



PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

...equipping and empowering congregations and clergy for the declaration and demonstration of the courageous love of Christ!

A Message from PCC

November 4, 2019

Dear friends of Penn Central Conference,

Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:31-32)

Of all the Christian doctrines, the understanding of sin is foundational. Yet sin is one of those words with which we struggle. We know it has been used by the church and by individuals to crush and inflict damage. Some of us can speak directly to that experience. We also know that the experience of being forgiven our sin by the love of God in Christ is deeply transformative. Some of us can also speak to that experience. Our traditional doctrines claim that Jesus died for our sins (see the sections on "Misery" and "Deliverance" in the Heidelberg Catechism), and for the majority of those in our churches, that remains a closely-held affirmation, even though the mechanics of it might elude us.

In the past few years I have had opportunities to share with other believers why I believe that sin matters. More and more often I hear pastors and lay members sharing their opinions that we "shouldn't talk about sin so much" because of the way the term has been used "to hurt others." This view runs alongside the perspective that we should not use prayers of confession in worship because they are perceived as too negative. For some believers, the use of terms such as "brokenness" and "mistake" seem more effective. I have known some individuals who have been crushed by the term sin, especially when used to condemn them as individuals and to withhold the message of God's grace from them because of who they are. Make no mistake – the church can be sinful too, including the way it condemns those who seek Jesus.

But I also affirm this – that because a theological term has been abused in the past does not mean it can no longer be used. Sin as a theological concept has no equivalent in English. That is because it holds two realities in tension. Yes, sin includes our brokenness and our dysfunction and our wounds. Yet it also holds the necessary aspect of our own

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Hartman Center

Upcoming Retreats

The PCC Confirmation Retreat will be held March 27 - 29, 2020 at Hartman Center. This weekend is always a great opportunity for our confirmands to explore "Being The Church" and to connect with other youth.

Planning for this retreat is done by the Pastors and/or youth leaders of the participating churches. We will gather for an initial planning meeting on Monday November 18 from 1 - 3 pm at the conference office, and Zoom will be available.

Please contact Pastor Patty Dodds as soon as possible if your church is interested in participating. 717-502-2246 or Program@HartmanCenter.com

2020 VISION Retreat is for everyone willing to work for the future of Hartman Center to spend time together developing ACTION PLANS for 2020. December 6, 2019 at 2:00PM through noon on December 8, 2019 Register online.

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...

Grace UCC, Spring Grove

Starview UCC, Starview

Faith UCC, State College

Saint Peter's UCC, State College



Message from the Conference cont'

responsibility and culpability for the damage we inflict on others, ourselves and our relationship with God. We are simultaneously broken and culpable. This is why grace has so much power when it sweeps down through us, when we know both healing and forgiveness. For Jesus is our plumb line – the one who has taken on our sin and frees us from it, and who also holds out his life as the criterion against which we measure our own.

As Christians we have tremendous power in the way we use language. We can be sinful in our use of language – most of us have experienced that. But remember that for a hurting and suffering world, the message of sin and grace is one that holds out life and hope – when said well, with love and with compassion. This is, after all, the heart (yes, the heart) of our message. Consider in closing these words from Martin Luther, who centuries ago wrote, “A truly Christian work is that we descend and get mixed up in the mire of the sinner as deeply as he sticks there himself, taking his sin upon ourselves and floundering out of it with him, not acting otherwise than if his sin were our own. We should rebuke and deal with him in earnest; yet we should not to despise but sincerely to love him. If you are proud toward the sinner and despise him, you are utterly damned.”

Of all of our theological forebearers, Luther knew the experience of what it means to be a sinner and to be one saved by grace. May we know this liberation as well and share it freely in love.

Peace,

Carrie

Town Halls

You are invited to gather with others from your association (clergy and lay people alike) for fellowship and a light dinner of soup, sandwiches and dessert. (See dates and locations below.)

Conversation with Rev. Carrie Call will follow our dinner. She will provide updates about Penn Central Conference, touching on topics such as new staffing, updated strategic planning, and the Hartman Center.

Please bring your questions and concerns as well as your enthusiasm and ideas for our Conference!

Lebanon Association
Wednesday November 13th, 6:00PM
Quentin UCC, Quentin

Upcoming Events

Check out other upcoming events on our website:
<https://pccucc.org/calendar/>

Read our full weekly eNews:
<https://pccucc.org/enews-archive/>

Sign up for our weekly eNews:
Link at bottom of any page on www.pccucc.org

More From Hartman Center

Fall Women's Retreat: Living Well—In The Moment

Friday the 15th at 7 p.m. to Sunday the 17th at 11 a.m. Leaders: Sue D'heedene and Winnie Kowalik. Register online

Fall Youth Retreat: Never Alone

Friday November 15, 2019 7:00 PM - Sunday, November 17, 2019 11:00 AM register online

Men's Retreat: Seasons of a Man's Life

Friday, January 17, 2020 at 7PM - Sunday January 19, 2020 at 1PM register online

Contact us!

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