



The New York State Council of Churches, founded in 1893, represents 7,500 congregations across the State of New York. We are comprised of nine partner denominations including American Baptist Churches USA, Empire Baptist Missionary Convention (National Baptist Convention), The Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church USA, The Reformed Church in America, The Religious Society of Friends, United Church of Christ, and The United Methodist Church.

NYSOC's mission is rooted in the Christian covenant to care for one another, safeguard the presence of communities of faith, extend hospitality to all, and boldly witness to God's justice in the world. Through collective action, NYSOC pursues its mission goals that can be achieved more effectively in partnership,

Our work is divided into three commissions: Chaplaincy, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, and Social Justice. The Social Justice Commission has several working groups: Criminal Justice Reform, Economic Justice, Environmental Justice, Housing Justice, and Immigration/Racial Justice. If you are interested in joining us for any of this work, sign up [here](#), at <https://gqr.sh/DCV5>, call us at 518-436-9319, or scan the QR code.



Here is a brief look at the past year in review:

Staffing Updates – After 10 years with the Council the Rev. Peter Cook has transitioned from his role as Executive Director. We thank him for his work and years advancing the mission of the Council. We are pleased to announce that Ms. Rashida Tyler, who has served as Deputy Executive Director since 2023, has been promoted to Acting Executive Director. Ms. Tyler brings strong leadership skills, strategic clarity, and a deep commitment to the Council's mission. Among her priorities are strengthening internal capacity, elevating the voice of clergy and faith leaders, and deepening connections with social justice advocacy partners. She is focused on increasing internal organization and operational effectiveness, with particular attention to programming, finance, and administrative systems to ensure faithful stewardship for the future. Rashida will continue to expand the Council's outreach to diverse communities, strengthening relationships with our current denominations, and recruiting new denominations to join our common work.

Rev. Jim Ketcham remains on staff as our Chaplaincy Certification Coordinator, shepherding clergy through the process to become certified chaplains for NY State agencies – Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), Office of Mental Health (OMH), Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), and Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS).

Heather Smith continues in her role as the Office Manager and Director of Communications.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Advocacy Days – In March 2026, we hosted a successful 2026 Ecumenical and Interfaith Advocacy Day across March 9th and 10th, bringing together faith leaders and community members from across New York to strengthen a shared voice for justice. Participants engaged in learning about priority legislation within the state budget, meeting with lawmakers, and standing together in faithful witness. The gathering was enriched by an inspiring keynote from Rev. Amaury Tañón-Santos, as well as a timely and practical workshop led by representatives of the Columbia County Sanctuary Movement on how congregations can respond if ICE comes to their churches. This is an annual event so, please consider joining us in 2027 – watch our website for more information www.nyscoc.org.

Gathering of Faith Leaders with the NYS Office of Faith and Nonprofit Development Services – In December 2025, the Social Justice Commission organized its second annual meeting with Governor Hochul's Office of Faith and Non-Profit Development Services, NYSOC Executive Committee members, Social Justice group members, and judicatory heads met online to address general and specific concerns related to our legislative priorities with staff members of this office. We plan to make this an ongoing, annual meeting in Late November- early December.

10th Annual Awards & Fundraising Gala – Held in November 2025, in Albany, we honored several people this year, including UNY’s own Dr. Scott Johnson. We were honored to have Bishop Héctor Burgos-Núñez provide our opening prayer. Find our informative program booklet [here](https://gqr.sh/fML4), <https://gqr.sh/fML4>, or by scanning the QR code to the right:



Chaplains Conference – In October 2025, Protestant Chaplains gathered in Liverpool, NY for this annual training and networking event. The program theme was "Moral Injury," and the keynote speaker was Rev. Dr. Anthony Hedley, Emeritus Professor of Pastoral Care, Asbury Theological Seminary. This is open to professional and volunteer chaplains. Please consider joining us for the next one!

Interfaith Affordable Housing Collaborative – The Interfaith Affordable Housing Collaborative (IAHC) provides technical assistance and pre-development funding to faith-based institutions that wish to develop affordable housing throughout New York State. In June 2025, the IAHC hosted “*Rebuilding the Sacred Hearts of Our Communities*” at The Riverside Church in New York City. Over 200 faith leaders, clergy, real estate professionals and advocates learned about the affordable housing development process, financing and experience of Faith leaders currently developing affordable housing projects. To learn more, contact Rashida Tyler, Project Manager, rt Tyler@nyscoc.org.

Religious Nationalisms – The Council is committed to helping congregations, and the public identify the way in which religion can be distorted and utilized to deny freedom and democracy to religious minorities and people of the same faith who disagree with the government’s interpretation. The Council is helping to organize a gathering of faith leaders in Rochester, NY this July.

To learn more, email the office (office@nyscoc.org) and we will connect you with Rev. Dr. William Wilkinson, Chair of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Commission.

Community Solar Program – With your help, we were able to complete the first 3 milestones of the NYSEDA grant which has helped fund the work of the Council in addition to making a positive impact on our environment and economy. While we have completed our work on this phase of the project, the Council is committed to helping congregations across New York move away from harmful fossil fuels.

Chaplain Certifications – A very important part of our work is to certify protestant chaplains for the State of New York. Over this past year, we have certified 7 new chaplains and have 11 more in process. If this work interests you, contact Rev. Jim Ketcham, Chaplaincy Certification Coordinator, at jketcham@nyscoc.org

Legislative Priorities – The Council’s legislative priorities are selected by each working group and confirmed by a vote of the Social Justice Commission. The 2026 Legislative Priorities can be found [here](https://gqr.sh/qgYa), <https://gqr.sh/qgYa>, or scan the QR code.



We always have actions, opportunities, and resources to share through our website (www.nyscoc.org), newsletters (sign up at www.nyscoc.org/contact), and on our social media (Facebook: @NYSCofChurches; Instagram: @nyscoc; and YouTube: @nyscouncilofchurches). Please follow us, share our information, and join us in advocacy and action!

We look forward to connecting with you!

Ms. Rashida Tyler

Acting Executive Director, New York State Council of Churches
Project Manager, Interfaith Affordable Housing Collaborative
rt Tyler@nyscoc.org

Rev. Jim Ketcham

Chaplaincy Certification Coordinator
jketcham@nyscoc.org

Mrs. Heather Smith

Office Manager & Director of Communications
hsmith@nyscoc.org