

Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania

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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



February-March 2021, Number 1

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

Clergy Included in Pennsylvania Group 1B; Encouraged to Receive Vaccine



Rev. Scott Fuller, Spiritual Care Coordinator at UPMC East in Monroeville, receives his COVID-19 vaccine.

However, with the expansion of Group 1A and the limited supply of vaccines, it may be quite a while before Group 1B is invited to receive its first shots.

“There is not a lot of vaccine anywhere in the state right now,” Department of Health public information officer Amber Liggett said. “Everyone, regardless of being in Phase 1A or later, needs to have patience during this process.”

Liggett added that it may take several months to complete group 1A. Be sure to follow local news sources and government websites for the most up-to-date information about vaccine access.

Procedures for vaccination sign-up vary by each individual provider. A map showing vaccination sites, color-coded by availability and including providers’ websites or phone numbers, is available at www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Vaccine/.

When Group 1B opens, clergy and house of worship personnel should be prepared

to demonstrate their eligibility to vaccine providers. Allegheny County Health Department spokesperson Aaron Aupperle noted that other occupation-based group, such as health care workers, have been asked to verify employment through ID cards, pay stubs, or letters from their employer.

Meanwhile, clergy serving in health care settings are eligible now, in group 1A. The Rev. Scott Fuller, Spiritual Care Coordinator at UPMC East in Monroeville, received his first vaccine in late December and his second in mid-January. He said over 70 patients have died from COVID-19 at that hospital.

“Having seen what the disease does first-hand, having an additional layer of protection was very much a relief,” Rev. Fuller said. “Being vaccinated helps me do my job better: to serve God and serve the people. It’s so important that we all get vaccinated as soon as it becomes available.”

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The commonwealth of Pennsylvania has included clergy and other essential support personnel for houses of worship in Group 1B of its COVID-19 vaccination plan.

Museum of the Courageous Honors Pittsburgh’s Faith Leaders

Did you know that *you* were honored with a billboard in New York City’s Times Square this winter?

It’s true. The name in lights was “Pittsburgh’s religious community, 2018” and we were recognized as part of the inaugural *Courageous Class*, a project of the new Museum of the Courageous.

The *Courageous Class* is an annual celebration of historical and contemporary leaders who took a stand against hate and injustice through courageous acts.

The Museum described us this way:

“Pittsburgh’s religious community exemplified courageous leadership,

coming together in solidarity across religions to stand firmly against acts of hate in the wake of the deadliest anti-Semitic attack in America’s history.”

On the Museum’s website, motc.org, visitors can read more about Pittsburgh’s response to the 10.27 shootings at Tree of Life synagogue.

The Museum of the Courageous is currently an online institution, on the web at motc.org, and on Instagram and Facebook @[museumofthecourageous](https://www.facebook.com/museumofthecourageous). A physical museum will be established in the future. Its mission is to share and celebrate inspiring stories that inspire others to stand up to hate.



REFLECTIONS ALONG THE WAY

Dear friends,

Everyone's talking about unity.

"This is our historic moment of crisis and challenge, and unity is the path forward," said President Biden in his inaugural address.

"United we can deliver the peace, strength, and prosperity our country needs. Divided, we will fail," said House minority leader Kevin McCarthy in the aftermath of the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.



And they were not alone. In a month that included a second impeachment for one President and the inauguration of another, calls for unity came from every spot on the political spectrum. Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senator Mitch McConnell, and many, many others issued calls to come together, to focus on our common ground, to discover our shared identity.

Our ecumenical labors for unity usually take place in relative obscurity. But all of a sudden, unity is in the spotlight. As a person in the unity business, I would have expected to be thrilled by this development, but instead, all these calls for unity leave me unsettled and empty.

Perhaps that's because these politicians and pundits seem to have a very different unity in mind than that for which we work in the ecumenical world. For them, unity is a means to an end, a way to accomplish short-term political goals. Or, unity is a synonym for civility: a facile niceness that allows for polite surface conversation without threats and insults, but not for deeper dialogue about ideas that really matter. Sometimes, unity is even a way to ignore significant misdeeds or painful memories, letting the past alone without seeking consequences for offenses.

Together, we are bound for a day when our national identities diminish, where our political labels no longer matter, where our denominational factions fade away: when we truly can be "all one in Christ Jesus."

In contrast, Christian unity is not a tool of the majority nor a weapon of the minority. The unity we are called to in Christ is not a political expediency, not a civic consensus. The unity we seek calls for confession, reparation, and forgiveness, not brushing over wrongs. It is not a bland niceness, but something far deeper than that: *love*, love for God and love for our neighbor.

Nor is our unity in Christ something that we can create by sheer force of will. Instead, like the kingdom of God, it exists already in our midst as a hidden gift, sometimes visible but more often veiled, awaiting our uncovering. And also like the kingdom of God, unity simultaneously is not-yet: it waits ahead of us, a destination we can only glimpse, a day that hasn't yet arrived. Always, unity is God's work: work that the Spirit graciously invites us to share.

Calls for conversation across the political aisle are much needed—in fact, watch our Facebook page: we're hoping to organize some of these in coming months. But these dialogues are not the final destination of our work. As this turbulent political season continues, I hope we can keep our eyes on the unity promised by Jesus, not that preached by politicians. Together, we are bound for a day when our national identities diminish, where our political labels no longer matter, where our denominational factions fade away: when we truly can be "all one in Christ Jesus."

Your sister in Christ,

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



Sofa Spirituality Returns with New Interfaith Interviews and Dialogues

Your sofa: it's a comfortable place to relax and the perfect spot to curl up with a book. This winter, it's also where you can experience innovative interfaith dialogue.

Sofa Spirituality, an innovative online interfaith dialogue series produced in partnership by Christian Associates and the JCC of Greater Pittsburgh's Center for Loving Kindness, is back with a new two-month quarter of programming starting in early February.

It works like this: watch a short video interview with a spiritual leader on our website, sofaspirituality.org. In just 6-10 minutes, you can learn more about their faith and practices and discover unexpected connections with your own. Among the new interviews featured in this quarter are conversations with:

- **Bishop David Zubik** of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh
- **Rabbi Dr. Andrea Weiss** of Hebrew Union College, coordinator of the "American Values, Religious Voices" project



Sofa Spirituality interviews this quarter include (from top left, clockwise): **Bishop David Zubik, Rev. Sharon Groves, Fr. Paul Abernathy, Rabbi Andrea Weiss.**

- **Fr. Paul Abernathy** of the Neighborhood Resilience Project
- **Rev. Kotoku Crivello** of the Pittsburgh Zen Center

Next, sign up for a real-time dialogue among people from varied faiths and backgrounds. Gathering on Zoom, we'll

explore the themes of each interview, learning from one another and gaining new insight into our shared humanity and our fascinating differences.

This quarter, our dialogues take place every **Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday at 5 p.m.**, and last about 45 minutes each. They're not your usual exhausting and lonely Zoom meetings: instead, they're a way to nourish your spirit and beat back isolation.

You can even plan one or more customized dialogues for your congregation, ministerium, or organization, at no cost to you. Work with us and our extensive video library to choose the themes and format that work best for your group. We can even help pair your church with a partner congregation, perhaps from a tradition very different from your own, to build new relationships.

There's plenty of room on the sofa for you. Come join us and give *Sofa Spirituality* a try!



Sikh Activist Valarie Kaur, Quaker Author Parker J. Palmer, and Singer-songwriter Carrie Newcomer to Headline Henderson Summer Leadership Conference

Christian Associates is a co-sponsor and planning partner for the 2021 Henderson Summer Leadership Conference at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary: "Religion and the Common Good."

The **May 24-25** event will be fully online, with lectures and Q&A, interactive workshops, and worship all via Zoom. Conference activities take place from 12:30 to 8:30 p.m. each day.

Sikh activist Valarie Kaur, a noted TED speaker, will offer a Monday afternoon workshop, "The Labor of Revolutionary Love." Drawing on the metaphor of childbirth, she reframes the present moment in history as one of transition, and calls on us to show up in the labor of birthing a new future.

Monday evening, Kaur presents the annual Henderson Lecture, "See No Stranger: Revolutionary Love as the Call of Our Time." Speaking from her faith tradition and her life experiences resisting hate and bigotry, she offers a powerful way of

looking at others: not a strangers, but as "a part of me I do not yet know."

On Tuesday, Parker J. Palmer's keynote, "Cultivating the Courage to Stand and Act in the 'Tragic Gap'" invites us to hold the tension between reality and possibility.

On Tuesday night, Carrie Newcomer joins Palmer for "Healing the Heart of Democracy: A Gathering of Spirits for the Common Good," an evening of music and inspiration.

Registration is available now at pts.edu/SLC-2021. Valarie Kaur's Monday evening lecture is free to the public, but advance registration is required. Full conference registration for both days is



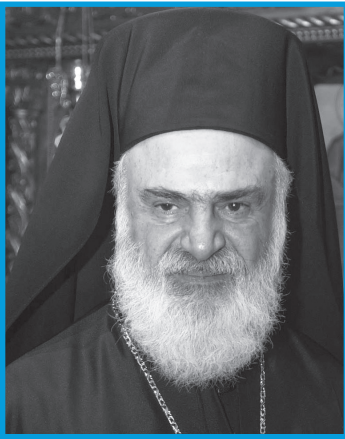
(Left to right): **Carrie Newcomer, Parker J. Palmer, Valarie Kaur**

offered using a grace economics model so that all who wish to participate have a greater opportunity to do so: registrants may choose their price, from \$0 in cases of financial need to the full cost of \$100, which includes a signed book.

Registration is limited, so early enrollment is strongly encouraged.



Remembering Metropolitan Maximos, Champion of Ecumenism



Metropolitan Maximos
1935-2020

After a lengthy period of failing health, **Metropolitan Maximos** reposed in the Lord on November 2, 2020. He led the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh from 1979 until his retirement in 2011.

Metropolitan Maximos played a significant role in ecumenism and interfaith work on the national and international levels. He was an official observer at the Second Vatican Council, and assisted in the drafting of both *Nostra Aetate* and *Lumen Gentium*. He participated in numerous World Council of Churches delegations and assemblies, as well as meetings of the National Conference of Christians and Jews.



The Rev. Liddy Barlow and her predecessor, Pastor Don Green, were honored to represent the ecumenical community at Metropolitan Maximos' funeral. *Left to right:* Archbishop Melchisedek of the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western PA, Orthodox Church in America; Pastor Don Green; Archbishop Elpidophoros of America; Rev. Liddy Barlow; Metropolitan Savas of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh.

“Metropolitan Maximos was a theological giant and a dedicated champion of Christian unity,” said Rev. Liddy Barlow. *“Serving for over three decades on our Council of Bishops and Judicatory Executives, he helped encourage the Orthodox churches of our region to participate fully in Christian Associates. He was an active, fondly-remembered, participant in our Theology & Education Committee. All Southwest Pennsylvania ecumenists who follow are the beneficiaries of his efforts and faithfulness. Memory eternal!”*

Clergy Included in Pennsylvania Group 1B

(continued from page 1 . . .)

Rev. Fuller said he experienced some minor side effects from the vaccine, including fatigue and chills, “but that went away after a few hours and I was back to work the next day. It’s important to overcome fear. To get back to the way life used to be, we need to do this.”

Rev. Richard Freeman, manager of the Pastoral Care team at Children’s Hospital UMPC, also experienced side effects, but he emphasized, “Nothing that I have endured with the chills is worth any of the illnesses I’ve seen as a chaplain in the hospital. I’ve lost a relative to this thing. I’m sure if she could have taken the vaccine and not died, she would have.”

While clergy await the opening of Group 1B, they can work to assist their communities with vaccine access. All Pennsylvanians over age 65, and those under 65 with pre-existing health conditions, are now eligible.

“Clergy are trusted members and messengers in their communities,” said Aupperle at the ACHD. “There are many ways clergy can help with the vaccination process, from talking to their congregations about the vaccine to offering technical assistance to members of their congregations who may be struggling with the sign-up processes.”



Liggett said clergy can help reduce vaccine hesitancy among their communities. “This vaccine is safe and effective, has gone through the proper review protocols, and is our best path to protecting one another against this virus,” she said.

Volunteers to assist with vaccination clinics, both medical professionals and those who can offer general clerical assistance, are being called from the Medical Reserve Corps.

To learn more, and sign up to volunteer in any of the 13 counties of Southwest Pennsylvania, visit www.alleghenycounty.us/Health-Department/Programs/Emergency-Preparedness/Medical-Reserve-Corps.aspx.

“This entire pandemic has been a test of patience, and this final stage is no different,” said Rev. Liddy Barlow of Christian Associates. “But we can now see the finish line. When enough of us are vaccinated, when case counts decline and herd immunity becomes a reality in our region, our church communities will be able to sing out loud, share meals together, join hands to pray, and hug our friends, just as we loved to do in February 2020. Let’s work together to reach that goal.”

A Sweet Volunteer Opportunity



As spring approaches, the sweet maple sap rises. At Camp Agape in Hickory, Washington County, camp staff and volunteers tap over 100 trees to collect the sap and make maple syrup.

The camp is in need of volunteer individuals or groups who can help harvest maple sap and boil it down into syrup. The volunteer day is from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m., and volunteers should bring their own lunch. All COVID-19 precautions will be observed.

“Due to the fact that the weather affects how fast it needs to be collected, we cannot set up a firm schedule for volunteers,” said camp director Deacon Rick Frederick. “We would contact folks at 4 p.m. the day prior about our need for help.”

Interested individuals or groups should contact Deacon Frederick at executivedirector@campagpe.org.



Special Thanks to Our Judicatory Supporters

Christian Associates is deeply grateful to all our member judicatories, but we wish to offer particular recognition to the church bodies who contributed to our financial needs in 2020:

Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh
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Kiskiminetas Presbytery, Presbyterian Church (USA)
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Third Episcopal District, African Methodist Episcopal Church
Washington Presbytery, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Western Pennsylvania Conference, United Methodist Church
Western Pennsylvania Division, Salvation Army

If you would like to support our ministries personally, as did many of your neighbors during our winter appeal, we invite you to do so. You can mail a check to **Christian Associates, PO Box 5241, Pittsburgh PA 15206**, or give online at www.casp.org/donate.

Thank you for helping our ministries to thrive, so that we may be a witness of unity to the world!

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THE CALL

A Retreat for Vocational Discernment

JUNE 24 - 27, 2021

The Call is a retreat that is aimed at young adults who are listening for the call of the Lord and considering whether that vocation might be to full-time ministry. The weekend will include talks on what a vocation is, how to discern God's call, what formation for ministry looks like, the cultivation of the spiritual life, and participating in the mission of God.

Space is limited to 25 participants.

For more information and to register, visit tsm.edu/thecall

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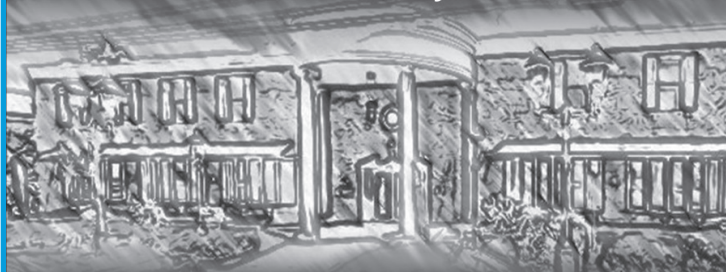


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**Traditions of Christian
Spirituality: An Overview**
March 7-10, 2021
L. Roger Owens, PTS

**Hope and Healing: Responding
to Mental Health Issues in
Youth and Young Adults**
March 17, 25, April 7, 2021
Michelle Snyder, Soul Shop

**J. Hubert Henderson Lecture
on Church and Ministry**
*See No Stranger: Revolutionary Love as
the Call of Our Times*
May 24, 2021
Valarie Kaur, Civil Rights Activist,
Documentary Filmmaker, and
Attorney

Henderson Summer Leadership Conference
Religion and the Common Good
May 24-25, 2021

Parker J. Palmer, Author, Educator, and Activist; Carrie Newcomer, Singer, Songwriter, and Educator;
and Valarie Kaur, Civil Rights Activist, Documentary Filmmaker, and Attorney.
Registration will be limited for this event!



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



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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Preachers and Writers: Seeking Your Reflections on Race

Christian Associates is renewing plans for the fourth volume in our book series, *The Word in Our Voices*. This spring, we will publish *Who Is My Neighbor? Southwest Pennsylvania Preaches on Race in America*. The book will be available in both printed and electronic forms.

We invite your sermons and homilies, essays, articles, blog posts, poetry, or other pieces of writing that consider matters of race and racism in the light of Christian faith and scriptural reflection.

We are particularly interested in featuring writing from preachers of color.

To submit your writing, email your manuscript, transcript, video or audio recording to lbarlow@casp.org by March 25. Be sure to note the scriptural text your sermon considers, and to include the date and location where it was preached. Those whose sermons are selected for publication will receive a printed copy of the book; due to limited space, we may not be able to include all submitted sermons.

To download the three previous volumes in the series, visit www.casp.org/sermons.

YouTube Channel Offers Ecumenical and Interfaith Programs

Fill a bowl of popcorn and click on over to Christian Associates' YouTube page for the latest in ecumenical programming! If you missed the premieres of any of our recent events or devotions, you can find them at bit.ly/CASPYoutube. Offerings include:

- ❖ Daily devotionals for the 2021 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. These short videos include conversations and prayers with bishops, executives, and other church leaders across our region.
- ❖ An interfaith prayer service on the eve of the presidential inauguration, including reflections from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Baha'i, and Native American traditions.
- ❖ Christian Associates' 50th anniversary Jubilee Celebration, featuring prayers and preaching, music and history, marking half a century of ecumenical ministry together.