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The Connection

The Capital Area Council of Churches

MARCH - APRIL 2015

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A MESSAGE

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I always struggle with the arrival of winter. I often miss its arrival because it comes after the colorful last blast of autumn just before the craziness of Christmas. Winter sneaks up on us and we are then left trying to insulate ourselves from the harsh cold months with its bone-chilling cold.

With all the things I “forget” on a daily basis, I cannot seem to forget winter and how Lent also sneaks up on us. Maybe winter is a perfect time for the season of Lent. We may not be mindful that we are on a spiritual journey. Lent helps us to remember who we are and our purpose.

Our Ecumenical Witness to Baptism program is that kind of reminder. It reminds us that we as Christians through Baptism are people of God who have died and risen in Christ in a new life. Lent sneaks up on us to remind us that we have to leave our old ways behind.

In the rush of daily lives we may forget that we have been called to emulate Christ in service to one another. The Council offers you that opportunity through our work in the shelter, with our senior citizens, and in the soon to be created summer lunchbox program.

This Lent, let us strive to see ourselves as God sees us. Let us look honestly at our actions, our motives and our lives.



April and May 2015

CALENDAR of EVENTS

APRIL:

1. Wednesday of Holy Week
2. Maundy Thursday
3. Good Friday Service
 @ St. Vincent DePaul at NOON
5. “Christ is Risen”
7. Congressman Paul Tonko to speak on
 Social Security/Medicare First Lutheran
 Church @ 2:30
11. Hunger Summit
 @ Carondelet Hospitality Center
12. Orthodox Easter Sunday!
15. Yom Hashoah
 (Holocaust Remembrance Day)

MAY:

3. CROP Hunger Walk
10. Mother’s Day

Once again, *thank you* to all the many churches who contributed meals every night throughout the winter to the Emergency Overflow Shelter.

GOOD FRIDAY

(Continued from Page 1)

Let us accept the challenge that God puts before us: Pray, do acts of loving kindness, fast and if you can and are able, give charity. In the famed words of Mission Impossible, “if you choose to accept this mission,” you will know the joy of coming closer to God and that we are a people who will know His everlasting love. And if you can only do ONE thing this Lent, come to the Council of Churches Good Friday Service at noon at St. Vincent de Paul Church on Madison Avenue. The Reverend Bertrand Fay will lead us in an extraordinary Good Friday service, “In the Green Wood and the Dry.”

May your invitation to “return to God with all your heart” be accompanied by joy and trust and God’s grace.

CACC ANNUAL MEETING

Despite mountains of snow, the Council held its annual meeting early in February. We certainly were a diminished crowd, but hope that the churches will be sure to send their delegates to the Spring Assembly in June. The Council depends on its member congregations and their delegates to be present at the assemblies so that business can be conducted.

As expected the budget passed. The annual report was distributed. If you have NOT received your copy, please call the Council office and we will get it out to you ASAP. Many thanks to Fr. Pat Ligato for his opening prayer and remarks at the meeting and to the St. Sophia’s Greek Orthodox Church for their hospitality and openness to the Council. The Council is grateful to St. Sophia’s congregant and Council board member Margaret Danes, for the church’s support and spirit of generosity.



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. SCHOLARSHIP

Mark Your Calendar!

Applications are now being accepted for the Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship. Please call the office to receive your application. All scholarship applications are due by close of business April 15, 2015. They will be reviewed by a committee and the applicant will be contacted for further information.



The 35th CROP HUNGER WALK

The 35th annual Albany CROP Hunger Walk is scheduled for Sunday, May 3, 2015. The Walk will begin and end at First Lutheran Church in Albany and will offer the option of a 1 mile or 3 mile loop.

In 2014, over 500 walkers from 50 different groups raised just over \$93,000.

Since the first Albany CROP Hunger Walk was held in 1981, nearly \$2 million has been raised to combat hunger at home and abroad. One-quarter of the funds raised comes back to the Capital District to support local food pantries and soup kitchens, while the remaining 75% is used for hunger relief and development projects in more than 30 countries around the world.

If you did not pick your Recruiter packets up at the rally, please let us know when you can stop by the office so we can be there to greet you. Call us at 462-5450.

Plan now to field a team of walkers to help us end hunger, one step at a time. If you didn’t send a representative to the Rally,

visit the CROP Walk web site: www.cropwalk.org and follow the prompts to get the Albany NY walk page, then lace up your walking shoes to walk with the world. Call the CACC office at (518)462-5450 for more information.

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE

The Capital Area Council of Churches will hold its annual Good Friday Service at Noon on Friday, April 3 at St. Vincent DePaul Church at 900 Madison Avenue.

This year’s service includes the reflection “In the Green Wood and the Dry” as written and presented by the Reverend Bertrand Fay. We are grateful to Fr. Fay for his willingness to share a work that will draw us into the experience of Good Friday as we identify with and place ourselves into that event.

Our ritual this year will create a stronger distinction of the loss of Good Friday and the celebration and joy of the Easter resurrection. Please join us for a service of contemplation, reflection and silence.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

There is an estimated 29 million women, children and men trapped in modern day slavery. Behind every number is a story worth hearing. One of the initiatives for action taken on by the Council is making known those stories and increasing awareness about trafficking.

At the end of January, Deb was invited to speak at Union College about what the everyday person can do to prevent trafficking and help those trapped in slavery. Additionally, Sr. Doreen Glynn from the Action and Program Commission who also leads a local task force on trafficking was also a speaker at Union. The week-long conference was spear-headed by Barbara Dworkin of SAFE Inc. in Schenectady. How you can help—support legislation about the issue. Get educated about the issue and bring that education to your organizations, business, and even your book clubs. That’s the beginning of increasing awareness about the issue. Take advantage of those resources yourself. Learn about the Polaris Project and see how you might be contributing financially without realizing to the existence of this increasing criminal act world-wide by going to Slaveryfootprint.org

And, of course, there is also prayer. Early in February, the leaders of several religious sisters of varying communities held a prayer vigil at the Sisters of Mercy

Mother House. The Council represented by Deb was part of this effort.

People braved the beginning of a large snowstorm to come together in prayer and to hear the stories of several trafficked people. Joining us on this wintry day was Bishop Edward Scharfenberger as well as Congressman Paul Tonko.



THIS JUST IN...

The Council is pleased to announce that the Albany CROP Hunger Walk is **NUMBER SIX** in the nation!! We are so excited. To those of you who walked last year. THANK YOU! Special thanks goes, of course, to Kitt Jackson. Kitt works tirelessly on this event. The phone calls, copying, gathering of packets, rally info etc. etc. is voluminous. Kitt makes it look so easy to the rest of us but it is her hard work that has catapulted us into the limelight. We all thank you Kitt for your effort to get Albany on the map through the CROP Hunger Walk.

INTERFAITH PRAYER VIGIL FOR PEACE



On a dark, cold, evening in January, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception was filled with those who chose to be part of an event that was praying for peace in our world. This evening was initiated by Bishop Edward Scharfenberger and the Reverend Jim Kane, pulled together an interfaith team. The Council of Churches was delighted to be part of that service. As we continue to see each night on the evening news horrific acts of violence being committed before our eyes, the latest being that of the beheading of 21 Coptic Christians, it would seem that continued evenings of prayer should be in order. Participants included members of the interfaith community—Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Hindus. Let us all make a commitment to pray for the protection of all those who are in harms way.

INTERFAITH PRAYER ROOM

by Deb Riitano

Recently on a quick jaunt to Florida, I had the opportunity to stop by the Interfaith Prayer Room. Being a nervous traveler and not a drinker, the Prayer Room is always a first stop on my itinerary. I like reading the comments in the guest book. On this day, the following caught my eye: “Very peaceful. I came to Albany for my mother’s funeral and burial and I was able to pray for her here before leaving for home.” It was written by someone who lives on the West coast -- someone who wanted to collect her thoughts and privately mourn before she became enveloped in the myriad of details about the funeral.

INTERFAITH PRAYER ROOM We don’t often mention the Prayer Room. That comment underscores just how important and needed that sacred space is in

the midst of travel schedules, departures and destinations and being able to stop and breathe in the spirit. The space provides respite and solitude for those traveling.

Next time you’re at Albany International, visit this unique interfaith space and experience its warmth and calm designed by Rev. Richard Vosko, Sacramental Minister at St. Vincent DePaul Church.

THE SPIRIT OF MLK JR. LIVES!

Each year the Capital Area Council of Churches remembers Martin Luther King Jr. in a service that remembers, celebrates, and honor the work and ministry of Dr. King. This year was no different. Held on Dr. King's birthday, January 15, at the Macedonia Baptist Church in Colonie, hundreds came out in the cold to remember this American icon. We are grateful to Joan Marie Lipscomb for heading up this effort.

We are grateful to Pastor Leonard Comethier and the Macedonia Baptist Choir, ushers and administration for their warm hospitality.

Many thanks to the Albany Academy Dance Workshop. Their inspired performance of Alvin Ailey's "Revelations" was restaged by Cathy Teitlebaum and the music, and grace of the students stunned the audience. Their willingness to participate and adapt to a smaller performance area was incredible and a great example of dedication and professionalism.

Pastor Comethier's message "When Hope Wanes" was powerful. He reminded us that MLK symbolized what was right and noble about America. He reminded us that Dr. King was in constant pursuit of truth, and when he discovered it, he embraced it. The nonviolent campaigns of Dr. King brought

about redemption, reconciliation and justice. He reminded us that because of the non-violent approach of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, America is a more democratic, just and peaceful nation.

The service raised approximately \$8,000 for the scholarship given to those seniors going on to attend college. The scholarship application can be requested by calling the Council at 462-5450. All applications are due April 15, 2015.

JOIN REV. JEFF MATTHEWS IN THE HOLY LAND

Join Rev. Jeff Matthews on a ten day journey to Israel, departing October 20, 2015. The all-inclusive price begins at \$3,198. Extension to Jordan is available at an additional cost. Experience the land, people, places and culture that gave birth to our faith. It's the journey of a lifetime.

Interested? For further information, please contact Rev. Matthews at 518-463-1293, ext. 11. You can also reach him by email at: jmdiv83@hotmail.com. plation, reflection and silence.

AFRICAN SPRING DINNER

On Saturday, March 21, the African Spring Dinner will be held at Westminster Presbyterian Church. Come and hear about Ebola Orphans We Know. This dinner is a Pot Luck so bring a dish to share. Honorary Committee levels range from \$50 - \$500. Checks can be made out to Westminster Presbyterian Church (add African Spring Dinner in memo line) Here is a wonderful opportunity to hear what is happening with West African Ebola Orphans many who are being housed at the Hope Mission in Paynesville, Liberia, an organization supported by Westminster Pres. Immigration issues will be discussed by Leonard J. D'Arrigo Esq. and Moments in Women's History will also be presented by Nell Stokes-Holmes. It looks to be a great evening.

FAITH AND HUNGER NETWORK OF NYS

The Faith and Hunger Network of NYS will host an afternoon of a program of workshops "Working Together to End Hunger." This unique opportunity to learn about the role of faith in eradicating hunger and food insufficiency will be hosted by the Sisters of St. Joseph at the Carondelet Hospitality Center on Saturday, April 11, 2015 from 1 - 4 p.m. Ellen Teller, Director of Government Affairs, Food Research and Action center in Washington DC will be the keynote speaker. Plan to be part of this special day.

FAITH COMMUNITIES: KEEPING SENIORS CONNECTED and ENGAGED...

On July 22 The Capital District Senior Issues Forum and Albany Guardian Society will sponsor our annual forum for faith communities. The Forum will be held at the Carondelet Hospitality Center in Latham from 8:30 am to 1:30 pm.

If your faith community has a program, event or service that has successfully reached out to and engaged your senior members, let us know. We are soliciting proposals from faith communities. Please call the Council office for more details.

COME ONE! COME ALL!

Congressman Paul Tonko will give a presentation regarding Medicare and Social Security. As events continue to unfold regarding these issues, it will be helpful to hear from the Congressman what we can expect out of Washington.

Join us on Tuesday, April 7 at 2:30pm at First Lutheran Church, 646 State Street# Bring a friend!