

# 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](http://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



February-March 2023, Number 1

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

### Racial Wealth Gap Simulation Available for Churches and Community Groups

Pittsburgh is a city of bridges, but there's one chasm that our region still has not closed: the racial wealth gap.

Massive differences exist between the average wealth of Black and white households in the United States. How did the wealth gap come to be? What's its impact on quality of life for all our neighbors? And how can people of faith be part of the solution?

*Bread for the World's* Racial Wealth Gap Simulation explores these questions. The simulation is an interactive experience that brings economic disparity to life.

Working around tables, participants learn more about the impact of federal policies from Reconstruction to the present day, collecting and returning cards representing land, money, and lost opportunities.

In dialogue, participants make the connection between historic events, experiences we've had in our own neighborhoods, and our responsibilities as Christians. The workshop then moves from learning into action as participants



Members of Pittsburgh Presbytery churches took part in the Racial Wealth Gap simulation on January 21 at Hiland Presbyterian Church in Ross Twp.

brainstorm practical next steps for themselves and their congregations. Congregations, organizations, and judicatories across our region have participated in the simulation since 2021, and Christian Associates can bring this experience to your setting, too. Rev. Liddy Barlow is available to facilitate the simulation for groups between 12-75 people, in person or online. Contact us ([lbarlow@casp.org](mailto:lbarlow@casp.org)) and reserve your date.

Alternatively, if you would like to host and facilitate the simulation on your own, you are welcome to arrange to borrow our kit of cards, PowerPoint slides, and materials.

For more engagement with *Bread for the World*, mark your calendar now for the annual **Advocacy Workshop**. This year's workshop, exploring how Christians can help shape a 2023 Farm Bill that meets the needs of our poorest neighbors, takes place on **Saturday, April 22 from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.** at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Registration information is coming soon; watch Christian Associates' website and Facebook page for details.

### Allegheny County Jail Welcomes Spiritual Care Volunteers

As the Covid-19 pandemic surged in spring 2020, Allegheny County Jail entered a lengthy lockdown. To prevent the virus' spread, inmates spent more time restricted to individual cells, and volunteers were no longer able to enter the jail.

Three years later, as the pandemic slowly comes to a close, these controls are easing, and the jail's doors are open again to volunteers.

**That means we need you!** Our partners at the Foundation of HOPE are seeking new and returning volunteers in the Chaplaincy and Pre-Release programs.

There are many ways to help. Volunteers lead Bible studies and offer counsel and prayer. Volunteers teach classes in the Pre-Release program, using provided curriculum to help participants explore topics such as Parenting and Anger Management. Volunteers serve as mentors

to inmates, helping them make the transition to life beyond jail. Catholic volunteers offer Eucharistic ministry. And congregational volunteer teams take turns leading Sunday worship for Protestant inmates.

A volunteer application is available at [foundationofhope.org](http://foundationofhope.org). Chaplaincy and Pre-Release staff also welcome questions and conversation about available opportunities.

# REFLECTIONS ALONG THE WAY

Dear friends,

When I visit congregations to speak about Christian unity, I emphasize that ecumenism is for everyone. Ecumenism is not about remote ecclesiastical officials meeting in boardrooms, disconnected from local parish life. Instead, each one of us has an ecumenical story. Even if we've been a lifelong participant in the same strand of Christianity, we've still read books and sung hymns written by members of other Christian traditions. We've known neighbors and friends from other denominations. And most of us have ecumenical connections within our own family.



Janet Bloom and Paul Grevstad  
at the piano, 1948

To illustrate this point, I show them this photo. "This is my grandparents," I say. "They might look awfully wholesome, playing piano duets on a date as high school students in Lakewood, Ohio in the late 1940s ... but underneath this peaceful façade, their union was scandalous.

"You see, my grandmother was a Methodist ... and my grandfather was (gasp!) a Lutheran!"

People laugh, but there's truth inside the joke: my grandmother, Janet Bloom, of English and Huguenot descent, was the first non-Lutheran ever to marry into my grandfather Paul Grevstad's Norwegian immigrant family. Both sides of the family had to adjust expectations and overcome stereotypes as Janet and Paul built a marriage from varied Christian traditions.

As it turned out, my grandmother's life would span the ecumenical milestones of the past century:

- Janet and Paul's Methodist-Lutheran pairing began in 1948, the year the World Council of Churches was established: theirs was the not the only cooperation taking place across (predominantly Protestant) denominations and ethnicities.
- Moving from Ohio to Connecticut in 1963, the family joined a Congregational church that had recently joined the new United Church of Christ, one of a global movement of united and uniting churches established in the mid-twentieth century.
- In 1978, in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, she welcomed a new son-in-law, Mark Gerchman (my father), in a wedding presided by both a Roman Catholic priest and a UCC pastor.
- In 1986, Janet and Paul retired to New Hampshire, where a search for the best church choir in their area led them to join an American Baptist congregation: like many contemporary Christians, they de-emphasized denominational branding in favor of finding the right community fit.
- And in 2014, when her granddaughter began a new role, Janet became – of course! – a supporter of the ministries of Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania. For the past nine years, she's listened eagerly to my Christian Associates stories, proofread my appeal letters, and cheered for my every step.

On January 4, I rushed up to New Hampshire; I was able to reach my grandmother's bedside as her breathing gently slowed. My deep grief is mixed with profound gratitude. I'm thankful for her example, her faithfulness, her sense of humor, her service to church and community, her tireless and abundant love for me and my family. And I'm thankful, too, for her ecumenical life, demonstrating in her own story the ways that God calls all who follow Christ to be one. May each one of our own stories reveal that same beautiful truth.

Your sister in Christ,

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

*"I am reminded of your sincere faith,  
that lived first in your grandmother ...  
and now, I am sure, lives in you."*

2 Timothy 1:5



Rev. Liddy Barlow and her grandmother,  
Janet Grevstad, 2021

## Ministry Among the “Nonverts”: Christian Associates Meets Dr. Stephen Bullivant

On January 18, members of Christian Associates’ Council of Bishops and Judicatory Executives met with author Stephen Bullivant, a sociologist and theologian whose most recent work is *Nonverts: The Making of Non-Christian America*. With the number of “nones” continuing to rise, how can the church respond? Here are a few key takeaways from Dr. Bullivant’s presentation:



Members of Christian Associates’ Council of Bishops listen to Dr. Bullivant’s presentation.

- There is no quick fix, so we must adapt our mindset to this new reality: the default setting is now “no religion” unless a person has a particular reason to identify with a faith tradition. For Christians, that means that more than ever, we live in mission territory.
- The biggest indicator of adult religious practice is childhood religious practice. If we had a time

machine, we could go back and intervene when today’s adults were children. But since we do not, we need to be sure to attend to the children in our communities today.

- Being “community for community’s sake” can feel pointless, but forming a community around a niche interest or identity can galvanize strong

feelings of belonging and rich participation. Churches can help form these communities by focusing on what makes them unique, whether that’s a particular outreach ministry or a distinctive liturgical practice.

- Appreciate the young adults in your house of worship. For them to be present, they have had to overcome the skepticism of others, and likely have argued with part of themselves as well. They’ve made a real choice to be in church!
- All churches must cultivate a spirituality of resilience and grit. It would be easy to get discouraged by dwindling numbers. Instead, we need to recognize the ways that God is at work, even in this challenging time.

Many thanks to Fr. David Poecking, Regional Vicar of the South Region of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh, for arranging this fascinating presentation, and to Duquesne University for hosting our group.

## Christian Associates Welcomes Sarah Betzig as Interfaith Research Associate



This winter, Sarah Betzig began working with Christian Associates as our Interfaith Research Associate. She will be supporting the work of our *Sofa Spirituality* project, especially in compiling a report on the interfaith landscape of northern New Jersey, home of our primary sponsor, the Russell Berrie Foundation.

Sarah has called Pittsburgh home since 2013, when she initially moved to the city for studies in robotics engineering and business. Soon after, she discerned a call to teaching and began working as a language tutor. Simultaneously, she engaged in teaching ministries in her home church, eventually leading the small groups ministry department.

A lifelong connection to Christian scripture led Sarah to Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, where she earned the degree Master of Theological Studies (2021). Her work focused in Old Testament studies, culminating in a study of the themes of unity and the fear of the LORD in 2 Corinthians. Sarah’s time at PTS affirmed a call to teaching, opened the door for further academic work, and fanned into flame her love of scripture.

Sarah continued her theological education at the World Council of Churches’

Ecumenical Institute just outside of Geneva, Switzerland. There, she had the chance to live, study, and explore with young clergy, theologians, and other people of faith from six continents and numerous Christian traditions.

Sarah particularly enjoyed exploring hermeneutical approaches of various ecclesial traditions through history and participating in spaces of sharing about questions of social ethics in various cultures, as well as forging friendships.

Now, Sarah begins work with the team at Christian Associates and the JCCPGH Center for Loving Kindness on the interfaith mapping report. “I count myself blessed to be able to participate in a project that is in line with my passions for promoting congregational health and fostering dialogue across difference,” Sarah said. “I am grateful for the opportunity to lend a hand in the worthwhile work of bridge building.”

## West Virginia Institute of Spirituality

1601 Virginia St E  
Charleston, WV 25311  
304-345-0926  
wvis.org

### Praying Our Experiences: a 5-week Group Spiritual Direction program

Dates: Tuesdays, Feb 28-March 28  
Time: 6:30-7:30 p.m.  
Location: Zoom  
Donation: \$20 (plus the book, to be purchased separately)

Do you struggle at times with how to pray, when to pray, or even what to pray? Using Joseph Schmidt's book, *Praying Our Experiences*, this program explores the practice of setting aside time each day to bring the ordinary experiences of your everyday life to God.

### Our Human Desires: Identifying, Strengthening, Converting the Longing in our Hearts

Dates & Times: Fri. March 3, 6-8 p.m. and Sat. March 4, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Location: via Zoom  
Donation: \$70

Through silence, imaginative contemplation, and reflective sharing, the Lent Retreat invites participants to explore the deep desires of their hearts.

### Life of the Beloved: a 5-week Group Spiritual Direction program

Dates: Mondays, April 17-May 15  
Time: 7-8 p.m.  
Location: Zoom  
Donation: \$25 (plus the book, to be purchased separately)

Through Henri Nouwen's book, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World*, we will explore the call of the Beloved which invites us to look at our individual brokenness under the light of the blessing.



## Olmsted Manor Retreat Center

17 East Main St.  
Ludlow, PA 16333  
814-945-6512  
olmstedmanor.org

### Prayer Retreat: Meditate Like Jesus

Dates: Fri, March 3-Sun, March 5

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. K. D. Weaver  
Cost: \$275 (includes two-night stay, six meals, and course tuition)

Learn about the meditative tradition that shaped Jesus, unique principles of Jesus' meditative approach, and practical meditative methods that will deepen one's personal life and spiritual community.

### Spring Women's Retreat

Dates: Fri, April 14-Sun, April 16  
Cost: \$215 (includes two-night stay, six meals, and tuition)

Surround yourself with a supportive cohort of women who understand just how exhausting life can be sometimes.

This retreat offers inspirational speaking, encouraging group discussions, quiet time with God, opportunities to enjoy stillness and nature, and Christian hospitality that will make you feel welcome and cared for.



## Lutherlyn

500 Lutherlyn Lane  
Butler, PA 16001  
724-865-2161  
lutherlyn.com

### Saturday Safari: Maple Syrup Time

Date: March 4 (register by Feb 28)  
Times: 9:30 a.m.-Noon or 1-3:30 p.m. (register for one session only)  
Cost: \$10, free for children 4 and under

Saturday Safaris are a great way to spend some time learning about nature in the woods. This Safari features winter tree identification, tapping a maple tree, collecting sap, and observing the evaporation process. Dress to be outside.

### Intro to Blacksmithing Class

Date: March 18  
Time: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Cost: \$150 (includes lunch)

Learn the art of Blacksmithing in the Woodland Forge with master blacksmith, Flavius Brinsfield. The class will start or continue you on the path to developing the core skills of smithing. All materials and supplies are included.



## Association of Pittsburgh Priests

associationofpittsburghpriests.com

### How to Stand with Goals of the Pittsburgh Black Collective

with Dr. Kathy Wilson Humphrey  
Date & Time: March 8, 7-8 p.m.  
Location: Zoom  
Cost: Free

Dr. Humphrey will share her work with Pittsburgh Black Collective, a group of local African American leaders who are committed to improving local conditions that undermine the poor: affordable housing, closing the wealth gap, equity in education, improved healthcare, and diminished violence. Dr. Humphrey is the 11th president of Carlow University.



## St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church

601 Boone Ave.  
Canonsburg, PA 15317  
724-745-8216  
frunner.org

### Light From The Church On The Hill Series: An Evening with St. John Chrysostom

Date & Time: Thu, March 30, 7-9 p.m.

The "Light from the Church on the Hill" lecture series continues with a presentation by Dr. David Ford of St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary. Dr. Ford is currently working on a major anthology to be titled "Sing to Your Soul" - *A Festival of Wisdom from the Writings of St. John Chrysostom*.



## International Association of Women Ministers

facebook.com/IAWMWesternPA

### Spring Retreat

Date & Time: Thurs., April 20, 2:00 p.m.-Fri., April 21, 1 p.m.  
Location: Antiochian Village, 140 Church Camp Trail, Bolivar, PA 15923  
Cost: \$200, includes single room, dinner, breakfast, lunch, and program

Gather with women clergy colleagues from across the region for a relaxed and refreshing time of retreat led by the Rev. Dr. Meredith Hutchison of the West Virginia Institute for Spirituality. To sign up, contact Rev. Ann Morris, foxmorris@verizon.net.

## Have Ecumenism, Will Travel!

*Are you a tired pastor looking to fill your pulpit for a Sunday of well-earned vacation?*

*Or, are you seeking a fresh topic for a Sunday School class?*

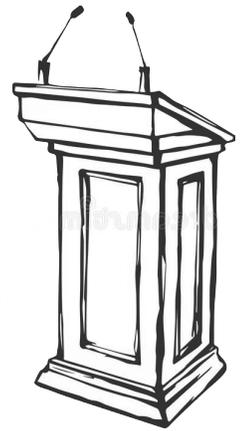
*Or, would you like your congregation to hear an inspiring message on Christian unity?*

**Invite Christian Associates to visit your congregation!**

Rev. Liddy Barlow travels (and Zooms) throughout Southwest Pennsylvania visiting local churches and community organizations. She can offer a sermon, give a "minute for mission," or lead a full liturgy. She can teach a class for youth or adults, offering a history of ecumenism in our region, an exploration of ecumenical or interfaith ministries, a virtual visit to the World Council of Churches Assembly, or even the Bread for the World Racial Wealth Gap Simulation (see page 1).

All stipends from her visits support the ministries of Christian Associates: this is a great way for you to support Christian unity in our region while also providing fresh content for your congregation.

Contact us at 412-688-9070 or email [lbarlow@casp.org](mailto:lbarlow@casp.org) to reserve a date.



## Pastors' Workshop: Creating an Experiential Church

Thurs.  
April 20th  
9am - Noon

Sewickley  
Presbyterian  
Church  
Lower Level

Cost:  
\$30  
Includes  
refreshments

414 Grant St., Sewickley, PA 15143  
Led by The Rev. Dr. Graham Standish

This workshop will help you to develop an approach to church that offers meaningful and engaging experiences of God in worship, preaching, teaching, ministry and mission.

**Register Now:**

[samaritancounseling.net/pastors-workshops](http://samaritancounseling.net/pastors-workshops)



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## Special Thanks to Our Judicatory Supporters

Christian Associates is deeply grateful to all our member judicatories, and we wish to offer particular recognition to the church bodies who contributed to our financial needs in 2022:

Allegheny Union Baptist Association  
Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh  
Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania,  
Orthodox Church in America  
Bruderhof Communities of Southwest Pennsylvania  
Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Pennsylvania  
Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh  
Kiskiminetas Presbytery, Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Metropolis of Pittsburgh, Greek Orthodox Church  
Mid-Northeast Mission District, North American  
Lutheran Church

Penn West Conference, United Church of Christ  
Pittsburgh Presbytery, Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Redstone Presbytery, Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Roman Catholic Diocese of Greensburg  
Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh  
Southwestern PA Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church  
in America  
Washington Presbytery, Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Western Pennsylvania Conference, United Methodist Church  
Western Pennsylvania Division, Salvation Army

We know judicatories have many important financial priorities, and we are grateful to these church bodies for their commitment to Christian unity. If you see your judicatory's name on this list, please express your appreciation to your bishop or judicatory executive.

Support from individuals and congregations is also essential to sustaining our ministry, and we are thrilled that so many of our readers responded to Christian Associates' winter appeal. If you would like to add your name to our roll of supporters, we invite you to mail a check to **Christian Associates, PO Box 5241, Pittsburgh PA 15206**, or give online at [www.casp.org/donate](http://www.casp.org/donate). Thank you for helping our ministries to thrive, so that we may be a witness of unity to the world!



## Sewing a New Future: Remarks at Bethel AME

*In honor of Black History Month, we reprint these remarks offered by Bishop Kurt Kusserow of the Southwestern PA Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at a November 18 press conference advocating for reparations for Bethel AME Church in Pittsburgh's Hill District.*

Seven and a half years ago nine members of Mother Emanuel in Charleston, South Carolina were shot and killed by a professed white supremacist during a Bible study.

Nothing that we do will change the history of that terrible event or bring those nine martyrs back. But if we do nothing, we resign ourselves to a future that is no different from our past.

My presence here today gives voice to a national church body that is not willing to do nothing. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is determined to recognize its complicity in the sin of racism and to do something about it by taking an active stand for reparations.

One visible expression of that active stand is a pledge to get to know the people of the African Methodist Episcopal Church as friends and family. While doing this provides no guarantee to end race-based violence, it does begin to repair a great tear in human relationships in this country between people of European descent and people of African descent.

If a giant needle and miles of thread could sew closed that tear, we would use those things. But this work of repair, this work of reparations, requires different tools.

**One tool is truth.** We tell the truth. Generation after generation, for hundreds of years, people of color in this country have been made to bear the burden and

pay the cost of economic progress that benefits white people. That's the truth; and if that truth has a sharp point to it, well, then let us use it as we would a **needle**, working



to repair the torn fabric of our nation. Today is about telling the truth. The truth is that Bethel Church was among many properties of Black people taken by eminent domain while neighboring properties that belonged to white people were spared.

### **Another tool in the work of repair is trust.**

Trust is built in small and consistent actions, like **stitches** sewn into torn clothing. Trust is built by saying something and then doing it. Trust is built through honesty and transparency. Trust acknowledges the truth and then responds to damage with repair. While the lives of people taken away by violence cannot be given back, land taken away by eminent domain can be given back. Today is about building trust: say it; then do it; give Bethel back its land.

**A third tool in the work of reparations is temerity.** Not timidity, but temerity – bold courage that dares to risk stepping a bit out of line in calling for justice because it has learned that staying comfortably within the lines only perpetuates injustice. Temerity decides to speak up when keeping silent would be easier. Temerity asks for more than is strictly necessary, dreams for more than is thought possible, harbors hope against all odds. Today is about adopting temerity as pattern of life.

And I mean to address this third tool specifically to the white Christian population of this city. Use your place of privilege to call for reparations. Absolutely you should do this. But don't stop there. Have the temerity to sew a little **embroidery** into the stitch and reach for real equality.

Don't settle for settling up over land that was taken decades ago, but reach for more – genuine friendship across racial lines in the promised Beloved Community.

The real work of reparations won't be complete until we are stitched back together: Black and white, one people who desire to live together in mutual love and trust.

This is our shared dream. But this blessed future will remain only a dream until the first steps are taken to repair the damage done. Today is about taking those first steps.

So today we say together: Tell the truth. Right the wrong. Build trust. Return the land. That at least gets us back to square one. From there, from that holy ground, we begin again.

*Tell the truth. Right the wrong. Build trust. Return the land.*

# KELSO COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ON RACE AND FAITH *TO WHOM ARE WE NEIGHBOR?*

Churches and Communities Engaging in Anti-Racism Work Across Generations

**Kelso Lecture • March 17, 7:00 p.m. *In Person and Online***

**Metro-Urban Institute Conference • March 18, 8:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m. *In Person***

Explore how churches and communities can work together to facilitate anti-racism in their neighborhoods. The Kelso Lecture, delivered by Starsky Wilson, president and CEO of the Children's Defense Fund, kicks off Friday. Metro-Urban Institute's Conference follows on Saturday with workshops, a panel discussion, worship, a community lunch, and resource fair. *All are welcome!*

The Kelso Lecture is free. The Metro-Urban Institute Conference is \$25. Registration required.



Register at [www.pts.edu/Kelso-2223](http://www.pts.edu/Kelso-2223)



[www.pts.edu](http://www.pts.edu) 412-924-1449 MUI@pts.edu

## Retreat to Laurelville

A Sanctuary in the Woods

**Reconnect, refresh, and renew at Laurelville,  
a Christian retreat center near Pittsburgh, PA.**

[laurelville.org](http://laurelville.org)  
[info@laurelville.com](mailto:info@laurelville.com)  
724.423.2435



Laurelville is a year-round, 600-acre retreat center set in the tranquil beauty of the Laurel Highlands. Experience our peaceful setting, comfortable facilities, extensive recreation options, delicious meals, and signature Christ-like hospitality.

**Great for church groups, women's  
and men's groups, and youth  
groups! Flexible packages for  
groups of any size.**



## Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania

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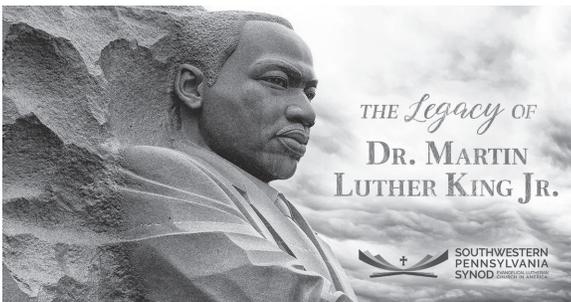
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### Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration Explores Housing for All

*"We viewed slums and slumism as more than a problem of dilapidated, inadequate housing. We understood them as the end product of domestic colonialism: slum housing and slum schools, unemployment and underemployment, segregated and inadequate education, welfare dependency and political servitude."* - The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., reflecting on the Chicago Campaign in his autobiography



Dr. King's dream of Beloved Community is inextricably linked to the right to fair, decent, and affordable housing. On **Sunday, March 26 at 4 p.m. at Berkeley Hills Lutheran Church** (517 Sangree Road, Pittsburgh, 15237), the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with **"A Home for ALL in the Beloved Community: Equitable Development and Housing in Pittsburgh."**

The afternoon begins with an ecumenical service of Holy Communion. The preacher will be the Rev. Dr. Asa J. Lee, President of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and presiding will be Bishop Kurt Kusserow of the SWPA Synod as well as Bishop Abraham Allende, who retired as Bishop of the Northeast Ohio Synod.

Following the service, the event continues with a panel discussion on equitable development and housing in Pittsburgh, and small-group conversations with Pittsburgh housing experts. As homelessness in the city has increased 20-30% in the past year, and as rising rents and gentrification threaten the stability of neighborhoods, this conversation is vitally important. How would Dr. King understand this situation, and what is our response as people of God?

The event will be offered both in-person and via livestream. It is open to the public and admission is free.

Christian Associates is one of numerous ecumenical and community co-sponsors of this event.