



PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE



Empowering churches to proclaim the reconciling love of Christ.

A Message from PCC

March 25, 2020

Dear Friends of Penn Central Conference -

"How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?" Psalm 13:2

"God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them." 1 John 4:16b

It was 1985 and I was away at sleep-away summer camp. It was a first for me. Hiking, cooking on the fire, singing by the fire, hauling fresh water, collecting wood, meeting nature in the dark – were all new experiences. At the time I struggled to really have fun in these new activities because I was overwhelmed by fear. It was a feeling shared by a cabin-mate named Lily. Lily was only slightly braver than I was but we vowed to try everything. We weren't exactly sleeping that first night when Lily announced it was time for a trip to the latrine. We put on our bravest faces, grabbed my flashlight (the night sun) and headed into the darkness. I remember that fear as if it were yesterday. We began singing at the top of our lungs, "You are my hiding place, you always fill my heart with songs of deliverance, whenever I am afraid, I will trust in you."

We made it through that first night! In the morning, the whole camp was talking about our nighttime serenade. Many were making fun of our fear. The director told us how brave he thought we were because we faced our fear and in the midst of it, and remembered that God was with us. He reshaped the morning devotion to remind us all that no matter what we are feeling, that feeling was OK and God is always with us. (Read Psalm 13 for more validation of your feelings.)

This past week, there have been a number of moments where I was again overwhelmed with fear and anxiety. I repeatedly turned to scriptures and my faith to dispel these feelings. No matter how many times I read verses directing me to not be afraid or not to worry, I would continually find myself deeper in despair because I couldn't seem to shake the fear and anxiety.

Then one morning as I was reading Psalm 56, I remembered that morning devotion at camp.

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Outdoor Ministries

SUMMER CAMP REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

Early bird pricing for those who pay in full before March 31, 2020. Learn more and register at <https://hartmancenter.com/summer-camp/>

Dear Hartman Center family,

It is with a heavy heart that, due to the risks of Covid-19, we are postponing the following events until the public health emergency has passed:

Countdown to Opening Day Fishing Retreat, Mar. 16-18

Confirmation Retreat, Mar. 27-29

What is Good Leadership Retreat, April 14-15

Learning To See Photography Retreat, April 27-29

PRIDE: LGBTQ+ Retreat, May 29-31

The Golf Outing on May 9th has been cancelled as well.

A decision on whether Summer Camp will continue as planned will be made once we are closer to the summer and can make informed decisions. However...

I remain optimistic and excited about our Summer Camp program. We have an amazing Summer Service Team lined up and the registrations seem to be flooding in! I want to reassure everyone that, should a decision be made that the programming cannot continue throughout the summer, full refunds will be issued.

All of us who see these posts love Hartman Center. The measures which we must take to keep ourselves and each other safe right now are difficult. Giving up opportunities to gather at Hartman Center are one of the most painful sacrifices we must make, and the very thought of not gathering in our beautiful camp this summer is heartbreaking for each and every one of us.

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Message from the Conference cont'

Once I was able to validate my feelings as OK, rather than try to dispel them, I was able to do something with them. I made conscious decisions to only look at the news at designated times, not constantly or every time a news alert flashed on my phone. I limited my moments on social media and I sat with my fears and anxieties and invited God to help me hold them rather than assume God would take them away.

One verse that I kept returning to was 1 John 4:18, "perfect love drives out fear." As I sat with God and my feelings of fear of anxiety, I began to feel God's presence with me. God is love. Now I cannot say to you that knowing that love and presence drove out my fear, but it has in fact helped me to hold it and carry it differently.

I am beginning to feel that part of holding fear inside the same space as God's perfect love is exactly what is driving my desire to DO something. So right now the things I am DOING to show God's perfect LOVE for me and others include:

- Being at home
- Being isolated and with God
- Being connected through the phone, social media, zoom, etc.
- Being with my feelings

I am praying about ways that I might be called to DO in the coming weeks and days. There is going to be a wave of need the likes of which many of us have never seen before. There is going to be increased food needs, clothing needs, cleaning needs, hygiene needs, and shelter needs, as well as unforeseen needs. This season of being with God and my feelings and connecting with others in new and different ways will have me spiritually prepared to DO the acts of LOVE that share God with others when the time is right and necessity calls on me.

How are you sitting with God's perfect love right now? How might that sitting prepare you for doing in the tomorrows that will come?

Shalom,
Nora



Hartman Center Cont'

But Hartman Center is more than a place, we are a ministry. Since I have come into this chapter in my life, I have been moved innumerable times by the love of and devotion to this camp, which I have seen demonstrated by just about each and every one of you.

Know that I am holding each of you in prayer.

Your sister in Christ,

Zoë A. D'heedene

Coordinator of Camps and Retreats

Contact us!

PCC Office Staff

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call, PhD - Transitional Conference Minister
email: ccall@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-652-1560 ex. 12

Rev. Nora Driver Foust - Associate Conference Minister
email: nfoust@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-652-1560 ex. 13

Zoë D'heedene - Coordinator of Camps/Retreats
email: program@hartmancenter.com

C. Paul Keller - Office Manager
email: pkeller@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-652-1560 ex. 14

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, Grantville

Grace UCC, Greencastle

Emmanuel UCC, Hanover

Grace UCC, Hanover