

Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania

Serving 10 Counties, 28 Church Bodies, 2,000 Congregations and 1,000,000 Christian Members

The Call . . .

On the Web: www.casp.org

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 5241, Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Hicks Memorial Chapel - lower level

616 North Highland Avenue - Pittsburgh, PA 15206

to be one in Christ



December 2020/January 2021 Number 6

A Unifying Voice in the Name of Jesus Christ for the Mission of the Gospel and the Wholeness of Communities

Sing "Silent Night" Across Southwest Pennsylvania: Socially Distant and Spiritually Together



This year, planning for Christmas Eve stings. Because of the global pandemic, many churches are closed to in-person worship, or are limiting attendance and revising cherished traditions.

Online connections are a gift, yet the internet cannot recreate what Christian people have come to love about celebrating Christmas Eve together. We will miss our crowded churches and the joyful noise of organ, choirs, brass, and bands. We'll miss the hush of candlelight as we sing Silent Night together.

But our candles still glow, and a pandemic can't stop our song. Join Christians across our region for a safely distant, yet spiritually together, Silent Night sing this Christmas Eve.

On **December 24 at 6:30 pm**, you and your household are invited to sing with us. Light a candle and stand at the end of your sidewalk, on your front porch, or in your driveway. Together—socially distant

but spiritually united—we'll sing Silent Night together. We'll be a sign for one another of unity and hope, welcoming the Christ child into the world with one voice.

You can find lyrics and prayers at casp.org/silentnight. Help us spread the word about this simple, compelling way to be in community, even in times like these.

Christian Associates Partners with The Frick to Produce "Lights Across Pittsburgh"

While Christians light our Advent wreaths and hold our Christmas candles, our neighbors have their own ways of illuminating the midwinter dark.

On **December 17 at 7 p.m.**, in partnership with The Frick Pittsburgh and the JCC of Greater Pittsburgh's Center for Loving Kindness, Christian Associates presents an interfaith, interracial, intercultural celebration of our region's diversity: "Lights Across Pittsburgh."

The online program explores the role of light in five different winter holidays. Presenters will describe their own tradition, then join in a roundtable discussion.

We will explore the connections we see across these traditions and the ways they inspire us to move toward acts of service and kindness. At the end of a challenging



The Rev. Canon Eric McIntosh of St. James Episcopal Church, Penn Hills, lights the Advent wreath in a "Lights Across Pittsburgh" video.

year, our varied traditions offer a flicker of hope.

Presenters include the Rev. Canon Eric McIntosh of St. James Episcopal Church in Penn Hills, who will light an Advent wreath, and Tracy Baton, a member of Pittsburgh Mennonite Church, who will light a Kwanzaa kinara.

Other local leaders will light a Hanukkah menorah, a Unitarian Universalist chalice, and a Diwali diya. The Rodman Street Missionary Baptist Church choir, directed by Alton Mitchell, will close the event in song.

The program is free for Frick members and \$15 for other guests. Advanced registration is required, and is available at bit.ly/fricklights.

REFLECTIONS ALONG THE WAY

Dear friends,

This fall, many of you joined us for *We Have To Talk ... About Keeping the Peace This Election Season*, an online interfaith conversation with Nathan Stock of The Carter Center. Nathan shared the Center's sobering research that indicated Southwest Pennsylvania was at elevated risk for politically motivated violence in the period following Election Day.

Following the event, we formed a small working group of spiritual leaders—intentionally bipartisan, multiracial, and interfaith—to take action. Despite the unsettling prospect of civil unrest, the Carter Center's experience across the globe has shown that faith leaders can use proven strategies to prevent political violence in their communities. The process is surprisingly simple: **the right words at the right time from the right people make a real difference.**

Our group devised a series of messages, based on the research of conflict experts across the nation. We cast them in Southwest Pennsylvania-specific terms, such as the language of neighbor from our beloved Fred Rogers. To express the necessity of waiting for all votes to be counted, for example, we drew on the classic Pittsburgh experience of pouring Heinz ketchup.



photo by Jennifer McKinney

In this troubled season, the Prince of Peace brings with him the promise that peace might truly reign on earth as it does in heaven, and that each one of us, following him, might be a peacemaker.

At the same time, we worked to identify our people. We diagrammed all the sectors of our region's common life: our industries, our foundations, our sports teams, our entertainers. Who did we know? Who could speak in ways that would be heard and welcomed by the broadest possible audience? We made lists of those we might call on to bring our messages forward if the days after the election were tense or even violent.

Thanks be to God, the unrest we feared has not come to pass in our region. But the hours we spent in preparation were far from wasted. We learned just how critically important our houses of worship are to our region's public life. The trusted voices of diverse religious leaders, the breadth of our connections, and the ways we have cultivated those relationships over decades: these are the ties that bind us into a cohesive community, across all our dimensions of difference.

And of course, we do not do it on our own. Our own words of peace are inspired by the one who is the Word made flesh, who came to us in Bethlehem: the right Word at the right time. He is the one who called the right people to receive him: not prominent influencers but ragged shepherds and foreign Magi. The relationships we build mirror the relationships in God's very nature as Trinity, and all the relationships down through the centuries that we call Church.

In this troubled season, the Prince of Peace brings with him the promise that peace might truly reign on earth as it does in heaven, and that each one of us, following him, might be a peacemaker.

May the blessings of Christmas be with you and your communities, this year and always.

Your sister in Christ,

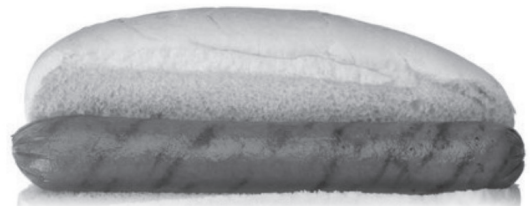


The Rev. Liddy Barlow
Executive Minister
Christian Associates of Southwest PA



*Some things are
worth waiting for.*

**Now that voting is closed,
our job is to wait patiently
as our election workers work hard
to count and verify every vote.**



This graphic was among a set of ten Pittsburgh-themed post-election graphics designed by the bipartisan working group.

Celebrate the Christmas Season

with EAST LIBERTY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

EAST LIBERTY
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

Please join us on Facebook and YouTube for these streamed events.

Friday, Dec 18 • 7:30 pm

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Our Cathedral Concert series culminates the 2020 year with its annual Christmas Concert featuring the Brass Roots and organist Dr. Edward Alan Moore! This holiday concert has become an East Liberty tradition!

Saturday, Dec 19 • 7 pm

BLUE CHRISTMAS:

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS SERVICE

Join this reflective streamed worship service to feel God's presence in a time of unprecedented isolation, loss, and distress. The Blue Christmas service is a resource of strength, hope and communion.

Thursday, Dec 24

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Join us virtually for the streaming of our Friends & Family service at 5 pm, and our Candlelight service at 8 pm. These are special services of Christmas music, scripture, and messages of hope.



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Videos to Celebrate Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Christians across the globe come together across our varied traditions each year to celebrate the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 18-25*.

This year, we will celebrate virtually! Christian Associates is producing a series of special video presentations for the week, to be featured on our website (casp.org) and Facebook page (facebook.com/christianassociateswpa).

Inspired by the 2020 theme for the Week, "Abide in My Love ... You Shall Bear Much Fruit" (John 15:1-17), the videos feature interviews and conversations with members of Christian Associates' Council of Bishops & Judicatory Executives. What do seemingly-disparate traditions have in common? What experiences shaped our understandings of Christian unity? How can we abide in Christ's love, even when the going gets tough? What fruit have our ecumenical friendships borne?

Your local ministerium may choose to celebrate the week with an online worship service, and Christian Associates would love to help! We would be glad to help promote your service, and even to participate in planning or leadership.

For suggested liturgies and reflections on this year's theme, visit the Greymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute, geii.org.

Help Launch Our Next 50 Years: Support the Ministries of Christian Associates

As this anniversary year draws to a close, we are so grateful all who have shaped Christian Associates' ministries in our first half-century. Our robust history shows the difference that diverse, committed, and faithful Christians can make when we work together.

Our first fifty years are just the beginning: will you join Christian Associates in mission to our region as our ecumenical journey continues?

Contributions from donors like you make all our ministries possible:

❖ **Community leadership**, from our spring COVID-19 prayer service that provided solace to our region, to election outreach that educated voters and helped keep the peace. When Southwest Pennsylvania needs the strong and values-led voice of the church united, Christian Associates is ready to respond.

❖ **Interfaith initiatives**, such as the Sofa Spirituality series of online dialogue opportunities: building bridges with our neighbors, exploring our differences, and celebrating our shared values. Join us on the sofa at sofaspirituality.org!

❖ **Partnership between the church and community organizations**, as we work in collaboration to relieve disaster, end hunger, promote positive police-community interactions, extend welcome to immigrants, minister to people affected by incarceration, and much more.

❖ **Communications**, including this newsletter you are holding, that share the news, events, and information that help churches connect and thrive.

With the help of donors like you, we are well on our way to securing a solid financial future for Christian Associates—

but to ensure that our work can continue for many decades to come, we need your continued support. Please take a stand for unity and collaboration by giving generously to Christian Associates.

You may use the enclosed envelope to send your gift today. Checks may be made payable to Christian Associates and mailed to:

Christian Associates of
Southwest Pennsylvania
PO Box 5241
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

You can also give online at www.casp.org/donate. Your gift may qualify as a charitable deduction for federal income tax purposes.

Thank you for taking this important step toward the unity we share in Christ and yearn to make manifest here in Southwest Pennsylvania.



Special Ways to Give

Be part of the Circle of Unity. Circle members give monthly, providing the sustaining support that Christian Associates needs most.

You won't need to remember to mail in a check; your contribution will be made automatically, and can be paused at any time. To show our gratitude, we'll send you a member newsletter and special treats throughout the year.

Join the Circle of Unity by visiting www.casp.org/circleofunity and signing up for a monthly online gift.

Join the John 17 Society. The Society includes our most generous donors, who give \$250 or more each year, or \$21 or more each month.

Members of the John 17 Society are invited to attend a special social event each spring, where we celebrate your commitment and offer sneak peeks at what's next in our work together.

Make a distribution from your IRA. If you are 70.5 years of age or older by the end of the year and have a traditional IRA that requires a minimum distribution, you may direct all or part of that distribution (up to \$100,000) to Christian Associates before the end of the calendar year. The donated distribution is not subject to federal income taxes.

Remember Christian Associates in your will. Ensure that our work can continue for many years to come by including Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania when you plan your estate.

*How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity!*

Psalm 133:1



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In this most unpredictable of years, these individuals, congregations, corporations, and foundations have provided the financial support that makes our work possible. We are so grateful for their generosity, and we look forward to including your name in this space next year.

* Indicates a member of the *Circle of Unity* monthly giving program

§ indicates that the person is a sponsor of the Jubilee Celebration not previously acknowledged in the September edition of *The Call*

John 17 Society "that they may all be one" \$250 or more

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This list includes donations made between November 15, 2019 and November 15, 2020. We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this list and apologize in advance if any names were omitted, miscategorized, or misspelled. Please contact our office if you discover an error and we will publish a correction. We are also deeply grateful to our anniversary sponsors, listed in the September 2020 issue of The Call. We will print the list of our 2020 judicatory sponsors in the February 2021 issue of The Call.



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Jan. 15-Feb. 19, 2021
Mary Lynn Callahan and B.J. Woodworth, Spiritual Directors

Difficult Texts: What the Bible Really Says About Poverty, Authority, and the Status Quo

Kelso Community Conversation on Race and Faith
Feb. 3, 10, 17, and 24, 2021
Liz Theoharis, Union Theological Seminary

Traditions of Christian Spirituality: An Overview *A Spiritual Formation Required Class*

March 7-10, 2021
L. Roger Owens, PTS

Wise Women and Spirituality *Conversations and Community Series*

Jan. 21, Feb. 18, March 18, and April 15, 2021
Barbara Brown Taylor, Lerita Coleman Brown, Mihee Kim-Kort, and Chanequa Walker-Barnes



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ENGAGING THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

June 10 & 11, 2021



Speakers include: Jonathan Wilson, Edith Humphrey, Paul Blowers, Sandra Richter, and Chris Armstrong

The Christian doctrine of Creation is one of the most contested doctrines of the modern era. But arguments with the natural sciences can distract us from the Bible's narrative of God's creation and redemption of the world, and disconnect that narrative from the life of the Church. This Conference will explore the biblical narrative of creation, its significance for the historic Church, and its implications for the worship and mission of the Church today.

Register January 4th-May 28th at webbercenter.tsm.edu

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*Christ the Savior
is Born*

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Reimagine Christmas



Peace and Blessings!

*Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi
and the*



Western PA Conference
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