PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

August 14, 2024

Greetings Penn Central members and friends,

"Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise…" Ephesians 5:15

I was just joking with a group of friends that I've evidently reached that age where I love bird watching! Now, I'm not talking about going for "The Big Year" quite yet (check out the delightful movie by that same name, if you don't know it). But each morning I've begun to drink my coffee and do my devotional time out on our porch, while also listening and watching the birds around our backyard. And thanks to the wonderful phone app, "Merlin", developed by the ornithology department at Cornell University, my attention span for my coffee and devotional time has been shortened, because every time I hear or see a bird I don't know, I reach for my phone and use that app to identify the bird! So, while my goal each day is to have some quiet time, often it can become another time of my brain is hopping from coffee to the app to the devotional to the app and back to coffee. Maybe I'm becoming bird-brained?! Ha!

However, it turns out becoming bird-brained may not be such a bad thing. I rediscovered some research that indicates that birds have episodic memory, something previously believed to be unique to humans, as it seems scrub jays remember not only where, but also when, they hid worms and other food. This type of memory involves mental images of past events, like retracing our steps the last time we misplaced our phone. And even better for me is that researchers have discovered that black-capped chickadees grow brain cells to store information about where they find their food. When that information is no longer needed, those brain cells are discarded.

That all makes me feel good about my emerging birdbrain, especially as we find ourselves in "Wisdom Week" in the common lectionary, at least that's what I'm calling it. We've got young Solomon asking God for an understanding mind in 1 Kings 3; we have Wisdom personified in

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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...

Trinity UCC, Hellam

David's UCC, Herndon

St. Paul UCC, Herndon

Zion UCC, Herndon



Proverbs 9 inviting us into her feast for us simple-minded to "lay aside immaturity…and walk in the way of insight"; and Paul writing to the Ephesians, "Be careful how you live, not as unwise people but as wise…" (5:15).

In this Age of Distraction, these scriptures are calling us back to focus on that which nurtures our unsettled minds as they entwine with our souls and faith journeys. They ask us to seek God first, as we face yet another tempestuous election cycle. They ask us to sit down with those whose company satisfies our hunger for real relationship. They ask us to live as people of songful gratitude in a time when we are told we always need more to make us happy.

So, friends, if you haven't read these three scriptures yet this week, maybe join me in grabbing your favorite morning beverage, putting down our phones and our favorite apps, and taking time to refresh ourselves for the journey with a bit wisdom from our ancestors in faith. I'm hoping it may nurture my episodic memory, maybe grow a few new brain cells, all the while drawing me closer to an understanding and grateful heart in the wisdom of God.

In Peace,

Dwight

Rev. Dwight Hein

Facilitator of Clergy Care

Penn Central Conference

Dear members and friends of Penn Central Conference –

You requested more information on aspects of the Keystone Project, and we heard you! Please contact the PCC office for a copy of the Transitional Timeline. We hope this will provide some clarity about what would happen next if all the Conferences vote to pass the Motion for the creation of a Keystone Conference.

Please keep the following things in mind as you review the timeline:

1. This timeline is evolving. More information will be added to it in the next few months including timeframes for financial decisions, sale of real estate, office location, legal paperwork submission, and the like. New versions will be released on a regular basis.

2. The full transition of four Conferences into one takes several years. A crew of transitional staff is necessary to carry the work of the new Conference into and through its first year, especially as a transitional Board is getting established. The timeline for staff transitions (current to transitional to settled) is a dynamic operation and we will adapt as needed.

3. Following the official start of the Keystone Conference (01/01/2026) there will remain four 'skeletal' boards of the original conferences. At this point the current four Conferences will come to be the "Historic Penn Northeast Conference" etc. This is necessary as we move toward financial integration, which will happen over the following few years.

4. All our significant timeline decisions are made with the knowledge and counsel of the National setting of the UCC, including our General Counsel, Heather Kimmel.

Please share your feedback and questions at:

Keystone.Conference.project@gmail.com

In Peace,

Your Conference Ministers