

# Voice of the SPIRE

The Newsletter of Arch Street United Methodist Church, *A Reconciling Congregation*

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## St. Louis—What Happened and What it Means for Arch Street

*Deaconess Darlene DiDomineck, Carmen Francesco, Kristi Painter, Rev. Herb Snyder, and Rev. Robin Hynicka*

*Editor's note: Arch Street's ministry team with Rev. Herb Snyder traveled to St. Louis in late February to witness at the UMC General Conference's 2019 special session, held to consider resolutions concerning the Book of Discipline's current positions on homosexuality. Three proposals drafted by the Council of Bishops were considered: the Traditional plan, which would add additional penalties and restrictive provisions to the Book of Discipline; the One Church plan (recommended by the bishops), which would allow each church and conference to decide for themselves what their stance will be; and the Connectional Conference plan, which would create separate conferences and jurisdictions for those who want a more inclusive church. After three days of debate, the 800-plus delegates passed the Traditional plan with a margin of 57 votes. On their return home, our team wrote this pastoral letter to the congregation.*

Dear Arch Street UMC Family,

We're glad to be home where we know we are beloved children of God and where, as a congregation, we embody the universal love of God. We lament the harm and pain inflicted on the LGBTQIA+ community within our United Methodist connection and the LGBTQIA+ community-at-large. The actions taken by General Conference this week were oppressive and exclusionary. We are angry. We grieve the decision to center patriarchal power instead of embracing liberation and love. Jesus was in the hearts, minds and voices of our LGBTQIA+ siblings and allies who spoke truth to power and proclaimed a prophetic witness with holy inspiration.

We are devastated by what happened in St. Louis but we are not defeated. We will take the time to mourn and to cry out like Rachel refusing to be consoled, but we resist lingering in that space for long. Just as in Ezekiel 37, God made us walk through a valley of dry bones, and they were very dry. God asked, "Can these bones live?" Yes! God will fasten sinews and fashion flesh covering the dry bones with skin and filling them with breath. God said, "You will live and know that I am God. Breathe, breathe, breathe and live." Just as the Holy Spirit breathed life into the valley of dry bones, so shall she breathe new life into us.

For as the hymn says: "We shall not, we shall not be moved. Just like a tree that's planted by the water, we shall

not be moved." We have more Reconciling consciousness, more Reconciling communities, and more Reconciling congregations to plant, water, and grow. Lent and the blooming of spring remind us that out of ashes comes new life and out of crucifixion comes resurrection, eternally filled with possibility and hope.

Meanwhile, we want you to know that what happened in St. Louis is not the final word. The plan that passed is seriously flawed, not only for its homophobic hubris and patriarchal piety, but also because it violates the Constitution of the United Methodist Church. Nearly 60% of it was deemed unconstitutional by the Judicial Council on two separate occasions before the final vote. Yes, those who supported the Traditional Plan voted for legislation sections of which they knew were unconstitutional. There is no parliamentary rule preventing General Conference from voting on unconstitutional legislation. Our own U.S. Congress passes laws that are unconstitutional. That is the reason for the Federal Court System with the Supreme Court as the final arbiter of whether a law is constitutional. The United Methodist system of governance and jurisprudence is similar. So, in the case of the recently passed legislation, it has been referred to the Judicial Council (the UMC Supreme Court) for a declaratory decision. In addition, we want you to know that no action of the 2019 General Conference can be implemented until January 1, 2020. Our light continues to shine, illuminating the path to sacred change.

We shall not be moved. We will continue to do same sex weddings, continue to embrace our LGBTQIA+ siblings at all levels of the church, and continue to organize with other Reconciling communities around the world to tear apart the veil of false unity and replace it with a rainbow banner of liberation and love. We invite you to join us this Sunday as we gather around our radically inclusive communion table. Members of our LGBTQIA+ community whose gifts to the congregation are marvelously immeasurable will consecrate and distribute the eucharistic gifts—the bread of life and the cup of hope. We need you in this movement, we invite you to join us, we love each of you!



## Minister's Message

Rev. Robin Hynicka, ~~Senior~~ Pastor

On the northeast corner of Lehigh Avenue and 11th Street there is a food cart. The first week of April, I walked to that cart from Serenity House to get lunch. That walk was quite nostalgic because I passed that way so many times when I lived in the neighborhood from 1978 to 1993. As I walked, I wondered if the same man who served me lunch 'back in the day' would be in the cart. With great anticipation, I looked into the cart and there he was.

Over 30 years had passed since I visited that cart to get lunch. Henry, the man in the cart, recognized me and asked, "Where have you been?" He remembered my name. As I waited in line to place my order we chatted and caught up. Several orders of hot sausage sandwiches with the works, a bag of chips, and a juice were delivered before it was my turn. Henry made me a chicken salad sandwich. He remembered that I always ordered the chicken salad.

During ASUMC's Wednesday afternoon Lenten Study, Deaconess Darlene and I shared leadership in presenting

## Notes from The Center–Philadelphia

Deaconess Darlene DiDomineck

This year brought with it new opportunities for Arch Street UMC's community center called The Center–Philadelphia. Under the direction and vision of our practicum students from the Community College of Philadelphia and Temple University, a new program took shape. It is called "Wellness Wednesdays" and meets in the chapel each week. The program gives our community the opportunity for stress reduction and to express hopes, dreams, and fears through art and crafts—you may have noticed the art displayed on the walls of the chapel during Advent, created by Wellness Wednesday participants.

The first session of Wellness Wednesday programming was so successful, it was recognized with a small grant to continue and expand opportunities for the congregation and community at Arch Street as well as at Serenity House. The grant, awarded by the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Con-

ference through the Deweese Fund, will assist with arts and craft supplies and to further expand our weekday programming. If you are interested in exploring arts and crafts as stress reduction, watch for more opportunities and reach out to Global Mission Fellows Carmen Francesco and Kristi Painter to get involved with exciting new programming at Serenity House.

material from the book *The Call: Living Sacramentally, Walking Justly* by George McClain and Tilda Norberg, Nancy Kruh (Editor). In the book, the authors share this insight: "Holy Communion is not just a memory of deeds, teachings, and sacrifice. We, as a church, assert with a new clarity that the Eucharistic act of sharing the basic elements of food and drink embodies the living presence of the risen Christ among us." "It is about how we share the blessings of life, at all the tables of life."

When Jesus shared the bread and the cup, he invited those gathered to remember him, but he also invited those gathered to remember each other and all creation and to share the essential elements of life with equity and love. Henry has been serving his own style of communion from that food cart for 38 years. In the shared experience of remembering each other, the hunger for eternal fellowship was satisfied. As I ate the bread and drank the juice that I got from Henry, we celebrated holy communion.

Would you like to learn more about a justice issue or subject of interest to you? This summer, we will begin hosting civic engagement forums related to topics and issues of deep importance within our congregation and community. Check the weekly eblast and Sunday bulletin for announcements and contact me at [darlene@archstreetumc.org](mailto:darlene@archstreetumc.org) or at the church to share your thoughts and ideas for the forums. And stay tuned this August as we welcome two new Global Mission Fellows to the Arch Street family!

## Meet Deneeya, Arch Street's New Office Manager

Janis Moore Campbell, Chair, ASUMC Staff-Parish Relations Committee



Located at 12th & Vine, in Philadelphia's Chinatown neighborhood, Asian Arts Initiative (AAI) is a multidisciplinary arts center that hosts exhibitions and welcomes performers and artists-in-residence. AAI is also one of several venues where Deneeya Brown, Arch Street's multi-talented new office manager, and her fiancé Jamaarr Hall, spoken word artist, acoustic guitarist, and master plumber, have performed their original music. The couple met at Temple University, where Deneeya's mom has worked for 20+ years.

A Philadelphia native, Deneeya, is a mezzo soprano and classical flautist who graduated from Philadelphia's High

School for Creative and Performing Arts. During my visit to the church office (*and after a bit of prodding*), Deneeya was gracious enough to share with me a recording of the duo's original music. Their neo-soul sound is reminiscent of "Kindred the Family Soul." All I can say is ... wowza!!

Here's more about Arch Street's new Office Manager extraordinaire:

**BEST PIECE OF ADVICE:** Get it done, make it happen!

**BEST SONG TO SING:** "The Lord's Prayer"

**BEST MOVIES TO REWATCH:**

- *Cinderella*, the one with Brandi and Whitney Houston
- Disney's *Mulan* (I & II, for Mushu...)
- *Jurassic Park*, the entire five-film franchise

**BEST FUTURE PLANS:** Real estate development, continue to make music, more travel

**BEST THING (so far) ABOUT WORKING AT ARCH STREET:** *"It feels good to affiliate with a congregation that does not look away from pain."*

Deneeya, welcome to Arch Street—we are delighted you're here.

## Serenity House—An Intentional Community

Kristi Painter, US2 Missionary and ASUMC Community Organizer

Serenity House continues to undergo changes and improvements as we prepare for the future! The house was originally acquired by Arch Street when Cookman UMC closed, with the intention of maintaining a Methodist presence in the neighborhood and providing a space for young adults to live in intentional community as they work for justice in the city.

The house has four bedrooms in the Intentional Community space. Currently, two young adult missionaries, Carmen and I, live in the house. The ministry team is prepping the other two bedrooms, however, so that we can welcome one or two interns for the summer and two new Global Mission Fellows in August! The second floor bedrooms are being touched up and stocked with furniture thanks to some generous donations and hard-working volunteer groups.

Residents of the Serenity House Intentional Community build a covenant together detailing how we want to live in community. We decide on everything: from how we want to complete chores, to how we will handle disputes, to when we want to do fun things together. We challenge one another and grow together in our faith and commitment to justice.

I have lived in Serenity House for seven months now and have enjoyed building community with Carmen in this way. I am excited to see our future with a full or almost-full house!



(Photo courtesy of Kristi Painter)

## Preparing for Arch Street's Future

Nancy Megley with Betsy Connor and Wilhelmina Young, for the Retreat Planning Committee

John Wesley's vision for Methodism envisioned a church where leadership comes from the laity, not the clergy—we see this model in earlier congregations that were served by itinerant pastors and it continues today in churches where the pastor has a half-time or quarter-time appointment. Arch Street has always been blessed to have a full-time pastor. In that situation, though, there can be a temptation to leave everything up to the pastor.

On Saturday February 2nd, nearly 20 committee leaders joined the ministry team for a half-day retreat to consider how Arch Street's laity can become more involved in the life of our church. We all agreed that our efforts must be scripture-based and should build upon our relationships with one another and on our Methodist tradition. The session was framed around I Corinthians 12 (one body, many parts) to help us focus on our individual gifts and strengths and how we can invite others in to contribute their own talents to our shared work.

As you read this summary of what was discussed and where we are so far, we want to emphasize two things:

1. *The lay leadership of our church is not a closed club!* We realize it may look that way but it is unintentional. We encourage you to speak with people on any of our committees and ministries (see page 7) or a member of the ministry team if you see an area where your gifts and interests would fit. If full membership on a committee or to a ministry isn't workable, there may be a role for you as a consultant or an occasional volunteer.
2. *We need your help in this process if the expansion of lay participation is to be successful and sustainable.* Please tell us about your own experience at Arch Street and suggestions for what we can do better. (The next step, of course, is to volunteer to help fix it!)

At the retreat, an impressive list of accomplishments in 2018 formed the framework for a discussion of Arch Street's strengths and weaknesses. Our main takeaways were: (1) We rely on the ministry team for much of the work of our church. (2) Our ministries are largely directed to folks outside our walls; we don't do a good job of welcoming newcomers or nurturing our existing congregation. (3) Our key committees are understaffed. (4) We need term limits for our committees and we need to recruit and provide training for new leaders.

Four working groups were formed to begin addressing these issues. Here is a brief summary of their discussions to date, and we encourage you to speak with any of the conveners to learn more and see if you want to get involved.

*In-reach:* This group looked at how we interact and ways we can take care of our own. Arch Street has three very diverse congregations that meet at different times with no easy way to interact. We are not a neighborhood church and it's hard to get together outside of Sunday worship. We do not have a process for welcoming new members and inviting existing members into leadership positions where their talents could be used. The team would love to move the church not only more toward lay leadership, but more toward a see-a-need, fill-a-need culture where people feel empowered to build the kinds of connections they'd like to see exist. *Convener:* Audra Wolfe, 215-510-0710.

*Remembering Our Own:* Related to In-reach, this group looked at how we remember those we have lost and how we take care of each other here and now. On All Saints Sunday we commemorate all of our people whom we have lost over the past year. Some had an outsized impact on our church and we could do something extra to remember them. For example, the pews at the chapel entrance could be dedicated to Steven and Russell Whaley and a lilac bush or lavender could be planted in a memory garden at Serenity House for Anana Tinnhé. To take care of each other now, we could organize a "Shepherds" group. A shepherd would have a short list of members to contact monthly just to see how they are doing and if they need anything from the church. *Convener:* Molly McNeill, 267-979-4221.

*Congregational Survey:* This group looked at ways to invite people into the work of the church. The survey will ask folks in the pews what Arch Street does that inspires them, what they would like to know more about, and what skills/gifts/interests they have that might fit with some of our ministries and committees. The survey would be posted online and distributed in print on four successive Sundays. Each week, a committee chair could speak briefly about what their team does and encourage people to volunteer. *Convener:* Nancy Megley, 215-574-8320.

*Opportunities Fair:* After the survey is completed, this group will host an event where congregation members can speak directly with people involved in Arch Street's various committees and ministries to learn more about their work and decide where they might want to volunteer. *Convener:* Katie Donnelly.

This process of widening laity involvement will be ongoing with the goal to make Arch Street stronger and better positioned to sustain our work for the future. Thank you for prayerfully thinking about how you might help in this effort and in the broader life of our beloved church.

## "Heart and Soul"—The Story Behind Jazz Sanctuary

James Dell'Orefice, Musician, 8:30 Worship Service



April is Jazz Appreciation Month, affectionately referred to as "JAM." It is dedicated to recognizing the positive effect jazz music has had on all our lives. By presenting free jazz concerts and programs designed to offer a learning experience, JAM musicians aspire to "stretch" their enlightenment to the rest of us (*stretch* is the jazz musicians' term that denotes a time in the music to elaborate on their improvisation).

That reference aside, I would like to continue my story from the previous *Spire* issue and tell you a little more about an extraordinary man, Alan Segal. When Alan was a kid, he wanted to be a drummer, but living in a row home with thin walls made practicing drums impractical. He took dance lessons for 17 years from age 7 to 24. At age 36 he picked up a guitar, and later started playing bass. Alan started a career as a Certified Public Accountant, became a financial consultant, and went on to become a Certified Specialist Management Consultant. The list of his achievements goes on from there.

How would God want you to react when tragedy strikes? Well, when Alan developed a condition known as AVM he had to answer that question. Put simply, AVM is when the

brain springs a leak. Incapacitated and with no hand and eye coordination, Alan decided to practice bass 5 to 7 hours a day to regain his ability to read and develop his hand-eye coordination. The idea of giving back came to him when a priest visited and asked to pray with him.

Unable to talk and needing all the help he could get after 33 days in the hospital, Alan sorely wanted to get back to good health. Having brainstormed with friends, he came up with idea of the "Jazz Sanctuary," an organization that would present world-class performances in sacred spaces. He believes that music takes on another meaning when heard in places where people pray. We see the success it has had and that the idea works. The 500th event took place this April—an extraordinary milestone for the "Jazz Sanctuary," which was formally established in July 2011.

Alan has said on many occasions that music taught him the importance of paying attention to people on an individual level as well as an audience, and from a performance aspect, to listen, watch, appreciate, and converse with them. Alan feels that music has made him a better person, calmer and more aware. "You can't be angry playing music." His hope is that being at a Jazz Sanctuary performance will be the easiest part of your day.

Alan, who is Jewish, has been married 37 years to Reverend Joy who is a priest in the Episcopal Church. They have a daughter named Teddi. Alan has faith and is as comfortable in a church as in a synagogue. He is quiet, humble and generous, and in general a very happy person, surrounded by honest, talented, and thoughtful people.

As an aside, the title for this article—"Heart and Soul"—are words spoken by Pastor Robin Hynicka as he was referring to Alan's commitment to the Jazz Sanctuary.

## Our History: International Welcoming

Dale Shillito, ASUMC Historian

In Rev. Haney's mind, all people were children of God in need of grace. Rev. Haney's spirit of welcoming was contagious. It swept throughout the congregation as we began the tradition of taking time during the service to greet one another.

Rev. Haney created an outreach ministry to college campuses in the area. Particularly receptive to our invitation were foreign students studying in Philadelphia. Rev. D. F. Gonzalo, an immigrant from the Philippines, became our international pastor. Rev. Gonzalo encouraged international immigrants and visitors arriving in our city to join us as well.

At the 2nd annual Thanksgiving Family Dinner, guests were included from Mozambique, Nigeria, Ireland, the Philippines, Samoa, and the Dominican Republic. Worldwide Communion was celebrated with flags from around the world. Rev. Haney invited international missionaries and laymen to speak from our pulpit. A world map was placed in Nichols Hall. All distant visitors were invited to place red pins in the map to locate their home, and if they chose, to tell us something about their country of origin.

## Candidates Forum Helps Voters Prepare for the May 21st Primary

Nancy Megley, Co-Chair, Arch Street POWER Local Organizing Committee



(Photo by Bonfire Media Collective)

*Editor's Note: This report was compiled from communications provided by POWER and The Alliance for a Just Philadelphia.*

On Sunday March 24th, over 1,200 community members converged on Congregation Rodeph Shalom to witness how City Council at-large candidates would respond to The People's Platform developed by POWER and nearly 30 other organizations that make up The Alliance for a Just Philadelphia. All 41 candidates were invited and 19 came. The platform presented eight key demands:

- Stop targeting black and brown people
- Keep Philadelphia accessible and affordable
- Invest in healthy schools, jobs, and housing
- Make corporations, developers, and universities pay their fair share
- Expand community control of land, housing, schools, and energy
- Make Philadelphia a safe and healthy city for everyone
- Protect the dignity and respect of all work
- Ensure a democracy where we can all participate

Community members told powerful stories about how issues like stop & frisk, housing accessibility, community land control, and toxic schools have directly impacted them. Then the candidates were asked if they would enact policy changes to address these concerns. Face to face with their constituents, the candidates responded with clear "Yes" or "No" answers ... while others abstained.

Ahead of the forum, the Alliance sent each candidate a questionnaire with policy questions similar to those that were asked at the event. Now they will cross-check the candidates' answers and compile a follow-up to help voters in their election decisions. Additionally, they will produce one-page policy briefs on each of the key issues. The Alliance is not endorsing any candidates in May's election. Instead, they are putting the issues front and center. They believe candidates for office should speak up and take action to show where they stand on The People's Platform.

One of Arch Street's attendees said this about the event: "With 41 people running for 7 at-large seats, this year's Council race is especially confusing. I was so impressed that the Alliance managed to turn out nearly half of these candidates for the People's Forum. More importantly, the format pushed the field as a whole to embrace progressive ideas previously unheard of in Philadelphia, from rent control to eliminating metal detectors in schools. I'm looking forward to casting my vote on May 21st!"—Audra Wolfe

Please visit [www.ajustphiladelphia.org](http://www.ajustphiladelphia.org) for specifics about the Alliance's key demands and to sign on to The People's Platform. You can also request to receive the Alliance's reports about the candidates' positions. *Then be sure to vote on May 21st to elect candidates who embody the values of the People's Platform!*

## United Methodist Events and Other Observances

Sun Apr 14 - Palm Sunday  
 Thurs Apr 18 – Maundy Thursday  
 Fri Apr 19 - Good Friday  
 Sun Apr 21 - Easter

Sun May 5 - Eastern District Conference  
 and Native American Ministries Sunday  
 Sun May 12 - Mother's Day  
 Sun June 9 - Pentecost

June 13-15 - Eastern Pennsylvania Annual  
 Conference  
 Sun June 16 - Father's Day and Peace  
 with Justice Sunday

## ASUMC Calendar

Sign up at our website ([www.archstreetumc.org](http://www.archstreetumc.org)) to receive weekly e-news from Arch Street and check the Sunday bulletin for the latest calendar activities.

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 third Sunday of the month at 12:30 PM. See the bulletin for exceptions to these dates

## ASUMC Officers and Committees

Please speak with these church leaders if you would like to know more about what they do and the opportunities for volunteering.

Lay Leader: Cathy Simpson  
 Church Council: Phil Gressman, *Chair*  
 Staff-Parish Relations Committee: Janis  
 Moore Campbell, *Chair*  
 Trustees: Russ Alexander, *Chair*  
 Finance Committee: Jim Bibber, *Chair*

Endowment Committee: Ken Bere, *Chair*  
 Mission and Justice Ministries Committee:  
 Open  
 Worship Committee: Open  
 Reconciling Ministry Committee: Michael  
 Gilbertson, *Chair*

POWER Local Organizing Committee:  
 Betsy Connor, Nancy Megley, Wilhel-  
 mina Young, *Co-chairs*  
 Recording Secretary: Nancy Megley  
 Church Historian: Dale Shillito  
 Editor, *Voice of the Spire*: Nancy Megley

## Birthdays

### April

1 - Devon Goodwin  
 2 - Donald Lathrop  
 ("Country")  
 3 - Amy Woodworth  
 4 - Gabe Bedell,  
 Elizabeth Fuller,  
 Kenny Jackson,  
 Seilala Tapealava  
 7 - Barbara Williams  
 10 - Rick Taylor  
 14 - Jason Regino  
 15 - Louella Chase,  
 Solange Pereira  
 16 - Thomas Bowen  
 17 - Remone Mundle

### May

2 - Thomas Freeman Jr.  
 3 - Michelle Brooks  
 Whittaker  
 5 - Henry Gressman  
 7 - Ilaisaane Tapealava  
 11 - Anthony Ellis,  
 Fred Farmer  
 12 - Jacob Bonfante,  
 Jane Pipes  
 14 - Thomas L. Bartlow,  
 Rev. Jordan Harris,  
 Rev. Jeffrey Haskins  
 17 - Ken Bere  
 19 - Martin Farmer  
 20 - Miles Jefferson  
 21 - Frederick Farmer  
 26 - Timothy Adams  
 27 - Sophia Govorov  
 28 - Lea Booth  
 30 - Rev. Oscar Allen  
 31 - Alexander Govorov

### June

1 - Agatha Lewis,  
 Karen Wolfe  
 3 - Rev. Reinhard Kruse  
 4 - Tyler Liam Scott  
 5 - Nelson Warley  
 6 - Callie Chen,  
 Alicia Garcia  
 8 - Steve McKinney  
 9 - Davida Gobin  
 10 - Elaine Jenson  
 11 - Jean Bibber,  
 Anne McCormick  
 13 - Deborah Fowlkes,  
 Dr. Charles Lewis  
 15 - Susan Lee Miller  
 16 - Don Caskey  
 17 - Virginia Brown,  
 Toni McIlwaine  
 18 - Karen Porter  
 19 - Audra Wolfe

21 - Ralph Ciampa,  
 Paul Ertel  
 22 - Mark Lord-Schell  
 24 - William Crawford,  
 Ted Koziara  
 25 - Rev. Dave Krueger,  
 Alicia Thomas  
 26 - Roger Rohtert  
 27 - Nicole Gilmore  
 29 - John Buzby  
 30 - Vanessa Flacks-Brown,  
 Alex Patterson,  
 Chris Whaley

Spring Issue  
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## Voice of the Spire

Arch Street United Methodist Church  
55 North Broad Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

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### Future Dates

Independence Day -  
July 4

UMW's Mission U -  
July 19-20

Youth Mission Trip -  
August

Labor Day - Sept 2

Impact of Racism on  
People of Color  
Workshop - Sept 14

Read past issues of  
*Voice of the Spire*  
and follow events at  
our website:

[www.archstreetumc.org](http://www.archstreetumc.org)

### Arch Street United Methodist Church



The second floor of Serenity House is being prepared for additional occupants. They will arrive this summer and fall to complete the Intentional Community at our satellite ministry in North Philadelphia.

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