

**Penn Central Conference
United Church of Christ
62nd Annual Meeting Minutes
June 8, 2024**

The 62nd Annual Meeting of Penn Central Conference of the United Church of Christ was held at The Penn Stater Hotel & Conference Center, State College, PA, as a hybrid meeting with in-person participants and remote online participants via ZOOM on Saturday, June 8, 2024. This meeting occurred as part of the PA UCC Conferences Spring Meeting that occurred from June 7 through June 9, 2024.

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Carolyn Herman, Moderator, opened the meeting at approximately 9:00 am, with a welcome and introduction of the officers of the board of directors. The officers included Rev. Susan Emmons, vice moderator, Mr. Dale Mease, secretary, and Rev. Mike Price, treasurer.

Rev. Dr. Carrie Call, Conference Minister, delivered an opening prayer.

Business Session Notes

1. Report on Quorum – Mr. Dale Mease, Secretary, reported that a quorum of 188 was met with the combination of 145 in-person delegates and 33 on-line delegates in the ZOOM meeting.
2. Test Vote – Rev. Dr. Nora Foust, Associate Conference Minister, reviewed the voting process for in-person delegates and voting process for remote delegates who were participating via a ZOOM meeting. A test vote was conducted with the in-person and remote delegates.
3. Standing Rules – Carolyn Herman reviewed the standing rules of order that would be used for the meeting. The standing rules were also posted and available on the conference web site. The adoption of minutes and reports through the use of common consent was also covered.
4. The Consent Agenda for the meeting was approved by common consent.
5. The minutes of the 2023 Conference Annual Meeting that was held on June 9 and 10, 2023 and the 2023 Conference Budget (ZOOM) Meeting that was held on November 9, 2023, were open for discussion.

a. Official Business – Motion to Approve the Minutes from the 2023 Conference Meetings

- i. A motion was made by Mike Price and seconded by Brad Walmer to approve the minutes from the 2023 conference meetings as presented.
 1. The motion was unanimously approved.
6. Treasurer's Report – Rev. Mike Price, Treasurer, delivered the following remarks regarding the conference finances.
 - a. The conference has approximately \$1,900,000 in financial assets as of 5/31/24.
 - b. The auditors reported that all of the conference finances were reported fairly, and he thanked Paul Keller for all of his work handling the conference finances and his work with the auditors.
 - c. Mike shared that the conference is drawing from its cash reserves instead of pulling funds from its investment accounts to fund the conference grant programs, like Innovation Grants and Outdoor Ministry Grants. This approach is being taken for funding the grant program to allow the funds in the investment accounts to grow due to the strong financial markets.

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- d. Mike extended his thanks to the 53 churches that are “5-for-5 Churches”. The “5-for-5” churches contribute to each of the four United Church of Christ denominational offerings and Our Church’s Wider Mission.
- e. faswere approved by common consent.
- 7. Nominations Commission Report – Ms. Jessy Defender, Chair, delivered the report from the Commission of the candidates for the open positions on the Penn Central Conference Board of Directors and the 2025 delegates from Penn Central Conference to the United Church of Christ General Synod in Kansas City.
 - a. Special thanks were shared to Rev. Dr. Galen Russell for his dedicated service and tenure as the former chair of the Nominations Commission.
 - b. Vice Moderator of the Board of Directors
 - i. Rev. Susan Emmons York Association
 - c. Board of Directors – Class of 2026 – Final List of Candidates
 - i. Kristin Vines Lebanon Association
(Lay – fulfilling unfinished term – Class of 2026)
 - d. Board of Directors – Class of 2027 – Final List of Candidates
 - i. Dennis Drummond Lancaster Association (Lay – 1st Term)
 - ii. Rev. Leigh Pick Northern Association (Clergy – 1st Term)
 - iii. Thaddeus Sampson Harrisburg Association (Lay – 1st Term)
 - iv. Rev. Dr. Chris Rodkey York Association (2nd Term)
 - e. 2025 General Synod Delegates – Final List of Candidates
 - i. Lancaster Association
 - 1. Rev. Libby Nocheck Clergy (2023-2025)
 - 2. Lee Nocheck Lay (2023-2025)
 - 3. Julia Lambert Young Adult (2023-2025)
 - ii. Lebanon Association
 - 1. Rev. Tony Fields Clergy (2023-2025)
 - 2. Kristin Vines Lay (2023-2025)
 - 3. Zachary Worley Lay (2023-2025)
 - iii. Central Association
 - 1. Rev. DiAnn Baxley Clergy (2025)
 - 2. Gail Landers Lay (2023-2025)
 - 3. Riley Hoey Youth (2023-2025)
 - iv. Northern Association
 - 1. Rev. Jes Kast Clergy (2025)
 - 2. Rev. Dave Downer Clergy Alternate (2025)
 - 3. Susan Rudy Lay (2025)
 - 4. Mark Holm Lay Alternate (2025)
 - v. Harrisburg Association
 - 1. Rev. Judy Strayer Clergy (2023-2025)
 - 2. Brenda Eckert Lay (2023-2025)
 - vi. Mercersburg Association

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| 1. Rev. Caroline Saxton | Clergy (2023-2025) |
| 2. Rev. Tim Dugan | Clergy Alternate (2025) |
| 3. Jeff Leister | Lay (2025) |
| vii. York Association | |
| 1. Rev. Martha Boyer | Clergy (2025) |
| 2. Joann Kreeger | Lay (2023-2025) |
| 3. Glenn Young | Lay (2023-2025) |

f. Official Business – Motion from the Nominations Commission to Approve the Candidates for the Board of Directors and the 2025 General Synod Candidates as presented.

- i. The motion was unanimously approved.

8. Remembrances

- a. Rev. Dr. Carrie Call, Conference Minister, and Rev. Dwight Hein, Facilitator of Clergy Care, shared remembrances and thanksgiving for the lives and service of seven pastors who passed away in the last year.
- b. Rev. Dr. Carrie Call shared words of thanksgiving for two congregations who drew their ministry to a close in the last year.
- i. These churches were St. Paul's UCC, Dallastown, and Mount Olivet UCC, East Berlin.

9. Creative New Church Starts

- a. Rev. Dr. Carrie Call recognized two creative new church starts that have taken place.
- i. Brush Valley Fusion of Faith, led by Rev. Julie Holm, which combined two UCC congregations and a Lutheran congregation.
- ii. LIFT United Church of Christ, that was created through the combined efforts of Rev. Ed Dickel, Rev. Anabel Profitt, and Rev. Donte' Jones.

10. Celebrations of Pastoral Ordination Anniversaries

- a. Rev. Dr. Carrie Call and Rev. Dr. Nora Foust, Associate Conference Minister, recognized the ordination anniversaries for pastors based on 10 years of ministry at 5-year intervals. were recognized.

11. Celebrations of Congregations with Milestone Anniversaries

- a. Rev. Dr. Carrie Call and Rev. Dr. Nora Foust, Associate Conference Minister, recognized the milestone anniversaries for eight congregations that have been in existence between 75 and 285 years.

12. State of the Conference – Rev. Dr. Carrie Call

- a. Rev. Dr. Carrie Call shared her message on the state of Penn Central Conference. Highlights of her remarks include:
- i. Statistics
1. There are currently 167 churches in our conference. There were 175 churches at the start of her tenure as conference minister five years ago.
2. The average Sunday worship attendance at our churches is 48.
3. The average number of members in our churches is 135.

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4. There is a combined total of 23,500 members across all of the churches in our conference.
5. There is a combined total of approximately 10,000 active members across all of our churches.
6. There are three (3) churches in our conference that have over 400 members.
7. All four of the Pennsylvania conferences are experiencing average Sunday worship of less than 50.
- ii. Based on these statistics, we need to put to rest the fact that small churches will be overlooked if the Keystone Project takes place. We are all conferences of small churches.
- iii. General Remarks
 1. Our conference ministers help churches decide their future.
 - a. Our conference's Church Futures Commission is there to help churches plan their futures.
 2. It is important to remember that all of the churches listed in the New Testament closed.
 3. Every church is like a mosaic. They are each unique and beautiful.
- iv. Challenges – Search and Call
 1. Search and Call is the biggest challenge that we face in our conference.
 2. Search and Call is also the biggest challenge that we face throughout the entire United Church of Christ.
 - a. 52 clergy profiles have been circulated within our conference in 2024.
 - b. Feedback from these pastoral candidates is that they are looking for churches in metro/urban areas. There are no metro/urban areas within our conference that meet these criteria.
 - c. Since June 2023, 28 new pastoral positions are being served within our conference.
 - i. All of the candidates that were called to fill these pastoral positions were from within Penn Central Conference.
 - ii. A breakdown of the background of these candidates is:
 1. 10 – UCC clergy
 2. 3 – Lutheran (ELCA)
 3. 2 – American Baptist
 4. 1 each from three (3) other denominations
 3. The bottom line is that the traditional way of doing Search and Call is not working anymore.
 - a. We are not drawing clergy from outside of our area.

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- b. Six years ago, our churches were receiving around 21 profiles for a pastoral search.
 - c. Now we are at a point where we have churches that have been searching for three years and have not been able to find a candidate.
 - 4. A key solution to the challenge of finding pastors to lead churches is to draw from within our churches by having and developing solid lay leaders who can lead worship.
 - a. We are looking at lay minister and lay leader training.
 - v. Challenges – Relationships and Financial Support
 - 1. 38 of our churches have not given to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM). This is 23% of our churches.
 - 2. Our churches contributed \$33,500 to The Christmas Fund offering of the United Church.
 - a. Our conference gave over \$14,000 in financial support to clergy in the past year.
 - 3. "The conference is the place to help pastors and churches."
 - vi. What Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) Supports
 - 1. The Church Futures Commission
 - 2. Pastoral support through the services offered by Rev. Dwight Hein
 - 3. Visits and support to churches by Rev. Dr. Nora Foust
 - 4. Training for pastors and lay persons
 - 5. Search and Call for churches and pastors
 - 6. Support for Committees on Ministry provided by Nora.
 - a. Nora attends all nine of the monthly Committee on Ministry meetings that occur within the conference.
 - 7. Being present with churches in conflict.
 - 8. Delivering a conference presence at association meetings
 - 9. Administration and support for the conference through the services delivered by Paul Keller, office manager.
 - vii. The core of OCWM is relational. It is built upon a web of relationships.
 - 1. We need the engagement of the churches.
 - 2. We need our relationship to be a 2-way street.
 - viii. Thanksgiving
 - 1. Carrie shared her thanks for the opportunity to serve as conference minister for the past five years.
13. Mini-Workshop Regarding the Keystone Project
- a. Mike Gibbs, leader of the Church Futures Commission and a member of the Keystone Working Group, led a mini-workshop for all of the conference members in attendance. The workshop focused on three questions to discuss at each table related to the Keystone Project. The three questions were:

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- i. Gains and Losses – How do you see a Keystone Conference benefitting your local congregation or you? What do you think could be lost and needs more attention as the merger discussion continues? (KWG – Mike Gibbs)
 - ii. Association Impacts – Given that Associations will need to reclaim work assigned them in the UCC Constitution, what will associations need to be successful in doing that work? (KWG – Dwight Hein)
 - iii. Networks of Support – How do you see churches contributing to the network of volunteers to do this work? Name names on your papers of people with skill sets that sit in the pews. (KWG – Heather Kurtz)
- b. The members gathered at each table were asked to consider each of these questions and then write responses on large Post-It notes and then stick each Post-It note on large easel pages located around the meeting room.
 - c. The responses on the easel pages were read by Mike Gibbs, Rev. Dwight Hein, and Rev. Heather Kurtz, who are all members of the Keystone Working Group.
 - d. The easel pages were all saved so that the messages on each of the Post-It notes could be transcribed by the Keystone Working Group.
14. SpeakOuts – Five 1-minute SpeakOut messages were shared.
15. Lancaster Theological Seminary Scholarship Announcement
- a. Rev. Dr. Carrie Calle announced that Lancaster Theological Seminary is offering 100% scholarships to United Church of Christ members for any of the master's degree programs.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:45 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Dale H. Mease, Secretary