

CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATES OF SOUTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA

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*A Unifying Voice in the name of Jesus Christ
for the Mission of the Gospel and the Wholeness of Communities
Serving 10 Counties and 15 Faith Traditions in 27 Judicatories,
with 2,000 Congregations and 1,000,000 members*

Grace and peace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to all who gather for this year's annual convention! It's my joy and honor to bring you greetings and gratitude from Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania and our Council of Bishops and Judicatory Executives. Christian Associates works for the visible unity of the church with our 27 member church bodies, Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant. Through collegiality, collaboration, and connectedness, we pursue the mission of the Gospel and the wholeness of communities.

The past year has been both busy and exciting. Our Council of Bishops and Executives issued a statement on racial reconciliation, recommitting ourselves to diversifying the voices in our fellowship so that we might contribute meaningfully to the struggle against racial injustice. We worked with the FISA Foundation to publish "Peace, Be Still!" a guide to help clergy engage their congregations in working against domestic violence and sexual assault. We launched a new Facebook page and an electronic newsletter, "Unity N'At." We worshiped together, celebrating our 45th anniversary with inspiring preaching and great music. We co-sponsored a wide range of events, including the Pittsburgh Pastoral Care Conference, the Trinity Institute, and a prayer service to commemorate Overdose Awareness Day. I also spent many Sundays and holy days working to increase Christian Associates' visibility by visiting congregations as a guest preacher, Bible study leader, or simply as a fellow worshiper. I welcome invitations to visit churches; please let me know when I can join you!

This year also marked a turning point in our collaborative ministries. For nearly 30 years, Christian Associates provided interfaith chaplaincy services at Allegheny County Jail. These programs flourished, offering spiritual support to inmates and officers alike, and giving birth to the Foundation of HOPE, which provides intensive training and mentoring programs for inmates and ex-offenders. HOPE is now an independent non-profit organization, with its own board of directors (including Bishop Dorsey McConnell) and – for the first time – a full-time Executive Director, Susan Orr. As of January 1, 2015, HOPE has also assumed responsibility for chaplaincy, as well. This transition allows Christian Associates to focus more intently on our central mission of Christian unity, assured that our partners at HOPE will use their expertise in correctional ministry to continue excellent work at the jail.

As in years past, the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh has enthusiastically supported the work of Christian Associates. At a time when budgets for all our member judicatories are tightening, we are deeply grateful for your financial support of our ministries. Bishop McConnell continues faithful participation in the work of our Council, and many more members of the diocese have been engaged in work on our committees and projects. Thank you all for your commitment to the unity of Christ's church!

Your sister in Christ,
The Rev. Liddy Barlow
Executive Minister