

CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATES OF SOUTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA

*A Unifying Voice in the name of Jesus Christ
for the Mission of the Gospel and the Wholeness of Communities*
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Dear friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh: Grace and peace to each of you as you gather for Annual Convention. In your worship and deliberations, your learning and your fellowship, may this time provide opportunities for new and renewed connections to one another, to the Church, and to God.

Just as the Annual Convention serves as a yearly reminder of the breadth of the Episcopal Church in southwest Pennsylvania, so Christian Associates is a vibrant manifestation of the unity of the whole church of Jesus Christ, in all its fascinating and complicated diversity. Guided by our core values of collegiality, collaboration, communication, and connectedness, Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania brings together 28 Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant church bodies to be a unifying voice for the mission of the Gospel and the wholeness of our communities.

Since your last Convention, we have been working with energy and creativity to make the unity of Christ's church more visible in the ten counties of Southwest Pennsylvania. Here are just a few of the projects that your support has made possible this year:

- We launched our new series, *The Word in Our Voices*, which collects and publishes sermons and essays by our region's clergy. The first volume, *I Was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me*, focused on immigration; the second, *Blessed Art Thou Among Women*, focused on Mary, Mother of Jesus; and the third, *Who Is My Neighbor?* focused on racial justice. Each of these volumes may be downloaded at our website, www.casp.org. I hope you will consider submitting your sermons on baptism for publication in the next volume, coming next spring.
- We developed a partnership with the Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh's new Center for Loving Kindness and Civic Engagement, cosponsoring a series of community forums and clergy breakfasts bringing faith perspectives to public issues. Each event includes inspiring preaching, compelling first-person stories, and opportunities to move into action. We invite you to join us at our upcoming events in 2019, including forums on community development and mass incarceration.
- We launched a new, modern database of our region's clergy and congregations, maintaining up-to-date information on thousands of churches throughout southwestern Pennsylvania. Not only will this project enable us to streamline our own communications, both paper and electronic, it will propel our efforts to build connections between Christians who share common roles and interests.

None of this good work would be possible without your support. The Episcopal Diocese has been an essential partner to Christian Associates since our beginnings, nearly fifty years ago. Today you continue to support us financially, and you share your skills and energy with us as well. This year, Bishop Dorsey McConnell serves as President of our Council of Bishops and Judicatory Executives, leading his peers with faithfulness and creativity.

Although the gifts we receive from judicatories such as the diocese are vitally important to our work, we also look to individual, congregational, corporate, and foundation donors to support our mission. We are especially grateful to the members of the John 17 Society, who support our work with gifts of \$250 or

more each year. For more information about the Society, or to make your own gift of any size to Christian Associates, visit www.casp.org/donate.

Encountering our Christian brothers and sisters deepens our own understanding and practice of faith, and helps us to recognize that despite all of our differences, we truly are one body. May the spirit of unity, friendship, and reconciliation be with you all at this year's Convention and in the coming days. Thank you again for your support of Christian Associates.

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