

Report to the Annual Meeting of the Penn West Conference 2017

Penn West Academy for Ministry

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

As we prepare students for challenges they will meet in ministry, the Penn West Academy has had a good year of faithful service.

We meet four times a year (September; October; March; May) for a Friday night and Saturday in Greensburg. We divide our time among regular scheduled classes, fellowship, and special presentations on particular subjects.

In September, we met for our orientation and shared our understandings of call to ministry. Rev. Becca Siddle, Chaplain at Redstone Highlands, presented in October on Pastoral Care. In March, Academy graduate Paul Sarver led a discussion on faith and his work with Community Supported Agriculture. In May, Rev. Erin Davenport, Director of the Miller Summer Youth Institute at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, lectured on pastoral care trends in particular age cohorts. Pastor Jeff Nelson, spiritual director and pastor, taught our Refresher Course at Living Waters on Spirituality.

Faculty changes emerged in the latter part of the year. Revs. Cindy Parker and Ruth Shaver both moved out of the Penn West Conference. This left 3 courses open to new instructors. In April 2017, the Conference Committee on Ministry met and interviewed candidates for the open positions. For 2017-2018, the faculty are as follows: George Kepple (Church History); Rev. Stephen Fair (Worship & Preaching); Rev. Meredith Hutchison (UCC History and Polity); Rev. David Longstreet (Old Testament); Rev. George Steffey (New Testament); Rev. Joseph Hedden (Theology).

The Habakkuk Group of the United Church of Christ has proposed a new model of ministry for the future. Although these changes are evolving, the Penn West Academy is committed to following the process of the UCC wherever it may lead. This means proactive teaching, mentoring, and working closely with the Committees on Ministry and the Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization (MESA) Team of the UCC. In that vein, the 2017 Refresher Course will be held at Living Waters with the

leadership of MESA on the Manual Ministry, the Marks of Ministry, and the role the Penn West Academy plays and will play in the future.

Finally, for those of you who are in need of some Continuing Education (both clergy and lay folk), the Academy offers auditing for classes. If you would like to work on your preaching or need to re-prime the pump regarding the ins and outs of United Church of Christ polity and founding documents, consider signing up by contacting the Dean.

Dates for the 2017-2018 program are:

- September 15 & 16, 2017: Special Block: Orientation
- October 13 & 14, 2017: Special Block: Wayne Sautter. “Is Worship Theater?”
- November 17 & 18: Refresher Course at Living Waters with MESA
- March 9 & 10, 2018: Special Block: Bobbie Hinline. “Spiritual Direction for Leaders”
- May 11 & 12, 2018: Special Block: Janet Hellner-Burris. “The United Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ: Divergences and Convergences”

Grace and Peace,

Rev. Joseph Hedden, Dean
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