



The Connection

The Capital Area Council of Churches

December 2024

110 North Pearl St
Albany, NY 12207
(518) 462-5450
capareacc@gmail.com
www.capareacc.org

Board of Directors

Dr. Margaret Anderton
President

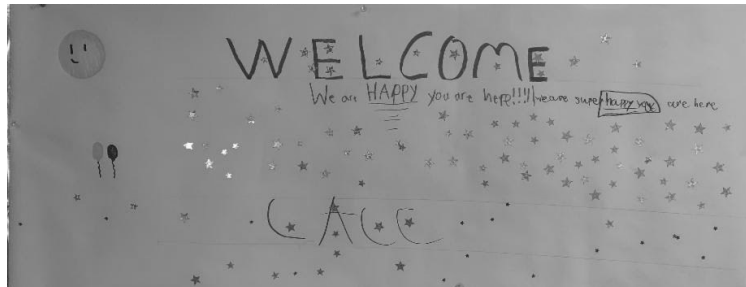
Rev. Dr. Roxanne Jones-Booth
Phyllis Cardona
William Hedberg
Dr. Richard Pfau
Anel Smith
Andrea Ralph
Rebecca Mondore
Jonathan Kimmel
Victor Russak

Evelyn Stone
Emerita

Peter Crasto-Donnelly
Executive Director

Tracey Barber
Administrative Assistant

Our Offices have moved!



A greeting from the 9 Up Youth Program at First Church

The Capital Area Council of Churches Office and Emergency Homeless Overflow Shelter have moved to the First Church in Albany. Our new address is 110 North Pearl Street, Albany, NY 12207.

Our friends at First Church have been so kind, warm, and welcoming to us! Thank you so much for all you have done to prepare your space and invite us in.

Learn more about The First Church in Albany on Page 3

Meet our new Executive Director -> Pg 2

More in this issue

Meet our Executive Director	Page 2
2025 Annual Assembly and First Church Spotlight	Page 3
Hogancamp Seminary Scholarship	Page 4
Fall Dinner Celebration	Pages 4-5
Prayer Notes	Page 6
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Resources	Page 7
Faith Comes By Hearing All Saints Spotlight	Page 8
2025 EWB Renewal Service and 2025 Good Friday Info	Page 9
2025 MLK Celebration & Scholarship	Page 10
2025 CROP Walk 2024	Page 11

Meet our New Executive Director, Peter Crasto-Donnelly



Dear Friends,

It is an honor and a privilege to be called to serve as the Executive Director of the Capital Area Council of Churches. First—I want to express my gratitude to Bruce France—both for his five years of service as Executive Director and for his ongoing support to ensure a smooth transition.

Ecumenism is a passion that God laid on my heart from a young age as my faith formation is ecumenical in nature. I was born and raised as a Roman Catholic through Elementary School. I spent middle and high school attending a Free Methodist Church where Free Methodist Bible Quizzing played a key role in helping me learn and understand this faith through the Bible. While attending Union College, I joined InterVarsity Christian Fellowship where I gained friends from many different Christian Traditions. I also used my Sophomore Research as an opportunity to compare the role of the Deacon across Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and Free Methodist traditions, and used my Senior Thesis to explore ecumenical partnerships. It was at Union that I met my wife, Teresa. After college, I moved to Albany and came full circle by completing my First Communion and joining Teresa's Roman Catholic Church, The Shrine Church of Our Lady of the Americas where I serve as Trustee.

Since graduating college I have been seeking an ecumenical position and am grateful for God's preparation of me over the past decade. Following college I served at the Rescue Mission of Utica for four years overseeing the Food Pantry and the Clothing Closet. This service was Ecumenical in nature as Christians from many traditions worked and volunteered in service to the poor. After this I served for six years at The Food Pantries for the Capital District, a coalition of over 70 food pantries, where my last role was as Program Director. I am grateful that God led me to be mentored by Angie Pender-Fox who always kept the needs of our neighbors and the feedback from our members front and center to every decision and program. I strive to do the same here at CACC where I have served on the board for the past five years, the last two as Board President.

A final note, during the most challenging parts of my life, God led me to church families that enveloped me in love and affirmation. Without meeting God through the church, I would not be where I am today. I am passionate about seeing churches succeed and grow so that others can both meet God and find their place in the body of Christ. I look forward to meeting our member churches and seeing how we can work together to love our God and love our neighbor together.

Pete Crasto-Donnelly

2025 Annual Assembly

Save the Date and Share about One of Your Ministries!

The 2025 Annual Assembly will be held on Wednesday, February 12th at Bethany Reformed Church, 760 New Scotland Ave, Albany, NY 12208, 6 PM Networking, 6:30 PM Annual Report, 7 PM program.

We are excited to offer Assemblies as a place to network with and learn from other churches. Towards this end, we are looking for churches that are willing to present at the Assembly about a key ministry at their church. If you would be interested, please call (518-462-5450) or e-mail (capareacc@gmail.com) our office with what program you would like to share. Deadline is January 17th.

Historic Church Welcomes Diversity and Affirmation



It's old. It's really, really old. However, The First Church in Albany also chooses to be responsive to the growing needs of the present and the future. Established in 1642, The First Church, a member of the Reformed Church in America, is a nationally historic congregation and one of the oldest churches in the United States. Celebrating history with the ethos of First Church, Sunday services are classical with hymns, prayers, and sermons, but progressive as the church professes liberating theology and contemporary values. Its mission statement reflects on the importance of welcoming peoples of all backgrounds.

"In response to God's unconditional love for all people made known to us in Jesus Christ, we are called to be a welcoming and affirming community. The First Church in Albany includes young and old, families, couples and singles, rich and poor, persons of various races, ethnicities, backgrounds, sexual orientation and gender identities, differing physical and mental abilities, believers and seekers. We welcome into the full life of the church all those whom God sends us. Centered in Christ, we commit ourselves to breaking down dividing walls and building a community where we are all loved. ""

In addition to classical Sunday services, newcomers are also invited to attend the more informal, contemporary service in the Stephen James Chapel on Sundays at 9 AM. This service is relaxed and interactive and everyone is welcome for fellowship and worship.

Note: As a member of RCA, First Church, in addition to supporting local and worldwide mission programs, participates in many ecumenical initiatives such as Church World Service and the National Council of Churches, offering its members opportunities for active service both near and far.

A long-time supporter of CACC, First Church has hosted several CACC events. In January of 2023, the Ecumenical Witnesses of Baptism Renewal Service was held in their chapel and the service was led by Associate Minister The Rev. Trey Tirpak. This January, First Church hosted the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Interfaith Celebration with Senior Pastor The Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston delivering the celebration message.

Fall Celebration Honors the Best of the Best

On September 25th, the Capital Area Council of Churches held their Annual Fall Dinner and Awards Celebration at the Italian American Community Center. Recognizing outstanding people is a highlight each year for the Council. The Capital Area Council of Churches was pleased to honor the following individuals this year:

Rev. Antonio Booth - Rev. Booth was Co-Pastor at Riverview Missionary Baptist Church for many years and is currently an Associate Pastor at Macedonia Baptist Church. He led the ecumenical effort in the Ravena area for several years including the CROP Walk. He is also active with CACC where he serves as a co-chair of the MLK committee.

Rev. Dr. Roxanne Jones-Booth – Dr. Booth was Co-Pastor at Riverview Missionary Baptist Church and is currently an Associate Pastor at Macedonia Baptist Church. She has served on the Cornerstone Campus Ministry Board and is an active member of CACC where she serves as a board member.

Rob Kovach - Rob is the President and CEO of the Jewish Federation of Northeastern New York. He has long been involved with the Interfaith Alliance of Upstate New York and currently serves as treasurer.

Natasha Pernicka - Natasha is the Executive Director of The Alliance for a Hunger Free New York and the Food Pantries for the Capital District which also oversees the statewide Food As Medicine Coalition.

Rev. James Kane - Father Kane is the longtime Ecumenical Officer for the RCDA. He has a passion for both ecumenical and interfaith work and is known to all in both worlds.

Congratulations to our awardees this year and a heartfelt thank you for all their outstanding work. May they continue to succeed in their efforts and offer inspiration for others to follow in their footsteps.

Hogancamp Seminar Scholarship Available

Thanks to the generosity of the late Grace Hogancamp, the Capital Area Council of Churches is pleased to offer scholarships for seminary students.

These Students must be:

- Members of a member congregation of the CACC; and
- Enrolled in or accepted at a Protestant theological seminary.

Please call (518 462-5450) or e-mail (capareacc@gmail.com) the CACC office for an application.

Fall Dinner & Awards Celebration



PRAYER NOTES

by

Peg Anderton, MDiv, DMin
Hospital Chaplain
Palliative Care/Hospice
Ethics Specialist

Praying with Scripture

Lectio Divina and Gospel Contemplation are two ways to pray with Scripture.

This month we'll look at Lectio Divina, or Holy Reading: **Lectio Divina**

This method of prayer goes back to the early monastic tradition. There were not bibles for everyone and not everyone knew how to read. So the monks gathered in chapel to hear a member of the community reading from the scripture. In this exercise they were taught and encouraged to listen with their hearts because it was the Word of God that they were hearing.

When a person wants to use *Lectio Divina* as a prayer form today, the method is very simple. When one is a beginner, it is better to choose a passage from one of the Gospels or epistles, usually ten or fifteen verses. Some people who regularly engage in this method of prayer choose their reading from the day's lectionary.

First, go to a quiet place, settle in and remind yourself that you are about to listen to the Word of God with God.

Next, read the scripture passage aloud so that you hear the words with both body and mind.


When you have finished reading the passage out loud, pause for a moment and recall if any word or phrase stood out or touched your heart in some way while you were reading. Savor the insight, feeling, or question that arose.

Go back and read the passage out loud again. Once again, pause and note what happened within you.

If you want to talk with God in response to what you felt, follow the promptings of your heart.

This reflective listening allows the Holy Spirit to deepen your awareness of God's desire to speak with you.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
January 18th – 25th



Resources from Graymoor Institute available:
<https://geii.org/resources/>

MAY ALL BE ONE

Every year, Christian communities and churches join together to pray for the visible unity of the Church, faithfully abiding by the will of Christ, who prayed “that all may be one” (John 17:21), during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In much of the world, this Week of Prayer is commemorated from January 18-25. In other places, it is celebrated during the eight days preceding Pentecost. The Franciscan Friars and Sisters of the Atonement of Graymoor in Garrison, NY, USA, feel called to invite all Christians to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which was co-founded at Graymoor in 1908 and continues today to realign the hearts of Christians toward mutual recognition and spiritual transformation. This year’s theme is “Do you believe?”

A local Ecumenical Celebration of the Word of God will be hosted by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany’s Commission on Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Affairs on Wednesday January 22nd at 12:15 PM at the RCDA Pastoral Center - 40 N Main Ave, Albany, NY 12203. This year the 10th Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Albany will preach and Peter Crasto-Donnelly will preside at the service.

Jesus Prays for All Believers - John 17: 20-23

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.



Faith Comes by Hearing - Improving Accessibility for those who are Hard of Hearing— Peter Crasto-Donnelly

Inclusion and accessibility are key principles followed by All Saints Roman Catholic Church in Albany, NY. All Saints has continued to livestream masses as it allows distant family and friends to celebrate the sacraments with their loved ones and provides a connection to the church community for homebound parishioners. Through a grant from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, All Saints was able to make accessibility improvements to their church, including installing automatic doors and purchasing Williams Sound Neckloop Telecoil Couplers for their congregants that are hard of hearing. The device is like a small radio that connects directly to the church's sound system. By plugging in a pair of headphones to the coupler congregants muffle out ambient noise and are able to clearly hear the service. Like a radio, congregants also have the ability to increase or lower the volume of the device.

Lori Herkenham, Chair of the Parish Council at All Saints, learned about the technology from other local churches including St. Vincent de Paul. All Saints staff or volunteers ensure that the couplers and headphones are placed on a front table before each service. Headphones are individually bagged. At the end of the service, congregants place the couplers back on the front table, and used headphones are placed in a basket under the table. Between services, staff or volunteers wipe down each pair of headphones and re-bag it for use.

Like all things new, it took about a month for congregants to learn how to use the technology, but once they did, the feedback was very positive. It turned out that there were congregants who had been coming to service each week even though they couldn't hear the service very well. Thankfully, at the recommendation of St. Vincent's, All Saints purchased a dozen couplers to ensure that they had enough.

The couplers were purchased and installed through Corvino and Sons.



Ecumenical Witnesses of Baptism

Save the Date!
January 12, 2025
2 PM
For the
30th ANNUAL CELEBRATION
of the
Ecumenical Witnesses of Baptism!

Capital Area Council of Churches invites all Clergy and Laity, Ecumenical Witnesses of Baptism and interested persons to worship together at:

St. Matthews Church
25 Mountainview St.
Voorheesville, NY 12186

Following worship, a time of fellowship and information on this Ministry of the *Capital Area Council of Churches* will be provided.

Anyone wishing to learn more about this ministry is invited to participate.

Ecumenical Witness of Baptism Team

Christine J. Baxter—Christ United Methodist Church in Troy, Witness Coordinator

Peggy McQuade - St. Matthew's Roman Catholic Church in Voorheesville, sends out cards and crosses

Pastor Denise Gisotti (retired) - First United Methodist Church of Delmar, responsible for the EWB renewal service which occurs on the Sunday following the Feast of the Epiphany

The Rev. William Hinrichs - St. John's Episcopal Church in Cohoes, publicity



2025 Good Friday Service

Save the Date

The 2025 Good Friday Service will be held on Friday, April 18th at Noon at St. Andrews Episcopal Church, 10 N Main Ave, Albany, NY 12203.

Seven speakers will share reflections on the seven last words of Jesus. We hope to see you there!

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship 2025

Honoring Dr. King's Legacy

Once again the Capital Area Council of Churches will sponsor the 53rd Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Interfaith Scholarship Memorial Celebration on January 15, 2024 at Congregation Beth Emeth on Academy Road. This Interfaith Celebration aims to remind us of Dr. King's legacy as well as raise scholarship funds for deserving high school seniors. It will be an evening of prayer, song, and speakers who honor the accomplishments of Martin Luther King with words of wisdom and faith.



The MLK scholarship was established in 1973 by the Capital Area Council of Churches to honor the memory of the life and work of Dr. King and to preserve the legacy of the nonviolent human rights movement as it was expressed in his life and teachings. Awards are given without regard to race, creed or gender. The scholarship is a very positive way of encouraging young people to keep striving for the fulfillment of Dr. King's dream. The MLK scholarship is available to graduating high school seniors who live, worship, or attend school in Albany County or southern Rensselaer County. The award is presented to a student(s) who demonstrates academic merit, financial need and, most importantly, the strength and determined character of the late Martin Luther King Jr. Many former recipients have let us know how the scholarship was an encouragement as they began their educational path.

This year, in celebration of fifty-three years of raising scholarships, we look to raise \$20,000 to support five children with their college education. Therefore, we look for your financial support again. We are asking various churches, temples, mosques, or synagogues to donate a minimum of \$200 towards the scholarship fund. If your religious institution can give more, please do so. If one hundred religious institutions support this cause, we will have reached our goal. Please support this worthy effort.

And make sure to come and join us for Dr. King's birthday celebration. Share the word with friends and family. He was truly a man to be remembered and honored.



Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Interfaith Celebration
January 15, 2025 - 7 PM
Congregation Beth Emeth
100 Academy Rd.
Albany, NY 12208

CROP Walk 2025

As we approach the end of 2024, the Albany CROP Walk Committee is already planning the 45th annual CROP Hunger Walk in Albany, now known as the John U Miller Memorial CROP Walk. We wanted you to be aware of the dates and locations of the 2025 CROP Recruiters Rally and the Walk. The Rally and Awards Reception has been tentatively scheduled for Sunday afternoon, March 23, at the First Church in Albany on No. Pearl St. (the same location as last year's Rally) More details will come to you in a mailing in February.

The Walk will take place on Sunday, May 4, at a new starting location and an hour later than in previous years. The Walk will begin and end at the **Church of St. Vincent de Paul, 900 Madison Ave.** in Albany, a location along the route that had been used for several years. **Registration** will begin at **1:30pm** in the fellowship space, with music and opening ceremonies in the sanctuary. The Walk will officially step off at 2:30pm. As in the past, there will be a choice of two routes: the Golden Mile and a longer loop of about 2.5 miles.

Please mark your calendars now and, if you are not the CROP Walk contact person for 2025, please forward this message to the appropriate person and send us their contact information.

Finally, we could use a few more people to join the planning committee for the Rally and Walk. Our next meeting will be Wednesday, January 8, from 4-5:30pm, at the First Church in Albany, (the new home of the office of the Capital Area Council of Churches). Please let me (Kitt) know if you are interested in helping organize this important community event.

A blessed holiday season to all! See you in the New Year!

Peace,

Kitt Jackson

Chair, Albany CROP Walk Committee



More Fall Dinner Pictures





Capital Area Council of Churches, Inc.
110 North Pearl St
Albany, NY 12207
518-462-5450
capareacc@gmail.com

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 363
Albany, NY

Please deliver to Current Resident or:

Upcoming Events

January 12	Ecumenical Witnesses of Baptism Renewal Service 2 PM, St. Matthew's, 25 Mountainview St., Voorheesville
January 15	Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Interfaith Celebration 7 pm, Congregation Beth Emeth, 100 Academy Rd., Albany
February 12	Annual Assembly 6 pm, Bethany Reformed, 760 New Scotland Ave., Albany
March 23	CROP Walk Recruiter's Rally - See website for updates
March 31	Deadline for MLK Scholarship Applications
April 18	Good Friday Celebration 12 pm, St. Andrew's Episcopal, 10 N Main Ave, Albany
May 4	John U. Miller Memorial CROP Hunger Walk 1:30 Registration, 2:30 Walk, St. Vincent's, 900 Madison

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