PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

January 17, 2024

Greetings members and friends of Penn Central Conference,

"Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh. Jonah 3:2-3

I love the call stories in scripture. Jonah is one of my favorites because I really appreciate how hard Jonah works to say "no." It reminds me a lot of myself - and a good number of folks I know.

God is clear in this verse what it is that Jonah is being asked/told to do. And perhaps to the reader's surprise, Jonah does it. We know from the fuller context that Jonah is none too thrilled to go to Ninevah, much less deliver the message God is giving him. Let's review the first two chapters of Jonah and listen for parallels in our own lives.

Chapter 1 starts out with Jonah being called by God to go to the city of Nineveh and deliver a message. However, Jonah tries to escape from this responsibility by boarding a ship heading in the opposite direction. A great storm arises, and the sailors on the ship realize that Jonah is the cause. Jonah suggests throwing him into the sea, and reluctantly, the sailors do so, leading to his being swallowed by a large fish. (*Running from what you think God is asking you to do?)*

Then Jonah finds himself not dead, but alive and inside the belly of the fish. In his distress, he prays to God, acknowledging his disobedience and seeking forgiveness. Despite his dire circumstances, Jonah expresses gratitude for God's mercy and vows to fulfill his original calling. God commands the fish to vomit Jonah onto dry land, demonstrating divine intervention and Jonah's redemption. (*Asking God to help in this*

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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...

Zion UCC, Newburg

St. Paul's UCC, New Oxford

Incarnation UCC, Newport

Elias UCC, Newmanstown



crisis and you will change your ways and do the things God asks?)

In today's verses from this week's lectionary passage, God gives Jonah a second chance, instructing him to go to Nineveh and deliver the message of impending judgment. Jonah obeys and enters the city, proclaiming that Nineveh will be overthrown in forty days. The people of Nineveh respond by repenting and turning to God.

Jonah's response of obedience and the people's response of repentance are life changing. Jonah did the hard thing that God asked, and because of that obedience the people did the hard work of repentance. Lives were changed.

Doing the hard work that God calls us to is not always our first choice either, but do we really need consequences as dire as the belly of a fish or complete destruction of our communities in order to do the work?

How does the ministry of your congregation respond to God's calls in ways that change lives? No person or congregation can do everything, but each one of us can do the things God calls us to, and in that doing, lives will be changed.

Go out this week and be a Jonah - do the hard thing you hear God calling you to do. Or go out this week and be a Ninevite, doing the internal work that God is calling you toward. Be responsive to God's call this week and know that a life is changed, most certainly yours and quite possibly those around you.

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/

Worship Planning for Lay Leaders

Feb 5, 2024, 6:30PM

Many members of consistories and church councils are finding themselves needing to do more with worship planning for their congregation, some are even stepping into the pulpit. Our Penn Central Churches are experiencing longer and longer seasons of transition and interim and supply leadership is just not filling the whole of the growing need. This 90-minute workshop will look at available resources to assist lay leaders with worship development like liturgies, prayers, hymn selection, lectionary passages, and more, as well as touch on sermon preparation for those filling that need. All are welcome, please register.