

Winter Workshop Is Mini Version of Convention

Baltimore, Maryland

About a decade or so ago, the Baltimore Chapter of NPM sought to bring the format of the national convention to the local NPM community. At the time, NPM was winding down the use of regional conventions in favor of the national convention approach.

The vision was to bring the same types of formation opportunities on a smaller, affordable scale to the Baltimore region annually. Having a convention-styled event in our area strengthened the value of the local NPM membership. In addition, it provided a focus for the chapter calendar of events.

The workshops began with a plenum session. The keynote speaker might be someone local like former NPM President Msgr. Rick Hilgartner. The national office is in our backyard, after all!. Another option might be a nationally known composer like 2015 plenum presenter John Angotti, or Steve Janco, whose 2011 plenum addressed changes to the *Roman Missal*.

Following the keynote were morning breakout sessions. These breakouts might include tracks focused on: piano/organ, guitar and voice; a reading session sponsored by a publisher; ministry self-care and reflection; psalmody; or practical matters on topics such as sound systems or child protection. The breakout options would also include opportunities for NPM cantor or organ certification.

The first of the winter workshops was held around the 2011 introduction of the revised Roman Missal. There was quite an interest in how this would impact liturgical music. Several of the early workshops featured topics supporting the new missal, including Mass settings.

After lunch, afternoon sessions often included repeats of the morning opportunities. Offering on-site cantor certification adjudication has helped the Baltimore chapter to foster one of the largest representations of certified cantors in NPM.

Workshop attendees were encouraged to bring their instruments for a jam session to finish the day of formation and fellowship. The joy of singing and playing music with chapter friends we don't typically see at Sunday liturgy is a gift we embrace.

The Winter Workshop was typically held on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in January. Many parish offices and other workplaces would be closed, providing an opportune day to invest in ministry formation. Lunch was often included with the workshop fee of \$20-\$30 for chapter members (with separate fees for NPM certifications).

The Winter Workshops were held throughout the last decade. Over the years, weather cancellations have proven to be a concern, and the Baltimore chapter is considering virtual workshops to supplement our event calendar. NPM chapters need to offer these types of local opportunities, whether virtual or gathered, to increase value so local membership continues to thrive through an ever-changing landscape.

–Marie White, chapter secretary