



American Guild of
ORGANISTS
Dayton Chapter

May 2026

TRUMPETINGS **Newsletter**

Dean's Note: Think Like a Monk!

By Karen Bocko, Dean

Dayton AGO wrapped up the 2025-2026 program year with a magnificent student recital featuring six current and one previous students of four of our skilled teachers. A detailed article can be found later in this newsletter. But the skillful and passionate playing that filled the Christ Church UMC sanctuary not only brought joy to the soul but also a ray of hope for our future!

It was certainly a welcomed relief from an article in "The American Organist" I had just read on Saturday. In the June 2026 edition, the National AGO Executive Director provided some startling statistics of what we all know is happening in the organist world. But to see it in black and white was a rude awakening. Comparing numbers from 1998 to 2026:

	1998	2026
Regular Members	13,370	4,036
Special Members (65+)	4,223	5,612
Student Members	1,110	926
Active Chapters	349	247

It is very telling that the increase in 65+ members has increased by 1,389 and student membership declined by 184! We are quickly reaching our expiration date (although those of us in this category remain as active as possible!). If well-planned actions aren't taken – and taken soon – the organization will die on the vine. It is time to develop some ideas outside the box!

Yet credit must be given to Dayton AGO and those dedicated members who have invested decades of time and effort into Pedals, Pipes and Pizza. Individuals including Priscilla and Dan Acuff, Yun Kim, Ellen Bagley, have organized an event that has produced several extremely talented organists from this area. And 2027 will bring the next Pedals Pipes and Pizza. But we must do more!

Current technology provides some assistance with reaching a wide audience, But, in my opinion, creativity, determination, perseverance and faith will provide lasting solutions. We need to follow the example of the monks in Christ in the Desert monastery. The following article is proof that with faith and action, even the most unlikely goals can be reached. I was blessed to have visited the monastery in 2000 and 2001. It's in a desert in the Santa Fe national forest in New Mexico. And it is only reached by traveling 15 miles of dirt road off US Highway 84. It is a sizeable understatement to say that traveling those rough 15 miles was well worth it! The serenity, the natural beauty and guesthouse hospitality were indescribable. And the monk's chanting during any of nine services offered from 4:00am to 7:30pm provided an incomparable combination of tranquility and peace. If anyone would have mentioned the addition of a pipe organ into that perfect environment, I would have written it off as them smoking some potent desert weed on a hiking excursion! The thought was almost laughable at the time. Yet, now more than two decades later, a pipe organ sits in their lovely sanctuary as a result of faith, planning and action. (As a side note: I highly recommend at least one visit to Christ in the Desert in your lifetime.)

To any and all reading this article, I extend the challenge to THINK LIKE A MONK! Keep the word "impossible" out of your thoughts. Be attentive to all you experience in the summer months such as the use of technology, creative marketing, successful youth events. Send a quick email with subject "MONK: to dean@daytonago.org with your thoughts and ideas. All info will be gathered and provided for problem-solving brainstorming. Together, we will give it our best shot to reverse the statistics and ensure that future generations get to experience the same jubilation we enjoyed at our recent student recital!

AN ORGAN FOR OUR CHURCH

BY BARBARA GOLDER, MD, JD



What inspires a monk to build an organ from scratch - especially a very unconventional one?

Perhaps like most other things in the monastery, it was the needs of communal life. Brother David Bryant puts it this way: "For many years the only instrument in our church was a Yamaha ELB-02. After I became choir-master, it began to feel like the right time to move toward something more fitting for our community."

Pipe organs are indeed prodigious instruments, requiring so much space that often, churches are designed around them. Although the console isn't terribly large, the ranks of pipes take up an enormous amount of space and must be placed and voiced properly for the instrument to sound as it should. The church at the Monastery of Christ in the Desert is a small, minimalist space with little room to accommodate the traditional form of pipe organ. With prices of even used instruments often exceeding \$50,000 to upwards of \$100,000, stewardship of money as well as space demanded a different solution.

Organs are important to Catholic, monastic, worship. "Sacrosanctum Concilium" teaches that organ music has pride of place in worship in part because, unlike the piano, which is a percussive instrument, the organ gets its unique tone and tenor from the passage of air, which allows a more sustained sound that blends easily and well with the human voice, given that it too comes from modulation of air. Add to that the symbolism of breath and air in Catholic thought and piety (after all, man received life from the breath of God) and it's understandable why procuring an organ suitable for praying seven

times a day in the monastery church became a priority.

The hybrid organ Brother David created combines the traditional wind-blown organ pipe with digital sampling technology. Some of the sounds come from the pipes; others are from exceptionally high-quality digital recordings played through speakers placed to optimize the blending of sounds and to provide an experience very much like a traditional pipe organ.

One of the greater challenges in creating the organ was a lack of precedents. Most people build either electronic or traditional organs. Much of the technology and the technique involved in building this organ was acquired by trial and error, a process Brother David describes as "quietly joyful." The digital side of the organ was the simpler part to bring to life. The console, manuals and wooden parts took more time and exacting work to very tight specifications. Along with those came a variety of new skills: 3D graphing, with high precision, computer driven machine tools such as drills, lathes, mills, and routers. Because the monastery is remote and there really is not a "hybrid organ building" community to turn to for help, internet research and trial and error became the order of the day.

In the end, something unique in the world of organs has emerged in the quiet solitude of the monastery. It's not unreasonable to hope that the hard-won knowledge of how to build a hybrid organ, whose sound and voice more closely resemble the traditional pipe organ than does the all-electronic console organ, will permit other congregations, parochial and monastic, to enjoy the beauty of organ music as it was written. Theologians and composers alike understood the intimate beauty of a choir singing with an organ.

The first day the organ was installed as a work in progress and used in worship, Brother David recounts, "people were looking around, trying to find where the sound was coming from, searching for pipes I had not yet finished setting up (at that time, only the digital portion was working). Then, that first Christmas, when I played the bells from the console, the whole church seemed light with joy." ✠

(For more information on the building of the organ, its updating and for the chance to listen to it, please see the link and QR code attached below.)



<https://thedesertmonkbrdavid.wordpress.com/2026/02/17/organ-build-notes-and-photos/>

May Program

Dayton AGO Organ Academy Student Recital

On Sunday, May 31st, 46 chapter members, friends and families gathered at Christ United Methodist Church in Kettering to celebrate the accomplishments of this year's student at the Dayton Organ Academy Student recital. This annual recital recognizes the academy students' accomplishments and the effort and dedication of both the students and their instructors.

This year seven current Academy Students performed including: Joshua Witte and Nathaneil Witte who studied with Daniel Neal, Evan Jackle who studied Terry Donat, Mia Doyle and Catherine Gulick who studied with Rachel Spry-Lammi and Luke Dexter who studied with Alan Kimbrough. Finally, The recital culminated with Ellie Sauser who was Rachel Lammi's former Academy student and is a current chapter college scholarship recipient with a double major in Music (organ) and biomedical sciences at Andrews University.

Each student demonstrated their hard work by playing some of the literature pieces they had worked on this year as well as a hymn. The hymns all included multiple registrations consistent with the texts and several included descants or significant reharmonizations or variations. The literature pieces played included multiple J.S. Bach preludes and fugues, the Pedal Excitium by C.P.E. Bach and Vierne's Carillon de Westminster.

As chapter Dean, Karen Bocko said, "These students are the future of our chapter"; however, this program also recognizes the Academy teachers. Once a student successfully auditions and is admitted to the academy, the teachers generously volunteer their time and talents providing two years of free lessons to help foster the next generation of organists.

After the recital, the Dayton Chapter installed its 2026 officers and board members recognizing them for their efforts to support the chapter, develop the programs and manage the business of the chapter. A social reception was held immediately after the program allowing the students, the families and the chapter to get to know each other and to personally congratulate the students and teachers.

Some pictures from the program are below.

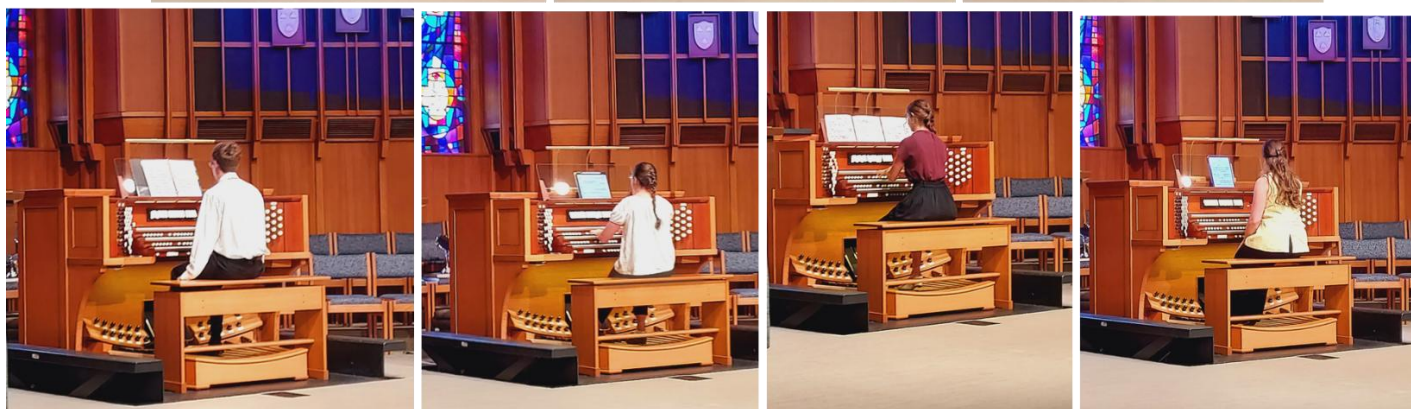
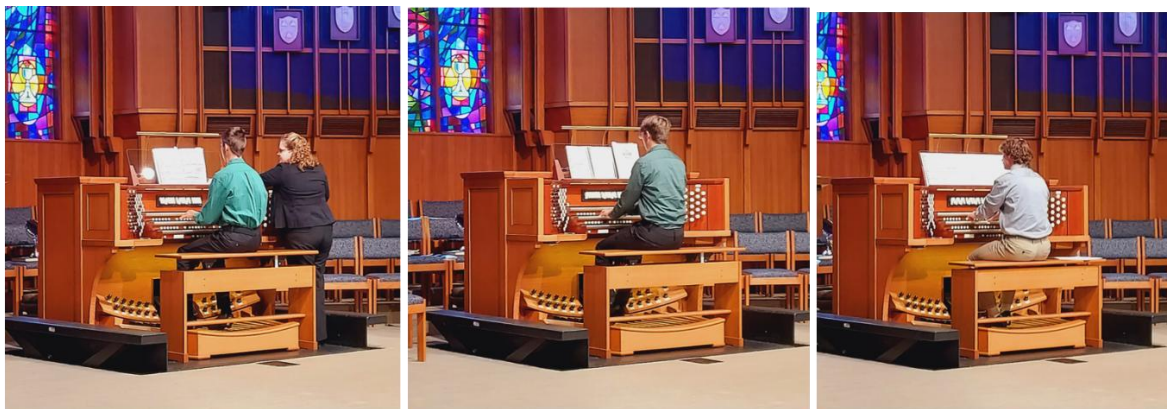
2026 Dayton Organ Academy Students and Teachers from left to right: Evan Jackle, Terry Donat, Ellie Sauser, Mia Doyle, Rachel Lammi, Catherine Gulick, Joshua Witte, Daniel Neal, Nathaneil Witte, Alan Kimbrongh and Luke Dexter.



Dayton Organ Academy Student Recital



Dayton Organ Academy Student Recital



Installation of the Dayton Chapter Officers and New Board members.



Students, teachers, families and chapter members at the Organ Academy Recital Reception.



Adventures through the AGO Music Library

by Madeleine Demetriades

Over the past two years, my parents and I have periodically worked to process, sort and organize the multitude of music donations and other assorted ephemera that have been dropped off at the AGO Music Library which is currently housed at Westminster Presbyterian Church in downtown Dayton. We have laid eyes and hands on absolutely everything, tossing items which were too far gone, condition-wise (missing/torn pages) and making repairs whenever possible (loose pages remedied with packing tape, for example). We have re-organized everything into several different categories, which include:

- "Collections" which have multiple composers inside (i.e. a treasury or anthology). Would be useful for someone seeking a few different options to play for church, recitals, etc.
- "Singles", meaning individual composers & arrangers which are organized alphabetically (i.e. Hal Hopson, L. Vierne, Dale Wood)
- Wedding books
- Funeral books
- Easter & Holy Week-specific books
- Christmas & Advent-specific books
- Teaching/Pedagogical materials (mostly piano-specific). Currently working on alphabetizing by author)

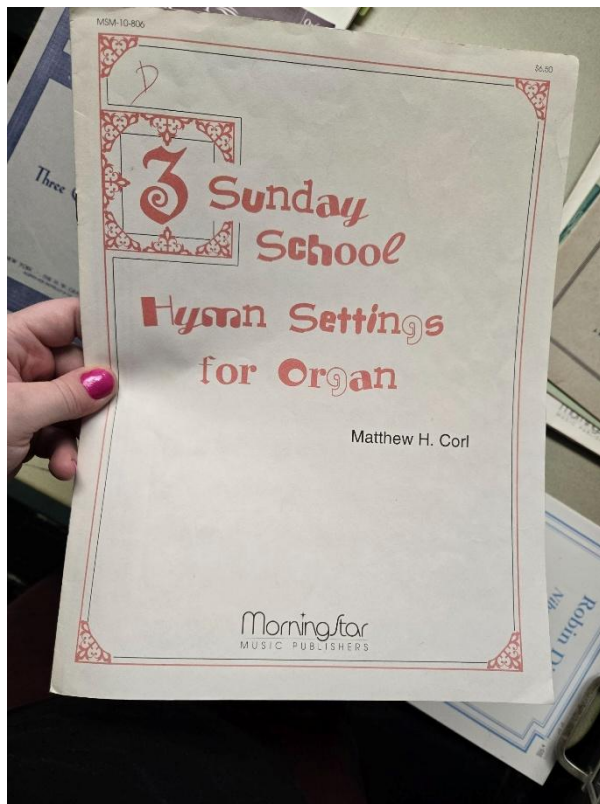
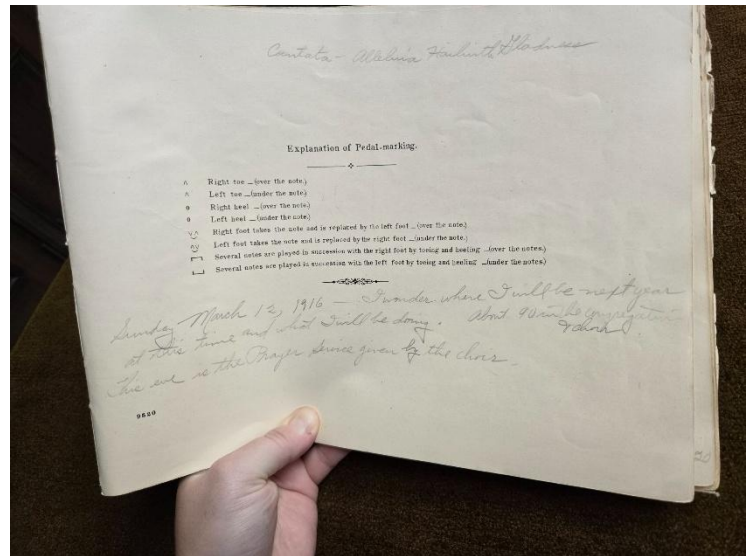


We also have:

- Organ shoes, currently 2 pair
- Pedagogical children's music games
- handbell music
- Choir octavi & vocal solo books

Working through the library has been a big undertaking, but it has been incredibly cool to do with my parents. My dad is the volunteer archivist at my home church, and has a PhD in Germanic Languages. My mom has a Master's in Library Science and experience working in libraries. We are a family that loves books and history! My Grandma Helen is a (retired) concert organist, so my folks are also familiar with organ literature/classical music in general.

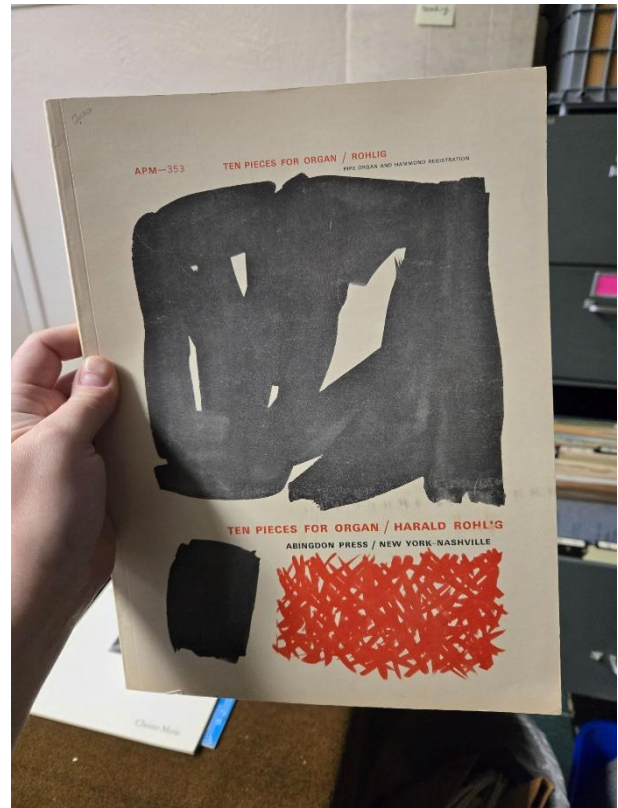
It has also been neat to see and touch music from the late 19th-century and early 20th century. I particularly enjoy seeing any historical annotations/written notes from the organists who played from these tomes. From one document: "Sunday, March 12, 1916 - I wonder where I will be next year at this time and what I will be doing. Almost 90 in the congregation and choir. This eve is the prayer service given by the choir."



I have also enjoyed seeing a diverse amount of beautiful unique cover art on the books. On the book "Ten Pieces Organ" by German composer Harald Rohlig, there was a beautiful abstract expressionist work staring back at me - blocks of black, red and white. I felt instantly transported to the 1960's. Super cool!

Anyway, more work to come in organizing the space. We considered adding a QR code on the cabinets that would invite visitors to "pay what you want" for a book. Previously, all books were \$1 (or 50 cents if in rough condition). At this point, the library functions more like sheet music "free store," as we have enjoyed simply gifting the books to chapter event attendees whenever possible.

Thank you for your support and donations to the AGO library! My parents and I have greatly enjoyed organizational process.



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AGO National Convention



Home Schedule Registration Fees Artists Venues Hotel Young Organists (AGOYO) FAQs Donate Advertise/Exhibit ▼



We hope you will consider attending the AGO National Convention July 6th through the 10th, 2026 at the Hyatt Regency St. Louis at The Arch. The AGO conventions provide a fun, exciting and inspiring experience where you can connect with musicians from across the country. The St. Louis Chapter has planned an opening barbecue (BBQ) and a spectacular opening concert celebrating America's 250th Birthday. The convention includes more than seventeen performances at seventeen different venues that will include eight newly commissioned works. There are thirty workshop sessions to choose from as well as all the various exhibits in the Exhibit Hall. In addition to the convention activities, the city of St. Louis has a variety of activities such as the Missouri Botanical Garden, the St. Louis Zoo, The Muny (the nation's largest outdoor theater) and the Gateway Arch grounds (just across the street from the Convention Hotel). You can get the convention details at:

<https://web.cvent.com/event/fdadaa37-8ca8-48de-ba86-373c87010edc/websitePage:6e12c009-3562-4eb4-8899-9e944836e4f7>

Matt Dierking and Lynn plan to attend and are registered on the "Blue" track. Let us know if you will attend and we can plan some chapter get togethers during the convention (matt.dierking@gmail.com).

Newsletter & Facebook Announcements

Newsletter Inputs

Chapter members are encouraged to submit items and articles for the newsletter. They can be anything that would be of interest to the chapter members including such diverse topics as organ techniques, organs or programs you visited, chapter history, etc.. The deadline for sending information and photos for newsletter is the 20th of the month and should be submitted to matt.dierking@gmail.com.

Program/Event Announcements for the Newsletter:

Chapter members are encouraged to submit announcements for local programs for the newsletter that would be of interest to the chapter including concerts, recitals, dedications, choral events, etc.. The announcements should include a title, date/time, location, a short description (a couple of sentences is fine), point of contact and a photo if possible. The deadline for submitting announcements is the 20th of the month prior to event date or two weeks prior to the event date – whichever is earliest.



Facebook Announcements

Chapter members may submit event/program announcements to the Chapter Facebook page. They can be anything that would be of interest to the chapter members including concerts, recitals, dedications, choral events, etc.. The Facebook page turnaround is faster than the newsletter and can also reach people outside of the chapter. Announcements should be submitted to our Facebook page editor, Madeleine Demetriades (madeleinedemetriades@gmail.com), one to two weeks before the event. Madeleine will make the final decision on what to post on the page.

Want to Play the Dayton Art Institute's 1929 Skinner?



The Dayton Art Institute's 1929 Skinner organ is a wonderful, historic instrument in a beautiful Italian renaissance styled auditorium. As a community outreach, Matt Dierking plays regular programs on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month. The programs are designed to be informal, fun and a hopefully a little educational. Museum patrons are encouraged to engage with the organist and ask questions about the organ, its history and/or the music. These discussions can be the best part of a program! One of the great things is that you can pretty much play whatever you like. Playing a wide variety of music is best since this is often the first time many of the museum patrons have heard a real pipe organ. A single program could include everything from a 1500's fugue all the way to a Walt Disney movie theme. You can also play music from the holidays or events in that month such as Christmas, Black History Month, Fourth of July, Oktoberfest, etc.. These programs can be a lot of fun to play and are a great way to introduce people to the pipe organ. **If you would like to get more information about playing a program on the Skinner, please contact Matt Dierking: matt.dierking@gmail.com or cell: 937-505-7290.**

Area Events

This section includes non-chapter events that may be of interest to chapter members.

Dedication Recital

for the

RUDOLF

von

BECKERATH

HAMBURG

Organ – 67ranks

Michael Unger

Professor of Organ
Cincinnati Conservatory of Music

Wednesday, June 10, 2026 - 7pm

Reception to follow in the Parish Center
St. Lawrence Roman Catholic Church, Cincinnati



Dayton AGO Leadership

OFFICERS

Dean—Karen Bocko
Sub-Dean—Matt Dierking
Treasurer—Yun Kim
Secretary—Priscilla Acuff

BOARD MEMBERS

Judy Bede
Barbara Acker-Mills
Madeleine Demetriades
Terry Donat
Jimmy Leach
Joe Severyn

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Organ Academy Chair— Rachel Spry Lammi
Educational Concerns— Judy Bede
Newsletter Editor—Matt Dierking
Placement—Jimmy Leach
Membership & Directory—Ellen Bagley