

Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania

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

The Call . . .

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to be one in Christ



June-July-August 2020, Number 3

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

Sofa Spirituality Invites You Into Learning and Dialogue ... From Your Own Living Room



Rev. Liddy Barlow joins Rabbi Jonah Pesner, Director of the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism, on the couch for *Sofa Spirituality*.

There's plenty of room on the sofa: come take a seat, and join in a new interfaith dialogue opportunity. Welcome to *Sofa Spirituality*!

A project of Christian Associates and the JCC of Greater Pittsburgh's Center for Loving Kindness, *Sofa Spirituality* (sofaspirituality.org) is designed to bring the community into conversation about our diverse faith traditions and our shared humanity.

The process is simple:

- **Watch an Interview** with diverse religious leaders from across the world, discussing the treasures of our spiritual traditions. New videos will be posted each Monday, featuring leaders such as Rabbi Jack Bemporad of the Angelicum in Rome and Imam Abdullah Antepli of Duke University.

- **Engage in Dialogue.** Sign up for a real-time 45-minute Zoom conversation to explore the themes of the interview. Several different dialogues are available every week.
- **Discover Shared Values.** Each dialogue will be filled with curiosity, openness and respect as we learn from one another in informal discussion.

If you are stuck at home in quarantine or living far away from diverse houses of worship, *Sofa Spirituality* offers the gift of interfaith friendship.

Watch as our curiosity ripens into understanding and our isolation turns into connectedness.

Visit sofaspirituality.org and sign up for our weekly emails to learn more about each new opportunity for dialogue.

We can't wait to see you on the sofa!



News in Brief: Ecumenical Headlines at a Glance

Christian Associates looks forward to including your sermon, essay, or other writing in our 50th anniversary edition of *The Word in Our Voices* series: *All One in Christ Jesus: Southwest Pennsylvania Celebrates Christian Unity*.

We are looking for writing on the topic of Christian unity, as well as first-person stories about Christian Associates' history.

Please submit your writing by email to lbarlow@casp.org by July 30 to be included in this milestone publication.



Even at the grave, we make our hallelujahs! We remember with gratitude the lives of two Christian leaders who recently died.

Dr. James McLemore died June 5 at age 74. He served as Presiding Elder of the Pittsburgh District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and represented Bishop Frank Madison Reid III on the Christian Associates' Council of Bishops & Executives.

The Rev. Canon Richard W. Davies, a priest of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh, died May 7 at age 93. He served as President of Christian Associates' Board of Delegates from 1990 through 1993.



Amen to Action, an event that usually packs one million meals to be shared with people who are hungry, will not take place this November. But hunger has not been cancelled, and so our challenge is to provide one million meals by the end of July: a \$200,000 fundraising goal.

Visit amentoaction.org to make your gift.



After an unusual and exhausting spring, clergy deserve a Sunday off! Fortunately, Rev. Liddy Barlow is available for pulpit supply, virtual or in person, throughout our region. All honoraria support the ministries of Christian Associates. Email lbarlow@casp.org to reserve a date.

REFLECTIONS ALONG THE WAY

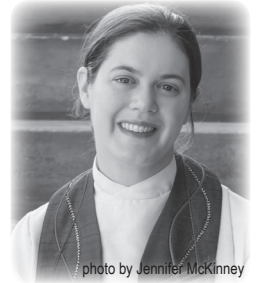
Dear friends,

In Roman Catholic and similar traditions, worshippers sing the Litany of the Saints at Easter Vigil, All Saints Day, and ordinations. A cantor lifts each name, and the people respond: “Pray for us.”

Saint Peter and Saint Paul, pray for us.

Saint John, pray for us.

Saint Mary Magdalene, pray for us.



Christian worship breaks down the boundaries of space and time: we are surrounded by the saints whenever we pray. By invoking their names, we remind ourselves that we are not alone. There is a great cloud of witnesses among us, inspiring us through their example and encouraging us with their continued prayers.

On June 1, clergy convened at *Freedom Corner*, a gathering place in Pittsburgh’s Lower Hill District hallowed by its role in the civil rights movement. Responding to a call from a group of Black church leaders from the Hill and the Mon Valley, they came from all parts of our region, representing over a dozen different judicatories. For some, demonstrating for justice was familiar. For others, this was their very first time bringing their faith to the streets.



The clergy wore face masks and kept their distance, conscious of the continued COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the risk, they were determined to stand against another pandemic, one that Rev. Raphael Warnock terms “COVID-1619”—the pandemic of racism that has afflicted this country for 400 years. Just like the coronavirus, COVID-1619 can be a deadly diagnosis.

After hearing from nine speakers, each representing a minute that George Floyd spent crushed on the pavement, the group set off on a march toward the City-County Building. Along the way, Rev. Brian Edmonds of Macedonia Baptist Church held a bullhorn and led the chant. He called the names of Black people who have died in racist violence and together the crowd responded:

George Floyd. Say his name.

Breonna Taylor. Say her name.

Ahmaud Aubery. Say his name.

Antwon Rose. Say his name.

All the way down the hill, the litany continued. There was not a pew or a pulpit in sight, but the call and response felt like worship nonetheless. As Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel once said, describing his march with Dr. King: “I felt as if my feet were praying.”

Of course, a single day on the march, or even a series of demonstrations as we’ve seen in this season, is not enough. Working for racial justice is sustained and complicated work that requires energy and courage. My fellow white Christians must resist our fragility, sustain our attention, and cultivate deep humility. Black Christians must lead boldly, even while tending their own broken hearts.

None of us do this alone. Along the way, with every step of our march, every word in our courageous conversations, every signature on a petition, we are in good company. The martyrs, the heroes, the saints: all those who came before us are with us. We say their names. They pray for us. They are here.

May your own efforts toward justice bear fruit in this season, and may the church and the world find wholeness once more.

Your sister in Christ,

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

Classified Advertisement

The Pennsylvania Council of Churches (PCC), with offices in Harrisburg, seeks full-time Executive Director to lead the PCC in addressing the issues facing the Christian community. The successful candidate will be a skilled and committed ecumenist combining broad scriptural/theological scholarship, passion for and demonstrated experience in ecumenism with strong leadership and relationship-building skills. For information, visit www.pachurches.org or email searchcommittee@pachurches.org.

“OFTEN WHEN YOU THINK YOU’RE AT THE END OF SOMETHING, YOU’RE AT THE BEGINNING OF SOMETHING ELSE.”

~ FRED ROGERS ‘62

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