



# Middlesex Chapter American Guild of Organists

- April 2026 -

## Dean's Column

Hi All,

It was two years ago in April when I attended an organ concert at Princeton Chapel to see Anna Lapwood. The audience filled the chapel to an almost standing room only crowd! I thought about how wonderful it is that artists like Anna are putting our instrument front and center in the performing arts arena!

It is our good fortune that Shea Velloso has put another exciting organ crawl event together; this time visiting organs in Princeton, including the magnificent instrument in Princeton Chapel. Besides visiting three fantastic instruments, a lunch is part of the agenda, which is free of charge for active chapter members (sans alcoholic beverages). Thank you Shea!

Whether you wish to play or just listen to others explore the capabilities of the organs, I hope that you are able to join us for this remarkable event.

Soli Deo Gloria,

Joe Suchocki



"Organ +..." Members' Recital 3/1/2026 - First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen:  
*(Performers in italics l to r): Joe Suchocki, Father Mike Krull, Nancy Cliff, Stas Zakharenko, David Citron, Brenda Day, Jody Velloso, Shea Velloso, Chris Deibert, Paul Caruso*

### Middlesex Chapter AGO Executive Board

|                  |                        |                           |
|------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Dean:            | Joe Suchocki           | jsuchocki@optonline.net   |
| Sub-Dean:        | Jody Velloso           | drjodydokter@gmail.com    |
| Secretary:       | Emily Sensenbach-Gopal | esensenb@hotmail.com      |
| Treasurer:       | Mary Ann Fraser        | Maryannfraser31@gmail.com |
| Chaplain:        | Reverend Michael Krull | frkrull@aol.com           |
| Member-At-Large: | Brenda Day             | Brenda@daysmail.net       |
| Member-At-Large: | (vacant)               |                           |

## Upcoming Chapter Events

### **April, Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 10 am: Organs of Princeton Organ Crawl \*:**

Members and Friends of the Chapter will visit the fine instruments in the beautiful Princeton University area. The itinerary for this rain or shine walking “crawl” is as follows:

- **St. Paul’s Church, 214 Nassau Street - meet at 10am**  
IV/65 Aeolian-Skinner/Murphy  
***Directions to St. Pauls***  
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/uKwCaiCk5EbyDZPn7>



- **Princeton University Chapel**, . IV/137 Aeolian-Skinner/Mander
- **Lunch – Teresa Cafe** 23 Palmer Square East – (Active Members and their guest receive free lunch voucher )
- **Nassau Presbyterian Church**, 61 Nassau Street, III/40 Holtcamp

**\* Notify Shea Velloso if attending and how many no later than Wednesday, April 15<sup>th</sup> - [svelloso@famfaith.org](mailto:svelloso@famfaith.org) or (908) 227-7868**

**June 14, 2026, 3pm: Dean’s Picnic.** The last event of the 2025-2026 season provides another chance for members and friends to get together in a relaxing BBQ atmosphere.

## Other Notable Events

**April 18, 2026, Organ Recital**, Christopher Deibert, St. Francis of Assisi Cathedral, Metuchen

**May 16, 2026, Mozart Festival** – 2 Symphonies (Paris and Haffner), plus a surprise concerto, St. Francis Cathedral Orchestra, St. Francis of Assisi Cathedral, Metuchen

*Do you have an event or other pertinent information that you wish to list in future newsletters? Email the info to Joe Suchocki – [jsuchocki@optonline.net](mailto:jsuchocki@optonline.net)*

*Don’t forget about our chapter’s OSG - \$500 toward organ lessons for young pianists 18 yrs and younger*

### **Middlesex Chapter Organ Study Grant**

<https://mcago.org/organ-study-grant/>



## “Meet the Members” – Emily Sensenbach-Gopal

Hello Middlesex AGO! While preparing my “organ story” for our chapter newsletter, I thought of a lot of different angles to take, from telling you how I first fell for church music (thanks, public radio), to describing my career path... Ultimately I decided to introduce you to my first organ teacher, Stephen Best, who is someone truly special.

As an undergraduate college student in Central NY, I was gently conscripted into helping with Protestant worship at the Hamilton College chapel. First this meant leading a choir, then playing some piano, then replacing our graduating organist. So I was introduced to Steve Best to begin my first organ lessons.

At our first lesson on the Noack, Mr. Best was quivering with excitement for the instrument, the teaching, all of it. This book (Peeters) will get you coordinated! This metronome will last forever! (Sadly, not quite.) You’re a natural!

I suspect that most of Mr. Best’s students have also been naturals, because he loved and praised and cheered us on so wholeheartedly. We were invited to his church in Utica, NY to hear recitalists (I heard David Higgs and a very young Felix Hell) or to join his annual Christmas carol singalong, where the audience was encouraged to bring their own bells. He is still teaching, and he uses Facebook to champion his current and former students. Teenagers in particular hold a special place in his heart, and so he has published several etude-type pieces via Evensong Music, many of which are dedicated to a particular young person. My favorite is a trumpet tune in 7/8! His students and proteges include Jillian Gardner, Cameron Carpenter, Felix Hell, to name a few. My freshman year roommate battled through his keyboard harmony class and still has only the best to say of him... because he had only the best to say of her. He has always believed 100% in his students. I started organ study in a spring semester, and within a couple of months, he connected me to an organ major (Tim Olsen) at Eastman to teach me over summer break. He introduced me to the AGO. He introduced me to anyone he knew. I wasn’t just launched, I was catapulted.

I am so grateful to have started organ study with the most positive teacher in the world. Mr. Best has shaped not only my experience at the organ, but also my view of what a joyful experience teaching and learning can be.

## Chapter Trivia:

*Can you name this MCAGO blast from the past?*



*[answer to March's "Chapter Trivia" - "]*

*"Registration Workshop" – United Methodist Church, Milltown, November 9, 2013,*

*(l to r) Walter Baber, Shea Velloso, Emily Sensenbach-Gopal, Bill Kistler, Sean Price, ?, Mary Ann Fraser, Joe Suchocki*

