PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

January 7, 2025

Greetings Friends and Members of Penn Central Conference,

"The Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'" -Luke 3:22

In this passage, the identity of Jesus is made clear to the gathered people. Our identities are also made clear in baptism: we are the beloved of God! Because we share in Christ's baptism, we are called to discipleship in his church. Lives of discipleship ask us to live differently in the world. Since we are all ministers and members of the Body of Christ, all are called to the work of building up the Body. Some are called to leadership roles, others to follower roles.

This past weekend I was at the Hartman Lodge with 16 Members in Discernment (MIDs) who are actively discerning their calls to ordained ministry in the church. Along with the MIDs were fellow Conference staff from across our four PA Conferences; it was our first Keystone MID Retreat. One participant commented about how "it offered such a valuable time to come together as a community of faith and share stories with one another." (Amy Fawks, Gettysburg MID)

This coming together is important to the whole Body of Christ, not just to our pastors or MIDs. In our workshop on "Pastor as Teacher and Visitor" with Rev. David Ackermann, our group was reminded of how important the 'being together' is for our members that can't come to the church building anymore. We also explored how a church visit does not always have to come from the pastor.

We are all called to different ministries in the church through our baptisms. While those MIDs are called to pastoral leadership, perhaps you are called to a visitation ministry. Years ago, there was a blue binder training for congregations titled, "**Called to Care**." This resource has been updated and is available from the national setting offering guidance for

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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. Peter's UCC, State College

Trinity UCC, State Line

First Reformed UCC, Sunbury

Peace UCC, Denver



anyone in the church who might feel called to visit their congregation's members at home.

The new resource is called the **UCC Wellness Ministries Handbook for Visitation***. The description asks: "Are you visiting a person or writing a note on behalf of the church? Aren't sure what to say to this person?" And in response offers, "This handbook furnishes information to guide you in each encounter and provides scripture passages, prayers, and blessings you can easily use."

Church-life is changing and more and more churches are seeing shifts to part-time ministry, as well as longer seasons of transition between called pastors. In both of these situations, lay people will be called on for more of the types of church visits that homebound members want from their church family. This resource may be just what your consistory or other church leadership is looking for to help these folks answer this call on their discipleship journey.

Call happens along all our discipleship journeys, not just in the lives of those that are called to ordination like our MIDs. As we all approach the celebration of Christ's baptism in this Sunday's lectionary, I encourage you to listen for your everyday ministerial calls and claim your identity in the Body of Christ. There are many resources available to help you explore your own call, whatever it may be. Talk with your pastor or reach out to the office today for resourcing your "Yes" on the discipleship way.

Shalom,

Nora

Rev. Dr. Nora Foust

Associate Conference Minister

Penn Central Conference

* can be ordered here: https://www.uccresources.com/products/handbook-for-visitation?variant=41137934303295

This year we will celebrate the 300th Anniversary of the German Reformed Church in the United States which began with the first communion at Faulkner Swamp, October 15, 1725. This celebration of our immigrant heritage is particularly meaningful and instructive given the current conversations about immigration happening around the nation.

An 300th Anniversary Committee of representatives from all four Pennsylvania UCC Conferences has begun the work of planning a series of events and worship celebrations to mark the occasion. They include (among other things) quarterly presentations of German Reformed History, a liturgy for congregations to share on the morning of Sunday, October 12th and a Festival of Celebration on Wednesday, October 15th.

A history strong in its roots and its capacity to evolve within God's unfolding creation leads us into an uncertain future by God's certain presence. This is something to celebrate! Please watch your conference newsletters for more details will be forthcoming.

The United Church of Christ has established the Hurricane Helene Recovery Appeal and the Hurricanes 2024 Appeal.

https://support.ucc.org/hurricane-helene-relief

Your support for these appeals will ensure that communities are supported and accompanied for years as they rebuild. You can donate through your local church, with your gifts going through the Conference to the Appeal. Gifts can be made through PCC by clicking "DONATE" on pccucc.org. Under "Directed Gifts" choose "Disaster Relief" and notate "Hurricane Relief". And you can always mail a check to the PCC offices with the same notation.