

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

to be one in Christ



October/November 2021, Number 5

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

Counting Our Blessings:

Spiritual Leaders Gather Virtually to Share Gratitude & Conversation

The past 18 months have been a challenge for everyone—and an especially hard period for people in positions of spiritual leadership. We have navigated constant change, conflict, suffering, and fear in this era of pandemic and polarization.

And yet, we are also surrounded by blessings. One is our region's community of spiritual leaders: colleagues who understand our challenges and empathize with our concerns. We are not alone!

As we approach our second pandemic Thanksgiving, take time to gather with our region's diverse spiritual leaders. On **Wednesday, November 3** at 1 p.m., join us on Zoom for *We Have to Talk: Counting Our Blessings*.

The event features short video interviews with spiritual leaders from across the U.S. Rev. Quinn Caldwell, a member of the United Church of Christ's StillSpeaking Writers Group, explores blessings in Christianity, such as the waters of the



Video interviews feature Sher (top), Kazemi (center), and Caldwell (bottom).

baptismal font. Dr. Parisima Kazemi, a member of the Bahá'í community, reflects on the role of blessings in times of personal struggle. And, Cantor Leon Sher, composer of the powerful musical Jewish prayer "Heal Us Now," considers blessings for time of community pain.

We'll share in dialogue, listening and sharing as we reflect on the blessings we see around us, even in times like these.

The event is intended for spiritual leaders, defined broadly: clergy, vowed religious, and lay leaders are all warmly invited. Sign up at casp.org/blessings.

The "We Have to Talk" series of conversations among spiritual leaders began in the aftermath of the massacre at Tree of Life Synagogue, and includes virtual and in-person events for large and small groups. Leaders from 9 world religions and 22 Christian denominations have participated in "We Have to Talk."

Make Plans Now for January's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

For over 110 years, Christians have observed the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*: eight days in January set apart for us to join Christ in praying "that they may all be one."

This fall, Christian Associates invites our region's clergy to start planning now for the 2022 *Week of Prayer* so we can live out the full potential of this week.

This year, try a two-week congregational worship exchange. Here's how:

1. Identify a partner: the pastor or priest of a congregation near yours.

2. Make plans for Sunday, January 23 and January 30. One week, worship at your partner's church building. In the second week, welcome your partner's congregation to your own Sunday service.
3. Plan the worship services collaboratively. You might share worship leadership responsibilities at both services, or you might each take primary responsibility for the service that takes place in your church.
4. Provide a worship option for members of each congregation who will not

participate in the exchange, and ensure appropriate sacramental ministries take place.

This plan is already taking shape among a pair of clergy in Squirrel Hill. On Sunday, January 23, the Pastor and people of Sixth Presbyterian Church will cross Forbes Avenue to worship with the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer. On January 30, Redeemer's Interim Rector and congregation will return the visit, joining Sixth for Sunday worship.

Additional resources for the Week of Prayer are available from the Greymoore Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute, geii.org.

REFLECTIONS ALONG THE WAY

Dear friends,

Sometimes it seems as if the COVID-19 pandemic is over. Fans crowd into the stands of every Steelers game. The symphony is back at Heinz Hall, and the curtain goes up soon at the Benedum Center. Children fill yellow buses each morning, heading to face-to-face classes again at last. We may continue to wear masks; we may reach for the hand sanitizer more often; but still: we are together and healthy again.

But in hospitals across our region, the pandemic is still a daily, brutal reality. The autumn COVID surge is filling beds and packing emergency rooms. In several counties of our region, over 80 percent of intensive care beds are in use. Some hospitals, such as UPMC Children's in Pittsburgh, have even erected triage tents in their parking lots.



While most of us return to a normal-feeling fall, our region's medical workers, from doctors and nurses to respiratory therapists and custodial workers, face circumstances that are not normal at all. Risking their own wellbeing, they labor long hours in challenging conditions, surrounded by an illness that ravages every bodily system and devastates formerly-healthy people.

Among these workers are men and women charged with providing for the spiritual needs of people of all faith traditions, and carrying the good news of the Gospel to the hospitals' Christians: our professional chaplains. For over eighteen months, these steadfast servants have kept vigil at bedsides with the dying. They have set up FaceTime calls to share last words with loved ones, and provided comfort to family members in times of deepest grief. They have coped with their own anger and frustration at the preventable illnesses that could have been avoided with a simple vaccination. They have faced abuse from visitors who sneer about the need for masks and other precautions. Their hearts have broken again and again, as they attend the deaths of young parents and beloved elders.

As you are reading this, I invite you to pause, to set this newsletter down, and to pray, in whatever words your tradition suggests, for all our chaplains. Pray for their strength and courage. Pray for their continued compassion and their sustained faith. Pray for their health and for their families. *Stop and pray for them now.*

Welcome back. Now that you have done that, I invite you to go one step farther. If you know any of our chaplains personally, I hope you will pick up your phone now and send them a friendly text. If not, send a note of encouragement to your local hospital addressed to the Department of Spiritual Care. Or, you might organize or participate in a visible act of public support. In Butler, for example, the Butler Clergy Network organized a Ring of Light: community members holding flashlights gathered in a circle around Butler Memorial Hospital, offering a virtual embrace for the people within.

In the years to come, when I look back on these pandemic months, I expect I'll remember them as a time of anxiety and uncertainty, but also as a quiet and sweet time: more time with my family, fewer hours in the car running from place to place. But not everyone has experienced the pandemic that way. All of us who have been privileged enough to sit at a distance from the worst impacts of this period must step up to support those who have borne its deepest traumas. And of course, we must also do all we can, though the promotion of continued health precautions, to lighten to the burden on our hospitals and the dedicated children of God who work within them.

Your sister in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Liddy".

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



Photo courtesy of Butler Radio Network

Participants in the Butler Clergy Network's "Ring of Light" lifted their small candles aloft to show support outside the hospital.

Dr. Amy-Jill Levine, Father Walter F. Kedjierski Among Speakers at Holocaust Education Conference

Rising nationalism, erosion of democratic norms, ideologies of hate directed at minoritized populations ... all of these existed in Europe's political culture in the 1930s. Chillingly, they are also evident in today's United States.

November's Ethel LeFrak Holocaust Education Conference at the National Catholic Center for Holocaust Education at Seton Hill University will consider in what ways and to what degree the fascism of the mid-twentieth century can provide a template for understanding and confronting extremism today.

The conference convenes teachers, professors, and others interested in Holocaust studies and Jewish-Catholic relations. This year, the conference will take place in a virtual format **November 7-10**, with the theme "Holocaust Education Today: Confronting Extremism, Hate, and Denial."

Events include an opening keynote address by Amy-Jill Levine, Rabbi

Stanley M. Kessler Distinguished Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Hartford Seminary, titled "Jesus' Beatitudes in His Time and in Ours." Dr. Levine is a Jewish scholar of the Christian Bible; her books include *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* and *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi*.



Dr. Amy-Jill Levine



Rev. Walter Kedjierski

The closing presentation, "Fratelli Tutti: A Call to Unity in a Fractured World" will be offered by the Rev. Walter Kedjierski, Executive Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The conference also includes many other presentations and a commemoration of Kristallnacht. Registration for the full conference is \$35. A full schedule and more information are available at <https://bit.ly/2021holocaustconference>.



Women Ministers Gather for Learning, Sisterhood

After a COVID hiatus, the Western Pennsylvania chapter of the International Association of Women Ministers is back for a new year of in-person programming, providing support, connection, and learning for women clergy, professional Christian educators, and seminarians.

The November program is all about money! Do you fully understand your church's balance sheet? Do you know best practices for receiving offerings and paying bills? What's the deal with endowment income, anyway?

Find out on **Thursday, November 11** at 10:30 a.m., when the group will meet at Saint John Lutheran Church, 715 Lincoln Hwy, North Versailles, PA 15137. IAWM member and local chapter Treasurer the Rev. Ann Morris will lead a program titled "Help for Church Finances."

Prior to her ordination to ministry, Rev. Morris worked in the treasury departments of several Fortune 500 companies and as financial administrator at several churches and non-profits. She is a member of Pittsburgh Presbytery.

Next, on **Thursday, December 9** at 10:30 a.m., also at Saint John Lutheran in North Versailles, take part in the chapter's annual Advent worship and potluck luncheon. Participants will be able to walk a large canvas labyrinth, a meditative prayer experience. All are invited to bring a dish to share.

To learn more about IAWM and to be added to the mailing list, contact Western PA Convener, Rev. Liddy Barlow at lbarlow@casp.org or Secretary, Rev. Kimberly Greway at pastorgreway@gmail.com.



At a retreat prior to the COVID pandemic, IAWM members Rev. Dr. Jean Henderson (left) and Rev. Dr. Verna Call (right) share Holy Communion.

Coaching supports and encourages the calling, gifting and unique potential that God has given each person. The Benedictine Women of Pittsburgh are sponsoring a two-year online coaching training program open to religious women: vowed, ordained, or lay women working in ministry settings. The program certifies women to create a new ministry of professional coaching, or simply to strengthen skills useful in any ministry setting. The application deadline is December 15; an online info session takes place November 20. Sister Roberta Campbell, rcampbell4530@gmail.com, for more information.

Three Years After Tree of Life Shooting, The Community Pauses to Reflect

Three years ago, eleven of our Jewish neighbors died in a terrible act of antisemitic and xenophobic violence.

The shooting at Tree of Life synagogue continues to inspire our grief, our repentance, and our acts of compassion.

This year's public commemoration will take place on **Wednesday, October 27 at 4 p.m.** outdoors in Schenley Park, at the intersection of Hobart Street and Prospect Drive, near the grove of trees that was planted this spring in memory of the 11.

The service will include music, ritual, and prayer honoring the lives that were taken

and rededicating our community to stand against all forms of hate. All are welcome; social distancing will be strongly encouraged.

Commemorative events also include opportunities for group Torah study via Zoom led by prominent rabbis from across the United States, and community service projects throughout the month of October.

For more information and to register, visit 1027healingpartnership.org.



Family members of those who died in the 10/27 attack plant trees in Schenley Park.

Photo Feature: Glimpses of (In-Person!) Christian Unity

This summer and fall, many in-person events, long delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, resumed—resulting in joyful, face to face reunions!



Bishop Dorsey McConnell (center) retired from the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh in September. Rev. Liddy Barlow of Christian Associates (left) and Bishop Kurt Kusserow of the Southwestern PA Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (right) stopped by his retirement festivities.



Members and guests of Christian Associates' Council of Bishops & Judicatory Executives met at the Spring Valley Bruderhof for their September retreat.



Council of Bishops & Judicatory Executives members enjoyed a walking tour of the Spring Valley Bruderhof during their September retreat. Left to right (foreground): Rev. Linda Miller-Pretz (United Church of Christ), Rev. Jana Quisenberry (Christian Church-Disciples of Christ), Emmy-Maria Blough (Bruderhof), Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi (United Methodist).

Foundation of HOPE Seeks Renewed Support

Because of rising rates of COVID, the Foundation of HOPE has postponed its planned "Evening of HOPE" event. We'll keep you posted when a new date is selected.

Although the event is delayed, HOPE's work of chaplaincy, pre-release, aftercare, and diversion to serve people affected by incarceration continues, and their need for support is as strong as ever.

Learn more by visiting foundationofhope.org, and give online today.



Participants in the Foundation of HOPE's pre-release program complete coursework that prepares them for life beyond Allegheny County Jail.

Comic Book Illustrates Homelessness in Pittsburgh

Christian churches and many other faith groups share a concern for people experiencing homelessness and poverty, along with a desire to offer gifts and respectful support to those affected. Despite our hopes, it can be difficult for faith communities to find ways of learning more about these issues and how they impact individuals' lives.

Drawn to Home is a comic book resource that shares the stories from nine Pittsburghers experiencing homelessness. They address common struggles regarding identity, acceptance, relationships, stereotypes, and frustrated hopes and intentions.



lives of their neighbors. It opens space for reflective discussions about one's call and opportunities to respond with faithfulness and integrity to those in need, according to one's own traditions, beliefs, and commitments.

To learn more about *Drawn to Home* and to request copies and interfaith curricular resources, visit drawntohomecomic.com.

Donations from congregations are welcomed to help offset the publication cost. All are welcome to contribute to a Kickstarter campaign, which is currently raising money to print copies for school libraries.

The stories help teach how these human challenges can help lead to homelessness, and how homelessness can dramatically impact one's life.

of traditions, including Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim. These materials would be used well in education classes or small groups, as well as secular schools.

- by the Rev. Jennifer Peters McCurry



Accompanying curricular resources are available to guide and support its use by faith-based organizations from a variety

Accessible to people of many age levels, this transformative resource invites readers to grow in empathy as they learn about the



**Sunday Service 11:15 am
Held at "The Forge Winery"
210 E 7th Ave, Homestead, PA 15120**

Yorke Fellowship is seeking Seminarists:

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- To participate in our Bread Ministry
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- To manage our Facebook page

Our services are live streamed on Facebook. Our Pastor is Rev. Raymond Ursin.

For more information, please contact George Harpster-Edmonds at yorkefellowship@gmail.com.



WVIS is rooted and growing in the light of God's love.

WVIS, under the guidance of Executive Director Sr. Carole Riley, CDP, Ph.D., is currently offering a variety of opportunities via Zoom including:

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Visit our website at www.wvis.org
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ECUMENICAL EVENTS

Rodef Shalom

Biblical Botanical Garden
4905 Fifth Avenue, Suite 4
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
412-621-6566
www.rodefshalombiblicalgarden.org

Fall Into the Holy Land

Dates: Oct. 4-Nov. 4
Times: Sun.-Thurs. 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Cost: Free

The exhibit showcases Biblical fall flowers, featuring flowers of the field, bitter herbs, Jerusalem artichokes, and more. Come experience the Holy Land for this special extended season exhibit. Group tours are not offered, but a self-guided audio tour is available using the website.



Epiphany Academy of Formative Spirituality

820 Crane Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15216
epiphanyassociation.com
412-344-7494

Voices From the Great Tradition Series

Dates: Mondays, Oct. 11-Dec. 20
Time: 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
Facilitators: Susan Muto and Lori McMahon
Cost: £20 for each presentation, or £100 for the full series; includes live talks and access to recordings.

This series, co-sponsored by the Epiphany Association and the Centre for Carmelite Spirituality, Boars Hill, Oxford, England, explores six interesting figures of the Christian Tradition who offer insights for an authentic Christian living founded on the truth of the Gospel. Topics include Augustine of Hippo and the Restless Heart (Oct 25), Hildegard of Bingen and the Music of the Heart (Nov 8), and Julian of Norwich and the Revelation of Divine Love (Nov 22). Register online at carmelite.uk.net/online-talks-retreats/voices-from-the-great-tradition-series/



Camp Agape

72 Agape Rd
Hickory, PA 15240
724-356-2308

Church Active Shooter Seminar

Date & Time: Sat., Oct. 30, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
Cost: \$40, includes lunch & snacks

Camp Agape

(cont . . .)

Firearm Training Specialists of Graysville teach how to create a comprehensive Safety Plan for your congregation and staff in case of an active shooter event. Call to sign up.



First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh

320 Sixth Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
fpcp.org

Night of Restoration and Hope

Date & Time: Sat., Nov. 13, 7 p.m.
Cost: \$50

This inspirational evening benefits the Refuge for Women Pittsburgh Emergency House, providing sex trafficking survivors immediate access to safe housing, crisis intervention, and support services. A social hour with a silent auction precedes the powerful testimony of Dr. Ron Archer, a "trick baby" who was conceived through prostitution. Learn how he discovered Jesus Christ, and became a celebrated speaker, Pittsburgh Steelers chaplain, and best-selling author. For more information visit: www.refugeforwomen.org/pittsburgh.



Divine Mercy Parish

164 Washington Place
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
divinercypgh.org

Profundum Speaker Series: What Makes a Good Bishop?

Date & Time: Sat., Nov. 13, 7:15 p.m.
Presenter: Dr. Michael Sirilla

Dr. Michael Sirilla is the Professor of Dogmatic and Systematic Theology at Franciscan University in Steubenville. A Thomist in the Dominican interpretive tradition, his doctoral thesis was on Aquinas' theory of the Good Bishop.

Profundum Speaker Series: Literature and Catholic Imagination

Date & Time: Sat., Dec. 11, 7:15 p.m.
Presenter: Dr. Justyna Braun

Divine Mercy

(cont . . .)

Dr. Braun holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Rutgers. She teaches literature and philosophy at Chesterton Academy of Buffalo.

This series seeks to assist Catholics to go deeper into the intellectual tradition and riches of the Church. Contact mdamico@divinercypgh.org with any questions.



Pittsburgh Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program

412-232-5815
www.pmhs.org

Virtual Health Ministry Prayer Gathering: Spirituality and COVID-19 – Life Lessons

Date & Time: Sat., Nov. 13, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.
Location: online via Zoom
Presenter: Edwina Gateley
Cost: \$35 for registered nurses with CEUs; \$20 for RNs without credits; \$15 for undergraduate nursing students, seminarians, religious, and clergy.

Many in the caregiving and ministerial professions may feel stretched and drained physically, mentally, and spiritually as we go through the COVID-19 Delta variant. This prayer gathering will be a time to reflect on where we are within our spiritual life. By participating in this gathering, we are also setting aside time for self-compassion and self-care. Register by Nov. 3 by contacting ParishNurse@pittsburghmercy.org.



Neighborhood Resilience Project

2038 Bedford Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
neighborhoodresilience.org

Journey of Hope and Resilience

Dates: Nov. 17 and 18
Cost: Free, donations requested.

See and experience the Neighborhood Resilience Project, a unique Orthodox Christian ministry in the Hill District. Collect stamps in your passport as you discover NRP's varied programs. Tickets available soon; watch the website for details.

GUIDING THE FAITHFUL IN COMPLEX TIMES

Register Now - All Classes and Events Take Place Online

Wise Women 2.0 - Caretaking
Community and Conversation Series
Oct. 21, 2021
Jeanelle Austin

Becoming People of One Book
Albright-Deering Event
Nov. 3, 2021
Steven Tuell and Chenda Innis Lee

**Successful Strategic Planning
and Implementation for
Churches**
Nov. 7-Dec. 11, 2021 (asynchronous)
Jim Downey

**Wise Women 2.0 - Community
Community and Conversation Series**
Nov. 18, 2021
Sara Miles

**Spiritual Writing: Formation
through Words**
Spiritual Formation Elective
Jan. 10-Feb. 13, 2022
Jonathan Callard

**Wise Women 2.0 - Breathing
Community and Conversation Series**
Jan. 20, 2022
Cole Arthur Riley



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Support Our Clergy in Pastor Appreciation Month

Clergy are feeling stressed, burned out, overextended and underappreciated. How can churches minister to their pastors so that they feel renewed and restored for ministry?

On **Wednesday, October 27** from 6:30-7:45 p.m., log in to *Sustaining Your Pastor for the Long Haul...a workshop for Congregations*. This webinar led by the **Rev. Dr. Graham Standish** offers strategies for church elders and members who hope to help their pastors thrive.

While the event is organized by the Presbyterian Church USA's Synod of the Trinity, we've been assured that lay leaders from other Christian traditions will be warmly welcomed, too.

Dr. Standish is the Executive Director of Samaritan Counseling, Guidance, Consulting and author of six books, including *Becoming a Blessed Church*. He works closely with pastors one-on-one as a spiritual director and clergy coach, in groups and as a congregational consultant.

Register at <https://bit.ly/oct27standish>.

GiveBig To Support Christian Associates

Give big! Or hey, give medium sized. Or give small. Every bit counts!

November 30 is the annual GiveBig community giving day. Christian Associates will be accepting donations through the GiveBig Web site:

[www.givebigpittsburgh.com/organizations/
christian-associates-of-southwest-pennsylvania](http://www.givebigpittsburgh.com/organizations/christian-associates-of-southwest-pennsylvania).

Gifts made through this site will be eligible for a share of a prize pool.

Of course, you can also support the work of Christian unity by donating at any time by mail (P.O. Box 5241, Pittsburgh, PA 15206) or online (www.casp.org/donate). If you would like to be included in the annual list of our supporters in the December issue of *The Call*, be sure to send in your gift by November 15.

Your gifts are needed to sustain our ministries that bring diverse Christians together to work for the common good. Thank you for your support!