



# **PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE**



Empowering churches to proclaim the reconciling love of Christ.

## **A Message from PCC**

**March 18, 2020**

### **Dear Friends of Penn Central Conference -**

In the past two weeks I have experienced a wide range of emotions. While I have felt anxiety, I have also felt a sense of connectedness as colleagues, friends, neighbors and families pull together to help one another. I confess I also feel frustration and not a small amount of irritation when I see erroneous information shared as if it were truth, bad theology couched in oblivious privilege, and posturing in place of servant leadership. Times such as these bring out the best and the worst in humanity.

I took comfort by re-reading Martin Luther's letter "Whether One can Flee a Deadly Plague" written in 1527.\* Luther was writing to Rev. Dr. Johann Hess, a pastor at Breslau in Germany. There is evidence from the original manuscript that Luther was interrupted in this task several times, in part because of the terrible bouts of depression he experienced as the Black Death swept through parts of Germany. The university in Wittenberg had moved to a new location as the plague approached, but Luther refused to leave. Ignoring the pleas of his Dean, Luther stayed behind with his friend and colleague Johannes Buegenhagen to minister to the sick and dying. From his own words it is clear that Luther was struggling spiritually and emotionally, as people he knew died in his arms and women and children passed away every day. He noted in a letter to another friend, "So there are battles without, and terrors within."

Luther's letter reveals that there was poor advice and bad theology all around him. He strove to provide reasonable, nuanced suggestions on how one could view the plague and how to behave appropriately while remaining faithful. On the one hand, Luther acknowledged the legitimacy of looking out for one's own well-being and survival during

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## **Outdoor Ministries**

### **SUMMER CAMP REGISTRATION IS OPEN!**

Early bird pricing for those who pay in full before March 31, 2020. Learn more and register at <https://hartmancenter.com/summer-camp/>

Dear Hartman Center family,

It is with a heavy heart that, due to the risks of Covid-19, we are postponing the following events until the public health emergency has passed:

Countdown to Opening Day Fishing Retreat, Mar. 16-18

Confirmation Retreat, Mar. 27-29

What is Good Leadership Retreat, April 14-15

Learning To See Photography Retreat, April 27-29

PRIDE: LGBTQ+ Retreat, May 29-31

The Golf Outing on May 9th will be determined by their planning committee.

A decision on whether Summer Camp will continue as planned will be made once we are closer to the summer and can make informed decisions. However...

I remain optimistic and excited about our Summer Camp program. We have an amazing Summer Service Team lined up and the registrations seem to be flooding in! I want to reassure everyone that, should a decision be made that the programming cannot continue throughout the summer, full refunds will be issued.

All of us who see these posts love Hartman Center. The measures which we must take to keep ourselves and each other safe right now are difficult. Giving up opportunities to gather at Hartman Center are one of the most painful sacrifices we must make, and the very thought of not gathering in our beautiful camp this summer is heartbreaking for each and every one of us.

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## Message from the Conference cont'

such times. He writes, "It is not forbidden but rather commanded that by the sweat of our brow we should seek our daily food, clothing, and all we need to avoid destruction and disaster whenever we can, as long as we do so without detracting from our love and duty toward our neighbor." On the other hand, while standing in the mist of one of the most horrifying pandemics in human history, Luther was forceful and clear that everything has to be done to protect the weak and leave no one alone to suffer in isolation. Luther stakes his allegiance to Christ by quoting Christ's warning to his followers: "I was sick and you did not visit me" (Matt. 25:43). "According to this passage we are bound to each other in such a way that no one may forsake the other in his distress but is obliged to assist and help him as he himself would like to be helped."

We are bound to each other. No matter what the danger we face, then or now, our task as disciples of Christ is both simple and very hard: care for each other and leave no one alone. How we are doing that will vary by place and capacity. What matters is that we recognize our boundedness and reach out – even in the face of anxiety and fear. May our transformed hearts radiate Christ's compassion, burning through selfishness, greed and fear.

**Peace,**

**Carrie**

\*Luther's Works Volume 43, Devotional Writings  
II.Upcoming Events

## Contact us!

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## Hartman Center Cont'

But Hartman Center is more than a place, we are a ministry. Since I have come into this chapter in my life, I have been moved innumerable times by the love of and devotion to this camp, which I have seen demonstrated by just about each and every one of you.

Just like our churches, we are called to stay connected. Therefore, I am inviting the Hartman Center family to join me for some virtual fellowship and light brainstorming at two different meeting times next week:

Youth- Tuesday, March 24th 6 pm. -- <https://zoom.us/j/355189806>

Adults- Wednesday, March 25th, 6 pm. -- <https://zoom.us/j/9124829107>

Know that I am holding each of you in prayer.

**Your sister in Christ,**

**Zoë A. D'heedene**

**Coordinator of Camps and Retreats**

## 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...

**Trinity UCC, Gettysburg**

**New Hope (Fissel's) UCC, Glen Rock**

**Trinity UCC, Glen Rock**

**St. Paul's UCC, Gowen City**

