



National Association of Pastoral Musicians

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Press Release: National Association of Pastoral Musicians Celebrates 50 Years of
Serving the Church Through Sacred Music

The National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM) celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2026, marking five decades of formation, fellowship, and leadership for those who serve the Church through sacred music.

NPM was founded in 1976 during a time of significant liturgical renewal in the Catholic Church following the Second Vatican Council. Father Virgil C. Funk, a priest of the Diocese of Richmond, Virginia, founded the National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM) in 1976. Father Funk offered this explanation of the association's purpose: "Our focus was—and is—on the musician: Good musicians make good music. We decided to work to motivate, encourage, and support pastoral musicians and clergy and to develop skills and understanding in the areas of music, liturgy, preparation for worship, communication, and spirituality." Solicitations brought in the first 1,700 members, and the association was on its way.

The first convention of NPM's members took place in Scranton, Pennsylvania, in March 1978, with the theme "Musical Liturgy Is Normative." To make that affirmation and dream a reality, the association began adding to its services for members. One of the most widely used and most practically helpful additions to NPM's repertoire of services were its summer schools and institutes, programs lasting three to five days that focused on particular ministries or rites. The first such program was offered in 1978; in subsequent years, there were repeatedly successful schools and institutes for cantors, choir directors, organists, ensemble musicians, Gregorian chant, music education, children's choir directors, adult initiation, and more.

From its earliest days, NPM sought to integrate musical excellence with pastoral sensitivity and liturgical understanding. What began as a small gathering of musicians seeking formation and collaboration quickly grew into a national movement supporting parish music ministers across the United States.

Over the past fifty years, NPM has become a leading voice in pastoral music ministry. Through national conventions, educational programs, publications, and a vibrant network of local chapters, the Association has provided formation and resources for thousands of parish musicians and leaders who guide congregations in prayer through music.

Part of NPM's enduring legacy can be heard each Sunday in Catholic churches across the country. Many of the hymns and liturgical settings widely sung at Mass today were first introduced or premiered at NPM national conventions, where composers, publishers,



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and pastoral musicians gathered to share new music for the Church's prayer. These gatherings have served as an important meeting place where new repertoire enters the life of the Church.

"For fifty years, NPM has been a place where pastoral musicians find community, formation, and the tools they need for ministry," said NPM Executive Director Jennifer Kluge. "As we celebrate this milestone, we also look forward with gratitude and hope to the next generation of musicians who will continue to lead the Church's song."

A cornerstone of the Association's work has been its flagship journal, *Pastoral Music*, which has served as a vital resource for pastoral musicians for decades. Through articles on liturgy, music, theology, and pastoral practice, the journal has helped shape the development of pastoral music ministry in parishes throughout the country.

The Association will commemorate its golden anniversary throughout 2026 with special events, historical reflections, and celebrations across the country, culminating at the 2026 NPM National Convention in Washington, DC (July 20-24). The gathering will bring together pastoral musicians from across the nation to celebrate the legacy of NPM and envision the future of music ministry in the Church.

"For generations, pastoral musicians have been called to help the faithful encounter God through song," said Meyer Chambers, Chair of the NPM Board of Directors. "This anniversary is a celebration not only of the Association, but of the countless musicians whose ministry has shaped parish life and worship for fifty years."

As it enters its second half century, NPM remains committed to forming and supporting pastoral musicians who serve the Church with faith, skill, and dedication.

About the National Association of Pastoral Musicians

The National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM) is a national organization that supports the formation and ministry of pastoral musicians in the Catholic Church. Through education, publications, events, and a nationwide network of members and chapters, NPM fosters the art of musical liturgy and the pastoral leadership of those who lead the Church's song.

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