



PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE



Empowering churches to proclaim the reconciling love of Christ.

A Message from PCC

April 1, 2020

Dear Friends of Penn Central Conference -

"After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered." (John 18:1)

Posted on social media lately are images of beautiful vistas – ocean sunsets, mountain peaks, and rolling farmland – all in an effort to share beauty in the midst of a very difficult time. The efforts are laudable and beauty helps to lift us. There has been plenty of research in recent years showing the mental health benefits of beauty and especially being in the out-of-doors. We need to know, now more than ever, that in the midst of anxiety and fear beauty can be balm and solace. Beauty and sorrow intertwine in surprising ways.

I saw a physical manifestation of this a few years ago while in London. During the London blitz many churches were bombed. There was no place safe to hide and being part of a religious body offered no protection. In the years after the war, as a broken people began to rebuild, a decision was made about one particular, modest church in the city. For this church, there would be no rebuilding. The bare, stone walls of the church that remained on three sides would stay standing, along with the small tower. The war damage could still be seen – the windows were empty of glass and the roof was gone, and walls were pockmarked. However, in the middle of the sanctuary, where people had gathered in prayer and where bombs had fallen directly, a garden was planted. The garden filled the entire interior and over time took on a well-established presence, enhanced with prayer flags. On the day of my visit there were flowers blooming and the grass paths invited pedestrians to contemplation. I was stunned at the juxtaposition. Here in one place was evidence of the original faith of the builders, damage done by the evil actions of humanity, and quiet restoration through beauty. The experience would not have been the same had the building been a store, or a pub, or even a school. The power came from the location of the garden in the heart of a bombed church. It spoke volumes about hope, perseverance, suf-

Outdoor Ministries

SUMMER CAMP REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

Early bird pricing for those who pay in full before March 31, 2020. Learn more and register at <https://hartmancenter.com/summer-camp/>

Dear Hartman Center family,

It is with a heavy heart that, due to the risks of Covid-19, we are postponing the following events until the public health emergency has passed:

Countdown to Opening Day Fishing Retreat, Mar. 16-18
Confirmation Retreat, Mar. 27-29

What is Good Leadership Retreat, April 14-15
Learning To See Photography Retreat, April 27-29
PRIDE: LGBTQ+ Retreat, May 29-31

The Golf Outing on May 9th has been cancelled as well.

A decision on whether Summer Camp will continue as planned will be made once we are closer to the summer and can make informed decisions.

Your sister in Christ,

Zoë A. D'heedene

Coordinator of Camps and Retreats

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...

Saint David's (Sherman's) UCC, Hanover

Saint Paul's (Dubs) UCC, Hanover

Trinity UCC, Hanover

Colonial Park UCC, Harrisburg

Continues on back

Message from the Conference cont'

ferring, death, healing, new life – in short, about resurrection. And it spoke all of it in silence.

In the midst of the Covid-9 pandemic this image is a powerful one for me. The church garden speaks to me of life on the other side of suffering. It also speaks to me of how churches can serve as places of healing and hope, even when it appears that some are on the edge of ruin. We will come to that place on the other side in time. But first, next week we will hear again of two gardens. One will be the site of agony and betrayal. The other will host angels and an empty tomb. Redemption and resurrection will come, even in the face of pockmarked and windowless days.

**Peace,
Carrie**

Need for iPads

I know that there may be some limitations in giving and offerings at our churches during the ongoing shelter-in-place and the recovery period, so, I hesitate to ask. But many of our residents are unable to Facetime with their families because of the very few iPads we have on campus. Like many things, this has not been an issue or priority for us before, but it is now. Families of residents who are actively dying are permitted to visit in person VERY BRIEFLY. I came in this evening to be present with one such family. Many family members are at a distance and are unable to get here for even a brief visit. I am asking if your churches have any benefactors that might be interested and willing to sponsor one or more iPads for our residents to use during this difficult time. I am told they cost about \$500 with a case. Thank you for any consideration of this proposal. I hope to see you here visiting with your parishioners again soon.

**In the Spirit,
Rev. Dr. Joel B. Hummel
Director of Pastoral Care
Homewood at Plum Creek**



Looking Ahead:

The Perfect Blend: Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations

A day with author Bishop Robert Schnase

Saturday, September 19, 2020

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Santee Chapel

Register at <https://pccucc.org/register-for-an-event/>

Contact us!

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