

The KEYSTONE Conference

PSEC Town Hall Meeting

April 11, 16, and May 2, 2024 via Zoom

Agenda

The Keystone Process

Review of the 2023 PSEC Fall Meeting Presentation.

What's been happening since then.

What's ahead.

Your questions & observations.

Keystone

- The Keystone conversation was envisioned by the four Conference Ministers of Pennsylvania: Rev. Dr. Carrie Call (Penn Central), Rev. David Ackerman (Penn West), Rev. Bill Worley (Penn Southeast), and Rev. Dr. Bonnie Bates (Penn Northeast) in the first part of 2022.
- The Keystone Conversation became the Keystone Working Group (KWG), comprised of officers from the four Conferences, October 15, 2022.
- The KWG is guided the four Conference Ministers who are guided by a consultant (Rev. Bill Metzger of PNEC) all of whom are guided by the Holy Spirit.
- Funded by a 3 year, \$90,000 grant from the Council of Conference Ministers.

Keystone

- Over the course of 18 meetings, The Keystone Working Group has created:
 - A Case Statement– to answer why do this
 - A basis of Union– to answer where is God in this
 - Key Functions of a Conference- what Conference does and how
 - FAQ's from conversations like this one today
 - Working Groups– Staff Structure, Finance Planning, Governance, General Synod Resolution, Legal
- Regular updates in PSEC eNews, and at Association, Ministerium, Conference Committee meetings.
- Feedback sessions last fall and this spring.

2023 PSEC June Meeting @ West Chester

- Introductions of the 4 PA Conference Ministers.
- Description of the process to date.
- Delegate conversation: *“What is the most pressing need at your church or ministry setting, in your local community, and in your faith life that must be met by a merged Conference (which could be something that is already happening)?”*

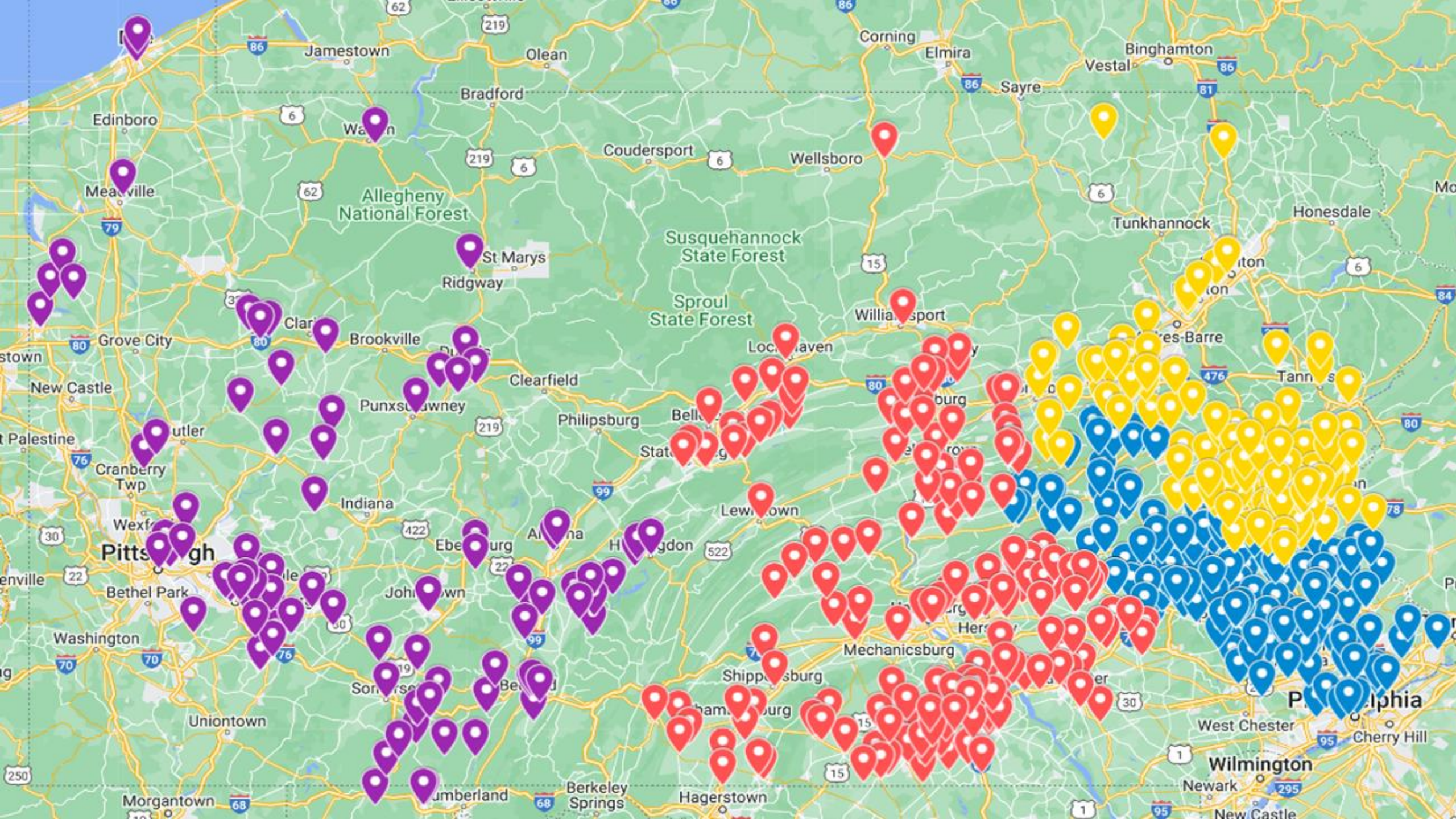
2023 PSEC June Meeting @ West Chester

➤ Delegate Responses:

- Youth Ministry
- Leadership Development
- Mission/values/identity clarification
- Attention to the local church
- Wider Church/Ecumenical relationships
- Leveraging Conference staff especially with regard to search and call
- Justice and witness ministry especially cultural inclusion and Open and Affirming.
- Relationships between and among churches, clergy, Conference staff.

2023 PSEC Fall Meeting @ St. Paul's

- Update on KSW Group Progress and formation of sub-committees (Staff, Finance, Governance, General Synod Resolution, Legal).
- Inclusion of June Conference meeting responses into Key Conference Functions (<https://psec.org/keystone/>)
- Clarification that Keystone process will not change Association boundaries.
- Presented map of UCC church locations in PA
- Delegate Conversation: *"What are you excited about? Where do you see God working in this process? What are your hopes? What do you want to share with the working group?"*



2023 PSEC Fall Meeting @ St. Pauls

- Delegate Responses:
 - Will there be provision for faith formation?
 - We will be the second largest UCC Conference and not OnA. That is a concern.
 - This is long overdue. Statistically, the UCC is almost non-existent by 2050.
 - Concern about relationships not getting thinner as we get larger.
 - How do we grow diversity in a predominantly white Conference?

Follow-up to the feedback

- Several questions from PSEC members and the other Conferences are addressed in an FAQ document you can read here: <https://psec.org/keystone/>
- Faith formation is a key function which you can read about <https://psec.org/keystone/>
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is a significant part of the proposed staff structure and the Justice and Witness Key Conference function.
- The Keystone Working Group meets with Rev. Dr. Velda Love, Lead for the Join the Movement campaign, and UCC Minister for Racial Justice at its April 2024 meeting.
- None of the 4 PA Conferences are currently OnA. We know this designation is critical for many in the church. A merged Conference cannot be determined to be O&A from its creation. Like the local church, a Conference must agree to engage in the Open and Affirming process.

A Word About Associations...

- The Keystone Conference Process cannot include alterations to Association boundaries, leadership, or duties.
- The UCC Constitution prohibits such actions unless they are posed by and agreed to by an Association or in partnership with another Association.

What else has been happening?

➤ **Formation of Keystone Sub-Committees**

- **Staff**— A staff structure draft has been created and shared and amended with input from all 4 Conference staffs. Current Conference staff will remain in place (as funding and performance allow) until at least March 2026.
- **Finance**— Have created a consolidated 2024 budget from 4 Conference budgets. Will present a ruff draft of a 2026 budget at the June Meeting. Also created a consolidated Endowment report and OCWM projections for the next 5 years.
- **Governance**—Has created a governance model and related documents to suggest how a Keystone Conference might be structured and administered
- **Resolution**—Has drafted the formal UCC General Synod resolution that all 4 Conferences will review at the June meeting and vote on at the November Fall meeting merging the four Conferences.
- **Legal**— Will address all issues related to dissolving and creating new charters of incorporation.

What else has been happening?

- **Preparation for the June 7-9 Combined PA Conference Meeting in State College.**
 - Registration is open. The cost for that is well beyond our most recent meetings. Conference Consistory directed \$50,000 from savings to provide a 75% reduction in the registration cost. CM's have applied for and received \$15,000 in additional CCM grant money. Another \$20,000 Brown Grant is currently being considered.
 - PSEC delegates will have their own Conference Consistory led conferring session Saturday morning to discuss Keystone. They will also receive a 2025 draft budget for consideration/conversation. The final 2025 budget is not adopted until the 2024 Fall Conference Meeting.
 - A sermon and liturgy for June 9 is available for use by congregations who pastors will be at the Conference are who would like to participate in the Conference worship themes for the day.
 - To date, 55 delegates from PSEC have registered; 45 in person, 10 online.

What happens next?

1. Town Hall Meetings via Zoom this April 11, 16 and May 2.
2. PA Conference Meeting, June 7-9 of all 4 Conferences in State College, PA to receive and discuss the proposals (finance, staff, etc.) and possibility for merger.
3. Town Hall Meetings between July 1 and November 1.
4. Saturday, November 9, 2024 all 4 Conferences meet in their regions to vote on the Keystone Conference Resolution.
 - A 2/3 majority is required for the resolution to pass.
 - All 4 Conferences must vote "yes" for the merger to move forward.

What happens next?

5. If passed by all 4 Conferences (required), the Keystone Conference Resolution will be presented at the 2025 UCC General Synod for approval (the Synod has to approval all Conference boundary realignments). **If approved...**
6. The Keystone Conference would officially launch sometime in 2026.

Your questions and
observations?