

Local American Guild of Organists Chapter Formed

On July 9, 2010 a group of area organists met at the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection, Surfside, to discuss and evaluate the need for a local chapter of the American Guild of Organists. With the nearest chapters being Charleston and Wilmington, the group came to the consensus that the organists, church musicians, churches and the arts community of the Grand Strand would benefit from having an active chapter in the area.

The American Guild of Organists is the national professional association serving the organ and choral music fields. Founded in 1896 in New York City, the AGO now serves 25,000 members in 350 chapters throughout the United States and Europe.

Membership is open to all and includes working professionals – organists, choir directors, teachers, organ builders, technicians, and suppliers to the field – as well as students, clergy, amateur musicians, and dedicated supporters.

The American Organist magazine, published monthly by the AGO, is the most widely read journal devoted to organ and choral music in the world. A subscription to this magazine is included in the membership fees of voting members.

Other benefits of the AGO include educational publications, conventions, a professional certification program, and the commitment to improving the non-musical aspects of the working life of organists and choral conductors. This is reflected in its programs in professional concerns; cooperation with national denominational officials to influence policies regarding employment; work with seminaries to broaden the musical education of clergy and the theological education of musicians; and development of publications and materials to assist individual members.

A slate of officers was elected at the organizational meeting. Billy Fallaw, Director of Music and Organist at First United Methodist, Conway was elected Dean; Karen Kearney, Organist and Choirmaster at The Episcopal Church of the Resurrection in Surfside is the Secretary; Brian Monroe of Pawleys Island serves as Treasurer; Thom Martin, Director of Music and Organist at Georgetown Presbyterian Church is the Registrar/Membership Coordinator; Jon Blamire, Organist and Director of Music at Prince George Episcopal Church in Georgetown is the Communications Coordinator.

Billy Fallaw, newly elected Dean of the Grand Strand Chapter, says, "The fine arts are alive and well in this region with many talented professional and amateur organists. The charter of an AGO Chapter here promises to broaden the scope of support for the arts as well as organists in this area."

The inaugural meeting of the newly formed Grand Strand Chapter of the American Guild of Organists is planned for Friday, October 1st, 7:00pm at Trinity Episcopal Church, 3000 N Kings Hwy at 31st Ave N, in Myrtle Beach. Everyone is asked to bring a covered dish to share. Following the meal, we will have an anthem reading session. Dr. Mark Chaney, Organist/Choirmaster at Trinity is our host and in charge of the program. This is an open meeting. All are welcome!

For more information about the Grand Strand Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, see their website at www.agograndstrand.org.

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