

Keystone Project: Summary from April 14, 2023

The fifth meeting of the Keystone Study Group* took place Friday, April 14, 2023. This group continues to explore the possibility of mutual or consolidated ministry among the four conferences toward the question, “could we become ONE Keystone Conference?”

To this point in our process, we have explored the needs of our UCC clergy, local congregations and other ministry settings and how we might welcome a process of discernment. From the four conferences, with our unique mission needs and perspectives, we each live into the UCC hope to be a united and uniting denomination, giving life to the prayer of Jesus, “that they may all be one.”

We believe a unified Keystone Conference will better serve, support, challenge and unite our diverse faith communities. Our study group focused on many questions, all grounded in “Do we know our WHY?” Knowing our WHY may mean we choose to leave some other pieces behind in order to move forward. The complexity of the task and all the stakeholders compounds the significance of our WHY! We came to realize that until we knew our WHY we could not fully determine our WHAT and our HOW!

When we studied the options other conferences have taken, and learnings from their experiences, we’ve asked “Is there a way we could do the work with just shared ministries and collaboration between our current conferences? Is there a greater power and voice in combined ministry that can inspire our clergy, congregations, ministry settings and denomination? Can the Keystone Conference offer something better? What can we do better together than we can do separately? Why Now?

We brought together our inspiration of heart and spirit, as well as our intellect and reasoning to give language to what we were all feeling. And finally, the Holy Spirit spoke, and we knew the voice of the One welcoming us to see the “new thing” that God is creating.

“Together we are stronger! The Keystone Conference” and the Spirit is still speaking!

We believe a Keystone Conference can inspire all settings of the Church to thrive in diversity and unity around Christ’s table of love! Our partnered work is greater than our individual efforts. To go elsewhere is to court uniformity, rather than finding our unity through our diversity, to become an agent with God to “answer” Jesus’ prayer, one body with many different parts in Christ.

We are embracing the possibility of our WHY, so we may move forward with WHAT we believe God is calling us to become, and being open to HOW the Holy Spirit will create innovation through us to meet opportunities for ministry and love.

Our ministry continues, empowered and inspired in the hope and assurance that...

“Together We Are Stronger! – The Keystone Conference”

Sharing our progress in grace and hope,

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*A study and discernment group of the 4 PA UCC Conferences – Penn West, Penn Central, Penn NE, and Pennsylvania SE