



PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE



Empowering churches to proclaim the reconciling love of Christ.

A Message from PCC

March 17, 2021

Members and friends of Penn Central Conference-

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord. Jeremiah 29:11-14a

When Jeremiah was writing these words to the captives in Babylon, they had lost all hope that they would ever return to normal in their beloved Jerusalem. We don't know if these words got through to them. Sometimes when we are in the depths of grief, unconvinced that anything will return to the way we hope, we can miss the message God has for us; even if it is a promise for hope and a future. Actually, if we look at these words carefully, God does not promise a return to “normal”, as I would imagine the exiles yearned for. God says “I have plans to prosper you.....to give you hope and a future”: not necessarily back to the way it was, but certainly plans filled with prosperity, hope, and a vision for what is yet to come.

I wonder. Could it be that God is saying these words to us? We certainly can relate to yearning to return to “normal” after the pandemic eases. We may feel like hope is elusive. Maybe God is telling us as well that things won't necessarily go back to the way they were. Maybe God promises prosperity and hope, as we look to God, pray for what God has in store for us—seeking God with our complete hearts until God is found.

In the past few months, a group of 14 churches have gathered in the Congregational Empowerment Academy with Paul Nickerson, renowned consultant for church vitality. So far, we have had 2 half-day workshops (the 3rd and last workshop is in May), and coaches have been meeting with these congregations in between the workshops. The pastors and lay leaders have been listening

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Outdoor Ministries

In partnership with Lutheran Camping Corporation

Summer Camp: REGISTER ANYTIME!

The 2021 summer camp schedule is set! There are camps for all ages and interests at both Kirchenwald and Nawakwa. Check out what is offered online. There is an early-bird registration discount if you register before April 3. Also, if you attend the Open House, you can get an additional discount.

Summer Staff Recruitment -- GOING ON NOW!

Calling all high school kids, college-age young adults, and adults interested in working at camp this summer! Lutheran Camping Corporation is recruiting now for this summer's camp season.

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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...

St.Thomas UCC, Harrisburg

Salem UCC, Harrisburg

Trinity UCC, Hellam

David's UCC, Herndon



Message from the Conference cont'

for God's voice to them for prosperity, hope, and a future. One thing Paul has emphasized is that we may not want things to return to normal after the pandemic no longer grips us. Normal really wasn't working anyway, as 85% of churches in the United States have seen a decline in the past 20 years.

In this Academy we are looking for a new normal; a thriving, not only surviving new normal. We have been discussing how some churches can retain contact through technological means even when there is a return to the sanctuary. The "couch attendees" are a new mission field, ripe with opportunities for connection. We have been discussing how each church, large and small and anywhere in between, has a unique call from God to live out the mission to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ in their greater communities; to reach out to the unchurched through building relationships over time.

I would imagine many of our churches in Penn Central are pondering "what does the future hold for us? What will be our post-COVID normal? Will we even survive?" My friends, have hope that as all of us look to God we will find God and God will show us our new future; our new normal.

We are currently discussing the possibility of another Academy in late fall or winter. If you are interested, let me know right away. Until then, coaching is available to you. I am certainly available for discussion and conversation; to help you discern your path forward. And perhaps through discussion and conversation, God will surprise you and will reveal ways for your church to thrive; to reach out beyond the four walls to the people around you; to invite them to a life in Christ; to be the hands of feet of Jesus for a hurting world—in our own backyards.

Blessings,

Marisa

Rev. Dr. Marisa Laviola

Associate Conference Minister

Penn Central Conference

Outdoor Ministries cont'

Summer Camp Open House at Kirchenwald & Nawakwa; March 21 & April 11; 2-4:30 p.m.

You are invited to visit Kirchenwald or Nawakwa on March 21 or April 11. Take a tour of camp with members of our summer staff and see what camp is all about. As a bonus, we will give a \$10 gift certificate for the camp store to every brand new camper! Register here

Learn more: www.lutherancamping.org / 717-677-8211
lcc@lutherancamping.org

Or contact Anne Rankin, Outdoor Ministries liaison
annerankin524@gmail.com / phone: 717-945-4585

PCC Virtual Choir

The **PCC Virtual Choir** has beautiful Lenten musical selections on the Penn Central Conference YouTube page. A new video of "God So Loved the World" was just posted this week! Click on the YouTube icon on the upper right corner of pccucc.org or search "penn central conference ucc" on YouTube.

Contact us!

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