



# The Connection

## The Capital Area Council of Churches

FALL 2020

**646 State Street  
Albany, NY 12203  
518-462-5450  
[capareacc@gmail.com](mailto:capareacc@gmail.com)**

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**Love, Compassion, Understanding**

It is who we are. The Capital Area Council of Churches. A gathering of churches and members whose mission is to foster love, compassion, and understanding in a world sorely in need of love, compassion, and understanding. Surrounded by fear and hate, dissension and demagoguery, we are in need of understanding and promoting the gentle kindness and good deeds that are in practice daily, but lost in the sensationalism of flashing media reports.

“**Love** thy neighbor as thyself” (Mark 12:31). Sometimes a hard directive to follow, but love is at the core of our faith. Found in many different forms, love is a virtue expressing the best of mankind-- human kindness.

**Compassion** is more than sympathy. It is empathy and a sensitivity for the suffering and misfortunes of others. It takes us out of “selfies” and encourages a caring, communal fellowship.

And **understanding** serves as the foundation for love and compassion. For when we take the time to understand how the past has shaped the present, how history has affected a groups of people, or how negative life factors including abuse and neglect have affected the inner core of an individual, then love and compassion are certain to follow.

CACC has for many years encouraged and developed programs and events that exemplify the best of Christianity, of humanity itself. We have a Shelter program, a refuge for the homeless operating during the frigid

days of winter when shelter is often the only option for survival. We have the annual Crop Walk which raises funds for food pantries both locally and worldwide. We have the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration in remembrance of the man who led the nation in demonstrating peaceful protest for racial inequality. In keeping with his remembrance, CACC offers a MLK scholarship award each year to a high school senior who exemplifies the qualities and character of the late Martin Luther King. Another directive offered to youth is Campus Ministry, an opportunity for students at the University at Albany to find camaraderie and faith experiences in volunteer work. Communication and information to our membership is also a work of daily concern. Information and participation on the recent United Way 21-Day Equity Challenge was offered to our members and readership.

([www.unitedwaygrc.org/equitychallenge](http://www.unitedwaygrc.org/equitychallenge)). Listen to the podcast on “Breaking the Cycle: Dr. Donna Beegle” for an enlightening look at “generational poverty” from a woman born into migrant poverty.

There is so much we can look forward to as we move forward in this time of anxiety and uncertainty. We hope you will join us with your support (see donation envelope enclosed) so we may continue in our mission of love, compassion and understanding.

Margaret Danes  
President

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# A Statement in Response to the Death of George Floyd

*A Statement of Repentance, Lament and Solidarity from the Capital Area Council of Churches*

June 2020

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter stood up and spoke up. He spoke the uncomfortable and dangerous truth that those in position of privilege had used their power to kill Jesus who did not deserve death (Acts 2:22-23). This past spring we watched as George Floyd, a black man, was handcuffed and while he was laying on the ground a white police officer knelt on his neck for over 8 minutes resulting in his death. Three other officers stood around and did nothing to prevent his death even as observers pled for relief. He called for his mother; he cried out that he couldn't breathe. We, members of the Capital Area Council of Churches, cannot stand around and do nothing. We are called to stand up and speak out – even when, perhaps especially when, the truth is uncomfortable and feels dangerous.

We, as Americans, have too long ignored the evils of white privilege and systemic racism. We, as followers of Jesus, have too long been complacent and complicit about both white privilege and systemic racism. We believe that all people are created in God's image (Genesis 1:26). Racism and white privilege reject this foundational biblical claim. Our Lord Jesus commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31). We repent of our apathetic responses to racism. We repent of ignoring the cries for justice from our brothers and sisters of color. We repent of our preference for the status quo and tranquility even when it comes at the cost of another's pain. We lament the ongoing suffering caused by this injustice and the societal structures that reward some and punish others based on the color of their skin.

**“We, as followers of Jesus, have too long been complacent and complicit about both white privilege and systemic racism.”**

In this time of mourning for the loss of life, we pray for healing and hope. The prophet Jeremiah warned against ‘healing the wound lightly saying peace, peace when there is no peace (Jeremiah 8:11).’ To heal the wounds caused by racism, we believe the church is called to attend to the ways we contribute to racism, within and beyond the church. We must examine ourselves and remove the debris of prejudice and privilege. Acknowledging the work white Christians need to take up, we also commit ourselves to standing with our brothers and sisters seeking justice to prevail in our communities. We seek to fully embody the “Beloved Community.”

And we are not without hope. When the risen Christ met his disciples – the ones who had betrayed and deserted him – he offered ‘peace (John 20:26).’ The risen Christ still calls forth peace. Not a simplistic, watered down peace that is enforced by guns. Rather a transformative peace of changed hearts and spirits, changed atmosphere and environment brought about by the Spirit. The Hebrew word for peace, shalom, means more than physical healing. Shalom expresses a wholeness that encompasses the entirety of human existence. We pray for a holistic peace based in justice which flows from God's love for all of humanity and through every system. We long to be partners with God in living justice and loving our neighbors.

## **CACC Racism Group Formed**

The Capital Area Council of Churches is searching for opportunities to address racial justice issues. A small group of clergy and laity have been meeting and discussing the issue. If you would like to be part of the discussion, contact Executive Director Bruce France at [edcapareacc@gmail.com](mailto:edcapareacc@gmail.com) or his cell, (518) 441-9584.

# Shelter Reacts to COVID-19

David Stagliano - Shelter Oversight Committee Chair

During the last two months of 2019 and first two months of 2020, CACC's Emergency Homeless Overflow Shelter operated normally. We are fortunate to have a trained, dedicated staff led by Shelter Manager Pam Bullock who operate the shelter during the cold weather months. Supporting the staff is a large network of CACC member churches. Congregations prepare meals, buy supplies, volunteer in the shelter and provide financial donations.



1,000 pairs donated socks

For four months, the shelter operated as normal, and then COVID-19 hit. As the possibilities of the COVID-19 pandemic became apparent, Pam made some key decisions that were designed to protect the guests and staff. In addition to finding face masks, disinfectant and hand sanitizer, the intake procedures were changed to include screening for symptoms, temperature taking, and hand sanitizing. However, more importantly the decision was made in mid-March to keep the shelter open 24 hours a day. Knowing that a wandering homeless population is a lightning rod for any illness and a potential hot bed for COVID-19 infection, keeping our guests at the shelter all day and night was the best way to protect our guests and staff.

Changing from an overnight shelter to a 24/7 shelter took planning. Staff hours needed to be rearranged. Limiting the number of beds to ten allowed us to maintain appropriate physical distance and operate with less staff on duty. Staff was moved to cover the daytime hours. These changes required increased payroll and additional meals. As the normal closing date of April 30th, approached, Albany County DSS requested that we continue to remain open. Responding to this new challenge, the CACC Board of Directors approved remaining open until the end of June as needed.

Through all of these challenges, our member churches and volunteers continued to support the shelter. Laura Wayman of the Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit has continued to help organize meals. When the shelter began operating 24/7, she reached out to congregations to provide the additional meals. When the decision was made to continue operating past April 30<sup>th</sup>, Laura once again contacted congregations for continued support in providing meals. The Council is grateful for the dedication demonstrated by our congregations and for all their efforts in keeping the shelter open during this trying and difficult pandemic period. On behalf of our shelter guests, we thank you.

## Special Awards Newsletter

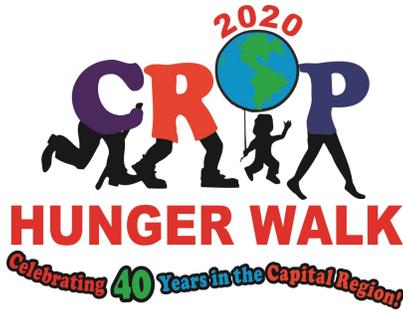
Each fall, the Capital Area Council of Churches recognizes ecumenical, interfaith and social justice leaders of the Capital Region at an annual awards dinner. This year, In lieu of that recognition and celebration, a special publication honoring unique recipients from the past will be distributed. The honorees that will be highlighted are listed below.

Nell Stokes	1992 James & Pearl Campbell Peace Award
Evelyn Stone	2006 Evelyn C. Stone Lifetime Achievement Award
Ruth Pelham	2012 James & Pearl Campbell Peace Award
Rev. Peggy Funderburke	2011 Rev. Joyce Giles Pastoral Award
Rabbi Scott Shpeen Rev.	2016 Carlyle Adams Ecumenical & Interfaith Award

If you would like to be on the Honorary Committee or your sponsor the newsletter with an ad, contact Executive Director Bruce France at [edcapareacc@gmail.com](mailto:edcapareacc@gmail.com) or his cell, (518) 441-9584.

# 2020 Virtual John U. Miller Memorial CROP Hunger Walk a success!

Kitt Jackson - Crop Walk Committee Chairperson



When the COVID-19 pandemic shut things down just before the traditional CROP Recruiters Rally in March, we wondered how we could modify our plans to hold a virtual walk. Thanks to the guidance of Church World Service which sponsors close to 2,000 CROP Hunger Walks throughout the country, and the enthusiastic response of our faithful recruiters and walkers, we made it work. Over 150 walkers registered on-line and raised funds from supporters around the country. A generous gift from the family of John U. Miller and other checks and matching gifts were sent to the CACC office. The total amount raised was \$90,631.45.

On May 3rd, we held a virtual opening ceremony on Zoom, with participation from Honorary Chair Jill Konopka of News Channel 13, members of the Miller family, and Ruth Pelham of the Music Mobile, who led the singing of the Albany CROP Walk Song before our 200+ walkers took to the streets in their own neighborhoods to “end hunger, one step at a time”. The weather was perfect (after 4 years of rainy Walk Days!) and several walkers posted pictures or videos on social media.

Twenty-five per cent of the funds raised came back to the Council of Churches which meant that a total of \$22,735 was distributed among 26 local food pantries and soup kitchens in and around Albany. Many thanks to our corporate sponsors and all who participated in or supported the walk in any way.

Plans are already being made for the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Walk on May 2, 2021. We are hoping we will be able to hold the Walk in the usual way, but will be prepared to pivot to a virtual walk again if necessary. Volunteers are needed to join the Committee that plans the Walk; the first meeting will be on Wednesday, Oct. 14, from 4:30-6pm via Zoom. Please contact Committee Chair Kitt Jackson if you are interested, either by phone (518)439-9771, or by sending an e-mail to [kit-t82@verizon.net](mailto:kit-t82@verizon.net).



Edith & Ian Leet

## Meghan Hall - Student Intern Extraordinaire

Her plans were to attend the Sparks Race Coxing Program in the Netherlands this summer. As a coxswain for the Riverfront Recapture rowing team, Meghan wants to compete at the college level. This was going to be a great opportunity to travel to a foreign country, meet new friends, and, most importantly, hone her skills. But then COVID-19 derailed that plan. Then she hoped to get a job at Crossgates Mall for the summer. But then the mall closed. Through a connection with her grandparents, Meghan discovered that CACC might offer an opportunity to do some volunteer work for the summer. Meghan and Executive Director Bruce France connected and Meghan started working at the coming into the office for a few hours each week.

Meghan's ability to complete tasks with little instruction was apparent in her first few days in the office. Bruce saw an opportunity to utilize her strengths. Since CACC was without an administrative assistant, that part-time position was offered so Meghan could work more hours. She accepted and has been major asset to the workings of the office. Since her school year started remotely, this has allowed Meghan to continue working at the CACC office while attending school.

(Continued on page 5)

## Martin Luther King Scholarship Committee 2020 Recipient Samantha Ivey

Andrea Ralph MLK Scholarship Committee Chair



CACC established the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Scholarship in 1973 to honor the memory of the life and work of Dr. King and to preserve the legacy of the nonviolent human rights movement as was expressed in his life and teachings. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 2020 Committee consists of seven members. The original deadline was March 31, but was extended this year due to the Coronavirus. Eight applications were received. The students were asked to write a five hundred word essay explaining how they have implemented and plan to implement the goals of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. The students were also asked to provide evidence of service in school, their faith community and society that reflects the ideals of Dr. King. Academic records were requested and letters of recommendation were submitted from teachers, guidance counselors and religious leaders to verify the commitment to exhibit characteristics of Dr. King. The committee reviewed the applications and read each essay submitted. The committee met via zoom and discussed the creative content, idea development and writing style of each essay. Zoom interviews were scheduled and the candidates were asked a series of questions as the last phase in the process.

The committee awarded a \$4,000 scholarship to Samantha Ivey. Samantha is a member of Macedonia Baptist church and a graduate from Shenendehowa High with a 96 grade point average. She was inducted into the National Honor Society and served as chapter president. Samantha was very active in her school and community. Her extracurricular activities include Co-President of A World of Difference Club, Chapter President of NAACP Youth Council, New York State Youth and Government Commissioner of Public safety and a participant in Girl's Inc. Eureka. Her school counselor described Samantha as an amazing young woman who possesses a strong will, intelligence across a broad spectrum of topics, and motivation to succeed. The counselor also reflected on her kind heart, sensitivity, being supportive, and one who values honesty and integrity. Samantha is also an active member of Macedonia's youth ministry and plays the trombone for her church and other church services and programs. Samantha's goal in her involvement in her school and community activities is to display the ideals of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as reflected in his fifth principle of nonviolence- that nonviolence chooses love instead of hate.

Samantha Ivey has been accepted to Amherst College and is pursuing her goal of becoming a lawyer so she can fight for justice for all people. As she begins her college path, Samantha expressed her passion to continue Martin Luther King's fight for justice through her daily words, thoughts and actions.

*(Continued from page 4)*

Meghan is a bright, thoughtful, sixteen-year-old who lives in Voorheesville and attends Loomis Chaffee School in Windsor, CT. In addition to her coxswain activities, Meghan has done considerable volunteer work through the community service program at Loomis Chaffee. This includes working with the Boys & Girls Club, teaching elementary school children math and self-defense classes, serving as a tour guide for her school, working at food pantry fundraisers and participating in the model UN program. During her work with CACC, Meghan was pleased to learn about the many programs and volunteer opportunities available at CACC. Working on these programs has given Meghan an opportunity to continue her efforts in giving back to the community.



# Getting to Know CACC Membership

First in a series of articles about our member churches

Delmar Presbyterian Church began as a mission church of the Presbytery of Albany in 1955. The block at the corner of Delaware and Cherry Avenues where the church now stands was bought with gifts from the churches of the Presbytery in order to establish a contemporary church for the future in the rapidly expanding suburban community of Delmar. From its formal organization on November 18, 1956, with 76 charter members, this church has been committed to reaching out in service to the Bethlehem community, to the Capital District, and through mission opportunities to those in need across the nation and around the world, in the name of Jesus Christ and for the glory of God.



The Delmar Presbyterian Church has maintained its commitment made in 1956 to be a mission church, continuing its journey of faith through worship, Christian education, fellowship, and outreach in service to this community and to the wider community and beyond. The congregation has taken seriously the Presbyterian charge to "serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love." The Delmar Presbyterian Church has been very active within the community. The church usually sends a mission trip to Washington D.C. to support the homeless and food insecure, although that wasn't possible this year with COVID. DPC members are avid supporters of Family Promise, Unity House in Troy and Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless. Through the CACC they have been part of our CROP Walk and supporters of our Emergency Overflow Homeless Shelter.

The Delmar Presbyterian Church is committed to social justice, and they have joined the Matthew 25 Mission and 21 Day Racial Justice Challenge. They also place an emphasis on counteracting climate change, through activities such as reading the book *Climate Church*, *Climate World* together as a congregation, their Earth Care Task Force, and ongoing support of local nature preservations. The leader of the Earth Care Task Force, Nancy Scholes, has served as a member of the CACC board and its finance committee. Irene Harbison is on the CACC Emergency Homeless Shelter Committee. The current pastor of Delmar Presbyterian, Reverend Karen Pollan, has been with the church since 2013 and oversees the many activities and programs of its membership. The Capital Area Council of Churches is also fortunate to have Pastor Karen serving on our Board of Directors.



# “One Person, One Vote #2020Census Campaign”

Reaching Out to the Hard-To-Count Population

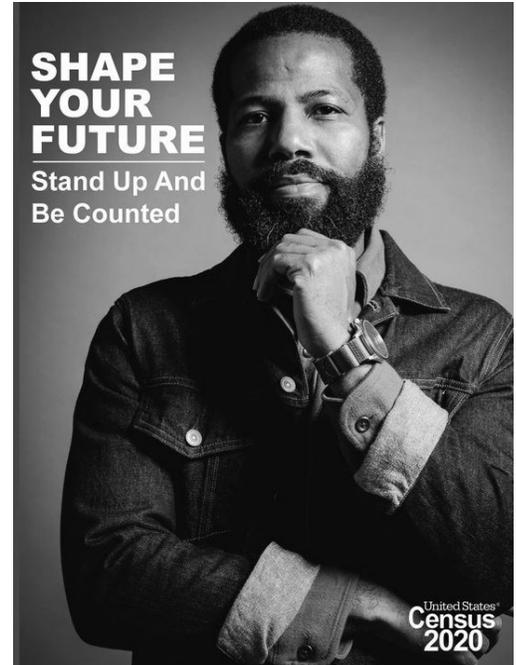
This past spring, the Capital Area Council of Churches was pleased to join efforts with the Capital Area Urban League and others on the “One Person, One Vote #2020Census Campaign.” This campaign was aimed at hard-to-count populations and hard-to-reach census tracts in our regions that are comprised of individuals and families who may be suspect of completing the census. The campaign encouraged people in those areas to reach out to a Virtual Call Center (VCC) that was manned by individuals who know and are known by the neighborhoods and their thought leaders. VCC team members were trained to engage these households on the importance of the decennial census, how to complete the census, and critical privacy protection necessary to conduct these engagements.

A variety of methods were used to inform the public of this campaign and encourage them to call the VCC. Primary was the creation and distribution of signs in high traffic locations (i.e., grocery stores, convenient stores, barber shops, religious institutions, other establishments that are open during the day), distributing a door hanger in specific areas and advertising at CDTA bus shelters.

CACC’s involvement started with applying for and receiving a \$3,250 grant from the Community Foundation of Elmira, Corning and the Finger Lakes. This money was used for printing door hangers and posters, translating materials to Spanish, French, Swahili, and Arabic, and renting CDTA bus shelters advertising space.

## “One Person, One Vote” Coalition Partners:

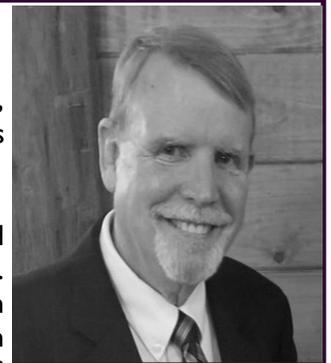
- Capital Area Council of Churches (CACC)
- Capital Area Urban League (CAUL)
- Capital District Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CDCBTU)
- Centro Civico
- The Albany African American Clergy United For Empowerment (TAAACUFE)
- The League of Women Voters, Albany County



## Founders of CACC “*Ecumenical Witnesses of Baptism*” Pass Away

It is with great sadness to report that the Rev. Dr. Gregg Mast and Rev. Dr. Allan Janssen, founders of CACC’s “*Ecumenical Witnesses of Baptism*” program, both passed away this past spring due to COVID-19 complications.

In 1993, Rev. Mast, who was the pastor of the First Church in Albany (Reformed), called Rev. Bob Lamar, a Presbyterian minister and the Executive Director of CACC at the time. The conversation was about Christians witnessing each other’s baptisms. The discussion quickly expanded to include the Rev. Janssen, of First Reformed Church of Bethlehem in Selkirk and President of the CACC Board of Directors, and the Rev. John U. Miller, a UCC Pastor who was chairing the CACC Prayer & Worship Commission. In June, 1993, CACC established a task force designed to plan and implement an ecumenical presence on the occasion of the act of baptism in the member congregations of the Council. In addition to Rev. Janssen serving as CACC President, Rev. Mast served as the CACC Chair of the Worship and Education Committee and is a recipient of the Rev. Joyce Giles Pastoral Award. Their commitment and service on behalf of the ecumenical efforts of the CACC are truly commendable.



Rev. Dr. Mast



**Capital Area Council of Churches, Inc.**  
646 State Street  
Albany, NY 12203  
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[capareacc@gmail.com](mailto:capareacc@gmail.com)

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### **The Voter Beatitudes,**

Excerpts from the writings of Dr. Mankekolo Mahlangu-Ngcobo and adapted for Americans in 2020 by Jackie Dupont -Walker:

“And seeing the multitudes, He went up to the stage, and when He was set on the podium his countrymen and women came to Him. He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying:

BLESSED are they that VOTE, for their personal VOTE will make a difference.

BLESSED are the voters with pure hearts, who educate and encourage voters with apathy and disillusionment to register and VOTE, for they shall see a voter turnout on Election Day.

BLESSED are the voters who are not intimidated by the political machinery, money, and candidate’s supporters and vote their conscience, for they shall inherit the fruits of democracy.

BLESSED are they that VOTE for the candidate who stands for their rights and views, for they shall receive change in their lives.

BLESSED are the voters that mourn for better housing, education, and safer and secured neighborhoods, for they shall be comforted by their winning candidate.

BLESSED are the voters who are merciful to candidates who did wrong in the past and who have acknowledged and apologized for those mistakes, for they (voters) shall obtain mercy.

BLESSED are they that hunger after free and fair elections, for they shall inherit prosperity and peace in the land.

BLESSED are the peacemakers during the campaign and on Election Day, for they shall be called patriotic citizens.

BLESSED are the voters who are persecuted for voting according to their conscience, for theirs is the Power within.

How will your power to change the status quo be restored? If you don’t VOTE, your issues will be thrown out of the debate.

You are the light of the world of democracy, the country that is a superpower...praise the smooth transition of government and give glory to the Father and Mother on earth and in heaven.”