



The Keystone Connection

A Message to the Conference

September 22, 2026

Members and Friends of Keystone Conference,

“We would rather die alone than live together.” I spoke those words at a gathering of the Upper Bucks in the North Penn Association this past Saturday. True, it’s not true for all of us, as humans or as churches, but it is a phenomenon present in our country’s long history and has certainly infected Christian churches. I spoke on Saturday with churches hoping to think outside the box about how to proclaim the Gospel and help their community in practical ways. The tradition of American individualism can be a gift, especially when one needs the courage to speak out an unpopular word about justice, but it also lies to us, as if we didn’t really need each other, as if our enemy wasn’t also our neighbor, whom we are commanded to love by Jesus. And love isn’t a command to feel something but to do right by the other, if stranded on the side of the road, brutalized by thieves, abandoned by others (Luke 10:25-37).

I did a version of this workshop three years ago, but the second version, with additional new figures around pastoral searches in our Conference, felt more urgent. If God still has ministry for us to do in our communities, it’s time to think about sharing and going back to a model from our American past. That past includes sharing a pastor between two churches, sharing a building with another congregation, merging with another congregation, or creating a “Co-Op” of multiple churches sharing pastors and ministry. In every work we do for the Gospel in word and deed, we should be asking ourselves, “Why are we doing this by ourselves? Who can we seek out as a partner in living out our ministry together?” Even Jesus, who I believe to be God given flesh and bone, needed fellow travelers, needed others, to do his work. And if there is change about to happen in the next few months or few years in your church, the time to start asking those questions above is now, not tomorrow. We have work to do in a world that is changing, sometimes for the good, sometimes for the bad, but our unique expression of faith in a world divided by politics and theology is sorely needed. I would rather live with others than die alone, personally. How about you?

Rev. Kevin J. McLemore

Transitional Regional Conference Minister for Region I
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**Global Ministries: A Journey of Faith and Fellowship, the Church of South India
by Charles Kuthuru**

The partnership between PSEC, PNEC, and the Medak, Karnataka Central, and Karimnagar Dioceses of the Church of South India (CSI) has been deeply meaningful, particularly through our mission visits in, 2020, and

2023.

During our visit, we travelled throughout the dioceses, visiting both urban and rural congregations. Everywhere we went we were received with genuine brotherly and sisterly love. The warmth and hospitality extended to us were deeply moving. We were welcomed with prayer, fellowship, shawls and gifts and with expressions of honor and affection that reflected the gracious spirit of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Yet, beyond the hospitality and beautiful cultural expressions what touched us most profoundly was the faith of the people. This journey gave us an opportunity to recalibrate and renew our own faith by witnessing the faith of the believers in India. We witnessed their passion for Christ, their reverence to utmost God and the commitment to life of the church.

Beyond the hospitality and beautiful cultural expressions, what touched us most profoundly during our journey to India was the deep faith of the people. Witnessing the believers' passion for Christ, reverence for God, and commitment to the life of the Church provided us with an opportunity to recalibrate and renew our own faith.

This was especially evident in the rural communities. Where material resources were limited, we encountered abundant spiritual richness. The genuine, humble, and deeply rooted devotion of these believers reminded us that faith is measured by the depth of one's relationship with God, not by possessions or circumstances.

Our visit transcended a typical partnership trip; it became a true spiritual encounter. While we went to share fellowship and strengthen the relationship between our dioceses, we returned strengthened ourselves. The believers we met served as powerful witnesses to the simplicity, passion, sacrifice, and reverence that should characterize our walk with Christ.

The partnership between the Medak Diocese Karnataka Central Diocese and the Karimnagar Diocese has been a profound blessing both institutionally and spiritually. This journey reinforced that the Body of Christ spans cultures and geographical boundaries as one united family. We are excited to be continuing that relationship into the Keystone Conference.

In connection with our academic and ministry partnerships, I also wanted to highlight the work of Lydia Bujem, who has come this fall to US as exchange student. She is at Lutheran Seminary as a third-year doctoral researcher in Old Testament at United Theological College, Bengaluru, studying under Dr. K. Jesurathnam. Coming from a ministerial family in Nagaland, her research interests stem from observing the limited participation and representation of persons with disabilities in the church.

Her thesis, "The Corporeality of God in the Select Psalms: A Socio-Rhetorical and Disability Reading," examines how the Psalms portray God through body-centered language. The study explores the socio-cultural and ideological factors shaping these representations and addresses whose experiences are included or excluded. By integrating disability studies into Old Testament interpretation.

She is connected with our global team, The Northern Association extended invitation to visit a local church in the month of November 2026. And the Global Ministries team introduced Lydia to the UCC disability ministries for further partnership with promising young PhD scholar.

We give thanks to God for this meaningful fellowship and for the faithful people who welcomed, encouraged, and challenged us to deepen our commitment to Christ. The memories and lessons of this journey continue to remind us of the power of a genuine, Christ-centered faith.