



Newsletter January 2025

219 Hummel Street, Harrisburg, PA 17104
(717) 234-0415

A Note from Art Williams Gather the Spirit for Justice (GTSFJ) Board Vice President and Program Committee Chair



Big Shout Out to all the folks who come every Saturday and just make our community event happen. Many hands make light work! And now that we have our processes down, we have many people who know what needs to be done and how to do it.

That being said, **we can ALWAYS use help in the kitchen**, especially around clean-up time. See Art or Ben if you want to help cook, clean, serve, wash, sweep, etc.



Now that winter has set in, our neighbors more than ever need the help we provide in our warm, safe, welcoming Saturday morning sharing of food and fellowship.

With the new year, I've resolved to learn more names and get to better know the rich stories of our guests and neighbors.

I frequently serve as a greeter at the front door of the church on Saturday mornings, and delight in greeting familiar faces each week. But a special treat is when a new person comes to our door for the first time. Whether they are looking for help with a state ID, or have a need to learn English, or just want a hot breakfast, I love to be able to walk them upstairs and introduce them to a volunteer who can provide them with the help they need. And when folks leave, I often ask them: "Did you get enough to eat?" I haven't gotten a negative response yet!

Here are a few fun facts about our Saturday morning events in 2024:

- In 2024 we served **over 3,200 meals**.
- In 2024 we **hosted a guest over 5,300 times**
- In 2024 we had a Saturday **volunteer** come help **over 920 times**.
- Finally, since we moved to **First Church**, we are averaging **140 guests** and **30 volunteers per week**.



Gather the Guitars

Join us at the **Appalachian Brewing Company** in **Harrisburg, PA**, for an unforgettable experience of music and fun! Our annual Gather the Guitars event is scheduled for January 19th, 2025, from 3:00 to 6:30 pm. Connect with talented musicians, enjoy incredible live performances, and dive into the excitement of our silent auction. You can help us grow the event by attending, bringing your friends, and promoting Gather the Guitars on social media.

To purchase tickets, visit <https://tinyurl.com/mmv8ua8j>

Gather the Spirit
FOR JUSTICE
Building Community in Allison Hill

GATHER THE GUITARS

Sunday, January 19
3PM - 6:30PM
Abby Bar at Appalachian Brewing CO
50 N Cameron St. Harrisburg

Ticket \$25

QR Code: Tickets Here

SUPPORTS PROGRAMMING THAT PROVIDES A SENSE OF HOPE & DIGNITY WHILE STRENGTHENING THE COMMUNITY ON ALLISON HILL



A Note from Ben Perez, Program Director

Since November, Gather the Spirit for Justice has been operating a Sunday afternoon warming and charging center for unhoused individuals. Volunteers gather at 1:00 PM to set up, and we open our doors from 1:30 to 4:30 pm.

Anyone who needs a safe place to get out of the elements is welcome. We serve hot coffee and cold water, as well as various donated local surplus foods supplied by Helping Harrisburg Homeless--one of our partner agencies. Our guests are able to nap on cots that have been donated by the American Red Cross, charge their phones, use restrooms, and talk to volunteers about the challenges they face. We do housing referrals to Christian Churches United, and we also refer guests for possible job opportunities. Those needing coats, gloves, hats, blankets, hand warmers, socks, and other necessities are given them if we have them. Our goal is to distribute our donated stock of survival gear as quickly as possible to those who need it most.

Although it is a new program, word of our Sunday afternoon shelter is spreading rapidly throughout the unsheltered community in Harrisburg. This is because there simply is nowhere else to get indoors on Sunday afternoons in Harrisburg. Our afternoon shelter fills a pressing need--especially in severe weather.

Toiletries Updates

The "toiletries team" recently put out a written appeal/reminder to everyone on our mailing list that **"Winter is Just Beginning"** and that after this month GTSFJ has no groups lined up for a drive.

Every contribution is welcome, but what we most need as the thermometer drops are hats, gloves, warm socks, umbrellas, waterproof jackets, and hoodies for the messy weather ahead.



So, if you didn't see the article, let please let Pat (patricialeschanoallen@gmail.com) know so you can be sure you are on the mailing list. And if you have any friends who belong to other organizations or faith groups, please share the newsletter and encourage them to get in touch with me at 717-737-1122. Let's keep the warm smiles coming.

Gail Ismart gismart@mac.com
(toiletries & outreach)

Pancakes with Santa Lunch

Colonial Park United Church of Christ provided a Pancakes With Santa Lunch at noon on Saturday, December 7th at the GTSFJ community center for the children of Allison Hill! Santa was there (many thanks to volunteer Nelson from First Church of the Brethren) along with gifts, Christmas crafts, decorations, and lots and lots of pancakes. A big thank you to Colonial Park United Church of Christ for making this event happen. They have been sponsors of GTSFJ for decades!



English as a Second Language (ESL)

Thanks to a grant from the Emerging Philanthropist Program Endowment fund, a fund of The Foundation for Enhancing Communities, we have bumped the ESL instruction to a new level of professionalism. We now have formal texts for students to use. This will help us standardize the instruction and keep students on track through home study if they need to miss a class. The texts are from the New in America Series written by a local author, Tone Hess. This series is focused on conversational speaking and phrases that new English speakers are likely to use. We permit the students to purchase a book of their own for half of our cost. In this way, students make an affordable monetary investment in their learning. The revenue generated from the sale also permits us to purchase additional resources for future students.

We also thank Catholic Social Services for permitting us to benefit from excess office supplies and instructor resources at their Harrisburg office. These materials are being put to good use and help GTSFJ save money. Their need to downsize was a windfall for our program.

We continue to need additional volunteers who are willing to work one-on-one with beginner-level students. These students need to master essential phases like how to clearly tell an English speaker their name, address and telephone number. It sounds simple, and in some ways it is, but it requires volunteers who have patience and an encouraging attitude. Repetition and one-to-one feedback is the key to learning at this stage. Once students have mastered key phases, the alphabet, numbers, dates, time, etc., they can transition from one-to-one instruction to small group sessions and textbooks. Our students are intelligent, but try to imagine yourself learning a language like Chinese. The basics can be overwhelming.

In December we had a little extra fun by exchanging cultural traditions related to Christmas time. We even learned a little bit about Eid al-Fitr from an Arabic-speaking student. The students sang songs, some in English, some in their native tongue, and entertained the entire GTSFJ breakfast group with a few verses from Silent Night, Feliz Navidad and other favorites.



ESL French/Creole Speaking Group

Since mid-November, we have had fewer students attending our classes. Recently, we have hosted between 10 and 14 students every Saturday, compared to 20 or 30 in previous months. We are changing and improving our processes to improve our teaching....

1. More volunteers to fewer students - We also have a higher number of volunteers than when we started and are currently able to have one native speaker for every two students.
2. Dedicated spaces - We now have spaces and arrangements ideal for working one-to-one or in small groups.
3. Breakfast delivery improvements - The students are able to eat breakfast and make it to class on time, since classes now begin at 10 am.
4. Adaptable curriculum - Last week we started using the latest edition of "New In America" which has been adapted to include resources for teaching one-to-one, in larger groups, and independent of native speakers using video/audio tools. After our initial use as a group, it looks very promising. Both the teachers and the students seemed to like the format. Several students showed interest in using the videos to learn outside of the classroom.



Potluck for Volunteers

Dear Volunteers,

We are often so busy that we don't get to know each other. This potluck will be a great opportunity for us to get to know each other and to learn more about the different services that we each help to offer through the GTSFJ umbrella. Please mark your calendar for **Saturday, January 11, 2025 at 5:00 pm** at the community center. Please sign up using this link:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080E4EAEA92BABFB6-53878885-gtsfj>

Holiday Gift Assistance

Many of our Allison Hill neighbors face difficult choices during the holidays – such as how to stretch meager funds to pay for heat, electricity, warm clothes, food and children’s gifts. GTSFJ volunteers partnered with several faith groups, Toys for Tots and individuals to allow each visitor to select a toy and a stuffed animal for their family. Thanks to all who donated to provide holiday joy.



Recent Statistics at Common Ground Coffee

Date	11/2/24	11/9/24	11/23/24	11/30/24	12/7/24	12/14/24	12/21/24	12/28/24
Guests	151	190	154	121	110	132	146	129

The first 3 months of 2023, when we reopened post-COVID, we only averaged about a dozen guest a week – a lot has changed since then!

Story of a Neighbor

E. is a sweet woman in her late 60's who recently moved to Harrisburg and has lost all her documents in the move. We are helping her get her birth certificate from out of state and will then provide her with a check to take to PennDOT to obtain her PA ID. New to town, she needs weekly guidance about addresses and phone numbers for other human resources available to her during the week. She also needs someone who looks forward to seeing her and is willing to hear about her week.

Grant from Sheetz

Many thanks to our local Sheetz for supplying extra treats for the holidays. For our December 14th breakfast, Sheetz contributed fancy donuts, muffins, hard boiled eggs, butter, juice and milk. With these foods in addition to our customary pancakes, sausages, grits, and muffins, we served a hearty and much appreciated breakfast.

Free Store Needs

Our host church, First Church of the Brethren, operates a free store for neighborhood residents with assistance from GTSFJ as well as many neighborhood volunteers. The following items are urgently needed:

- Spanish, French or Creole children's books
- Winter coats and gloves for adults and kids
- Pots, pans, plates, cups, silverware
- Blankets and bed linens

If you can assist, please drop off items at the community center any Saturday morning from 9:00 to 10:30 am or leave them anytime on the porch at 4384 North 6th Street in Harrisburg.

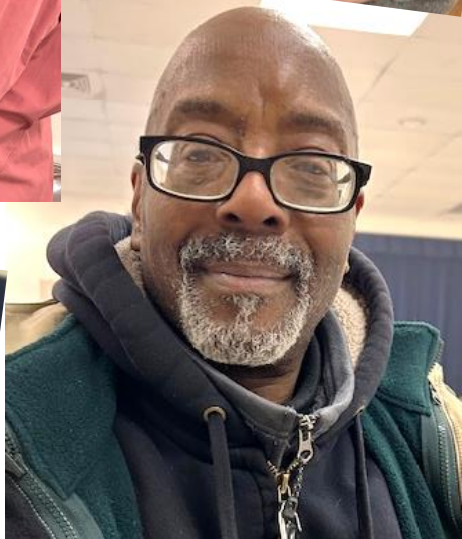
Volunteers Needed!

In his article on page 1, Art mentioned that we can always use help on the kitchen, and that is true!

Even though we are only open for breakfast from 9-11, the kitchen crew is actually very busy from 7:30 am until noon. Cooks come in early to start the grits and pancakes so we can begin serving at 9 am sharp! Helpers set up tables and chairs, and set out syrup and condiments. And equally important is the crew who stay afterwards to scrub pots and silverware, and wipe down and put away tables.

If you can help out by coming in early for setup, or staying a little later for clean-up, please contact Ben at Ben.Perez@gatherthespiritforjustice.org or Art at artwilliams7@gmail.com!

Meet Some of our Neighbors and Volunteers



Sharing News from our Friends

Shalom Summit February 22nd, 2025

First Church of the Brethren

219 Hummel Street, Harrisburg, PA 17104

Phone (717) 234-0415

Come join us at the First Church of the Brethren for a powerful event focused on pursuing racial justice in our neighborhoods, with guest speaker and author **Lisa Sharon Harper**. This in-person summit will bring together disciples from all walks of life to discuss and take action towards creating a more inclusive and equitable community

EVENT WILL INCLUDE:

- Workshops focused on Biblical Justice and Praxis for Social Change.
- Networking opportunities with Christians from diverse traditions.
- Meals are included.



Registration is just \$10 per person, with scholarships available.

Register at: <https://thejourneyharrisburg.org/shalom-summit/>

Guest Speaker: Lisa Sharon Harper is the founder and president of Freedom Road, a groundbreaking consulting group that crafts experiences that bring common understanding and common commitments that lead to common action toward a more just world. Lisa is a public theologian whose writing, speaking, activism and training has sparked and fed the fires of re-formation in the church from Ferguson and Charlottesville to South Africa, Brazil, Australia, and Ireland. Lisa's book, Fortune: How Race Broke My Family And The World—And How To Repair It All was named one of the “Best Books of 2022” and The Very Good Gospel was named 2016 “Book of the Year” by Englewood Review of Books. The Huffington Post identified Lisa as one of 50 Women Religious Leaders to Celebrate on International Women’s Day. Lisa is host of the Freedom Road Podcast, cohost of The FOUR Podcast and author of her weekly column on Substack, “The Truth Is...”

Speaker: Dr. Drew Hart is an associate professor of theology at Messiah University, where he currently directs the Thriving Together: Congregations for Racial Justice program in central PA. He co-hosts Inverse Podcast with Australian peace activist Jarrod McKenna, and is the author of Trouble I’ve Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism (2016), Who Will Be A Witness?: Igniting Activism for God’s Justice, Love, and Deliverance (2020), and he most recently co-edited Reparations and the Theological Disciplines: Prophetic Voices for Remembrance, Reckoning, and Repair (Nov. 2023). Drew regularly speaks at colleges, conferences, churches, and community groups across the country. He is married to Renee and is the father of three sons.

Additional Speakers: Rev. Kristopher Sledge, Nathan Richard Sooy, Pastor Lexi Aligarbes, Pastor Josiah Ludwick

Christ Lutheran Church, 124 South 13th Street, Harrisburg, PA 17104 Phone (717) 236-8382

- **Medical Outreach Clinic:** The clinic is a free, nurse-run, walk-in clinic that provides simple lab tests, basic physical assessments, and health education. Open Monday-Friday 10 am-2:30 pm. No appointment needed. 717-260-9320.
- **Dental Clinic:** Volunteer dentists, support staff, and translators offer care 3 days a month for urgent dental conditions requiring simple extractions and fillings. No appointments, all walk-in, first-come-first-served, free of charge. Call to learn upcoming dates.
- **Spiritual Care:** Pastor Best offers spiritual care to church members, community residents, and staff of partner organizations. Please let him know if you would like to talk about how he can provide spiritual care to you, your staff, or the members of your organization. Pastor Best will be in the Medical Outreach Clinic waiting area from 1:00-2:00 pm every Wednesday to chat.
- **Fit on the Hill** is an exercise class that takes place every Saturday at Christ Lutheran Church starting at 11 am. All levels of ability are welcome, so long as you like to move your body.

Contact Information

Located in First Church of the Brethren, 219 Hummel Street, Harrisburg, PA 17104

<https://gatherthespiritforjustice.org>

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Mailing address for checks: Austin Cheers, CPA, Miller Dixon Drake, PC, 701 N 2nd Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102

**Our Mission: Gather the Spirit for Justice
seeks to strengthen community in Allison Hill,
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.**

Please share the flyer on the following page regarding our Gather the Guitars annual fundraiser.



GATHER THE GUITARS

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