



PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE



Empowering churches to proclaim the reconciling love of Christ.

A Message from PCC

February 26, 2020

Dear Friends of Penn Central Conference -

"For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath...all are from the dust and all turn to dust again." (Ecclesiastes 3)

While a young pastor in New Jersey, I was blessed to have a young couple in the congregation from Liberia. The wife was pregnant when I arrived and they were overjoyed to learn they were expecting twins. The day of the birth came, yet only one twin survived. In the days to come the couple struggled with the joy of their baby boy's life and grief at the death of their baby girl. This was a classic pastoral situation – one fraught with sorrow and questions and anguish in the face of a seemingly capricious universe. Their faith sustained them, but it did not soothe their heartbreak.

The church had recently created a small memorial garden in our historic graveyard. We were not expecting the first set of ashes to be those of a tiny girl. When I stood with the parents in the garden, they took out the small bag holding the cremains (how was it possible this was all that remained?) and I shook the contents into the space we had made in the ground for her. As I did this, the ashes stirred in the wind and my hands received a light dusting. A moment later I reached out for the mother and father's hands and we stood in prayer. In that one, singular moment, I felt the grit of the baby's ashes in the palm of my hand against the warmth of the mother's hand in my own, and I knew mortality as a complete, wrenching fact. These ashes – to this we are reduced.

Historically Lent was a time to confront our mortality and ponder our life on earth as preparation for returning to God and ash. Our task remains the same today. Death has a way of reminding us of both the fragility and promise of life. During Lent we consider anew the inevitable fact of our own death alongside how to live into the promise of God during our days on earth.

Continues on back

Outdoor Ministries

Upcoming Retreats:

Confirmation Retreat - March 27 - 29

What is Good Leadership? with Rev. Dr. Carrie Call - April 14 - 15

Learning to See - A Photography Retreat with Nelson Dodson - April 27 - 29

Pride Retreat for LGBTQ Folks & Allies - May 29-31 (details to come)

SUMMER CAMP REGISTRATION IS OPEN! Early bird pricing for those who pay in full before March 31, 2020. Learn more and register at <https://hartmancenter.com/summer-camp/>

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...

Mount Olivet UCC, East Berlin

Zwingli UCC, East Berlin

Saint John's Center UCC, East Earl

Trinity UCC, East Petersburg

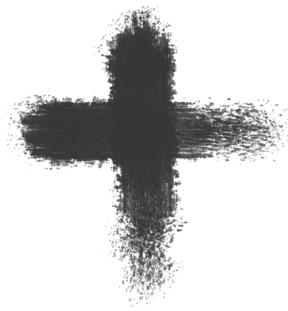


Message from the Conference cont'

Every Ash Wednesday I think of that young couple and that moment of standing in the garden. I also remember the faith that encircled us, and the warmth of the living hands that held my own. Ash Wednesday is about remembering – from whence we come and where we will go – both into the cold earth and into the warm hands of God. Today I sit with my hands in my lap and remember the ash-covered hands that held mine in the garden. I remember Mary Oliver's words, "Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?" And I remember, day after day, to grab hold of Jesus' hand, the one that will lead me through 40 days of reflection, truth-telling, and healing, all the way to another garden, where we will see the glory of our true end.

Peace,

Carrie



Upcoming Events

Chicken and Waffle Dinner, to benefit the Hartman Center Sponsored by the Brush Valley Fusion of Faith, UCC and ELCA at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, 120 East Main St., Rebersburg, PA

Saturday, February 29 from 4 to 7 PM. Eat in and Take Out available. Adults \$10, Children 5-10 \$8 and under 5 Free

Stephen Ministry Introductory Workshop - Palm Lutheran Church, Palmyra - March 14, 9:00AM - 1:00PM

Mended Heart Lenten Concert/Potluck - Salem UCC, Elizabethville - March 15 - 3:00pm

York Association Earth Day Anniversary Weekend w/ Jim Antal - Mt. Zion UCC, York - April 18, 9:00AM

Pastoral Colloquy 2020 "Building a Just Peace in an Unjust World: Learning with and from Our Anabaptist Colleagues" - In collaboration with our German Partners - July 26-30, 2020

Welcome and Hospitality are major themes of our UCC culture. You have the opportunity to provide welcome and hospitality to a guest from German during the week-

end before and/or after the PCC/UEK Pastoral Colloquy. Hosts are needed throughout the conference to host German visitors, primarily single individuals and couples, from July 24 -26 and/or from July 31 to August 2. If you have a guest room, an open heart and a passion to share yourself with new friends, contact Julie Holm (julie@bvfof.org or 814-349-5515). Join us in providing a warm welcome for our overseas guests.

The Perfect Blend: Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations—A day with author Bishop Robert Schnase—Saturday, September 19, 2020—Lancaster Theological Seminary, Santee Chapel—Seating is limited, registration required. Register at pccucc.org/register-for-an-event

PLANNING AHEAD:

Annual Meeting - June 12-13, 2020

Around the conference:

DVD Lending Library - St. John's UCC, Chambersburg, manager@sjucc1811.org or phone (717) 263-8593.

Looking to borrow - A congregational set of "Unbinding Your Heart" by Martha Grace Reese. If your church has a set to lend, contact Hamilton Park UCC, Lancaster (717) 397-9791

Sign up for our eNews—click the link at pccucc.org!

Contact us!

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