

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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Spring 2017

Dear friends of the Penn West Conference,

Grace and peace to you in this milestone year, as we commemorate 500 years of Reformation. Both locally and internationally, this anniversary has been an opportunity for reconciliation across our differences, as Catholics and Protestants come together for worship, study, and service. It is exciting to watch the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing new expressions of unity into the church.

We've seen the Spirit working among us in so many ways this year at Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania. We continue to expand our witness; in fall 2016, we welcomed the Bruderhof Communities of Southwest Pennsylvania as our 28<sup>th</sup> member. This May, the Council of Bishops and Executives traveled to the Bruderhof's Spring Valley community in Fayette County to get to know our new friends better and enjoy their extraordinary hospitality.

Such **Collegiality**, convening Christian leaders to build relationships grounded in trust and common values, is central to the work of Christian Associates. With many new leaders arriving in our member judicatories, we facilitated a full-day retreat for the Council of Bishops and Judicatory Executives this year, enabling us to pray and sing, discuss important issues, and share fellowship time with one another. We also recognize the importance of collegiality on the local level; we've recently launched an online directory of local ecumenical groups in our region, available at [www.casp.org/localecumenism](http://www.casp.org/localecumenism). If you know of a ministerium, clergy group, or service agency that should be added to the directory, please contact our office.

Through **Collaboration**, we put these relationships to work, speaking and acting for the common good. Our Church & Community Committee continues to find new ways to bring the Council's statements on welcoming refugees and ending racism to life. Our Theology & Education Committee's new e-book on the gifts each tradition offers to the wider church should be available by the time of our Annual Meeting; visit our website at [www.casp.org](http://www.casp.org) to download it. Speaking of the Web site, this year we completely re-designed it, telling our story more clearly and offering new resources to visitors.

Our **Connectedness** ministries bring the voice of the church to civic, community, and interfaith partnerships. We work with the Foundation of HOPE, Bread for the World,

the Pittsburgh Pastoral Care Conference, Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster, the Greater Pittsburgh Interfaith Coalition, Standing Firm, Cease Fire PA, and many other organizations. We have begun a partnership with Healing Communities, which helps faith groups build relationships of healing, redemption and reconciliation in families and communities affected by incarceration. In February, we played a key role in organizing “Becoming One – Standing Together,” a community interfaith worship event in solidarity with immigrants and refugees.

Our ministries would be impossible without the steadfast support of our member judicatories. I am so grateful for the Conference’s multifaceted encouragement, including your generous financial contribution. Rev. David Ackerman is a valued member of our Executive Committee, offering wise and committed leadership among his peers; thank you for sharing his gifts with us.

Although the gifts we receive from judicatories 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](http://www.casp.org/donate).

By this,” Jesus said, “everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” We live in an increasingly fractured and fractious world. It is all the more important for Christians to love one another across our differences, setting a vivid example of cooperation and harmony. Thank you, Penn West Conference, for joining Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania as we seek to build up that love in our communities.

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