

# PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE



Empowering churches to proclaim the reconciling love of Christ.



## A Message from PCC

## Contact us!

**April 27, 2022**

**Dear Friends and Members of Penn Central Conference,**

*Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not be disbelieving but believing." (John 20:27, author's translation)*

Certain narratives in the Gospel of John grab a hold of me and won't let go. The post-Easter narrative about Thomas is one of them. What makes it beguiling to me is what Thomas demands of Jesus. He wants to see Jesus' wounds. Now why is that important? Wouldn't just seeing Jesus be enough?

Jesus is the resurrected Savior – as such we might expect him to be healed of all wounds, all deformities, all the things that mark a human body through life. We might expect that when God raised Jesus, the marks of his crucifixion would be gone. Indeed, when the church talks of the resurrection of the dead at the end times, it is always as a perfected body without blemish or mark. But here we have the resurrected Lord who still bears the signs of his torture and means of execution. The presence of Jesus' wounds is foundational for Christianity.

Nicolaus Ludwig, Count von Zinzendorf (early Bishop of the Moravian Church and founder of the town of Lititz, PA) often focused on the wounds of Christ. Zinzendorf shares a wonderful story from St. Martin of Tours (d. 397 CE). In it, St. Martin tells his congregation that the devil himself appeared to him in the guise of Jesus wearing a royal robe encrusted with gold, gems and wearing a golden crown. He told Martin he was a beloved disciple and to adore him. Mar-

*Continues on back*

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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.*

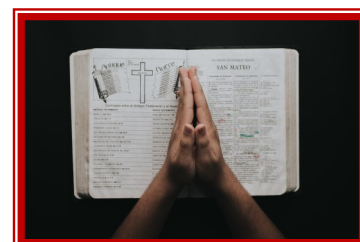
This week, we pray for each other as we continue to live into God's calling...

**Zion UCC, Newburg**

**St. John's (New Chester) UCC, New Oxford**

**St. Paul's UCC, New Oxford**

**Incarnation UCC, New Berlin**



tin immediately saw the mistake the devil had made and asked, "Where are the marks of the nails? Where the piercing of the spear? Where the crown of thorns? When I see the marks of the Passion I shall adore my Lord."

This is a mystery of our faith – that God comes to us as one who suffers. Not only is Thomas told to touch Jesus' pierced hands, but also to put his hand in his side, to reach into the reality of his suffering. Jesus is wounded but also transformed. This Jesus is one who carries transformed wounds. Christ shows us that God suffers with us, and that God can transform our own woundedness.

This should be liberating. However, for some reason the idea of the suffering of Jesus is troublesome to us. Even John Calvin wrote that while the wounds on the resurrected Christ were there to convince the first disciples, surely, they later healed up and disappeared! Zinzendorf asked, in 1742 on a trip to Lancaster, why it is that the church does not preach about the sufferings of Jesus?

I understand why Zinzendorf is asking. When I read of the intimacy of Jesus asking Thomas to put his hand into his side, I shy away. I feel the discomfort. Why? Perhaps because I don't really want Jesus to see or reach into my own wounds. After all, our wounds – especially emotional and spiritual - are held closely. We might hold on to them for all sorts of reasons. Yet our wounded Teacher, Savior, and Lord is the one who can transform them – and us. He is the one who will stand with us in the midst of the pain, fear, and trauma. He has been there himself.

The Easter message offers new life. Part of that message includes the healing of grievous wounds through love. Not the elimination of woundedness, but its transformation. In this Easter season may we allow the light of Christ's love deep into our own wounds without fear. And may we hear him speak to each of us, saying peace be with you.

**Peace,**  
**Carrie**

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call

Conference Minister

Penn Central Conference

### **Ways to Support the People of Ukraine**

Please see the two links below for some specific information about ways we can assist those in Ukraine. The Global Ministries staff at the national UCC setting has worked diligently to make connections with mission partners in the area and there are several opportunities for giving as well as joining in prayer.

<https://www.ucc.org/global-h-o-p-e/ukraine-emergency-appeal/>

### **PCC's 60th Annual Meeting**

#### **"Mission In Focus"**

"See, the former things have come to pass and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them." - Isaiah 42:9

Opening Plenary: 6:30PM, June 6, 2022

Workshops: 6:30PM, June 7-9, 2022

Business & Worship: 9:30AM, June 11, 2022

<https://penncentralconference.regfox.com/penn-central-conference-annual-meeting-2022>

**The Growing Project Volunteer Days** at The Wittel Farm begins on Saturday, April 2!

For April 30: <https://www.lutherancamping.org/event/volunteer-days-at-the-wittel-farm-04-30/>

For May 2: <https://www.lutherancamping.org/event/volunteer-days-at-the-wittel-farm-05-07/>

### **HC Spirit Week - What's in a Name?**

"Naming and Claiming Who God Made Us to Be"

Saturday, August 6 through Friday, August 12

Camp Mt. Luther

<https://penncentralconference.regfox.com/hc-spirit-week>