PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

May 31, 2023

Greetings members and friends of Penn Central Conference,

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up." Ecclesiastes 4:9-10a

The Penn Central Conference was formed in 1962, five years following the mergers that created a new denomination - the United Church of Christ. Our national membership was over 2.2 million at the time. No one had ever created something quite like the UCC, and we drew on the energy of the ecumenical movement and a deep desire to draw Protestant Christians back together. We committed to be United and Uniting into the future.

The creation of four conferences in Pennsylvania reflected the need to effectively manage the 1000+ Pennsylvania churches with a metropolitan center in each conference (Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Allentown, and Philadelphia). At the time, Pennsylvania had the highest number of UCC churches and still retains that honor.

The Pennsylvania churches now number about 500 and our overall membership has decreased by almost half. Our change mimics that of the national UCC, moving from 2.2 million members nationally in 1957 to less than 740,000 now.

We are all familiar with the "narrative of decline" and at times it leads us to grief and helplessness. Yet in the midst of that statistical reality, a 25-member group of officers and board members from the 4 Pennsylvania conferences has been an unexpected bearer of good news and vital energy.

Continues on back

Contact us!

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Prayers for Penn Central Conference

Ephesians 6:18 (NLT)

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

This week, we pray for each other as we continue to live into God's calling...

Emmanuel Union UCC, Centre Hall

St. John's UCC, Loganton

St. Paul's UCC, Selinsgrove

Trinity UCC, Watsontown



Many of you are already aware of the Keystone Working Group (KWG). This group of committed lay and clergy leaders has met monthly since last October to explore paths of shared ministry among the 4 conferences. They have also wrestled with the opportunities and challenges of a merger of our four conferences. The gift of this group has been its remarkable optimism about the future and what is possible for us to do together. Make no mistake, this is an enormous and daunting task. Still, the group expresses how good and exciting it feels to take action for the future of the church in PA. Instead of marinating helplessly in the face of decline the KWG has taken the proverbial bull by the horns and leaned into this task with faithful hearts. They are sustained by spiritual reflection and by that precious yet ephemeral gift of hope.

Next week at our Annual Meeting you will have an opportunity to hear more about the Keystone Project. There will be an on-line workshop on Wednesday evening with me, some of our KWG representatives, and Rev. Bill Worley from Penn Southeast. In person on Friday and Saturday we will welcome Bill to join us as our Friday afternoon preacher and we will lead a Keystone discussion for delegates and guests that will include some of our KWG representatives. In the same days, our colleagues from Penn West (Rev. David Ackerman) and Penn Northeast (Rev. Dr. Bonnie Bates) will be together at the annual meeting of Penn West at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. In addition, all four of us will be together this coming weekend at the Penn Southeast meeting.

There is still so much work to do. We know our "why" - Together We are Stronger. We will work on "what" we need to do (functions of a conference) before we will discuss "how" we will make it work (staffings, finances, etc.). We are committed to unity and transparency. In the months to come you will have multiple opportunities to share your ideas, reflections, hopes, fears, and aspirations. I pray you will feel the optimism and hope of what lies ahead for our United and Uniting UCC church in Pennsylvania.

Peace,

Carrie

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call

Conference Minister

Penn Central Conference "Renewing The Covenant We Share" PCC 61st Annual Meeting

- June 9-10, 2023 at DoubleTree Hotel in Willow Street (Lancaster)

Registration now open! https://penncentralconference.regfox.com/penn-central-conference-annual-meeting-2023

"Making All Things New" General Synod 2023

"Making All Things New" will be the theme of the 34th biennial General Synod of the United Church of Christ, scheduled for June 30–July 4, 2023, in Indianapolis.

Hartman Center Homecoming week

July 31 through August 5, 2023

We will be returning to Hartman Center Campground in Milroy, PA as guests. Camping experiences for all ages, including intergenerational camps.

2 night camps Monday, July 31 at 4PM through Wednesday, August 2 at 4PM

Getting Started - Grades 1 and 2 ($125)

Intergenerational Camp ($125)

3 night camps Wednesday, August 2 at 4PM through Saturday, August 5 at 11AM

Intergenerational Camp ($190)

Camp of the Heart ($250)

5 night camps Monday, 07/31/2023 at 4PM through Saturday, 08/05/2023 at 11AM

Elementary - Grades 3 - 5 ($300)

Junior High - Grades 6 - 8 ($300)

Senior High - Grades 9 - 12 plus ($300)

Leadership - Grades 9 - 12 plus ($300)