PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

A Message from PCC

August 14, 2024

Greetings Penn Central members and friends,

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
God's mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is God's faithfulness.
"The Lord is my portion," says my soul,
"therefore I will hope in the Lord." -Lamentations 3:22-24

"to live in this world
you must be able
to do three things
to love what is mortal;
to hold it
against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go"

— Mary Oliver, New and Selected Poems, Volume One

Poetry is a powerful linguistic tool. It is used in scripture to convey deep spiritual truths, emotions, and divine revelations in a powerful and memorable way. We use poetry in worship services each week in the form of calls to worship, sometimes in prayers, sometimes as alternative "scripture" readings. Poetry in scripture and in our lives can enable deeper reflection, point toward emotional engagement, and lead toward a more profound connection to the divine.

Poetry, though, has not always been my cup of tea (or coffee). I often struggle through the syntax and have to work to understand some of the metaphor and allegory that others so plainly see. I remember how much I loved hearing the rabbi read Psalms to us in Hebrew when I was in seminary and taking Hebrew so I could "understand" the poetry of scripture. There was a time when I could read the Hebrew and it sounded very poetic, but the understanding was still somewhat elusive.

Continues on back

Contact us!

PCC Office Staff

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call, PhD - *Conference Minister*
email: ccall@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-433-3196

Rev. Dr. Nora Driver Foust - *Associate Conference Minister*
email: nfoust@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-652-1560 x3

C. Paul Keller - *Office Manager*
email: pkeller@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-652-1560 x1

Rev. Dwight Hein - *Facilitator for Clergy Care*

email: dhein@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-433-6306

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...

Church of the Redeemer UCC, Hershey

Emmanuel UCC, Jacksonville

Brush Valley Fusion of Faith, Madisonburg

Hummelstown UCC, Hummelstown



When Alice asked me to lead the Heart and Soul Camp as part of the HC Spirit week, I knew that I needed to include poetry among the ways that our spirits are filled. I hear from so many how Mary Oliver or Rumi, among others, helps them to connect with God or get in touch with their own feelings. Since Carrie leads a Poetry as Prayer group monthly, she was my first choice to walk my campers through how prayer might feed their heart and soul. Carrie couldn't be with us, but one of her group members, Rev. Leigh Pick, did join us for an afternoon session on poetry. It seems like the very first thing Leigh asked us to do was to write our own poems. She walked us through composing a memory poem around a camp or church memory, a place related memory that we had. She told us to write down the memory. To include feelings, sights, sounds, everything we could think of – just get it all on the paper. "Don't worry about form, just get the words out." Then begin circling important words or phrases and build a poem. We all wrote solidly and in near silence (it was raining outside so spreading out was challenging) for 30 minutes. I was shocked to look at my paper and see an actual poem.

My camp memory is below, email pkeller@pccucc.org to receive a sheet of more.

Several months ago, I invited you to submit a prayer to the People's Prayers for Peace campaign that our national setting is hosting, and today I am inviting you to compose a poem. It need not rhyme, although it may. Think about a church memory. It can be from your childhood or just last week. Set a timer and write everything you can about that memory, digging deep for feelings, sights, sounds, smells – just write for 25 minutes. When the timer alerts you, read over everything you wrote and circle things that really stand out. Now use your circled words and phrases to share your memory in poetic form. Share it with me, hang it on your facebook wall to share with the world, or simply talk about it in faith formation or coffee hour next Sunday. Join me in being a poet this week. Let your memory poem be a prayer for your tomorrrows.

Uphill chaos delivers A-frame simplicity
Spiders, snakes, latrines - sleepless nights
"OH BOY?"

Poplar in the kitchen, oak and ash, charcoal in the ringHauling, serving, playing, learning
"OH BOY."

Stinging nettle on every path, listening to the trickling stream.
"Honey if you love me..."
"OH BOY!"

Cast iron cooking, campfire singing
2"x4" benches, plywood beds, all the noises of the night - peaceful slumber
"OH BOY!!"

If you are interested in exploring poetry and spirituality more, there is another poetry as prayer group forming for clergy to begin this fall and if there is enough interest, we can offer one for laity as well. (Clergy can register on pccucc.org/register-for-an-event interested laity please email Nora).

Shalom,

Nora

Rev. Dr. Nora Foust

Associate Conference Minister

Penn Central Conference