

**CAPITAL AREA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES  
CONNECTION  
February/March 2014**

**A message from our New Executive Director ☩**

My feet are still not touching the ground following my installation as your Executive Director of the Capital Area Council of Churches. It is with a joyful and grateful heart that I begin the work of the Council—work I love.

First, I must honor and thank the Reverend Vern Victorson who agreed to come out of retirement to steer the Council ship at a time when we were in desperate need of skilled leadership and experience. Vern and his wife Kay exemplified great generosity of spirit when he agreed to take a four-month stint and extend it to 15 months. This Council and I, in particular, will be forever indebted to the Victorsons.

For those of you who do not know me, I am a Roman Catholic and attend the Church of St. Vincent DePaul in Albany. Although I am a former business teacher as well as having taught GED and ESL, my last ministries have served the poor and senior citizens in our community. However, my avocation has always been ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. I know the work that goes into the dialogue and The Capital Area Council of Churches can be proud of their long tradition (under the leadership of Rev. Bob Lamar and Rev. John Miller) in helping to create a culture of peace through ecumenical and interfaith conversation. I look forward to continuing that tradition. And by the way, I am married for almost 40 years (yes the same amount of time that Moses wandered in the desert) and have six children and three grandchildren.

As already mentioned, the needs of our seniors, sitting in the pews and those who are unable to get out, continue to be a concern of all of us. I hope to step up our efforts at the Council so that we may become a help with your senior members. Several of our board members and associates are currently working in the area of issues of concern for the elderly and the “Boomers” as well. At a recent meeting with those leaders in the “senior” network, it was noted that the churches, synagogues and mosques are the first contact to address the challenges of seniors as they journey through their golden years. Houses of faith are the most caring, most accessible and the least expensive places for elder support. They are also the most under-utilized. Our congregations can look to the newly instituted parish nursing programs as well as becoming part of care teams that support those with dementia and Alzheimer’s Disease. Collaborations for adult day care are also possibilities. I look forward to speaking with our member churches to further this discussion, particularly regarding this question: what is the role of the church in relation to vulnerable populations? Perhaps together we can determine how the resources of the churches could be used more effectively to meet these challenges faced by all of our congregations.

Our Homeless Shelter continues to be a place of hospitality and warmth. We are a vital link in the shelter network. As I continually say, “wouldn’t it be great if we could be put out of business—that everyone in our neighborhoods would have a roof over their head and a warm meal and a job to care for themselves and their families.” It is just not to be...yet. Our doors are open and we work hard to raise the money to keep this ministry going. Please stop by and visit our Shelter. To those congregations who provide meals, we thank you. To those of you

who would like to become an active part of our shelter—CALL US. We would love to hear from you.

Finally, if you would like to share some ideas with me, I can be reached at the Council office at 462-5450, on my cell phone at 505-7498 or by email [driitano6@gmail.com](mailto:driitano6@gmail.com). Thank you for your well-wishes, words of encouragement and prayers—and please keep those prayers coming!

*--Deb Riitano*

### **Transitions**

Welcome to the Rev. Paul Hunter, newly appointed Canon for Mission at the Cathedral of All Saints in Albany. The Rev. Thomas Lawless has been appointed pastor of All Saints R.C. Church in Albany, replacing the Rev. Ron Menty, who is retiring. We note with sadness the passing of retired UMC minister Rev. Phil O'Hara, who had served several area churches

### **CACC Annual Meeting Report**

Over 80 people gathered at the McKownville United Methodist Church on February 3 for the CACC Annual Meeting. Following a delicious dinner served by the youth group of the host church, elections of officers and directors were held, and a budget of \$100,508 (excluding the Shelter) was adopted for 2014. Revised by-laws were approved, two new member congregations were received, and gratitude was expressed to retiring Board members Michael Burgess and the Rev. Mary Robinson White. The two new congregations are St. John the Evangelist/ St. Joseph in Rensselaer and the Albany 2<sup>nd</sup> Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Elected to office were: George Herrick, President; Rev. Judith Johnson-Siebold, Vice President; Jane E. Schweikert, Secretary; and William Hedberg, Treasurer; Communications Committee Chair, Jeanne Bianchine; Finance/Development Committee Chair, Nancy Scholes; Shelter Oversight Committee Chair, Rev. Vern Victorson; Worship & Education Commission Chair, Barbara DiTommaso; and as Board member-at-large, Rev. Karen Pollan.

There were two vacancies on the Nominating Committee, but only one person, Jeanne Chesney, was elected. Anyone interested in filling the second spot (for a three year term) on this committee is invited to call the CACC office. (462-5450)

A copy of the 2013 Annual Report will be sent to each member congregation; additional copies are available at the Council office.

### **Congratulations to.....**

--Maggie Sherwood, a member of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Loudonville, who received our first Micah 6:8 Award for her dedication to the Emergency Overflow Shelter and its guests.

--the Rev. Bruce Cornwell, celebrating 25 years as pastor of the Colonie Community Reformed Church!

--The Food Pantries, recently honored by the City of Albany's Human Rights Commission!

## ***CROP Hunger Walk Recruiter's Rally***

**4:30-6:30pm, Sunday March 23**(snow date, 3/ 30)

First Lutheran Church, 646 State St. Albany 12203

Park in lot at the corner of Cortland Pl. and State St.

Come celebrate with us as we honor the top groups and walkers from the 2013 Walk, enjoy a light vegetarian meal, and hear about the local and global impact of the funds raised. Last year's walk raised \$93,595; 25% of that amount came back to Albany County food pantries and soup kitchens.

Please call the CACC office (462-5450) by March 18 to let us know you are coming. This event is primarily for recruiters, but if you want to find out how to be part of the May 4, 2014 CROP Hunger Walk, please join us! If your congregation has not walked before, why not start now? Visit [www.crophungerwalk.org/albanyny](http://www.crophungerwalk.org/albanyny) for more information.

### **Shelter News**

Thanks to all who participated in "Bowling for Beds" on Feb. 8. Over 100 bowlers of all ages from 18 different groups raised \$9,500 for the Shelter. Special thanks to Rev. Sandy Damhof and the students from Cornerstone Campus Ministry at UAlbany who organized the Bowl-a-Thon.

**Urgent needs:** coffee, creamer, sugar; sturdy foam bowls, plates, hot cups.

### **Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholarships**

The offering at the Jan. 15<sup>th</sup> MLK Interfaith Memorial Service amounted to \$3,708. Additional gifts have brought this year's income for the MLK Scholarship Fund to well over \$7,000. Additional donations are welcome. Checks made out to the "CACC MLK Fund" may be sent to the CACC office. Scholarship application forms are available at the CACC office and through high school guidance offices. Applicants must live, worship, or attend school in Albany County or southern Rensselaer County; be active in their school and faith community; understand and plan to apply the teachings of Dr. King; show evidence of academic potential and financial need; and be accepted at an accredited college/ university. Completed applications, along with all supporting documents, are due at the CACC office by **3/31**.

### **March Happenings**

**3/5:** New date for the Rosanne Cash Concert to benefit the Coalition to Prevent Homelessness (including the CACC Shelter), originally scheduled for Dec. 19. 7:30pm @ Troy Savings Bank Music Hall. We have several \$30 tickets for sale. Call us @ 462-5450. (Yes, it's Ash Wednesday.)

**3/7:** Church Women United World Day of Prayer. Theme: "Streams in the Desert" written by the women of Egypt. 11:30am registration @ Newtonville United Methodist Church, corner of Route 9 & Maxwell Rd. Bring a bag lunch.

**3/7:** Homeless Action Committee "Evening in the Park" (the former Sleep-a-thon), 5pm-midnight in Townsend Park. Get sponsors, spend at least one hour in the park to raise funds for HAC programs. Call (518) 426-0554 or visit [www.homelessaction.com](http://www.homelessaction.com).

**3/9:** Showing of “A Place at the Table”, a documentary about hunger, sponsored by the Albany CROP Hunger Walk Committee. 2pm @ St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church, 440 Whitehall Rd. Discussion follows. Free and open to the public. Call 462-5450 for more information

**3/18/20:** NYS Labor-Religion Coalition 40 Hour Fast This annual event calls on participants to fast for all or part of the 40 hour period (8pm Tues. -Noon Thu.) and use the time to reflect and act on ways to seek justice for low wage workers. Theme: “Wage Theft”. Visit [www.labor-religion.org](http://www.labor-religion.org) for details about the fast and information about local events.

**3/21-24:** Ecumenical Advocacy Days People of faith gather in Washington, DC for education, worship, and advocacy. This year’s theme is “Building Peace, Resisting Violence”. Visit [www.AdvocacyDays.org](http://www.AdvocacyDays.org) for information or to register. Some scholarships are available from the FOCUS Churches.

**3/28:** “Wrestling with Our Inner Angels: Spirituality and Mental Illness”, a workshop offered by the Consultation Center. 9am-4pm @ St. Ambrose Church Parish Center, 347 Old Loudon Rd., Latham, 12110 Presenter: Sr. Nancy Kehoe, RSCJ, PhD. Cost: \$80 before 3/21, \$100 thereafter. (includes lunch) Call 489-4431 or e-mail [consultationcenter@rcda.org](mailto:consultationcenter@rcda.org) to register.

**3/30:** Voices of Hope Concert, 3pm @ Delmar United Methodist Church to benefit Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless

### **Capital Region Theological Center**

CRTC provides ecumenical theological education, support for clergy, training for ministry, and resourcing services for congregations. Upcoming: “*He Said WHAT?? Bridging the Gap between Pulpit and Pew*”, Dr. Mark Allan Powell, Fri/Sat. 2/28-3/1, 9am-4pm @ Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Scotia. Cost: \$150. Register by 2/12.

“*Finding Sacred Ground: Three Abrahamic Traditions*”, Dr. Yehezkel Landau, 3/13-14, 9am-4pm @ Congregation Gates of Heaven, Schenectady. Cost \$155 by 2/14, \$175 thereafter. Register by 2/26.

“*Introduction to Old Testament I: History, Israel’s Faith, & Our Future*”, Rev. Dr. Johan Bosman, Thursdays, 3/20, 3/27, 4/4, 4/10, 7-9pm and Saturdays, 3/22 and 3/29, 9am-2pm @ Christ Community Church, Clifton Park. Cost: \$275; \$225 to audit. Register by 3/4. Call 462-2470 or visit [www.crtc.org](http://www.crtc.org) for more information.

### **Wave Riders Spring Sessions to Begin Soon**

The Community Hospice offers a free six-week support group for grieving children and teens. The Albany County group begins **March 27** and will meet on Thursdays from 5:00-6:30pm @ Macedonia Baptist Church. Call Tara @ (518) 729-2660 to register. Call the same number for information about other sites/times or visit [www.HospiceWaveRiders.com](http://www.HospiceWaveRiders.com).

### **HELP WANTED**

The Capital Region Ecumenical Organization (CREO) is seeking a part-time Coordinator. Duties will include scheduling meetings, handling communications, promoting events, producing a newsletter, among others. Work schedule will be flexible, averaging 2-4 hrs./week. Salary: \$3,000/yr. Coordinator would need to provide his/her own computer and work space.

To apply, send a resumé and cover letter highlighting interest and experience in ecumenical activities to Ian and Edith Leet, 951 Myrtle Ave., Albany, NY 12203-1817 or by e-mail to [ileet@nycap.rr.com](mailto:ileet@nycap.rr.com). Deadline is March 1.

For a full job description call the Leets @ (518)482-6612 or visit [www.capecumenical.org](http://www.capecumenical.org).

### **This and That**

NEWS FLASH: The Rev. Monsignor Edward B. Scharfenberger, a priest from Brooklyn, has been named as the next Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany. We look forward to meeting him and pray for both him and Bishop Hubbard during this time of transition...Albany Maritime Ministry Fundraiser @ First Lutheran Church, 2pm on **2/23**. Local artist & historian Len Tantillo will speak about the historic area of the Hudson River. Call the church @ 463-1326 for tickets; suggested donation is \$10...The Interfaith Story Circle presents “Under the Tent of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar: Stories of the Healing Power of Forgiveness”, on **2/25 @ the Dominican Retreat & Conference Center** on Union St, in Schenectady. 6pm vegetarian potluck, 7-9pm, program. Call Anne @869-5247...Thinking of buying a home? The Affordable Housing Partnership will be holding a Housing Fair on **4/26**, 10am-2pm @ the Albany Public Library.....Zion’s United Church of Christ in Sand Lake will observe Earth Day on **4/27** with activities all day, displays, music, and food. To be a sponsor or to reserve display table space, contact the Rev. Robert Loesch @ 674-8204 or e-mail [rkloesch@aol.com](mailto:rkloesch@aol.com).

### **HELP! An Urgent Call for Church World Service Kits**

Amy Bobbette of the Upstate NY office of CWS/CROP says that she can’t remember a winter as cold as this. This would be a good year to organize an offering for the CWS “Blankets +” program, and/or to organize a work group to assemble Hygiene Kits, School Kits, Baby Care Kits, or Emergency Cleanup Buckets. The current inventory of kits at the warehouse in Maryland is very low due to all the recent disasters. Visit [www.cwsglobal.org](http://www.cwsglobal.org) for details on how to assemble, pack, and ship kits. We have brochures about the kit program at the CACC office, too. There will be a site in Schenectady to drop boxes of kits off during April, so your group can save on shipping costs. The Capital Region collection site is St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church in Schenectady, located at 1229 Baker Ave. Drop off dates are April 21, 23, and 25, 9:30am-11:30am. Contact Richey Woodzell @ (518)372-9398 or the office at St. Stephen’s @ 346-6241.

#### **February, 2014**

11 Shelter Oversight Com., 4pm  
12 Albany CROP Com., 4:45pm  
17 Presidents’ Day (office closed)  
26 Action & Program Com., 4pm.

#### **March, 2014**

\* 5 Ash Wednesday; Rosanne Cash Concert, 7:30pm  
\* 7 CWU World Day of Prayer; HAC “One Night without a Home”  
\* 9 “A Place at the Table”, 2pm

#### **March, 2014 (cont.)**

9 Daylight Savings Time begins  
11 Shelter Oversight Com., 4pm  
12 Albany CROP Com., 4:45pm  
13 BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
\*18-20 Labor-Religion Coalition 40 Hr. Fast  
\* 21-24 Ecumenical Advocacy Days  
\* **23 CROP Walk Recruiters Rally & Awards Reception, 4:30-6:30pm**  
26 Action & Program Com., 4pm  
\* **31 Deadline for MLK Scholarship applications**

**Save the date: May 4<sup>th</sup>, Capital Region CROP Hunger Walks**  
**May 18<sup>th</sup>, Capital Region Ecumenical Organization Pentecost event**  
[\*denotes more information to be found elsewhere in this issue]