PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Empowering churches to proclaim the reconciling love of Christ.

1962 CELEBRATING SIXTY YEARS OF MINISTRY 2022

A Message from PCC

June 22, 2022

Members and friends of Penn Central Conference,

"Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire." (Gustav Mahler)

Yesterday I received an email from a colleague that contained an article from a 1949 issue of The Daily Item of Sunbury, PA. The article described how the Penn Central Synod was having a meeting and discussing the possible merger to form the United Church of Christ. The merger was discussed "with much favor" by the clergy present. I sat for some time thinking about how they must have felt at that meeting, hopeful and excited to see the birth of something new. Looking ahead to a church that would bring two very different groups of people together for the purpose of spreading the love of Christ further into the world.

The pastors at that meeting knew they were moving into something that would entail loss and grief. Traditions from their past would be lost, in some cases, and their approach to church governance would change. Yet the clergy (and many of the churches) were in favor of this move since they saw the potential for new life and doing more than they could before for the glory of God.

The quote from Mahler above is a favorite of mine. The words capture something ephemeral, but which we understand intuitively. The worship of ashes implies facing backward, focused on what burned, and praying for a phoenix to rise from those ashes. The preservation of fire implies moving forward, taking the flame from one campfire ring to the next one, lighting new signal fires that will blaze a path forward. The saying also implies that the flame is what matters. That we must eventually leave the ashes (which are now cold and empty) and turn toward the warmth and living dynamic of the future.

Our questions to discern are, what is ashes and what is fire? How do we know when a fire has gone

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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...

St. Paul's UCC, Spring Grove

St. Peter's Lischey's UCC, Spring Grove

Trinity Roths UCC, Spring Grove

Grace UCC, Spring Mills



out? Can something be rekindled? How do we take the fire while it is still burning and carry it forward to a new location? In church life this metaphor is powerful. And the answers require deep thought and conversation. I believe, however, that we can determine a few differences between what is ash and what is fire.

To me, something has become ashes when it no longer has the power to throw light around it, no one can find it in times of darkness, or find warmth by its side. The ashes we worship contain no living fire and instead are remnants of what was once valuable or precious. They cannot be followed or expanded as fire can be. There are any number of things that may qualify within our church life, and certainly the clergy at that meeting in 1949 knew there were ashes they were leaving behind.

Fire, in contrast, can be spread to the benefit of many people, who will draw close for its warmth. Fire cooks water and food and provides light in the darkness. Fire is meant to be shared and can be carried out into the world, as we do with the light of Christ every week at the close of worship.

When I think of the clergy gathered in 1949, I see them tending the fire of their Evangelical and Reformed faith lives. They knew what needed to be carried forward and they were eager to do so. I have no doubt the Holy Spirit guided them, as a flame. May that same Spirit guide us as we discern in each of our settings where the fire burns.

Peace,

Carrie

Rev. Dr. Carolyn Call

Conference Minister

Penn Central Conference



HC Spirit Week - What's in a Name?

"Naming and Claiming Who God Made Us to Be"

Saturday, August 6 through Friday, August 12

Camp Mt. Luther

https://penncentralconference.regfox.com/hc-spirit-week

Learn more about camping opportunities here:
https://pccucc.org/outdoor-ministry/