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

**Newsletter
October 2025**

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

It's so amazing that we are already in the fourth quarter of 2025. The fall and soon the holiday season will be upon us!

This has been a year full of lots of turmoil both in the world and in the nation. There are so many things I would like to, and try to change, but that are mostly out of my reach. But I also look locally for actions I can take that can have an immediate and positive impact on my community: Things like Gather the Spirit.



As the quote goes, "When you have more than you need, build a longer table." Well, we don't always have more than we need, but we are certainly doing all we can to build a longer table! As you can see elsewhere in this newsletter, our popularity (as measured in attendance counts) continues to grow. We will continue to improve how we serve breakfasts and provide other services in our goal to build community on Allison Hill.

We simply can't fit any more activities into Saturday mornings, so we are expanding out into the week more. Word is spreading about our Sunday afternoon safe space to assist unhoused folks. We are also adding Saturday afternoon activities to the calendar. I'm personally looking forward to the first Open Mic event Saturday afternoon Nov 8!

Looking forward to seeing all of my Allison Hill friends at our fall breakfasts and events this season.
:)



Two Upcoming Events Conducted by Gather the Spirit Come join in the fun!

Open Mic!

Saturday, November 8th 3:00-4:30 pm

Come to sing, play an instrument, dance or read poetry. Or come and just enjoy the show!

In 1st Church of the Brethren

219 Hummel Street

Use the red door on the sidewalk.



TRUNK OR TREAT celebration for neighborhood children and teens and for your family! Join us, please on:

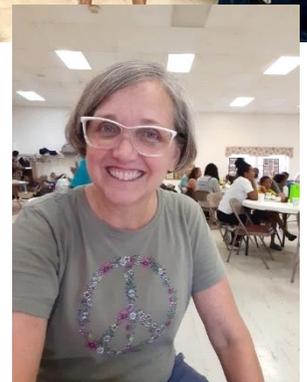
Saturday, November 1st, 2025

at 11:00 am - right after our free community breakfast
in the front parking lot of First Church of the Brethren
219 Hummel Street, Harrisburg, PA

You can help in three ways:

1. Bring your vehicle to the parking area with the trunk filled with candy and other treats, small toys, and/or school supplies. Dress in costume if you'd like. Hand out your treats from 11:00 to noon to neighborhood children and teens.
2. Drop off toys and/or school supplies at the church on Saturday, October 18th, October 25th, or November 1st during our free community breakfast hours (9:00 am-11:00 am) Ask for Art, Ann, or Pat to help you carry them in. Stay for breakfast if you have time. We will distribute your donations for you.
3. Drop off toys and/or school supplies on the porch at 4384 North 6th Street in Harrisburg by October 29th. We will get them to the church and distribute them for you.

Highlighting our Cooks, Servers, Order Takers and THE FOOD!



Toiletries

Each Saturday morning while the kitchen offers a yummy breakfast, our toiletry line serves on average between 180 and 200 homeless and/or low-income neighbors. Each individual is asked to sign a book to register and then selects two personal toiletry items. Diapers and women's hygiene products are always provided if available and don't "count." We couldn't continue this without the generosity and help of so many supporters who drop off items (on Saturdays at the community center or on Pat Allen's front porch, 4384 N. 6th St., Harrisburg) or hand us shopping dollars. Thank you. Thank you. You are wonderful. ~ Gail Ismart gismart@mac.com

Late update!

On the last Saturday in September, the number of low income/homeless waiting in line for two toiletry items jumped by 45%. There were many new faces. We ran out of everything, including toilet paper. In addition to toiletries, we were able to distribute diapers in almost every size thanks to a cash donation provided specifically for this purpose. So, thank you to everyone who continues to help us. We are 100% reliant on donations and could not do this without you and help from volunteers such as those you see pictured here.



Happy Birthday

One of our most dedicated volunteers, Jonne Dundore, celebrated her 70th birthday in rare fashion in October. In lieu of birthday gifts, her husband requested that her VERY GENEROUS friends make donations in Jonne's name to Gather the Spirit for Justice totaling over \$700! A HAPPY BIRTHDAY indeed!

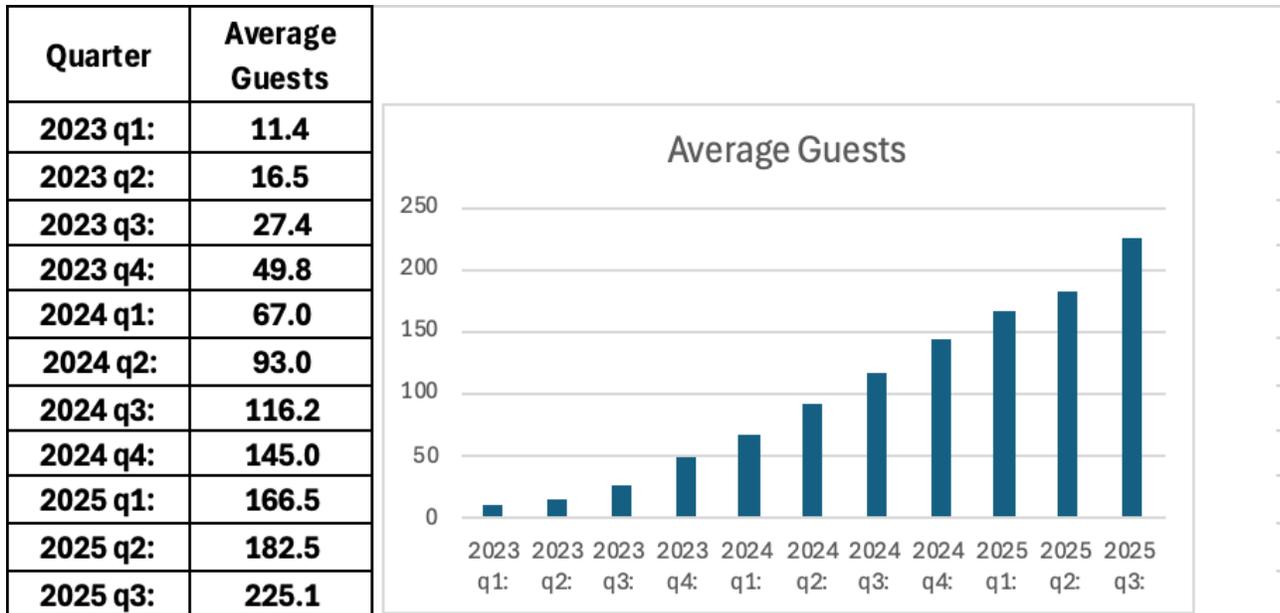


GTSFJ donations for any occasion can be sent to:
Austin Cheers, CPA, Miller Dixon Drake, PC, 701 N 2nd Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102
You may also use Paypal with the address gtsfjinfohbg@gmail.com
[https://paypal.me/Gather the Spirit?country.x=US&locale.x=en_US](https://paypal.me/Gather%20the%20Spirit?country.x=US&locale.x=en_US)
venmo us @Gather the Spirit or donate via our website: gatherthespiritforjustice.org

Gather the Spirit Statistics

As neighbors have learned of our services and as economic conditions have become more difficult in the neighborhood, the number of guests we serve each week has steadily increased. In just the last year we have seen almost a doubling from a Saturday average of 116 in Quarter 3 of 2024 to an average of 225 in Quarter 3 of 2025. (Our recent record was 291 on September 27th!) We expect growth to continue, although likely at a somewhat slower rate, and to exceed an average of 260 each Saturday by mid-2026. About two-thirds of those who visit order a full breakfast; others stop in just for some pastries, a coffee or tea, or one of our non-food services (e.g., driver’s license assistance, English classes). Additionally, the weekly number of guests at our Sunday shelter for the unhoused averaged 48 in Quarter 3 of 2025.

Saturday Breakfast Guests



Dear friends, We are hoping to have a table of holiday gifts so that parents will have gifts for their children. If you would like to donate one or more gifts, please contact us or drop them off at the community center on a Saturday morning. Gifts should be unwrapped; we will have a wrapping station for parents to use after they have selected their gifts.

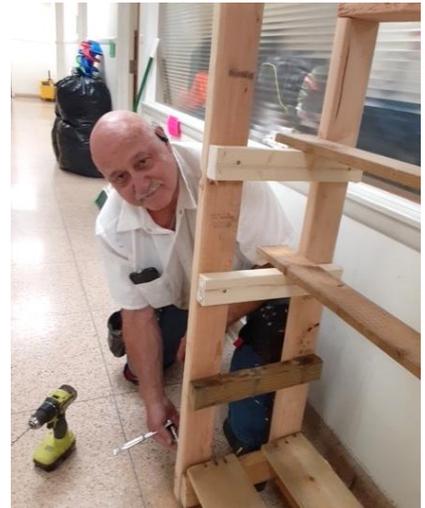


The Free Store

Every Wednesday afternoon, several Gather the Spirit volunteers sort donations and organize the Free Store that our host church operates on Fridays during their Food Pantry distribution. The Free Store contains clothing, shoes, toys, towels, kitchenware, books and bedding. Donations may be brought to the church or contact Pat Allen (patricialeschanoallen@gmail.com) or Ann Van Dyke (avandyke3@outlook.com).

Getting Organized!

Rev. Stephen Melton has been hard at work making us new shelves to organize our toiletries storage room and our Free Store sorting area. This will be SOOOO helpful for organizing and efficiently distributing the donations we receive from individuals, faith groups and civic groups in our community.



Helping Neighbors Find Housing

We are noticing a steady increase in the number of people who need help finding housing. Fortunately, our program director, Ben Perez, can provide a lot of guidance about the kind of housing assistance available in the Harrisburg area. The problem is, there is not enough. Two of the places to which we refer people are the YWCA for women and children and the Bethesda Mission for men. We almost always encourage people to call the Help Office, which is funded by Christian Churches United, where they can get on a waiting list. We are grateful for all of our partner organizations who directly address Harrisburg's increased housing needs.

Photo IDs, Driver's Licenses and Birth Certificates

We continue to see the enormous relief on people's faces when they learn Gather the Spirit can help them get/replace/renew a Pennsylvania ID or driver's license or help them get a copy of their birth certificate. During the end of the summer, a couple mothers came to us for help getting their children's birth certificates so that they could start school. People are often unable to afford to renew an expired ID at \$44.50 (!) even though they have a job. Word has spread that we offer this service and, although in August (a five Saturday month) we provided 61 checks and in September (four Saturdays) we provided 42, we must turn away people almost every week because of limited funds. We continue to seek grants and donations from area organizations and congregations.

Profile of a Partner

One of our newest Partner Organizations is the Harm Reduction Project. This group is dedicated to providing non-judgmental services including basic healthcare, education, and counseling to the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations of Dauphin County.



They offer safety measures for those who are at high risk for contracting blood-borne diseases. Also, they work to protect the public from the spread of diseases through referrals to other health care services, to help those seeking assistance return to their homes and workplaces.

The third Saturday of each month Sarah Ballard and her compatriots staff a table where they offer many handouts, pamphlets, and especially expert advice.

Sarah Ballard is no stranger to Gather the Spirit. She is a former Executive Board member and was formerly in charge of the Saturday Breakfasts. She currently works as a clinician and community coordinator with Penn State Health.

We really appreciate connecting up our Gather the Spirit community with important and relevant organizations such as the Harm Reduction Project!

Grants and Gifts

The **M&T Charitable Foundation** The Foundation provided us a generous gift of \$1,000 to contribute to the costs of our Saturday community breakfasts. Much of our food is obtained at low-cost or free from the local food bank; thus, these funds will go a long way toward feeding the average 225 people who stop in for breakfast each week.



The Club continues collecting toiletries for us!



The Hershey Company gifted us with three large cases containing a variety of individually wrapped candies to distribute as part of our Trick or Truck event. SWEET!

We are so grateful to all our regular donors who give whatever you can, whenever you can. Your continued support makes the work of Gather the Spirit possible. Your donations convey to people you've never met that their well-being matters.



Non-Profit Day

At the invitation of The Foundation for Enhancing Communities, Gather the Spirit volunteers staffed a table at the Farmer's Market for Third in the Burg Non-Profit Day. Not only did we have the opportunity to share information about our work, we connected with representatives of other groups that serve our community. Those connections will facilitate appropriate referrals for neighbors and help us work more effectively together.

New Volunteers

Often groups from a civic organization, business or house of worship come together to volunteer at the community center. In August, friends from Isaac's Restaurant visited to help in the kitchen and with serving.



Derry Presbyterian Church brought a group to the center on September 20th. The group helped in the kitchen and toiletries area. They also visited our ESL classrooms and spoke with our teachers. Derry Presbyterian also conducts ESL classes, so their teachers and ours exchanged ideas for books and class activity.

Save the Date: “Gather the Guitars” Benefit Concert — February 1st at The Abbey Bar

Get ready for an unforgettable afternoon of music and community spirit in Harrisburg! On Sunday, February 1st, Gather the Guitars returns to raise funds for our local nonprofit at The Abbey Bar, nestled inside the Appalachian Brewing Company at 50 N. Cameron Street. Doors open at 2:30 PM, and guests are invited to enjoy an all-ages showcase of guitar-driven performances—all for a great cause.

Mark Your Calendar

-  Sunday, February 1st
-  Doors open at 2:30 PM
-  The Abbey Bar at Appalachian Brewing Company, 50 N. Cameron St., Harrisburg, PA —an intimate and stylish setting with a strong local brewing reputation
-  \$25 admissions, 21 and older or accompanied by an adult, walk-ins welcome

What to Expect

Local guitarists and singer-songwriters will share the stage in an afternoon showcase of soulful tunes, energetic riffs, and heartfelt melodies. This family-friendly event offers something for every music lover and provides a unique opportunity to support a meaningful community cause. The event will include a silent auction and a raffle.

Why You Should Attend

Your ticket purchase supports the mission behind Gather the Spirit for Justice, a Harrisburg-based nonprofit dedicated to making a positive impact. Alongside raising funds, the event celebrates local artists and fosters community engagement in a laid-back, welcoming environment.

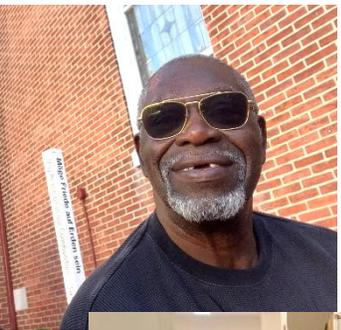
Venue Insight

The Abbey Bar at Appalachian Brewing Company is a beloved Harrisburg hotspot known for its cozy ambiance, craft brews, and live entertainment.

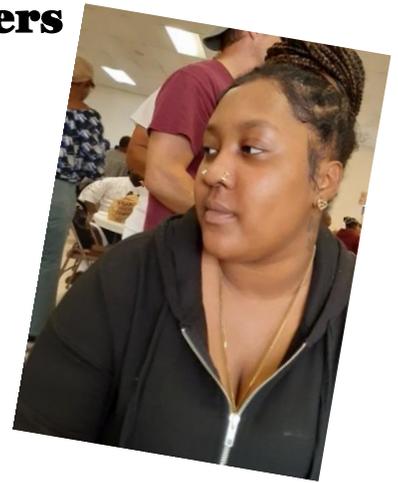
Stay tuned for announcements on performers and special guests. In the meantime, save the date, prepare for a day of music, community, and purpose! If you'd like to get involved with the planning committee, please don't hesitate to contact Linda at ldebease@icloud.com.



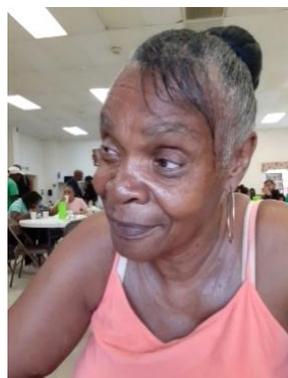
Meet Some of our Neighbors and Volunteers



More Neighbors and Volunteers



And More . . .



Sharing News from Our Friends

AMiracle Community: When the encampment of unhoused individuals living near PennDOT was scheduled to be disbanded to allow for expansion along a section of Interstate 83, AMiracle4sure worked with the unhoused, non-profits, the city and the county to develop new living arrangements for over 100 individuals. AMiracle Community began welcoming residents in August. There is currently space for 60 families to choose outdoor living. The property includes an office onsite where residents can receive case management support. Residents have access to a cooking area, a smoking area, two portable toilets, fresh water, charging stations, mail delivery, and dumpsters. Individuals and organizations who previously provided support at the encampment will continue to serve free meals, offer street medicine services, and provide opportunities for connection. To assist with purchase of items such as tents, cots, lanterns, security cameras, etc., use the following link: https://www.amazon.com/registries/gl/guest-view/2ETYMX5YNSQOZ?ref=cm_sw_r_cp_ud_ggr-subnav-share_RKV5QCQT38RDS DGN6X32

Heeding God's Call to End Gun Violence: The Dauphin County Chapter of Heeding God's Call to End Gun Violence is grateful that six different congregations in the Harrisburg area have hosted the Memorial to the Lost since May. The Memorial contains 55 t-shirts that list the name, age and date of death of people who have lost their lives to gun violence in the Harrisburg area during the last three years. The newest congregational partner is Peoples Community Baptist Church, 2001 Chestnut St. If you know of a congregation of any faith that would like to host the Memorial and be a part of the work to end gun violence, please contact Ann Van Dyke (avandyke3@outlook.com).

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

- Medical Clinic: Free, nurse-run, walk-in clinic that provides simple lab tests, basic physical assessments, and health ed. Mon-Fri 10 am-2:30pm. 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.
- Fit on the Hill: Exercise class is back from its summer break! Classes are held Saturdays at a new time – 9:00am. All ability levels are welcome.
- Spiritual Care: Pastor Best offers spiritual care to church members, community residents, and partner organizations. Please let him know if you would like to talk about how he can provide care. He will be in the Medical Clinic waiting area from 1:00-2:00pm every Wednesday to chat.



New time



Tell Us How to Use Your Donation!

If one of our activities especially touches your heart, you can designate how we use your donation:

- Sponsor an ID, driver's license or birth certificate. Donate \$42.50 for an ID or license or \$20 for a birth certificate. (Indicate "vital documents" on your check or with your donation.)
- Sponsor one Common Ground Coffee breakfast for \$250 **AND** (this is the most fun of all!) bring your own crew to do the serving. Contact Art at artwilliams7@gmail.com to arrange a Saturday of your choice.
- Contact Art at artwilliams7@gmail.com to arrange a Saturday of your choice.
- Sponsor an English textbook for \$10. (Indicate "ESL" on your check or with your donation.)
- Help sponsor a toiletries distribution. (Indicate "toiletries" on your check or with your donation.) You can also drop toiletries off at the community center any Saturday morning or leave them anytime on the porch at 4384 North 6th Street in Harrisburg.
- Contribute to general administration and the salary of our part-time Program Director.



Checks for donations to Gather the Spirit can be mailed to: **Austin Cheers, CPA, Miller Dixon Drake, PC, 701 N 2nd Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102**

You may also use Paypal with the address gtsfjinfohbg@gmail.com

[https://paypal.me/Gather the Spirit?country.x=US&locale.x=en_US](https://paypal.me/Gather%20the%20Spirit?country.x=US&locale.x=en_US)

venmo us @Gather the Spirit or donate via our website: gatherthespiritforjustice.org



You can also help by volunteering: VOLUNTEER every Saturday morning, 9 to 11 am for coffee and conversation! Volunteers prepare and serve snacks, welcome and interact with guests, and assist with setup and/or cleanup. To volunteer, contact Art at artwilliams7@gmail.com or drop by any Saturday morning. This link will take you to our volunteer signup page: <https://ttsu.me/zu5ejm> Or contact Glen at gdunbar47@gmail.com to volunteer in our English as a Second Language classes.

Contact Information

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

<https://gatherthespiritforjustice.org>

Patricia Allen patriciaeeschanoallen@gmail.com

Art Williams artwilliams7@gmail.com

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Kim Jarrett kimjarrett6640@gmail.com

Ann Van Dyke avandyke3@outlook.com

Linda DeBease ldebease@icloud.com

Glen Dunbar gdunbar47@gmail.com

Sol Vazquez-Otero

Mary Kelly kellyfamily17011@gmail.com

Program Director Ben Perez Ben.Perez@gatherthespiritforjustice.org

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.