The Keystone Connection

A Message to the Conference

May 26, 2026

Members and Friends of Keystone Conference,

And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." 20Immediately they left their nets and followed him. Matthew 4:19-20

My spouse and I live in Pottstown, and to our left is an older person, or at least older than us, probably in her late seventies, and to our right is a house full of young people, none of whom has probably reached 30 yet. I am 56, and my spouse is 60. When a snowstorm back in February had finished doing its damage, I was shoveling our sidewalk and our older neighbors' sidewalk, when our young neighbors saw me and told me to go inside, that they had this shoveling stuff covered. They were so kind, but when I walked back inside, it suddenly struck me that they thought I had gotten to an age where I shouldn't be shoveling snow. I mean, they saw me as old, or at least, as an older man, in danger of hurting himself doing this work of moving snow. And they weren't wrong – I am not the young man I used to be six to eight weeks ago (!) – and I've officiated at the funerals of two older men who died while shoveling snow. Leaving these young people to do some of the work I could do easily only a few years ago, well, that was a difficult yes. Time marches on, as they say, and it has marched all over my 56-year-old body, widened as it has been with too much food and too little exercise. I could have said no, I could have been stubborn – I've shoveled snow in the past, and I could do it now, even if sometimes I can't catch my breath, and I feel a kind of tired afterward that I rarely feel doing anything else.

Fear of new things, new ways of doing things, or of accepting that the past is truly no longer the present seems to drive many of us to say no. I don't know how old the disciples were when they said yes to Jesus – we make some assumptions about them that may not be true, about how old they were – but it's important to say yes when the time and moment call for it, when God asks something of us in our own ministries – and yes, you are all ministers in some way. Maybe you need to say no to what you once did in your church, in other places, in your life, but there will always be a need for a yes, something asked of us that surely comes from God, and we ought not to hesitate with our answer, since "immediately" seems to be the going word in our story today. Your ministry as a person and your ministry within your church will not end until you end, at least until you end your journey on this side of eternity. How do I know, how do we know that it's Jesus asking us, commanding us – what's the best and perhaps only way to discern the will of the Spirit? If the yes leads to more love of God and of each other, surely that voice asking us to do it immediately is God's voice, is Jesus' command to us. Throw down your old nets and pick up different ones, handed to us by Jesus, ones meant to scoop others up in a web of love, goodness, and justice – and do so immediately.

Kevin
Rev. Kevin McLemore
Regional Conference Minister, Region 1
Keystone Conference UCC

Attention Youth Campers and Families,

Please read the following information carefully, as the Conference policy for supplementing youth summer camping has changed.

For the 2026 summer season, the Keystone Conference will campership or reimburse 30% of the cost for one youth to attend one summer camping experience. If a youth attends more than one camp during the summer, only one camp will be eligible for the 30% reimbursement. Please use the application for additional camps if this creates a hardship.

Learn more and download the application under the campership section of keystoneucc.org/mission-grants-committee/

Living Waters Camp & Conference Center
Schellsburg, PA

Trustin' Jesus! Summer Camps
Fishing Camp - June 28 to July 2, for grades 6 to 12
Primary (grades K - 3) - July 5 to 11
Elementary Camp (grades 4 - 6) - July 5 to 11
Junior-Senior High Camp - July 12 - 18
Grandparent / Grandchild Camp is July 12 to 15
Learn more at livingwaterscamp.org

HC Spirit Camp is hosted at Hartman Center Campground, Milroy, PA . The theme for HC Spirit 2026 is "In the Wilderness." Camp runs from July 26 - August 1, 2026. Registration is now open—check hcspiritcamp.org for more info and registration.

Urban Service Camps

Throughout the year, Old First UCC (Philadelphia) welcomes volunteer service groups from colleges and churches for a few days up to a week. Service campers volunteer around Philadelphia, while learning about the challenges facing those living in the city and the joys and rewards (and challenges) of hands-on work in agencies that are making a difference in Philly. The work of service campers is critical to our partner sites, as one-in-four Philadelphians are food insecure and the city's poverty rate is more than 20% – almost double the national average.

The urban service camp experience also includes time for participants to reflect on the spiritual, social and political implications of their experiences. Members of Old First work with group leaders to help groups unpack the structural realities that create and perpetuate homelessness, combining hands-on experience with learning and spiritual growth. And there is usually time for some good, old-fashioned fun, too – such as sight-seeing in the historic district!

We welcome Service Camps for just one day, or up to a week. And if schedules allow, Old First encourages service camps to volunteer with our Saturday Breakfast and/or worship with us on Sunday morning.

Learn more here: https://oldfirstucc.org/serve/volunteer/ and click "Urban Service Camps"