PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

May 29, 2024

Greetings friends and members of Penn Central,

Confession: I am biased. It is not always a conscious thing, but I am always aware of its presence when it influences my perception of things. It functions much like a lens and channels my thoughts about what I read, how I engage in conversations with my wife and with members of my church community, what I hear from the pulpit, and what I express to church leadership teams when I have been asked to help them through a season of discernment.

A couple of weeks ago a lay leader in my home church was called upon to lead worship and to deliver the morning message in the absence of our pastor. Deb has many gifts that she freely gives to our congregation, and one of these is that she is a great story-teller with the capacity to extract the essential meaning from scriptural passages. On this particular day, she was telling the story from Acts 1 wherein the Apostles and the other followers of Jesus had gathered following his ascension into heaven. They spent much time in prayer trying to discern what they should do while waiting "for the promise of the Father" as Jesus had commanded them. Eventually, Peter took charge and guided the assembly through what could be the first decision of the early Christian church in transition – replacing Judas. Deb noted that these early church leaders faced many of the same challenges that we, like many of you, are facing today, and they set about addressing them in ways that should feel familiar. They acknowledged that there was a vacancy that needed to be filled; they created a rudimentary job description; they identified two suitable candidates; they prayed to God for guidance; and they offered a call to Mathias.

There it is, my bias, exposed through an early example of the church in transition. For, while Deb was speaking to the congregants of our local church about our local challenges, I generalized to the wider church and all of its ministerial settings. In my view, the church has been, and always will be, in

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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...

First UCC, Carlisle

St. Matthew's UCC, Carlisle

Salem Stone UCC, Carlisle

Trinity UCC, Cashtown



transition from one age to another. It is an inescapable fact of being the church.

How to effectively lead the church in times of transition is a constant challenge to those of us in leadership positions. In their book, Called to Be Church: The Book of Acts for a New Day, Robinson and Walls (2006) write that in being called to God's church we are called "to responsibility and equipped for it in a time of transition" (p. 47) As Deb pointed out to us that day, these early Christians were equipped to respond to God's call to be God's church in several ways. First, they prayed constantly. Second, they studied the scriptures. Third, they relied on God to show them the way forward.

I would add another. They knew that they needed a full complement; that everyone had a role to play and all were expected to be a part of the work that God would lay before them. Together they would be stronger.

Together **WE** are stronger, too. In the coming weeks and months, **WE** will be prayerfully considering how the four Pennsylvania UCC conferences will transition into the future. **WE** – the members of every congregation in every association in each conference – have a stake in this future. Playing off Rev. Dr. Carrie Call's favorite naval metaphor, we are all in the same boat. Our successful transition into this next age requires us all to take up an oar and row in the same direction which God sets before us.

Consequently, if you – as an individual, as a local church leadership team, or as an association council – are wondering what this transition into the future might look like for you in your ministry setting, I encourage you to reach out to the Church Futures Commission for assistance in your discernment. I also encourage you to individually ponder a call to serve the wider church in some capacity so that when your church or association nominating committee asks you to serve, you are prepared to say, "Yes!" And when the conference leaders call you to serve on a ministry team, you are again prepared to say, "Yes!"

TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

Dr. Michael Gibbs

Coordinator, PCC Church Futures Commission

62nd Annual Meeting of the Penn Central Conference

For the first time, all four Pennsylvania conferences of the UCC will be gathering for a shared Annual Meeting on June 7-9, 2024 at The Penn Stater in State College, PA. We will have shared worship, workshops, meals and meetings as well as each conference's separate business meeting.

We will be joined by General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, who will be preaching during closing worship on Sunday. All four conferences will be hosting a reception with her on Saturday evening as well. Register by clicking the Annual Meeting tab on pccucc.org

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

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/

