

Annual Report

Rev. Dr. Nora Foust

Associate Conference Minister for Congregational and Ministerial Excellence

June 2022

What a year it has been! A highlight was surely completion of my Doctor of Divinity degree at Lancaster Theological Seminary just this past May. I appreciate the support of the Conference Board of Directors, individuals, and the new-ish Penn Central MID Assessment Team that helped bring my doctoral project to life!

Most of my work falls into two major categories of the Penn Central Strategic Plan: Excellent Leadership and Adaptability.

A team was created to begin working with members in discernment as part of my doctoral project. That group is working with 10 of the conference's 20 Members in Discernment. MIDs new to the journey from roughly January 2020 and forward are working with this assessment team and developing Marks Portfolios. MIDs who were already in process prior to the beginning of this team remain with their local association committees on ministry for assessment. I meet with all nine committees on ministry for their regular meetings and provide resources, training, and conference updates. Most committees meet monthly, but some meet every other month or as needed for business matters. I have had the opportunity to train committee on ministry members in the Hawaii Conference and the Vermont Conference in addition to the work that I do with those committees here in Penn Central. I have recently created a YouTube playlist of training videos for COM members.

I plan most of the continuing education offerings which in the past year has included a number of boundary training sessions on zoom and 7 ministerial excellence forums with leadership from within the conference, the Lower Susquehanna Synod, and even the governor's office. These sessions were also held on zoom. Since the 2021 Annual Meeting, clergy have completed almost 800 hours of continuing education in theology, ethics, ministry assessment, trauma informed ministry, coping skills, and so much more through the 20 educational offerings across the conference! Staff and outside facilitators have shared expertise and invited a sharing of the vast wisdom across our conference. Boundary Trainings and most educational events include both a daytime option and evening option so that our full time and multi-vocational clergy may attend at times convenient for their schedules.

Recently I have offered several sessions for local church pastoral relations committees to refresh their skills or get work started. It is my hope that each local church would have a pastoral relations committee to ensure healthy relationships with their pastors. Conference staff are available to come out for training or via zoom.

The Lower Susquehanna Synod of the ELCA elected me to a term on their Camping Corporation's Board of Directors. The outdoor ministry sites at Kirchenwald, Nawakwa and Wittel Farm are "the Church, in a place and time apart...Where God's presence is experienced, Faith is renewed, Christ's love is felt, and the Church is strengthened for the service and proclamation of the Gospel!" I have had that experience! We have already exceeded our camper enrollment over 2021 and hope Penn Central can continue to increase our involvement with summer staff, chaplains, campers, and adult retreat-ers! Check out all the opportunities at www.lutherancampingcorporation.org.

The sale of the Hartman Center property was completed in December of 2021 and the Outdoor Ministries Commission has begun their new purpose of developing a vision and process for grant disbursements that cultivate greater access to outdoor ministry and creation justice work across the conference. Watch the enews for ways to apply coming soon.

I have worked with UCC conference leadership across Pennsylvania to plan seasonal prayer groups and continue to work with our conference minister on the Theology Roundtables here in the PCC and the UCC History and Polity course that draws students from across the country.

I have recently been accepted in the UCC CHHSM (Council for Health and Human Services Ministries) Nollau Leadership Institute. The program brings together leaders from across CHHSM organizations and the denomination to journey together and work toward justice, collaboration, and possibility. The program begins June 26th with an in-person retreat at Cedar Valley Retreat Center in Wisconsin and continues via regular zoom sessions and two additional retreats. I will present a capstone project at CHHSM's Annual Gathering in March of 2023.

On July 1st I will begin a 3-month sabbatical. I look forward to being back with you all October 1st.

Blessings to you all!

Nora

Penn Central Conference Members in Discernment

Approved for Ordination

Allyssa Boyer (Mercersburg)
Stephanie Dorsey (Lancaster)
Leah Thomas (Lancaster, ordination service 6/12/22)

Continuing the Journey

Julia Brown (Mercersburg, Pastor @ Salem, Dover)
Joseph Clapper (Northern)
Spring Davidson (York)
Zoe D'heedeene (York, Pastor @ Bethel Spring Grove)
Rhonda Feiser (Gettysburg)
Jan Garinger (Central, Pastor in Care @ Emmanuel, New Berlin)
Jeff Hauck (Central, Pastor @ St. Peter's Lewisburg)
Teresa Hockenberry (Northern, Pastor @ St. Peter's & Salem, Spring Mills)
Tim Hogan Palazzo (Central, Pastor @ Saint Paul's, West Milton)
Joslin Kearse (York)
Tom Kiepert (York, Pastor @ Chapel Hill, Camp Hill)
Diane Kinley (Northern, Pastor @ St. John's, Bellefonte)
Bonni Lucas (Central, Supply)
Shawn McNett (Central, Pastor @ Trinity, Strawberry Ridge)
Stephanie Oelrich (York)
Jonathan Paredes (Lancaster, Youth Group Leader @ Church of the Apostles)
Kathy Steiner (Lebanon)
Rachel Ward (Northern, Digital Coordinator of Christian Education & Spiritual Formation @ Faith, State College)