PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

October 02, 2024

Greetings Penn Central members and friends,

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20a, NRSV)

On an errand at my car dealership, the gentleman waiting on me shared that he and his fiancé were planning to serve as missionaries overseas. This young man had experience with mission work, as he described it, with the "untaught" – that is, people who had never learned about Christianity. That included people of other faiths. I was struck immediately at the irony of the encounter, as I recently returned from the 200th anniversary of the Berlin Mission in Berlin, Germany.

Mission is a fraught topic. Depending on the branch of Christianity, the word has various interpretations. For some it includes preaching and teaching the Bible, working toward conversion. For others it is running a community meal, and no Jesus-talk happens. In mainline churches, mission talk raises concerns about colonialism and experiences of those who were the recipients of mission work.

My time in Berlin showed me a more nuanced reality up close. For two days I reflected, sang, and ate with Bishops and other representatives from 20 countries where the Berlin Mission has sent its missionaries or established partnerships beginning in 1824. The oldest was South Africa, where a mission was established in 1834. In a group conversation about the future of partnerships, the bishop from South Africa was vocal about two things: First, they were aware of the problems and mistakes missionaries made involving their people, from paternalism to lack of self-governance. Second, they were deeply grateful for the gift of the Gospel. Others from various countries spoke of the same thing. Yes, we recognize the complicated relationship within mission relationships and yet… thank you for bringing us the gospel. In a particularly poignant exchange as part of our closing celebration, the delegation from Tanzania present-

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. Luke's UCC, Lock Haven

Sandy Hill UCC, Loysville

St. Peter's UCC, Lykens

St. Luke's UCC, Dalmatia



ed a Bible to the mission leaders and said, "You came to us with a Bible in your language. Now we can come to you and give you a Bible in our language."

I felt humility and gratitude that I could be there to hear the exchanges in person. What affected me the most, however, was the refreshing presence of nuanced conversations in which nothing was all good or all evil. Conversations that held the tension of what mistakes we made in mission work alongside the joy that people had in the gospel. There was honesty without judgment and listening without interruption. In short, there was an abundance of grace.

Upon leaving Berlin, I knew that in engaging in conversation about mission or other potentially fraught topics I will look more intentionally for the nuances, the both/and, the holding of space for complicated realities in which hurt and hope reside side-by-side or damage and healing may share a seat. These conversations are harder, yet they hold more space for transforming grace.

Thank you, members of Penn Central Conference, for allowing me to travel to Berlin to be part of this historic celebration. Our multiple partnerships with German regions are valuable and I give thanks for all who are involved and supportive.

Peace,

Carrie

Conference Minister

Penn Central Conference

UCC Appeal for Hurricane Helene Relief Efforts

I was in North Carolina for a funeral over the weekend as Helene unleashed rain and wind over our state's highest elevations. The amount of rain coming at the end of a week of wet weather was far more than any geography could handle. My parents and I waited a little more than 30 hours for a message from my sister and brother-in-law who live in the mountains of Ashe County. We heard. They were safe. No power, no water, no cell service - save the one lady with a magic phone in their small and devastated town.

I know many wait for that call still. Even as the clean-up begins for others.

One of the UCC outdoor ministry sites in the NC mountains, Johns River Valley Camp, where I camped, worked, and was married, sustained heavy damage. UCC churches are among the many from Florida to Tennessee who are assessing each of their situations.

The need is great and will last for some time to come. Buckets and hygiene kits, financial donations, mission teams and more. Check out this information from our national settings office of Global HOPE to see how you can help.

Donate here: https://support.ucc.org/hurricane-helene-relief

Or send a check to the PCC office,

Rev. Nora Foust

Associate Conference Minister

Penn Central Conference