

# God Is Still Speaking

## ARE YOU LISTENING?

MISSION STATEMENT  
Pennsylvania Southeast Conference  
United Church of Christ

# Strengthen Your Pastoral Leadership

### AS CLERGY DO YOU EVER...

- Wonder if other pastors experience the same challenges as you?
- Want to know how your peers handle certain tasks?
- Feel the need for prayer support from other members of clergy?
- Simply feel alone in your ministry?
- Need counsel on how to deal with a situation?
- Wonder how you are going to grow as a pastor?
- Experience the need to admit what you do not know?



### AS NEW CLERGY DO YOU EVER...

- Feel overwhelmed by the scope of pastoral work?
- Seem confused with prioritizing your task list?
- Experience feelings of uncertainty or incompetence?
- Desire to counsel the wisdom of senior clergy?
- Have a need for theological reflection?
- Wish for prayerful support from your peers?

PASTORAL EXCELLENCE IS FOR YOU...

We, the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ, trusting in God's saving grace; proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, ministering in covenant with our local churches and associations; and reaching out in mission to the wider church and to the world; embody God's love by:

Encouraging our local churches toward new and renewed ministries; nurturing strong pastoral leadership while celebrating and developing the God-given talents of all members.

Strengthening the mission of our Conference; providing new opportunities for worship, Christian education, stewardship, evangelism and Christian witness while affirming our partnership with the whole United Church of Christ.

Preparing the way for God's reign; affirming the ecumenical unity and inclusiveness of Christ's Church; committing to the struggle for justice, mercy and peace while praying for the healing of all that separates us from God's love.



 **UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST**

PENNSYLVANIA SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE  
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For more information about the  
PASTORAL EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

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Care, support & accountability

A time for theological reflection

Renew your calling

Develop life sustaining friendships

Immerse yourself in the Holy Spirit & Prayer



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## What is a Community of Practice?

*Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.*

### Three characteristics are crucial for a Community of Practice:

- **THE DOMAIN:** A community of practice is not merely a club of friends or a network of connections between people. It has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. Membership therefore is a commitment to the domain, and therefore a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people.
- **THE COMMUNITY:** In pursuing their interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other. But members of a community of practice do not necessarily work together on a daily basis. The Impressionists, for instance, used to meet in cafes and studios to discuss the style of painting they were inventing together.
- **THE PRACTICE:** A community of practice is not merely a community of interest ~people who like certain kinds of movies, for instance. Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems, in short a shared practice. This takes time and sustained interaction.

*It is the combination of these three elements that constitutes a community of practice. And it is by developing these three elements in parallel that one cultivates such a community.*

For more information...

## What is the purpose of a Clergy Community of Practice?



### To Strengthen and Sustain Pastors by:

- Offering care, support, and accountability
- Nurturing practices of spiritual discipline
- Developing “the craft” of ministry and strengthening practices of pastoral leadership
- Engaging in theological reflection on pastoral identity and congregational ministry
- Fostering a sense of ministry as a shared endeavor
- Preparing for a church whose future we cannot yet see or imagine

### Key Practices and Core Values

- Development of a group Covenant
- Facilitation by a respected, seasoned peer
- Respect for agency of adult learners
- Honoring the “wisdom in the room”
- Asking questions rather than offering advice
- Trusting in the Holy Spirit

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## What is the purpose of New Clergy Groups?

*In addition to the purposes and key practices of Clergy Community of Practice, New Clergy Groups are strengthened by the following.*

- Assisting new pastors in making a strong transition into ministry with the support and guidance of a mentoring community
- Providing space to reflect on and learn from the firsts in ministry (first baptisms, communions, weddings, funerals, first full liturgical years, first conflicts)
- Developing and honing good habits and practices of ministry from the start



### Unexpected Gifts of the Groups

- Life Sustaining Friendships
- The Healing Power of Laughter
- A New Perspective
- A Renewed Calling
- Culture Change
- A Time for Reflection
- Ministry to the Wider Church

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