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FROM THE EDITOR

Regina Kettering, Editor (editor@pitago.org)

When we initially put together the articles for this issue of the newsletter, we were planning for a much different month than what we have seen. As I write this update, the past week has brought significant disruptions to our livelihoods, daily habits, and expectations.

The April 2020 newsletter is going all electronic. Due to the shutdown of non-essential businesses, our printer is closed temporarily. The board had voted to go electronic... next academic year. So, while we had already planned to make the switch, it is happening much earlier than expected. Those with no email address on file will receive a printed newsletter, printed on a home computer and mailed via regular mail.

Why are we changing our meetings?

We want everyone to stay as healthy as possible. Compared to the flu, COVID-19 is approximately twice as contagious. As I write this, Pennsylvania has closed all non-essential businesses and limited gatherings. We do not know how long the restrictions will continue. We will continue to keep you updated electronically as much as possible.

What can I do?

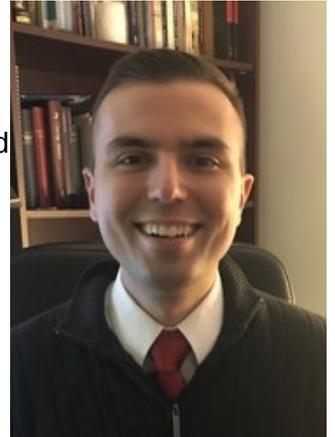
Follow the CDC recommendations and stay home as much as possible. Check on those around you who have difficulty getting around by calling or emailing them. Have compassion for others. We may be used to reaching out with our music, but now we must find other ways to reach out. And of course, wash your hands.

DEAN'S NOTES

by Chaz Bowers, Dean (dean@pitago.org)

Dear Colleagues,

I would imagine that, even considering all of our various backgrounds and upbringings, none of us have ever experienced a time quite like this. In what seemed like a quick few hours, our lives have totally changed. Most recently, the CDC banned gatherings of 10 or more; those of us living in Allegheny County are to shelter in place as much as possible; nearly all local businesses have been ordered to close with the exception of pharmacies, supermarkets, and gas stations; and our entire lifestyle has been restricted as we enter deeper into the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Some of us are now working from home—if we are lucky. The great organs of our churches sit silent, unless they are being used in live streamed masses, and they will, as it appears, remain silent for some time in the absence of the corporate worship of the church. And as we draw nearer to Holy Week, we must come to terms with the fact that Holy Week will be more different than ever before.

With the shutdown of all essential business, our newsletter printer closed up shop. This was a blessing in disguise as Regina Kettering, our Newsletter Editor, decided to take this opportunity to make some lemonade out of this lemon. Regina has gone above and beyond to make this newsletter focus on COVID-19 and the helpful resources we offer to the organists of our chapter. My thanks goes to her, as well as several members and friends of our chapter who were willing to step up at a moment's notice and share some helpful tips on what they are doing during these difficult times.

I would also like you to note: after speaking at great length with Ken Danchik, and in consultation with Alan Lewis, we have decided, in an abundance of caution, to cancel the April Meeting. *Instead of physically gathering together, we are inviting each of you to share a video of your home organ on our facebook page at any point throughout the month of April. Even if you do not have a home organ or cannot upload videos, you can still join in the fun. Simply visit [facebook.com/pittsburghago](https://www.facebook.com/pittsburghago) throughout the month to view the videos. We never get the opportunity to see each other's home instruments and I think it will be great fun to share our practice instruments. See Ken's article for more details.*

It is most likely that the May meeting will also be changed; however, that information will be forthcoming. All standing reservations for March and April will either be applied to May, or they will be refunded at the end of the program year.

Finally, in the spirit of making lemonade, consider this: Sir Isaac Newton is said to have discovered the laws of motion when sent home from Trinity College, Cambridge, because of the Black Plague—isolation and social distancing were tried and true methods, even then. Johann Sebastian Bach wrote the Well-Tempered Clavier under house arrest. After much personal thought on this, I have decided that I will make this time worthwhile. I continue teaching lessons for Seton Hill, albeit online, which is sad for the students, especially those who had

senior recitals scheduled (please pray for them). But each day, I have a project planned for my house; many of which are things that I have been meaning to do for some time. I have also decided to spend a little time outdoors on my property, some extra time practicing, and to spend more time in personal prayer. Finally, I plan to spend some of the time to simply just “be.”

In closing, I want you to know that you are in my prayers. If there is anything that I can do for you, I am here. Though we all make this journey from the silence of our own homes, what makes it bearable is knowing that God makes the journey with us and that, at the end of this long road, we all make this together.

May God continue to bless and protect us.

Sincerely,
Chaz Bowers
Dean

APRIL ONLINE

by Ken Danchik, Sub-dean (sub-dean@pitago.org)

Dear Chapter Members,

In spite of so many necessary adjustments in our current lives, we still have the personal and professional bonds of our Guild to help us all to get through what's to come.

Hoping that we all can stay together, at least through the internet, Chaz and I propose the following activities as a way to stay connected:

- For the month of April, would you consider sharing a brief video and/or soundbite about your home musical instruments? It would be great to learn a bit more about you and the way you keep up your skills at home, when you are not practicing at church.
- You can upload a file to our Chapter Facebook page, and attach a sound file from SoundCloud or other source. Play something for us. Extra credit if it comes from IMSLP. Pictures also are welcome. Be creative--have fun!

Looking forward to the next program year, which will be the 100th anniversary of the founding of our Pittsburgh Chapter, I am looking for ideas for programs and events, and will be forming a planning committee to explore possibilities. We could have a ‘virtual meeting’ via a video or conference call. Please send an email to me if you want to be on this committee, and/or if you have any suggestions. Although the dates for the coming program year have not yet been settled, it would be great to consider the possibilities!

Many thanks. Stay healthy. Be good to others. Practice.

IDEAS AND RESOURCES

Tyler Randolph

Ideas and Resources to Educate, Entertain, and Stay Connected

The only thing certain about this time is that it is quite uncertain! I wanted to share some resources and ideas to keep the members of your music ministry connected, educated, and entertained. We are certainly all in this together, and it important to remember that your parishioners are in the same boat as us, asking “What can we do to fill this time?” This is by no means an exhaustive list, but hopefully something here might “tickle your fancy” and be an idea to try. Any of these can be sent out in whatever frequency you deem appropriate. With my own folks, I don’t want to overload them with too much and “spam” their inbox, but I want to give them enough variety of things to have something for everyone!

- **Choral Music Recordings** - YouTube is such an amazing resource... consider sending out links to recordings of choral pieces that you were planning on using. There are so many fine examples of choirs from all over that can be used as listening examples.
- **Hymn of the Day** – Send out a recording of a hymn, something seasonally appropriate or one you would have used for worship. Again, there are so many recordings on YouTube to hear any number of hymns from so many great churches.
- **Organ Music** – I recorded and sent to my musicians the prelude that I was planning on using this weekend. You can record yourself, or once again... there is YouTube!
- **Record a “Hymn Sing”** – Ask your people what their favorite hymns are, record yourself playing and/or singing it and send your musicians. I sent out an email for “requests” just before I started working on this article, and so far I have six requests!
- **Video Workshops** – Again, the wonders of YouTube! There are so many educational videos available. Look through and find things that might be good for your folks – breathing exercises, cantor workshops, music history, theology, it is endless! Now more than ever there is time to educate your musicians, consider sending things that normally you just don’t have the time for.
- **Personal Videos** – It is so important, above all of these things, to stay connected! Though your ensembles cannot be together, and we cannot be all together to serve our communities, the importance of staying connected to one another *is so important!!* I made a short video and sent out just checking in and saying “hi.”

Creating a YouTube account is truly very easy! I had never made a video until all of this... I recorded, uploaded, and sent out all on my phone. SoundCloud is another great resource to upload audio tracks only. I use that normally to upload practice tracks for my choir. You might feel overwhelmed by all of this, and possibly the “tech” aspect of it all... it is ok, I truly am as well! We must find a way to get through this, and come out on the other end even better than before. I wish you all of the best during this difficult time, but eventually we will be out of our Lenten dessert again to celebrate with our communities the joy of the Resurrection!

REMOTE CHOIR REHEARSALS

By Doug Starr

“In time and space” is a subjective phrase but made explicit in recent times of isolation and quarantine because of the unique Coronavirus. We have the sacred time but we cannot physically share the same worship space. Although this is temporary, it is traumatic to be separated from our clergy, choir and church family. Lead by our pastoral administration, many of us have sought remedy in live-streamed worship or other virtual mechanisms. We have even conducted choir “rehearsals” via networking technologies such as Zoom or Skype. Creative ways to reduce the trauma of separation have justifiably taken over practice time. But that’s Ok. We are in need of healing.

At St. Paul’s Episcopal in Mt. Lebanon our Rector, Noah Evans, has challenged staff to adapt and recover. Our staff meetings are held on Zoom. All staff post video on our parish YouTube account for subsequent release on our website and weekly emails. Christin Cooper, our Music Assistant, and I record videos previewing music for each Sunday. Our soloists and organists record Bach to Spirituals for parish family viewing. We have also initiated the synchronous experience of weekly choir rehearsals via Zoom. Here is a typical Thursday night rehearsal.

After inviting choir to enter the Zoom portal via email with an assigned ID Number, we electronically gather as Christin or I play keyboard music. The agenda is flexible because we are a family who need to see and hear one another in conversation and laughter. Synchronous singing is problematic but Zoom mechanical adjustments make it work. We can sing a hymn or anthem to accompaniment by muting our microphones and sing our part with accompaniment only. We can sing chant as solos with open microphones thereby hearing one another in real time. This works very well with plainsong. The best part of each rehearsal is storytelling; how we deal with isolation, how music enlivens us, and what we will joyfully experience when we are back together.

A quote from Choral Scholar, Sarah Richards, sums it up, ““It is so great that we have the tools to make music together virtually in this tough time. Singing together is so powerful in building communities of faith.”

Yours in hope and Faith,

Doug Starr

DON'T FORGET ABOUT COPYRIGHT LAWS!

By Aaron Sproul, treasurer

With so many churches suspending public worship and turning to “virtual worship” during the coronavirus pandemic, the need to live-stream sacred music is greater than ever before. However, just because a church subscribes to a reprint licensing company for paper worship aids does not mean that live-streaming is covered. Fortunately, licensing companies are among the overwhelming number of businesses and corporations that have responded to the pandemic by offering free or low-cost solutions during this very difficult time.

Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) and OneLicense are two of the major licensing companies that are offering help to churches that have turned to live-streaming worship. CCLI is offering discounted rates on their streaming plans, and One License is offering one month of free coverage to any new customers or existing customers who wish to add streaming coverage to their plan.

Visit <https://us.ccli.com/streaming/> to purchase a CCLI license, or <https://www.onelicense.net> and click on the red banner at the top of the page for more information about OneLicense.

If you are live-streaming your church services, take advantage of these great offers. Remember, when it comes to copyright laws, it's always better to be safe than sorry!