

What Matters? A Proposal for Conversation
PSEC Fall Meeting 2019
Ursinus College
November 17, 2019 – 3-5pm

For the last five years, the work of our Conference Consistory and staff has been shaped by our 2020 PSEC Vision Plan. We have accomplished six of the seventeen goals and made good progress on four more. A final six goals have eluded our effective engagement. While Consistory continues to build on the successes of that plan, they have begun to discern which of those elusive goals to cling to and which to release in order that we might embrace new possibilities. Your participation in the conversation that is briefly outlined below is a valuable part of that discernment.

One of those elusive, but critical, 2020 Vision goals is *“identifying at least two social justice issues impacting the communities in our conference, offering prophetic witness through op-ed pieces, protest rallies, social media campaigns, member education and all other effective means for the advancement of just and generous Christian values;”*

This goal was created with an understanding that social justice action evolves from the desire and call to be in right relationship with God, each other, social/government/religious systems, and our planet. Of the many social justice issues we could identify the Consistory heard a range of voices from local PSEC churches to General Synod speak to 1) the opioid epidemic and 2) climate change.

The Opioid Epidemic:

- Every day, more than 130 people in the United States die after overdosing on opioids. In 2017, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared a “public health emergency” and announced strategies to combat the crisis of opioid addiction.
- Delegates to the 32nd General Synod (June 2019) called on local churches and conferences to recognize opioid addiction as a “health epidemic” and to partner with corporations, governments, and health care providers to find ways to address behaviors that can lead to addiction.
<https://www.uccfiles.com/synod/2019/resolutions/Plenary-Opioid-Crisis.pdf>
- Several PSEC congregations have engaged their communities in responding to the devastating effects of this crisis that impact people, many of them in our pews, from large cities to rural towns.

Climate Change:

- The urgency of the climate crisis continues to accelerate faster than anticipated by anyone.
- General Synod has spoken repeatedly to the issue of Climate Change. In 2017, delegates committed to the “moral imperative” of urging “clergy to speak from their pulpits about the moral obligation of our generation to protect God’s creation (of the UCC’s ‘Three Great Loves’). Again in 2019, Synod delegates passed a resolution supporting the Green New Deal that, “recognizes the scale and immediacy of the climate crisis...” <https://www.uccfiles.com/synod/2019/resolutions/Supporting-the-Green-New-Deal.pdf>
- PSEC pastors, lay leaders and congregations have begun their own initiatives and partnered with other agencies in response to the call to climate action.

There is no doubt that most, if not all, people in PSEC would agree that these are life and death issues. But they are not the only ones. Our hearts are in many places. So, the question we want to entertain, first in small groups, is this:

What matters to you? And why does that matter?

We know that your answer to that question at the Fall Meeting may dovetail with the two suggestions offered by Conference Consistory. Or they may not. The intention of the conversation is to get clear about what matters the most to most of our Conference. And to begin thinking about how to move in a direction that matters to most.