

Voice of the SPIRE

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

A Milestone Birthday

Rev. Robin Hynicka



Irene Meyer, long-time member of ASUMC, will turn 100 on August 1st, 2019. Her service to the church as financial secretary is legendary. It lasted well into her 90's, and for a while was uninterrupted even after she moved to Simpson House from Devereaux Street.

ASUMC was a second home for Irene. She left her birthplace of Duboistown, Pennsylvania and came to Philadelphia to attend nursing school at Methodist Hospital. As a

medical/surgical nurse, Irene worked at Graduate Hospital and Frankford Hospital.

Every Sunday, along with several of her friends, Irene would walk from Broad and Wolfe Streets to Broad and Arch Streets to attend church at ASUMC. It was at ASUMC's Wednesday night Friendly Hour that Irene met Lewis Meyer. Irene and Lewis married in 1944 and as a couple they became avid square dancers. Irene's eyes light up when she describes the special square dance dresses she wore.

Irene danced, roller skated, attended to children in the church nursery, knitted prayer shawls, counted the offering, and attended to the work of the Women's Society (now United Methodist Women). At one point, she and some other women of the church prepared meals in the church kitchen for several of the Masonic lodges that met in the Masonic Temple next to the church.

Irene loves the hymn "In the Garden" and describes ASUMC as a place where everyone becomes a friend. Her unconditional welcome of all people is inspirational. She recently met Philadelphia's Mayor, Jim Kenney, when he hosted a luncheon for Philadelphia residents turning 100 this year. Irene enjoyed the event (and whispered to me that it was held at the SugarHouse Casino!).

Irene Meyer, we salute you and praise God for bringing you to ASUMC.

Arch Street's 2019 Graduates

These young people earned their high school or college diplomas in 2019 and we wish them all the best in the next phase of their lives. Congratulations!

Fornati Bedell
Gillian Booth
Callie Chen

Jazzmen McIlwaine Cuevas
Maria Dell'Orefice
Jensen Graham

Sebastian Pilecki-Campbell
Ethan Wolfe



Minister's Message

Rev. Robin Hynicka, Pastor

"The sky is falling! The sky is falling!" is that famous quote from Chicken Little: the story about a chick getting hit on the head with an acorn, thinking it was a piece of the sky coming down. Chicken Little feels compelled to get to the ruler to tell him that the sky is falling. Along the way, Chicken Little gathers followers and together they create quite a bit of environmental and, I would add, emotional damage. In the presence of the ruler, Chicken Little makes the case for a falling sky. The ruler is not convinced and asks Chicken Little and the entire entourage to take him to the place where the sky is falling. Once there, the ruler sees only a fallen acorn and nothing indicating that the sky is coming down.

I must admit that sometimes I feel like crying out like Chicken Little. The world is wavering, the denomination is disintegrating, and our church spire is crumbling. There is such temptation to leave it all behind and go tell someone else to fix it, figure it out. While it's true that something did

fall and hit Chicken Little on the head, it wasn't the sky. It was something mundane and manageable: an acorn.

While it's true that the world is wavering, the denomination is disintegrating, and the church spire is crumbling, this isn't the time to isolate or to leave—it's time to step up to our challenges, model just relationships, and be partners in repairing the cracks and gaping holes in our society and denomination as well as our spire. Chicken Little lacked vision, values, and a viable plan to respond appropriately to his moment of uncertainty. ASUMC's vision, values, and viability are reflected in a growing community of people who are committed to truth-telling, justice-seeking, and radical inclusion. Uncertainty is dismantled by sacred community and fear of the future is transformed by liberating love.

We will do more than survive this liminal season, we will thrive! Come to worship, participate in liturgies of liberation, share holy communion, and engage each other in true fellowship. ASUMC is rising!

Update on the Façade Inspection

Russ Alexander, Chair of the Trustees

In 2018, after an inspection in 2017, we removed three masonry finials on the Arch Street side of our church building. On March 30th, 2019, our engineers conducted a survey of the spire and concluded that certain aspects of it are unsafe. They filed their façade inspection report with the City of Philadelphia, which triggered a violation notice. Our duty now is to make repairs to the spire so it is safe. Meanwhile, sidewalk protection has been installed to shield pedestrians if something should, in fact, fall from the spire.

The project will be easier said than done. It is a massive job which will probably involve scaffolding the entire spire. The investment may well exceed \$1 million. Planning to make the repairs and to pay for them is underway:

1. Funding: proposal submitted to the National Fund (Partners for Sacred Places) for a grant of \$250,000.

If approved, the church and its partners would need to raise an additional \$500,000 in matching funds.

2. Assessment: figure out the cause of certain troubling conditions discovered during the inspection.
3. Design: decide on what must be done to correct the troubling conditions.
4. Bidding: obtain prices to do the work.
5. Contracting: pick a bidder to do the work.
6. Preconstruction: plan implementation of the work called for in the design phase with the winning bidder.
7. Construction: do the work.

Please prayerfully consider how you can be a part of the stewardship of God's building and contact any of the Trustees if you have questions.

Notes from The Center–Philadelphia

Deaconess Darlene DiDomineck

Our staff at Grace Café and Serenity House have been busy at work dreaming of a just Philadelphia.

Two new summer interns have joined the intentional community at Serenity House! Jensen Graham and Devon Burke will be helping to build our capacity and expand our Serenity House programming. Jensen will be working with children and youth and Devon will focus on building a free produce stand with vegetables and herbs grown in the People's Garden. Jensen graduated from Temple University in May and will continue her call to mission this fall in the Mission Year program. Devon is a continuing student at Temple University and interested in environmental justice and community development. We are excited to have them join our team. Stay tuned to your weekly e-blast for more information about their work and be sure to stop by Serenity House on Thursdays to say hello!

This summer we will say goodbye to Carmen Francesco, our Global Mission Fellow serving with us from the 2017–19 cohort. Carmen has ably led Grace Café for the last two

years, continuing to expand our community resourcing and developing a legal clinic, case management services, and helping to build capacity in our nurse-led Wellness Clinic. She along with neighbors ushered in a new season of the People's Garden with a plot system including community plots so that neighbors unable to garden themselves can enjoy fresh vegetables and herbs. Fear not, Carmen won't be too far away! She will be working locally and will remain a member of ASUMC. We're excited to celebrate her marriage in early August!

This fall, we'll welcome two new Global Mission Fellows to join Kristi Painter in her second year. Ben Lasley and Roy Koech will join us in late August. They will serve with us for two years with primary responsibilities for Grace Café and the People's Garden.

It's been a busy year! If you are interested in volunteering with Serenity House, Grace Café, or children and youth programming at Arch Street, please reach out to Deaconess Darlene to get connected.

The Serenity House Cat

Kristi Painter, US2 Mission Fellow



A new resident moved into Serenity House in May! Our furry friend is named Corrine, a 2-year-old gray and brown tabby. Corrine is a foster cat from the Philadelphia Animal Welfare Society (PAWS). We are taking care of her and giving her a real home to live in until she is adopted. This allows for PAWS to have room to care for more cats in their shelter.

Corrine is a big and friendly cat! She was a little overweight at the shelter, but now that she has room to run around, she is healthy and happy. Some of her favorite activities include running a few laps up and down the hallway to get her energy out after breakfast, unraveling a ball of yarn, chasing her tail, eating, and talking to humans. Corrine is not quite a lap cat but she is still very cuddly—she will lay her head on your leg or in your lap and purr for hours. She is also always happy to get a head scratch. Unlike many cats who like to hide away alone from time to time, Corrine always wants company! She will follow you around, always curious about what you are doing.

Corrine started her life at PAWS, was adopted, and then was returned to PAWS when the family moved and couldn't keep her. While she was growing, the lids on her right eye didn't develop quite right and were partially fused together. When she returned to PAWS, she had surgery to open her eyelids and now she is comfortable and healthy. Her eye is still a little squinty, but, don't worry, she can see just fine. (She would make a great pirate for Halloween!)

Corrine would make a great pet for a family with no other cats or dogs. The PAWS adoption fee is \$60. If you are interested in adopting Corrine, reach out to Kristi on Sunday or by email (kristi@archstreetumc.org).

Preparing for Arch Street's Future—An Update

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

In the spring *Spire* issue, we reported on a leadership retreat held in February to plan how to bring more of our congregation into committees and leadership roles at Arch Street.

We are fortunate to have a gifted and inspirational ministry team and it is a temptation to leave much of the work to them. However, John Wesley's vision was that the Methodist church would be led by laity with support from clergy, not the other way around, and our *Book of Discipline* is clear about the role lay leadership should play in the life of a congregation—down to job descriptions for the leaders and committees necessary for a church to function! You can see these (and *many* other possible committees) at:

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/local-church-officer-job-descriptions>.

Arch Street is also fortunate to have committed and talented lay leaders responsible for those key functions, which include the hiring, smooth operation, and wellbeing of our clergy and staff (Staff Parish Relations Committee: Janis Campbell, chair); maintaining our building and ensuring compliance with laws and codes (Trustees: Russ Alexander, chair); overseeing church finances and stewardship (Finance Committee: Jim Bibber, chair); providing overall leadership and decision-making (Church Council: Phil Gressman, chair); and modeling Christian living in the church and in the world (Lay Leader: Cathy Simpson). Many of these committees are short staffed, all could benefit from the insight of new members, and we want to institute term limits so that our chairs can rotate off and not burn out.

In addition to these required positions, we have many other functioning committees and groups that are doing important work at Arch Street and would welcome new

members: our United Methodist Women chapter (Margaret Harris, chair); the Endowment Committee (Ken Bere, chair); POWER Local Organizing Committee (Betsy Connor, Nancy Megley, and Wilhelmina Young, co-chairs); Native American Indian Awareness group (Dale Shillito, chair); Reconciling Ministry Committee (Michael Gilbertson, chair); *Spire* newsletter (Nancy Megley, editor); and of course, the sanctuary choir (Adam Haines, music director).

Some areas important to the wellbeing of our congregation are not well covered. A Children's Ministry is being reactivated and needs volunteers. The Inreach and Remembering Our Own working groups from the February retreat have a lot of good ideas for nurturing our congregation: we hope to restart the in-home dinners that were so enjoyable last year and look for other fellowship opportunities beyond our time together on Sundays. And we would love to have a Membership Development team that would welcome visitors and engage them after services, follow up during the week to invite them back, and make sure they are meeting people and being welcomed into our community.

At a Ministry Sunday in September, you will hear short presentations about the purpose and mission of our various committees and groups. Afterward, you can meet one-on-one with a chair or committee member to learn more and see if you are called to help in their work.

But of course, you don't need to wait till then if you are ready to get involved in an existing committee or ministry or want to volunteer to head up a new one! Please speak with any of us, with a committee chair, with Deaconess Darlene, or with Pastor Robin. We will be thrilled to have you!



The Remembering Our Own working group suggested a Memorial Garden at Serenity House to remember our dear Anana Tinnhe'. A planting ceremony was held on May 25th. Several weeks later, the flowers are thriving. (Photos courtesy of Molly McNeill.)

The 2019 Youth Mission Trip

Rev. Robin Hynicka

The ASUMC Young Adults are planning their annual mission trip to Lumberton, North Carolina (July 28th – August 3rd). Flood waters have caused widespread damage to homes in the Lumberton area and the North Carolina Disaster Relief Team has been hard at work helping individuals and families recover, both spiritually and physically.

Our young adults will travel to Lumberton by van, sleep in bunk beds at the Chestnut Street United Methodist Church, and spend six days assisting local leaders make repairs to homes hit by the rushing flood waters. In addition,

they will continue to build life-long relationships with residents and United Methodist friends: retired Home Missioner Gary Locklear and Local Pastor Reverend Kelly.

Working hard together and staying connected builds solidarity and deep trust. Please find a way to support the ASUMC Young Adults and the great work of the North Carolina Disaster Relief Team. Make checks out to ASUMC and put Mission Trip on the memo line, or visit www.archstreetum.org to use the online giving option.

Confronting Racism Means Looking to the Past, the Present, the Future, and Within

Betsy Connor, Co-chair, Arch Street's POWER Local Organizing Committee

In the past several years, Arch Street members and friends have been offered the opportunity to formally study and discuss racism and white supremacy at many events. The first such opportunity, in my recollection, was shortly after *The New Jim Crow* was published and our United Methodist Women's group read and discussed it. POWER has since sponsored events that featured national speakers (Rev. Alvin Toussaint Herring, Rev. Deth Im) as well as small congregational conversations to which our church members were invited. Our pastor, Rev. Robin Hynicka, has led a White People Confronting Racism group with POWER members who had participated in a months-long training that was held a few years ago. Last fall, a study and discussion on racism that was open to all was held at our church.

For me, attending some of these events, reading books and articles, and participating in discussions has opened the door to history that was unknown to me, or that I had ignored, to the current white supremacist culture that is all around me, and to a future that can only be moved toward justice by personal involvement.

Besides looking at the past, present, and future of racism, looking inwardly is both desirable and inevitable. The subjects of racism and white supremacy are immense and overwhelming to me. I have learned a lot, but have barely begun. Many emotions are churned up that can inhibit or help with learning and taking action. I'm still learning the basics. A few things new and important to me:

- I learned currently accepted definitions of racism and white supremacy that are critical to understand.
- Learning the definition of "racism" as "prejudice plus power" helped me be less defensive about accepting the fact that I participate, and even benefit, every minute in a racist culture.

- I know that I am not a White Supremacist like the tiki-torch-carrying marchers made infamous in Charlottesville, but I live in a white supremacist society defined as: "our current system of social, institutional and cultural power and control that maintains benefits for white society, keeping whiteness at the center, while continuing to oppress and otherize people of color. White supremacy doesn't just mean KKK members or the conditions under historical Jim Crow law, but the current system that continues to define and maintain supremacy for whiteness in the U.S." (from a POWER-sponsored lecture by Rev. Deth Im). Education apartheid in Pennsylvania (nondebatably), that our congregation has been active in fighting for seven years as part of POWER, fits squarely within this definition.

- I realized that learning American history with respect to racism is a must for me. Learning about government-mandated racist policies in post World War II mortgage law helped me understand that it is possible "Racist ideas do not create racist policy. Rather, racist policies propel racist ideas" (Dr. Ibram X Kendi, from Rev. Deth Im's lecture).

I have so much more to learn—I might need another lifetime to learn it. But if we commit ourselves to dismantling racism (remembering that racism is "prejudice plus power") and to "deconstructing the arrangement in which white supremacy dominates the systems in which we live and work through our language, culture and structures" (Rev. Deth Im's lecture), the next lifetime, or—prayerfully and hopefully and with hard work—*this* lifetime, will see freedom from our life-crushing current racist and white supremacist society.

"All and In All"

James Dell'Orefice

In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all! —Colossians 3:11

All and In All and with heart-felt compassion, kindness, and humility—that is what we are asked to share, give, and be thankful for. We earn God's love by accepting each other with love and forgiveness. We gain that divine motivation by making Jesus our All and In All.

On our journey, we will want the peace of Christ to control our every thought and action. We pray for him to touch our heart and soul. We want to strengthen our belief in the Lord and be forever thankful for his kindness and forgiveness. Let Jesus be your All and In All, and ask him to be the one you can call on in times of need.

Our History: The Obvious Answer

Dale Shillito, ASUMC Historian

In 1969, the UMC Board of Missions was asked to do another study of Arch Street's still declining membership. In the timeline used, 1960–68, the church had lost 951 members (176 through death). While gaining 498 new members, the aggregate congregation totals reflected over a 50% loss (down to 421) over eight years. This indicated a great deal of mobility. New membership included about 30 young adults plus some 50 to 100 students, a very transient population. The influx of Black residents into West Philadelphia and simultaneous White flight to the suburbs were cited as reasons for the decline.

A questionnaire was sent to all new members of the past three years to ascertain why they had joined the church. Friendliness and fellowship were the most frequent responses, followed by the pastors, quality of the worship services, and proximity to the church. When asked for *least* helpful attributes, there were few and those given had no common theme.

The report's recommendations stated that Arch Street still had too much vitality to close, but saw little opportunity for growth. The apartment dweller population in Center City was growing, but experience had shown this to

"All and In All." In these words from Colossians, Paul seems to summarize the Bible and the words of Jesus—the words that come from God our Creator. We believe in Jesus and the promise of his glory.

"All and In All" and within God's kindness, we wait for when Christ returns. Let us all practice humility, compassion, acceptance, and forgiveness, for Christ will welcome us when we do. When we believe in Jesus and his message of love and acceptance, he will truly become our All and In All.

Here let us pray for the guidance and courage to practice our belief in the message of Jesus:

"Our Father, who art in heaven..."

be a hard population to recruit. The church drew "special groups" such as students, young adults, and single women, and therefore had a place in Center City life, but would probably need special support from the Philadelphia Annual Conference. The Board recommended \$16,000 for apartment ministry, student ministry, and various programs.

In retrospect, this report seems degrading. Arch Street did not see itself as a basket case, or without hope. What the report did *not* recommend seems today the most obvious answer: since the United Methodist Church had just desegregated, and since the Black population of the city was growing, why not try to integrate some of these fellow Methodists into our church?

This idea was not unanimously accepted at first. Around 1960, with the Civil Rights movement in the headlines, a young adult class discussed Black membership at Arch Street. An associate pastor leading the group was said to have been among those who hoped desegregation would never happen here.

By 1969, things had changed. Black membership was accepted by Rev. Haney and the majority of the congregation. We needed only to encourage them to join us.

United Methodist Events and Other Observances

Thurs July 4: Independence Day (office closed, AA will meet)

Aug 2-4: EPA Laity Academy, Eastern University, St. David's, PA

Mon Sept 2: Labor Day (office closed, AA will meet)

July 19-20: UMW's Mission U, Reading, PA

ASUMC Calendar

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

A Church Potluck dinner is held at 6:00 PM the first Wednesday of the month, followed by Church Council at 7:00. All are invited.

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, Wilhelmina Young, *Co-chairs*

Recording Secretary: Nancy Megley

Church Historian: Dale Shillito

Editor, *Voice of the Spire*: Nancy Megley

Birthdays

July

1 - Aaron Bonfante
 4 - Marge Donnelly
 5 - James Lane
 6 - Juan Dakota
 7 - Dr. Patrick Kim
 9 - Jacob McNeill,
 Dottie Wells
 10 - Bryan Sieber
 14 - Norris Broadway
 15 - Darlene DiDomineck
 18 - Baki Tucker
 20 - Roberto Bonfante
 21 - James Abel
 26 - Heidi Bowen, Varsay Lewis,
 David Dunah Kpakolo
 29 - Margaret Harris
 30 - Parasram Gobin
 31 - Patrick Ledlum

August

1 - Ototta Kolo, Daniel Lee,
 Irene Meyer
 3 - Linda Berry
 4 - April Evans
 5 - Kirby Brislin, Thomas Cooper,
 Denise Whaley
 6 - Jay Newlin
 7 - Jubilee Mary Kleinberg,
 Rev. Herb Snyder
 8 - Kim McKonly Cooper
 9 - Rebecca Patterson
 14 - Ron Alexander, Dale Shillito
 15 - Tremir Ford
 16 - Eugene Minus
 19 - Samuel Krueger, Helen Purltel
 22 - Molly Dang
 23 - Sayda Dunlap, Darlene Evans, Oladumi
 Farmer, Cathy Johnson, Charlie
 Meyers
 24 - Trent Ford
 25 - Elizabeth Johnson
 26 - Beth Leonberg
 27 - Sarah Burger, Henry Geiger
 30 - Loide Ann Santos
 31 - Vivian Liu, Max Manuel

September

3 - Pavi Jaisankar
 4 - Rev. Robin Hynicka
 5 - Brian Schenk
 7 - Rev. Susan Cole, Raymond Wilson
 8 - Thomas Brislin, Laura Jones
 9 - Jim Bibber
 10 - Anna Jackson, Bryan Shay
 15 - Barbara Bailey,
 Rev. Warren Cederholm,
 Nelson Servano
 16 - Ginger Doubt
 21 - Nikki Kelley Kleinberg
 22 - Rob Schell
 25 - Harold Glass
 26 - Guy McNeill, Mandi Rollerson
 27 - Beverly Faunce,
 Joel William Robeson
 28 - MuiMui Kolo, Dustin Long
 29 - Barbara Kelly
 30 - Leon Rollerson

Summer Issue
July – Sept 2019

Voice of the Spire, the newsletter of Arch Street United Methodist Church, is published 4 times per year and distributed free to members and friends of the congregation.

To be added to our mailing list, please notify: Office Manager, Arch Street United Methodist Church, 55 North Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107.

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Voice of the Spire

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55 North Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

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Future Dates

World Communion
Sunday – Oct 6

Daylight Savings Time
ends – Nov 3

United Methodist
Student Day – Nov 24

Thanksgiving – Nov 28

Advent begins – Dec 1

Christmas – Dec 25

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

www.archstreetumc.org

Arch Street United Methodist Church



Celebrating Carmen's two years of
inspiring ministry at ASUMC

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