

REFLECTIONS ALONG THE WAY

Dear friends,

The year was 1967. A loaf of bread cost 22 cents. The Beatles' album "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" spent 15 weeks at the top of the charts. At a McDonald's restaurant on McKnight Road, local entrepreneur Jim Delligatti put two all-beef patties on a sesame seed bun and called it the Big Mac. And on October 2, Mabel Lindsay Gillespie died at age 81.

Miss Gillespie's father became rich in the lumber business, and she grew up in Gilded Age Pittsburgh, surrounded by incredible wealth. Like other members of the city's aristocracy, the Gillespies had a classic sense of *noblesse oblige*. Mabel became involved in dozens of charitable causes across the city and beyond, supporting education, the arts, and religion.

As an only child, Mabel inherited her parents' fortune in its entirety. She never married and had no children to name in her own will; her obituary lists a single cousin as her survivor. So, she had to be creative in structuring her own estate. She left bequests to friends and distant relatives; she made gifts to her chauffeur and housekeepers; she supported the farmers who cared for her summer estate on Maryland's Eastern shore. And she created a trust to benefit her friends' children. Each would receive income from the trust during their lifetimes; on their deaths, the principal would be divided among 41 different charitable organizations.



Mabel Gillespie

These organizations are widely varied in location, focus, and scale. Mabel named colleges, hospitals, the symphony, the parks conservancy. She named organizations in Pittsburgh's Shadyside neighborhood, where she lived, and she named distant ones, like the American University in Cairo. And she named ecumenical organizations: the National Council of Churches, the Presbyterian Church's commission on ecumenism, and the Council of Churches of the Pittsburgh Area.

Mabel Gillespie never heard of Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania: it wouldn't exist until 1970. She never lived in a world where ecumenical organizations included Catholics as well as Protestants. She certainly never imagined a time when ecumenical conversations would happen over Zoom or on social media.

And yet even so, for the past 55 years, each time one of her trust's beneficiaries has died, Christian Associates (as the successor organization to the Council of Churches of the Pittsburgh Area), has received a gift designated for our endowment. These funds have gone to work, generating income that has fueled our ministry for decades. This December, 55 years after

Miss Gillespie's death, we received the final installment of her gift, bringing the total of her generosity to our mission to approximately \$325,000.

Most of us will never dream of the fortune that Miss Gillespie had, but we still have wealth to share: our faith, our wisdom, our imagination, our love. What legacies will you leave? Who will you still be helping, 55 years after your death? What is the work beyond your current imagining that you can, even now, begin to make possible?

Praise be to God for the lives of generous saints; help us too to provide for the faithful ones who will follow us.

Your sister in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Liddy".

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



Rev. Liddy Barlow pays respects at Mabel Gillespie's resting place at Allegheny Cemetery



A stained glass window in the Gillespie mausoleum