



The Connection

The Capital Area Council of Churches

Fall 2021

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In Awe of Love

The meek and the mighty—the shepherds from their field, the three wise men from the East. They came in awe of the birth of the baby, a birth that would signify a new chapter in the history of mankind. From this humble beginning would come the man who would teach and demonstrate the true meaning of love for all of us to follow and emulate.

In a world today filled with acrimony and tragedy and sadness, it's easy to lose sight of the beautiful messages of:

**“Love one another.”
“Do unto others.”**

And yet, it's there. It's here all around us, often shrouded in the clouds of despair. Of course, there are many other kinds of love. Romantic love. Love of nature. Love of the arts. Love of animals and pets. Love of exploration. And more. All well and good.

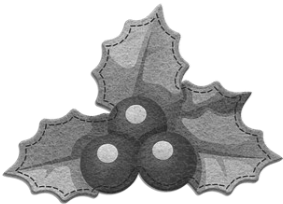
But another name for love, the one to be praised is “agape.” Agape is unconditional love. It is a gift of one's self.

That love, that charity, that agape is here. It is all around us. We just have to look. It's here in the homeless shelters. It's here in the food pantries. It's here with support for victims of abuse. After-school programs for children. Services for those with severe disabilities. Support for those with serious medical issues. So many different ways in which people demonstrate giving and sharing unconditional love. We applaud and thank them for all that they do to make the world a better place.

We here at the Capital Area Council are here to share in our mission of doing together what we cannot do alone. Please join us in our efforts to serve the homeless, to feed the hungry, to address social injustice, and, most of all, to demonstrate the message of love for one another.

In awe of the beauty of the Christ Child and his unconditional love, the board, the staff, and our awesome volunteers wish everyone peace, joy and, most of all, love. God bless us everyone.

Margaret Danes
Board President



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Awards Celebration Bringing Tidings of Comfort and Joy

It was an evening of camaraderie — friends, family, co-workers, and, happily, new acquaintances to share some “good news.” The night began with a social hour followed by a lovely dinner, a most satisfying way in which to “nourish the body.” Then followed the recognition of the program’s honorees, the highlight of the evening. This provided a different kind of nourishment-- food for the heart and soul. It helps to be reminded of the incredible goodness that often gets overlooked in today’s tumultuous times.

The Capital Area Council of Churches 80th Anniversary Awards Celebration, “**Building Bridges**” was held on October 13, 2021 at the Italian American Community Center. This year the program focused on five honorees and their accomplishments of working to bring “comfort” to those in need—whether by addressing poverty and homelessness, establishing scholarships, mentoring young people, working to empower young girls to positive life styles, or building a community strengthened through diversity. Our honorees exemplified all that and more. Brief biographies of recipients and pictures from the dinner can be found throughout this issue of Connections.

We look forward to this celebration again next year and the opportunity to shine the spotlight on the goodness that truly does exist in this world. More importantly, may these accomplishments serve to inspire a new generation to positive works to make our communities better and brighter places for all.

“It Takes a Village”—Addressing Gun Violence

Powerful. Riveting. On Monday, November 15, 2021, the Capital Area Council of Churches in partnership with the League of Women Voters of Albany County and the Rockefeller Institute of Government sponsored a virtual program addressing the complexities of gun violence. Participants represented community and faith-based leaders, law enforcement officials, state legislators, and street outreach workers brought insight on the toll of gun violence and how we can reduce it through positive changes in education, employment, health and social services, and public safety. The intent of the program was to inform and inspire the audience to support a variety of investments and interventions through advocacy for, and involvement within, our community.

Comments from viewers:

“The speakers brought such depth and diversity of understanding, and each so clearly explained their perspective. The moderating likewise was excellent, bringing ideas back and around for the speakers to comment on, and then move forward. Hearing these six people left me with a renewed sense of hope for our struggling communities and world.”

From another viewer:

“That was a really good discussion among the panelists. I thought it was the right mixture of people, coming from a broad diversity of perspectives. My take-away is that all of the perspectives need to be taken into account for us to move forward on deeply devastating problem of increasing gun violence. In other words, kind of an “and/both” rather than an “either/or” set of solutions. I look forward to recommending the recording of the session to some of my friends and colleagues.”

Note: The video is now available on LWVAC's YouTube channel. See: <https://youtu.be/cdfkgtLnxmw>

Our thanks to the following for their insight, commitment, and participation: Craig Apple, Sheriff, Albany County; Bishop Avery Comithier, Pastor at Elijah Missionary Church; Dr. Alice Green, Executive Director of the Center for Law and Justice; John T. McDonald III, New York State Assemblymember for the 108th District; Richard Williams, 518 SNUG Outreach Worker from Trinity Alliance. Lead moderator of the program was Joseph Popcun, Executive Director of the Regional Gun Violence Research Consortium at the Rockefeller Institute of Government.

Fall Awards Honoring the 2021 recipients

This year the prestigious **Rev. Dr. Carlyle Adams Ecumenical & Interfaith Award** was shared by two dedicated leaders, Miranda Rand and Dr. Peter Zaas.

Miranda was born and educated in England and immigrated to the U.S. in 1966. She has long been a leader in the ecumenical and interfaith worlds. As Coordinator for CACC's Ecumenical Witnesses of Baptism program, Miranda matches requests from member churches to volunteers dedicated to witnessing the Sacrament of Baptism. She is currently President of the Interfaith Community of Schenectady and serves on the board of Working Group on Girls of Schenectady, Inc. an organization dedicated to empowering Schenectady City School District Middle School girls to build healthy life habits.

Rev. Jonathan Vanderbeck presents to Miranda Rand



Dr. Peter Zaas with Betty Bachman & Merle Longwood

Dr. Peter Zaas, was educated at the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies, Oberlin College, Duke University, and the University of Chicago, where he earned his PhD in New Testament and Early Christian Literature, writing on the communication of morals in the letters of Paul. His research has focused on that author, and on the birth story of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. An inquiry to Siena College by Hayyim Kieval in 1983 led to the foundation of the Kieval Institute, whose Directorship Dr. Zaas assumed in 1991.

The Pearl and James Campbell Peace and Justice Award was presented to FOCUS Churches of Albany.

FOCUS Churches of Albany is a group of churches and affiliates committed to food justice through direct service programs and public advocacy. Our Interfaith Food Pantry and Breakfast Program are located one block from the State Capital. FOCUS members can gather for a hot meal, then walk down the street, raising their voices to protest systems which result in food insecurity.

Fred Boehrer, Rev. Kathy Donley & Peter Donnelly

In 1967, FOCUS Churches of Albany was born amid a spirit of collaboration, service and justice. Today, we are a group of interfaith affiliates and six covenant congregations: Delmar Reformed Church, Emmanuel Baptist Church, First Church in Albany, First Presbyterian Church, Trinity United Methodist Church, Westminster Presbyterian Church. We offer new possibilities of wholeness among those who feel lonely and alienated. We commit to speak the truth in places of power.



Cornerstone Campus Ministry is BAAAACK!

After over 18 months of shut down and hybrid learning, UAlbany is back to full in-person education and that means that Cornerstone Campus Ministry is BAAAAACK! All at UAlbany are required to be vaccinated and those who are not able are tested weekly. In addition, everyone, regardless of their vaccination status, wears mask in all campus buildings. This is our “new normal” and it means all of our programs are up and running including Worship and Sunday Supper, Food and Faith, Bible Study (twice each week), Mid-Week Meet-Up, lots of community service and lots of social events continue.

At the end of last year, we had 20 students graduate which left a huge hole to fill. But our group of student leaders rose to the occasion and worked so hard to recruit new students. We are back over at our pre-pandemic levels of participation. Our incoming freshmen are showing such enthusiasm and are really excited to participate in ALL the programs and activities we have planned. Truly they are the best outreach coordinators ever!

In addition to our weekly on-campus Worship and Sunday Supper, on Tuesday we gather for Food and Faith. Each week is hosted by a different congregation. In addition to feeding the 20-25 students who gather, the congregation plans a mini-worship experience. If your congregation would like to help, please reach out to Rev. Sandy Damhof at sdamhof@albany.edu. We’ve also coordinated two campus-wide community service events. In September we assembled 100 hygiene kits for Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless; in October we made over 200 Bean Soup Bags for Grassroot Givers who will, in turn, distribute them to local food pantries in the Capital Region. In November we’ll be making fleece scarves to distribute to homeless shelters in the area.



The most exciting news of the semester is that our Winter Break Service Trip is back. In November we made baked goods and sold them in local churches. The funds raised will help underwrite the cost of the trip. To further underwrite the cost of the trip for each participant, we are looking for congregations to “adopt” our students. If you would like to help you can send your donation via check to “Protestant Campus Ministry”, UAlbany Interfaith Center – CC346, 1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12222 or send your donation via Cash App or Venmo. The suggested “adoption” fee is \$200 but any amount is welcome!

Contact Rev. Sandy Damhof, Protestant Campus Ministry, at 518-442-5591 or sdamhof@albany.edu.

Congressman Paul Tonko at Fall Awards Celebration

Ephesians 4:12

To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.



Fall Awards Honoring the 2021 recipients

The Micah 6:8 Award was presented to Karen Pass who leads mission ministry for FUMC Delmar working in partnership with IPH, Iglesia Emmanuel, RISSE, Frank Chapman Memorial Institute, CACC's Emergency Homeless Overflow Shelter and other programs.

Karen Pass epitomizes that wonderful group of people who give selflessly of themselves in service for others, particularly those in need. A long-time congregant of First United Methodist Church of Delmar, one of Karen's primary responsibilities is coordinating their mission groups. On any given day, Karen can be found taking school items to RISSE or clothing to Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless or helping out at her church's Lounge Sales. She also works with the Frank Chapman Memorial Institute, Iglesia Emmanuel and CACC's Emergency Homeless Overflow Shelter. Her work with these ministries demonstrates how Karen puts her faith into action.

Nannette Ashe presenting award to Karen Pass



Rev. Comithier and friends

The Rev. Joyce Steinkraus Giles Award presented to Rev. Leonard D. Comithier, Jr., a nationally renowned preacher and teacher, serving as pastor of the Macedonia Baptist Church for 35 years.

Rev. Leonard D. Comithier, Jr. is a nationally renowned preacher and teacher, serving as pastor of the Macedonia Baptist Church for 35 years. Under his committed & visionary leadership, many successful initiatives were created and implemented, including a community-wide academic support/mentoring program, the Macedonia Scholarship Fund and the Rites of Passage, a faith-based, cultural/social enrichment program. Humbly receiving numerous titles and accolades including "Stellar Award for Pastor of the Year", "Dean of Preachers", "MLK Drum Major of Life", Reverend Comithier continues to be a vital and necessary instrument in the Masterful Hand of God.

Hebrews 13:7

Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

Ecumenical Witness of Baptism

For over forty years I have served as an ordained minister in the Episcopal Church. During that time, I was honored to preside over countless baptisms of both adults and children. At each baptism it was clear that the candidate was not being initiated into the Episcopal Church, but into the Body of Christ. In other words, the event mattered not just to the local congregation but to the larger Christian Church.

During the seventeen years that I served as Rector of St. George's Episcopal Church in Clifton Park we participated in the **Ecumenical Witnesses of Baptism** program offered by the Capital Area Council of Churches. Each time we celebrated a baptism we were honored to host guests from various other denominations who joined us at the font and helped us welcome the newly baptized into the Body of Christ. In turn, we had a team of volunteers who were prepared to visit other churches in the Capital Region and witness their baptisms.

At St. George's we found that the Ecumenical Witnesses of Baptism not only enriched the life of our parish, but it was also a doorway that welcomed us into participating in other programs offered by the Capital Area Council of Churches.

Now that I am retired from full-time parish ministry, through the Ignatian Volunteer Corps, I serve as a volunteer for CACC. If you would like to know more about my experience with the Ecumenical Witnesses of Baptism, I would love to sit down and visit with you. You can reach me at WilliamRHinrichs@gmail.com or 518-608-1139.

If you want to invite ecumenical witnesses to a baptism at your church, or become a witness yourself, you can call or email our Coordinator, Miranda Rand, at (mirandarand411@gmail.com) or 518-393-5047.

The Rev. William R. Hinrichs, D. Min.

Karen Pass and Friends



1 Corinthians 12:13

For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Matthew 28:19

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

The Altamont Reformed Church

The Altamont Reformed Church (the “little church under the mountain,” as described by its pastor) is a local church of the Reformed Church in America (RCA). It was recognized as an independent congregation by the Classis of Schenectady in 1896.

The church building, which was erected in 1888, still serves as the center of worship at ARC. Although there have been renovations over the years, the sanctuary is essentially unchanged. It features 16 stained-glass windows, most of which were installed in 1895. The church is a stop on the Altamont Village Museum in the Streets[®] walking tour.

Although it has a rich history, ARC is not captive to the past. Members of the church family come from many walks of life and have joined together for one purpose -- to learn what it means to love God and to love others. As a community of faith, they:

- Strive to follow Jesus's command to love God and love others
- Pray for God's guidance in an uncertain world
- Reach out to those in need
- Value authenticity and simplicity in worship
- Cherish relationships and connections in our church life
- Believe in asking honest questions and seeking God's truth



The current pastor, the Rev. Matthew J. van Maastricht, was installed in October 2017. He guided the congregation through the challenge of Covid-19 when everything went virtual. Things are slowly returning to normal. The church resumed worship in the sanctuary on Palm Sunday 2021. As of this fall, the Chancel Choir is singing anthems, the biweekly men’s study group has resumed, and the annual women’s retreat was held in early October. The pastor is teaching a class for teens and adults each Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

Worship in the sanctuary begins at 10:30 a.m. each Sunday from September through June and at 9:30 a.m. during July and August. Those who are unable to attend in person continue to join the service on Zoom and a video of the sermon is posted on the church website.

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Shelter Opening....

The Emergency Homeless Overflow Shelter opened its doors on November 1st and will remain open until April 30, 2022. The summer was spent preparing the shelter for another season. Donations of paper products, socks, gloves, coats and of course, monetary donations are always welcome.

The shelter, under the management of Pam Bullock, is a deeply caring environment for our guests. There is always a clean bed, warm food provided by our member parishes, and a listening ear. We invite you to come, see the shelter, and volunteer your time. Call the Council at 518-462-5450 to make a visit.

(Continued from page 7)

ARC engages in service and mission in the village, the Capital Region, and around the world. For several years the church has hosted free monthly community dinners for residents. The dinners have been suspended temporarily because of Covid-19 restrictions. ARC also houses the One Love Preschool which provides safe, quality childcare for children in the village.

In the Capital Region, ARC actively supports Schenectady Community Ministries, Community Caregivers, the Cornerstone Campus Ministries at UAlbany, Camp Fowler, and the Capital Area Council of Churches. Church members regularly participate in the annual CROP Walk – the ARC team placed sixth in the region with \$3,140 in donations this year.

Church members make regular donations to food pantries in Altamont and Guelderland with opportunities to bring food items to designated worship services. They also contribute needed items to local residences for those diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and to Adopt-a-Family project during the holiday season.

ARC is a supporter of Church World Service, a faith-based organization that responds to global needs related to hunger, poverty, displacement, and disaster. The church conducts an annual February campaign for CWS “Blanket the World with Love” project and raised \$2,000 this year while worship services were still online. Another project resulted in the contribution of nearly 100 school kits for CWS for distribution to needy students across the globe.

For more information about ARC, its people, and its mission, please visit the website at www.altamontreformed.org.



Pastor Matthew J. van Maastricht

First United Methodist Church of Voorheesville Gets New Pastor

Quincie J. Yamin has been appointed Pastor of FUMCV effective July 1, 2021. Pastor Yamin has finished her Masters of Divinity and graduated from Duke University. Between her graduation and recent marriage to FUMCV Associate Pastor Mat Yamin, Quincie has a lot going on in her life!

We wish her great success in her ministry.



CACC Annual Assembly, February 9, 2022

The Capital Area Council of Churches exists because a group of churches recognized that an ecumenical organization could provide a venue for churches from different denominations to interact. Each year, clergy and laity from these churches assemble to provide important direction for CACC. This includes passing a budget, voting for board members and officers, and discussing potential ecumenical activities the Council should pursue. Each member church can send a clergy member and two lay persons as representatives. All member churches are encouraged to attend this important meeting.

This year the Annual Assembly will be held on Tuesday, February 8, 2022 at 6:00 pm. Site is yet to be determined. If restrictions to in-person gatherings are in place, the meeting will be held via Zoom.

ECUMENICAL 9/11 MEMORIAL SERVICE



The Capital Area Council of Churches held an ecumenical service to remember 9/11 on the 20th anniversary of that tragic day. Produced by CACC, the service was hosted by Delmar Presbyterian Church. The service combined both live and recorded elements and was streamed on Facebook Live.

The service was developed by several clergy and laity of CACC member churches. Roman Catholic, Episcopal, American Baptist, United Methodist, and Presbyterian denominations contributed to the planning and participated in the service. A highlight of the service was a virtual choir that was made up of congregants from several different denominations. Live organ music was provided by Helen Hamel, organist and choir master of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Delmar. Several speakers shared heartfelt personal stories they experienced on 9/11.

All donations made as a result of the service went directly to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants and their efforts to resettle refugees from Afghanistan. The service can be viewed on CACC's website.

Interested in Volunteering with CACC?

If so, here are some thoughts to consider.

- The Capital Area Council of Churches (CACC) was founded to foster ecumenism and faithful witness through service, advocacy and celebration. Would volunteering in an ecumenical organization be of interest to you?
- Do you have relevant experience or skills that you could bring to the organization?
- Would you like to have an impact on the Capital Area Council of Churches?
- The greatest needs are in recruiting talented individuals, providing financial advice and oversight, fundraising and communications. Would you be willing to assist in any of these areas?
- The Capital Area Council of Churches is a largely volunteer operation and our committees are working committees where members work on projects between meetings. Do you have time to commit to volunteering with us?

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. CELEBRATION

50th Anniversary

This will be the fiftieth year the Capital Area Council of Churches has celebrated Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. In recognition of this day, the Council sponsors an Interfaith Celebration that aims to remind of us Dr. King's legacy.

The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. virtual celebration will take place on his birthday, Saturday, **January 15, 2021**. This interfaith service will include prayer, music and remembrance of Dr. King. The keynote speaker will be the Reverend Michael Poindexter, Pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church. In honor of his life and works there will be an appeal for donations to the annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Scholarship Fund. That award is presented to one or more college-bound students who demonstrate academic merit, financial need, and most importantly, the strength and determined character of the late Martin Luther King Jr.

This year, in celebration of fifty years of raising scholarships, we want to raise \$20,000 to help support five students with their college education. In addition to the support we receive from individuals, we are asking churches, temples, mosques, or synagogues to donate at least \$100. If your religious institution can give more, please do so. If we can get at least one hundred religious institutions to do so, we will be at half our goal.

We look forward to seeing you on January 15 for further questions call CACC 462-5450.

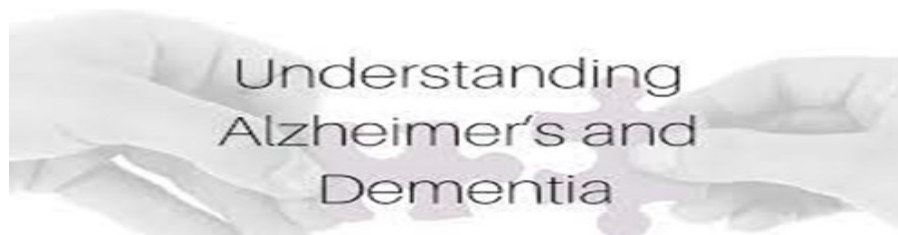
“The function of education is to teach one to think intensely and to think critically. Intelligence plus character-that is the true goal of education.” - MLK



Rev. Comithier and Macedonia Baptist Church



DEMENTIA FRIENDLY CONGREGATIONS



Over 6 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease. The greatest risk factor for Alzheimer's and other dementia is age. Since many denominations are comprised of older members, it is likely that churches and faith communities have one or more members living with Alzheimer's. This presents new and challenging opportunities for ministry. The **Capital Area Council of Churches** is planning to offer a resource for clergy, church leaders and all who are interested.

In partnership with the Alzheimer's Association and the Albany Guardian Society a webinar will be offered on **JANUARY 19 FROM 1:30 TO 3:00 PM.**

Shannon Lawler MSW, Director of Programs and Services of the Alzheimer's Association of Northeastern New York will offer a thirty-minute presentation titled: *Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia*. This program is designed for those interested in learning more about dementia in general and Alzheimer's disease in particular. It features information from dementia experts and perspective from individuals living with dementia and their care partners.



Rev. Dr. Cynthia Huling Hummel

The keynote speaker will be the Rev. Dr. Cynthia Huling Hummel. She is a retired Presbyterian minister living with Alzheimer's. She will share her own personal story and offer a presentation titled *Beyond Nametags: Becoming a Dementia-Active Congregation*. To learn more about Pastor Cynthia, please take a minute to view a short video Cynthia's Story / Unmasking the Stigma of Dementia (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmeTB_7rhY0)

Thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Albany Guardian Society, this program is free and open to all who are interested.

Questions? Contact the Capital Area Council of Churches at (518) 462-5450 or edcapareacc@gmail.com.

Interested in Volunteering with CACC?

If so, here are some committees to consider joining.

- Finance The Finance Committee, in conjunction with the Treasurer, is responsible for providing financial oversight for the Council.
- Development - Members of this committee assist executive staff with fundraising (mailers, appeals, bequests) and event planning so that the good work of the council can continue.
- Communications - to spread the word about the good work that our many member churches and committees are doing.



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Upcoming Events

January 15, 7 PM - Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration to honor Dr. King and to raise funds for the MLK Scholarships. This celebration will be recorded.

January 19, 1:30 - 3 PM - Dementia Friendly Congregations program via Zoom

February 9, 6 PM – CACC Annual Assembly, location to be determined.

February 12, 12 PM to 4 PM - Bowling-For-Beds, Shelter Fundraiser

March 20 - Albany CROP Hunger Walk Recruiter Rally

April 15, 12 PM - Good Friday Ecumenical Service

May 1 - 41st Annual Albany CROP Hunger Walk

May 24, 6 PM - Spring Assembly

Additional information can always be found at www.capareacc.org