

Church Creates Scholarship Program to Train Next Generation of Church Musicians

by Stephen Peet, Annapolis, MD

St. Andrew by the Bay Roman Catholic Church in Annapolis, Maryland, is the site of an exciting new program designed to encourage young musicians to train for careers in Music Ministry. The program was started two years ago by Stephen Peet, St. Andrew's Director of Music and Liturgy. The program currently has two components—a Young Organist Scholarship and a High School Church Music Scholarship. The church currently has two students enrolled in the Young Organist program, and one student in the High School Program.

The High School program is designed for any specialty—keyboard player, singer or instrumentalist. The four-year scholarship—beginning in 9th grade—trains all musicians in the basics of hymn and service music playing, both on their instrument and the keyboard, as well as giving basic instruction in conducting, accompanying, and organizational skills. Our current Scholar is regularly accompanying the Children's Choir, and playing and cantoring for two masses each month.

Our Young Organist Scholarship program is designed for students in third grade, is a six-year program, and uses the materials from the *Discover the Basics*® and *Discover the Organ*® series. Our hope is that after they complete this program they will be ready to continue into the High School Scholarship program and learn the rest of the training they may need to become a church director of music.

"I began directing the children's choir at my home church when I was eleven, and with little guidance from anyone except my piano teacher. When I began my own organ study at fifteen, I was also directing the adult choir," says Mr. Peet. "I don't think of myself as a prodigy certainly, but I do wish that I had known more about what I should be doing. Our program is designed to give that specific training to those students who express an interest in becoming church musicians. Our Young Organ Scholars have each completed the four beginning books in the *Discover the Basics*® series in a little over a year, and are now in the first and second levels of *Discover the Organ*®. They especially enjoy the supplemental books with their favorite melodies—*Christmas Season at the Organ* and *Easter and Pentecost Seasons at the Organ*. They memorize these pieces before even having to be asked, and each has performed in our annual Scholarship Concert, as well as special Masses during Christmas and Easter. The church is very supportive of the program. I give my time to teach the lessons, and profits from our annual Concert Series program are used to provide materials."

"We currently have an electronic theater organ in our sanctuary, but because of the scholarship program and the positive response it has elicited from our congregation, we are hoping to begin fund raising soon for a new pipe organ. In the meantime, our scholars are taken to other churches in the areas to reinforce the wonderful information they are learning about the instrument in their lesson books."

"We are expecting great things of this program. We had three times as many applicants for the program this year, and are still evaluating the applications. We're hoping that even those students who aren't selected for the scholarship will have parents who will support their study themselves. The parents of our current Young Organ Scholars have also been surprised at how they have been able to follow along, and learn some keyboard playing themselves!"