PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

February 1, 2023

Greetings members and friends of Penn Central Conference,

Is this not the fast I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice; to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? (Isaiah 58:6 NRSV)

The authors of the Book of Isaiah were active from 500 BCE to 70 CE and produced one of the most lyrical and beautiful works of prophetic poetry known. The entire scope of Isaiah speaks to the ways God's people Israel have turned away from God, borne the consequences, and been restored. The words include threat, judgment, mercy, hope, and renewal.

Now imagine the amount of time that has passed since those original words were scratched on vellum. Two thousand five hundred years. When I sit down to read Isaiah, I am struck at the remarkable act of reading words across that span of time, words that have something to say to me, here in 2023 CE. I am humbled in the face of those eons. I imagine the thousands who copied the words by hand, the millions who read these same words, and the innumerable number who recited them aloud.

That humility is the best place for me to recognize that the expectations of God in 500 BCE are the same now in 2023 CE. Reading Isaiah draws me into a cycle of judgment, repentance, and restoration. But it also draws me back to a sobering reality – God has told us what is expected of us and yet consistently we turn away. God calls for justice. Instead, we quarrel, plan revolts, defraud widows, take bribes, withhold bread, ignore the naked and homeless, refuse to intervene when called for, create idols, point the

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...

Zion UCC, Marietta

St. Johns (Markelsville) UCC, Newport

Maytown Reformed UCC, Maytown

St. James UCC, Littlestown



finger, place a yoke on others' shoulders, rob the poor, make prey of the orphans, and oppress our workers. Add to this ingratitude, complacency, pride, iniquity, and bloodshed, and just about everything is covered.

The prophet speaks the words of the Holy One, calling us back to a life of justice. And this life of justice has a clear blueprint. The just community will have food, clothing, and shelter for the most vulnerable, and they (widows, orphans, strangers, slaves) will be protected. They will be free from fraud in the marketplace and in the legal system. The community will not be socially equal in the way we think of that equality now. Yet it will be in balance with God at the center and its inhabitants living in peace.

The words from God about humanity's injustice are searing. They reappear, chapter after chapter. God begs, pleads, questions, and demands to know why we turn away from right relationship with God and neighbor. I ask myself this too – especially in recent days. I begin at home and consider the blueprint in my own heart. Does it reflect the way God expects me to live? A life of care for the vulnerable, recognizing all that God has done for me and acting out of that immense gratitude?

God is patient. I am thankful for that. While I felt the indictment as I read (of myself and our society) I also cling to God's words of mercy and promise:

But those who are noble plan noble things,
and by noble things they stand…
hen Justice will dwell in the wilderness,
and righteousness abide in the fruitful field.
The effect of righteousness will be peace,
and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.

(Isaiah 32:8, 16-17)

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 DoubleTree 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/