



GRAND RAPIDS

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THE CIPHER

February 2026

Dean's Letter

Dear friends,

I hope this newsletter finds you well. The weather seems to be trying to force us into hibernation, but I hope you've been able to get out and enjoy some of the many musical happenings around town. I went to the symphony a few weeks ago for their Ravel concert. I wasn't sure I wanted to go just for the Ravel, but the first half showcased an extraordinary, 20-year-old violinist who blew us away followed by several Ravel pieces in the second half, including *Bolero*, which was choreographed with three amazing modern dancers. I heard about a wonderful cello concert at Trinity Lutheran Church last weekend with more cellos than you could shake a stick at. I was not able to attend but many people who did spoke highly of the variety and beauty of the music. Just this evening, I have returned from participating in an ecumenical service with LaGrave Ave CRC, Westminster Presbyterian Church and the Cathedral of St. Andrew. The service highlighted the unity we have in our beliefs and callings to serve the world around us. In light of the news in recent months it was a much needed balm in our troubled times. Many of these events were made more difficult to attend because of our weather. It always felt easier to just stay home, but after going to these events, I have been refreshed musically and spiritually, and I'm so glad I made the effort to go.

As you are reading this newsletter, we will just be going to the home of Thom Gouwens to tour his recently installed 2-manual pipe organ by Wahl Organbuilders of Appleton, WI. In March, we have the opportunity to go to First Presbyterian in Grand Haven for their annual young organists recital featuring Chanmi Kim. The recital will be Sunday, March 1st at 4pm. I hope you'll take this opportunity to support a young organist. Our final event of the year will be an organ recital based on the Psalms with sponsorship from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship in conjunction with the university's 150th anniversary. Andre Knevel from Ontario, Canada will be the recitalist. Please save the date: Monday, May 4th at 7:30 at the Calvin University Chapel. I hope to see you at one or more of these events!

Rob Hobgood, Dean



Report on New Year's Eve Concert

Todd Wilson performed an organ recital at Central Reformed Church on the five-manual, 81-rank organ. The instrument was originally installed in 1957 by the Schantz Organ Company. In 1982, it was rebuilt by Robert Dial in conjunction with Leslie Peart, who was then Central's Director of Music Ministries. The church has presented an annual New Year's Eve program ever since the completion of the rebuild. For the first such concert, Mr. Dial and Mr. Peart were joined by area organist Phillip Pratt to play an all-Liszt program – the *Fantasy and Fugue on Ad nos, ad salutarem undam*, the *Variations on Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Sagen*, and the *Prelude and Fugue on BACH*.



Central Reformed members Tim Elzinga and Kathy VanderLaan; Todd Wilson; Taemin Han – Director of Music Ministries

Mr. Wilson serves as head of the Organ Department at The Cleveland Institute of Music and is considered one of today's finest organ virtuosos. He began his program with settings of *In Dulci Jubilo* by Karg-Elert, Bach and Dupré, and in his cordial opening remarks he congratulated the audience on venturing out on a blustery, winter evening. The masterworks of Bach, Dupré and Widor that ensued were first described with gracious, detailed commentary and then brilliantly and elegantly performed. Mr. Wilson adeptly led the audience in singing *Auld Lang Syne* to conclude the program. The Grand Rapids Chapter appreciates the opportunity to support area churches in the presentation of the exceptional recitals that are a part of our programming.

Upcoming GRAGO Events

Monday, February, 2026

Social Event for Grand Rapids Chapter AGO

Our February program is a social event which will include a visit to the home of Thom Gouwens to see and play a new residence organ built by Wahl Organbuilders of Appleton, Wisconsin.: Two Manuals and Pedal; Nine stops.



Sunday, March 1, 2026, 4:00 p.m.

**First Presbyterian Church
508 Franklin Street
Grand Haven, MI 49417**

Young Artist Recital: Chanmi Kim

Chanmi Kim, originally from South Korea, studied piano, psychology, and child development during her undergraduate years. She was first introduced to the pipe organ in college and was deeply captivated by its wide range of tone, colors and expressive potential. This led her to begin private lessons and later pursue formal studies in the United States.

She recently completed her Master of Music in Church Music with an organ concentration at Baylor University, studying under Dr. Jens Korn-dörfer. During her time at Baylor, she served as organist at both St. Peter's Catholic Student Center and Calvary Baptist Church in Waco, Texas. In 2024, she won the Semper Pro Musica Organ Competition at Baylor and had the honor of performing at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City.

Chanmi is pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Sacred Music at the University of Michigan and is serving as Organ Scholar at St. John's Episcopal Church in Detroit.



Monday, May 4, 2026, 7:30 p.m.

**Calvin University Chapel
Calvin University Chapel
1835 Knollcrest Circle, SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546**

Organ Recital: André Knevel

Organist André Knevel, of Ontario, Canada will present a recital based on the Psalms with sponsorship from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship in conjunction with the university's 150th anniversary.



Celebration of Music Concert Series



Saturday, February 28, 2026 10:30 a.m. - noon | Trinity Lutheran Church Centennial Hall

AFRICAN DRUM CIRCLE: LEAH IVORY + 100 AFRICAN DRUMS PLAYED BY YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS!

Join us for an incredible opportunity for children, families, and adults of all ages. This musical adventure is filled with fun and learning. Sing songs from Africa while drumming with everyone in the room. Participants sit in a circle, play drums, and enjoy energetic rhythmic music. We will be led by world music expert and teacher extraordinaire Leah Ivory (Grand Rapids Youth Chorus conductor and lecturer in world music at Calvin University). This event takes place in Trinity's Centennial Hall. During the event, you will also hear about some very special children that Trinity sponsors in Kalehe (Democratic Republic of the Congo). The children live in an orphanage that is a part of Christophe's Children. We'll hear these special children sing some of their favorite songs via a short video visit.

**Trinity Lutheran Church
2700 Fulton Street East
Grand Rapids, MI 49506**