

## Antiphon

*News from the Annapolis Chapter  
of the  
American Guild of Organists*



**June 2023**

### Benchwarming

Major televised award shows engage people to serve as “seat fillers” to maintain the appearance, to the television audience, of a full house. As soon as the seat holder exits, the seat filler moves into the place, with instructions to always face guests as filing into the rows, but not to speak to them. If anyone asks what they are doing, they are to flash the back of their pass on which is printed: “Hello, I am temporarily filling this seat for camera purposes. Thank you.”

Within the organ community, we also have our “seat fillers”, although, given the nature of the instrument, they should more appropriately be called “bench warmers”. The comparison between our “bench warmers” and the athletic team reserve players known as “benchwarmers” (without a space) is worth consideration. Many of you will be reading this as your thoughts are turning to summer vacation and some relaxation; it seems appropriate to focus this month’s letter on considerations surrounding the substitute organist, or the benchwarmer.

(cont. on p. 2)

### ELECTIONS

Chapter members received an email with a link to the ballot on May 26. Thank you to those of you who have voted. Thank you to Nominations Chair Isaac Borocz for working on these. Here are the nominations for the year beginning July 1, 2023:

Co-Deans: David Beatty & Isaac Borocz

Sub-Dean: Betsy Lord

Treasurer: Scott Romanoski

Secretary: Cindy Carlton

Members-at-Large, Class of 2026: Bill Gilligan & Ben Garcia

Bill Gilligan has been a member of the Southern Maryland Chapter for several years, and, with the merger of our two chapters, is ready to assist with our chapter leadership. The ballot contains information about each of the candidates. Please vote if you have not already done so.

### CONCERTS AND EVENTS

June 4, 10:00 am: Annual Bluegrass Mass, St. Margaret’s Church, 1601 Pleasant Plains Rd., Annapolis. Music begins at 9:30.

June 4, 2:00 pm: Annapolis Pride Interfaith Service, First Presbyterian Church, 171 Duke of Gloucester Street, Annapolis. For information on joining the pick-up choir, contact Ruth Capobianco at collageofvoice@gmail.com.

## SUBSTITUTE LIST UPDATE PROJECT

An updated substitute list is an organist's very best friend! Please send Secretary, Cindy Carlton ([cclarlton1@gmail.com](mailto:cclarlton1@gmail.com)) your intention(s) as soon as possible.

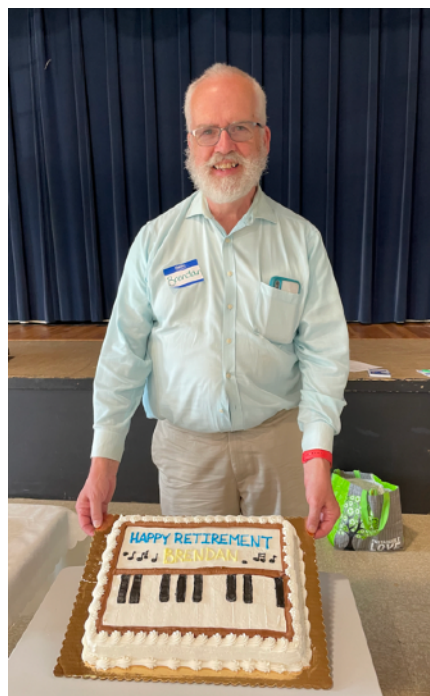
Our list includes service-type availability as well as liturgical preferences. See the AGO Annapolis website at [annapolisago.org](http://annapolisago.org).

We look forward to providing our membership with a useful, up-to-date list.

## STOPS AND MIXTURES

Several members gathered for a pot-luck dinner at St. Matthew's United Methodist Church in Bowie on May 21 hosted by Isaac Borocz. We were happy to be joined by three members of the Southern Maryland Chapter, which has just merged with our chapter. They brought along a student. They were Susan Yoe, Bill Gilligan, and Larry Whitbeck, with student Marcus Thompson. We honored member Brendan Walls, shown at right, who is retiring after thirty years in music ministry at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Crofton. We were excited to try out the church's Casavant Frères pipe organ with new stops. These were recently added to the organ, with installation by David Storey of Baltimore.

We enjoyed getting to know chapter member Dale Gray, a young musician who is Music Ministry Coordinator at St. Pius X Church in Bowie. From the time Dale was a child growing up at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Crofton, Brendan Walls encouraged him to share his talents during worship. He started out by playing just small sections of the liturgy on the piano or organ, and soon became hooked, decided to pursue music ministry as a career. We could all follow Brendan's example by inviting young pianists and organists to play during worship services, rather than waiting until they have the training to be able to do the entire service!



We have sad news to pass along. David Kerr Park passed away on May 22 following a lengthy illness. He was Director of Music at St. Stephen's Church in Crownsville, and graciously hosted several of us during our September 2022 organ crawl. Besides being an outstanding music minister, he was an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church. He will be sorely missed, especially by the St. Stephen's congregation, which he had served for almost three years. A viewing is scheduled at Hardesty's Funeral Home, 851 Annapolis Rd., Gambrills on Friday June 9, 2 - 4 pm. We will pass along details of a memorial service when they become available.

## BENCHMARKS, CONT.

Like a "seat filler" at the Academy Awards, the "bench warmer" ensures continuity during the absence of the resident musician. Athletic "benchwarmers" typically sit on the sidelines, eagerly awaiting an opportunity to get into the game. Unlike the "seat fillers", though, organist "bench warmers" are expected to perform duties beyond just sitting at the console. They are much more like the athletic "benchwarmers": when called to action, they must fully engage in the ongoing event in lieu of the "starting player". A major difference between most organist "benchwarmers" and the athletic reserve players is that the latter practice with the team. I have met very few substitute organists who are

consistently rehearsing, each week, with the “team” of worship leaders, choirs, etc., with whom they must work when they are called into service. Unlike the athletic reserve players, our benchwarmers are not compensated during the “waiting times”, but only receive a stipend when they get into the game. Additionally, our benchwarmers, because they are not in the “first string”, do not have the luxury of access to practice facilities. (Imagine what might happen to an athletic team if their reserve players were not provided the facilities or resources to practice until the coach made the decision to send them into the game!)

Some who employ our organist benchwarmers apparently contend that the benchwarmer should be securing rehearsal facilities, and maintaining skill sets during the entire year at their own expense. From a business economics standpoint, this would translate into amortizing the rental of rehearsal space, or purchase of rehearsal instrument, across all the playing engagements during the amortization period. While the depreciation schedules for musical instruments are not flat within IRS schedules, for quick estimation purposes, let’s consider a flat schedule. If a benchwarmer secured a rehearsal instrument for \$56,000, over the 7-year IRS depreciation life, that would be \$8,000/year. During the course of a year, if the benchwarmer were called into the game for 20 appearances, \$400 of remuneration would be needed to address the rehearsal facility cost.

If one then considers the amount of time spent throughout the year maintaining a basic skill set, and estimates a rather low one hour/day, 5 days/week, then in the course of the year (52 weeks), 260 hours would be spent just maintaining a basic skill set. If those hours are amortized across the above hypothetical 20 engagements/year, then in addition to the specific hours spent for the engagement, 13 hours of the year’s maintenance cost would apply.

For a substitute, the specific hours of preparation and delivery of service does vary, but I have found in my decades of substituting that the time for a single service is typically between 12 and 24 hours targeted to that specific event. For events when I am asked to accompany and conduct more ambitious repertoire, involving complex registration, the hours/event increases. If you’re keeping the running tally, then we have 12 to 24 targeted hours and 13 hours amortized basic skill set maintenance, or 25 to 37 hours of labor for the single engagement.

Maryland minimum wage is currently \$12.80/hour, for employers with fewer than 15 employees. One might wonder if substitute labor requires “minimum” skill, but it seems that many hiring institutions are oblivious to the years of preparation, training, and experience enabling one to perform the work.

At minimum wage, then the hours associated with a single event translate into \$320 to \$473. On top of that is the noted \$400/event amortized facility cost. So a minimum-wage caliber substitute is thus incurring opportunity cost of \$720 to \$873 for each event.

But what if the substitute is more than a “warm body”, but has other employment that increases their time? If the benchwarmer is more accomplished or more trained than deserving of minimum wage, or if (due to competing economic trends) their time is more valuable, that cost element could certainly be greater. Among those who substitute, per hour time valuation could easily be \$50, \$75, \$100, or greater. I leave it to the reader to continue working the math.

As many of you are aware the American Guild of Organists does not publish or recommend salaries or stipends due to agreement reached with the Federal Trade Commission. With respect to substitutes or benchwarmers, that means each of them is an independent contractor. Note that as such, they set their own rates. Each contractor determines how great a profit or loss they incorporate into their rates. When I was seeking substitutes, the simple arithmetic above led me to observe that substitutes were typically incurring net losses with each engagement. (In the few cases where they were not, it was because they were not adequately preparing for the engagement, and evident from the feedback regarding the quality of their service.) So for those of you engaging substitutes, do not offend the independent contractor by presuming you will dictate the magnitude of the loss they are to incur; most have set their rates to well below any “break even” point.

Within the discussion of costs, it is also quite important to note that the Internal Revenue Service cites \$0.655/mile as the mileage rate for business endeavors. Note that this is an additional cost that “benchwarmers” will incur as they seek to provide assistance. Given the geographical spread of the greater Annapolis area, I believe most substitutes are easily traveling at least 20 miles each way, and many will likely make at least 2 round trips (one to rehearse and one for the service). At current rates that would lead to an IRS mileage cost of \$52.40, excluding tolls or parking.

A decade ago, I provided the treasurer and leadership at the church of my employment some very practical recommendations for budgeting for substitute musicians. At that time, I noted that we were needing to secure competent substitutes (for an Annapolis venue) from the Arlington (35 to 50 miles one-way depending on route taken) or Baltimore (40 miles one-way depending on actual residence location). I recommended that church budget for 200 miles of reimbursement, along with a base stipend to compensate for the substitute’s time and talent. (Note at 2023 IRS rates the mileage alone would then be \$131.)

I do encourage any of you who engage substitute musicians to ensure that your institution is adequately budgeting for annual coverage that avoids requiring extreme largesse of the substitute. Otherwise, you may discover dwindling supply of competent artists possessing sufficient skills to keep the bench warm in your stead.

For those of you who engage substitute musicians these economic factors should prod some overall policy considerations:

1. To avoid charges associated with the overhead costs of providing an instrument, your institution should be making their instrument available to the “reserve players” on a regular basis (every day and every week), so that there can continue to be “benchwarmers” available when needed.
2. The overhead cost is related to number of engagements throughout the amortization period. Increased volume decreases the cost per engagement. Thus it is best to make more frequent use of one particular substitute than to cycle through a large number of them.
3. Budgeting for substitutes should take into account economic indicators, such as changes in minimum wage and other industry salary estimates, and accordingly be updated annually. (When discussing such updates with institution funding boards, it would be prudent to mention the “real value” of the time that some of these substitutes are providing compared to the charge.)
4. If the stipend is lower than the “value” to be provided, do not be dismayed if the substitute opts to withdraw from the engagement when an opportunity to frolic with friends in France suddenly emerges. The substitute was losing money on the engagement anyway.
5. The budget should separate travel reimbursement from stipend. Mileage rates vary with changes in energy costs and typically are adjusted at least annually.

With regard to item 1 above, employing institutions should recognize that substitutes frequently have another “day job” to enable them to pay the rent. Thus the rehearsal time on the instrument needs to be made available during evenings or weekends. Providing “reserve players” with keys to the facility and maintaining a standard rehearsal schedule for those hours will enable this to be successful. Forcing substitutes to arrange their rehearsal schedule around the “open hours” of a church will reduce the quality of their music making, or prevent them from being able to accept the engagement.

In this regard, I continue to be amazed at the number of churches seeking substitutes who react to a request for rehearsal time with “What? You want to practice? For HOW many hours?”

Moving away from cost and value considerations, there is a great deal of administrative information that should be shared among the benchwarmer, the resident musician, and the employing institution.

1. Contact information for the benchwarmer (including information regarding pending business trips, cell phone, home phone, work phone, home e-mail, work e-mail, mailing address, typical times when they can be contacted, nature of “day job” that defines whether they can be contacted, variability of working hours). [One substitute I was attempting to employ a few years ago was part of a surgical team that performed organ (heart, liver, etc.) transplants. He couldn’t drop the scalpel to take a call to discuss details of an upcoming engagement.]

2. Contact information for the resident musician. (In addition to items such as those above, this should also include information about when the resident musician is going to be out-of-contact due to the absence that precipitates the need for the substitute).

3. Contact information for the employing institution. It is VERY important that the benchwarmer have “emergency” contact numbers for the institution. Accidents can happen: in 1985 I fractured a vertebra in an automobile accident on a Saturday afternoon, after rehearsing with the vocalist for a substituting engagement the next day. Weather can intervene: flooding and blizzard conditions can sometimes prevent or significantly delay the arrival of the substitute. This contact information must be USEFUL. It does not help to have the number for the senior pastor who is ALSO on vacation. Neither does it help to have the office number that will be checked by the parish administrator on Monday morning.

4. Scheduling details about the engagement itself:

A. Date, time(s), and location(s) for the services/performances

B. Date, time, location, and content for mid-week rehearsals

C. Times, location(s), typical duration(s), and structure of pre-service rehearsal(s)

5. Plans of the benchwarmer regarding prior rehearsal (hours, days, schedule)

6. Instructions regarding access to the building for both rehearsal and service

A. Preferred doors and relationship to key

B. Alarm system considerations

C. Time that the building will be open or closed.

7. Location of the light switches

A. Hallways and other rooms between entrance door and organ

B. In the area of the organ console

C. On the console itself

8. Location of the organ switch, and has it moved? [At Kirkpatrick Chapel, Rutgers, the switch was in another room. A few years ago, two churches within blocks of each other in the Philadelphia area, BOTH had the switches relocated. Switch locations are not obvious.]

A. Complex switch systems should have documented instructions. [Not everyone remembers how to start the Hammond B3.]

9. Instructions associated with the combination action.

A. Memory levels to be assigned to the substitute. (If the instrument does not possess a multiple memory level system, or if specific memories of a multiple memory system are not to be allocated to the substitute, it is the responsibility of the resident musician to maintain a record of a “standard” set of pistons. I contend that substitutes should charge resident musicians at a rate of no less than \$100/hour for recording and “resetting” their decades-old selections.)

B. It is helpful to provide the substitute with indication of typical registration/memory levels that the resident musician would use in service playing.

C. Details about locking or unlocking memory levels if that is a feature of the combination action.

10. Instructions regarding problems with the instrument. (Whom should be contacted if the instrument requires urgent repair? In the event of a cipher, should pipes be pulled? Where are keys to the organ chambers?)

A. Details of any known problems with the instrument (stops that are not playing, notes that will cipher, etc.).

## 11. Repertoire

A. Hymns (or specific knowledge regarding the time table for hymn selection and method that the score for the hymn will be conveyed to the benchwarmer. Hint: if the hymns are picked on Friday, the US Postal Service will NOT be able to deliver the hymn scores to the substitute prior to a Saturday morning rehearsal)

B. Plagal Cadence “Amen” at the end of the hymn? (Pick one: Never; Only if in the hymnbook; Only if the final stanza meets certain criteria; Always, even if not included)

C. Service Music, and be specific.

i. Doxology: There are multiple metrical approaches to the Old Hundredth Doxology, and a wide variety of texts. There are also other tunes in frequent or common use. Don’t assume the benchwarmer knows that your pastor just required switched from Lasst Uns Erfreuen to Avery & Marsh last month in an attempt to achieve cultural relevance.

ii. Doxology (2): If it’s not listed in the service leaflet, the substitute should assume that it is NOT included unless explicitly instructed otherwise.

iii. Gloria Patri: There is not just ONE setting---be specific.

iv. Mass Setting, including details regarding which parts will be employed and which will not. Some choirs or congregations DO sing the Credo. Some mass settings include responses in the midst of the Eucharistic prayer, but some congregations do not employ them.

## 12. Details of the service itself (Liturgical customary)

A. An annotated order of service is best.

B. Cues (including cue for the beginning of the service)

C. Method of introducing (congregational songs/hymnody and service music)

D. Special care should be given to the “unwritten” traditions. The substitute was not born with the knowledge that Mrs. McGillicutty donated the Schulmerich carillon and must hear “Sweet Hour of Prayer” followed by the striking of the hour between the prelude and the first hymn or she’ll remove the church from her will.

E. Opportunities for improvisation

- i. Following the Gospel (allowed?/verboten?)
- ii. During communion
- iii. Bridge between offertory anthem and Doxology
- iv. Softly during the altar call

13. Specific instruction regarding organ voluntaries

A. Typical length range (If the prior spoken service is not out of the nave until 5 minutes before the musical service, the benchwarmer may not have time to play Franck’s Choral in E, Duruflé’s Prelude, Adagio, et Choral Varie, or the Reubke 94th Psalm. Conversely, if the congregation typically arrives 15 minutes ahead of the service with the expectation of hearing a ten minutes of standard organ repertoire, one Orgelbüchlein chorale may let them down.)

B. Character of the works (Must the prelude end softly? Will a soft postlude be drowned out by conversation as people leave? Does this change seasonally?) [When I first filled in for Richard Alexander at St. Paul’s, Chestnut Hill, he indicated that they tend to keep things a bit lighter in the summer, but if I wanted to play the Duruflé Toccata, by all means, please do! ]

C. Behavior of congregation during voluntaries (utter silence? loud conversation?)

14. Details regarding bulletin or service leaflet submissions

- A. Deadline (day/time)
- B. Contact information for recipient of data
- C. Content expectations
  - i. Brief biography of substitute
  - ii. Voluntary titles
  - iii. Additional information that may originate with the resident musician but pass through the substitute.

15. Details regarding payment

- A. What is the agreed upon base stipend?
- B. Is it understood that the base stipend is for the work and does NOT include travel reimbursement which will be added in the final invoice? (Or, is it understood that the lack of separate travel reimbursement implies the substitute is receiving pennies of compensation for hours of work?)
- C. When and how will the payment be provided?

#### D. Whom should be contacted should the payment be incorrect or be late?

The listing is certainly not exhaustive, but does represent a few considerations associated with benchwarming and the employing of benchwarmers. Please add to the list those things that I've omitted.

For those of you who are the resident musicians or "starting players", I would advise that you also plan for emergencies. Many of the above items are "standard" for your situation, and do not change week-to-week. Documenting those things in a standard guide for substitute musicians (and keeping such a guide updated) will likely serve you well.

A few years ago, I was visiting central NJ for a weekend, when my host (my former organ professor) received a phone call from a colleague who was desperately searching for a substitute organist. The husband of a mutual colleague has suddenly passed away around noon that day, a Saturday. Friends were scrambling to find a substitute to play for the next day's Pentecost liturgy. I was recruited into service, but only given the information regarding the address of the church and the time the choir would arrive before the service. My former teacher provided me his score to Duruflé's Prelude, Adagio, et Choral Varie, and, fortuitously, the church doors opened an hour before the choir arrived. Pistons were set, some repertoire spots were checked, choir anthems rehearsed, and a few choir members recruited to "tell me what to do and when to do it". Luckily, the service went well. However, we should never count on "luck" when planning and preparation are better.

So, with that lengthy (and undoubtedly incomplete) discussion of benchwarming, I encourage you to book your summer benchwarmer now (if you haven't done so already). For the growing ranks of benchwarmers, I encourage you to keep your standards high. Keep your "Dieu Parmi Nous" in the fingers: when you get the call on the morning of Christmas Eve that the "starting player" is out, you can fill in ably!

Soli Deo Gloria!

David P. Beatty

## JOB POSTING

Prince of Peace Presbyterian Church is seeking a new Director of Music and Organist. Here are complete details: <https://www.popchurch.org/music-worship>

### CHAPTER OFFICERS

Co-Deans: David Beatty, Jim Douglas  
 Sub-Dean: Betsy Lord  
 Secretary: Cindy Carlton  
 Treasurer: Scott Romanoski

### CHAPTER WEBSITE:

[Annapolisago.org](http://Annapolisago.org)

### MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Class of 2023:  
 Isaac Borocz, Ben Garcia  
 Class of 2024:  
 HyeSung Hwang, Brendan Walls  
 Class of 2025:  
 Kathi Hiatt, Monte Maxwell

### CHAPTER EMAIL:

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