



April 2, 2017

Is your Congregation in discernment over it's future?

Did you know that on average, one UCC congregation closes every two weeks? Did you know that from 2012 to 2015, 111 UCC congregations closed their doors?¹

Unfortunately, this is happening more and more frequently. This is happening in the PA Southeast Conference. In 1996 there were 205 congregations; today there are 166. This is the reality of church in 2017.

There are so many reasons for this new normal and too many reasons to go into in this article. However, I would like to introduce a resource that can help you and your congregation to discuss and discern the future of your church.

The resource is *Living Legacy*. This is a resource of the United Church of Christ and contains many helpful chapters. It covers the challenges of today's church, discerning the future, options for your building, and legal issues in regards to church dissolution and/or merger. In addition, it contains a wonderful Bible Study for use as a discernment tool.

Who knows what might happen when we come to God with our prayers and concerns; God might just lead us down a path that we never dreamed we would travel. For we are a resurrection people! Where we see death, God sees new life! Where we see nothing, God may see an opportunity to do a new thing!

I want to lift this resource to your congregation and pray that your congregation will begin to discern the future that God has for your congregation. Please speak with your pastor and have a conversation.

If you would be interested in *Living Legacy*, please send me an email request and I will send it to you in pdf format. My email is morris@psec.org

¹<https://carducc.wordpress.com/2017/03/06/final-act-of-faith-closing-congregations-nurture-next-generation-of-mission/>

-Rev. Sharon Morris, Associate Conference Minister

Getting to Know:

Friedens Reformed UCC

1011 Church Rd., Sumneytown, PA 18084

Once "the little church on the hill", we now call ourselves "the beacon on the hill"; for Christ's Light has begun to shine in the life and ministry of Friedens church in new and exciting ways. We just completed a year of intentional renewal and revitalization facilitated by the interim ministry during our search and call process. We are thrilled to begin 2017 with our called pastor, the Rev. Deborah Schwartz. She already has been a great blessing to Friedens!



Exciting energy and engagement is easily felt within our church community. You may see it in the many smiles on faces on a Sunday morning, in the active lay leadership that works to enrich our faith work with Christian education initiatives, through new fellowship events, in community outreach, and with ongoing mission activities. Our Sunday school has doubled in size. We will be welcoming TEN new members this month. Sunday worship attendance is growing. Joy abounds!

A mission team of 16 recently served at Back Bay Mission in Mississippi. We partner with Trinity Meals in Pottstown and the First Monday Meal in the Upper Perkiomen Valley. We also welcomed the community to Friedens' Free Breakfast, a time of fellowship, as well as food for both body and spirit. Friedens is actively working to find additional ways to engage and bless our neighbors.



Worshippers find inspiration in our rich Music Ministry and through the gifted spiritual leadership of Pastor Deb. Christian Education flourishes through Sunday school classes, adult study groups, Vacation Bible School, and pursuit of wider church resources. There are always ways

to be engaged in faith's good works at Friedens!!

Prayers are requested for Friedens Reformed UCC
 in Sumneytown and Rev. Deborah P. Schwartz.

