

# AAM MINNESOTA

## JUNE 9-13, 2024

Walking with Saint Benedict

## CONFERENCE REVIEWS

### SUNDAY, JUNE 9

IT IS ALWAYS A WONDERFUL FEELING to begin the journey to an AAM Conference, knowing that I will be joined by colleagues from all over the country once I arrive. With this being the first AAM conference in Minnesota since 1991 (and surprisingly, my own first visit to the Land of 10,000 Lakes), I imagine many of us were eager for a week of rich liturgies, inspiring concerts, and invigorating conversations in this area known for excellence in choral music and a long history of heartfelt worship.

Once we checked into our rooms in the beautiful Marquette Hotel, we had a brief time to get settled, connect with those arriving at the conference, and explore our surroundings. It

was not long until we loaded a bus for the quick trip to St. Mark's Cathedral, where we would enjoy the opening concert by *The Singers*.

*The Singers*, led by conductor Matthew Culloton and collaborative pianist Bryon Wilson, are a 40-voice professional choral ensemble founded in 2004. Their concert featured works entirely by



composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, with an emphasis on compositions written within the last five years. Standard works like John Rutter's *Hymn to the Creator of Light*, Herbert Howells' *Requiem*, and Stephen Paulus' *Pilgrims' Hymn* were matched with newer works, including Caroline Shaw's *and the swallow*, Melissa Dunphy's *#UnitedWeDrewm*, Ola Gjeilo's *Unicornis captivator*, and John Muehleisen's *Dawn* which had its premiere by *The Singers* only weeks prior.

The concert was everything I expected from entering the sphere of choral music in Minnesota. Commitment to phrasing, precise intonation, unification of vowels (though there were some interesting vowel colors that I found intriguing), and passion for the music were apparent from the first note to the last. Favorites for me included Rutter's *Hymn to the Creator*, which I have always considered to be his finest choral work, and Caroline Shaw's *and the swallow*, which brings a new choral language to the ancient verses from Psalm 84, leaving me captivated and eager to explore more of her compositions. While the Howells was sung accurately and beautifully, the performance was more hurried than I prefer. Hearing Ola Gjeilo's *Unicornis* is always an adventure; I marvel at Ola's ability to compose within a range of styles and textures while creating a seamless work. All in all, conference attendees were treated to a wonderful and memorable evening of choral excellence and a great start to an inspiring week.

After the concert, we were shuttled back to the hotel for our opening reception on the 50<sup>th</sup> floor of the IDS Tower. It was a spirited reception, and it was a joy to hear the introductions of those for whom this was their first conference. While the vast amount of food was notable (who doesn't like to eat Bacon Mac and Cheese right before bed?), the view of Minneapolis from the top of the tower was the highlight for me. It was exciting to know that we would spend much of the conference on the 50<sup>th</sup> floor, and it remained a high point throughout the week. ❖

SCOTT HANOIAN

*Scott Hanoian is the Director of Music and Organist of Christ Church Grosse Pointe, Michigan where he directs the church's four choirs and oversees the yearly concert series. He is also the Music Director and Conductor of the University Musical Society Choral Union where he conducts and prepares the Grammy Award-winning chorus in performances with the world's finest orchestras and conductors.*

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## MONDAY, JUNE 10

I HAVE BEEN ATTENDING AAM conferences since my first one in Boston in 1999. It is one of my favorite weeks each year, and I always enjoy seeing AAM friends and meeting new members. Minneapolis showed off for the first day of the AAM conference with a lovely, sunny, dry, and warm – but not too warm – day. Downtown Minneapolis proved to be an inviting conference location.

The opening Eucharist was celebrated at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral with The Right Reverend Brian Cole, AAM's new chaplain and Bishop of East Tennessee, as Celebrant, The Venerable Paul Sneve, Preacher, and the Diocesan Choir led by Canon Dr. Maxine Thévenot, and Organist Dr. Melanie Ohnstad. The liturgy utilized resources from the Racial Reconciliation Holy Eucharist Liturgy developed by St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church in St. Paul, Minnesota.



St. Mark's is a lovely, spacious, and welcoming building, and of note was the large Pride display of photographs and posters on the breezeway walls leading to the nave. As the cathedral filled, conference attendees greeted each other happily, glad for another post-pandemic opportunity to gather. The opening organ voluntaries were lively, expressive, and contemplative, with a lively *Veni, Creator Spiritus* (Fanfare and

Rumba) by Paul Leddington Wright, reminiscent of his *Praise the Lord!* anthem, the *Elegiac Prelude* composed by Gerald Bales, former organist choirmaster of St. Mark's from 1959–1962, a lovely *a cappella* introit by the choir, and topped off with the fourth movement of *Quatre Pèlerinages en Lorraine*, *Opus 30, No. 4* by Rachel Laurin.

The opening hymn with text by The Reverend Victoria Sirota, set to *Darwall's 148th*, was sung with gusto, no doubt astonishing fellow worshippers who have never had the pleasure of hearing AAM congregational singing. The service music was composed by Gerald Near, who served at two churches in Minnesota in the 1960s and '70s, and was sung by the Diocesan Choir. Past President Paul Ellison served as lector, followed by Psalm 129 to a chant composed by Maxine Thévenot.

The Venerable Paul Sneve (pronounced Snavy), who is Lakota and serves the Diocese of South Dakota as vicar for a Lakota congregation, preached “to the choir” about the role of music in worship, liturgy, and prayer. He taught us about Lakota traditions and beliefs, noting that Jesus was able to speak to all, and each heard him in their own language. Jesus calls us out of our comfort zone to overcome implicit bias and avoid prejudice, bigotry, and sin. People see Jesus as “they” are, so Jesus looks different depending on who is depicting him, but as the Lakota say, we are all related.

The sermon was followed by A Litany of Reconciliation, which focused on racial reconciliation, ending racial bigotry, economic oppression, and discrimination, and action that will sustain, empower, and fill all with grace.

The offertory anthem was composed by Stephen Paulus, with words by John Keble, encompassing the spirit of reconciliation and restoration.



Bishop Cole celebrates the Opening Eucharist

The presentation hymn was set to *VIRGINIA SQUARE* by Frank Boles, with words by Susan Cherwien, and one of the Communion hymns was set to *FISK OF GLOUCESTER* by Thomas Foster. The service concluded with *Go Forth for God*, Erik Routley's *LITTON* tune including the descant as “taught by Jim Litton to the Cathedral Girls Choir,” followed by Guilman's *Scherzo Symphonique*, *Opus 55, No. 2*.

After lunch on our own, the afternoon, back at the conference hotel, included the exhibits, sessions on the Episcopal Church and Indigenous Ministries in Minnesota and the Dakotas with The Venerable Paul Sneve, and *Diverse Approaches to Creating Sacred Repertoire*, a composer panel moderated by Julie Amacher. We then traveled by school bus to St. Olaf's Roman Catholic Church to hear Gerre Hancock Intern Abraham Wallace's thrilling recital. I was especially impressed by Abe's page-turner (Sarah Simko), who was unflappable and even joined in playing on one section. As an occasional page-turner, I'm grateful I've never had to do that.

Upon returning to the conference hotel, a Founders' Society reception was followed by the Opening Banquet, during which AAM President Kyle Ritter gave his presidential address.

It was a very full and interesting first day that kicked off a thoroughly enjoyable conference. ❖

TRACY REED

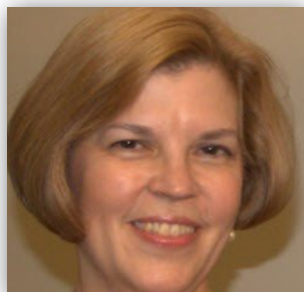
*Tracy Reed is a long-time AAM groupie who directs the Training Choir and assists her husband, Alan Reed, AAM Archivist, with the Treble Choir at St. John's Episcopal Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. Tracy and Alan recently retired as Managers of the long-running RSCM Charlotte Summer Choral Residency.*



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TUESDAY, JUNE 11

TUESDAY, JUNE 11, began with breakfast on the 50<sup>th</sup> floor of the IDS tower (the tallest building in Minnesota), which segued into an efficient, informative, and encouraging



Annual Meeting led by our president, Kyle Ritter. Our chaplain, Bishop Brian Cole, offered the opening prayer. Minutes of the 2023 Annual Meeting were presented by Secretary Linda Stowe and approved, and Joe Galema gave a strong treasurer's report. The highlights of the remainder of the meeting included:

1. Acknowledgment of the 2024 Nominating Committee and the introduction of the great slate of nominees for Vice President and Director-at-Large. The successful candidates were announced later in the day: Michael Kleinschmidt was elected Vice President, and Jared Johnson was elected Director-at-Large. Introduction of the 2025 Nominating Committee, which is in charge of finding nominees for the positions of Secretary and Director-at-Large.
2. A "yes" vote for both the 2026 Atlanta Conference and the 2027 England Conference.
3. A report about the Lay Professional Advocacy Committee's (LPAC) work: in addition to continuing to work for equity between lay and clergy employees of the Episcopal Church, the committee hopes to develop a deeper relationship with the Professional Concerns and Development Committee (PCDC) in order to expand support of pastoral concerns. The committee will also encourage AAM members to apply for appointments on Interim Bodies of the Episcopal Church, especially the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music.
4. An opportunity for the 2025 conference committee to share their plans. It is sure to be a great time in Cincinnati!
5. Acknowledgement of outgoing board members Sonya Sutton, Immediate Past President, and Gregory Deane Smith, Director-at-Large.

After the Annual Meeting, the group departed for Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, the "home" and final resting place of Paul Manz, where David Cherwein masterfully led us in a hymn festival entitled "Creator God Who Gives Life." The festival included hymns from *Resounding Voices* of the *Women's Sacred Music Project* and was crafted around texts of Julian of Norwich and Hildegard of Bingen. David's intonations, accompaniments, and improvisations were inspiring and certainly paid tribute to the legacy of Paul Manz. After the

hymn festival, we returned to the hotel for a lunch buffet.

Following lunch, Janet Yieh moderated the professional concerns panel discussion on the topic of "How to Navigate Healthy Transitions." The panel consisted of Dr. Marty Wheeler Burnett, The Right Reverend Brian Lee Cole, and The Reverend Jared Weber-Johnson. The discussion included guidance on what to ask when considering a new job, how to develop a collegial and mutually supportive work culture, how to prepare for and navigate change, how to begin a job on a good note, and how to leave a job well.

After this discussion, conference attendees traveled to Gloria Dei Lutheran Church for Lutheran Vespers and Extended Musical Offering. The participants in the liturgy included the choral ensemble *Kantorei*, one of the premier choral ensembles in Minnesota. The choir was founded by Axel Theimer in 1988 and is now directed by Adam Reinwald. As the conference program book states, this choral organization has an integral focus on vocal health, resulting in a rich and effortless choral sound. It was interesting to have contrasting approaches to choral sound offered throughout the week. After strongly leading Vespers's service music, *Kantorei* offered a



*Kantorei leads the music at Lutheran Vespers*

short concert with a good variety of music, much of which was from the standard repertoire. Madeleine Woodworth, Director of Music at Grace Episcopal Church in Oak Park, Illinois, served as organist for this service. She offered exquisite playing of the voluntaries and collaborated beautifully with *Kantorei* in leading service music. After returning to the hotel, conference attendees dispersed to the various great Minneapolis restaurants for dinner.

CRYSTAL JONKMAN

*Crystal Jonkman serves as Music Associate at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Richmond, Virginia. Prior to this appointment, she was Director of Liturgical Music and Organist at St. Michael's Episcopal Church, Bon Air, Virginia for 28 years. In addition to her work at St. Paul's, Crystal is the Artistic Director for the Greater Richmond Children's Choir (GRCC).*





Abe Wallace plays the Hancock Intern Recital

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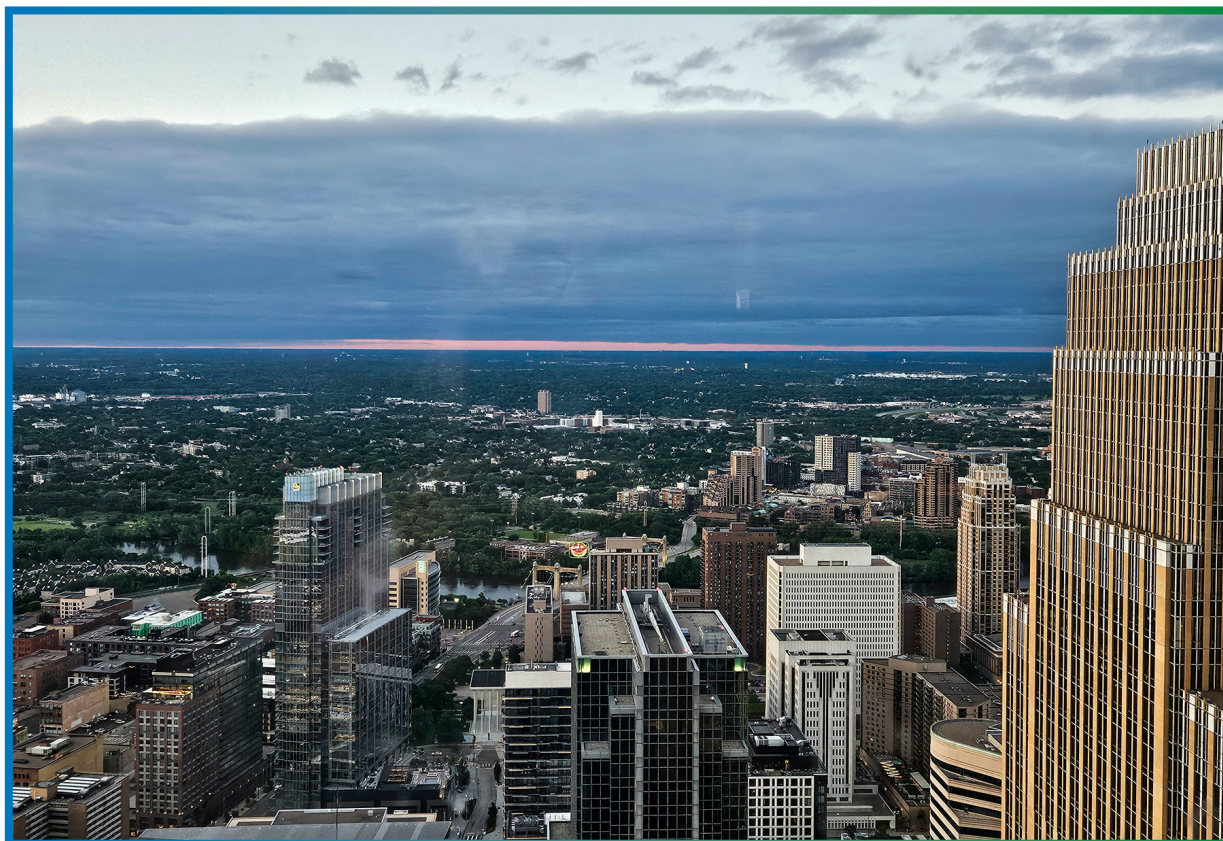


The Composers' Forum panel

The AAM board will meet in October to review the Minnesota Conference and would like to hear any feedback related to your experience. Please email:

**[office@anglicanmusicians.org](mailto:office@anglicanmusicians.org)**

before October 1. Your thoughts and comments will be shared with the Minnesota, Cincinnati, and Atlanta Conference Committees.



The view from the fiftieth story of the IDS Center



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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12

WEDNESDAY WAS OUR MOTOR COACH DAY with a trip to central Minnesota and the campus of St. John's College, also home of St. John's Abbey. I'm generally not a fan of Brutalist architecture, but this abbey church took my breath away, inside and out. The interior of the Abbey, consecrated in 1961, is built with unobstructed views of the altar from everywhere. The Stations of the Cross exist but are inconspicuously installed in the floor.

Our first program in the Abbey was a presentation by Fr. Anthony Ruff on *Music, Hymnody, and Latin Chant at St. John's Abbey*. Ruff has been a Benedictine monk since 1988 and spoke about the many ties to the Episcopal church. Until fairly recently, the monks had been using the *Hymnal 1982*, but they now have their own hymnal, which they have developed over the years. As our



conference book states:

Saint John's Abbey has historically maintained close ties with the Episcopal Church in Minnesota. This special cooperative relationship was put into specific focus with the 1990 completion and dedication of the Episcopal House of Prayer, the first such facility ever built within the confines of a Roman Catholic monastic community.

The German Catholic families from the area provided many of the original monks with a once-peak community of four hundred. However, as Fr. Ruff pointed out, "A lot of lovely things are fragile right now," including religion, the arts, and humanities. Both St. John's College and the nearby College of St Benedict (for women) are "facing strong headwinds in enrollment." Currently, there are one hundred monks living there, mostly older. Fr. Ruff spoke about not worrying about the future of this religious community – what will be will be.

AAM members joined the monks for worship at noon and at the end of our day. The monks are in the process of revising their daily Offices to retrieve components that are more Benedictine in nature. Fr. Ruff stated that any time you reform, you should do so "only when your heart is pure" so that decisions are not judgmental. With a new Abbott earlier this year, the community is enjoying a time of peaceful discernment and focusing more on "monastic spirituality."

One of the options offered in the afternoon was a public service of healing led by our chaplain, The Right Reverend Brian Cole. Separate opportunities also existed to visit the astonishing handwritten Saint John's Bible residing in the college's library. This Bible was the first commissioned Bible in the United States, and the calligraphy effort was led by Donald Jackson, once Scribe to Queen Elizabeth. It was a global collaboration, finished in 2012, consisting of seven volumes. Interestingly, it is an NRSV (New Revised Standard Version) translation. The oversized pages are vellum and beautifully illustrated. This Bible alone is worth a special trip to this campus.



Damin Spritzer and Isabelle Demers

My colleague, Mark Nelson, visited the organ workshop and had this to say:

Many of our conference-goers took the opportunity to see the workshop of Abbey Organ Builders in the new facility built for Abbey Woodworking. This latest endeavor has allowed Martin Pasi to move his shop to Collegeville and reestablish a tradition of Benedictine organ building. Many will know of the important treatise on organ building written by Dom Bédos de Celles (1709–1779), a Benedictine monk. Through a combination of

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students, interns, volunteers, and employees, they are working on a sizable instrument for a church in Kansas. The workshop is an impressive facility for both the woodworking and organ-building groups. Martin mentors young apprentices and works with monastics and other organ builders to achieve this dream.

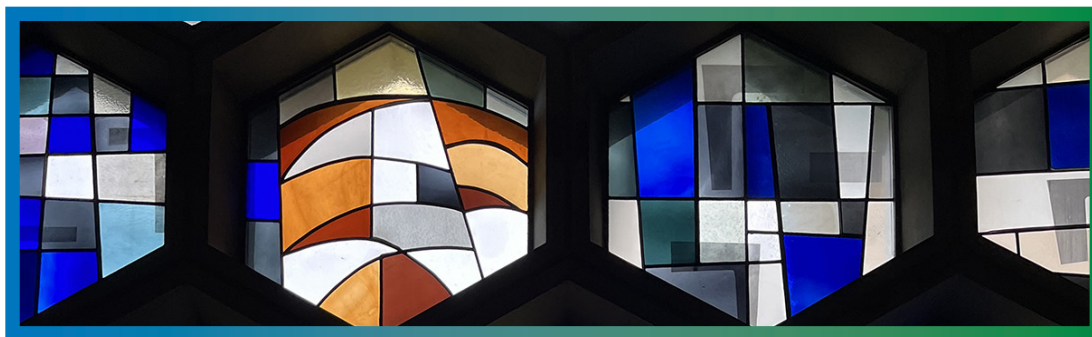
If seeing all of these beautiful things was not enough, we were also treated to a wonderful listening experience with a duo organ recital by Isabelle Demers and Damin Spritzer on the Abbey's greatly expanded Holtkamp organ – with work undertaken by Martin Pasi and others – finished in 2021. Their first four-hand piece by Jason Roberts was a premiere: *Sonatina on the name "Barone."* Michael Barone was present and recording the program that day. Mr. Barone had commissioned the following piece by Rachel Laurin in honor of the Abbey's monks:

*Concert Piece No. 5, Op 97* was played by Demers, with Spritzer then playing *Lyric Rhapsody* by Searle Wright. Two more duo pieces followed by Ralph Vaughn Williams and Rachel Laurin.

Two cafeteria-style meals in the college refectory, a cocktail hour in the former Abbey church, saying goodbye to our AAM friends staying behind for a retreat, and a relaxing ride back to Minneapolis completed a great day. ❖

MAGGIE MARSHALL

*Maggie Marshall is a retired church musician living in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, who enjoys retirement by subbing regularly, continuing as a public library trustee, reading voraciously, and enjoying friends and family. Maggie has served as AAM Secretary, head of the Grants Committee, and has been on both Boston conference committees.*



A small portion of the great west window at St. John's Abbey Church



The Singers with conductor Matthew Culloton



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THURSDAY, JUNE 13

THE CLOSING EUCHARIST of an AAM conference is bittersweet. With days of worship, learning, and making new friends in the rear-view mirror; we are aware that for many of us, it is the last opportunity until the next conference to see those friends and enjoy the loud-stun-kill (yet amazingly sensitive) singing of AAM at full voice. Thus, it was as we closed out the Minnesota conference at the Church of St. John the Evangelist in St. Paul.



The voices of women were heard throughout the week, both as composers and authors of profound and elegant texts. A plethora of AAM composers, living and departed, appeared throughout the closing Eucharist; at the risk of omitting anyone, I mention Craig Phillips, Peter Hallock, Bruce Neswick, Thomas Foster, Mark Stahura, David Hurd, Richard Wayne Dirksen, and Daniel Fortune. Familiar melodies were usually coupled with new texts, and the service theme – For the Care of God’s Creation – reminded us of the increasingly urgent need to care for “this

fragile earth, our island home.” In the Land of 10,000 Lakes, it seemed particularly poignant that in the Prayers of the People, the theme of water flowed through each petition, from the Creation to its liturgical use, to its lack in some places and overabundance in others, to all the waters of the earth and the creatures who live in them.

The fine choir of the church, the Copper Street Brass, and Dean Billmeyer at the organ, all under the direction of Richard Gray, provided strong and exuberant leadership throughout. Bishop Cole’s sermon described his discovery of monasticism at a Baptist seminarian and reminded us that our music is essential for the nurture of Christian communities in a world that is falling apart and reborn; it is our vocation to walk with Benedict.

We were treated to lunch and a warm welcome by the kind folk of St. John the Evangelist. We departed filled with memories of an amazing conference and the knowledge that “Minnesota nice” is indeed a thing. ❖

JANE BOURDOW

*Jane Bourdow received degrees in music from Mary Washington College and American University and is retired after a long career in church music, most notably 33 years as organist and choirmaster at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Alexandria, Virginia. In retirement, she is a frequent substitute organist throughout the Washington, DC area, and when not playing somewhere, sings with an awesome (Presbyterian!) choir.*

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The participants in the retreat gather at St. John’s Abbey





St. John's Abbey Church, Collegeville, Minnesota



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