PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

September 20, 2023

Members and Friends of Penn Central Conference,

"Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" (Matthew 20:15)

The parable of the vineyard workers in Matthew 20 may be the most uncomfortable parable Jesus shares. In the parable, the owner of a vineyard hires workers first thing in the morning and offers them a certain wage. Later the owner hires more, who start work later, and he offers them a wage too. Finally, in the afternoon the owner hires a last set of workers, who agree to the same wage as the others. When the time for payment comes, the vineyard owner pays all the workers the same wage. Discontent rears its head. The workers from the morning complain bitterly, for those who were hired in the late afternoon are being paid the same wage as those who worked from the morning! This seems terribly unfair. As the workers complain, "You have made them equal to us.." The owner's questions in response (above) are the heart of the parable and pose a potent query to each of us.

God's freedom, after all, does not always fit with our sense of how God should act. God's economy does not fit human conceptions of fairness, either. Both truths rub us the wrong way. The focus, for Jesus, is the generosity and freedom of the vineyard owner. When this generosity is demonstrated so starkly, we react with our own conceptions of how the owner should have acted instead of what the workers actually did receive from the owner.

Continues on back

Contact us!

PCC Office Staff

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call, PhD - *Conference Minister*
email: ccall@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-433-3196

Rev. Dr. Nora Driver Foust - *Associate Conference Minister*
email: nfoust@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-433-2587

Rev. Rick Luciotti - *Facilitator of Care to Clergy and Clergy Families*
email: rluciotti@gmail.com / Phone: 717-433-6306

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

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...

St. John's UCC, Fredricksburg

St. Paul's (Hamlin) UCC, Fredricksburg

Trinity UCC, Gettysburg

New Hope (Fissel's) UCC, Glen Rock



Why is it so very difficult to focus consistently on what we have received from God and express gratitude for it? Humans are social creatures, thereby constantly judging and comparing ourselves to others – it's one of the ways we survive socially. We also have an innate sense of 'fairness' (as do other social creatures) that helps us maintain equilibrium in our groups. However, devotion to a human idea of fairness goes haywire at times and instead of gratitude for what we have already received, we are filled with envy and resentment because someone else received 'more' (in our definition of 'more'). Or we hold our own judgment about who 'deserves' what they receive and who does not. The workers hired in the morning judged that those hired in the afternoon did not deserve what they received. Once again Jesus, the great psychologist, holds up a mirror to show the disciples, and us, how small is our thinking, how constricted are our hearts. After all, did they not receive the pay which they were promised?

This has become a constant spiritual discipline for me. I need the reminder daily (hourly?) to thank God, the great vineyard owner, for what I have received. To focus only on me and the gifts God has given me, not on what I assume God has given to others. And to remember that since all comes from God's hand, God is free to do as God wills. Gratitude and humility – two practices of discipleship that Jesus consistently calls us back to. May we re-awaken to God's generosity in our own lives.

Peace,

Carrie

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call

Conference Minister

Penn Central Conference

Lay Leader Boundary Awareness – Healthy Church Relations – This 90-minute introductory session for lay leaders in the church will introduce issues of power, multiple relationships, church money, social media, and health information sharing practices built around a behavioral covenant. It's sure to be an enlightening and empowering conversation. Please join this important conversation at 6:30pm on September 18th.

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 11, 6:30PM; St. John's UCC, Lewisburg (in-person only)

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)