PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

September 11, 2024

Greetings Penn Central members and friends,

The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

(Psalm 19:1)

Each week I look ahead to see the lectionary reading for the following Sunday, whether I will be preaching or not. The readings for September 15th are familiar as well as challenging. They include James 3:1-12, a scathing reminder of the evil prowess of the human tongue, and Mark 8:27-38, in which would-be followers are told to pick up their cross and follow Jesus. Both James and Mark offer edgy, defiant words that have some bite - and which are powerful spiritual food.

Yet my focus today is elsewhere. After all, I do not need to read James to be reminded of the fires set by the human tongue or that with it "we curse people made in the image of God" - for politics and social media show me this daily. And as for picking up my cross to follow, well... there are days when I just need to lay it down.

Hence, Psalm 19. Reading these words soothes my spirit. Human language is not referenced. Instead, the heavens declare God's glory, and day and night, while they do not have speech or words, still have a voice that goes out to the ends of the earth. The sun testifies like a strong man running from his tent with joy. And its heat touches everything – stone, water, animals, humans. The psalmist reminds us that creation is always first to speak of God's glory. Creation's voice rings out, dwarfing our small human words. This comes as a relief to me.

The law of the Lord, we are told, is perfect and will revive the soul. The law is more than words - it is a gift from God that rejoices the heart and enlightens the eyes. What God teaches is more desirable than gold - it is sweet, and it endures forever. Like creation, God's law simply is. Through it we draw close to God, into relationship with great mystery,

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Contact us!

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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...

Salem (Rohrerstown) UCC, Lancaster

New Hope UCC, Landisburg

Grace UCC, Lebanon

Hill UCC, Lebanon



transcending the merely human, finding and living into the truth of who we were made to be.

Finally, the last verse of Psalm 19 is all I need for my spiritual practice. If I prayed verse 14 every day, I would be on my way to practicing life with the law of God at its center. In these days, the words are sweet as honey: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer." A verse so worthy of repetition.

This week, weary ones, flee the fires of the human tongue. Rest from bearing the cross of the gospel. Listen for the voice of days and nights, feel the sun on your skin, follow its journey across the heavens. Wander in the wilds to meet the mystery of your Creator and draw close to God's law. For God's law will revive your soul and enlighten your eyes. And in its sweetness, there is great reward.

Carrie

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call

Conference Minister

Penn Central Conference

Greetings to all from your PCC Board of Directors,

As I prepared to write these notes to inform you of the work of the Board of Directors, a verse from Philipians (4:13) came to mind, " I can do all this through him who gives me strength". In the context of the board, I took the liberty of changing this verse just a bit to read, We can do all this through him who gives us strength. Each time the board comes together, the work gets done because of the strength of our Lord and Savior.

Our third quarter meeting was held on August 26th via Zoom.

The Finance Committee report included 2 action items: 1. Two Innovation grants were awarded to Trinity UCC, Fort Loudon, and to St. Paul's UCC, McConnellsburg. Both astutely prepared grant applications requested funds for audio/visual and livestream technologies for broadcasting worship services, 2. A motion was made by Mike Price and seconded by Rev. Caroline Saxton to approve reallocating the conference investments to achieve a 50/50 ratio in the Beyond Fossil Fuels Fund and the Balanced Funds of United Church Funds. The motion was unanimously approved by the board. The Personnel Committee had nothing to report at this time.

Old Business:

Keystone Project Update

Carrie shared the details surrounding the motion that has been prepared and extensively reviewed by legal counsel to create the Keystone Conference. Carrie explained that each of the board of directors or consistories of the four current Pennsylvania UCC conferences must approve the motion as it is presented. She stated "The key immediate next steps are: 1. Each board or consistory must approve the motion to create the Keystone Conference, 2.. Each conference conducts a vote on 11/9/24, and all four conferences must approve the motion by a 2/3 majority in order for the Keystone Conference to move forward to the 2025 General Synod. The motion was unanimously approved by the board.

New Business:

STAR Coalition-Rev. Amelia Price, secretary/treasurer of the Central Association, shared background on the resolution to recognize the STAR (Small Town and Rural Churches) Coalition as a self-created group within the United Church of Christ. Amelia noted 64.4% of UCC churches meet the metrics of small and rural churches and serve in communities of 25,000 or less. Amelia asked the board of directors to vote to sponsor this resolution and to include this in the agenda for the conference meeting on 11/9/24. Motion passed

Initial Planning Discussion for the 11/9/24 Penn Central Conference Meeting

Carrie shared key details that have been worked out so far in planning for the 11/9/24 conference meeting. The meeting will be a hybrid meeting with participation available in-person and online via a ZOOM meeting. The fellowship hall at St. Thomas UCC, Linglestown, has been reserved on 11/9/24 to host the in-person meeting. A detailed timeline for the events that will occur on 11/9/24 is being developed.

Proposed 2025 Clergy Compensation Guidelines

Nora reported the Commission on Ministry reviewed and revised the 2025 Compensation guidelines. She reported the guidelines used comparisons to compensation The proposed revised Clergy Compensation guidelines were approved by the board.

Blessings to all!

Carolyn P. Herman, Moderator

PCC Board of Directors