

AAM 2021 BALLOT

For Secretary (2-year term)



Cynthia DeDakis began her career teaching music in public schools in New York and Wisconsin. While getting her Masters in Choral Conducting, studying with Robert Fountain at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, she became Music Director at St Andrew's Episcopal Church, thus beginning a career of over forty years serving Episcopal parishes in Wisconsin, Virginia, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., and an interim in Vermont. A hallmark of her work has been establishing and growing chorister programs using the model and practices of the Royal School of Church Music. At St. John's, Lafayette Square, she started the Chorister Academy, bringing together underserved boys and girls

from many neighborhoods for music education, karate lessons(!), pizza, and family fellowship. During her time in Atlanta, Cindy was Associate Choirmaster at the Cathedral of St. Philip (her three children were among her choristers), Music Director of the Atlanta Schola Cantorum, and a member of the professional ensemble, The Britten Choir. She has directed choir festivals in several states and served as interim director of Choral Music at Emory University.

After many years of service to the RSCM, including several years as its first woman president, the organization awarded her its highest honor. She has been a member of AAM since 1997, and previously served AAM as a director-at-large.

Cindy writes:

Following my retirement from active music ministry, I have had the opportunity to serve as Missioner for Parish Music in the Diocese of Maryland. This afforded me a unique platform to engage musicians and clergy from a wide variety of parishes in conversations about our common calling. The knowledge and perspective I gained through that, as well as my many years of experience, would inform my work representing you on the board. I am inspired by your resilience and continued good humor during these challenging and uncertain times. It was my pleasure to serve on the AAM Board in the past, and I am humbled to be asked to stand for Secretary. It would be an honor to serve and support you.



Michael Smith is the Minister of Music at St. Thomas' Church, Whitmarsh, located outside of Philadelphia, where he oversees a semi-professional adult choir and a chorister program. Prior to this appointment, he had a twelve-year career in teaching and administration for private schools, including Shipley School in Philadelphia and Groton School in Massachusetts. Concurrently, he served a variety of parishes on a part-time basis and values the experiences to work with small, medium, and large parishes everywhere on the spectrum from Anglo-Catholic to Morning Prayer. Michael earned his undergraduate degree in organ performance at Samford University in

Birmingham, Alabama. He went on to earn graduate degrees in organ and conducting at Yale University. He currently serves on the boards of the Yale Glee Club and the Royal School of Church Music in America.

Michael writes:

I am honored to stand for election as Secretary of the AAM Board. In addition to my experience with technology, prioritizing multiple tasks, and attention to detail, I also bring a passion for excellence in church music in a variety of styles. AAM, now more than ever, is poised to be a gift to the Episcopal Church by inspiring our members to meet this year's challenges with creativity and by giving them resources to accomplish this, not for the sake of music-making, but for building congregations and making disciples for Jesus. I would be excited to be a part of this work.

For Director-at-Large (2-year term)



Christopher Keady was raised in Eugene, Oregon, and participated in church music from an early age while growing up at Westminster Presbyterian Church. He studied Spanish in a K-12 immersion program and learned to love vegetables working at a nearby community garden during high school. Christopher earned a bachelor's degree from Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon, majoring in English and studying organ with Dr. Lee Garrett. He first encountered the Anglican tradition at Vespers services at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Portland, and he subsequently became organ scholar there, assisting in the development of a children's choral program, and serving as course organist for the first Pacific Northwest RSCM Training Course. Christopher completed an MM in Organ Performance at the

Institute of Sacred Music at Yale University, and served as Sacred Music Intern at the Brick Presbyterian Church in New York City. Since 2017, he has been the Assistant Director of Music at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, where he serves as principal accompanist for the cathedral's choirs, assists in directing staff singers and training choristers, and manages the monthly organ recital series. He, his husband Dan, and their two cats live in Oakland, California.

Christopher writes:

I am thankful for the opportunity to run for the director-at-large position on AAM's Executive Board. I look forward to, if elected, serving as a thoughtful member of the Board in discussion and decision-making, and as a responsive and available representative to the Board for all of you, the members. I also recognize the importance of this position in influencing the makeup of the AAM Executive Board in the future, and I will work to represent the diversity in AAM's membership with a broad range of representation in the Nominating Committee and in the nominees for elected positions.



Jessica Nelson is a native Mississippian and holds degrees in music and liturgy from Millsaps College and Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, as well as the Colleague Certificate from the American Guild of Organists. She served All Saints' Episcopal Church in Tupelo, Mississippi, as organist/choirmaster from 2010 to 2017, and was called to St. Andrew's Cathedral in Jackson, Mississippi, in the summer of 2017. She directs the Mississippi Conference on Church Music and Liturgy and in 2015 was appointed to the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music of the Episcopal Church in the United States. She has also served as secretary and has co-chaired various subcommittees. In addition to her service to the Episcopal Church, Jessica has taught on the music faculties of

the University of North Alabama and Northeast Mississippi Community College. In her spare time, she composes a little and watches Netflix a lot. Her published choral works are available from Paraclete Press and St. James Music Press.

Jessica writes:

I am standing for election for Director-at-Large in hopes that, if elected, I will help strengthen the relationship between AAM and the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music. At this time in the Episcopal Church's life, establishing a pattern of clear, consistent communication between the two bodies is critical, and having just finished a six-year term on the SCLM, I believe I can offer a perspective on the SCLM and General Convention process that may be helpful in crafting resolutions that, if enacted, will benefit AAM members. I am process-oriented, an excellent communicator, and hold in high esteem both the beautiful inherited liturgical traditions of the Episcopal Church, as well as the creative, innovative liturgical practices that I see emerging. I believe I would also bring a valuable millennial perspective to the AAM board.