



# PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE



Celebrating 60 Years of Ministry

## A Message from PCC

**August 03, 2022**

### Members and friends of Penn Central Conference,

*"How good it is, when kindred live together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1 NRSV)*

This past Sunday I preached at a "Church Reunion" service hosted by Salem UCC in Dover. Over 100 members of 8 area churches joined together in folding chairs under old shade trees, led in worship and praise by 8 clergy (all women!). The churches were Lutheran and UCC and testified to their past heritage as Lutheran and Reformed believers, in separate buildings and in union churches. I have never attended such a service. I have been to ecumenical services, of course, but this was something different. Here people from two different denominations had gathered for the first time to honor and celebrate their common tradition.

In 1757 when Salem Union Church formed, most of the people in the area were German. The Reformed, Lutheran, Mennonite, and Brethren community members all shared a common language and had fled religious turmoil in Germany due to the 30 years' war. They wanted peace and they wanted to farm, work as craftsmen, and raise their families. Members of these religious traditions intermarried, and anyone born in this area will likely find mention of all these traditions when studying family genealogy. They were a community of mutual aid and support.

When I looked out over the people gathered on Sunday, I was amazed to see so many present and then, looking behind them, Salem's graveyard that holds so many of their spiritual forebearers. The gathering gave me a sense of hope. Their ability as

*Continues on back*

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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.*

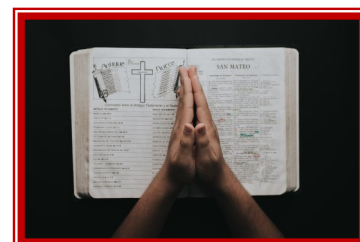
This week, we pray for each other as we continue to live into God's calling...

**Emmanuel UCC, York**

**Faith UCC, York**

**Hayshire UCC, York**

**Heidelberg UCC, York**



members of different traditions to live in peace with one another in the 18th and 19th centuries was a witness to Christian unity. Despite theological and liturgical differences, the community was united in Christ. That today's members were willing to gather to worship despite today's political, social, and theological differences was an echo of that unity.

In my sermon, I encouraged listeners to consider how the unity of their past might inform their ministry now. Lutheran and Evangelical & Reformed leadership spearheaded the separation of union churches in the 1950s (a decision some still lament). Yet the past still yields insights in how to approach ministry now. Not only with each other as ELCA and UCC churches, but with other Christian churches in the community. When Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another" he was speaking to his disciples. To the community of believers. And if we can work on our ability to love other Christians who are different than we are, we follow that commandment. How ironic that in today's world it is sometimes easier for us to love people outside of the church than those within it. And how much more challenging to bring two Christian fellowships who come from different theological and social perspectives together for common ministry projects.

However, if we do believe that Jesus has called us to live in unity and love with other believers, then working to share ministry and engage in projects together demonstrates that love. I have seen this work happen when clergy or laity reach a hand across the church aisle and explore a project with a church that does not fit their own political or social self-understanding. Shared mission trips and shared worship can be transformative. There are countless ways our unity in Christ can encourage us to widen the circle beyond familiar walls, liturgies, gatherings, prayers, and people.

Enact Jesus' command to love others. Seek other believers. Listen to their faith stories. Could the churches of Penn Central be the witness to unity in the body of Christ to a wider world? Even small steps like church reunions can lead us further down the road of peace.

*Special thanks to Rev. Eva O'Diam (Dover UCC), Julia Brown (Salem UCC), and Rev. Abbey Leese (Calvary Lutheran Church) for their initial conversation that led to such a special event (with great food!).*

**Peace,**

**Carrie**

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call

Conference Minister

Penn Central Conference

**"Making All Things New"**

**General Synod 2023**

"Making All Things New" will be the theme of the 34th biennial General Synod of the United Church of Christ, scheduled for June 30–July 4, 2023, in Indianapolis.

The General Synod of the United Church of Christ will get back to business a year from now. And it will do so in person.

After an all-virtual experience in 2021, the UCC's biennial national meeting will require all voting delegates to be in Indianapolis in 2023. That's according to the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, the associate general minister who serves as Synod administrator.

Delegates and visitors will meet June 30 through July 4 at the Indianapolis Convention Center.

