



# WELCOME!!!

No Matter Who You Are, Or Where You Are On Life's Journey, You are WELCOME Here, and NEEDED Here!! On behalf of the Penn West Conference, our family of congregations, committees, and officers, it is my great honor to welcome you to our Annual Gathering 2017!

Through the years, the covenantal partners of the Penn West have changed, and as our family gathers this time, we will see even more changes evident as we once again join in prayer and worship as a conference. Surrounding us are new faces, new routines, etc. however, we are still united in Christ, and our union in covenant calls us to a more intense and deeper Christ-like way of living.

During our time together, we will celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination, of one of the truly great servant-leaders in the church, the Rev Dr Paul Westcoat and as we pause to reflect we will celebrate a ministry that is still very much active. As the church in communion, we will be challenged by Rev Ackerman and Rev Johnson, to look around us and see what God is doing. The challenge before us this weekend isn't to formulate a way by which we can return to some special time or place, but to rise in Christ, once again living a risk-taking faith, and once again be in the habit of sharing the wonderful Grace of Jesus throughout our communities.

We are living in an exciting time in the life of the church. It is a time of great need, for an ever-increasing number of people are in want of the very love we can provide in Christ. The days have long since passed in which we can regale each other with the stories of past victories, and past confidences. The days are at hand in which together in covenant, we must heed the voice of Jesus, and Feed His Sheep!

Listen carefully this weekend, God has called you here specifically to be part of this conversation, and as we pray and worship together, let us expect to be changed in the most marvelous and extraordinary way!

I want to thank each of you, for the blessing you are to me personally, and when I think of you, the Penn West Conference of the United Church of Christ, I am deeply humbled, and I praise God that I have been blessed to walk with you over the past two years as your moderator. And a special thank you, to our vice-moderator, Rev Diane Wiley, for giving me the opportunity to provide this welcome letter, for Annual Gathering 2017!

So, my dearest friends, my sisters and brothers in Christ, May God bless us with a gathering of light, renewed hope, and when we leave this place may our Spirits be filled with risk-taking resolve to boldly proclaim our faith in all that we say and do!

Blessings and Joy be with you all!!

James F Neatrour