PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

February 14, 2024

Greetings friends and members of Penn Central Conference,

"Go to your bosom; knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know…" (Shakespeare)

I have heard a few laughs as people note that Ash Wednesday and Valentines Day fall on the same day this year. It's an unusual occurrence yet speaking of the heart on Ash Wednesday seems appropriate. The scriptures for this day mention the heart as the seat of conscience and compassion. The reading from Joel 2 reminds us to return to God "with all your heart" and to "rend your hearts and not your clothing." The passage from Isaiah speaks of the fast that God chooses, which includes loosing the bonds of injustice, sharing bread, and covering the naked, all actions that require the compassion of the heart. The psalmist reminds us that the acceptable sacrifice to God is "a broken and contrite heart." And finally in the Gospel lesson from Matthew we hear the timeless truth from Jesus that "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Jesus, the great psychologist, knew how the human heart works. After all, our hearts are capable of loving, swelling, breaking, bursting, rising, closing, opening, hungering, yielding, dropping, and aching not to mention being fickle, troubled, hard, courageous, cold, and mysterious. For eons the center of human character and conscience has been the heart. Hence the recognition by the scriptures that where our heart is directed indicates what we love. And our hearts love a great deal - not just other people, but also animals, ideas, nature, and many human-made things (and for some of us, especially sparkly things).

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...

Salem Walmers UCC, Annville

Salona UCC, Mill Hall

St. Paul's UCC, Schaefferstown

St. Paul's UCC, Selinsgrove



I think when it comes to loving God, however, we may take it for granted. We spend a great deal of time talking about how we love our neighbors. And we have oodles of practices that prove it, including those mentioned in Isaiah. Perhaps we might even find that loving our neighbors is the easiest way to express our love of God. But I would challenge us to ask ourselves a question this Lent: how do I love God? If our immediate answer is "by loving our neighbors" I would challenge you to engage the question more deeply. Remember Jesus' words in Luke 10, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all of your soul, all of your strength, and all of your mind..." Consider how your heart, soul, strength, and mind love God daily. How do you do it? What does it look like? How is it different than loving our neighbors?

While Lent is traditionally a time to consider sin and work through repentance, we can approach it also as reflecting deeply on what our heart loves - and how that love may need to be redirected to God. Our hearts are easily distracted and can chase themselves into emotional and spiritual cul-de-sacs instead of focusing on God's horizon. This Lent, join with me in taming our hearts a bit and finding the daily ways of turning them back to their original purpose - to love God, the one who made us and sustains us.

Peace,

Carrie

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call

Conference Minister

Penn Central Conference

Registration is now open for **HC Spirit camp at Hartman Center Campground and Retreat Center** - Sunday, July 28th through Saturday, August 3rd, 2024.

https://penncentralconference.regfox.com/hartman-homecoming-week-2024

Camp makes a great Christmas gift. Check out the summer options from our partners at Lutheran Camping Corporation's Kirchenwald (and Nawakwa)

https://www.lutherancamping.org/summer-camp/youth-summer-programs/

Salem's Closet, in Salem UCC, Harrisburg, has partnered with Church World Services and are supplying refugees with clothing and household goods.

The number of refugees that have been coming has gone from just a few to 15 a month. In conversation wtih Cindy at CWS, 15 or more is going to be the new normal. We need clothing for men, boys, teens, infants, and toddlers for all seasons, bedding that includes blankets, and sheets not to mention other household goods. These donations need to be in good condition and clean.

Please contact Susan Nelson at srsews@gmail.com to find out more about how to donate items. If you are able to help transport items donated from further afield, please let her know as well.

4 Conference Lenten Study: "Look Back to Look Forward"

The Penn West, Penn Central, Penn Northeast and Penn Southeast Conferences of the United Church of Christ cordially invite you to participate in this virtual Lenten opportunity! Meeting each Wednesday in Lent at 7pm, this Bible Study explores the foundations of our identity as Christians and members of the UCC as we explore what the future may hold! Each week is unique so if you cannot attend every date you can still participate in as many as you are able. If you have questions, or you would like to participate in this study, please email pattyr@pnec.org to receive the link. Thank you!