The Keystone Connection

A Message to the Conference

March 24, 2026

Dear Keystone Members and Friends –

I grew up in a family that loved parades. I've been fortunate to have seen in person two of the most popular holiday parades. I've been to the Rose Parade on New Year's Day in Pasadena, CA, and got to witness the incredible artistry of those floats to which seeing them on TV can't compare. I also got to see the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in NYC, but from an unusual vantage point. When we couldn't find a spot on the street, my brother took us to a conference room in his company's office building, and we watched the parade through the 25th floor windows! We were actually looking down upon the famous balloons of that parade.

By now, most everyone is familiar with the scholarship on the two parades of Jerusalem on what we call Palm Sunday. Many believe that the peasant parade of Jesus, the disciples, and others was planned mockery and a counter-parade to the parade of power of Pontius Pilate and his Roman guards. The Romans were entering the city on the west side, Jesus and company on the east side.

This coming weekend in our country there will be two days of parades, if you will. The "No Kings" gatherings and marches will happen on Saturday and in many churches the Palm Sunday parade(s) will be remembered and in some even reenacted.

The parades this coming weekend can be compared to the tension of that first Palm Sunday in Jerusalem: Parades can be statements of power and/or protest. Sometimes, we need a 25th floor view to see the true scope and effectiveness of such gatherings. Jesus mocking Roman power in the occupied holy city of his faith made a statement that his power was not of this world. Pilate's Parade, and many ruling-party parades since, filled with swords, weapons and shows of loyalty are statements of authority of this world.

Nearly 2000 years later, we may still love a parade, especially those with artistry, passion, or the power of community at their hearts. Other parades hit differently.

So, it makes me wonder in a decade or two how the two parade days of this coming weekend will be viewed in terms of their power? I suppose the participants and viewers will decide the answer to that question in time.

Rev. Dwight Hein

Coordinator Leadership Development

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

Ideas for Earth Month from Keystone Climate Justice Team:

Fifty six years ago on April 22nd, Earth Day was born, an expression of the American public's desire that we take better care of our environment. Our national church office of Environmental Justice Ministry has called for churches celebrate the whole month of April as Earth Month. Check out the Environmental Justice page on the UCC website for more suggestions for Earth Month.

1). While the children's art contest has passed, you could hold an in-house art contest on the environment, or more ambitiously invite artists in the community to participate.

2). Celebrate Creation Justice Sunday! There are worship resources at the link.

3). Start a Green Team.