PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

September 06, 2023

Members and Friends of Penn Central Conference,

"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

"Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." Matthew 18:15-20

Jesus admonishes believers to cope with sin within the body of believers by first speaking privately with the perceived offender. If that fails to resolve the matter, then attempt an intervention with a small number of trusted members. Again, failing to achieve resolution, he encourages involvement of the entire church community. Finally, if these efforts are rejected, then treat the person of concern as an outsider.

This advice appears reasonable and straight forward, but I think a deeper examination and consideration of context suggests some serious unpacking. As a preface, I ground my response to this passage with the following quote I heard a few years ago. "We are Christians, of course we do not gossip. We simply share concerns. And of course, we are Christians, we are not judgmental. But some people just need to know

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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...

Zwingli UCC, East Berlin

St. John's Center UCC, East Earl

Trinity UCC, East Petersburg

Christ UCC, Elizabethtown



how wrong they are, and we must make it clear to them." I want to suggest that this approach is not how Jesus intended his teaching be applied.

It is understood how difficult it is to speak with concern to someone concerning behavior injurious to the community and to themselves. Undertaking such a task entails risk of rejection and potentially harsh response. Similarly, attempting the second and third steps would be equally daunting, despite the safety in numbers theory. The final step may appear as common sense and an easy solution to an ongoing problem, but there is more than meets the eye.

We will each experience episodes wherein we are confronted by the very issue Jesus addresses in this passage and so learning to apply this reaching is central to the life and governance of the community of believers. Clearly, gossip and judgmental expressions have no place in church life, for who among us is without sin. And would we want such behaviors exhibited towards us when our sins manifest themselves within the community? Jesus is encouraging engagement with the offender that is genuine and gracious.

There are those who contend that such an approach is beyond our capacity to express. I disagree. Difficult to achieve, but not beyond. God's grace empowers and encourages us to learn better, more effective coping behaviors. Yes, much practice is required in learning when to speak, when to remain silent and to think first while awaiting the Spirit's inspiration prior to engaging with the offender.

Finally, when Jesus states that we should then treat the offender as we would a tax collector or other sinner, we much ask the following question: How was it that Jesus himself treated such persons? Should we not go and do likewise?

Rick

Rev. Rick Luciotti

Coordinator of Clergy Care

Penn Central Conference

Hawaii Fires

The United Church of Christ, through Wider Church Ministries, is issuing a special appeal to provide essential items and long-term support to those impacted by wildfires across Hawaii, including the deadly wildfires on the island of Maui. https://support.ucc.org/hawaii-wildfires

The Hawaii Conference also shared a link to donate as well as other information and a prayer, you can read here: https://conta.cc/4439NJP

A message from Megan Swope, founder of The Period Project Harrisburg, to Penn Central Conference:

Hello! I want to continue to celebrate the contribution made at the Penn Central Conference Annual Meeting in June to The Period Project Harrisburg. As a result of those efforts, we were able to help MORE PEOPLE this month, spending less than we would have had to on our wholesale order for our Day of Impact 2023. As of August 9, ALL of the products collected by Penn Central Conference have been distributed as part of 1,000 period packs! Thanks to Penn Central Conference UCC, we were able to bless Bethesda Mission, She's Somebody's Daughter, Beacon Clinic for Health and Hope, Hershey Food Pantry, Hummelstown Food Pantry, Harrisburg City Schools, Brethren Housing, and Steelton-Highspire School District! Tonight, a menstruator may not have to suffer a loss of dignity, risk their health, or miss school or work… because of the generosity of Penn Central Conference donors. THANK YOU SO MUCH! I am truly honored and deeply grateful to Penn Central Conference UCC.

Lay Leader Boundary Awareness – Healthy Church Relations – This 90-minute introductory session for lay leaders in the church will introduce issues of power, multiple relationships, church money, social media, and health information sharing practices built around a behavioral covenant. It's sure to be an enlightening and empowering conversation. Please join this important conversation at 6:30pm on September 18th.