PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

December 20, 2023

Members and Friends of Penn Central Conference,

"*This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham*" Matthew 1:1

In listing the 42 generations from Abraham to the birth of Jesus, only 5 times are the mothers of the next generation's sons named. Despite the obvious injustice of omitting 37 of the 42 mothers, there is also a serious irony to consider. What is truly interesting about each of the 5 named women, (Tamar the mother of Perez; Rahab the mother of Boaz; Ruth the mother of Obed; Bethsheba the mother of Solomon; and Mary mother of Jesus), is the perceived unconventional or scandalous nature surrounding their pregnancies. So much for the genealogy section of Matthew's gospel being boring.

We might easily proclaim that God works in strange and mysterious ways when considering redemption stories. When we find ourselves in circumstances wherein, we must stretch our spirit to be either gracious or actively supportive, how difficult is it to be similarly charitable?

Now granted, each of the mothers mentioned were so much more than the seeming sordid events associated with their conception. Yet upon the reality of their circumstances coming to light, they were surely 'sore afraid', and with good cause. In each case harsh and cruel reactions may well have resulted. But, as the full story unfolded, we see their lives and reputations redeemed.

Considering their stories from our side of history provides a more charitable perspective. But at the time of their being found to be with child, per-

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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

Rev. Rick Luciotti - *Facilitator of Care to Clergy and Clergy Families*
email: rluciotti@gmail.com / Phone: 717-433-6306

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...

St. John's (Markelsville) UCC, Newport

Maytown Reformed UCC, Maytown

St. James UCC, Littlestown

St. Paul's UCC, McConnellsburg



ceptions of wantonness must surely have existed. In the case of Tamar, a move to have her killed because of such perception nearly occurred. Are people in serious personal crisis also not capable of being so much more than what we see on the surface? The question becomes, "Can we see and assess beyond the moment? Or are we so bound by conventional morality that envisioning how God's will might yet work in and through such circumstances escapes our imagination and understanding?"

In the case of Joseph, I imagine these were very weighty questions. He is described as an honorable and righteous man, deeply troubled by the questions of what to do concerning Mary's pregnancy. At the very least a decision to accept Mary as his wife would bring criticism and ridicule upon him. It might also be disastrous for his career. And I do not believe a mere vision in a dream would be enough to sway his judgment were he not devout in his understanding of the teachings of the prophets.

Joseph stood on the crossroads of history and what is truly justice without really knowing what would befall his decision. But that is the point for each such moment of truth throughout scripture and for our lives as well. When scripture teaches that we are to do justice always, the outcome may well be in doubt and certainly not convenient or expedient. But as with the now understood heroines and heroes of the 5 accounts noted, choosing to follow the teaching of the prophets and our Lord sent to fulfill those teachings is the point.

We do right to celebrate and enjoy the birth of Christ. But let us also go forth and live in that same spirit of doing justice because God has empowered us to do so.

Rick

Rev. Rick Luciotti

Coordinator of Clergy Care

Penn Central Conference

Camp Director Pastor Alice shares, "please mark your calendar for next year's **HC Spirit camp at Hartman Center Campground and Retreat Center** - Sunday, July 28th through Saturday, August 3rd, 2024.

God's Dance Party
Hartman Center Winter Retreat
January 12th-14th $100

Attention youth and youth leaders (if you're not a youth leader, please pass this on to whoever works with the youth or communicates with the youth in your church):

Are you in 6th to 12th grade? Looking for a break after the Christmas season? Want to get away from your family for a couple days? Missing Hartman Center?

We can help! Come party with us at our winter youth retreat from January 12 to 14. We'll be at Hartman Center in Hartman lodge (formerly Micheaux lodge) and maybe some cabins. You can't beat the price. Use code PCC2024 for a 50% campership.

Register now and tell your friends to register too.

https://penncentralconference.regfox.com/hc-winter-youth-retreat-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/