# The Keystone Connection

## A Message to the Conference

**March 17, 2026**

**Dear Keystone Members and Friends –**

*"The days are coming," declares the Lord,*

*"when I will make a new covenant..." Jeremiah 31:31*

There are seasons in the life of faith when it feels as though everything familiar is being stripped away. The routines we trusted no longer hold. The assumptions we leaned on begin to crumble. Even the ground beneath us seems to shift, and we find ourselves wondering what if anything God is doing in the midst of it all.

In Jeremiah, we are reminded that Israel knew that feeling well. When Jeremiah spoke his prophetic word, the people were living through devastation. Their temple lay in ruins. Their leaders were scattered. Their identity as God's people felt fragile, almost lost. They were a community asking the same questions we ask in our own wilderness seasons: What now? What next? What is God doing with us?

Into that uncertainty, God speaks a promise that sounds almost too hopeful to believe:

"I am making a new covenant."

Not a new rulebook.

Not a new set of demands.

A new relationship.

A new way of being bound to God.

And here is the astonishing part, this covenant will not be carved into stone or preserved only through ritual. God says, "I will put my law within them. I will write it on their hearts." It is a promise of intimacy, of transformation, of God's presence woven into the very fabric of who we are. We worship a heart-writing God. What might God be inscribing on your heart today?

It is as if God kneels down in the soil of our lives and plants something deep within us, something that can take root, something that can grow, something that can bear fruit even when everything around us feels barren.

This is the grain that bears fruit.

Not the grain we manufacture through effort or perfection.

Not the grain we protect through fear or nostalgia.

But the grain God plants--quietly, tenderly, persistently, until it becomes part of who we are.

Jeremiah's promise is not about erasing the past; it is about transforming the future. It reveals a God who refuses to give up on us, who refuses to let exile or failure or heartbreak be the final word. A God who believes we can be re-made from the inside out. A God who trusts that new life can emerge from the very places that feel most desolate.

May we have the faith to read what God is inscribing.

May we have the courage to welcome what God is planting.

May we have the patience to nurture it.

And may we remember that God is still making all things new, even now, even here, even in us.

**Rev. Shannon Garrett-Doege**

Coordinator Faith Formation Youth

Keystone Conference UCC

**Keystone Conference of the United Church of Christ's first Annual Meeting** will be held June 5-7 at Millersville University in Millersville. Overnight accommodations will be on campus as well as the DoubleTree Hilton in Lancaster. Registration will begin in March 2026.

Our theme is "Joy at the Table Together" and our centering scripture is Acts 2:46-47 "Every day they met together, breaking bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God." The meeting will include a Service of Consecration for Keystone Conference.

Speakers will include Rev. Dr. Marcia McFee, author of Think Like a Filmmaker: Sensory-Rich Worship for Unforgettable Messages; Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ; Rev. Dr. Mary Luti, author of Do This: Communion for Just and Courageous Living; Rev. Greg Edwards, Executive Director of POWER Interfaith, Secretary Russell Redding, PA Secretary of Agriculture, and Rev. Freeman Palmer, Conference Minister for the Central Atlantic Conference.

**Attention Youth Campers and Families,**

Please read the following information carefully, as the Conference policy for supplementing youth summer camping has changed.

For the 2026 summer season, the Keystone Conference will campership or reimburse 30% of the cost for one youth to attend one summer camping experience. If a youth attends more than one camp during the summer, only one camp will be eligible for the 30% reimbursement. Please use the application for additional camps if this creates a hardship.

Learn more and download the application under the campership section of keystoneucc.org/mission-grants-committee/

**Living Waters Camp & Conference Center**
**Schellsburg, PA**

Trustin' Jesus! Summer Camps
Fishing Camp - June 28 to July 2, for grades 6 to 12
Primary (grades K - 3) - July 5 to 11
Elementary Camp (grades 4 - 6) - July 5 to 11
Junior-Senior High Camp - July 12 - 18
Grandparent / Grandchild Camp is July 12 to 15
Learn more at livingwaterscamp.org

**HC Spirit Camp** is hosted at Hartman Center Campground, Milroy, PA . The theme for HC Spirit 2026 is "In the Wilderness." Camp runs from July 26 - August 1, 2026. Keep checking in at hcspiritcamp.org for the upcoming brochure and registration links