

PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE



Empowering churches to proclaim the reconciling love of Christ.



A Message from PCC

March 31, 2022

Dear Friends and Members of Penn Central Conference,

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples who was about to betray him said, “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?” (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, “Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.” (John 12:4-5, 7-8 NRSV)

As we approach Good Friday and Easter, we start to see some of the best and worst of human behavior. Judas, for example, bears the weight of our judgment as we look to him as the betrayer of Jesus. That happens in the passage from John quoted above in which Mary anoints Jesus’ feet at a meal in Bethany. Judas’ question is dismissed by the author of John quite easily by referring to Judas as a thief. The question Judas raises, however, is one worthy of investigation. And that he is discounted for asking it is also worthy of investigation.

Judas’ question is, quite simply, “What about the poor?” Any of the disciples could have asked this question since Jesus had spoken to them about selling their possessions and giving the money to the poor. However, for the writer of John, Judas has a role to play, and he will be the one dismissed and berated by the narrator. This is somewhat odd since the question of “what about the poor?” is one that we are encouraged to ask. I would venture to say that dismissing Judas’ question out of hand masks the reality that we ask this question all the time. And we feel quite justified *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.

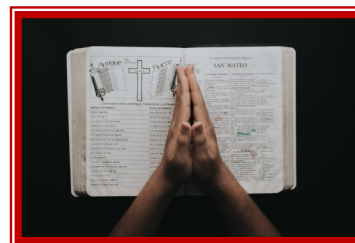
This week, we pray for each other as we continue to live into God's calling...

St. John's (Marklesville) UCC, Newport

Maytown Reformed UCC, Maytown

St. James UCC, Littlestown

St. Paul's UCC, McConnellsburg



(even righteous) in asking it. Jesus' response to Judas should give us pause, literally. Jesus explains that something is happening here (anointing for death) that is of greater immediate significance, and we should be focusing on this reality instead. His words turn my heart in a necessary yet uncomfortable direction.

I feel myself called to account by this passage. I confess that my first response in certain situations is "wait, what about the poor/neglected/broken/oppressed?" I am adept at this question. And I know in the past we have asked "wait, what about...?" regarding many issues. At times the question is critical for the moment and will unmask all manner of injustice. Other times it can be used as a judgment and a demonstration of our own righteousness ("See? I am the one who noticed the emperor's lack of clothes!").

I've also learned that asking the question constantly can shut down conversation and relationship in a barrage of judgment. It can demonstrate my own reluctance to see what else is happening in the immediate moment that may be deeply significant. Something to which Jesus is calling my attention. Maybe to hear the story behind the action to which I am reacting or maybe to simply listen and quiet my hyper-critical mind. To set my judgment and criticism aside for a moment.

In my mind, Jesus' response to Judas says, "your offense at the state of the poor will always be with you - but for right now, focus on me." This is difficult for me since my experience of offense about the state of the world is high. Yet I will wrestle with it - because while I want to unmask injustice, I also want deep listening, authentic dialog, and meaningful relationships. We need to balance using our good questions to unmask evil and listening to Jesus to hear what more might be arising from the moment. May grace assist us.

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/>

Save the Date:

PCC's 60th Annual Meeting

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

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

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

Outdoor Ministries

Summer Open House (April 10 from 2-4:30 p.m. at Kirchenwald & Nawakwa)

(For Kirchenwald) <https://www.lutherancamping.org/event/summer-camp-open-house-kirchenwald-0322/>

(For Nawakwa) <https://www.lutherancamping.org/event/summer-camp-open-house-nawakwa-0322/>

HC Spirit Week

Mt. Luther Camp
August 6—12, 2022

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

