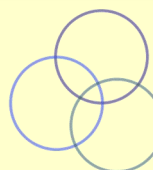


→ *Impact Report 2025* ←

HAGERSTOWN AREA RELIGIOUS COUNCIL



Our Year in the Community



HARC

Hagerstown Area Religious Council
we can do more TOGETHER

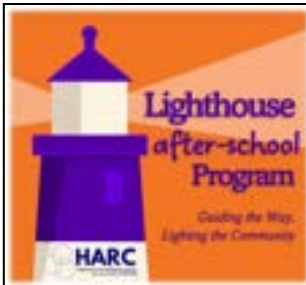


HARC's mission is to embody mercy, justice and love
as diverse faith partners in Washington County, Maryland.

~ IN THIS REPORT ~

WE BELIEVE in the power of faith communities working together.

- 4 Interfaith Progressive Dinner
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- 7 Interfaith Thanksgiving Service
- 8 Remembering Ed Poling

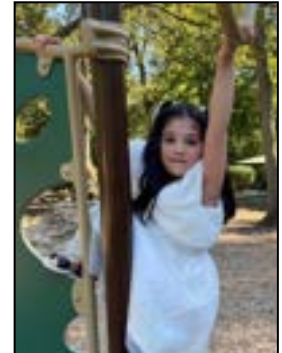


**WE BELIEVE in nurturing the
unlimited potential of every child.**

- 9 ENOUGH Initiative
- 10 Lighthouse After-School Program
- 11 Micah's Backpack

**WE BELIEVE all people have
equal value and are loved by God.**

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- 15 Washington County Black Professionals Network
- 16 Equity in Education Scholarships



WE BELIEVE in equipping one another to create stronger houses of worship.



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Message from HARC's Board president



Rabbi Mark Perman

Shalom everyone (in Hebrew it means both peace and hello),

I'm honored to have been the president of HARC's Board of Directors during the past year and am looking forward to the second year of my term, which begins in January.

As president, I've been able to witness and actively participate in an organization that is doing such important work in serving not just Washington County's interfaith community, but the community at large.

Just to point out a few highlights: In November we held HARC's annual Interfaith Community Thanksgiving Service at Congregation B'nai Abraham. It was very heartwarming to see all the participating clergy, members of our leadership team, and attendees from across Washington County who came together to celebrate God's gifts and to offer gratitude for all of our blessings. So many different faiths were represented this year, thanks to Rev. Sandy Boyer and her outstanding planning committee. Everyone I spoke to found the service to be very meaningful and connecting.

HARC's **Refugee Welcome Network** continues to work with and provide support for refugees who have come to this country to find a better life for themselves and their families. As of this writing, the Refugee Welcome Network has assisted 38 families with jobs, food, housing, and connection to other resources.

Micah's Backpack remains an extraordinary program that is a partnership between Washington County Public Schools, HARC, Maryland Food Bank, and more than 47 participating churches and community organizations. In 2025, the program served

more than 1,350 students in 38 schools, providing nutritious food to food-insecure school children each weekend of the school year. As the need continues to grow, the need for sponsors and volunteers also continues to grow.

The 2025-2026 school year is the second year of the **Lighthouse After-School Program**, which is a partnership between houses of worship in Washington County and Washington County Public Schools. Lighthouse provides supervised after-school activities and clubs for school children, meeting a critical need to enrich the lives of the kids who participate, provide good role models/mentorships, and potentially free up parents to work longer days.

There is so much more to be found in this comprehensive end-of-year Impact Report. If you'd like to contact me directly, you can do so via email: rabbimarkcba@gmail.com

As we begin 2026, I'd like to wish everyone all the best for this coming year and thank our staff, board, participating organizations, and volunteers for all their extraordinary work. We could not do it without you!

May this new year bring everyone good health, peace, and renewal of our commitment to building a better world that truly reflects the nature of God, and the presence of the divine within each one of us.

Blessings,

Rabbi Mark Perman

Congregation B'Nai Abraham
HARC Board President

We believe
in the power
of faith
communities
working
together.

We strive to
listen when
God is
speaking, and
act boldly
together
to make a
difference
in our
community.
We build
collaborations
across
boundaries
of religious
differences,
as well as with
community
organizations,
to do the work
we are called
to do.

THIS FIRST BELIEF STATEMENT IS **who we are**

The pages of this report are filled with evidence of the power of faith communities working together.

Much of this work also fits under other Belief Statements, so here we focus primarily on the building of interdenominational and interfaith relationships, which leads to more tangible efforts that fall under our other three Belief Statements.

Interfaith Progressive Dinner

On Saturday, September 20, about 90 people attended our annual **Interfaith Progressive Dinner**. Participating faith communities were Hebron Mennonite Church (Christian), Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist Temple (Buddhist), Congregation B'nai Abraham (Jewish), and the Islamic Society of Western Maryland (Muslim). At each location, guests enjoyed spiritually and culturally relevant foods and faith leaders presented a short program on the history and beliefs of their faith. This year, along with members of the Refugee Welcome Network, seven students from Hagerstown Community College World Religions classes also attended this unique event, experiencing first-hand the flavors of our area's diverse faith communities.



Left: The Hebron Mennonite Church choir performed for their Interfaith Progressive Dinner guests.

Below: A traditional Japanese Noodle Slide proved a fun and unique method of "catching" noodles for soup!

Below left: Some children played at the mosque during the event.





Left: The mosque of the Islamic Society of Western Maryland presented their legendary dessert buffet as the final stop for Interfaith Progressive Dinner guests.

Below: Guests enjoyed delicious food and fellowship at the synagogue of Congregation B'nai Abraham.



Faith leaders present at San Mar training

A panel of faith leaders participated in a training seminar in May to benefit San Mar Children & Family Services staff and foster parents. The focus of the discussion was understanding different faiths and how to best support foster children who come from different religious backgrounds.

From left: Jerica Washington, Paul Britner, Rev. Les McIntosh, Rabbi Mark Perman, Imam Nazir Faruki, Msgr. J. Bruce Jarboe, Kathy Powderly.

Hagerstown's annual Historic Houses of Worship Tour



Hagerstown's annual Historic Houses of Worship Tour was held on December 26.

Always free and open to the public, this event provides an opportunity each year to see the interiors of many historic downtown houses of worship.

Participants learned about the architecture and

heritage of each location from docents. Some locations provided music and refreshments.

This self-guided walking/driving tour was a collaboration of the houses of worship, HARC, the City of Hagerstown, and the Hagerstown-Washington County Convention & Visitor's Bureau.



Good Friday Unity Walk

On April 18, about 140 Christians from various denominations across the area came together at Hagerstown's City Park for HARC's annual Good Friday Unity Walk.

This walk, always free and open to the public, features readings and songs of faith as participants walk through the park, stopping at seven different

stations. After each station, someone volunteers to carry the cross to the next stop, symbolizing Christ's Passion. This moving experience begins the Easter season, and fosters a cohesive unity among Christian brothers and sisters.

"It was a very meaningful Good Friday reflection for me," said one participant afterwards.



Interfaith Community Thanksgiving service



Our annual Interfaith Community Thanksgiving Service was held on Sunday, November 23, at Congregation B'Nai Abraham in Hagerstown. Leaders from various faith traditions — including Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, and Native American — participated in this unique service.

A community choir was featured, with many

volunteer vocalists arriving early to practice "Prayer of Thanksgiving," presented during the service.

A free-will offering was taken at the door of shelf-stable food and monetary donations for the St. Mark's Lutheran Church Community Food Bank. Guests enjoyed a reception held afterwards in the synagogue's fellowship hall.



Above: Venerable Temm Bikle, Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist, offers a chant during the service. **At right:** Rev. Les Macintosh, Impact Ministries; Gita Kali Natarajan, Hindu; and Paula Myers, Baha'i.



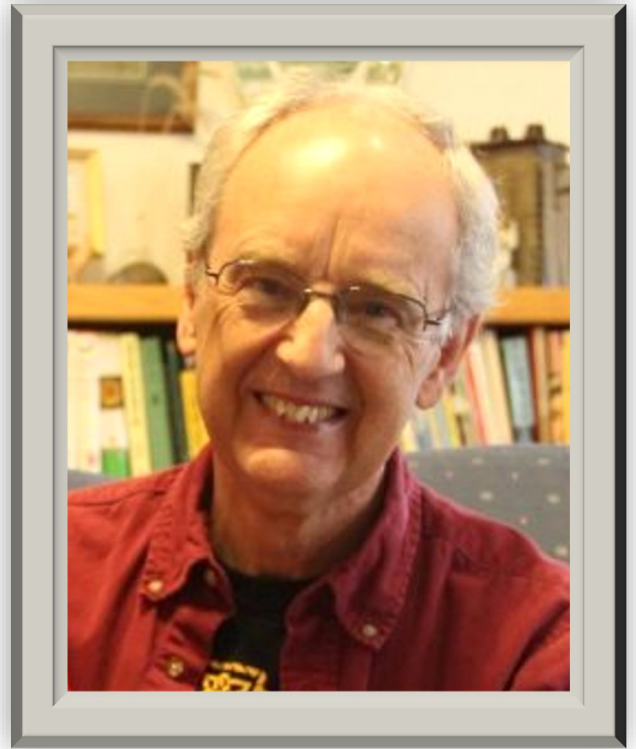
Above: Imam Nazir Faruki, Islamic Society of Western Maryland
Top photo: No fewer than 15 leaders from diverse faith traditions lit candles of peace and gratitude to end the service.

In remembrance of Rev. Ed Poling

ED POLING WAS A LONG-TIME MEMBER AND active volunteer with HARC. He was instrumental in starting HARC's Interfaith Coalition in February 2002. The Interfaith Coalition was formed by the Washington County Council of Churches (now HARC), and included representatives from Jewish, Muslim, and Christian faiths to provide a forum for interfaith dialogue in our community following the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

Representatives from Baha'i and Buddhist traditions, as well as other religious and humanist communities participate today, and the interfaith work has blended into HARC as part of our overall mission and identity.

Today's Interfaith Team is still energized by the important work of building bridges, relationships, and understanding across religious boundaries in Washington County.



Ed Poling / 1947-2025



Hike Leader Ed 2018 Challenge Hike
"The Year of Flooding"

Leaving more than a legacy

Ed also led the planning team for the Good Friday Unity Walk for many years with a small group of volunteers. This walk, held on Good Friday each spring, originally began as the Good Friday Walk for Justice in downtown Hagerstown before moving to City Park in recent years. It has grown to well over 100 participants from many different Christian denominations.

Not only was Ed faithful, caring, and peace-oriented as a pastor and leader, he also was an active "doer." A seasoned athlete, Ed started the HARC Hike *for Hunger & Hope* in 2012, hiking the full 41 miles of the Appalachian Trail in Maryland — in one day! — to raise money for HARC to hire an Executive Director. He worked tirelessly on the Hike Planning Team each year, his leadership and logistical skills helping the Hike to evolve into a successful annual fundraiser, for which he personally raised more than \$45,000. Following Ed's passing in January 2025, the Hike Planning Team decided to rename the

Hike in Ed's honor. It's now "The Ed Poling Memorial HARC Hike *for Hunger & Hope*."

It would be difficult to overstate the extensive, positive impact Ed had on not just HARC, but our wider community. We remain forever grateful for his vision, his leadership, his work, and his friendship.

We believe
in the
unlimited
potential of
every child.

We focus our
collaborative
efforts on
building
supports
around and
creating
opportunities
for children
and families.

ENOUGH Initiative

Every child deserves more than just a chance to survive — they deserve the opportunity to thrive. The ENOUGH Initiative recognizes that people who live in a community are best positioned to lead the change in that community.

HARC is grateful to be a partner alongside the Asian American Center of Frederick (AACF) in the Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments and Households (ENOUGH) initiative.

Led by San Mar Family & Community Services/Bester Community of Hope, this unique Maryland state grant-funded program is a multi-partner collaborative effort to alleviate poverty for children and families in the south end of Hagerstown. This initiative aims to strategically address generational poverty and promote a legacy of economic mobility through critical support and resources.

The role of AACF and HARC in this initiative is to come alongside diverse families to help them overcome their unique barriers and begin to thrive. Our two Bilingual Community Workers, Jane Powell and Julien Patrick Tete Wabo, have a passion for serving and building community. Together, they have built relationships and trust, and connected families to tangible resources, including medical and dental care, mental health care, food, clothing, housing assistance, employment opportunities, English classes and more.

Amid this tangible work, Jane and Julien Patrick are connecting people to one another, building *community* and collective strength. The success of this work culminated in a year-end holiday celebration planned by the families and attended by around 100 people. The celebration reflected the strength of the relationships they have helped foster and the community families have built together.



May through December 2025:

43 diverse families served
(approximately 200 individuals)
600+ service connections

In October 2025, HARC and the Asian American Center of Frederick (AACF) received an Outstanding Service Award. Specifically highlighted was the work of **Jane Powell** and **Julien Patrick Tete Wabo** for their exemplary efforts in building partnerships that help families in our community.

From left: TJ Sydykof of the AACF, Jane Powell, Elizabeth Chung of the AACF, Kathy Powderly of HARC, and Julien Patrick Tete Wabo.

Lighthouse After-School Program

BY ANGELA YAMASHITA / PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Now in its second year, HARC's Lighthouse After-School Program continues to make a meaningful difference for families across Washington County.

Lighthouse introduced several new programs this school year, including "Livin' It Up," a social-emotional learning program; Rope Warriors, a double-dutch jump rope program; and a knitting club.

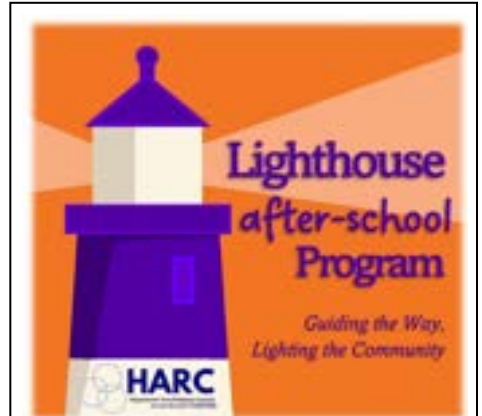
You can check out the stats at right, comparing our programming this year with last year. While the data is great, this program's impact often shows up in small moments.

Helping students grow

One of our schools shared that the Astronomy Club, which we've offered since 2024, was one of the best clubs they've ever had. In Game Club, students who once refused to join in and acted out during club time began to open up. By the end of the school year, they were participating in activities and learning to communicate and collaborate with others. It's a simple shift that speaks to a deeper truth: when students feel safe and included, they grow.

This program is possible only because of the dedication of our talented program leaders and the vision and support of our community partners. We are grateful for the houses of worship that have invested their time and hearts into beginning and sustaining this work, and for several funders that have invested their dollars. We also rely on the partnership of WCPS staff, who help make Lighthouse accessible to families.

Lighthouse continues to fill a critical need in our community. Students are building the confidence and social-emotional skills they need in school and at home, families have peace of mind knowing their children have safe, fun after-school care, and children are surrounded by encouraging adults who believe in them.



BY THE NUMBERS:

2024-25 SCHOOL YEAR

Lighthouse finished strong:

300+ children served
14 unique programs, filling
52 programming slots in
7 schools

2025-26 SCHOOL YEAR (FIRST HALF)

300+ children served
9 unique programs, filling
33 programming slots in
6 schools



Elementary school children participate in "Livin' It Up," a social-emotional learning program introduced this year in the Lighthouse After-School Program.

Lighthouse serves between 180 and 300 students each week through after-school programming. Each club typically serves 15 to 20 students.

Micah's Backpack

is a partnership of HARC, Washington County Public Schools, Maryland Food Bank, and 48 sponsoring houses of worship and community organizations.



In 2025, the program served more than 1,300 students in 38 schools in Washington County. More than 12,000 students in WCPS are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. For many kids, their lunch at school will be the last hot meal of the day. Children are especially hungry over the weekends when school is not in session.

Developed in Washington County by Trinity Lutheran Church in 2010 with HARC joining in 2012, Micah's Backpack continues to grow every year. We are grateful for all our sponsoring houses of worship and community organizations that do the work each week of assembling the backpacks and delivering them to the schools they sponsor. Also essential partners in this work are the school liaisons, since they're responsible for identifying children who are food-insecure, and they make sure those students receive their bags of food each week.

This program would not be possible without the Maryland Food Bank, our primary source of affordable food and a strong partner in addressing food insecurity. We are most grateful to the many generous funders listed at the back of this report.



Making a positive difference:

- 51% of parents said their children do better in school since receiving the bags
- 57% of school staff think the program has been helpful in increasing attendance
- 80% of school staff agreed students are more engaged in learning during the school day
- 97% of school staff said this program cultivates a more positive relationship between students and coordinators and school staff

Above and at right:

Taken at the Maryland Food Bank in September 2025, these photos show volunteers working on food distribution for the Micah's Backpack program.

At the start of the 2025-2026 school year, more than \$70,000 worth of food was purchased and distributed to sponsoring houses of worship and community organizations.



We asked: "What do you like about Micah's Backpack?"

KIDS:

"It helps us out."

"I like everything."

"I have food now."

"Helps with no food at home."

"The food is so good!"

PARENTS:

"This program really helps us out when my husband lost his job and we fell on hard times."

"The high cost of groceries makes it hard to meet the needs of my family. This helps ease that need."

Source: Washington County Public Schools Micah's Backpack Survey conducted Spring 2025

We are so grateful to the many volunteers of our partner houses of worship and organizations who did the bulk of the day-to-day work of providing food for children through Micah's Backpack in 2025:



America's Hauling for Hope
Bethel United Methodist Church
Brownsville Church of the Brethren
Christ's Reformed Church
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Concordia Lutheran Church
Crossroads Church
Emmanuel United Methodist Church
Evangel Baptist Church
Grace United Methodist Church
First Christian Church
Hagerstown Church of the Brethren
Hagerstown Church of the Nazarene
Haven Lutheran Church
Hilltop Fellowship Church
Hollowell Brethren in Christ
Hub City Vineyard
Interfaith Service Coalition
John Wesley United Methodist Church
Marsha Green & Family
Maugansville Bible Brethren
Mt. Moriah Lutheran Church
Otterbein United Methodist Church
Paramount Brethren in Christ
Presbyterian Church of Hagerstown

Redeeming Grace Church
Rehoboth United Methodist Church
Ringgold Church
Saint James School
Salem Lutheran Church
Shiloh United Methodist Church
Smithsburg Valley Church
South Washington County Food Pantry
South Washington County Ministerium
St. Andrew Presbyterian Church
St. Ann Catholic Church
St. John's Episcopal Church
St. John's Lutheran Church
St. Joseph Catholic Church
St. Mark's Episcopal Church
St. Mark's Lutheran Church
St. Mary Catholic School
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Funkstown
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Smithsburg
Trinity Lutheran Church, Hagerstown
Trinity Lutheran Church, Smithsburg
Unitarian Universalist Church of Hagerstown
Williamsport United Methodist Church
Zion Lutheran Church
Zion Reformed United Church of Christ

We believe
all people
have equal
value and
are loved
by God.

We seek
justice for
those who are
not treated
equally or
given equal
value by our
broken world.
We strive to
lift up the
unique gifts
and abilities of
people and
empower them
to be who they
were made
to be.

Refugee Welcome Network

In 2025, the Refugee Welcome Network (RWN) assisted a total of 28 families, which included 44 adults and 48 children.



Even better, 19 families/individuals “graduated” in 2025, which means they’ve settled into homes, work and life, and are financially independent.

Of the new families welcomed by RWN in 2025, the majority are from Afghanistan, with others coming from Iran, Haiti, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Angola, and El Salvadore. Each family brings pieces of their unique and beautiful culture and a strong desire to work and fit into this community.

Each “graduate” family has gotten established in their new Washington County home with stable housing, work, improved English skills, a community of friends, and more. This is due to their hard work, and the generosity of many in the community who have donated time, talents, funds, and goods.

Annual Planning Retreat

In August, the RWN held its annual Planning Retreat to review the program and decide what changes need to be made to better help newcomers to our community. The group prioritized providing enhanced legal assistance in light of current U.S. administration policies, as well as post-graduate workforce development, which for some individuals includes entrepreneurial work. The growing talent pool includes an excellent seamstress, drivers, a cleaning crew, and some who are seeking work or training in IT, HVAC, automotive repair, accounting, and the medical field.

The annual Refugee Welcome Network Family Picnic was a potluck held at Hagerstown’s City Park in September. RWN families and volunteers gathered to connect, make new friends, and of course, eat!



One family's journey

A new family of three arrived from Iran via diversity lottery in late October. They came with almost nothing and were walking from agency to agency in Hagerstown looking for assistance.

They stayed in the home of a kind family, but had limited time to get out on their own, yet their green cards and social security cards had not yet arrived and they couldn't work for income.

They were referred to RWN by two agencies, and with the urgent nature of their situation, Basheer, one of our members who speaks Farsi, called them from outside of the country just to get their full story and see if we could help them.

The mother was so grateful for his friendly call that she thanked him over and over. RWN accepted the family a few days later, got them into housing the following week, helped to furnish the apartment, got their son enrolled in school, provided food and clothing, and signed them up for English classes, all in a short window of time.

There is still much to do, but this family feels welcomed and supported, and they are well on their way to making Hagerstown home.



Above: Ahmad and Mary Shadan address the group during the annual Refugee Welcome Network Planning Retreat held in August.



At left: Julien Patrick Tete Wabo, Josh Brown, and Elizabeth Chung help with moving furniture generously donated to the Refugee Welcome Network by the Asian American Center of Frederick.



To learn more about the Refugee Welcome Network, scan the code.

The RWN is always in need of volunteers and there are many opportunities to help! To volunteer, donate furniture and goods, or to inquire about hiring someone from our Workforce Development initiative, please email: refugeewelcome@harccoalition.org



Now we feel you are like our family member, we can share our good or bad news with you and our door is always open for you as well.”

— Refugee client of the RWN

Racial Justice

Formed in 2021, HARC's Racial Justice Team seeks equity, opportunities, and to highlight the myriad of gifts of our Black brothers and sisters in Washington County, Md. This active team developed goals and continues to work toward them with energy and enthusiasm.

HARC's Board of Directors and this team are committed to the long-term, at times challenging work. We believe it will not only serve African Americans, but will bless our entire community as we embrace all people and cultures in love and unity.

Washington County Black Professionals Network

BY TANIA ANDERSON / CO-LEADER RACIAL JUSTICE TEAM

The Washington County Black Professionals Network (WCBPN) held several meetings on the last Wednesday of the month throughout the year. Most of the meetings took place at Grace Methodist Church in Hagerstown, or 19th Hole at Black Rock Restaurant in Hagerstown.

The WCBPN supported two events led by members with a contribution toward their program. The events were the "2025 Back to School Bash" which donated backpacks and other services to children in our community before the school year started, and also supported the "2025 Black Out Gala," an annual event hosted by the Black Owned Business Community.

Our monthly meetings will resume in January 2026. On Saturday, February 21, 2026, the WCBPN will host a business networking event, where pre-selected businesses and vendors will be featured.



For updates on meetings and events, follow our Facebook page by scanning this code.



Black-Owned Business Directory

The WCBPN maintains a Black-Owned Business Directory on HARC's website. From home décor and design to consulting and legal services, this directory provides a wealth of Black-owned businesses in the area. To view or download your copy of the Black-Owned Business Directory, visit harccoalition.org/black-owned-business-directory or scan this QR code:



Equity in Education Scholarship

The Equity in Education scholarship fund was designed to remove barriers for racially minoritized individuals to become educators in Washington County Public Schools.

Multiple scholarships are awarded annually ranging from \$1,500 to \$7,000 to racially minoritized students who reside and/or teach in Washington County, Md., and are pursuing a degree in education or a related field. Scholarships may be eligible for renewal until degree is obtained.

For the 2025-2026 scholarship cycle, two applicants were chosen: **Janeice Bates** and **Carmen Diaz**. Both were second-year recipients as each continues to pursue her teaching degree.

Pictured at right is **Precious Steel**, a 2024 recipient of an Equity in Education Scholarship and a 2025 graduate of Frostburg State University!

Application period is February 1 through March 31 annually.

We are seeking donations for the 2026-2027 scholarship cycle and to build an endowment to continually fund this scholarship in the future. Donations can be made securely through the HARC website, designated to the "Equity in Education Scholarship," or scan the QR code.



Precious Steel



Gratitude for a dream fulfilled

Hakema Mutanu was a winner of the 2024 Equity in Education Scholarship. She just started a full-time position teaching Art at Lincolnshire Elementary School in Hagerstown, and wrote this note to the scholarship team:

"Thank you so much, everyone, for the kind and encouraging words. I completed my first full day of teaching yesterday, and it has been a wonderful experience so far. I feel truly blessed to be here.

"Without the Equity in Education Scholarship, I would not be here today. Thank you for believing in me and supporting my dream which has now come to fruition.

"I hope you all have a wonderful holiday and look forward to many great days ahead."

We believe
in equipping
one another

to create
stronger
houses of
worship.

We build
relationships
among clergy
and people of
faith, and
support and
encourage one
another.

We provide
information,
resources, and
connections to
enhance the
work of
congregations,
ministries, and
community
organizations.

connect & learn

AT OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS

One of the ways we equip one another is by presenting informational programs at our monthly meetings. Programs are relevant for and geared toward faith leaders and members, but anyone can attend. Our meetings are also a great place to network, catch up with old friends and meet new ones. Below are meeting summaries and program topics of 2025.

At our **JANUARY Annual Meeting**, HARC members voted on the 2025 budget, elected and welcomed new Board officers, and reviewed our strategic plan. We also thanked outgoing Board officers, and recognized Mike and Beth Johnston for the generosity of God's Grace Fund which has blessed HARC and our community for many years.

Our **FEBRUARY** meeting was canceled due to inclement weather.

In **MARCH**, HARC's Interfaith Team hosted an **Interfaith Roundtable Discussion**, providing an opportunity to talk about the philosophies and beliefs of various faith traditions, and to get to know one another better.

Our **APRIL** meeting featured a **panel of faith leaders** who talked about how they are handling the challenges of the current polarized mood of our country, down to the local church/organizational level. Round-table discussions in small groups helped participants further process these challenges through a faith-based lens.

You Tube In **MAY**, we welcomed Emily Keller, Special Secretary of Overdose Response for the State of Maryland (*pictured at right*). Secretary Keller also served as the first female Mayor of Hagerstown from 2020-2023. She provided an update on the work of the Maryland Office of Overdose Response, including the promotion of Gov. Wes Moore's agenda to focus on programs and policies under five pillars: Prevention, Harm Reduction, Treatment, Recovery, and Public Safety.



You Tube Our **JUNE** meeting introduced the Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments and Households (**ENOUGH**) initiative, of which HARC is an active part in partnership with the Asian American Center of Frederick (AACF). This unique Maryland state grant-funded initiative is a collaborative effort to alleviate poverty for children and families in the south end of Hagerstown, led by San Mar/Bester Community of Hope. Julien Patrick Tete Wabo (*pictured at left*) spoke during this meeting.



You Tube

Some of our programs/speakers can be viewed on HARC's YouTube channel. Look for the YouTube icon.



~ No monthly meetings are held in July or August. ~

You Tube In **SEPTEMBER**, members of the Washington County Homeless Coalition shared updates on the collaborative work being done in our county to reduce homelessness and how the faith community can help. Mayor Bill McIntire and Hagerstown Police Chief Paul Kifer also spoke.

In **OCTOBER**, Dottie Gruler, Chairperson for Rising To Learn, introduced us to this new organization which is dedicated to ensuring children in Washington County Public Schools have access and opportunity to reach unlimited potential in their education. Ms. Gruler shared that the organization's mission is to serve as a transparent and accessible communication hub, by offering concise reports on school board meetings, explanations of board processes and actions, as well as links to resources.

During the **NOVEMBER** meeting, HARC members and friends participated in roundtable conversations and fellowship. Participants discussed some tough questions, each from their own individual spiritual perspective, enjoyed learning from one another, and getting to know one another better.

In **DECEMBER**, Dr. David Baker, Executive Director of Hope Beyond Our Grief presented a workshop on "Coping With Your Grief at the Holiday Season." He offered helpful tips on navigating the festive season while your heart is under the cloud of sadness. He also provided access to resources for training and support throughout the year.



Members of the Washington County Homeless Coalition who spoke at the September meeting were, from left, Jeannie Asbury, Executive Director of Reach of Washington County; Tim Fisher with Community Action Council; and Kelli Black with the Mental Health Authority.

HARC would like to gratefully acknowledge the houses of worship and community partners who so graciously hosted our monthly meetings in 2025. Providing meeting space, AV equipment, and dedicated volunteers who made and served delicious buffet meals for 30-50 people each month are all commitments to service that we so appreciate.



January: St. Ann Roman Catholic Church
February: *meeting canceled due to inclement weather*
March: Unity of Hagerstown
April: Grace United Methodist Church
May: Otterbein United Methodist Church

June: Congregation B'nai Abraham
September: Reach of Washington County
October: Grace United Methodist Church
November: Otterbein United Methodist Church
December: Beaver Creek Church of the Brethren

Ideas for monthly programs? Interested in hosting? Please let us know!

Do you or your organization have an idea for a HARC monthly program topic? Would your house of worship or organization be interested in hosting a HARC meeting in 2026?

If so, contact Kathy at director@harccoalition.org or call 301-842-4272.

For a wealth of resources and information to address the different kinds of needs people may have in our community, visit:

harccoalition.org

Under our **Resources** tab, you'll find lists of community resources for food, clothing, personal care; children and families; housing and shelter; immigrant resources; and more.

We offer downloadable resources for clergy and congregational vitality; faith-based counseling services; racial justice resources, and more.

Stay connected

HARC's Weekly Bible Study

Held on Tuesdays at 9 a.m. at Safron Bakery Café, 287 Eastern Boulevard North, Hagerstown, this is a time for pastors to dig into scripture with other pastors and support one another in ministry. Typically follows the Lectionary, so it also can help you prepare your sermons a week ahead if you follow the Lectionary cycle.

Meetings with city, county officials

HARC representatives met regularly in 2025 with Hagerstown's Mayor and a Washington County Commissioner, to exchange information and ideas on how we can work together to improve our community. Faith leaders from HARC also provide invocations at County Commissioners' and City Council meetings.

Quarterly Spiritual Leaders Connection

A quarterly opportunity for just spiritual leaders to connect, build relationships, tackle tough issues as they arise, consider ways we can support one another better, and dream together about ways we can serve the community and our congregations.



Season for Nonviolence

January 30 through April 4 each year



The official Season for Nonviolence begins by marking the anniversary of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on January 30 and ends on the April 4 anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

Between these dates are 64 days to practice the principles of Gandhi, King, and others to bring about peace and nonviolence in our world today.

Under the "Resources" tab, HARC's website offers a selection of materials to help congregations and individuals grow in their knowledge and practice of nonviolence and peacemaking. From books and articles to videos, you'll find everything you need to begin a mindful practice of peace and nonviolence.

We invite you to start practicing during the Season for Nonviolence and continue to use these principles and practices throughout the year.



What is a Parish Nurse?

Parish Nurses (PNs) are registered nurses who are paid or volunteer their time to bring health and wellness activities to their home congregations.

Parish Nursing, or Faith Community Nursing, is a specialty practice in nursing, endorsed by the American Nurses Association.

Some common services that parish nurses bring to individuals and families are:

- blood pressure screenings
- health education programs
- one-to-one health counseling
- referrals to health-related community resources
- advocacy in our complex healthcare system

Parish nurses do not provide “hands-on” clinical care, but instead are integrators of faith and health, recognizing that the interconnectedness of mind, body, and spirit leads to improved health and well-being.

Parish Nursing Program

BY WENDY ZIMMERMAN, BSN, RN-BC / LEAD, OTTERBEIN UMC

The Parish Nursing Program in Washinton County has been in existence since 1996. For 25 years, the program was sponsored by the Washington County Hospital, then Meritus Health. In July of 2023, the program was welcomed into the community under the auspices of HARC.

Our current network partners with 20 faith communities in the Tri-State region, and also reaches into Delaware. Network leadership is provided by seven faith-filled and skilled professional parish nurses, committed to this ongoing ministry of health and wholeness.

Our regional network holds quarterly meetings, during which continuing professional education for the PNs is provided, along with opportunities for sharing and networking. We also produce a quarterly newsletter that offers ideas for programming and spiritual enrichment that PNs can implement in their own faith communities.

More recently, thanks to a grant from the Kirshner Sisters and Sinnisen Foundation, 13 local congregations were able to replace expired AED pads, provide CPR training (*pictured at right*), purchase new or restock existing first aid kits, and host “Stop the Bleed” classes.

Partnering faith communities in Washinton County:

Bethel Worship Center, Hagerstown COB, Hagerstown Church of the Nazarene, John Wesley UMC, New Life Christian Ministries, Otterbein UMC, St. Ann Catholic Church, St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, The Broadfording COB Fellowship, Tri-State Fellowship, Zion Reformed UCC, and an at-large parish nurse-member of St. Joseph Catholic Church.



Interested in learning more about Parish Nursing?

Contact PNTeam@harccoalition.org

Pending membership approval at the Annual Meeting...

HARC welcomes new Board members



Jason Call

Jason has been selected to serve as HARC's Treasurer.

Originally from Humble, Texas, Jason has lived in Washington County since 2007. He currently serves as the Hagerstown Maryland Stake President for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, a role he has held for the past four years, following prior leadership positions in the City Park congregation.

Jason is the Chief Operating Officer of Blue Ridge Risk Partners, a local insurance brokerage firm. His career also includes managing North America Fraud and Credit teams for Citigroup. He earned a Psychology degree from Brigham Young University and an MBA from Texas A&M.

Jason and his wife, Dadra, married in 2004 and have five children: Abby (19), Landon (17), Nolan (14), Maylie (11), and Hudson (6).

"I value HARC's mission of showing God's love through small acts," Jason says. "I look forward to collaborating with faith leaders to strengthen the community."



Pastor Steve Humphrey

Pastor Steve Humphrey will begin his two-year term as an at-large Board member in January 2026. He's served as a United Methodist minister for more than 30 years.

A resident of Hagerstown for the past three years, Pastor Steve holds both a Master of Divinity and a Doctor of Ministry from Wesley Theological Seminary, where his doctoral work focused on leading change. He's served congregations and communities across Maryland. An avid reader of the classics—especially Stoic philosophy—Pastor Steve also enjoys watching whatever his wife and kids are into, and lifting weights.

"I'm honored to serve on the HARC Board and to support its vital work," he says. "I have a deep enthusiasm for HARC's mission."



Pastor E. Scott Winnette

Pastor E. Scott Winnette has been named as an at-large member of HARC's Board of Directors for a two-year term beginning in January 2026.

Pastor Scott is currently serving the Zion Reformed United Church of Christ on North Potomac Street in Hagerstown. He's been at Zion Reformed UCC for several years, commuting from Myersville, Md. For more than 30 years, Pastor Scott has served in UCC, as well as Presbyterian congregations.

Pastor Scott has been involved with HARC's Lighthouse After-School Program since its inception, volunteering as the program's Steering Team Leader. "I look forward to serving in other ways as a Board member."

Both Pastor Scott and his husband are passionate about historic preservation. He says: "We live in a historic farmhouse that's listed on the National Register of Historic Places."

The Ed Poling Memorial **HARC Hike for Hunger & Hope**

OUR BIGGEST FUNDRAISER OF THE YEAR



On Saturday, May 31, around 115 people turned out for The Ed Poling Memorial HARC Hike *for Hunger and Hope*, undeterred by reports of muddy ground or possible rain.

Spirits were high as participants enjoyed a 4K, 10K or half-marathon hike on the beautiful C&O Canal Towpath and the trails of Shepherd's Spring Camp and Retreat Center. Afterward, they were treated to a delicious buffet lunch prepared by local restaurant The 19th Hole/Harambee54, as well as music, fellowship, prizes, and an on-screen tribute to Hike founder Ed Poling. We were especially honored to have Ed's sister, Beckie, join us for our post-hike celebration.



Fundraising match

Between this main Hike and the May 17 Challenge Hike, the combined events raised more than \$80,000 for Micah's Backpack, the Refugee Welcome Network and other programs of HARC! This was in great part thanks to many participants seeking donations for their hike paired with a 2-1 fundraising match from the God's Grace Fund.

Top fundraisers — Thank you!

The top fundraising individuals were Christine Finke and Becky Fritts (Challenge Hike) and Mary & John Means (Canal Hike). Top fundraising teams were Hebron Mennonite Church for Ed Poling (Canal Hike) and Otterbein United Methodist Church (Challenge Hike).



Top photo: Many hikers participate as part of a team. **Bottom photo:** HARC Board member Ashlee Harris, left, and her daughter, Hanna, tackled the 4K together.



THE ED POLING MEMORIAL HARC HIKE FOR HUNGER & HOPE

Support is everything

We are so grateful to everyone who made this event possible and successful, with special thanks to our amazing HARC Hike Planning Team: Kelly Conrad, Beth Johnston, Ed Maloy, Deacon Sue Wert, Bill Pike, Butch Eigenbrode, Ted & Elizabeth Howe, and Kathy Powderly.

We also could not do this without our incredible sponsors, including God's Grace Fund (matching donor and lunch sponsor), Columbia Gas/NiSource, JLG/Jerr-Dan, First Christian Church, the Poole Law Group, and many others.

Churches and nonprofits loaned us use of their vans and drivers for the day: Girls Inc., Christ's Reformed United Church of Christ, St. John's Episcopal Church, and Valley Grace Brethren Church. Many thanks to all of you!



Let's do it again!

Mark your calendar now for the 2026 hikes:
The Challenge Hike on Saturday, May 16 and
the **Canal Hike** will be **Saturday, May 30** at a
NEW location in Williamsport.



Top photo: Jamal and Wasiq, members of the Refugee Welcome Network, volunteered to help serve lunch to hungry hikers after they crossed the finish line.

The Challenge Hike on May 17



Most of these fearless hikers trained for months to take on 20 mountainous miles on the Appalachian Trail to raise funds for the Hike.

Thank you to our generous donors:



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“News Flash”

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to ensure HARC can offer quality resources and programs.*

Kathy Powderly
Executive Director
director@harccoalition.org
301.842.4272 (HARC Office)



Elizabeth Howe
Executive Assistant
elizabeth@harccoalition.org
301.842.4272 (HARC Office)