PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

January 31, 2024

Greetings friends and members of Penn Central Conference,

In a recent issue of the Christian Century, Professor Philip Jenkins of Baylor University wrote a short essay titled "A Landscape of Lost Denominations". In it he reflected on a recent stay in central PA during which he explored churches in the area and remarked at the 'forgotten' lineage of Reformed, German Reformed, and E&R churches, noting that "rarely do church members have any sense of that really impressive Protestant heritage."[i] As you can imagine, I immediately had a bit of a defensive reaction. Once I calmed down, I wrote a letter to the Editors of Christian Century, noting that I would love to host Dr. Jenkins and introduce him to a variety of our churches who both understand and celebrate their German roots!

I do not deny that as churches move through their lives the connection to their past may be weakened or even lost. To me, that is always unfortunate, because our shared history holds a wealth of resources to draw upon as we greet new challenges. The Reformed tradition is one such history, and I am deeply impressed with those clergy and laity in Penn Central who actively engage the Heidelberg Catechism and other Reformed traditions in their own theological reflections and preaching (and yes, it even happens in progressive churches!).

The German Reformed tradition has been a theological center of gravity in the history of the UCC. The Reformed clergy engaged theology in written and spoken form, producing the Mercersburg and Ursinus movements and eventually joining with the Evangelical Synod of North America to become the Evan-

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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...

St. Paul's UCC, Newmanstown

Trinity UCC, Palmyra

Jacob's Church Reed's Station UCC, Paxinos

St. Peter's UCC, Paxinos



gelical and Reformed denomination. The E&R continued to produce theological treasures from a wide variety of scholars and preachers including Reinhold Niebuhr and Walter Bruggemann. And it was a handful of E&R clergy and one congregationalist pastor in St. Louis that sat down and started talking about unity – back in 1937. By 1943 the predecessor bodies of the UCC had drafted a Basis of Union.

The Basis of Union was a document that stated the theological basis for the proposed union, all with Christ at the center. They proclaimed, in part, "The faith which unites us and to which we bear witness is that faith in God which the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments set forth, which the ancient Church expressed in the ecumenical creeds, to which our own spiritual [ancestors] gave utterance in the evangelical confessions of the Reformation, and which we are in duty bound to express in the words of our time as God gives us light."[ii] The writers held their own traditions to be crucial to talks of union.

As we labor together for new expressions of the church and in hope of continued unity, the Keystone Working Group recently approved our own Basis of Union (find it here: https://psec.org/keystone/) This is a theological statement proclaiming hope for the churches in all four PA Conferences. We (and you, as voting delegates) have not yet determined the outcome of the Keystone Project. But this is a step in which we share our Christ-centered intention. And where we hold to the belief as Gustav Mahler said, that "Tradition is not the worship of ashes, it is the preservation of fire."

Peace,

Carrie

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call

Conference Minister

[i] Jenkins, Philip. "A Landscape of Lost Denominations" in Christian Century, February 2024, pp 34-35.

[ii] https://www.ucc.org/who-we-are/about/general-synod/general-synod-resolutions-regarding-environmental-justice/beliefs/beliefs_basis-of-union/

Registration is now open for **HC Spirit camp at Hartman Center Campground and Retreat Center** - Sunday, July 28th through Saturday, August 3rd, 2024.

https://penncentralconference.regfox.com/hartman-homecoming-week-2024

Camp makes a great Christmas gift. Check out the summer options from our partners at Lutheran Camping Corporation's Kirchenwald (and Nawakwa)

https://www.lutherancamping.org/summer-camp/youth-summer-programs/

Worship Planning for Lay Leaders

Feb 5, 2024, 6:30PM

Many members of consistories and church councils are finding themselves needing to do more with worship planning for their congregation, some are even stepping into the pulpit. Our Penn Central Churches are experiencing longer and longer seasons of transition and interim and supply leadership is just not filling the whole of the growing need. This 90-minute workshop will look at available resources to assist lay leaders with worship development like liturgies, prayers, hymn selection, lectionary passages, and more, as well as touch on sermon preparation for those filling that need. All are welcome, please register.