



April 30, 2017

Vision for a new Eastern PA Conference in the UCC

Dear PSEC Friends,

Conference merger. That idea has swirled around both north and south conferences for years. Folks have shared with me reactions that range from “Why are we waiting?” to “Why would we ever?” to “Why should I care?” Leaders in both conferences, who lean forward into the challenges of being church, have taken up this conversation and now invite you to be part of it.

The PSEC Conference Consistory, at their regular March 2017 meeting, entertained a resolution drafted by Consistory representatives of both the Penn Northeast and Southeast Conferences regarding the potential for merger. Like the resolution passed by five northern PSEC Associations prior to the merger that created the Covenant Association, this resolution creates a year-long opportunity to explore the faith, form and function of a consolidated conference. It will come to the floor of the business meeting at our Spring Annual Conference Meeting in June. Friends in PNEC will consider the same resolution at their Annual Conference meeting at the end of April. Obviously, both Conferences will need to approve the resolution for the process to move forward.

Either way, both Conferences have been working collaboratively to share staff resources, create continuing education opportunities and clergy support groups, facilitate Clergy Convocation and Our Ecumenical Ministry efforts. What other dreams and possibilities could we bring into reality that would make us stronger together than we are apart? That conversation excites me and I hope that you will be part of it.

Blessings,
Bill

-Rev. William P. Worley, Conference Minister

A VISION FOR A NEW EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE OF THE UCC

Rationale:

The Penn Northeast Conference and the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference have engaged in conversations together to vision new, creative ways of working together and reimagining church in the 21st century. We are seeking the guidance of the spirit to reshape our community so that our passions can meet the world's deepest needs. We are seeking to transform the church to a sustainable future and the long term health and wellness of the church. Using our gifts of creativity and hope, it is our intent as the conferences of eastern Pennsylvania to begin the process of mapping the future that enables us to be more responsive in a fluid world with the timeless truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ and move forward into the future with confidence and vision.

Isaiah 42:5-9 (NRSV)

⁵ Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it

and spirit to those who walk in it:

⁶ I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you;

I have given you as a covenant to the people,^[a] a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind,

to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

⁸ I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols.

⁹ See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth,

I tell you of them.

Vision:

By combining the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference and the Penn Northeast Conference of the United Church of Christ, we will be able to strengthen our mandate to take the Gospel into the world.

To join with the Holy Spirit in creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ for a new Eastern Pennsylvania Conference and the thrilling impact it would have on our churches and communities as we minister together.

To have the ability to discover new understandings of the mission of Jesus Christ that sends us out into Eastern Pennsylvania and the world to share the good news of God's love, grace, and justice in life giving and life transforming ways.

To move with the Spirit into a new way of being Conference in Eastern Pennsylvania claiming anew an identity, purpose, and mission that serves God's intentions for our churches, people and world.

To covenant together in a process to explore new possibilities God is setting before us in the creation of a new Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.

With this in mind, we present to you the following resolution:

Resolution:

Therefore be it resolved, that PNEC and PSEC will form a transition team to vision and develop a model of a new, merged conference. This transition team will hold small group meetings in both conferences to present the vision, invite feedback, and continue to develop a new understanding of conference ministry, identity, purpose, and mission.