

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

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Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
Hicks Memorial Chapel - lower level
616 North Highland Avenue - Pittsburgh, PA 15206

to be one in Christ



September 2021, Number 4

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

New Leaders Welcomed to Three Church Bodies

Transitions are in the air this autumn as three of Christian Associates' member church bodies welcome new leadership.

The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh elected **the Rev. Dr. Ketlen Solak** as its ninth bishop on June 26. Bishop-Elect Solak begins work in September and will be consecrated as bishop on November 13.

After an earlier career in music, she was ordained a priest in 2005 and currently serves as the Rector of Brandywine Collaborative Ministries in Wilmington, Delaware. She will be the first woman and the first person of color to serve as bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh.

The diocese's previous leader, Bishop Dorsey McConnell, concluded his ministry in August. He and his wife, Betsy, are retiring to their home in the White Mountains of New Hampshire.

At its General Conference in mid-July, the African Methodist Episcopal Church appointed **Bishop E. Earl McCloud, Jr.** as the next presiding prelate of the Third Episcopal District, which includes the



The Rev. Dr. Ketlen Solak

Pittsburgh and Allegheny-Scranton Districts. The District's previous leader, Bishop Frank Madison Reid III, is now serving the 11th District in Florida.

Bishop McCloud comes to our region from Africa, where he has led AME districts in both South Africa and West Africa. He grew up in Alabama and served for 10 years in the United States Army.

On July 24, the Allegheny Union Baptist Association elected the **Rev. Ricky Burgess** as its next Moderator. The AUBA brings together over 100 Black Baptist churches in

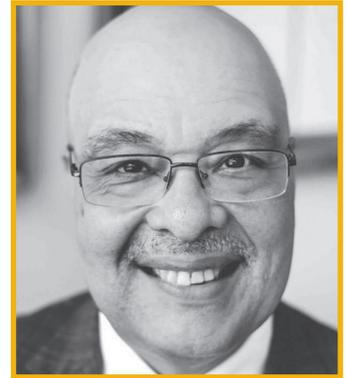


Bishop E. Earl McCloud, Jr.

Southwest Pennsylvania. Its moderator is elected for a four-year term.

Rev. Burgess has served for 30 years as pastor of Nazarene Baptist Church in Homewood. He is also a member of Pittsburgh's City Council, and he is a professor of Communications at the Community College of Allegheny County.

"I'm so excited to welcome these dynamic and experienced leaders to our Council of Bishops & Judicatory Executives," said Rev. Liddy Barlow. "We keep them in prayer as they begin these new ministries."



The Rev. Ricky Burgess

Region Prepares to Assist Our New Afghan Neighbors with Housing, Supplies, and Support

Our newest neighbors need our help.

This fall, Pittsburgh will welcome Afghan families airlifted from Kabul as our armed forces withdrew from Afghanistan. These families include civilians who offered interpretation and other essential assistance to the U.S. military. Their Special Immigrant Visas provide them the same support offered to refugees as they build new lives in the United States.

The local welcome effort is coordinated by our region's two refugee resettlement agencies, Jewish Family and Community Services (JFCS) and Acculturation for Justice, Access, and Peace Outreach (AJAPO), in cooperation with dozens of community partners.

Visit jfcspgh.org/help to discover many ways you and your congregation can welcome our new neighbors:

- ♦ Help identify temporary or permanent housing. Does your congregation have a parsonage that is not in use? Are you connected to landlords looking to lease apartments? Families receive assistance to pay rent during their first months in the United States and they are connected with employment opportunities so they can be self-sufficient.

continued on page 3 . . .

REFLECTIONS ALONG THE WAY

Dear friends,

As the Summer Olympics began, the hype was overwhelming. Simone Biles was the best: not just the best gymnast on the team, but the best gymnast—no, the best athlete!—ever. She was sure to win all the medals. She even posed with a farm animal for photos in the gym: a goat with the G.O.A.T.

But then disaster struck. In the preliminary round, Biles was not herself. She fumbled on the balance beam, simplified a vault, landed awkwardly. Soon, she withdrew from competition.

She wasn't coping with anxiety, or depression, or other mental ailments whose names we know. Instead, Biles' experience introduced most of us to a challenge we'd never heard of before, one that brings even the world's great gymnasts to their knees: *the twisties*.



When a gymnast has the twisties, she suddenly loses the ability to understand her body's location in space. Like Steve Blass on the mound, a routine she once performed to perfection becomes suddenly impossible; unlike in baseball, disorientation for a gymnast might end in a broken neck.

I don't know any Southwest Pennsylvania clergy who can do a Yurchenko vault, but I think many of us know a little bit of how Simone Biles was feeling in Tokyo. As he reflected on this strange time of pandemic ministry, chaplain Jim Kulma wrote, *"It's been a great stress and trauma for many in ministry. Their emotional/spiritual dimensions are experiencing the 'twisties,' a loss of spatial orientation and overwhelm."*

We used to know how to do this. Preaching, pastoral visits, committee meetings: we leapt into our daily tasks like a gymnast springboarding onto the bars. The rhythms of ministry have always been a challenge, but they were challenges we knew well and were fully prepared to meet.

... this disorienting era is calling us back to the shared, rich foundations of our faith. Back to scripture; back to prayer; back to community.

But in the past year, the pandemic has made familiar patterns strange. We've lived under the daily threat and presence of death and disease, forced to reckon with the ways that ordinary activities, like singing hymns together, might turn lethal. Community members have acted out their trauma on the only space they've felt they can control—their congregation and its clergy—bringing the conflicts and polarization of the wider world right into our own pews. No wonder we're not sure which way is up, or where we are, or how we can land safely.

In the gymnastics world, there are two ways to heal from the twisties.

One is time and rest. Stress both causes and exacerbates our sense of disorientation; stepping back and taking Sabbath can help us see a way forward. We can be patient with ourselves and one another, reconciling ourselves to not knowing all the answers, attending to the needs of the present moment.

The other way to heal is to go back to the beginning. Instead of a full-twisting double back, gymnasts will do a cartwheel or a somersault: skills they mastered in kindergarten. Adding difficulty one small step at a time, they grow in orientation and in confidence until the twisties recede altogether.

And so for us: this disorienting era is calling us back to the shared, rich foundations of our faith. Back to scripture; back to prayer; back to community. Back to the love and mercy of Christ, who called us to ministry and never fails to equip us for this work, even in the most challenging of times. Back to the beginning, so we can practice each twist and turn again, until we remember again exactly where—and Whose—we are.

Your sister in Christ,

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



Region Prepares to Assist Our New Afghan Neighbors

continued from page 1 . . .

- ♦ Offer financial support. The United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania is receiving financial donations to assist the new arrivals with housing, food, and clothing.
- ♦ Volunteer your time. You can help with grocery shopping, childcare, learning English, and more.
- ♦ Collect needed items. Be sure to check the lists on the website to ensure your gifts are appropriate for each family's needs; when in doubt, gift cards are always the right size.
- ♦ Write welcome letters. Share words of blessing and encouragement.

"I was a stranger and you welcomed me," says the Son of Man in Jesus' parable, as he receives those who practiced hospitality into the kingdom. Now is our time to extend that welcome to each of our new neighbors.



Interfaith Climate Change Group Launches Southwest PA Chapter



Pennsylvania Interfaith Power and Light is launching a Southwest Pennsylvania chapter this fall, with a first meeting at the Rhododendron Shelter in Pittsburgh's Highland Park on **Wednesday, September 22 at 5 p.m.**

PA IPL is a diverse community of congregations, faith-based organizations, and individuals of faith responding to climate change as an ethical and moral issue. Their work includes advocacy; education; energy, water, and waste conservation or efficiency; stewardship; and the use and promotion of clean, renewable energy sources across Pennsylvania.

The meeting on September 22, the Autumnal Equinox, includes a potluck dinner and a candlelit "Cosmic Walk", a ritual created in the 1980s by Sr. Miriam Therese MacGillis of the Dominican Sisters of Caldwell, New Jersey, the founder of environmental center Genesis Farm. Participants walk a spiral path representing the history of the universe, celebrating the "flaring forth" of matter, life, and understanding from the Big Bang to the present day.

To register for the meeting, and to learn more about PA IPL's ministries, visit paipl.us/event/southwest-pa-pittsburgh-pa-ipl-chapter-launch/.

Feed Your Neighbors – And Your Spirit – at Amen to Action

Now's the time to register a team from your church, your community, or your family to take part in an amazing demonstration of unity and care for our neighbors: *Amen to Action!*

Gathering in events across the region this November, the volunteers of *Amen to Action* will pack one million nutritious, shelf-stable meals for the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. Together, we'll show the unity of the Body of Christ, gathering across our denominational diversity.

Choose the morning (8:30-noon) and location that work best for you:

- ♦ **Saturday, November 6** at Crossroads Church in Oakdale, Christ Church at Grove Farm in Sewickley, or North Catholic High School in Cranberry
- ♦ **Saturday, November 13** at Mount Ararat Baptist Church in Larimer, Orchard Hill Church in Wexford, or Amplify Church in Plum
- ♦ **Saturday, November 20** at St. Catherine Laboure in South Park, First Presbyterian in Beaver, or Allison Park Church in Allison Park
- ♦ **Friday, November 26** at Sacred Heart Church in Shadyside

People of all ages are welcome to volunteer. This is a great opportunity to share the joy of service with your children or grandchildren.

Financial gifts are also needed to support the project: just \$15 provides 50 meals. Both volunteer registration and online donations can be found at amentoaction.org.

Bridge Political Divides in Your Community and Family This Fall

Christian Associates continues to partner in bringing *Braver Angels'* free online workshops to our region.

Join us as we learn how to find common ground across political divisions, engaging in healthy dialogue without compromising our own deeply-held beliefs. Upcoming workshops include:

**Countering Political Polarization:
October 18 at 7 p.m.**

**Families and Politics:
November 15 at 7 p.m.**

To register, find links at casp.org. Both sessions will be identical to the workshops offered earlier this year; both first-timers and repeat attendees are welcome to attend.



Bishop David Zubik, Diocese of Pittsburgh, (at right) has been a past participant in *Amen to Action*

Into the Unknown: Thriving Churches Event Explores Ministry Without a Map

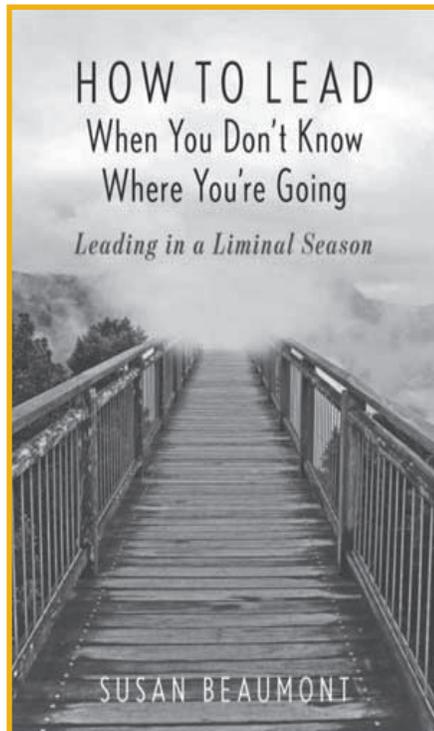
Between the old ways and what's next ... no longer there, but not yet arrived where we're going ... so much of our ministry takes place in the in-between. That's especially true now, as cultural shifts change church and community even as the COVID-19 pandemic resets longstanding realities.

This fall, Beaver-Butler Presbytery's annual *Thriving Churches* Event features the **Rev. Susan Beaumont**, author of *How To Lead When You Don't Know Where You're Going: Leadership in Liminal Spaces*.

Beaumont is a consultant, coach, and spiritual director. Ordained in the American Baptist Churches, she teaches at Wesley Theological Seminary.

The event takes place at **Calvin Presbyterian Church** in Zelienople on **Friday, September 24** from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

The cost is \$35. Registration is available at beaverbutler.org/Beaumont-event.



Window + Mirror = Discovery

That's the formula for *Sofa Spirituality*, an online interfaith dialogue project of Christian Associates and the JCC's Center for Loving Kindness.

Short interviews with spiritual leaders from around the world offer a **window** into the spiritual life of a neighbor.

Real-time small group dialogues explore the themes of each interview. The dialogue is a **mirror** in which we can all reflect on our own faith and practices.

Through interview and dialogue, we **discover** shared values. We affirm the particularities of our diverse faith traditions while celebrating all we hold in common.

This fall, *Sofa Spirituality* is offering public dialogues each Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday at 5 p.m. Check out our calendar at sofaspirituality.org to see our full list of coming events, and register to receive the Zoom link.

We also continue to offer customized *Sofa Spirituality* experiences for congregations, ecumenical groups, and other organizations. Reach out to learn more.

RACIAL WEALTH GAP Learning Simulation

The Racial Wealth Gap Learning Simulation is an interactive tool developed by Bread for the World and NETWORK that helps people understand the connections among racial equity, hunger, poverty, and wealth.

- In the simulation, participants learn how federal policies created structural inequalities.
- The simulation guides participants to an understanding of why racial equity is so important to ending hunger and poverty in the United States.
- Since the simulation emphasizes the importance of racial equity, it can be a helpful companion tool for churches, organizations, agencies, schools, and communities that have begun working on race and want to learn more about the role that public policy has had, over time, in creating structural divides.

To learn more about the simulation, go to <https://www.bread.org/library/racial-wealth-gap-learning-simulation>

Rev. Liddy Barlow is available to facilitate the simulation in your organization. Contact lbarlow@casp.org. This effort is sponsored by the SW PA Bread for the World Team.



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

ECUMENICAL EVENTS

The Port

3620 Butler St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15201
portpgh.com

Image and Likeness: An Exhibition of Sacred Art

Dates: Aug. 12-Sept. 18
Time: Noon-1 p.m. daily Mon.-Fri., or by appointment

Works by contemporary artists reflect the grace animating the material world, the likeness of the divine in the human form, or the glory of God that St. Francis of Assisi saw in all creatures. Offered in partnership with Assisi Arts Community.



Blessed Be Educators

baidos.net/blessed-be-educators

Domestic Violence and Healthy Relationships

Date & Time: Sat., Oct 9, 10 a.m.-noon
Cost: Free, free-will offering received

The first in the 2021-2022 series of virtual workshops: "The Lost Year: How Can We Move Forward? What Did We Learn?" Educators gather for professional development within a Christian framework. Act 48 Professional Development hours available. To register, contact Mary Ann Hvizdos, mahvizdos@verizon.net.



Association of Pittsburgh Priests

associationofpittsburghpriests.com

Peace Begets Peace

Date & Time: Thurs., Oct. 7, 7 p.m.

Marie Dennis, executive committee member of Pax Christi's Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, reflects on the U.N.'s Treaty on Nuclear Weapons in light of a Catholic commitment to nonviolence.

Black and Catholic

Date & Time: Weds, Nov. 3, 7 p.m.

Fr. Matthew Hawkins, parochial vicar at St. Benedict the Moor Parish and St. Mary Magdalene Parish, explores the identity of Black Catholics and their impact on the culture of the Church.

All programs are free of charge and presented via Zoom. Register at associationofpittsburghpriests.com.

Mount St. Macrina House of Prayer

500 West Main Street
Uniontown, PA 15401
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sistersofstbasil.org

Saturday Morning Spiritual Reflection: Optimism's Chain Reaction

Date & Time: Sat., Oct 23, 10-11:30 a.m.
Cost: \$20
Leader: Becky Johnen, Ed.D.

Enjoy a time of spiritual reflection in this virtual Zoom program. Register by Oct. 18 by email to hpmsm@verizon.net.



Divine Mercy Parish

164 Washington Place
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
divinemercypgh.org

First Principles to Survive in a World Gone Mad

Date: Sat., Oct 9
Time: 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Cost: \$20 + optional \$10 lunch

Dr. Peter Kreeft, Ph.D., is the author of more than 95 books and has been a leading voice in the Catholic world on winning the culture war for decades. The Profundum Speaker Series seeks to assist Catholics to go deeper into the intellectual traditions and riches of the Church. Register online at divinemercypgh.org/profundum.



Epiphany Academy of Formative Spirituality

820 Crane Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15216
epiphanyassociation.com

The Epiphany Academy of Formative Spirituality is happy to announce that Susan Muto, Ph.D., Dean, has won the first place award in the Spirituality category from the Catholic Media Association (CMA) for the year 2021 for her book, *A Feast for Hungry Souls: Spiritual Lessons from the Church's Greatest Masters & Mystics* (Ave Maria Press, 2020). To order an autographed copy of *A Feast* at the special sale price of \$20, call the Academy at 412-341-7494.



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Challenging the School to Prison Pipeline

Sat. Oct. 9, 2021, 9am-4pm

(8:30am Registration & Breakfast)

Christ United Methodist Church
44 Highland Rd. Bethel Park, PA 15102

Cost: \$15/person scholarships are available
Advanced registration is required, christumc.net/pipeline
Registration deadline is Oct. 4

The school-to-prison pipeline is a term used to describe how children and youth of color are rerouted by systems and institutions, funneled away from educational success and towards the criminal justice system.

For more information, including a complete list of speakers, visit christumc.net/pipeline

This important discussion is presented by the Christ Church Anti Racism Team.
Partial financial support provided by the Western PA Conference Anti Racism Team.

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Part I: Oct. 6-8, 2021

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6:30-8 pm



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program@laurelville.org • 724.423.2431

GUIDING THE FAITHFUL IN COMPLEX TIMES

Register Now - All Classes and Events Take Place Online

Grief: Loss and Resilience in a Pandemic World

Sept. 29, Oct. 27, Nov. 17, 2021
Dr. Melissa Kelley and Amy DeGurian

The Art of Transitional Ministry, Part 2

Oct. 7, 14, 21, 28, Nov. 4, 11, 18, 2021
The Rev. Dr. Jan Nolting Carter, the Rev. Dr. Paul Rhebergen, and the Rev. Hart Edmonds

Wise Women 2.0 - Caretaking

Oct. 21, 2021
Jeanelle Austin

Becoming People of One Book

Albright-Deering Event
Nov. 3, 2021
The Rev. Dr. Steven Tuell and the Rev. Chenda Innis Lee

Successful Strategic Planning and Implementation for Churches

Nov. 7-Dec. 11, 2021 (asynchronous)
Jim Downey

Wise Women 2.0 - Community

Nov. 18, 2021
Sara Miles

W. Don McClure Lectures in World Mission and Evangelism

Oct. 6, 2021 Dr. Kimberly Hill Lecture—*Christian Justice, Exploitation, and Racial Violence from 'Red Rubber' to 'Bloody Sunday'*
Oct. 13, 2021 The Rev. Dr. Asa Lee and Dr. Kimberly Hill Panel Discussion—*Reckoning with Invisibility: African American Missionaries and Their Hidden Legacies*



www.pts.edu/CE 412-924-1345 ConEd@pts.edu

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12-Step Programs

Visit our website at www.wvis.org
or call 304-345-0926

Dedicated to providing space and opportunities for deepening mindfulness, prayer practice, interior peace, and for integrating moral and ethical values.

Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania

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Bring Christian Unity to Your Inbox



Tired of waiting two months between paper editions of *The Call*? You are in luck! Now you can subscribe to Christian Associates' monthly e-newsletter: *Unity n'At*.

True to its name, *Unity n'At* brings news of local ecumenism and much more directly to your inbox. You'll find out about all the latest events and updates—and with a convenient monthly format, we'll never clog your inbox.

Add your name to our list of *Unity n'At* subscribers by visiting casp.org/sign-up.

We welcome submissions of news and events for publication in *Unity n'At* or *The Call*. Send directly to Rev. Barlow at lbarlow@casp.org.

Rebuilding & Restoring Connections Between Clergy, Police

"Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in." – Jeremiah 58:12

The summer saw the first meetings of **REBUILDING AND RESTORING: The City of Pittsburgh Police/Spiritual Leaders Community Councils Network**.

Christian Associates is working with the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police's Community Engagement Office, the Center for Victims, Rodman Street Missionary Baptist Church, and the Center for Loving Kindness at the JCC to convene clergy and other spiritual leaders in each of the city's six police zones.

The goal is to establish channels of communication, to speak honestly with one another, to work for improved relationship, and to identify ways to work together. As the project grows, it may be replicable in other municipalities throughout our region.

If your congregation is located within the City and you would like to learn more about the REBUILDING AND RESTORING group in your zone, email lbarlow@casp.org.