PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

March 27, 2024

Greetings friends and members of Penn Central,

Holy Week, for me, is shaped by a trip I took with Conference Minister colleagues to Montgomery Alabama in the fall of 2019. On that trip we visited a number of places, including The National Memorial for Peace and Justice. The memorial includes a museum in a former cotton warehouse and a memorial sculpture site that honors those killed by lynching (go to https://legacysites.eji.org/about/memorial/).

The trip was powerful in many ways. I was surprised to find that it brought me to Holy Week, theologically. As I reflected while I was there I had insights into the experience of Jesus as he was betrayed, mocked, and executed, as well as the line from the Apostle's Creed "he descended into hell."

In the museum were excerpts from the journals and notes of former slaves displayed on glass columns. I wandered among them and read how those who arrived at the market prayed over and over that God save them, save their children, provide succor, and honor their baptism. The words were powerful, tragic, and deeply moving. And they brought me to Jesus's betrayal, his words in the garden, and his words from the cross in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

The trip to the memorial, however, struck even more, into my deepest soul-space. The memorial recognizes 4,400 lynching victims, all painstakingly researched and verified. There are 800 columns, one for each county where lynching happened, and on that column are the names the victims and the dates of their death (and yes, counties from PA are present). These are rust-colored corten steel columns and when I began my visit I walked among them at ground level, so I was looking at each straight on. However, the floor begins to slope and as I walked down, the columns rose slowly above me until I reached the lowest point. At that moment I looked up and saw the seemingly endless columns above me. In that moment I realized that I was standing in the position

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Contact us!

PCC Office Staff

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call, PhD - *Conference Minister*
email: ccall@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-433-3196

Rev. Dr. Nora Driver Foust - *Associate Conference Minister*
email: nfoust@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-433-2587

C. Paul Keller - *Office Manager*
email: pkeller@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-652-1560

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 Tylersville UCC, Loganton

St. Paul's Verdilla UCC, Selinsgrove

Trinity UCC, Watsontown



that a member of the lynching mob would have stood, looking up at the work of their hands (and hearts).

In that moment the Apostles Creed - of all things - spoke to me: "He descended into hell." Here I was, standing looking up - at effigies of victims of horrific violence - and I was looking up too at Jesus on the cross.

The theologian John Calvin thought that Jesus entered hell when from the cross he cried out to God, "Why have you forsaken me?" And now I understood it in a visceral, deeply humbling way.

I confess that I wanted to run away from the horror of that moment, out of the dimly lit hell, back up to sunlight and "normal life." But I made myself sit and stay. It changed me.

There is no way to describe what the soul experiences when it comes face to face with the crucified Christ. I think that moment in the memorial was that face to face meeting for me. Now Holy Week carries the echoes of the voices of slaves and those victimized by lynching. The tragedy of the suffering and injustice is broadened. I think about how people have betrayed others in our country's past and the ways we betray one another now - even those we love. I think about hell and the crucifixion as combined. I think about how our histories, personal and national, can weigh so heavily on our souls.

But most of all, my eagerness for resurrection has been amplified and takes on greater urgency now. I carry that eagerness for the triumph of love into every day and every prayer. I carry it into a world full of suffering, injustice, and terror, praying and waiting for the first moment of sun to cross the horizon on Easter Morning.

Peace,

Carrie

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call

Conference Minister

Penn Central ConferencePenn Central Conference.

62nd Annual Meeting of the Penn Central Conference

For the first time, all four Pennsylvania conferences of the UCC will be gathering for a shared Annual Meeting on June 7-9, 2024 at The Penn Stater in State College, PA. We will have shared worship, workshops, meals and meetings as well as each conference's separate business meeting.

We will be joined by General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, who will be preaching during closing worship on Sunday. All four conferences will be hosting a reception with her on Saturday evening as well. Register by clicking the Annual Meeting tab on pccucc.org

Registration is now open for **HC Spirit camp at Hartman Center Campground and Retreat Center** - Sunday, July 28th through Saturday, August 3rd, 2024.

https://penncentralconference.regfox.com/hartman-homecoming-week-2024

Camp makes a great Christmas gift. Check out the summer options from our partners at Lutheran Camping Corporation's Kirchenwald (and Nawakwa)

https://www.lutherancamping.org/summer-camp/youth-summer-programs/

Lay Leadership Convocation 2024

Saturday, April 6

This Year's Theme: Sharing Leadership

Keynote speaker: Dr. Sarah B. Drummond, Dean of Andover Newton Seminary at Yale Divinity School, New Haven, CT

8:30 - 9:00 am Registration and coffee

9:00 - 9:45 am Keynote Address by Dr. Sarah B. Drummond: "Shared Leadership"

10:00 - 11:15 am Workshops

12:45 –1:45 pm Lunch

1:45 – 3:00 pm Workshops

Workshops on various topics.

Learn more and register here.

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lay-leadership-convocation-2024-tickets-803968149377