



PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE



Empowering churches to proclaim the reconciling love of Christ.

A Message from PCC

October 20, 2021

Dear Members & Friends of Penn Central Conference,

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens” (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

And yet:

“Arise, shine, for your light has come!” (Isaiah 60:1)

When our kids were small, we were very diligent about celebrating the seasons from Halloween to Christmas—in order—with no blurring of the lines. We allowed no talk about Thanksgiving until all the candy had been handed out at Halloween. We did not appreciate any stores that had Christmas decorations up before Thanksgiving. Even to this day, our kids bristle when they see the Christmas season begin too early. Our older daughter and her partner will be putting Christmas decorations up early, but not until December 1. Both she and Mike love Christmas, but I imagine Kristyn has set the rule. Our younger daughter Kathryn bemoans having to put new sets of Christmas themes up where she works at Bath and Body Works—red and green and white candles before the orange and brown candles have all been sold.

I think I was such a stickler when our kids were young because when I was growing up my parents taught me that the Christmas season did not arrive until Santa Clause climbed into the window of Gimbel’s Department Store at the end of the Thanksgiving parade in Philadelphia. Only then did we even begin talking about Christmas. My brother and I received Advent calendars, and the nativity went up right away, although Jesus was not placed in the manger until after midnight mass on Christmas eve.

When I think of these traditions, I wonder: wouldn’t it be rich and fun to share the history of each of our traditions? Everyone has one, of course. In the church’s calendar, liturgical seasons are very strictly observed with ordinary time not ending until Reign of Christ Sun-

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Outdoor Ministries

In partnership with **Lutheran Camping Corporation**

FALL FOLIAGE DAYS

October 24; 1-6 p.m. @ Kirchenwald and Nawakwa [Free] Come to camp for the afternoon to enjoy fall activities, worship, and a picnic supper.

ANNUAL QUILT AUCTION

November 7 @ Nawakwa This fun-filled day of bidding raises money for the Lutheran Camping Corporation’s Endowment Fund, which helps to financially sustain LCC’s outdoor ministry activities and programs.

Learn more here: <https://pccucc.org/outdoor-ministry/>

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...

Emmanuel UCC, Abbottstown

Christ UCC, Annville

Zion UCC, Arendtsville

St. John’s UCC, Bellefonte



Message from the Conference cont'

day. And only then can we put up the purple colors of Advent to adorn the sanctuary. Many pastors struggle with keeping the congregation in the Advent season of waiting and preparing, not going too quickly to the joy of new life on Christmas day.

As a local pastor I was quite diligent about Advent hymns, much to the consternation of our congregation, although I bent a bit on the fourth Sunday of Advent. Over time, I became more and more comfortable with the spirit of Advent beginning on the Sunday before Thanksgiving, a day to give extra special thanks. And on Thanksgiving Day, giving thanks is a wonderful way to anticipate Advent—not just thanks for our families, friends, or the food on the table. But giving thanks for the light we anticipate that shines all year through, that shines anew—anticipated every Advent and experienced every Christmas.

I realize talking about Advent and Christmas in this epistle violates my own rules. Halloween hasn't even arrived yet! Nonetheless, barring decorations prematurely showing up on houses and in malls, I am very willing to talk about Advent and Christmas—all year round. Waiting for the light of the world to shine--do we not need that all the time? Do we not need to acknowledge that the light is already here—if we open ourselves to that light that seeks to shine deep into the dark places of our lives, wherever those places are? Any season of the year?

Let us indeed contemplate our Advent and Christmas traditions and make sure they are meaningful for ourselves and for others. Even more than that, let's celebrate that we can anticipate and wait and prepare all year long; we can rejoice and bask in the light of Emmanuel—God with us—all year long.

Blessings and prayers to each and all of you,

Marisa

The Rev. Dr. Marisa Laviola, Ph.D.
Associate Conference Minister



Wider Church

The United Church of Christ is issuing a call to action to help the people of Haiti. A massive 7.2 earthquake on Saturday has killed nearly 1,300 people. Search and rescue efforts are expected to be hampered by Tropical Depression Grace, which came ashore on Monday.

To donate to this appeal, go to www.ucc.org/giving/donate-now/general-donation/ and designate the gift to "Haiti Appeal." One can also mail a check made payable to the United Church of Christ, to 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115. Please be sure to note "Haiti Appeal" on your check in the memo section, or in an attached letter.

Contact us!

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