

Voice of the Spire

The Newsletter of Arch Street United Methodist Church
A Reconciling Congregation



Autumn 2015

Arch Street United Methodist Church

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Voice of the Spire

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POWER's "Moral Takeover" on the Steps of the State Capitol

Wilhelmina Young



(Photo courtesy of POWER)

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice, and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?" — Isaiah 58:6

This verse from Isaiah was the theme that motivated POWER's Education Strategy Team last January when we met to decide what action we would take to "strongly encourage" our state legislators to approve a Full, Fair Funding Formula for Pennsylvania's public schools. So a 100-Day Fast was called for all the POWER congregations, leading up to and including the Pennsylvania budget season. As we approached June, we felt we needed to increase pressure on the legislators and decided we would take our 'fasting' to the steps of the state Capitol for the last 10 days before the deadline for next year's budget.

Who would answer? Who would be willing to fast and pray for 10 days on the Capitol steps? "Here I am Lord, send me." The call went out from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh. Funding our schools is not just a Philadelphia problem. A full, fair funding formula and budget for educating our children is a statewide problem, a moral imperative.

On June 20th, people of faith in four buses from Philadelphia along with cars and vans from around the state met at historic Grace United Methodist Church in Harrisburg, just down the street from the Capitol, for what would be known as a Moral Takeover. The day began with a

Shabot service on the Capitol steps, led by Jewish rabbis and POWER members. After gathering at Grace UMC for inspiring words about our purpose, a time of sharing, teaching, and call to action, we processed back to the Capitol. More than 300 people occupied the steps to participate in the blessing of the Capitol doors, the tents that would provide shelter during the 10 days, and the 15 fasters. The blessing was performed by members and affiliates of POWER's Christian, Muslim, and Jewish faith communities.

By 5:00 that evening, the official takeover of the Capitol steps had begun. The fasters included Sheila Armstrong, co-chair of POWER's Education Strategy Team, with her mother, her two sons, two nieces, and three nephews, along with four other POWER staffers, Mom Bernise from Sweet Union Baptist Church, and me. Our ages ranged from 6 to 78.

Our daily schedule of fasting and prayer lasted from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM. Each day began with a prayer led by a different faith community, followed by a direct action in the Capitol building. We visited legislators' offices where we prayed for and with staff, and we invited the legislators to join us at noon for prayer at our tents. Each faith community coordinated a day and led a teach-in on their community's theology as it relates to education. An afternoon action through the halls of the Capitol culminated with a time of prayer back at the tents.

By being present on the steps those 10 days, we were able to hold meaningful conversations with many legislators about the importance of passing a budget that would adequately fund public schools in Pennsylvania. We impressed upon them how our faith calls us to be voices for the children who we say "are our future." If that is what we believe, then we need to invest in their future.

At the end of the 10 days, three unions representing teachers and other School District employees with similar values came to occupy the steps of the Capitol for a week. We passed the mantle to them in our morning prayer time.

At the writing of this article two months later, there still is no budget for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

News & People

Arch Street's Worship Leaders

Remone Mundle

*Oh magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name **together***—Psalm 34:3

Psalm 34:3 provides a wonderful scriptural basis for worship leaders and our call to praying and worshipping God communally. Currently Cathy Simpson, Nicola Jefferson, and I serve in this capacity at Arch Street UMC. As worship leaders, we have a passion for praise and we lead much of the communal worship activities at both the 8:30 and 11:00 AM services.

Our preparation for leading worship is as individual and unique as our personalities, but it all starts with browsing the bulletin, which is usually sent to us by the secretary at the end of the previous week. We check the order of the service so that our prayers are in sync and seek clarification for any change or additions to the program as needed. Following that, a more in-depth review of the theme, hymn selections, and scripture readings is conducted to ensure cohesion.

The UMC's missions, current affairs, the church calendar, Pastor Robin's last sermon, the weather, or even a popular song have informed our prayers and calls to worship the Almighty on any given Sunday. Weaving God's inspiration into the present day's service is where we find the most joy, and praying for peace or inviting others into the worship experience is to us a blessing.

Indeed, our hearts are lifted up when we offer humble prayers of thanksgiving, adoration, and consecration that are extemporaneous or adopted as the Holy Spirit leads. We are privileged to be instruments of God's praise. Therefore we will continue to pray and seek God's voice amid the chaos and noise of everyday living, and we hope that even one word we say will inspire and encourage someone else to worship the Lord with us.

Arch Street Youth Go to Washington

Callie Chen

Editor's Note: When this year's Youth Mission Trip had to be canceled, Pastor Robin invited the group on a day trip to Washington, DC. Callie shares where they went and what they saw.

8/13/15: We took the train and arrived at DC around 9:00 in the morning, Pastor Robin, Guy McNeill, his friends Eyob and Roselie Grainge, and I. The first place we visited was the United Methodist building, a large white structure right next to the Capitol. We entered the Simpson Memorial Chapel, had a prayer, and signed our names in the ledger, next to hundreds of fellow Methodists and visitors.



(Photo courtesy of Rev. Robin Hynicka)

Afterwards we went to the Supreme Court building, a great marble structure with pillars and a pointed dome. It was filled with paintings and statues of Supreme Court judges, and had an ornate room decorated with red drapes and wooden chairs that I later found out was the Supreme Courtroom. We made a quick trip to the Capitol building before lunchtime came around and we stopped at place called Pete's Diner.

After lunch, we went to back to the Capitol and walked through an under-

ground passage that led to the Library of Congress. There was a room filled with books belonging to Thomas Jefferson—his very own library!—and a ceiling that held a large painting of four women dressed as warriors with the words “Valor,” “Achievement,” “Courage,” and “Fortitude.” The library itself was a circular room with reading desks in a semi-circle, a great painted dome, and stained glass windows higher up. We left the library and took a walk on Capitol Hill, admiring the beautiful houses with their gardens and trellises.

Our last stop was the Postal Museum, where there was a presentation on the Jenny stamp, a wall of anonymous postcard confessions, and a stuffed dog that wore a coat of medals for his curiosity—he got his medals from mail carriers that he followed. He was kind of like a mascot, an adorable one!

Finally we got back to the station, where we ate dinner at Potbelly's and boarded the Amtrak train back to Philly around 9:30 PM.

Off to a New Adventure

Deacon Nick Nicholas

Editor's Note: For those of you who may not know Deacon Nick Nicholas, he is that burly guy who was the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission Coordinator for the Northeast Jurisdiction and lived at Serenity House. He also helped around Arch Street for our special events. Nick has left Philadelphia to start the next part of his ministry journey.

I'm pleased to announce that, as of October 1, I will join the staff of Manchester UMC in Manchester, Missouri, as Pastor of Youth Discipleship. I look forward to being back in the local church. Thanks to UMCVIM NEJ for the amazing experience in ministry. Thanks to Arch Street UMC for being my home church on the East Coast.

God Bless Philadelphia and the NEJ!

“Sustainable Serenity”

Laura Rigell and .O

Since 2012, O and Brother John Bowie of Serenity House have partnered with students and faculty from Swarthmore College to pursue “just sustainability”—access to a healthy living environment and secure livelihood for all. With the guidance of Professor Giovanna Di Chiro, students Laura Rigell, Nora Kerrich, Lekey Leidecker, and alumna Alexa Ross are contributing resources toward environmental and social sustainability within the North Philadelphia community.

We call our community–college collaboration “Sustainable Serenity” and have focused on bringing solar power and energy efficiency to North Philadelphia. In 2014, we hosted a series of solar workshops at Serenity House that culminated in the installation of a panel on the garage roof. This spring, we supported residents on nearby Seltzer Street to win the city-wide EnergyFIT competition, providing free energy efficiency makeovers to 18 households.

Recently, Sustainable Serenity has held discussions with RE-volv, a San Francisco based organization that finances solar installations for nonprofits. With the support of RE-volv, Serenity House could be 100% powered by the sun at no upfront cost to Arch Street. After approval by Arch Street’s Church Council, our team would crowdfund the cost of the solar panels (we will call on you to support us, so keep your eyes open in early 2016!). Arch Street would then pay RE-volv for the installation over a 20-year lease. Monthly lease payments would be 15% less than Serenity House’s current electricity bill, resulting in immediate savings. RE-volv would then reinvest the lease payments into future solar projects.

To ensure that North Philadelphia residents benefit from this initiative we would organize an apprenticeship program during the installation, which would happen in April 2016. Participants would shadow the installers and become familiar with solar energy systems. We hope to

support the apprentices in pursuing jobs in the green economy going forward!

NSC’s Annual Thanksgiving Celebration

Margaret Harris

Each year, the Nationalities Service Center (NSC), our neighbor at 1216 Arch Street, hosts a wonderful Thanksgiving party for refugees and their families to welcome them to Philadelphia. NSC is the largest refugee resettlement agency in the Philadelphia area, helping hundreds of people each year rebuild new lives in our city. Refugees come to Philadelphia from many countries: Iraq, Sudan, Congo, Bhutan, Burma, Syria, Ethiopia, Yemen, Guinea, to name just a few. They have survived unimaginable trauma and hardship and are grateful to be here. And we are grateful that they have come to be part of our community in Philadelphia.

This year’s NSC Thanksgiving party is scheduled for Saturday, November 21st. Besides the food and fellowship, the party includes entertainment, dancing, singing, and performances by young and old. Some pictures tell the story better than words.

Once again, Arch Street is invited to help with the celebration. If you can bake cakes, pies, or cookies or if you can help serve food to the NSC guests, I invite you to be part of the celebration this year! Contact me at margaretharris@me.com to find out how you can join the fun.



(Photographs courtesy of Phil Straus)



Columns

Minister's Message

Rev. Robin Hynicka,
Senior Pastor



On Sunday, August 30th, in the evening, Weslia P. Hynicka, my beloved wife of 24 years, took the leap of faith as she passed from this life into the next. Even in dying she lived graciously. Weslia was surrounded by family and loved ones. It was in the midst of family storytelling that Weslia showed those present how to make a gracious exit. I was by her side and thank God that I was present. The transition was just like Weslia—quietly and peacefully powerful. Hallelujah!

My heart is broken but my spirit is undaunted and I look forward to living my life in honor of Weslia and in caring for family—both my immediate family and my worldwide family.



Photographs courtesy of Robin Hynicka, Eve Oswald Robbins, Jacob Robbins, Sioux Robbins, Rebecca Solayman, and Phil Straus

Shopping—For *What?*

Rev. Reinhard Kruse

As you get started on your seasonal shopping, what do you anticipate? Money will buy . . .

Material things, but not happiness

A house, but not a home

A bed, but not sleep

Food, but not appetite

Locks, but not security

Luxuries, but not contentment

Medicine, but not health

Counseling, but not confidence

Plastic surgery, but not personality

A gym membership, but not strength of character

Cosmetics, but not beauty

A candlelight dinner, but not intimacy

Sex, but not love

Books, but not brains

Online classes, but not education

A smart phone, but not wisdom

Gifts, but not family closeness

A car, but not togetherness

Thrilling entertainment, but not satisfaction

A high position or status, but not respect

A church pew, but not religion

A Bible, but not belief

To paraphrase Colossians 3:1–2, if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above; set your mind on the things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

There is no need to shop. Do things that strengthen relationships—build friendships, cheer the lonely, strengthen the weak, encourage the timid, serve others, celebrate with friends. Best of all, share your time, share your talents, share your gifts, share your joys, share your love, share your spirit. *Share, share, share* and you are much more likely to receive those things that money *cannot* buy.

Native American Sunday

Native American Sunday will be celebrated on November 15th this year. At both the 8:30 and 11:00 AM services, Barry Lee of Spirit Wing will speak on “Similarities and Differences between Native and Christian Beliefs.” Spirit Wing will also provide native music as Barry on guitar and his wife, Barbara Andrews-Christy, on native flute, sing and play “warm blended harmonies with a spiritual message.” Our delicious traditional Native American luncheon will be served in Nichols Hall following the 11:00 AM service.

Our History: The Ministry of Dr. John A. McElroy

Dale Shillito, Arch Street Historian

In 1949, Bishop Fred Corson promoted Dr. Alex Smith to district superintendent for West Philadelphia and named Rev. John McElroy to serve in Arch Street’s pulpit.

John (“Jack”) McElroy was born in Philadelphia December 28th, 1913. He attended Philadelphia public schools, then went on to Dickinson College and Drew Theological Seminary where he received a summa cum laude award upon graduation in 1938. In that same year, John married Mary Grace Shorter of Woodbury, New Jersey. John continued his studies at Temple University where he received a master’s degree in sacred theology.

Rev. McElroy began serving as a pastor in the Methodist Church in 1932. When he came to Arch Street in 1949, he continued Dr. Nichols’s Sunday sermon broadcasts on WFIL radio. He received an honorary Doctor of Divinity from Dickinson College in 1951 while pastor of Arch

Street. Dr. McElroy, who conducted three Good Friday services every year to overflow crowds, wrote a Lenten devotional book called *Living with the Seven Words*. A copy is preserved in our archives.

After leaving Arch Street in 1959, Dr. McElroy transferred to the Northern New Jersey Conference, where he served for 10 years at Calvary Methodist Church in East Orange, six years as District Supervisor in the Western District of Northern New Jersey, and four years at Newton, Sussex County. In 1978, after 46 years of pastoral service, he and wife Grace retired to Ocean City. He remained active as chaplain of Ocean City Tabernacle and visitation minister for Linwood UMC.

At the Conference level, Dr. McElroy served on various agencies. Having a particular interest in public health, he served as chairman of nursing at Methodist Hospital, Philadelphia, and East Orange

General Hospital, and as a trustee at Brooklyn Methodist Hospital. He also served as a trustee at Drew University.

The McElroys had three daughters, who all married and scattered with their husbands. Barbara Patterson moved to Lititz, Pennsylvania. Ruth Hahn moved to Lawrenceville, Georgia, and Alexandra Homan lives in Pittsfield, New York. In 1986, John and Grace moved to Rochester, New York to be near daughters and grandchildren. In all, they had seven granddaughters, one grandson, and four great-grandchildren. In 1996, the couple moved to a home for retired pastors at Cornwall Manor, Pennsylvania, where they reacquainted with colleagues from the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference including Rev. James M. and Angela Haney, also formerly of Arch Street. Dr. McElroy lived to age 90, passing to our Lord on October 21, 2004.

Events

Regular Sunday Activities

- 8:00 AM - Nursery, 1st floor (open till 12:30 PM)
- 8:30 AM - Worship, Chapel
- 9:45 AM - Adult Sunday School, Chapel
- 9:45 AM - Youth Bible Study, 2nd floor Office
- 9:45 AM - Children's Sunday School, Nichols Hall
- 11:00 AM - Worship, Sanctuary
- 12:30 PM - Get Acquainted Time
- 2:00 PM - Unity Fellowship Church Service, Chapel
- 5:30 PM - Grace Café, Sanctuary and Nichols Hall

Weekly Activities

- Monday 1:00 PM - Tea and Talk, Chapel
5:30 PM - AA Meeting, Nichols Hall
7:00 PM - Freedom Band Rehearsal, Chapel
- Tuesday 12:00 PM - Bible Study with Rev. Waller, Sanctuary
- Wednesday 6:30 PM - AA Meeting, Nichols Hall
- Thursday 5:30 PM - AA Meeting, Nichols Hall
7:00 PM - Diversity Group, Chapel

Please check the "Events" tab on our website (www.archstreetumc.org) for the latest calendar activities.

Committee Meetings, Special Events and Activities

United Methodist Men meet the first Saturday of the month at 10:00 AM; United Methodist Women meet the second Sunday of the month immediately after the 11:00 AM service; the Native American Indian Awareness Group meets the second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 PM. Refer to the weekly "What's Happening" bulletin for exceptions to these dates.

October 2015

Oct 4: World Communion Sunday

Submit calendar events to Nancy Megley (nmegley@msn.com). Listings for Winter 2016 issue are due December 1.

November 2015

Nov 1: All Saints' Sunday

Nov 15: Native American Sunday

Nov 26: Thanksgiving—*office closed*
Nov 26 and 27 (AA will meet Nov 26)

Nov 29: United Methodist Student Day

December 2015

Dec 1: World AIDS Day

Dec 12: Eliza Shirley Christmas Party

Dec 24: Christmas Eve Candlelight Service (AA will meet)

Dec 25: Annual Christmas Breakfast for the Homeless—*office closed*

Birthdays

October

- 3 - Emi Starr
- 5 - Joan Ferron
- 10 - Nicola Jefferson
- 11 - Sylvia Rose Kim,
George Logan
- 15 - Dennis Mayes,
Kalolaine Tapealava
- 18 - Pat Taylor
- 19 - Nemahun Tucker
- 20 - Terry Whaley
- 22 - Tolu Ogunkeye
- 23 - Janis Campbell
- 24 - Yema Tucker
- 26 - Joe Gutman
- 28 - Charles Fry, Siafa Lewis
- 31 - Katie Donnelly

November

- 2 - Gaspar Santos
- 3 - Daniel Timmerman
- 4 - Joe Kalil
- 6 - Gwendolyn Beatty
- 8 - Thomas Brislin
- 10 - Ray Mount
- 11 - Cathy Minecci
- 12 - Francisco Santos
- 16 - John Knox Jr.,
Dannyale Small
- 17 - Molly McNeill
- 19 - Pamela Thomas
- 20 - Dorothy Twiggs
- 22 - Phil Gressman,
Serafim Santos
- 24 - Rev. Robert Booker,
Mary Crawford
- 25 - John Kitterell, Sue Kruse,
David Mordell
- 28 - Myrna Brown, Patti Manuel
- 30 - Debra Wood

December

- 2 - Regina Bedell
- 4 - Aaron Carson
- 6 - Kobina Amissah,
Don Robinson
- 13 - Richard Dudley
- 16 - Fornati Bedell,
Elizabeth Lexa,
Bob Reeves
- 19 - Gladys Ackerman,
Heather Warley
- 20 - Alice Ming
- 22 - Carol Jones, Steve Raytek
- 24 - Stephanie Ann Carroll Carson
- 25 - Janice Ciampa
- 26 - Nathaniel Collazo
- 28 - Juanita Campbell Ford
- 29 - Barbara Prince
- 30 - Zoey Bonfante
- 31 - Jonathan Liu

LGBT Matters at Our Church

Rev. Dr. Herb Snyder

At Rev. Hynicka's request, I invited the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered (LGBT) community affiliated with Arch Street Church to my home for a dinner party. Fifteen of the 32 attended and decided they had so much fun that they wanted to continue getting together. A steering committee was appointed to plan future "happenings," one of which will be sponsoring a dinner honoring the Rev. Benjamin Hutchison. Rev. Hutchison, the most recent victim of the United Methodist Church's discriminatory policies, has been removed from his successful pastorate in West Detroit with less than a day's notice, simply because he would not deny that he is gay and in a relationship. He will preach at Arch Street at both services on October 18th. Please stand with Rev. Hutchison and do your best to attend!

On Saturday, October 17th from 6:00–8:00 PM, our LGBT group will serve a "Spaghetti Pie Dinner." Rev. Hutchison will be the featured speaker and there will be special inspirational music. Ever have spaghetti pie? Come out for a new experience in many ways! Tickets are on sale from any member of the steering committee or through the church office for a donation of \$10.00 each, or \$5.00 for students. All contributions will be used to help bring about an inclusive United Methodist Church.

The Reconciling Methodists of Eastern Pennsylvania met to reflect on Annual Conference and celebrate the increased support evidenced at the sessions. We have grown from six reconciling churches to 10 in the past few months, and look forward to several more in our conference joining the movement in the very near future. There is action throughout the United Methodist Church in anticipation of General Conference in April 2016. Most LGBT United Methodists and their supporters are saying, "Enough! The bigotry, the hurt, the exclusion must end." The United Methodist Church is

deeply at odds over this issue, and our bishops know that if inclusiveness is not granted, there will be a divided church that will continue to decline. This is not the time to relax our witness, but rather the time to keep the momentum going and put forth our best effort. Your support is needed!

Community Forums Will Address American Myths, Justice, Art, Music, and More!

Rev. Dave Krueger

Arch Street UMC is sponsoring a series of community forums during the 2015–16 season organized by the pastor, deacons, deaconess, and US-2 mission fellow in our church. The forums will address important issues and will take place Wednesday evenings from 6:00–8:00 PM. A light supper and child care will be provided.

The forums are organized around distinct thematic tracks. Deaconess Darlene DiDomineck and Certified Lay Minister Wilhelmina Young will host a series titled "Interrupting Injustice," examining the systems that perpetuate structural injustice and local and national movements that are working for social change.

Rev. Robin Hynicka and US-2 Rachel Ternes will present a series on "Art Activism" that explores the powerful role art can play in building community and working for change.

My series on "American Myths" will critically examine enduring narratives used to bolster notions of "American exceptionalism" and marginalize racial and religious minorities.

Rev. Nikki Kleinberg will host "Community Mixtapes," inviting contributions of songs that serve as vehicles of grace to help people cope with death and loss.

The full schedule is available at our website, www.archstreetumc.org. Please plan to come to these sessions and bring your family and friends, neighbors, and co-workers to be part of the discussion.

Small Groups to Resume This Fall

Rev. Warren Cederholm

Last year, five small groups were set up to reach out spiritually to our members as well as to people who might be interested in Arch Street UMC and/or the Bible and/or sharing on a deeper level with some new friends. Small groups provide the opportunity for current members and friends of the congregation to get better acquainted and for new folks to get connected more quickly. Most who participated felt it was very worthwhile and we should continue the program this year.

For the 2015–16 season, there will be three sessions: Oct 18–Nov 30, 2015 (7 weeks); Jan 8–Mar 14, 2016 (6 weeks); and May 2–May 23, 2016 (4 weeks). The groups will meet weekly for about an hour and a half. The intent is to provide the space, time, and support for folks to share what concerns them—"What really matters to your heart?" is the leading question. Each small group has a convenor who assists the members in developing the pattern and practice of listening and sharing. The basic format is centered on the passages of scripture used in Sunday worship; however, each group is free to develop its own agenda and set of activities.

At this writing, there are four convenors besides myself committed to facilitating small groups: Sarah Hermann, Rev. Hynicka, Cathy Simpson, and Wilhelmina Young. Each will provide the meeting place and time for the group they are leading; Rev. Hynicka's will be based at Serenity House. New people are encouraged to join in, new group leaders should not be afraid to step forward to form their own groups, and non-Arch Street folks as well as our own members should be invited.

Watch for announcements in the "What's Happening" bulletin, or you may call the church office (215-568-6250) or visit www.archstreetumc.org for further information.



Autumn Issue
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Voice of the Spire

Arch Street United Methodist Church
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Philadelphia, PA 19107

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Future Dates

- New Year's Day
January 1
- Human Relations Day
January 17
- Martin Luther King Jr.
Day of Service
January 18
- Ash Wednesday –
Lent begins
February 10
- World Day of Prayer
March 6
- Daylight Savings Time
begins
March 13
- Easter
March 27

Read past issues of
Voice of the Spire
and follow events at
our website:
www.archstreetumc.org

Arch Street United Methodist Church



Thanksgiving at the
Nationalities Service Center
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