



May 26, 2024

## From the Conference Minister

Dear PSEC Friends,

We are weeks away from our Four Pennsylvania Conference meeting in State College. Registration to attend, in person or online, has been extended until May 31st so you still have time! Although the room block at The Penn Stater is full, another room block at The Comfort Inn & Suites has been secured.

The Keystone Project is the meeting focus. Important information about that has been regularly posted and updated at our Conference website <https://psec.org/keystone/> and shared regularly in eNews, Communitas and at three Virtual Town Hall meetings in the past month.

The Keystone Working Group and five subcommittees (governance, staffing, finance, legal, and General Synod Resolution) have drafted proposals for the key areas of Conference life to cast a vision of what a merged conference might look like while at the same time holding space for ongoing input and future adaptations that will be discerned and decided should merger come to pass.

The Finance sub-group of the Keystone Working Group, which includes volunteers from beyond our regular working group, compiled the budgets and endowment funds (with corresponding restrictions) of the four Conferences and studied 5-year projections of OCWM trends in order to create a draft budget for 2026 (which would be the first year of a Keystone Conference should all four Conference vote to merge).

Similarly, the Staffing subgroup, created several staffing models that might serve a new Conference. Currently, the staffing proposal includes an Executive Conference Minister (with executive administrator) and three Regional Conference Ministers (each with dedicated administrative support). There is also a position for a bookkeeper and an Education/Leadership Regional Conference Minister. (Finance and possibly digital communication would be outsourced.)

Downward trends in OCWM impact our capacity to staff all levels of church life from the local congregation to the National Church. This has been part of

Keystone Working Group's deliberation, it will be part of the Keystone conversations at the June meeting, and our own Conference's Conferring session Saturday morning, June 8, when we look at a potential spending plan for 2025.

Up to this point, Keystone conversations have focused solely on what a merged Conference can do for pastors, churches, and Associations. We must address how each of those contributes to the mission and ministry we share. For Instance, how can Associations reclaim the authority and leadership responsibility delegated to them via the UCC Constitution? This may be helped by the forthcoming release of the new **Manual on Local Church** from the National Setting, which will call upon Associations to be more engaged with local churches regarding covenant and expectations. Can Associations provide programming, hands-on assistance with search and call, and more independent work for the Committees on Ministry?

As my colleague Rev. Dr. Carrie Call wrote to friends in Penn Central Conference, *"Collaborative leadership is necessary as we look to the future. In our denomination, the Church belongs to the churches. The ministry and work of the church can be facilitated and guided by Conference staff, but our collective financial realities going forward make it necessary for each one of us, clergy and lay alike, to embrace our Christian faith and step forward to offer leadership and/or participation. Together We are Stronger works if we unite and share the responsibilities as well as the celebrations."*

I look forward to seeing you soon in State College.

Blessings, Pastor Bill



## Registration for Spring Meeting Closes the 30th Annual Meeting 2024 "Together We Are Stronger"

**The registration for our upcoming joint PA Conference Spring meeting will close on May 30th! Are your church delegates registered?**

**Each conference will hold its own business session Saturday morning.**

Go to the PSEC website (psec.org) and click on the Annual Meeting slider on the opening page to be taken to an agenda, instructions on how to receive the registration discount and more!

**If you are having any issues** with getting an overnight room or registering, please reach out to Susan at the PSEC office at psec.org or by calling 484-949-8774 opt 1.