- I am grateful to the AGO for the convention last summer as well as all the support provided by performances and webinars online.
- I am grateful for the mutual encouragement from colleagues in our profession of all denominations.
- I am grateful and hopeful that as we move forward into whatever the “new normal” is, we will keep the best of what we have learned and incorporate it into our worship.

Soli Deo Gloria,
MICHAL HEMBD
Redeemer Lutheran Church
Fresno, California



First Armenian Presbyterian Church of Fresno

March 8, 2020 was the last Sunday that I played for the Sunday service at FAPC. Shortly after in-person services were suspended and the church went to an online format. The first attempts were done on Zoom, and the results showed that although this is a great online meeting format it is not the best one for worship services. Facebook seems to be the “go-to” format for live online worship services, with Youtube as a way for those who do not have Facebook to view the service after it is posted.

For the several weeks that the service was exclusively online, the sanctuary resembled a video production studio rather than a church! There were multiple cameras, microphones, lights, computer monitors and soundboards scattered throughout the room. The whole order of service was listed on Planning Center, a computer scheduling program, which everyone had on their iPad.

As far as being an organist, about the only change for me was that I no longer needed to wear a tie.

Before Christmas the church made the decision to resume in-person services. I procured several N95 face masks for my use. In reality, my life as organist has been minimally impacted by COVID-19. I pray that we all stay safe though.

Michael Varlas, Organist FAPC

Music during COVID-19

Worship at University Presbyterian Church

My role has shifted dramatically from choir director/organist, to organist, audio engineer, cameraman, lighting, sound, editing.... and anything else you can think of in the move business! Since mid-March, University Presbyterian Church has been completely online with no in-person gatherings. We pre-record all of the services, and I edit them together. While there was a huge learning curve, I have gotten the hang of it and am enjoying the new skills. While it is not as fulfilling as making music with other people, or worshipping in person, I am thankful to have a job and provide this alternative service for our community. The congregation has really done well to adapt to all of the changes, and many of our shut-ins have been able to join Bible studies and activities from their home, when they couldn't do that pre-Covid. As organist, I celebrated my 10th year serving at UPC. This is not what I would have thought the 10th year was going to look like!

Cactus Harris
Director of Music and Arts

Worship in different churches

I retired from being a church musician after 54 years before COVID hit. I was actually looking forward to being free on Sunday, visiting family members for more extended periods of time, and maybe even visiting other churches. I had that freedom for 9 months, then everything changed! Since I didn't have a church and didn't have to learn new tech skills, I had an easier time of it than my fellow musicians. But my previous church, Sierra Vista Presbyterian, Oakhurst, has done a great job of making it possible for worshippers to gather at a distance. Their outdoor amphitheater seats 150, so about 40 people could attend in person, depending on the weather! They followed all the rules and only had one unrelated COVID case. In addition, they did a recorded service for those who preferred to stay safe in their home. During the last year I have substituted at the organ for three different churches, so I have observed a variety of efforts to make worship meaningful. Most churches I have watched online have a single soloist for the hymns, but lately I have seen as many as a quartet to add to the music.

Catherine Walker
January, 2021

Member Recital

YOU ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN
THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY AGO'S

Hymn Tunes & Their Histories Virtual Recital

PLAY A FAVORITE HYMN TUNE ARRANGEMENT AND SHARE
A BIT OF ITS HISTORY.

CONTACT DEAN CACTUS HARRIS TO PARTICIPATE
CACTUS@UPCFRESNO.ORG

RECORDINGS DUE BY MONDAY, MARCH 8TH
RECITAL PREMIERE ONLINE AT 3PM, SUN. MARCH 14TH.