November 4, 2019 Newsletter

Independence Day should give us all pause to reflect on and give voice to the promise of America which welcomes all. In this newsletter, we highlight our Who is Our Neighbor? Community Development Seminars and immigration concerns while profiling an effort to counter human trafficking in New York and sharing the good news about the recent appointment of a Commission to make recommendations about public financing of elections through small donor matching. We also offer complete updates on the Poor People's Campaign and Citizen Action's Justice Works. Next week we will offer our post reflections on the past legislative session.

WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR? COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Is your congregation’s building a burden—or a tool for mission?
Is your congregation disconnected from its neighborhood—or does it listen deeply to the dreams and concerns of its neighbors?
Are your neighbors disconnected from each other—or does your congregation help foster a hospitable community?

Join the New York State Council of Churches, the Pace University Land Use Law Center, Goldstein Hall Attorneys at Law, Upper New York Conference-United Methodist Church, and a growing list of other partners for a day of conversation with colleagues and experts that will inspire you to think in new ways about your property and your community.

We’ll look at a wide variety of real-life examples of congregations who have found creative ways to redevelop their property for the benefit of the community. Across New York State, congregations have built affordable housing, created arts and community spaces, planted community gardens and developed schools and educational programs.

We’ll consider the theological basis for the congregation’s work to offer hospitality to the stranger and strengthen our social fabric that leaves so many feeling isolated. And we’ll directly address the architectural, zoning, financial and social barriers that stand in the way.

You’ll leave equipped with practical tools that will enable your congregation to take important new steps in following Jesus’ command to love our neighbors—and our neighborhood.

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

Thursday, September 26th on Long Island

- Tuesday, October 8th in Albany, NY
- Tuesday, October 22nd in White Plains, NY
- Tuesday, November 12th, in Medina, NY
- An additional date is being planned for January in the Syracuse to Binghamton Corridor.

Costs: $40.00 per participant, $100 for a team of three from a congregation. Scholarships available upon request. Click here to register Please be sure to select the date and location of the seminar you would like to attend.
Sponsored by the New York State Council of Churches, the Pace University Land Use Law Center, Goldstein Hall Attorneys at Law and the Upper New York Conference of the United Methodist Church. We invite your organization to join a growing list of legal, faith, architectural, planning, development, and banking and title organizations supporting the Who is Our Neighbor? Program. Please visit this link for a Letter regarding Sponsorships for Who is My Neighbor Seminars 2019. Click here to purchase sponsorships for our Seminars.

Contact The Reverend Peter Cook at 508-380-8289 to learn how you can help.

IMMIGRATION

Nationwide Lights for Liberty Vigil On July 12

The New York State Council of Churches is pleased to support the Lights for Liberty national vigil to take place on July 12 where we will call for much more human immigration policies consistent with the United States constitution, international conventions, and the biblical mandate to welcome the stranger. A large event will be held in New York City at Foley Square beginning at 7 PM and going to 10PM. Lights for Liberty is working with local organizations who have been doing the work around immigrants’ rights and related issues. Local hosting organizations are working with people who are directly impacted to curate each vigil. Vigils are seen as a nonviolent way to raise awareness of a cause and to motivate change, as well as uniting and supporting those attending the vigil.

A moment of silence will be held at 9 p.m. with candles (if allowed), battery operated candles, flashlights and phones to shine a light on our administrations policies at the border. In addition, there are 28 events held in other locations in every part of New York. Go to Lights for Liberty for more background locations and times.

Renewed Threats of ICE Raids after July 4

After a two-week delay, President Trump has announced that there will be ICE Raids throughout the country after July 4. Major cities, including New York City, have been identified as major targets but this could happen in any community. Here is the article from the Hill.

Click here for specific guidance from the New Sanctuary Coalition including how to prepare in the event of an ICE Raid.

Click here for guidance from New York City for those who may be vulnerable to an ICE Raid or those seeking to offer assistance.

We urge you to closely study this information and glean from it the guidance most applicable to your community and situation. There are also specific instructions for those who might fear deportation. Faith communities might distribute “know your rights” information while offer short term sanctuary, buddies for immigrant families, and other assistance.

Detention and Child Separation

Horrific conditions for children seeking asylum in Texas shelters is of grave concern. The New York State Council of Churches is joining with MICAH Faith Table, New Sanctuary Coalition, the Interfaith Center of New York are working with state legislators to have more transparency
in reporting about what is happening with undocumented children in New York. This is a follow up after the Separation of Children Accountability Reporting Act passed in the Senate but failed in the Assembly while the Child Trauma Response Act passed in the Assembly and failed in the Senate. The need for accountability remains high but we need to revisit the state approach given the ongoing crisis around child separation and the vagaries of working with a complex bureaucratic system.

While the state reform efforts are underway, the national crisis mounts and requires immediate and bold responses. An Ecumenical and Interfaith Statement which includes signatures from most if not all of the national heads of our denominational partners has been issued regarding treatment of immigrant children. Click here for the National Council of Churches' recent Newsletter. Click here for The Reverend Dr. William Barber's July 3 sermon on Immigration.

We are working to find every way possible to improve conditions for children and adults in immigration detention while seeking more comprehensive reform. For more background on Asylum, detention and our inhumane immigration system go to this resource prepared by Presbyterian Church USA.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The Reverend Adrian Dannhauser, Associate Rector, Church of the Incarnation, has been at the forefront of an effort to stop human trafficking in New York. She has invited concerned residents to attend a public forum at her church on July 23 to discuss proposed legislation, introduced by Assembly Member Richard Gottfried and Senator Julia Salazar, to decriminalize the sex trade in New York. Adrian notes that:

“while decriminalizing those bought and sold in prostitution is a good thing, decriminalizing their exploiters is not. In a nutshell, it's horrible from a human trafficking and child protection standpoint, goes against gender and racial equality, and will make NYC a global hub for sex tourism.”

Assembly Member Gottfried will speak about his bill with Dorchen Leidholdt and others at at the July 23 event. A description with a registration link and a flyer are below. Please consider coming and help Reverend Dannhauser get the word out to educate our fellow New Yorkers on this critical issue. This is the first time a bill sponsor sits down with an opponent in a public forum. We need all the support (and prayers!) we can muster.

Here is the Announcement:

"Decriminalizing Pimps and Johns in New York: What's at Stake?"

A conversation about bill A.8230/S.6419, aimed at decriminalizing the sex trade, with New York State Assembly Member Richard Gottfried, bill sponsor Dorchen Leidholdt, Sanctuary for Families Legal Director and Co-chair of the New York State Anti-Trafficking Coalition Marian Hatcher, Policy Analyst and Victim Advocate in the Office of Public Policy for the Cook County Sheriff’s Office Jessica Raven, Decrim NY Steering Committee member

Tuesday, July 23, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Church of the Incarnation, 209 Madison Ave. at 35th St. Read more and register HERE.
PUBLIC FINANCE COMMISSION APPOINTED

Yesterday, we received word that the nine members of New York’s public finance commission have been announced! Their biographies are below. Our friends at Fair Elections tell us that

We are one step closer to creating Fair Elections for New York, and it’s all because you’ve kept the pressure on Gov. Cuomo, Speaker Heastie, and Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, who made the majority of these appointments. You can read our official statement here.

This is a big opportunity to make our democracy work for all New Yorkers, not just the billionaires and corporations who currently fund our elections. These commissioners have the important task of creating a voluntary public financing program for New York state elections by December 1st, so that candidates can run backed by small donors not special interests.

We must keep the pressure on the Commission to craft a strong law that will lessen the undue influence of big money in Albany. We also need to keep pressure on the Senate and Assembly to introduce legislation for possible passage late this year should the Commission fall short of creating a model-for-the-nation law.

I will be in touch soon with more information on next steps. We want to make sure that the commissioners hold an open and transparent process. That means they hold hearings around the state -- in New York City, Albany and Syracuse -- so that all New Yorkers have an opportunity to provide input.

Who are the Commissioners?

The Governor has appointed:

- **Mylan Denerstein**, a litigation partner in the New York office of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, and Co-Chair of Gibson Dunn’s Public Policy Practice Group. Ms. Denerstein previously served as Counsel to the Governor from 2011 to 2014. Prior to that she served as the Executive Deputy Attorney General for Social Justice and Deputy Commissioner for Legal Affairs for the New York City Fire Department and as a federal prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York.

- **Jay Jacobs**, current Chairman of the State Democratic Party and longtime Chairman of the Nassau County Democratic Party. Jacobs was first elected to the position of Nassau County Democratic Chairman in 2001 and served as the Chairman of the New York State Democratic Committee from 2009 to 2012, returning to the post in 2019. He is also an at large member of the Democratic National Committee.

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins has appointed:

- **DeNora Getachew**, New York City Executive Director of Generation Citizen. Ms. Getachew was previously Campaign Manager and Legislative Counsel for the Brennan Centers Democracy Program and Policy Director for the Public Advocate’s Office.

- **John Nonna**, County Attorney for Westchester county and co-founder of the Democratic Lawyers Council. Mr. Nonna previously served as a Westchester County Legislator and as Mayor of Pleasantville.
Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie has appointed:

- **Rosanna Vargas**, currently serving as associate law clerk to a NYC Civil Court Judge in Bronx County criminal court. Prior to that, Ms. Vargas served as the Bronx Democratic Commissioner and later as the President of the Board of Commissioners for the Board of Elections of the City of New York. Ms. Vargas also has commercial litigation experience representing clients in trials, mediations and arbitrations in state and federal courts.

- **Crystal Rodriguez**, current chief of staff to Buffalo State College President Katherine S. Conway-Turner. Previously, Ms. Rodriguez was the chief diversity officer for the City of Buffalo where she developed the Opportunity Pledge to encourage diversity and provide opportunity to all in Buffalo and made it easier for businesses to apply for New York State’s Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE) certification. Prior to working for the City of Buffalo, she served as a law clerk in the New York State Unified Court System and worked as an adjunct professor at SUNY Buffalo.

At large seat jointly selected by the Governor, the Assembly Speaker and the Majority Leader:

- **Henry Berger**, an election law attorney with more than 40 years of experience litigating issues in state and national elections. He is also a former Special Counsel for the City of New York.

Senate Minority Leader John Flanagan has appointed:

- **David Previte**, principal attorney at Hinman Straub, PC and former Chief Counsel to the New York State Senate Majority.

Assembly Minority Leader Brian Kolb has appointed:

- **Kimberly Galvin**, Co-Counsel and Co-Director of the State Board of Elections Campaign Finance Compliance Unit. Ms. Galvin previously served as Chief of Staff and Counsel to the Republican Leader in the New York State Assembly.

**JUSTICE WORKS**

[Click here](#) to register for Justice Works, a community organizing conference on July 20 and 21 in Albany. Sponsored by Citizen Action.

**POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN**

The next Capital Region organizing meeting is on **Monday, July 15th, at St. Vincent de Paul Church**. Join us at 6pm where we'll go over the story, strategy, and structure of the campaign, and then begin the regular meeting at 6:30pm. We'll discuss the Moral Action Congress, our recent canvassing efforts, and make plans for upcoming events in the Capital Region and the rest of New York.

Capital Region Organizing Meeting
Monday, July 15, 6pm
St. Vincent de Paul Church
900 Madison Ave., Albany
(Enter through the lower, accessible parking lot door)
[Facebook event here](#).
We look forward to seeing you there!

In solidarity,
Joe Paparone, on behalf of the NYS PPC Coordinating Committee

For your reference, below is all the background on the Moral Action Congress in Washington D.C. offered by the Poor People's Campaign of New York

In particular, the Congressional Budget Hearing was like a master class on the different, distorted narratives about poverty. Here is complete background on the recent Moral Action Congress in Washington D.C.

The New York State Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival has just returned from the national Moral Action Congress in Washington, DC! From June 17-19, more than 60 delegates from across the state gathered with a thousand others from around the country, for three days of organizing, learning, and presenting our demands to elected officials and presidential hopefuls. Thank you for all of your solidarity with the New York State delegation - and thank you especially for helping us reach our $10,000 fundraising goal to support our travel and presence in DC!

We're excited to share our recap of our time together at the Congress, but before we do, we want to remind you of the email from Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis and Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II demanding a televised debate in which every presidential candidate addresses how they will confront poverty and the interlocking injustices of our time. Add your name to this call here.

Day 1

The first big event of Day 1 was the Candidates’ Forum, where nine of the 26 candidates running for President of the United States in 2020 joined us to listen to our demands, take questions from the co-chairs and the participants, and to share brief reflections on how their candidacies (and potential administrations) would reflect the policy priorities of the PPC.

Each of the candidates was asked tough questions, both on PPC-specific policy issues (see below) and on whether and how they will commit to pushing for an official presidential debate to address systemic poverty in the US—as inseparable from systemic racism, ecological destruction, the war economy, and the distorted moral narrative of Christian nationalism. All nine candidates agreed that this official conversation would be important—with Michael Bennet, Eric Swalwell, and Elizabeth Warren offering the most concrete commitments in terms of actually working to make that happen. Members of the PPC movement from across the country got to ask questions of the candidates—New York State’s own Kelly Smith (right) stood up with Ana Blackburn to ask candidate Wayne Messam how he plans to implement a just immigration system and address racist attacks against immigrants of color.

To watch the Candidates’ Forum, view the webcast on the PoorPeople’s Campaign Facebook page (in two parts) or check out the full rundown on CSPAN!

Monday concluded with a presentation and discussion of the Poor People’s Moral Budget, launched on June 17 as a joint production of the PPC, the Institute for Policy Studies, Repairers of the Breach, and the Kairos Center. Our moral budget shows that the United States has
abundant resources for an economic revival that will move towards establishing a moral economy. This report identifies:

· $350 billion in annual military spending cuts that would make the nation and the world more secure;

· $886 billion in estimated annual revenue from fair taxes on the wealthy, corporations, and Wall Street; and

· Billions more in savings from ending mass incarceration, addressing climate change, and meeting other key campaign demands.

See also the articles in Common Dreams here and ThinkProgress here, and the webcast of the launch on Facebook here.

Day 2

Day 2 of the Poor People’s Campaign Moral Action Congress packed in three plenary sessions and some meaningful group work, through a series of workshops and “tracks” delving into key action areas for the Campaign as it moves forward.

The day kicked off with a master class in movement-building and advocacy by Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, through a keynote and introduction of the 14 steps for moral fusion organizing that guide the Poor People’s Campaign. Rev. Barber asked for witnesses to join him on stage, and New York State’s own Becca Forsyth from Elmira answered the call, sitting behind Rev. Barber during his keynote (center). Photo courtesy Sarah Krull. To watch the webcast archive of Rev. Barber’s keynote, see the PPC Facebook page here. Don’t miss the stirring call to action at the end, where he outlines how the rejected will lead the revival!

Members of the NYS delegation were represented in each of the tracks and workshops: on lessons from the 1968 campaign; the Homeless Union Movement and the PPC; using the Souls of Poor Folk audit in state-based organizing; LGBTQ and women’s rights; on themusicology and movement cultural arts, communications, legal strategy, education and leadership development, and moral fusion organizing; and on each of the five evils. The Communications track featured a video report-back from the New York State bus tour, developed by Peter Kinoy, who was also recognized later in the day by the NYS delegation for his contributions to documenting the important work in New York State and across the country.

A plenary discussion was held on Voting Rights and Electoral Strategy, moderated by Forward Justice’s Penda Hair and featuring Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, Daryl Atkinson (Forward Justice), and writer and Mother Jones reporter Ari Berman. The webcast archive of this panel is here.

Finally, the last official panel on Day 2, on Intersecting Injustices, presented a rousing examination of the idea that the five evils the campaign addresses—systemic racism, systemic poverty, ecological devastation, militarism and the war economy, and the distorted moral narrative—cannot be addressed independently of each other. The panel featured Claudia de la Cruz from the Popular Education Project calling out capitalism as the root cause of poverty; Rev. Wesley Morris from the Beloved Community Center of Greensboro NC; Phyllis Bennis of the Institute for Policy Studies (partner in both the PPC audit and the moral budget) speaking on militarism and the war economy; Vanessa Nosie of Apache Stronghold, framing ecological devastation in the colonial history of this country; and Rev. Denise Anderson of the Presbyterian
Church addressing the distorted moral narrative. To watch the webcast archive of the Intersecting Injustices panel, click here.

Day 3

Wednesday, the final day of the Moral Action Congress, centered around the Congressional Hearing—webcast here!—where representatives of the Poor People’s Campaign testified to the House Budget Committee. After a powerful send-off to the folks going to Capitol Hill, the rest of the Congress spent the morning watching the livestream of the hearing and cheering on our brothers and sisters as they testified.

Along with Rev. Barber, Callie Greer (Alabama), Kenia Alcocer (California), Chris Overfelt (Kansas), and Savannah Kinsey (Pennsylvania), Rev. Liz testified and confronted the members of the budget committee—confronting their apathy and unwillingness to address the realities of the 140 million poor and low-income people in the United States. Read the Kairos Center’s recap here (with a link to a video of Rev. Liz’s rejoinder to the Congress members) and see the analysis in the Nation here.

What’s next

The Poor People’s Moral Action Congress concluded with an outline of exciting plans for the next year of organizing, mobilizing, educating and registering the poor—which will culminate in the Poor People’s Mass Assembly and March on Washington on June 20, 2020! Watch the co-chairs outline these plans and send us on our way back to New York to take the fight forward, in the final session here.

We have returned to our various corners of the state inspired and energized, and ready to take forward the testimonies, policy proposals, and poor people-led solutions we shared at the Congress. We look forward to working together in solidarity as we build our contribution as New York State towards the Mass Assembly and March on Washington.

Read more from the NYS delegation reflecting on our participation in the Congress, here.

Forward together - not one step back!

The New York State Poor People’s Campaign

Joe Paparone, for NYS-Poor People's Campaign Committee

In faith,

Peter Cook

Executive Director

New York State Council of Churches