



August 6, 2023

## Words from our Associate Conference Minister for Search and Call

*Teach me to know that life is ever*

*On the side of the future.*

*Keep alive in me the forward look, the high hope,*

*The onward surge. Let me not be frozen*

*Either by the past or the present.*

*Grant me, O patient Father, thy sense of the future*

*Without which all life would sicken and die.*

*-from Deep Is the Hunger by Howard Thurman*

I was with a group of churches recently discussing different pastoral options in this time of a clergy shortage. We discussed everything from continuing to seek solo pastors for each church to merger with another church to sharing a pastor with another congregation, and lastly, ending the ministry of a church. I experienced the meeting as a hopeful moment, despite the difficult choices many churches were considering about how to do ministry in the future, or to end that ministry in the coming years. All the choices required some sort of sacrifice, doing ministry that was unlike how it was done in the past, and which might cause discomfort to some, if not most.

It was hopeful because there were choices that could be made, because there were things that could be done, and it seems to me that when we have choices, we acknowledge the reality that there will be a future, however challenging and different it may be. Personally, I have despaired the most when I felt I didn't have a choice in the matter of my future. Yet, when I had choice in the matter, even if all the choices were not all positive or easy, it pushed me into the coming moments, and I came to acknowledge, as Howard Thurman says, that "life is ever on the side of the future." And Thurman then asks of God to keep alive in him "the forward look, the high hope, the onward surge." A sense of having a future, however different than the past, is what keeps us alive, and, in our better moments, we remember who will meet us in that future, the God who was there in the past, and is here with us in the present. God is faithful to the Church, in all times and in all places. Thanks be to God.

*Rev. Kevin McLemore, ACM for Search and Call*

## From the Addiction & Recovery Taskforce:

### Pen Pan Program

Maybe you missed the Pen Pal training event held on June 25th. The good news is, it's not too late to learn how to safely and effectively communicate with a person currently feeling isolated and forlorn in prison.



Many inmates have few, if any people on the outside who are willing to take the time to simply connect with them. It's part of our call as disciples of Christ to "visit" with them if we can. Once, Rev. Russ Gates contacted some individuals at Phoenix (our local State Maximum security prison), he got a surprisingly favorable response from willing inmates anxious to have a Pen Pal writing to them.

If you are interested, email the PSEC Addiction Task Force at [psec.ar.taskforce@gmail.com](mailto:psec.ar.taskforce@gmail.com) to find out how to get started.

### Synod news

The National UCC Synod passed a resolution that recognizes and encourages harm reduction interventions as an important part of compassionately addressing the drug epidemic.

The resolution is entitled: Faithful Advocacy for Intersectional and Transformational Healing in Harm Reduction. This final adopted resolution will be available in a few weeks on the PSEC Addiction and Recovery webpage.

Please read the resolution to become aware of the need for such intervention and the role of the national church in supporting local congregations and associations in establishing and supporting harm reduction interventions in our local communities.