PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

September 4, 2024

Greetings Penn Central members and friends,

I'd like for you time remember a time when you got to witness the baptism of an infant in a worship service. That little one was the epitome of grace and there was absolutely nothing that infant child could have done to earn God's love.

Around the corner from the days as a compliant infant, a child will eventually learn the word, "No!" That pivotal revelation in childhood that leads from having no choices to valuing choice above all things and the privilege it is to have choices. What follows is that they are then judged by others as being a good person or otherwise.

But doing right or wrong is not at the core of being saved by Christ's grace alone, is it? Most of us as children were told that Jesus loves us. Then at some point that changes in our minds. We start to think God judges us by our doing right or wrong, instead of being saved by grace alone. With the worry of "cheap grace" in the background, if we truly believe that Christ was sent into the world to save humanity through his life, death and resurrection, why do we put on each other the need to always be doing good in the rest of our lives?

Enter the letter of James in the New Testament telling us to be doers not just hearers of God's word. Did you know that James is one of the scriptures for which the Protestant Reformers had great disdain?

Dr. Thomas G. Long, professor emeritus of preaching at Candler School of Theology wrote, ""Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves" is the kind of statement that drove Reformer, Martin Luther up a wall. Luther famously thought James to be "an epistle of straw." …I tacitly agreed with Luther. I perhaps would never have spoken out loud frank criticisms of James, but I was so attached to sheer grace as a theological theme that James' little moral lessons—on everything from

Continues on back

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: 717-652-1560 x3

C. Paul Keller - *Office Manager*
email: pkeller@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-652-1560 x1

Rev. Dwight Hein - *Facilitator for Clergy Care*

email: dhein@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-433-6306

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...

Faith UCC, Lancaster

First Reformed UCC, Lancaster

Hamilton Park UCC, Lancaster

Lift UCC, Lancaster (new church start)



holding one's tongue to showing patience in suffering to the ethics of ushering in worship—seemed to me to be, if not straw, at least small potatoes. I wanted people to be hearers of the word; doing was for Sunday school."

Moravian pastor, Rev Katie Van Der Linden in her recent column in The Christian Century titled, "Faith in Public and in Private" tries to explain the paradox of James this way. *"James is looking at the big picture…What does a faithful person look like, act like, be like? …Faith is about what God sees and what the world sees; they are not separate."*

What James does well is to hold a magnifying glass to the ethics of everyday life with his capacity to urge us toward deeds that flow from our being faithful disciples of Christ, not just resting on our blessed assurances.

We say that our two sacraments, communion and baptism, are outward and visible signs of the inward and spiritual grace that we receive. Our daily actions should be outward and visible signs of the grace that we know so well, sharing that grace and love with others, and as James states it, "being doers, not just hearers" of God's holy word.

Dwight

Rev. Dwight Hein

Facilitator of Care to Clergy and Clergy Families

Penn Central Conference

Innovation Grant Applications Being Accepted

In 2018, Penn Central Conference established an Innovation Grant program to assist churches. As originally planned, the window for applying for a grant is from July 1 through October 31 each year. Funding is from the Strengthen The Church offering and the proceeds of the Conference investments which amounts to approximately $25,000 per year and is supplemented as needed from other sources.

The Grant Application can be found here or is available on the Conference website under the Resources tab at the top of the page. The drop down list reveals Documents and Forms and clicking on that enables you to scroll down to the Finance section, then select PCC Innovation Grant Form.

This same application is for use by Lebanon Association churches and groups to apply for a St. John's, Lebanon grant. These grants are funded through the investment proceeds of monies that were received from the sale of the Building of St. John's, Lebanon which amounts to approximately $5,000 per year.

Both grants are available to either begin or enhance ministries of the church.

To date, this year the Finance Committee has received two applications, both for updating the church's AV equipment enabling the congregation to make a more effective witness to their communities through their Sunday Services. It also will provide for homebound members a better opportunity to experience the worship within the walls of the building.

In previous years, the Innovation Grants have gone to churches and groups upgrading equipment and signage, starting a food pantry, planting gardens and create an LGBTQ youth center among other projects.

If you need or want any further information, contact the Conference Treasurer, Mike Price, at treasurer@pccucc.org or Paul Keller, Office Manager at pkeller@pccucc.org.