

Associate Conference Minister Yearly Report  
Rev. Dr. Nora Foust  
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This has been a full year, friends, and I remain grateful for the calling to serve among you! I truly love this ministry and work and continue to feel called to this time, place, and people. Thank you for trusting me in this way.

Last December I attended the bi-annual Authorizing Ministry for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Conference hosted by the National Setting's MESA Team. I presented some of my doctoral research on competency and implementation of Marks assessment and participated in numerous conversations around the shared joys and challenges of conference leadership in this season of the Church's life.

I have been staffing the new Outdoor Ministries Commission which is responsible for annual disbursements of earnings from the sale of Hartman Center. That dedicated group has worked on an application and a disbursement process, as well as a plan to expand and fund outdoor ministry opportunities within the Penn Central Conference. Several members of that commission are also on the HCSpirit Planning Team and have built an incredible camping opportunity this summer returning to the Hartman Retreat Center. Staffing that committee, I look forward to volunteering at their Homecoming Week.

Keeping in this vein of Outdoor Ministry, I continue to serve on the Lutheran Camping Corporation's Board of Directors. Kirchenwald, Nawakwa, and Wittel Farm all have incredible outdoor opportunities, multi-generational friendly camp, retreat, and volunteer offerings, summer staff openings, and so much more! The LCC is the Church in a place and time apart where God's love is experienced and faith is renewed.

This Spring I have begun using C-words to help summarize some of the trends in the wider church and in honing our own best practices here in Penn Central: Collaboration, Consolidation, and Covenant.

I completed a year-long leadership development program in March when I was commissioned by Council of Health and Human Services Ministries staff as a servant leader in the United Church of Christ. My capstone project was inspired by our work with Brene Brown's core values and my own reading of Victoria Loortz's *Church of the Wild*. I identified collaboration as a core value in my leadership style and partnered it with Loortz's interpretation of John's prologue translating *logos* as "conversation" rather than "word" for my capstone project presented at their annual meeting in Denver.

That trip with CHHSM was the first of quite a few for me this spring as collaboration was brought to life. I was invited to talk with the Hawai'i Conference in their planning a leadership development academy. Then I met with the ministerial staffs of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Conferences – New York, Central Atlantic, Pennsylvania Southeast, Penn Northeast, Penn West, and Penn Central. It is always good to compare notes and learn how others get our work done in these days. ACMs in New York, Central Atlantic, and I began dreaming about how we might share responsibilities and possibly a stipend staff position for Community of Practice development and oversight. We also discussed shared leadership for more regional boundary training opportunities and committee on ministry trainings.

Staff consolidation here in Penn Central invited an early return from my sabbatical last summer so that I might be better positioned to take on some of the search and call responsibilities when we had staff

transition in the Fall. I enjoyed 8 weeks of both rest and rejuvenating reading. I have shared in a number of settings some of the cultural humility work that I did and will continue to expand conversations around race, inclusion, diversity, belonging, and equity with our clergy and congregations.

Covenant is the last of my c-words and not only ties all of the above together, it also speaks to the Committee on Ministry work that I engage. We have consolidated fitness review work into a single committee in the conference setting. We also continue to build the Member in Discernment Assessment Team at the conference setting that assists each association COM with the assessment work of candidate portfolios. Covenant also comes up in compliance issues around information forms, boundary training hours, and attendance at association and conference events. Living out the Ministerial Code is a calling and I continue to seek innovative ways to engage the conversation with our clergy around the day-to-day weight of "living a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called."

And finally, I have begun to introduce new materials for local church with the Manual on Church's release of Marks of a Faithful and Vital Local Church. These Marks will be joined by other elements of the Synod mandated Manual on Church and I am excited to share in conversation around this resource with congregations and colleagues.

Gratitude for your sharing of life's journey with me in both big and small ways!

-Nora