

## Keystone Study Group: Summary of May 12, 2023 Meeting

The sixth meeting of the Keystone Study Group\* took place Friday, May 12, 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?” Last month, we answered the question of WHY pursue this possibility and embraced the truth in affirmation, **“Together we are stronger! The Keystone Conference”** and the Spirit is still speaking!

We believe a unified Keystone Conference will better serve, support, challenge and unite our diverse faith communities and ministry settings. Our study group focused on the many areas of opportunity to create a more robust and effective connection between the Conference functions/roles and the needs or ministry settings. WHAT is needed, desired, dreamed of for a more vibrant and vital ministry? The WHAT and the larger HOW will be our ongoing tasks in coming months.

Learning from the experience of other conferences, we take seriously the task of exploring options and questions around collaboration, accountability, effectiveness and meaningful connections. We looked at continuing with the “status quo,” and encouraging mutuality and sharing of opportunities for collaboration. We discussed merging the 4 conferences to 2. We shared options for church consultation models to deploy support with various expertise for needs, as well as more effectively utilizing part-time persons/clergy in staffing resources. We recognized that a systematic analysis of local congregations and their voices is needed to support strategic missional priority. The Conference serves to empower the work of ministry in many unique and mission critical areas. In all these considerations, we returned again to the power and energy of who we are and could be together. Our consensus remains, **“Together we are stronger! The Keystone Conference.”**

We now come to the WHAT... In what ways would God work with and through us to create that which strengthens our undeveloped or underutilized potential? What strengths do we possess that will get us to our future? We believe a Keystone Conference can inspire all settings of the Church to thrive in diversity and unity. We are exploring the necessary and desired functions of a Keystone Conference and what outcomes we believe you, our shared community, would want to achieve together. We began discussing functions and outcomes around Mission/Social Justice, Oversight/Authorization, Faith Formation for ALL ages, and Generosity. In the coming months, we will discuss Search and Call, Leadership Training, Technology/Digital Ministry, Communication, Ecumenism, Church Futures, Our Shared Voice and Ministry, Spiritual Revival, Crisis/Conflict Response and Transformation, as we identify functions and outcomes.

Our partnered work is greater than our individual efforts. We continue to embrace the possibility of our WHY, as we move forward with WHAT we believe God is calling us ALL to become, and being open to HOW the Holy Spirit will create innovation through our shared vision to give voice, strength and greater life to the Body of Christ.

Our ministry study continues in the hope and assurance that... **“Together We Are Stronger! – The Keystone Conference.”**

Sharing our progress in grace and hope,

### KSG Communications Team

Steve Davis	St. John’s UCC, Fullerton (PNEC)
Sterling Fritz	Redeemer’s UCC, Littlestown (PCC)
Robin Hightower	Peace In Zion UCC, Zieglerville (PSEC)
Deb Long	First Trinity UCC, Youngwood (PWC)

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