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FROM THE EDITOR

Regina Kettering, Editor (editor@pitago.org)

What is “normal?” Normal can be defined by things that are socially accepted. Normal can describe what would otherwise be unremarkable intellectually or physically. But mostly, normal is based on the actions and expectations of the majority of the population.

We must work to accept and create what is “normal” in a world where COVID-19 exists.

Early in the pandemic, we hoped that hunkering down and isolating ourselves would allow the virus to sweep through and burn itself out. That expectation does not look to be realistic now, as too many people have COVID-19, and the transmission is much more difficult to stem than hoped. We as a country will have to find ways to handle the ongoing threat of COVID-19.

Transmission of COVID-19 depends in part on how easily the virus gets into your body and avoids detection long enough for you to give it to someone else. It also depends on how many people we interact with regularly – increasing the number of people at an event increases the likelihood of someone having the virus and giving it to multiple other people. Governments have limited the number of people who can go out by issuing stay-at-home orders, effectively reducing the number of people who interact with each other.

Much of the discussion of adapting to having COVID-19 in our midst assumes and hopes that we will have a vaccine in 12-18 months. Right now, over 80 potential vaccines are in development. However, going back to “life as usual” assumes that one of the early vaccines will go through testing and trials with no problems. That would be a miracle, indeed. Realistically, we may be looking at multiple vaccine options that do not pass clinical trials before we have one that works. While we should still hope that a vaccine will be developed, I encourage people to prepare for the current status to last much longer than originally anticipated.

The good news is that we get input on what we want “normal” to be.

The majority of our livelihoods requires large groups of people gathering together. Realistically, the logistics prevent us from getting to the “old normal” in the near future. So how can we adjust?

- Look at ways your church can responsibly social distance. Many churches are going to online services to fill the gap, allowing organists and sometimes choir members to pre-record sections for the service.
- As states start to open up, look at how your in-house materials are used. If your church can afford to print the hymns rather than using hymnals, one less touch-surface is present to decontaminate between services. Bring pencils from home or sterilize them before use to reduce touching common contaminated items.
- Once services resume, split the choir into two or more groups, and alternate them so that all of the choir is not together at once. Reducing the number of people together will reduce the risk that all of the choir would get sick if someone accidentally comes to church with COVID.
- Reevaluate where you stand to direct. Singing expels droplets and aerosols further than talking, so increase the distance between you and the choir to 10-12 ft, if possible. Another option is to stand to the side of the choir so that you are not directly in the “line of fire.”
- How many people should have access to the organ? Is it in a place where many people walk through, or is it in a difficult-to-access loft? How frequently do you want to clean the keys?

All of the above items are focused on church activities. Here are a few additional questions to ask yourself as we try to understand what life will be like moving forward.

Are my actions sustainable long-term? Of course, this includes the questions about eating properly, getting exercise, and washing your hands. Also look at whether or not your mental actions are sustainable. A normal response to tragedy is to look one day at a time. There will be days where each one of us will need to just “make it through today.” However, extending this reaction for 18 months becomes maladaptive.

Expect and plan for “two steps forward, one step back.” As states reopen, the new intermingling of people will increase transmission of COVID-19 and may result in states temporarily pulling back. Hope for the best, but expect that some amount of fumbling will occur.

Who do I want to be in my “in group?” If you could only physically interact with 10 people, who would you want to interact with? The catch is that your small group would limit physically interacting with anyone outside of the group. Everyone else you can still talk to electronically by computer or phone. By limiting the number of people you physically interact with, the idea is to decrease the risk of everyone in the group without sacrificing the positive aspects of social interactions. Social isolation long-term is not healthy, but we need to find ways to keep the risk of COVID-19 down. Smaller isolation groups are documented in Italy (1400's) and England (1600's) as a way to isolate without sacrificing too much social interaction.

Talk with at-risk family and friends, especially those sharing space, about what level of risk is acceptable. As people go back to work, discussions about what precautions you want to take will become more important. Just like a group of musicians is impacted by the person with the lowest amount of musical skill, the person who has the lowest protection from COVID-19 impacts the rest of the household. Some essential workers have cordoned off portions of their homes so they do not transmit the virus to their families. If you have at-risk people in your “in group” do they need extra protections?

We are planning our events with the best information that we have at the moment. Uncertainty is the only certainty. As data about COVID-19 increases, we will be able to adjust and adapt our plans to the new information.

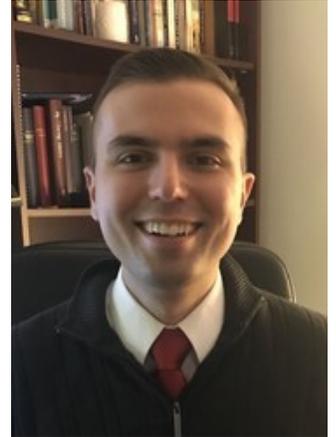
DEAN'S NOTES

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

Dear Friends,

The saying goes "If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans." How true that has become for all of us this spring as we experience the "new normal." On behalf of our executive board, I wish to tell all of you that we miss you, and we are thinking of each of you.

In a special way I want to thank our Sub-Dean, Ken Danchik, for his constant work. Even in a normal year, being the Sub-Dean is a rather involved position, and he held the title through perhaps one of the most difficult years in our chapter's 100-year history. Originally, Ken did an excellent job programming season, which took an incredible amount of work. Then, in response to the pandemic, he reprogrammed the year. And now, in the end, he had to cancel everything. Please, if you are in touch with Ken, offer him your thanks to him for his great work. **Be sure to check out Ken's article regarding the May meeting. The trip to Youngstown has been canceled, but we have planned a joint online meeting with Pittsburgh NPM.**



Second, I would like to thank Regina Kettering for her excellent work on our newsletter. She has brought us relevant information regarding COVID-19 yet again, and she was able to move the newsletter online. Our plan was to move the newsletter online and mail copies to the ten or so individuals who do not have computers, however the timeline was quickly moved up as our printing company closed due to the pandemic.

I also want to offer my thanks to Ed Moore and the Organ Artist Series Board, as well as Tyler Randolph and the Pittsburgh Organ Academy Board, as they navigate these difficult times. They, alongside the members of our executive board, continue to make excellent decisions for the good of the guild, and I am thankful for their service.

As you are reading this, you will have been, or soon will be, contacted by members of our executive board and friends on behalf of our AGO. This is part of a response plan led by the National AGO to call all of our membership. Please know our message is genuine. We miss you all greatly.

Likewise, the National AGO has posted a great deal of resources for organists on their webpage. If you haven't done so, I encourage you to take a look at the assistance that they are offering. Visit www.agohq.org for more details.

Please know that we are carefully monitoring this situation as we look to the fall. When the programming committee meets virtually, they will most likely need to consider programs that could be live-streamed with a skeleton crew at a church, as well as programs that can function as our normal monthly meeting. It is better to be prepared for the worst.

As you know, next year we will celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Pittsburgh Chapter. Regardless whether it will be online or in-person, it will be good for us to join together in this celebration. Know of my continued prayers for each of you. It is an honor to be your Dean, and I look forward to the day when we can come together and celebrate the end of this pandemic.

Sincerely,
Chaz Bowers

MAY COMBINED MEETING ON ZOOM

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

Dear Colleagues,

The Corona Virus has forced us to consider how we gather and plan for monthly meetings. Chaz and I have been discussing ways to keep our Chapter active, perhaps in a 'virtual' way.

As an experiment in meeting virtually, I invite you to participate in an online joint session with the Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Pastoral Musicians. On Tuesday, May 12th, from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM, a program dealing with the economic and practical impacts from the Covid Virus on church musicians will be hosted by David Dreher, director of technology for the Pittsburgh NPM Chapter. Amanda Plazek-Bruce from the National NPM Office will discuss options for online and virtual gathering. Lewis Steele, CPA with Connolly, Steele and Company, will join the discussion. 'Zoom' is the online program that we will use, allowing several options for participation.

Here is the hotlink for the meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89427174859?pwd=RFdEUk5yWHZkt2N3RHFzMHpYOHl6QT09>

Password: 962160

You will receive an email blast several days before the meeting with the same hotlink and password. If our membership approves, we will plan to gather 'virtually' next program year, at least for some of the programming. As the pandemic eases, if membership decides that we should gather in person, and if this can be done safely, programming will be adjusted to meet that expectation.

In this coming year 2020-2021 we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of our wonderful Pittsburgh Chapter. Several members have suggested topics and presenters for our monthly meetings. If you have any suggestions or ideas, please send them to me. And, if you would like to be part of a 'virtual planning committee' that will meet online in May, please contact me. All ideas and suggestions are welcome.

Chaz and I brainstormed several options for meeting 'virtually'. We could have a virtual 'cocktail hour' to chat and catch up before our scheduled online meetings. We could schedule online times to just 'chat'. For a members' recital, performers could record, then upload their playing, to be viewed with the other performers at a virtual meeting. Featured presenters could present from their unique location and instrument. (Cocktail hour could extend into the online presentation, at your own private discretion....) All this would entail a certain familiarity and comfort with online meeting protocol and resources. If you have any expertise or if you can help to set this up, please contact me.

Don't forget to upload a video of your home practice instrument to our Facebook page, and to check for interesting discussions and suggestions. Even though we have to be physically separate, we can stay connected as colleagues and friends, celebrating our glorious and exciting calling as church musicians and organists.

Please, stay safe and healthy!

Ken Danchik
Sub-dean

LUTHERANS AND PANDEMICS

Rev. Cyril Hurnyak

Lutheran Christians have often found themselves dealing with the grief caused by a Pandemic. Two striking examples come immediately to mind: a story about Martin Luther and one from the Hymn writer, Philipp Nicolai.

In the 15th Century the Bubonic Plague was once again widespread but really spiked in the 16th century when better than 60% of the population was lost to death.

Martin Luther feared the Plague. He often wrote how his only defense was "Prayer and Incense." His fear finally caught up with him, for his little twelve year old daughter came down with "the Black Death." He was so fond of Magdalena to the degree that when she died Luther felt so inconsolable. Immediately after her death it is said, as he held her, "Magdalena, I commend you to God because he is in need of such a saint."

Luther's grief was overwhelming. It fed his depression. In 1524 Luther wrote 4 hymns in the *Actliederbook*, one of the first Lutheran Hymnals. Such creativity, however, died with his beloved daughter. Her death, which came after 1524, had a profound influence upon him. He writes that the "hardest thing in accepting her death was to sing hymns." But his Faith was strong, for he also wrote: "At a time like this when it is so difficult to sing, that is precisely when we need the Church, because the Church must do the singing for you."

Luther's grief stifled his creativity, for between 1524 and 1529 not one hymn was authored, either text or tune. Perhaps in God's providence, it was no accident, because in 1529 he stepped forth with his most beloved and popular hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is our God." The last verse says it all: "Were they to take our house, Goods, honor, CHILD, or spouse, though life be wrenched away They cannot win the day. The Kingdom's ours forever!"

Another figure in Lutheran Hymnody who also had to cope with grief because of the Bubonic Plague was Philipp Nicolai. Author of "Wake Awake for Night is Flying" [the King of Chorales] and "How Brightly Beams the Morning Star," [the Queen of Chorales] Nicolai's Faith shone through. Nicolai wrote both of these chorales simultaneously as an attempt to comfort his grieving congregation.

Amid several parishes, Philipp Nicolai served as Pastor at Unna between July 1597 and 1598. The Plague took 1300 of his parishioners in a single week to the "Black Death."

What is ironic is how Philipp took his depression and grief and creatively did something with it. He took pen in hand and authored the text to "O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright" ELW Hymn 308. Not only did he write the text but also the tune, *Wie Schoen Leuchtet Der Morgenstern*. This hymn is such a testimony to the gift of Faith. How many of us could deal with our grief by proclaiming who is the true Morningstar in our life, who washes away the darkness of our despair as do shadows flee with the coming of the morning sun.

Some thoughts to encourage and inspire us in the Faith, as we also cope with the "Covid-19" virus.

Cyril Hurnyak

REV. GEORGE TUTWILER OBITUARY

It is with great sadness that our chapter has learned of the passing of the Rev. George E. Tutwiler, who died peacefully in Pittsburgh, April 16, 2020. George served as organist/choirmaster and instructor in church music and United Methodist Studies at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary from 1981-2011, when the Seminary awarded him faculty emeritus status. In 2013, the PTS established [The Rev. George E. Tutwiler Scholarship Endowment](#) to honor his 30 years of service here.

George received his bachelor's in music and English from Geneva College, where he became a lecturer in music. He earned a certificate in theological studies from Wesley Theological Seminary and took graduate studies at Union (N.Y.) Theological Seminary School of Sacred Music and the University of Pittsburgh. Widely known as a recitalist, conductor, clinician, and lecturer, he was dean of the American Guild of Organists' Pittsburgh Chapter and served as the Guild's councilor for Mid-Atlantic States for eight years. He also served a six-year term as national director of the Committee on Seminary and Denominational Relations and a vice president of the Pittsburgh Concert Society.

An ordained elder in The United Methodist Church, George was a member of the World Methodist Council. For nearly 40 years, he was an associate pastor/minister of music at three Pittsburgh area churches: First UMC of Pittsburgh, Eastminster PC, and Coraopolis UMC. He also served interims, including at Memorial Park PC and First PC of Pittsburgh. A member of the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, as well as the Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts, his interests focused on global congregational song and the renewal of liturgy and music in the church.

A memorial service will be held at a later time.

If your events are being moved online, please contact us with the relevant information AND A LINK (or where a link will be posted). In person events are subject to change, based on ongoing circumstances. Please contact the point person or website for relevant information.

| Date | Event |
|---------------------------|--|
| 15 May 3:30 PM | Ken Danchik, organist – Cathedral organist Kenneth Danchik in concert. Free admission – an offering will be received. <i>St. Paul Cathedral, 108 N. Dithridge St, Pittsburgh, PA 15213 (corner of Fifth Ave and Craig St)</i> donaiddfellows@verizon.net https://ghocatholics.org/ 412-621-4951 x. 28 |