



PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

...equipping and empowering congregations and clergy for the declaration
and demonstration of the courageous love of Christ!

A Message from PCC

Hartman Center

September 25, 2019

Dear friends of Penn Central Conference,

The structure of the United Church of Christ is a beautiful experiment in mutual accountability and balance, a collection of covenantal relationships held in tension among individuals, congregations, associations and conferences. When I teach UCC History and Polity the students from outside of the UCC are often baffled by the structure, wondering how we accomplish things as well as how we make decisions. Being social creatures, humans are naturally hierarchical – that is, we function (in general) most comfortably in structures that are recognizable as a hierarchy. As with other social creatures, (e.g. primates, dogs) this makes it easy to determine who is in charge and where the power of the structure lies. However, humans are also naturally egalitarian – that is, we are distrustful of power that is concentrated too heavily or for too long in one place (especially “above” us). And we have an uncanny ability to recognize when structures are not fair or balanced. A number of our siblings in Christ function best in systems that are more tightly bound in hierarchy than ours – Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists – while yet others thrive in loose systems with little or no hierarchy (e.g. Quakers). The UCC structure floats in the middle and attempts an unusual task. We ask individuals and churches to live in covenant with one another respecting our mutual responsibility and accountability. That is, we choose to live in a structure that exists and flourishes by mutual agreement. If a church makes a decision that is determined to be a bad decision by other UCC churches, our structure does not provide someone who can come in and remove that church. We choose to live with voluntary accountability – and we hope that we can maintain the tenuous balance. My students from Catholic, Lutheran and Methodist backgrounds marvel at the looseness of the system while they struggle with the perception that there are some who can “get away with things” because there is no centralized authority. Students from other backgrounds find the UCC structure to be comfortable since it is greater than what they’ve known – although sometimes getting used to covenant accountability takes time.

Continues on back

Penn Central Conference's FIRST Men's Retreats

This promises to be the beginning of a new tradition in the Conference or maybe a first step in a Men's movement!

Seasons of a Man's Life is the theme of the January 17-19 Men's Retreat at Hartman Center. Using the familiar text of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (To everything there is a season), the men will have an opportunity to experience the phrases of that text in multiple ways (talks, workshops, interactive displays, films, and worshipful moments.)

THE IMMEDIATE NEED is for anyone interested, to join the planning team at the next meeting, Tuesday, October 8 (7 p.m.) at the Conference Office in Harrisburg. If you or a layperson(s) from your church would come just let me know at abushnell@aol.com The cost of the retreat will be \$120. On-line reservations are now available at the Hartman Center Website. The Retreat begins Friday, Jan. 17 at 7 p.m. and ends Sunday, Jan. 19 early afternoon.

Fall Festival

October 12th, 2019 10:00AM-3:00PM

Mark your calendar and join us for live music, memories, games, and fun. Events include a rededication of our renovated Craft Shop. And this year, we're introducing Rachel Hartman's own locally famous chicken and waffles! Come get it while it lasts.

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. John's UCC, Red Lion

Richfield UCC, Richfield

Grace Evangelical & Reformed UCC, Richland

Tulpehocken UCC, Richland

Message from the Conference cont'

Our covenant relationships, especially those in associations and conferences, were established on the outlines of our predecessor denominations. In some areas those relationships continue to thrive. In other areas churches feel disconnected, isolated or different than their neighbors (even their UCC neighbors) and have little or no connection to their association. I have heard many of you ask how this can be fixed. The answer is that in some areas, it cannot be. In other areas, there is the interest and capacity for reconnection and a renewed commitment to covenant. Our polity is a choice and cannot be forced. Associations can make the time to have authentic and honest conversations among their members. Understanding the role of history is a first step. Then meeting in small groups for discussion about what difference it makes to be UCC in your area today can be enlightening. There are questions that can start good discussions. What is our mission in this place and time? What might we accomplish together that we cannot do alone? What would a renewal of discipleship look like in our communities? How might we answer the call of Jesus and walk together?

All answers must be heard and respected. Living in covenant is a choice. It is one that we must take seriously and it is worthy of our time, energy and effort.

Peace,

Carrie

Coming Events:

Fall Festival

September 29th

4:00PM-6:00PM

St. Paul's UCC

50 North Main St, Manheim, PA

How To Keep Your Boiler In Top Shape Webinar

Presented by Miller Insurance

& PCC UCC Church Insurance Board

October 2nd

Register:

<https://www.insuranceboard.org/online-learning/>
or call 888.717.4137

Chicken Pot Pie Dinner, Bazaar, Craft Sale & Flea Market

October 4th

9 AM - 7 PM

St. Paul's UCC

626 Williams Grove Rd, Mechanicsburg, PA

Fall Festival

October 12th

11:00AM—5:00PM

Dreisbach United Church of Christ

875 Dreisbach Church Rd, Lewisburg, PA

Upcoming Events

Organ Spooktacular

October 13th

4:00PM

Lancaster Theological Seminary

Santee Chapel

555 West James St, Lancaster, PA 17603

If your church isn't already participating—join a CROP Walk near you for the 50th Anniversary! Find one at <http://www.crophungerwalk.org>

Check out other upcoming events on our website:

<https://pccucc.org/calendar/>

Read our full weekly eNews:

<https://pccucc.org/enews-archive/>

Sign up for our weekly eNews:

Link at bottom of any page on www.pccucc.org

More From Hartman Center

A Marriage Enrichment Weekend - "It's a Wonderful Life"

Friday, November 8, 2019 at 7 p.m. - Sunday, November 10, 2019 at 3 p.m. register online.

Fall Women's Retreat: Living Well—In The Moment

Friday the 15th at 7 p.m. to Sunday the 17th at 11 a.m.
Leaders: Sue D'heedene and Winnie Kowalik. Register online

Contact us!

PCC Office Staff

Rev. Carrie Call, PhD - Transitional Conference Minister
email: ccall@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-652-1560 ex. 12

Rev. Nora Driver Foust - Associate Conference Minister
email: nfoust@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-652-1560 ex.13

Rev. Patricia Dodds - Coordinator of Camps/Retreats/Youth Ministry
email: program@hartmancenter.com / Phone: 570-506-0677

Scott Watts - Facilitator of Care to Clergy & Clergy Families
email: swatts@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-652-1560 ex. 15

C. Paul Keller - Office Manager
email: pkeller@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-652-1560 ex. 14

Laura Dalton - Administrative Assistant/Search & Call Assistant
email: ldalton@pccucc.org / Phone: 717-652-1560 ex. 10