The Keystone Connection

A Message to the Conference

March 10, 2026

Dear Keystone Members and Friends –



"Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.'" - John 4:13-14 NRSV

Some of you may remember the lyric: "Jordan river is deep and wide." But as you can see in this photo, compared to the Susquehanna, Delaware or Ohio, it's not really. It's more reminiscent of many streams or creeks here in our Conference. A fact of life in the Middle East is that water is precious. In response to Jesus' words in John 4 above, the woman to whom he is speaking says, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." It's not as much a matter of convenience as a matter of survival. Water is precious, and to the astonishment of his disciples, Jesus gives her this water through his empathic listening and teaching. She leaves her jar and tells many Samaritans, and the Bible says that many come to believe in him because of her testimony.

It's worth noting that the disciples are astonished because he is talking to a Samaritan woman. It should not be lost on us that she would be a foreigner and an outcast in the eyes of Jesus' disciples.

At one of the churches where I preached last Sunday, a group of children sang a song that they had been planning for weeks: "I've got peace like a river." It struck me as profound given the current events in our world.

Jesus calls us to be people of peace, joy, and love. While these principles can be challenging to live out, as Christians I believe that we absolutely must hold true to them. We are called to follow the example of the Christ who showed love to enemies and who did not allow the prejudices of his day to prevent him from doing that.

As we continue to grow into the Keystone Conference together, may we quench our thirst for peace and justice with the Living Water of Jesus, whose ministry becomes in us a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.

Grace and peace to you,

David

David Ackerman

Transitional Regional Conference Minister, Region 3

Keystone Conference

High Country UCC, in the Western North Carolina Association of the Southern Conference, has opened a Mission Trip/rebuild site in response to Hurricane Helene. The site will be commissioned on Sunday, March 15, at 11:00 am during worship. The UCC Global H.O.P.E. staff will join in worship to commission the High Country UCC campus as a volunteer host site for hurricane relief. The Keystone Conference has sent one of our disaster tool trailers to High Country for this response. A volunteer group from Maine will be working that week, and will share in the celebration.

You are invited to add this mission site to your prayer list for March 15. You can also send your best wishes to Rev. Sarah Parker, pastor, at pastor@highcountryucc.org.

Keystone Conference Addiction Recovery Taskforce

A group is forming to create a Keystone Conference Addiction Recovery Taskforce. They will begin with a discussion on mission, vision, and steps forward via Zoom on Thursday March 19 at noon. Please email Rev. Rich Mollica at rmollica33@gmail.com with your name, phone number, email and church you represent to register and receive the Zoom link.

Keystone Conference of the United Church of Christ's first Annual Meeting will be held June 5-7 at Millersville University in Millersville. Overnight accommodations will be on campus as well as the DoubleTree Hilton in Lancaster. Registration will begin in March 2026.

Our theme is "Joy at the Table Together" and our centering scripture is Acts 2:46-47 "Every day they met together, breaking bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God." The meeting will include a Service of Consecration for Keystone Conference.

Speakers will include Rev. Dr. Marcia McFee, author of Think Like a Filmmaker: Sensory-Rich Worship for Unforgettable Messages; Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ; Rev. Dr. Mary Luti, author of Do This: Communion for Just and Courageous Living; Rev. Greg Edwards, Executive Director of POWER Interfaith, Secretary Russell Redding, PA Secretary of Agriculture, and Rev. Freeman Palmer, Conference Minister for the Central Atlantic Conference.

Attention Youth Campers and Families,

Please read the following information carefully, as the Conference policy for supplementing youth summer camping has changed.

For the 2026 summer season, the Keystone Conference will campership or reimburse 30% of the cost for one youth to attend one summer camping experience. If a youth attends more than one camp during the summer, only one camp will be eligible for the 30% reimbursement. Please use the application for additional camps if this creates a hardship.

Learn more and download the application under the campership section of keystoneucc.org/mission-grants-committee/

Living Waters Camp & Conference Center Schellsburg, PA

Trustin' Jesus! Summer Camps
Fishing Camp - June 28 to July 2, for grades 6 to 12
Primary (grades K - 3) - July 5 to 11
Elementary Camp (grades 4 - 6) - July 5 to 11
Junior-Senior High Camp - July 12 - 18
Grandparent / Grandchild Camp is July 12 to 15
Learn more at livingwaterscamp.org

HC Spirit Camp is hosted at Hartman Center Campground, Milroy, PA . The theme for HC Spirit 2026 is "In the Wilderness." Camp runs from July 26 - August 1, 2026. Keep checking in at hcspiritcamp.org for the upcoming brochure and registration links