



# PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE



## A Message from PCC

**February 22, 2023**

### **Greetings members and friends of Penn Central Conference,**

*“By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:19)*

Years ago, I was the pastor of a small church in New Jersey. A young couple from Liberia who came to the United States to work for Bell Labs joined our church. Soon after they became members the congregation was overjoyed to learn that the young woman was pregnant. Even more so when we learned she was to have fraternal twins. Months later when her delivery day came, I received a call from the hospital. The infant girl had survived, but not the boy. The news was crushing for everyone. Some days later the husband called to let me know their infant son had been cremated and they wished to put his ashes in the church’s new memorial garden. I said yes, knowing his ashes would be the first to grace the garden. The couple and I gathered at the small garden while the baby girl slept in a carrier nearby. They took out a very small plastic bag containing the ashes of their son. The parents poured the ashes into the ground and shook out the tiny bag whereupon ashes clung to the mother’s hands. We filled in the hole and then we joined hands to pray. As the young mother put her hand in mine, I immediately felt the grit of the ashes and the dirt from the tiny grave. Then I felt the warmth of her hand.

In that instant I knew we were joined in a profound moment of realization. As we were surrounded by gravestones, I had a sudden awareness that we are truly both dust and life. Our existence includes the grave at our feet and the warm life between our *Continues on back*

## 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...

**Mt. Bethel UCC, Mill Hall**

**Trinity Reformed UCC, Mountville**

**Zion (Gosherts) UCC, Lebanon**

**Myerstown UCC, Myerstown**



hands. I recognized that we all live between ash and flesh, encompassing both the chill of emptiness and loss, and the warmth of loving and living. The moment was holy and humbling.

Today is Ash Wednesday, the portal into the season of Lent. Standing on the threshold of Lent we allow ourselves to be drawn forward in prayer, being reminded that “you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

This year I feel the presence of ash on my hands and in my heart. The death of a colleague, the gun violence claiming young lives, the infants and tiny children pulled alive from rubble where their families have perished – these aches of life rest heavily on me. On Ash Wednesday at worship, I expect to be reminded that we all share the gift and weight of mortality. I expect to see again how the burden and reality of death is lessened when we hold it together and acknowledge it before the Lord of Life. On Ash Wednesday we are reminded that we came from the dust of the earth, and we shall return to it. But we are also to remember that the hands of God hold both the grit and the warmth of all life, including our own.

**Peace,**

**Carrie**

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call  
Conference Minister  
Penn Central Conference

Looking Ahead:

### **ONA Ministry Team Winter Gathering**

### **SAVE THE DATE: “Embracing the Beloved LGBTQ+ Community: The Role of the Church”.**

This year's winter gathering will be held on Saturday, March 4th, 2023 at Colonial Park UCC, Harrisburg, PA. The featured speaker is Attorney Henry Sias.

### **JOURNEY INTO AND THROUGH RETIREMENT**

### **A convocation for Retired Clergy and Spouses**

MAY 9, 10, 11 at the Doubletree Convention Center, Willow Street, PA

**"Renewing The Covenant We Share" PCC 61st Annual Meeting** - June 9-10, 2023 at Double-Tree Hotel in Willow Street (Lancaster)

### **"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.

**UCC national setting hosts a variety of webinars for clergy and lay people alike.** See the upcoming events and register for them online at: <https://www.ucc.org/events/>

