



PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE



Empowering churches to proclaim the reconciling love of Christ.

A Message from PCC

Dear Members and Friends of Penn Central Conference,

"See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts." - Malachi 3:1

I must admit that I have struggled with this week's epistle. In my conversations with pastors over these past couple of weeks, I have heard frustration and weariness, as well as a deep desire for hope that comes with anticipating the coming of the Light this Christmas; a hope that Emmanuel - God-with-us--is still with us.

As I prepared to write, I pondered what more I could possibly say to commiserate with, bring a word of comfort, anticipate joy despite the ongoing COVID times we are in. I want to soothe. I want to encourage, but I don't want to come off as Pollyannaish. I want to commiserate, I want to stand in solidarity, but I don't want to bring us down further than we already are.

So I decided to look at last Sunday's lectionary texts that speak of God-with-us, God STILL with us. This year's Advent lections put pain and hope, lament, and anticipation of joy so expertly together in one large, encompassing understanding of our God. The text from Malachi immediately caught my eye and spoke to my heart as an affirmation of our God who was and is and will be; our God who has traversed the expanse of human existence, even as human existence has changed, as human understanding of bad times and good times has changed.

"The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple...brought by a "messenger of the covenant whom you delight in." What timeless words—given to ancient Hebrews; recalled by us today. Is the meaning the same? Is this Lord the same? Malachi was speaking assurances to the Hebrew people those millennia ago—words that we too so much long and need to hear. God is indeed timeless and shows up at any point along the human traverse of existence.

And then it dawned on me. God certainly

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Outdoor Ministries

In partnership with Lutheran Camping Corporation

4th ANNUAL ADVENT/CHRISTMAS IN THE BARN

December 19 @ The Wittel Farm (7-8:30 p.m.)

For more information & to register, go to:

<https://www.lutherancamping.org/event/christmas-in-the-barn-2021/>

"[Every]Body Of Christ" Youth/Confirmation Retreat

March 18-20 at Camp Nawakwa

Registration link coming soon!

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.

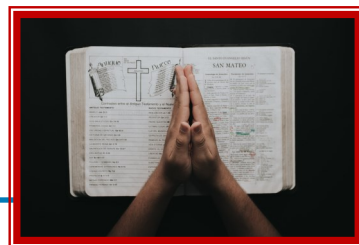
This week, we pray for each other as we continue to live into God's calling...

Dover UCC, Dover

Salem UCC, Dover

Mt. Olivet UCC, East Berlin

Zwingli UCC, East Berlin



Message from the Conference cont'

has not changed in everlasting presence, love, and care. We have changed. Our ancient ancestors certainly knew the travesties of their existence and did not understand them as we do in our technological age of modern medicine, social media, and flip-of-the-switch news. They knew terrible plagues just as we know the plague of COVID. They knew unspeakable violence just as we hear about (or experience) unspeakable violence. They believed it all came from the hand of God, just as redemption came from the hand of God. To our benefit, we now understand that disease is a part of the natural order of human existence; violence is the result of human choices that thwart God's desires for human relationships.

In many ways we are no different than our ancestors of faith. In many ways we are different because we know so much more, at least intellectually, what's going on around us, and we understandably rail against it. I believe our ancestors accepted their experiences as part of their existence. That's why the prophets re-assured them so much that despite their plight, God is with them, holding them, giving them hope and a future. Despite our knowledge, we too need so much to hear that despite anything we experience, God is with us, holding us, giving us hope and a future. And we Christians believe that's why God became flesh—so we know that God understands every aspect of human existence. Jesus knew unspeakable pain and violence, the travesty of oppression and denial of relationship. And he knew at a deeply personal level.

So, my friends, this Advent I encourage us all to realize that the God of the Hebrews is our God—the Lord whom we seek who is foretold by the messenger of the covenant. My friends, especially this Advent I encourage us to contemplate this Jesus who came to us in a cold and damp and dung-filled stable, in a trough filled with hay and animal saliva; this Jesus who appeared first to the lowest members of society in the shepherds. Contemplate this Jesus who became a refugee in Egypt with his parents because Herod sought to kill him; who 30 years later continued a ministry of knowing first-hand the worst pains, illness, and travesties of human existence. Emmanuel—God with us. And don't stop there, friends. Look to the hope of the Light that we anticipate this Christmas—a saving light that leads us all the way to being a resurrection people; people who seek the God whom the Hebrews sought—and found—over and over again. And drink deeply of the well of assurance that as resurrection people, we continue our faith in the first resurrected one to bring hope out of the ashes, peace from unspeakable hardship, joy from the deepest sorrow, love beyond measure.

**Blessings,
Marisa**

Wider Church

Rev. Dr. Marisa Laviola
Associate Conference Minister, Penn Central Conference

The Virtual Choir is back!

Check out our virtual choir's newest video "And The Glory of the Lord" from Messiah on our YouTube channel.

If you like to know more, email Julie Holm at bvfofmusic@gmail.com

Address Change!

Please begin mailing any correspondence to our new PO Box:

Penn Central Conference
PO Box 6625
Harrisburg, PA 17112

Our physical address starting the week of November 15
(Do not mail letters to this address!)

St. Thomas UCC
6490 Linglestown Road
Harrisburg, PA 17112

Make sure to note new direct numbers for PCC Staff below:

Contact us!

PCC Office Staff

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call, PhD - Conference Minister
email: ccall@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-433-3196

Rev. Nora Driver Foust - Associate Conference Minister
email: nfoust@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-433-2587

Rev. Dr. Marisa Laviola, Ph.D. - Associate Conference Minister
email: mlaviola@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-433-3564

Rev. Rick Luciotti - Facilitator of Care to Clergy and Clergy Families
email: rluciotti@gmail.com / Phone: 717-433-6306

Anne Rankin - Outdoor Ministries Liaison
email: annerankin524@gmail.com / phone: 717-945-4585

C. Paul Keller - Office Manager
email: pkeller@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-652-1560