



# Georgia Poetry Society Newsletter, January 2026

## President's Corner

By **Barbara Barry-Nishanian**

Fellow Poets, as we begin a new year, I want to take a moment to thank each of you for your continued support of the Georgia Poetry Society.



Whether you met with fellow poets in person, shared your poems on Open Mic, renewed your membership, or quietly encouraged others along the way, you helped keep our society active, welcoming and creative throughout 2025.

One of the true joys of this past year has been our third Thursday evening Open Mic meetings. Hearing members read their poems, poems straight from the heart reminds us why this society exists. Your voices, styles and willingness to share make these evenings meaningful and memorable.

I also want to acknowledge something important about how we made 2025 work. Our society was sustained by a small but committed leadership team: Marion Owens our tech gentleman, myself, Barbara Barry-Nishanian President, Michele Alderman Vice President, Alice Johnson Secretary, Kimberly Wright Treasurer and Newsletter Editor, Elizabeth John Membership Chair.

Each person probably felt like they wore more than one hat at times, and each stepped up when

needed. Dedication like this keeps GPS organized, connected, and moving forward—and I am deeply grateful for their support and service.

Most of all, thank you, our members. A poetry society is not defined by titles and roles, but by poets who show up, listen, write, and share. Your participation is the heartbeat of this organization.

As we look ahead, I hope you'll continue to read, write, attend events when you can, and invite others who love poetry to join us.

Together, we keep poetry alive - one poem, one voice, one meeting, one evening at a time.

Friends, we are not saying goodbye to the Meet and Greet meetings, but for now we are putting them on a back burner. If members express an interest in them, we might bring them back in a different format. Please let us know how we can get together, other than meetings and Open Mic. I'd appreciate your ideas.

One of the brightest parts of the year ahead is The Reach of Song, our beloved anthology of members poems. Our goal is a Spring 2026 release. Submission information, including guidelines and deadlines - will be announced after the Jan. 31 Quarterly Members Meeting. I invite every member —Please send in your poems! Your poetry belongs in this collectable anthology.

You see a new GPS logo that reflects our literary spirit, our Georgia warmth, hospitality, and our roots.

Expect to also see a new name for our newsletter, one that better reflects the vibrancy

of our society and reach in the community, and in work also, is a new Open Mic announcement.

2026 is not just a different number on your calendar—for GPS it's a time for growth, intention, and a time for celebrating you and your personal achievements, and for celebrating the poetic lives we're building together.

Friends, remember if you are interested in participating in any manner, or have suggestions for programs or ideas in any area, or for April Poetry month, please let me know by email ([joycines@gmail.com](mailto:joycines@gmail.com)). GPS thrives, as all poetry societies, on the valuable ideas and talents of its members.

#### **Coming Soon: A New Name for Our Newsletter**

As part of our 2026 refresh, the GPS newsletter will soon debut a new name — one that reflects Georgia, poetry, and community. We're excited to share it with you once the board finalizes the choice. A new look, a new voice, and a new chapter for GPS.

## **GPS Events**

### **January 31 Quarterly Membership Meeting**

We invite all members to join us for our first Quarterly Membership Meeting of 2026 on Saturday, January 31 at 11 a.m., via Zoom. This will be a brief but important gathering as we review the 2025 Yearly Report, share updates on ongoing projects, and look ahead to the work and opportunities that await us in the coming year. We will also provide the latest information on The Reach of Song, our members' anthology. After delays in 2025, we are moving forward

with renewed focus, and we will outline the next steps for submissions and production.

Although our 2026 programming is still taking shape, we look forward to sharing early plans and possibilities. This year offers us a chance to strengthen our community, expand participation, and continue building a society that reflects the creativity and commitment of its members.

Following the formal meeting, we invite anyone who wishes to stay for an informal conversation about how you might like to get involved — whether within GPS or in your own local poetry communities. Your ideas, interests, and energy are essential to shaping the year ahead.

We hope you'll join us as we begin 2026 with clarity, connection, and a shared sense of purpose.

## **GPS News**

### **Guest Poets at Open Mic: A New Monthly Tradition**

Beginning in 2026, GPS is launching a new initiative to bring guest poets to our monthly Open Mics. Our goal is to spotlight voices from across Georgia, strengthen community connections, and offer members a chance to hear from writers whose work inspires and challenges us.

Our Open Mics are held on Zoom on the third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m., and each gathering will begin with a brief reading or craft talk from a guest poet, followed by our regular open sharing.

We look forward to building this new tradition together and celebrating the rich diversity of poetry in our state.

## Limited-Time Membership Offer

Through the end of January, you can join the Georgia Poetry Society for just \$20. It's our way of welcoming new voices into the community and making it easier than ever to step into a richer poetic life.



## A New Look, A New Year: GPS Moves Forward in 2026

As we step into 2026, the Georgia Poetry Society is embracing a season of renewal. This year brings a fresh visual identity, a clearer sense of direction, and a renewed commitment to serving poets across the state.

You'll notice our new GPS logo and the updated Open Mic logo, both designed to reflect a more contemporary, welcoming, and creative spirit. Along with these changes, we are refreshing the look and feel of the newsletter to make it more visually engaging, easier to read, and better aligned with the vibrant community it represents.

We are also leaning more fully into the tools that help us stay connected. Our monthly Open Mics

will continue on Zoom, and we look forward to exploring additional ways to use technology to support accessibility, participation, and statewide connection.

This is a year of new plans, new energy, and new possibilities. We're grateful to have you with us as we move forward together.

## The Reach of Song: Back on Track for 2026

After a year of delays and shifting timelines, we are pleased to share that The Reach of Song is once again moving forward with renewed focus. Our goal is to complete the 2025 edition before April, and we are committed to providing clear, timely information as we progress.

We appreciate your patience during the confusion of recent months. With the new year comes a fresh start, and we are approaching this project with clarity and purpose.

Submission dates and updated guidelines will be announced after the January Membership meeting. Thank you for your continued enthusiasm and support for this longstanding GPS tradition.

## The Heart of GPS: A History of Hands and Voices

The Georgia Poetry Society was founded on August 30, 1979, when two poets — Charles J. Bruehler and Edward Davin Vickers — gathered a small group of thirty charter members who believed deeply in the power of poetry to bring people together. From the very beginning, GPS was built not just on bylaws and meetings, but on the generosity, imagination, and steady hands

of volunteers who wanted to nurture a statewide community of poets.

Over the decades, that spirit of dedication carried GPS forward. Members organized contests, hosted readings, mentored young writers, and poured countless hours into building programs that would outlast them. Grants from the Georgia Council for the Arts helped establish chapbook competitions that uplifted emerging voices, and in 1996, GPS volunteers helped bring poetry into the excitement of the Centennial Olympic Games, resulting in the anthology Poetry in Motion. In 1999, nearly 250 poets from across the country gathered in Atlanta for the National Federation of State Poetry Societies Convention — a milestone made possible entirely by the hard work of GPS members who believed in what this organization could be.

Through all these years, one thing has remained constant: GPS has always been shaped by the people who show up. The ones who give their time, their creativity, their patience, and their love of poetry. The ones who step in when something needs doing. The ones who believe that a community like this matters.

As we step into a new year — and into a new chapter — we honor the many hands that built this organization and kept it thriving for nearly five decades. Their efforts remind us that GPS has never been a passive membership; it has always been a living, breathing collaboration.

And now, as we refresh our identity and look toward the possibilities ahead, we invite our members to continue this tradition of involvement. Every contribution, large or small, personal or financial, helps shape the future of

GPS. The next chapter will be written by those who choose to take part in it.

*Historical details compiled from publicly available GPS records and past publications.*

## Did you know?

A few bright moments from GPS history:

- GPS was founded on August 30, 1979 by Charles J. Bruehler and Edward Davin Vickers, with just 30 charter members.
- In 1986, a grant from the Georgia Council for the Arts helped establish the Charles Dickson Chapbook Competition, supporting emerging poets statewide.
- GPS played a role in the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games, publishing the anthology “Poetry in Motion” featuring poems inspired by the event.
- Nearly 250 poets from across the country attended the 1999 National Federation of State Poetry Societies Convention hosted by GPS in Atlanta.
- For almost five decades, GPS has published The Reach of Song, an annual anthology showcasing Georgia voices.

# Member News

## Longtime member Jill Jennings mourned

Those of you who have been involved in the Georgia Poetry Society will remember Jill Jennings, a wonderful, witty and wise poet and a valued leader in our organization.

Sadly, Jill passed away in October in hospice care at Lehigh Acres, Florida.

Her obituary [posted on her author website](#) states that she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and a master's degree from the University of Georgia, Athens.

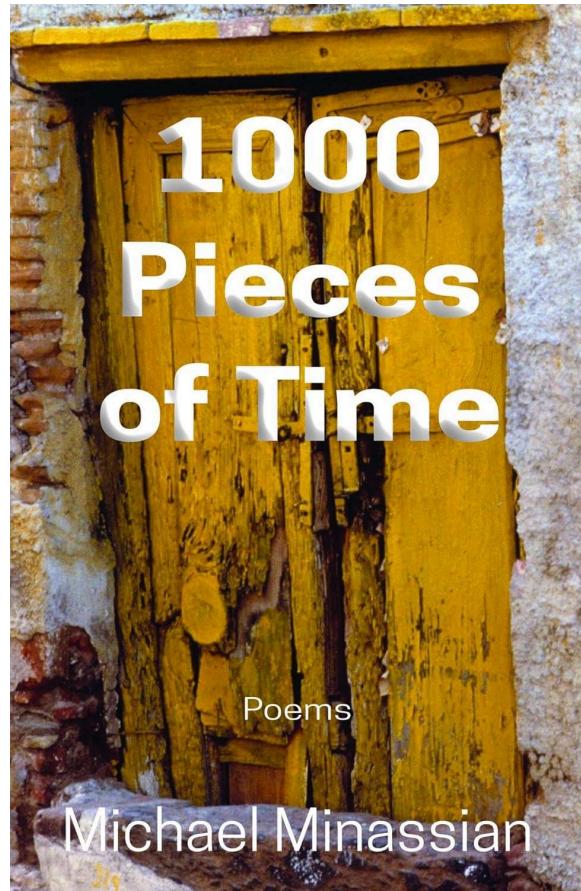
"Her commitment to learning was matched only by her dedication to teaching; Jill imparted knowledge as a Latin and English teacher at several schools, where she inspired countless students with her enthusiasm for literature and language," her obituary states.

An active member of the Georgia Poetry Society, she had most recently served on the GPS Board.

Jill is survived by her husband Paul.

Her obituary puts into words the loss of Jill: "Those who knew Jill will remember her not only for her literary talents but also for her warm spirit and kind heart. She was a person who touched the lives of many, and her legacy will continue through the memories shared by her friends and family."

## Michael Minassian's new poetry collection released



New member Michael Minassian's latest poetry collection, *1000 Pieces of Time*, was released by Sheila-Na-Gig Editions in late 2025.

His fourth full-length collection of poetry is available at Amazon, [barnesandnoble.com](#), and at the [publisher's website](#). Minassian will also provide a signed copy free shipping for any GPS member who would like to contact him via email for payment instructions. Email him at [timeisnotariver@gmail.com](mailto:timeisnotariver@gmail.com).

# Spotlight on Kimberly Wright



Kim first connected with the Georgia Poetry Society at a Decatur Library reading featuring Jericho Brown, just months before Brown's *The Tradition* won the Pulitzer Prize. She attended GPS events on and off in the years that followed, drawn especially to the generative workshops and the sense of community they offered.

Kim's love of writing began with her freshman English teacher, Mrs. Elizabeth Irvine, at John S. Shaw High School in Mobile, Alabama, who recognized her talent early on. She went on to major in English and build a career in journalism, driven by a deep curiosity about people's stories and the hidden truths behind them.

Her early poetic influences include W. H. Auden — especially “Epitaph on a Tyrant” — and Stevie Smith’s “Not Waving but Drowning,”

though she notes her own writing style is quite different.

GPS is grateful for Kim's steady presence, her behind-the-scenes service, and her enduring love of language. Her contributions have mattered more than she realizes.

Though she modestly insists she's “hardly worthy of a spotlight,” Kim has served GPS with quiet, unyielding dedication. Her work as Treasurer and Newsletter Editor has been essential to keeping the organization running smoothly. GPS President, Barbara Nishanian remarked, “Kim has been my right hand during my presidency, supporting me through events and challenges with strength and confidence.” Kim is indeed worthy of a spotlight, and this month we honor her and thank her for her friendship and service to this poetry community.

# CONTACTS

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## BOARD MEMBERS

- Elizabeth John – Member Outreach Chair

- VACANT – Education Chair
- VACANT – Reach of Song Editor
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