PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

February 21, 2024

Greetings friends and members of Penn Central Conference,

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel; Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. Isaiah 43:1

I realize this is not the lectionary passage for this week that you may have arrived here to read about, but when the Spirit puts the same verse in your path four times in a week, you sit with it a little differently, a little longer.

We use names all the time, parent-given names, nicknames, position-derived names, educated titles. In this verse, and other places throughout scripture, we are reminded of the profound significance found in the act of being called by name for a specific purpose, "fear not Nora, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; Nora, you are mine."

Take a deep breath and read that last part again with your name, hearing it as the words of God (as revealed through the prophet Isaiah).

I'm inviting you to read this epistle today as a bit of a meditation. Close your eyes and take another deep breath and let the weight of being called by name by God settle into the depths of your being. The Almighty, the Creator of the Cosmos, your Creator, called and is calling you by name - a name uniquely yours within a melody of God breaths - calling forth your being in the world.

(*Ok, I know you can't read with your eyes closed, but read that paragraph again and then close your eyes and sit in quiet reflection, attune yourself to *Continues on back*

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...

Mount Zion Welsh Congregational Church, Shamokin

St. John's UCC, Shamokin

Salem UCC, Coal Township

Grace UCC, Shippensburg



your feelings. And then open your eyes and follow the read and closed-eye reflection pattern for each paragraph below.*)

We live in a time of anonymity and fitting in. Being named, called by that name, is an incredible affirmation of your worth. It is a personal invitation from the Divine in this Lenten wilderness that can reach into the depths of your soul, casting out the shadows of doubt and fear. As you close your eyes, picture naming your fears and doubts with God.*

Some might say that a name holds power for it is not just a combination of letters - but rather a framing of your identity, your journey, your very purpose. For the Creator to call you by name acknowledges how known you truly are. Your joys, your struggles, your triumphs, your defeats, even your doubts are known and held by God. What are your joys and struggles today? How does it feel to name them with God?*

It is more than just being named in this verse, it is also being claimed. This verse offers an affirmation to each of us that in the grand design of the universe, each of us matter to God and are called to live lives that matter. God declares, " you are mine. " In that truth we can each hear the profound truth that you belong to God, you are cherished beyond measure. You are not lost in the vastness of creation, for the God who named you, claims you, and loves you. What does God's love feel like right now?*

As we think about this verse today, or perhaps carry it through part of the Lenten wilderness, listen for how God calls your name, surrounds you in the wilderness, and whispers words of reassurance and love. In that safe and brave space let go of the burdens you carry and give them over to the One who calls you by name. Let the hearing of your name grow the sense of purpose within you that you might know God's love, find strength for the hard places of life, and deeply know the peace of Christ.**

Close this time of prayer knowing that you are not just a face in the crowd, you are a beloved creation, called by name, and held in the heart of God. Amen.*

Thanks for praying with me today. May your calling be clear in this wilderness season.

Shalom,

Nora
Rev. Dr. Nora Foust
Associate Conference Minister
Penn Central Conference

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/

Salem's Closet, in Salem UCC, Harrisburg, has partnered with Church World Services and are supplying refugees with clothing and household goods.

The number of refugees that have been coming has gone from just a few to 15 a month. In conversation wtih Cindy at CWS, 15 or more is going to be the new normal. We need clothing for men, boys, teens, infants, and toddlers for all seasons, bedding that includes blankets, and sheets not to mention other household goods. These donations need to be in good condition and clean.

Please contact Susan Nelson at srsews@gmail.com to find out more about how to donate items. If you are able to help transport items donated from further afield, please let her know as well.

4 Conference Lenten Study: "Look Back to Look Forward"

The Penn West, Penn Central, Penn Northeast and Penn Southeast Conferences of the United Church of Christ cordially invite you to participate in this virtual Lenten opportunity! Meeting each Wednesday in Lent at 7pm, this Bible Study explores the foundations of our identity as Christians and members of the UCC as we explore what the future may hold! Each week is unique so if you cannot attend every date you can still participate in as many as you are able. If you have questions, or you would like to participate in this study, please email pattyr@pnec.org to receive the link. Thank you!