The Keystone Connection

A Message to the Conference

June 09, 2026

Members and Friends of Keystone Conference,

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (Phillippians 4:4)



This past weekend was a time of great rejoicing at our first Annual Meeting. Friday evening's worship with Rev. Dr. Marcia McFee included a blessing of the Conference by our UCC General Minister and President Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, a rousing sermon from Rev. Dr. Gregg Edwards, intimate communion at tables, beautiful music and singing, and heartfelt moments of profound reflection. I have already been told that it was Keystone's Pentecost experience – the moment when the disparate parts coalesced into a whole. After years of work, we reached a new place together – and it was glorious.

One of the highlights for me was to welcome Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding. His talk Saturday morning was an exquisite exercise in blending pubic policy, biblical references, statistics on hunger, theological insights, and farm life reflections. I was moved deeply, in large part because I come from an agricultural background. But also because I have never seen a public official speak with such deep theological conviction!

The Secretary was with us as part of our People of the Table mission initiative. The 50 Days of Easter Challenge was part of that mission and the results also led to much rejoicing! Just a few results are worth noting: our churches collected 6000+ cans of fruit and vegetables, 8000+ cans of pasta and soup, 2000+ cans of meat and fish, 5000+ toiletries, First Aid, and paper products and 1300+ jars of nut butters and jam (my personal favorite). Churches also collected 2700+ "Other" which included items such as pet food, baby food, bread, and farm fresh eggs.

When it comes to direct provision, Keystone churches provide a large range of services such as community gardens, community meals, onsite food banks, homeless food programs, meal delivery programs, and much more. The numbers are remarkable in part because these come from only 20% of our churches! We can only imagine the impact that all churches together have on their communities.

In addition, at Annual Meeting we asked in-person participants to bring a one-pound bag of rice or beans that would be given to the Lancaster Food Hub. We collected 251lbs. of rice and 142 lbs. of beans – that was over 200 bags for the benefit of the Hub's programs. We also collected over $2000 in cash donations for the Central PA Food Bank

during Sunday morning worship. The generosity of our churches is tremendous. THANK YOU! In the days and weeks to come you will hear more about People of the Table.

All of that was only a thin slice of the blessings of the Annual Meeting. My heart is full of gratitude, and I am still overcome when remembering the power of the worship, fellowship, workshops, music, poetry and more. If you were with us in person or on zoom, THANK YOU. Your presence, along with the Holy Spirit, made our first Annual Meeting a sacred gathering.

Carrie

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call
Transitional Executive Conference Minister
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"