PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

October 11 2023

Members and Friends of Penn Central Conference,

*"Some friends play at friendship, but a true friend sticks closer than one's nearest kin." (*Proverbs 18:24)

The narrative lectionary readings for this coming Sunday include the beautiful passage from the book of Ruth (1:1-17) in which Naomi's daughter-in-law Ruth pledges her fidelity to Naomi after the death of both Ruth's husband and Naomi's. In verse 16 Ruth says to Naomi, "Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I shall lodge; your people shall be my people and your God my God." This surprising passage shows that a bond can be closer than kin and be so deep and strong that Ruth would risk her social position and future to stay with Naomi.

Besides Ruth (and the friendship of David and Jonathan), the Book of Proverbs attaches more importance to friendship than any other Hebrew Scripture. The depth of true friendship is rooted in love and loyalty. According to Ellen Davis's reading of Proverbs 18, the contrast between the plural and the singular shows the uniqueness of true friendship. There are "friends" who play at friendship (plural). And then there is the singular "one who loves" (author's translation) whose value is greater than even family.[i] I would imagine we have experienced those in our lives who 'play at friendship' versus those whose deep loyalty is constant. Friendships influence who we are as people – for good or ill. The sages note in chapter 13 verse 20, "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools suffers harm." Our friends shape and mold our spiritual and emotional lives, gifting us – in the best of times – with insight, strength, and

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...

Trinity UCC, Hanover

Colonial Park UCC, Harrisburg

Penbrook UCC, Harrisburg

St. Thomas UCC, Harrisburg



laughter. Truly, "A friend loves at all times." (Proverbs 17:17a)

Why are the sages so interested in friendship? Biblical scholars are largely in agreement that the Book of Proverbs was compiled over time and likely finished after the Israelites returned from exile in Babylon. The sages who wrote and collected the words of wisdom were keenly aware of the change in Israel's culture during that time. Davis writes, "Kinship bonds weakened as some Israelites chose or (probably more often) were forced to move off the family land, out of the ancestral village and into the city or neighboring areas… far from home they now had to look to friends rather than family for support and help in time of trouble."[ii] The sages are nothing if not pragmatic about the reality we find ourselves in, both then and now.

Not everyone has a family for support and guidance. Not everyone has siblings who stand beside them. Some have kin who reject them. Davis reminds us, "Millions of people in our mobile society derive most of their emotional sustenance from friends."[iii] When family is supportive and tight, it is a blessing. Yet scripture reminds us to remember the value of deep friendships that transcend time and place. Jesus too, put his trust in the bond of friendship with his disciples. Perhaps our prayers at home and in church might lift up those who nurture our souls with the gift of their hearts in friendship.

Peace,

Carrie

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call

Conference Minister

Penn Central Conference

[i] Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs (2000) p.114

[ii] Ibid.

[iii] Ibid.

Register for the following at https://pccucc.org/register-for-an-event/

PCC Fall Budget Meeting

November 11, 2023 9:30 AM

This year's Annual Meeting included a vote for the Penn Central Conference to have a Budget Meeting in the fall. Each authorized minister is a voting member and each church is allowed two delegates to vote. These can be, but do not have to be, the same delegates as went to Annual Meeting. We do still need to reach quorum.

This meeting will be on Zoom only, and will include a budget presentation and vote. We anticipate it to take no more than 60 - 90 minutes.

Synod Seconds – A Keystone-wide Conversation

Join conference staff and delegates from across the keystone state as we explore implementation of General Synod Resolutions and looks at snap-shots of wider-church life. We'll be starting with 3 zooms this fall, September 11, October 16, and November 13 from 6:30-8 pm. All are welcome. Please register.

Choose from three in person and one Zoom Town Hall to learn more about the **Keystone Project**, the current working group's assessments and how they are visioning "Together we are stronger: the Keystone Conference."

October 18, 6:30PM - St. Paul's UCC, Mechanicsburg (in-person only)

November 1, 6:30PM - Zoom Only

November 14, 6:30PM - Quentin UCC, Quentin (in-person only)