

Annual Report to the Penn West Conference Penn West Academy for Ministry 2017-2018

*“Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans.”
--John Lennon, Beautiful Boy*

Who among us hasn't had the feeling that life throws us a curveball when we are not looking? I'm sure Moses had plans for shepherding later in the week when God spoke to him from the burning bush. Mary had a list of chores and studies that did not include speaking with the Angel Gabriel here on earth and the news that she was to bear a son. The Old Testament prophet Amos says he's not really a prophet; his work is helping pollinate, prune, and harvest figs (Amos 7:14). But he had to speak and to preach when God spoke to him.

I would invite everyone who reads this report to ponder God's call. All of us have a call to answer Jesus when he says, “The Kingdom of God is among you! Repent and follow me.” For some holy work is to be a dentist, seeing 10 patients a day. For others, a godly vocation is carpentry and framing houses to make the best quality and safest home. Some serve God in the computer industry. All of us have a holy call.

This is the function of the Penn West Academy for Ministry. To help you understand how your call ‘works’ in the ins and outs of life. How does the New Testament, a document written 2000 years ago, have anything to say to a digital, selfie, electronic culture? What difference does the church make in 2018?

The Penn West Academy wrestles with each of these questions in broad areas: Church history, taught by George Kepple; Worship and Preaching, taught by Stephen Fair; United Church of Christ History and Polity, taught by Meredith Hutchison; Old Testament, taught by David Longstreet; New Testament, taught by George Steffey; and Theology, taught by Joseph Hedden.

For some, taking these courses are about finding a way to live out their call in the church. But that is not all! Students are invited and encouraged to take these courses to learn more about the Bible or if you are interested in pastoral counseling or if you want to know if hell exists or not. How does science overlap with belief in miracles? Who was Hezekiah?

In 2018-2019, in addition to our regular classes, we will be offering four 'special blocks' that may be of interest:

September 14 and 15, 2018—Introduction to the Program and Picnic

October 19-20, 2018—How to pray.

Refresher Course at Living Waters: November 16 and 17. This will be a hands on workshop to work on the Marks of Ministry and will be open to all. Advisors from the Committees on Ministry will be on hand to help people work on the Marks of Ministry and discern where God is leading you next.

March 15-16, 2019—Context. How to read the Bible in Community and in different communities.

May 10-11, 2019—The Church and Mental Health

To enroll in any one of these classes or to get more information, contact the Dean, Joseph Hedden at pastorjoseph@windstream.net or 412-956-5252.

Grace and Peace,

Joseph Hedden