

CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATES OF SOUTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA

Collegiality, Connectedness, and Collaboration have become the core values of the bishops and church executives who are Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania. Though extremely diverse – 26 Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox regional governing bodies; a varied spectrum from theologically conservative to progressive; with similar diversity on social issues – yet because of each Christian leader’s commitment to **Collegiality**, the Council table has remained strong. In May the Council reviewed papers prepared by our Theology & Education Committee on “Ecclesiology.” The conversation was lively, reflective and pointed; but always respectful of the other. When at that same meeting a particular agenda item strained our ability to achieve consensus and threatened to fracture some relationships, the Council decided that they needed a “covenant” among themselves. ELCA Bishop Kurt Kusserow in assisting in drafting such a covenant shared with Council what he described as a “pithy summary” of his own ELCA Conference of Bishops’ Relational Agreement.

When we speak to each other, we do so directly and candidly.

When we speak about each other, we do so with grace and respect.

When we speak for each other, we use the words we have agreed to use.

When we speak together, we strive to speak with the voice of Christ.

Wisely our Christian leaders have recognized that such covenantal relationships which respect each other’s diversity, but recognize the image and likeness of Christ in the other, is the key to our continued journey toward unity within the Body of Christ.

A foundation grant maker has described Christian Associates as “nimble.” By that he meant that we are flexible, diverse but cohesive, and therefore able to foster dialogue and action in many arenas both within our Christian communities and in partnership with government, secular interest groups, human service providers and interfaith neighbors. Because of our **Connectedness** and **Collaboration**, Christian Associates is sought out to be a partner at many tables. Convening long-term recovery efforts among faith-based volunteers, secular agencies and government to respond to July’s flash flooding; co-sponsoring the annual Pittsburgh Pastoral Care and Returning Veterans Conferences; hosting the regional Bread for the World team; engaging Muslim and Jewish leaders in dialogue; conducting our own Outreach Ministry Inventory and Needs Assessment are but a few of the many ways in which, because we are nimble, we can respond to varied invitations to connect and collaborate.

For over a decade I have been privileged to serve as Executive Director of this unique ecumenical organization. I will be retiring in March 2014. It has been a joy and honor to be the public face of our efforts toward unity within Christ’s Church for the integrity of our witness to the world. Thank you for the hospitality that the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh has shown to me throughout the years. I am grateful for your continued partnership, both in prayer and finance, and particularly for the presence of Bishop Dorsey McConnell at the Council table. Thank you, both personally and on behalf of the Council who are Christian Associates. May the Spirit of unity dwell within your 2013 Convention!

Veni, Creator Spiritus!

Pax, Salaam, Shalom,

The Rev. Dr. Donald B. Green

Executive Director