



June 11, 2017

PNEC/PSEC Leaders Building Bridges with German Ecumenical Partners at a Time When it is Needed Most !

I am grateful that in the same week our national leaders were undermining connections with our German allies, a group of PNEC/PSEC leaders were building bridges with German ecumenical partners. We were in the Anhalt District of the former East Germany to celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation and to attend Kirchentag (You can learn more about that here: www.kirchentag.de/english/about_kirchentag/overview.html).



It is the irony of ironies that we returned from a former police state to a nation in a state of needing more police—to protect us from each other as much as manufactured threats used to manipulate fear. Therein lies the most recent motivation to maintain ecumenical ties with our German partners. Yes, we share theological, ecclesiastical and cultural rootedness. Yes, we have much to teach each other about the ongoing process of re-formation. Yes, prayers shared across the globe best honor our God whose reach is beyond nations as well as time and space. But in the upheaval of our current political climate when common competence and courtesy have given way to mindless impulsivity, partnerships among people who share the cause of Christian love and solidarity are crucial.



The joint conference delegation that represented our UCC congregations at Kirchentag were met by our German hosts with a graciousness and affection that transcends the barriers of language and transforms hearts in a unity of purpose which serve the world so “that they may all be one.” It was once the East German government that needed this reminder. Now, regretfully, it is ours. This is not the time for silence. It is the time for careful, convicted, compassionate and Christ centered confrontation. Our German partners stand with us offering gentle reminders of what can happen when we fail to do so.

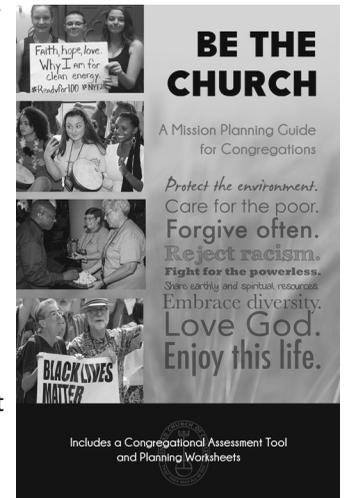
- Rev. William P. Worley, Conference Minister

“Be the Church” Planning and Assessment Guide Now Available

A question about finding a better way to measure church vitality has led to the creation of a new mission planning and assessment guide around ways to "Be the Church."

"Be the Church," nine bold statements first posted as an infographic on the UCC's Facebook page, describes what it means to be "unapologetically Christian" — Protect the environment; Care for the poor; Embrace diversity; Reject racism: Forgive often; Love God; Fight for the powerless; Share earthly and spiritual resources; and Enjoy this life. These words are displayed on banners by churches across the UCC and define to the world what the denomination is about.

The statements resonate with people of faith and mesh with the UCC purpose, vision and mission statements said the Rev. Mike Denton, Conference Minister of the Pacific Northwest Conference. So he and other conference folks wondered if there was a way to measure what it takes to be a vital congregation using "Be the Church."



"We came at it from a question, a question as to whether or not the statistics we had been using (around size for example) were the best ways to measure the vitality of a church — statistics were not measuring very much around mission. Some large churches struggle with vitality, and some small churches do it very well," said Denton. "We thought about using the Be the Church statements as marks of vital congregation, but we didn't know how to do it, so we turned it over to Kristina and CARD."

The result, a downloadable resource available for free to interested congregations. A 36-page "Be the Church" mission planning guide with an assessment tool that helps local faith communities measure the effectiveness of their ministry.

Find the “Be the Church” mission planning guide at : www.ucc.org/bethechurch

-Excerpts from an article on the UCC website