



# The Connection

The Capital Area Council of Churches

SPRING 2020

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## From the President

### **“It Was the Best of Times...”**

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. It was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness...It was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair....” *A Tale of Two Cities, Charles Dickens.*

And so it is in these precarious times. A world-wide health crisis looms over our every action, our every thought. Fear and anxiety are prevalent, and it may be a while before we return to any sense of normalcy. And yet there are acts of love and sacrifice and humanity all around us.

There are those in the medical community who are heroes of the highest order. Working long and arduous hours with oftentimes limited resources and risking their own well-being, these doctors and nurses are at the front lines caring for patients of all ages and needs. We thank you.

And then there are the many workers providing the needs essential for survival. The grocery store workers, the pharmacists, the police and firemen, the first responders, the post office workers, and so many others. And don't forget the truckers. They work long and lonely hours to provide the medical and food supplies that are so desperately needed. We also have volunteers doing a variety of tasks including preparing and or delivering meals for school children and the home-bound. Our collective thanks to these individuals and all others who are keeping our communities safe and well.

We pray that there will be a speedy and positive outcome to this current crisis. But the fallout from this pandemic will create major new issues. The economy, loss of jobs and businesses, funding cuts from the government are a few of the repercussions that will create new problems to be addressed.

We must be prepared to work together to address these new issues that will become apparent as we go forward in the aftermath of this brave new world. May we be brave. May we be safe. May we have faith and prayer. God bless us everyone.

Margaret Danes

### **“Courage is fear that has said its prayers.”**

*(Message from Bethany Reformed Church)*

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## Important Information

## Accurate Census Impacts

- **Head Start**
- **National School Lunch Programs**
- **New schools and housing**
- **Education grants**
- **SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs)**
- **Medicaid & Medicare**
- **Disaster aid**

### Census Information from United States 2020 Website:

What is the 2020 Census?:  
<https://2020census.gov/en/what-is-2020-census.html>

The importance of the data collected,  
<https://2020census.gov/en/census-data.html>

And how it helps your community:

<https://2020census.gov/en/community-impact.html>

# Earthquakes and Tsunamis

## 2020 Census: Will Our Children and Communities be Short Changed???

The COVID-9 Pandemic is comparable to a shattering series of “earthquakes.” However, what will follow is the devastating “tsunami” of our economy. Lost jobs, lost revenues, shortfalls in all areas of our everyday life. Now more than ever, it is critical to get an accurate count of our people--how hundreds of billions in federal funding every year will be allocated will depend on the results of the 2020 Census. Critical programs that will affect our children and families for the next **ten years** are listed in the sidebar.

All of these programs are the crux of our mission to serve. And other community resources to be affected include clinics and hospitals, infrastructure, and potential new services for families, seniors, and children. Of course, now as we struggle with the current health crisis, another critical issue is:

### \*\*\*Disaster Aid\*\*\*

Whether natural disasters such as hurricanes and flooding, or a health crisis such as the current Coronavirus Pandemic, funding will be depend on statistics. As we well know, this current pandemic will not only affect the health and well-being of our peoples, but also will create havoc with the economy including local, state, and federal budget not to mention loss of jobs and businesses. Federal assistance is critical to our recovery. Again, accurate population reports will be the yardstick for federal funding.

Other factors from the census will include how many congressmen/women will represent New York State in Washington. A decline in population could mean a lost voice in Congress for New Yorkers. And then there’s future planning. The census statistics assist business and nonprofit as well as government decision making.

**We must be counted.** However, fear (especially among the immigrant and refugee community), distrust of government inquiries, anxiety, and lack of knowledge about impacted programs may affect the 2020 Census figures dramatically. Unfortunately, not everyone realizes that many valuable programs may be seriously affected by a low census count.

This is where each of our member churches and other faith groups can make a difference by reaching out to all our members, friends, and neighbors and provide the information, encouragement, and support in completing the census report. Although in-person communication is ideal, in these times a phone tree may be a more realistic option. And part of our success will depend on our ability to reassure people that the information collected is confidential and that it is comparable to what they fill out for their taxes or on a W-4 form when they apply for a job.

Please let’s make a concerted effort to get everyone counted. The Census will have a monumental impact on our children and on our communities for the next ten years.

## Share Ideas With CACC

Executive Director Bruce France is eager to learn what is important to clergy and laity of our member churches and other organizations. Contact Bruce at 518-441-9584 or [edcapareacc@gmail.com](mailto:edcapareacc@gmail.com) if you have ideas that are important to CACC.

# Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Service

## Amazing Grace and Inspiration

A night of grace, a night of inspiration, a night to remember a man of great courage, vision, and leadership, leadership that changed the course of history. The Capital Area Council of Churches sponsored the 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Interfaith Scholarship Memorial on January 15, 2020 at the Macedonia Baptist Church in Colonie. Chaired by the Reverend Antonio Booth, it was an evening of prayer, song, and speakers who enshrined the accomplishments of Martin Luther King in words of wisdom and faith.

A sincere note of thanks to the following participants: Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston; Rev. Constance Knight; Rev. Monk Susan Sprange; Imam Nayef Abbas Patel; Rabbi Chana Markowitz; Rev. Dr. John Medwid; Rev. Leonard Comithier; Mayor Kathy Sheehan; County Executive Dan McCoy; Rev. Renee Hollinshed; Rev. Emily McNeil, guest speaker and Executive Director of the Labor-Religion Coalition; and Rev. James Kane.

Also on the evening's program was a musical selection by the Macedonia Gospel Choir and a powerful reading of "Excerpts from African American History Through Words and Song" by Ms. Nell Stokes all part of a stellar cast of participants.

As part of the evening's efforts, an offertory appeal was also collected which raised over \$4,500 for the Martin Luther King Scholarship Fund. The MLK scholarships will be awarded to selected college-bound seniors who exemplify the character and scholarship of the late Martin Luther King. Scholarship applications are available online at [www.capareacc.org](http://www.capareacc.org). Donations to the scholarship fund are also welcome.



### MLK Scholarship Deadline Extension

The deadline for the scholarship applications has been extended to April 30th. Application information can be found at the [www.capareacc.org](http://www.capareacc.org). Further extensions to the deadline, if necessary, can be found at the website or our Facebook page.

[wwwcapareacc.org](http://wwwcapareacc.org)

## Nominations Are Now Open

Each year CACC recognizes those who work tirelessly to provide leadership, compassion, and support in Ecumenical and Interfaith activities. Nominations for the following awards are being solicited:

**The Carlyle Adams Ecumenical and Interfaith Award**—Given to a person who exemplifies an inclusive spirit, works to build bridges among religious groups, and is active in some ecumenical program or project.

**The James and Pearl Campbell Peace and Justice Award**— Awarded to an individual who exemplifies a commitment to peace and justice through educational activities, ecumenical and interfaith endeavors, and civil rights.

**The Reverend Joyce Giles Pastoral Award**— Recognizes a pastor who has actively participated in the council's life and has exemplified the ideals for racial, gender and interdenominational inclusiveness.

**The Ed Bloch Interfaith Youth Award**— Awarded to a young person who is committed to building bridges between the faith community and youth especially in promoting human and civil rights.

Nominations are most welcome. Nominations which include a supporting statement can be mailed to CACC, 646 State Street, Albany NY 12203, or email to [capareacc@gmail.com](mailto:capareacc@gmail.com).

# Pastoral Perspective on COVID-19

Rev. Dr. John Medwid—First Lutheran Church

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

<sup>21</sup>Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem <sup>23</sup>But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. <sup>24</sup>God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:21, 23-24)

This text from the Third Sunday of Lent which describes Jesus encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well provides us with a great deal of fodder for our reflection. We are in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic. What scares me the most is not the invisible microbe, but the very visible fear and panic that have taken hold of the population at large. Measures have been taken to limit gatherings of people. This has impacted our ability to gather as faith communities for worship as well as for meetings and social gatherings. Our in-person communal Sunday worship has been suspended temporarily.

What does all this mean for us? I think that this is an invitation to be Church in a different way. In a recent sermon, I spoke of a church that, in the face of declining membership and finances, decided to make a radical decision to practice Sabbath rest. Two Sundays a month, they would gather for their usual Sunday worship. On the other two Sundays, they would have an amended contemplative service on Saturday evening and then on Sunday they would simply rest. People whose weekday activities were busy and chaotic would simply take time to rest, recuperate, and renew themselves. Some members would spend quality time with family. Others would intentionally gather for a meal together. What these church members were doing attracted the attention of the wider community and so others began to join them. The faith community that was dying began to grow and to show signs of new life and vitality.

In a sense, what that faith community did by a radical decision on their part, we are being forced to do because of our circumstances. How can we creatively embrace the concept of a Sabbath rest? We can creatively feed our spiritual hunger in a variety of meaningful ways. Whether it involves scripture reading, a breathing meditation, yoga, an outdoor walk, or an activity that we are passionate about, we have the capacity to be church in a variety of ways. That is what Jesus is talking about in his dialogue with the Samaritan woman. Jewish people and the Samaritans of Jesus’ day vehemently clashed about many religious topics one of which was where to worship God: whether the proper site was Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim. Jesus speaks about a new kind of worship in spirit and truth which was not dependent on a physical, geographical location. How appropriate are these words of the itinerant rabbi from Nazareth for our day and age! What worship in spirit and truth looks like is up to us now!

It is important during this time of “exile” that we stay connected. Technology provides many ways to connect and this is an excellent time to put them to use. Our in-person Sunday worship did not resume in time for Holy Week and Easter. I propose that we make Easter a movable feast this year and celebrate it on the first Sunday when we gather together again as a faith community! What a celebration of resurrection and new life it will be!

Until then, let’s remain united in spirit and truth! Wherever we are is holy ground! Our Divine Source is with us challenging us to be the answer to the very prayers that we express! As we raise holy hands in prayer, let’s make sure that they are thoroughly washed and sanitized!

Until we meet in person, I raise my hand to you from a distance in the Vulcan salute and say, “Live long and prosper!”

Peace, Pastor Medwid



## Looking to Expand CACC Committees

CACC is looking to expand the Development, Communications and Finance Committees. Contact the Council If you have experience in these areas or know someone who does. Call Bruce France at 518-441-9584 or email edcapare-acc@gmail.com.



## **Bowling for Beds 2020 Nets Over \$11,000 For Shelter**

Long before “social distancing” became our new reality, 163 bowlers from 15 teams gathered at Del Lanes in Delmar for the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Bowling-for-Beds Bowl-A-Thon to raise money for the Emergency Overflow Homeless Shelter operated by CACC. The afternoon brought together teams of bowlers of all ages and at the end of the day they had raised \$13,045,75 – far exceeding the goal of \$10,000.

Teams included: Girl Scout Troup 1117, Emmaus Methodist Church, Trinity Methodist Church, Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit, First Lutheran (Albany), St. John’s Lutheran, Westminster Presbyterian, United Methodist Youth Unit, RPM’s Youth Group, Immaculate Conception Church, McKownville United Methodist Church, Delmar Presbyterian Church, Union Missionary Baptist Church, Community Congregation Church of Clinton Heights, and Journey United Church of Christ.

The annual event is hosted by Cornerstone Campus Ministry at the University at Albany. After expenses were paid, the shelter received over \$11,000 to help pay operating expenses for the year. The shelter, located at First Lutheran Church is home for up to 19 men during the coldest seasons of the year, November through April. In addition, to offering a bed residents receive dinner and breakfast and are provided with an opportunity to do their laundry.

Thank you to each individual who bowled, to each church that put together a team, to Cornerstone for planning the event, and to Del Lanes for hosting a fun-filled afternoon. A very special thanks to Sandy Damhof for leading this important effort.

## **CROP Hunger Walk 2020 goes Virtual!**

In this time of social distancing, the John U. Miller Memorial CROP Hunger Walk is modifying to a Virtual CROP Hunger Walk. Even though we won’t be gathering with a large group and walking together, you can use it to your advantage and take a walk every day to end hunger! Join the Virtual Walk online at: [www.crophungerwalk.org/albanyny](http://www.crophungerwalk.org/albanyny) and start raising money now. If you can’t walk, consider making a donation to support one of the walkers or teams that have registered on-line, or make a general donation to the Albany Walk.

We hope to have recruiter packets ready for pick up by mid-April, but people can still collect cash and checks (made out to CWS/CROP) in their own envelopes and keep track of their donors. Arrangements will be made later to turn in any funds raised that way.

Then, on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, which would be the 40<sup>th</sup> annual CROP Hunger Walk in Albany, let’s “Walk Together---Apart”. In other words, walk alone, with your family or a small group (5 or less), around your block or in your neighborhood in solidarity with the people who rely on the food pantries and hunger-fighting programs supported by our CROP Walk dollars.

According to another local Walk leader, “Church World Service, like other helping agencies, is facing only more need and can’t afford to lose its main spring fund-raisers, nor can the local agencies that benefit from the Walk. This is not just a local crisis. It is a world-wide crisis, and our world relief organizations are pressed to respond, as are our local agencies. Unfortunately, during this awful time, those of us with health and resources may be needed in many ways. I think this is a time for above-and-beyond sacrificial giving, a time to do events like the CROP Walk and still add other outpouring of help where needed in our communities--not either/or, but both. Hopefully, we can meet the challenge.”

Will you step up and meet the challenge? Join us as we walk virtually to end hunger, one step at a time. Call the CACC office at (518)462-5450 or e-mail Kitt Jackson at [kitt82@verizon.net](mailto:kitt82@verizon.net) with questions.



[www.crophungerwalk.org/albanyny](http://www.crophungerwalk.org/albanyny)



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## Bruce France Named Executive Director

At the February Board meeting of the Capital Area Council of Churches, Bruce France was appointed Executive Director of the Council. Bruce has been acting as Interim Director since last spring. He has focused his efforts on developing committees, planning programs, participating in strategic planning and implementing a database to track organizations, individuals, donations and accounting transactions.

Retired from a long career in sales, operations and management, Bruce brings a variety of skills and experience to CACC. A life-long United Methodist, Bruce is a congregant of Emmaus UMC and serves as the treasurer. In that role, he was involved in starting RISSE which was developed by Emmaus and uses church facilities for the program. As a Certified Lay Speaker Bruce periodically delivers the sermon at Emmaus. As a volunteer in Albany, he has led a Cub Scout Pack, Boy Scout Troop and Central Babe Ruth.

One of Bruce's primary goals is to meet with clergy and laity of our member churches to develop stronger ties and better understand the needs of churches and their expectations of the Council. Bruce will be making phone calls to arrange personal contact with as many individuals as possible. Meetings will occur on the phone, via Zoom or at some point, in person. So be prepared to meet Bruce and share your needs and concerns. It is important for us to know. And as we are reminded daily, "We are in this together!" But more importantly, "together" can make a difference.

