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The Connection

The Capital Area Council of Churches

Spring 2025

Your Financial Support Needed to Do Together what we Cannot do Alone

At Capital Area Council of Churches, our small staff and many volunteers make a difference both in the Capital Region and around the world. Together we are:

- Housing the homeless (Thank you to our many partners on page 7),
- Walking to end hunger (A personal testimony pages 3-4)
- Remembering Evelyn C. "CROP Walk" Stone (page 2)
- Going Green (page 3)
- Worshiping together (Good Friday service info page 5)
- Fellowshiping together (Church Leadership Breakfast page 8)
- Learning from one another (Annual Assembly page 8, Joyful Noiseletter resource pg 5)
- Supporting College Students (MLK Scholarship info page 6, CCM Fundraiser page 11)
- Reflecting on human connection (page 7) and Imago Dei and DEI (page 9)
- Recognizing our community leaders (Fall Awards celebration nominations (page 10)

Doing together what we cannot do alone, however, is only possible through your financial support. Your donation to The Council today ensures we can continue to bring churches together in fellowship and service tomorrow. Please consider donating:

\$128 in recognition for the total number of men sheltered in 2024

\$90 in recognition of our over 90 member congregations

\$45 in recognition of the 45th Annual CROP Walk

In gratitude for the opportunity to serve,

Peter Crasto-Donnelly
Executive Director
Capital Area Council of Churches

Donate to CACC at
www.capareacc.com or
by scanning below



Remembering Evelyn Stone

It is with a heavy heart that we share that our dear sister in Christ, Evelyn C. Stone, has gone to be with her Lord and Savior after walking this earth for 98 years. While we are greatly saddened by Evelyn's passing, we want to celebrate the beautiful life she lived and the impact she had on all of us.

Evelyn witnessed the founding of the Federation of Churches and was there when it became the Capital Area Council of Churches. She talked the talk but she also walked the walk. Evelyn walked ten miles to help raise money for the hungry in one of the Council's first CROP Walks and has walked in every event since. It is joked that her middle initial "C" stood for "CROP Walk."

She was appointed as CACC Chaplain to Albany Medical Center and helped develop its chaplaincy program. As such she held Sunday morning services and did visitations throughout the week. She also started a ministry at University Heights now known as Hudson Park Nursing Home and held a service there once a month with her church, Bethany Baptist. Another one of her many endeavors was as chair of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholarship Committee from 1978 to 1986. Evelyn also fostered the CACC program Ecumenical Witnesses to Baptism and recruited new members to join the Witnessing team.

In 1989, soon after the Times Union Center, then known as the Knickerbocker Arena, was built, a group of local Christian businesspeople who had a prayer group, arranged for evangelical leader Billy Graham to come and give a series of his famous speeches for the people of New York. Evelyn was on a steering committee with the Rev. Bob Lamar that provided support for Graham's visit to Albany. Nearly 80,000 people attended over the eight-day crusade, and six and a half tons of food were donated to local food pantries. The Billy Graham crusades were inspirational to Evelyn who loved seeing how it brought so many people together. She still has an old picture of the convention crowds coming together to donate food.

Evelyn was the first woman president of the CACC serving from 1988 through 1991. Her favorite thing about being president was being able to connect with and unite many churches and congregations from all over the Capital Region. Even before she was president, she loved going out into the community and giving back. She enjoyed sharing the bond between volunteers as they got to see the true positive impact the CACC's programs made. She said that her work with the Council brought her out of her little corner of life after her husband died and allowed her to experience the joy of getting to know others who serve God. Evelyn said "The involvement in the Council changed my life. It has been a beautiful experience, and all I can say is that it's been a blessing to be a part of the Capital Area Council of Churches."



Going Green! Find the Connection Online



We're excited to announce a new chapter in our commitment to caring for God's creation. Our newsletter will now be available digitally! We will e-mail the newsletter to our mailing list and post on our website. By moving to a digital format, we can reduce paper waste and conserve resources while still keeping you informed about the Council. If you have not subscribed already, be sure to subscribe to our mailing list by visiting www.capareacc.org or scanning the QR code.

If you would like to receive a copy of our newsletter in the mail going forward you can do so in one of two ways:

- Active donors will continue to receive a paper copy of the newsletter as our way of saying thank you for your support.
- You can ask to be added to our mailing list by reaching out to the Council at capareacc@gmail.com or by calling the office at 518-462-5450. A suggested annual donation of at least \$25 dollars helps defray the cost of printing and postage.

Thank you for joining us in our efforts to care for the earth while staying connected to the mission. Together, we can make a difference—for our communities and for creation.

By: Peter Crasto-Donnelly

40 CROP Walks and Counting - Why I Still Walk

For many years I have written statistical articles about the scope and value of CROP Walks in general and the John U. Miller Memorial CROP Walk in particular, so I decided to make this article more personal. I wanted to put the faces of people – local people – behind the numbers. To begin with, however, it's worth understanding why I have walked in nearly 40 of the 44 walks held in Albany.

In January 1962, I left college for what I thought was the last time. I had a few dollars in my pocket, but no job and no place to really call home. I managed to find a cheap apartment in a really bad part of Albany and a job as a dishwasher at a local businessmen's club. For 4 months, I missed meals because I had no money for food. If it wasn't for the help of older college friends who were married and had an apartment within walking distance, I may not have survived that winter. In May 1962, I decided to return to Yonkers where I had attended high school. I found a job as a bank teller and a room which was only a place to sleep – no food allowed. I had to eat all my meals out which, on a salary of \$55/week before taxes, was difficult. Again, I had to skip meals in order to have money for other meals. Until November 1964, my life was basically a struggle for survival with no help from my family. Luckily, I did have help from an incredible family who literally turned my life around. They bought me my first Bible, taught me how to read/understand/apply it as my guiding light through life. They also introduced me to a true, Christian church community. They literally "rebuilt" me after helping me get rid of excess baggage from the first 20 years of my life. I went to night school full time (5 courses) and worked 2 part-time day jobs.

Story Continues on the next page

Visit <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/crophungerwalks/event/albanyny> or scan the QR code to join the CROP Walk today!



40 CROP Walks and Counting - Why I Still Walk

Continued from previous page

With my new family's help, I was successful in class, experienced my first call to pastoral ministry, and was elected President of the Protestant Christian Fellowship in October, 1965. Most importantly, I met the woman who was to become my wife/partner/rock. With her support, I have served in leadership roles and servant roles from that day to this. Her love and support still encourage me even though she returned to be with her Lord 13 years ago. The point of this recounting is to give personal testimony to the difference a helping hand can make. How much of a difference?

The 2024 Albany CROP Walk, one of 550 in the nation, raised a total of \$102,616.00. Of this amount, 25% or \$25,654.00, was distributed locally among the 25 food pantries and one soup kitchen; the remaining 75% was retained by Church World Service for its many humanitarian efforts globally. To break it down even further, I reached out to Grace and Holy Innocents Church where the soup kitchen is run and to St. Lucy's Catholic Church where the Altamont Food Pantry is run. Neither of these programs is numerically large, but they both represent examples of reaching out to "the least, the last, and the lost."

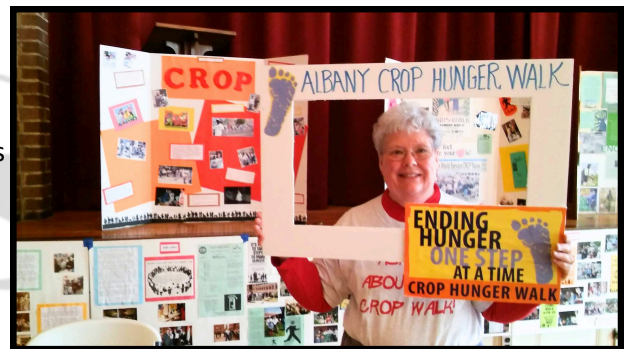
The soup kitchen was established in 1976. At that time, it served 75-100 meals every Saturday. 49 years later, they serve 325-400 meals! In addition to food, people, especially refugees, get clothing, foot gear, personal care items, and whatever else has been donated to the soup kitchen. Many of the people who have benefitted from this program have "paid it forward" by helping with set up, food preparation, serving, and clean up.

The Altamont Food Pantry started in 1988. In the beginning, it "only served a few families when the need arose." Now, it serves 25-30 families or fifty-five individuals each time it is opened which is twice a month. The coordinator shared two inspiring examples of how much of a difference even this modest program can make. The first story is about a single mother with two children who escaped an abusive situation. She changed her last name, started her own successful business, and is doing very well. She is "paying it forward" by helping at the Regional Food Bank's Land Farm. In the other story, a family of five, two parents and three children, were struggling to get by even though both parents were working. They were eventually able to buy their own home and live independently.

The point of this testimony and the success stories is that everything helps! We can all make a difference – as walkers, recruiters, volunteers, even full-time professionals. Whether we give \$1 or \$10,000, it all makes a difference. Now, more than ever, everyone must step up. There is a saying: "no one can do everything; but everyone can do something."

May it be so. AMEN!!!

by Frank M. D'Ambrosio



Visit <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/crophungerwalks/event/albanyny>
or scan the QR code to join the CROP Walk today!



CACC Good Friday Service



THE SEVEN LAST WORDS

An ecumenical Good Friday Service will be held at noon on April 18th, 2025, at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Albany. The service focuses on the last seven words of Christ on the cross. Clergy and laity from a variety of denominations will be offering their reflections providing a truly ecumenical experience. The service will be live-streamed on the Facebook page of CACC.

RSVP online at capareacc.org or by scanning the QR Code below



Resource Tip - Joyful Noiseletter 'The best humor publication in Christendom'

About The Joyful Noiseletter from their website - <https://www.joyfulnoiseletter.com/>

G.K. Chesterton once wrote: "Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly. Never forget that the devil fell by force of gravity. He who has the faith has the fun."

And do our subscribers have fun with our feast of Christian humor and jokes pastors can tell. Our award-winning newsletter, The Joyful Noiseletter, provides churches with a bountiful bimonthly supply of reproducible cartoons, clean jokes, one-liners, inspirational stories, and joyful Scripture references.

Local church publications and church web sites reprint JN's anecdotes and priceless cartoons by 18 of the nation's finest cartoonists, including Bil Keane, creator of The Family Circus, and Dave Coverly, creator of Speed Bump.

Subscribers regularly receive in JN a bonanza of delightful cartoons by 18 of the finest Christian cartoonists. These cartoons are related to current events, church calendars, holidays, and the changing seasons. The cartoons in JN may be reprinted in church newsletters, bulletins, fliers, posters, signs, and letterheads free-of-charge and without seeking permissions. They also may be projected on overhead screens.

Subscribers have the option of receiving the paper or electronic version of JN. The electronic version is mailed directly to your e-mail box, where you can easily cut and paste the articles, jokes and cartoons directly into your church publication.



from [JoyfulNoiseletter.com](https://www.joyfulnoiseletter.com)
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Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship 2025

Honoring Dr. King's Legacy

Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship

The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship is awarded to graduating high school seniors who live, worship, or attend school in Albany or southern Rensselaer County. Established in 1973 by the Capital Area Council of Churches, this scholarship honors the memory of Dr. King and preserves the legacy of the nonviolent human rights movement he championed.

The scholarship aims to encourage young people to continue striving for the fulfillment of Dr. King's dream of equality and justice. Awards are given without regard to race, creed, or gender. Last year, four outstanding students who were active in their school and faith communities and accepted to an accredited college or university received a \$4,000 scholarship. These students have shown leadership and dedication, embodying the values Dr. King promoted, and will undoubtedly have a positive impact on society as they continue his legacy.

Graduating high school seniors must meet the following criteria:

- Live, worship, or attend school in Albany or southern Rensselaer County
- Actively participate in their school and faith community
- Have been accepted to an accredited college or university for the fall semester

Applications are due each year usually by the end of March and can be submitted online at www.capareacc.org or by mailing an application to the Council offices. If you have questions, please contact the Council at (518) 462-5450.

Scholarships are awarded in May or June at the Scholarship Ceremony. Please join the Council's mailing list so that you can join us in celebrating our recipients!

Donations to the fund are still being accepted

Elder Andrea Ralph
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship Co-chair



"We must remember that intelligence is not enough.
Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of
true education. The complete education gives one
not only power of concentration, but worthy
objectives upon which to concentrate."

Dr. King

The Human Connection

Lost in the advancement of science and technology. The human touch. Human interaction. The human connection. Fixated on big screens and mobile phones, texting instead of talking. Unaware of our surroundings as we are mesmerized with electronic messages, programs, and video games. We are alone.

A fairly well-known fact is that babies need the human touch in order to thrive—physically, emotionally, intellectually. But as adults we also need the human connection to enhance our well-being, to reduce the negative effects of depression, stress, and anxiety, and even physical pain. And, of course, loneliness. Awareness of this issue is critical if we are to keep from falling further and further away from caring and loving and sharing--to retain our human connection. And one very, very special way to add light to our lives is to make attendance in church a regular occurrence.

We go to church to give thanks. We go to find comfort. We go for the moral guidance that defines our lives. And then, as a bonus, we get to be with people. In person. Live. We can shake hands. We can hug. We can greet each other, smile, and feel connected both physically and emotionally. And, as a group, we can do even more and work on programs that offer assistance and support to those in need. We are not AI, not robots, and not isolated from the world.

We are part of a living community. And we are part of that community because we make the effort. And, more importantly, because we need and want that human connection.

By Margaret Danes



Overflow Shelter - some Thank You's

On February 3, 2025 the Capital Area Council of Churches Emergency Overflow Homeless Shelter opened it's doors at the First Church in Albany to welcome our first guests of the season. We are so grateful to First Church for both welcoming us into their building and making investments in the building. This downtown location is also located on a bus a line, which makes the location more accessible to the men that we serve.

I also want to thank our many church families that provide meals and other donations to support the shelter as well as Laura Wayman who coordinates the meal providers. We could not operate this program without your support. I am grateful for the leadership provided by of our Shelter Director, Pam Bullock, as well as all the work the staff put in each night to make our shelter warm and welcoming.

I also want to thank the county for their support, especially County Executive Dan McCoy who came and spoke at our open house, Commissioner Erin M. Stachewicz, and David Bradley, Assistant Director of Social Services Programs.

Our shelter will operate through April 30th when we close down until next fall.

by Peter Crasto-Donnelly

Be sure to subscribe to our e-mails for updates about the shelter



Church Leadership Breakfast

Enjoy food and fellowship on Thursday May 8th
from 8 AM - 10 AM at Macedonia Baptist Church.

RSVP online at capareacc.org or by scanning the QR Code below



CACC Annual Assembly 2025

On February 12th, the Council held the Annual Assembly at Bethany Reformed Church in Albany. Over 30 people representing 18 member churches attended. The meeting agenda included business items and a program on food insecurity.

Attendees were invited to share about a key ministry that is important to them. The following ministries were shared:

- Macedonia Baptist Church - Food Pantry Program and receiving donations through their Higher Horizons Community Development Corporations
- St. Andrew's Episcopal Church - A Case for Love Documentary Screening and the Sacred Grounds Program
- Albany Friends Meeting - Young Peacemakers Week
- Parkview Bruderhof Community - Information about the Bruderhof Community
- Westminster Presbyterian Church - Westminster Commons Program
- St. Vincent's Roman Catholic Church - Food Pantry Program
- Blessed Sacrament Roman Catholic Church - City of Albany Catholic Schools
- Shrine Church of our Lady of the Americas - Church Community Celebrations
- Blooming Grove Reformed - Diaper Program
- First Lutheran Church - Maritime Ministry Program
- Bethany Reformed Church - Family Promise

The following elections were held:

Nominations - Vic Russak to the Nominating Committee

Board Member - Bill Hedberg, Rev. Dr. Roxanne Jones-Booth, Rebecca Mondore

Officer - Margaret Anderton, President; Bill Hedberg, Treasurer

Note: A special thanks is given to retiring Board Member, Phyllis Cardona for her many years of service and also to Bethany Reformed Church for hosting the Assembly.

A copy of the Annual Report can be found online at: <https://www.capareacc.org/programs/annual-assembly/>

Imago Dei and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



The concept of Imago Dei—the belief that all humans are made in the image of God—provides a deep theological grounding for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). If every person reflects God’s image, then every individual has inherent dignity, worth, and value. This understanding naturally calls for justice, respect, and inclusion in all aspects of society.

Human diversity is not incidental but intentional. The richness of different cultures, perspectives, and identities mirrors the multifaceted nature of God’s creation. Recognizing Imago Dei means embracing this diversity as a reflection of divine beauty rather than something to be erased or diminished.

Equity flows from this recognition. If every person carries the divine image, then systems and structures must ensure that all people are treated justly and given what they need to thrive. Imago Dei challenges discrimination, oppression, and inequality, compelling us to uplift the marginalized and create spaces where all can flourish.

Inclusion follows naturally. Exclusion, dehumanization, and injustice contradict the very essence of Imago Dei. To honor God’s image in others means creating communities where every person is seen, valued, and fully included. This is not just an ethical or social imperative—it is a sacred one.

At its core, Imago Dei doesn't just support DEI; it demands it. It calls us to recognize, honor, and advocate for the dignity of every human being.” - Naomi Norton

About Naomi Norton:

Naomi Ruth has a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) in Couples and Family Therapy at Northcentral University and researches White Fundamentalist Evangelicalism (WFE). Her Facebook page provides reflections and resources on a variety of topics relating to mental health, social justice, and WFE.

You may follow Naomi at:

<https://www.facebook.com/naomi.ruth.351?mibextid=dGKdO6>

CACC Fall Award Nominations

Nominations Now Being Accepted

Rev. Dr. Caryle Adams Ecumenical/ Interfaith Award:

- Has worked to spread the message of unity and inclusivity by being involved in ecumenical and interfaith efforts.
- Exemplifies the inclusive spirit of Dr. Adams.
- Has been involved in some ecumenical or interfaith program or project.

James and Pearl Campbell Peace and Justice Award:

- A person who in his/her life's work has shown to be a friend of peace and justice
- Should be active in the CACC service area, which includes Albany County and southern Rensselaer County.

Rev. Joyce Steinkraus Giles Pastoral Service Award:

- Actively participates in the Council in one of its programs
- Has done outstanding pastoral ministry
- Exemplify racial, gender, and denominational inclusiveness

ED Bloch Interfaith Youth Award:

- College or high school age person whose actions have helped build bridges within the interfaith community.

Micah 6:8 Award:

- A person whose actions represent someone who "does justice, loves kindness, and walks humbly with God".

Nominations for these awards are now being accepted. To nominate a person or organization send a letter to our office explaining why you think the person or organization deserves the award.

Nominations can be emailed to capareacc@gmail.com or sent to
CACC, 110 N. Pearl Street, Albany, NY 12207.

The deadline for nominations this year is May 31st.



Our 2024 recipients

Rev. Joyce Giles Pastoral Service Award

Rev. Antonio Booth

Rev. Dr. Roxanne Jones-Booth

Evelyn C. Stone Lifetime Achievement Award

The Rev. Fr. James J. Kane

Campbell Peace and Justice Award

Natasha S. Pernicka, MPA

Rev. Dr. Caryle Adams Interfaith Award

Rob Kovach



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Please deliver to Current Resident or:

Upcoming Events

April 18th

Good Friday Ecumenical Service

May 4th

John U Miller CROP Walk

May 8th

Church Leadership Breakfast

May or June

MLK Scholarship Awards Ceremony

October 22nd

Fall Awards Dinner

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