

# 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*



September 2024, Number 3

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

### This Election Season, Let's Come Together to "Love Anyway"

In a contentious election season, faith leaders can make a difference in building peaceful communities where all voices are valued.

That's not wishful thinking! Our partners at Common Ground USA confirm this message from their decades of experience in conflict zones around the world. They offer a variety of tools to help us develop our potential as peacemakers, including the **Peacemakers Toolkit** at [sfcg.org/peacemakerstoolkit](http://sfcg.org/peacemakerstoolkit).

Meanwhile, Braver Angels also offers resources for churches seeking to have productive conversations across political differences. Their workshop, **Depolarizing Ourselves**, helps communities interact without demonizing, dismissing, or stereotyping others. Christian Associates can facilitate this workshop in your house of worship; contact us



Faith leaders from across Pennsylvania gather at the State Capitol to affirm the "Choices and Voices for Peace" statement. Add your name at [bit.ly/choicesandvoicesforpeace](http://bit.ly/choicesandvoicesforpeace).

for details.

Our work will not be over once we've cast our votes—but let's take a moment to breathe. Spiritual leaders, both clergy and laity, are invited to a special **We Have to Talk** interfaith event the morning

after the election, November 6 at 11 a.m. at Phipps Conservatory. Join Rev. Liddy Barlow and Rabbi Hindy Finman for a calm, restorative space where we can connect with one another and move into what's next. RSVPs are appreciated by visiting [casp.org/wehavetotalk](http://casp.org/wehavetotalk).

Then, on Friday, November 8, let's come around the table despite our differences. Christian Associates and our community partners will host a community-wide **Love Anyway Feast** at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. No matter how we voted, no matter what the future holds, we will stay in relationship and love one another anyway. Join us by RSVPing at [bit.ly/pghloveanyway](http://bit.ly/pghloveanyway), or plan your own Love Anyway Feast; learn more at [cg-usa.org](http://cg-usa.org).

### New Bishops and Executives Selected to Serve Local Churches

This fall we welcome four new members to our Council of Bishops and Judicatory Executives as they begin their work leading church bodies in our region.

**Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball** is the new episcopal leader of the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. She served twelve years as bishop in the West Virginia Annual Conference. She also shared responsibility for the central Pennsylvania Susquehanna Conference.

Ecumenically, Bishop Steiner Ball served as Vice Chairperson of the West Virginia Council of Churches and co-chaired a task force of the Council working to



**Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball,**  
**Bishop Brian Thompson, Sr.**

address substance abuse and addiction. She is married to the Rev. Barry D. Steiner Ball; they have two daughters and two granddaughters.

The Mid-Atlantic Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church welcomes **Bishop Brian Thompson, Sr.**

The Conference includes AME Zion churches across a wide geography, from Ohio to Maryland to Guyana and Barbados, including our Allegheny Conference.

Bishop Thompson served numerous AME Zion congregations in his native North Carolina; during his tenure at Simon Temple AME Zion in Fayetteville, NC, the church grew from 300 to 3000 members.

In 2021, he was elected the 106th Bishop and was assigned the Western Episcopal District which includes churches from Alaska to Arizona.

Bishop Thompson and his wife, Missionary Supervisor Rev. Felica R. Thompson, have one son and one daughter.

*Continued on page 4.*

# REFLECTIONS ALONG THE WAY

Dear friends,

News alerts flashed across the nation on July 13: former President Donald Trump had been wounded in an assassination attempt at a rally taking place on the Butler Farm Show grounds. One bystander was dead; two others were seriously injured; the shooter had also been killed.

A frenzy began: journalists descended, pundits opined, and politicians moved to the microphones. But the news resonated differently in and around Butler itself. Here, this event was not just one banner headline among many. It was happening right here, among neighbors. Everyone knew someone who had been present to witness the violence. The victims of the shooting—Corey Comperatore, David Dutch, James Copenhaver—were people known by their neighbors, not as political stereotypes, but as friends, volunteers, family men.

And then there was the setting of the shooting: the Farm Show grounds. For nearly eighty years, the Butler Farm Show has been a beloved community event, a place where people gather across generations to affirm their connections to the land and to one another. This act of violence designed to tear people apart had happened in a place that usually serves to bring people together.

In the months prior to the assassination attempt, experts raised the alarm that Southwest Pennsylvania is at elevated risk for political violence. They noted that, compared to other states, Pennsylvania has a higher rate of involvement in extremist organizations and hate groups, and that local elections officials have faced more threats and harassment in Pennsylvania than in surrounding states.

But these same experts tell us something even more important: in the face of political violence, we still have a choice. We still have agency. We can still make change. In the face of the vicious cycle of violence (institutional distrust, powerlessness, polarization, and violent acts), we can instead build the virtuous cycle of peace: safety, institutional legitimacy, agency, and belonging.

What's more, faith leaders are uniquely equipped to do this work. We already use the tools of peacemaking every day, knowingly or not. We are building community where people know and trust one another across difference. We are fostering opportunities for people to speak honestly and openly with one another. We are reminding one another that our ultimate identity is not found on the ballot but in the baptismal font. We have what we need to make peace—and our communities need these tools we bring.

And so, an ecumenical group of pastors from the Butler Clergy Network made plans to participate in the opening ceremonies of the Farm Show. Together, they prayed for a community grieving and healing. Together, they rededicated this space for community flourishing. Together, they redefined Butler's identity: not a headline but a home. For their grateful neighbors, this ritual made a real difference.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you,” Jesus promised. When violence, polarization, tragedy, and division threaten to tear us apart, the Prince of Peace has already given us what we need to be peacemakers. May we use Christ's peace wisely in the days ahead!

Your sister in Christ,



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

PS – If you would like to know more about how faith communities can foster peace in their communities, download the Peacemakers Toolkit from Common Ground USA: [sfcg.org/peacemakerstoolkit](https://www.commongroundusa.org/peacemakerstoolkit).



Photo by Brian Cohen



Clergy lead prayers at the Butler Farm Show

## “Reckoning with Antisemitism” Series Continues with November Event & Preaching Challenge



Panelists at the June “Reckoning with Antisemitism” event: (left-right) Rev. Liddy Barlow, Sister Gemma DelDuca, Dr. Greta Stokes-Tucker, Noah Schoen, Rev. Leeann Younger, Bishop Kurt Kusserow

In a June program, Christian leaders shared their experiences of “reckoning with antisemitism”: their journey to understanding that anti-Jewish perspectives have distorted the Christian tradition, and their work to undo this oppression in their own lives and walks of faith.

In November, this important dialogue continues with **“Reckoning with Antisemitism: Listening to Jewish Voices.”** Please join Christian Associates and the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh on Sunday, November 17 at 6:30 p.m. in the John Knox Room at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary as we welcome a panel of Jewish leaders to share how antisemitism has affected their lives and community and what they hope their

Christian neighbors will come to understand about the Jewish experience.

The panel will include Eric Lidji, director of the Rauh Jewish History Program & Archives at the Senator John Heinz History Center; Sara Stock Mayo, a spiritual leader, musician, poet, and activist; and Alan Iszauk.

RSVPs are helpful but not required by visiting [casp.org/reckoning](http://casp.org/reckoning).

At the November event, we will share more about a preaching challenge for Christian clergy, as you take your own reckoning with antisemitism into the pulpit with support and encouragement from colleagues and neighbors. Watch for more details in the December edition of *The Call*.

### BLESSED BE EDUCATORS

## Annual Prayer Breakfast

**Saturday, October 26**

**9:15 to 11:30 a.m. (doors open 8:30 a.m.)**

Church of the Redeemer Parish Hall  
5700 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15217  
(Near corner of Forbes & Murray Avenues)

Hot Breakfast | Door Prizes | Gift Bags | Free Parking

#### Guest Speaker

Dr. Kathy Wilson, PhD  
President of Carlow  
University

#### Tickets

\$10/adult, \$5/child  
Contact Mary Ann Hvizdos  
[mahvizdos@verizon.net](mailto:mahvizdos@verizon.net)  
412-807-1611

This is BBE’s Annual  
Fundraiser.  
A free-will offering will be  
taken.



### Lecture Explores “the Jewish Jesus”

What difference does it make that Jesus was Jewish? Renowned scholar Mary C. Boys suggests that acknowledging Jesus’ Jewishness can transform our understanding of the New Testament and foster deeper relationship between Christians and Jews today.

On **Wednesday, October 30 at 7 p.m.**, Dr. Boys will present the Rabbi Jason Edelstein Lecture for Catholic-Jewish Dialogue at St. Vincent College in Latrobe, titled **“Recovering the Jewish Jesus and Reimagining a Relationship”**

Dr. Boys will identify the ways in which the gospel accounts depict Jesus as a Jew from Nazareth of Galilee, summarize how and why the early church was unable to recognize his Jewishness, reflect on the consequences of this omission for both Jews and Christians, and highlight the insights made possible by contemporary explorations of the Jewish Jesus Christ.

Mary C. Boys is the Skinner and McAlpin Professor of Practical Theology at Union Theological Seminary, New York City. She is the author of six books, including *Redeeming our Sacred Story: The Death of Jesus and Relations between Jews and Christians*.

At press time, the precise location of the lecture was yet to be announced; watch the St. Vincent website for details.



Dr. Mary C. Boys

## Welcoming New Bishops & Executives, continued from page 1

**Bishop Stafford J. N. Wicker** is the new leader of the Third Episcopal District in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The district includes Western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio.



**Bishop Stafford Wicker, Rev. Jessica McClure Archer**

Most recently, Bishop Wicker has been leading his home district of Mississippi and Louisiana, and previously served as bishop in the district that includes Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, and Eswatini. As a pastor, he led churches in Louisiana and Georgia, including a very large congregation, Antioch AME in Decatur, Georgia. Bishop Wicker and his wife, the Rev. Dr. Constance Wicker, have two daughters.

Rev. McClure Archer has served as the pastor of Sampson's Mills Presbyterian Church in White Oak since 2017, and has also been a leader in the Presbytery's Commission on Ministry. She has been active in ecumenical and community work in the McKeesport area.

Previously, Rev. McClure Archer served for ten years at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Purcellville, Virginia. She is a Washington County native; she is married to her husband Andy and they are the parents of two high school students, Evan and Camrynn.

Please keep all of these leaders in your prayers as they assume these new roles.

## Religious Researchers to Meet in Pittsburgh

This fall, the Religious Research Association and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion will host their annual meetings at the Westin Convention Center in downtown Pittsburgh.

Scholars from across the social and behavioral sciences will present over 400 research papers at the conference. Topics include talking about race in congregations, medicine and mental health, clergy wellbeing, and much more.

While registration for the full event, October 18-20, ordinarily costs nearly \$300, a special one-day rate for religious leaders is available for just \$35, allowing participation on Friday, October 18 only. To register, visit [sssreligion.org](http://sssreligion.org).



## Eradicate Hate Global Summit Returns to Pittsburgh


The Eradicate Hate Global Summit returns to Pittsburgh next month to continue its mission of sharing ideas and building relationships in order to reduce hate-fueled violence. Join experts and faith leaders from around the world at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center from October 21-23 for panels and breakout sessions on many of the challenges facing the global community today. Opening keynote speaker Dr. Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall has served as Homeland Security Advisor to President Biden since the start of his administration.



**Dr. Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall**

The summit will feature moderated panel discussions on reducing the risk of political violence, crafting caring conversations in conflict, and students defusing hate on campus, among many others. There will be a breakout session specific to faith communities on the final day of the event.

Registration is open now at [eradicatehatesummit.org](http://eradicatehatesummit.org)



### Pastors' Workshop: **Imagineering Your Church's Future**

**Thurs., Oct. 24th**

**Sewickley Presbyterian Church**

**9AM- Noon \$15**

**Presented by The Rev. Dr. Jordan Rimmer Pastor, Northminster Presbyterian Church**


Why do our churches have such a hard time turning great ideas into effective ministry and mission? We don't "imagineer" well enough. Based on the brilliant work of Disney, imagineering means achieving great ministry and mission by embodying great ideas through effective details.

Using imagineering insights, we'll explore how to:


- Generate great ideas.
- Understand story and theming.
- Build creative teams.
- Make worship feel more immersive.
- Develop processes that turn great ideas into well-planned, energizing ministry and mission.

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**QUESTIONS? 888.200.9746**



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## News and Notes from the Foundation of HOPE



Rev. Dr. Charissa Howe

### Congratulations, Chaplain Howe!

We join in congratulating the Rev. Dr. Charissa Howe, who was recognized as County Correctional Chaplain of the Year by the Pennsylvania Prison Chaplains Association. Rev. Howe has served as Director of Chaplaincy Services at Allegheny County Jail since June 2021.

Meanwhile, the Rev. Ulli Klemm, who served as Director of Chaplaincy at ACJ from 1992-2004,

was recognized as State Correctional Chaplain of the Year.

### Charity Cornhole Tournament

Our partners at Foundation of HOPE will host their second annual Charity Cornhole Tournament on Saturday, September 28 from Noon-4 p.m. at Nova Place on the North Side. Grab your partner and compete in one of two brackets: competitive or "just for fun." Those without a partner will be matched up by the organizers; all tickets include lunch provided by sponsor Deutchtown Deli. Learn more and register here.

### Host a Donation Drive

This fall, the Chaplaincy Department is collecting socks, sweatshirts and sweatpants, hygiene products, and religious reading material to show HOPE participants at the jail that our community cares about them. To learn more about specific donations that can be accepted, please call 412-350-2057 and request the fall donation drive flyer.

### Remembering Jody Raeford

And finally, we join in celebrating the life and mourning the July 31 passing of former HOPE Executive Director Jody Raeford. Mr. Raeford served HOPE for a decade, beginning as Aftercare Director in 2012 and serving as Executive Director from 2017-2022. We send our deepest condolences to Mr. Raeford's family, friends and colleagues.



Jody Raeford, 1960-2024

## Center for Loving Kindness Welcomes New Director

Christian Associates said farewell to a longtime interfaith partner in June, and welcomed a new face to the community.

Rabbi Ron Symons, founding director of the Center for Loving Kindness at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh, moved to New York's Hudson Valley this summer, where he accepted a new post at the Shames JCC in Tarrytown.

Meanwhile, Rabbi Hindy Finman arrived in Pittsburgh to become the Center's director. Rabbi Finman grew up in a Hasidic family in Detroit, and worked in Jewish camps and wilderness mental health programs before pursuing her rabbinical degree at Hebrew College in Boston. She graduated and was ordained this June.

The Center for Loving Kindness has partnered with Christian Associates on a wide variety of projects since its founding in 2017, including the "We Have to Talk" network of interfaith spiritual leaders, "Sofa Spirituality" online dialogues, and the "Rebuilding



Rabbi Hindy Finman and Rev. Liddy Barlow at the Pennsylvania State House in Harrisburg

and Restoring" series of conversations between spiritual leaders and police officers.

"Christian Associates is so fortunate to have wonderful interfaith partners across the community," said Rev. Liddy Barlow. "We've been particularly blessed by our fruitful collaborations with the JCC Center for Loving Kindness. We look forward to continuing this connection in the years to come."



Rev. Liddy Barlow and Rabbi Ron Symons at his farewell reception at the Jewish Community Center

## Carnegie Mellon Students Offer Help to Nonprofits



As we're only too aware, many churches and nonprofit organizations operate on tight budgets — but Carnegie Mellon Information Systems students are offering no-cost help in exchange for real-life experiential learning.

As part of the Information Systems curriculum, junior year students work in small teams to assist a nonprofit in solving a real-world tech problem. Any organization facing an information system challenge can apply to become a community partner in the program, though the department is particularly interested in "organizations aiming to bridge the digital divide, supporting under-resourced communities and looking to enhance their technological capabilities." Ideally, these nonprofits will have a staff member who has time to work closely with the students, helping them understand the organization's needs.

Assistance is available for web design, data management, mobile apps and more. Recent faith-based partners in the program have included Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries, East End Cooperative Ministry, Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh, National Council of Jewish Women and East End Youth Ministry. Details on each project are available on the program website.

To learn more and apply, visit [cmuisprojects.org](http://cmuisprojects.org)

## Celebrate Peace Through Music, Dance, and Art

Lifting voices, ringing bells, and sounding drumbeats will come together in a diverse celebration of peace on September 29 at 3 p.m. "Peace, Love, and Music" is the Pittsburgh Peace Is Possible Coalition's second annual interfaith concert, featuring performers from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist houses of worship across the region.

The concert takes place at First United Methodist Church of Pittsburgh (5101 Centre Ave, 15232). Admission is free and childcare is available.



Recognizing that peace begins at home, audience members are encouraged to bring donations to benefit the Women's Center and Shelter, such as gift cards and diapers.


For more information, visit [peaceispossiblepgh.net](http://peaceispossiblepgh.net).




Calligrapher Benjamin Aysan of the Turkish Cultural Center shares his art at the 2023 peace concert








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\* \* \* \* \*

**6:00PM** (SUNDAYS) & **7:30PM** (FRIDAYS / SATURDAYS)

Tickets - \$40, Seniors - \$25, Students & Artists - \$20

Written by Lorenzo Boone / Directed by JaSonta Roberts



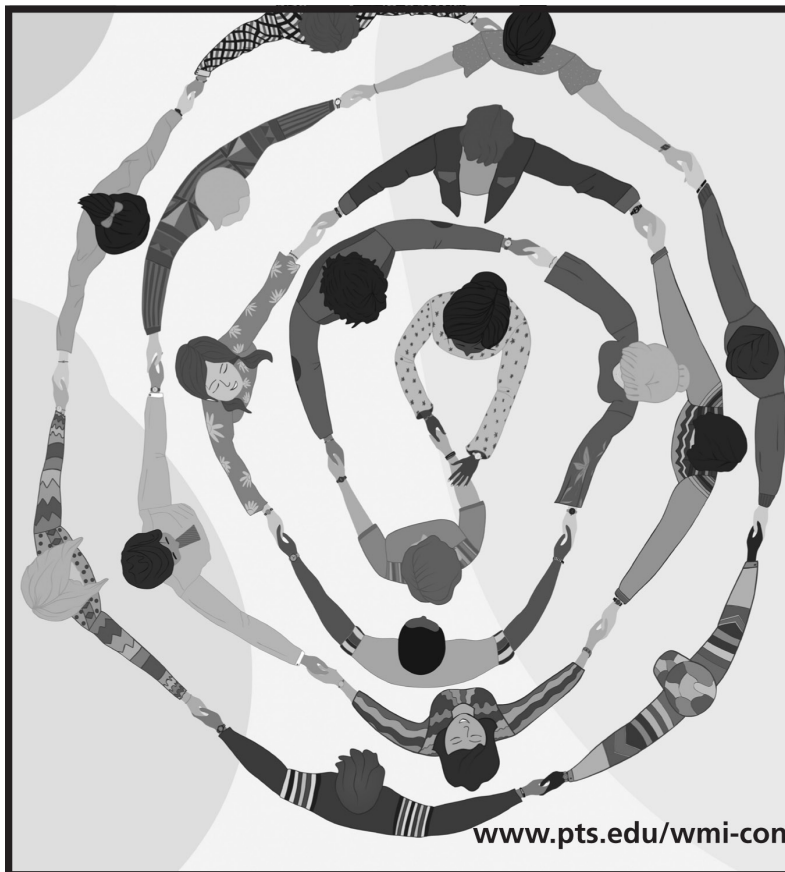

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## MISSION IN THE MARGINS: LESSONS AND PRACTICES FROM THE GLOBAL CHURCH

*W. Don McClure Lecture and World Mission Initiative Conference*

**Oct. 11-12, 2024**

In Person and Online  
with Dr. Harvey Kwiyani,  
Malawian Missiologist and Theologian



[www.pts.edu/wmi-conference-2024](http://www.pts.edu/wmi-conference-2024) 412-924-1364



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## Inspired by Prayer and Moved to Service: Feeding Our Neighbors with Amen to Action

Five weekends – twelve sites – thousands of volunteers – one million meals for our neighbors!

Spend a morning this November alongside your neighbors of faith and goodwill as together we pack a million meals for the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. Amen to Action, an initiative of the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation, is signing up volunteers now for its eighth annual service events.

The events take place on Saturday mornings as well as the Friday after Thanksgiving at host churches across the region, from Macedonia Baptist in the Hill District to Christ United Methodist in Bethel Park to Saints John & Paul in Sewickley. Choose a site near you by visiting [plf.org/a2a](http://plf.org/a2a).



**Bishop David Zubik and Reid Carpenter**

Monetary donations are also greatly appreciated; a gift of \$35 provides 100 meals.

Amen to Action was born out of ecumenical prayer gatherings convened by Bishop David Zubik and Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation founder Reid Carpenter in 2016.

Recently, these gatherings resumed, so we can see how God is next leading Pittsburgh to be “more famous for God than for steel.” Each features a time of praise and worship and opportunities to gather in small group conversations and prayer circles. The next will take place on Monday, December 11 at 7 p.m. at the Diocese of Pittsburgh Pastoral Center in Crafton. Come see what God is doing; RSVP by contacting David Solberg, [dsolberg@diopitt.org](mailto:dsolberg@diopitt.org).

### Need to Change Your Address?

Perhaps you have moved?

Visit [casp.org/addresschange](http://casp.org/addresschange) and complete a simple form to help us keep our records up to date.