

**Penn West Conference  
United Church of Christ  
55<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering and Meeting  
“Feed My Sheep”  
June 9 and 10, 2017  
California University of Pennsylvania  
California, Pennsylvania**

Registration began at 10:00 AM, with a “Conversation on Authorized Ministry,” following from 10:30 to 11:30 AM. The conversation was facilitated by Pastor David Ackerman, Penn West Conference (PWC) Minister; and Pastor Liddy Barlow, Executive Minister of Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania.

**BUSINESS SESSION ONE**

Mr. James Neatrour, Licensed Minister and PWC Moderator, called the gathering to order at 1:08 PM. David Ackerman offered the convening prayer.

**Credentials Report**

51 pastors registered  
53 delegates registered  
24 visitors registered

The Chair declared that a quorum was present.

**Approval of the Proposed Agenda**

**Motion/Second** – To adopt the proposed agenda as printed in the Annual Gathering and Meeting booklet. **MOTION CARRIED**

**Appointment of the Parliamentarian**

The Chair appointed Mr. Sam Swick, a licensed minister from the Clarion Association, to be the Parliamentarian.

(2)

**Appointment of the Tellers**

The following people were appointed as Tellers: Bill Hendricks (Juniata), Cheryl Petrini (Westmoreland), Marjorie Deaner (Somerset), Alice Lindsay-Bignell (Pittsburgh), George Kepple (Clarion), and Laddie Ohl (Lake Erie).

**Prayer Chapel**

David Ackerman encouraged the people to stop by the Prayer Chapel, and indicated where the Prayer Chapel is located.

**Introduction of Visitors**

Ackerman introduced the following individuals and the ministries they represent:

Donald Hamm (Insurance Board)  
Lisa Defibaugh, Jerry McCuller,  
and Jim Neatrour (Homewood at Martinsburg)  
Molly Stiles and Nancy Mears (Bethlen Communities)  
Diane O'Brien, Bill Kirker, Rita Clemente,  
and Chris Wright (St. Paul's Continuing Care Community)  
Liddy Barlow (Christian Associates of  
Southwest Pennsylvania)  
Joni Hufford (Living Waters)  
Jill Marie (Hoffman Homes for Youth)  
Tom Johnson (Neighborhood Academy)  
Christine Pashley (Days for Girls)

**Approval of the Minutes of the 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering and Meeting**

**Motion/Second** – To approve the minutes of the 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering and Meeting. **MOTION CARRIED**

(3)

**Acceptance of the 2016-2017  
Board of Directors Actions**

**Motion/Second** – To accept the 2016-2017 Board of Directors Actions.  
**MOTION CARRIED**

**Presentation of the Proposed  
Constitution and Bylaws Changes**

**Presentation of the Nominations Ballot**

**Introduction of the 2018 PWC Budget**

**Presentation of the Resolution:**  
**“On gifts to United Church of Christ-Related Continuing Care  
Retirement Communities Within the Geographic Boundaries of the  
Penn West Conference**

A panel discussion about the Resolution followed, facilitated by Chris Wright, President and CEO of St. Paul’s, A Continuing Care Community; Lisa Defibaugh, Executive Director, Homewood at Martinsburg and Springhouse at Everett; Jerry McCuller, Chaplain, Homewood at Martinsburg; and Molly Stiles, Bethlen Homes in Ligonier.

It was a meaningful conversation with thoughtful questions.

**Opening Worship**

The Opening Worship Service was led by David Ackerman and James Neatrour, with Ruth Miller, Minister of Music at St. John’s United Church of Christ, Bedford, as the Accompanist. The theme was “Food to Revive Us.”

Ackerman preached on the subject, “This Sermon is in Tents,” based on Exodus 33:7-11.

(4)

**Speak Outs One**

**Speakers and General Topics**

Steve Craft – Matthew Fox’ birthday ...  
Matthew is a young, deeply committed member of First Reformed  
United Church of Christ in Greensburg. Happy Birthday,  
Matthew!

Linda Miller-Pretz – Days for Girls at Calvary Church  
Cara Neatrou – Disaster Ministries  
Meredith Hutchison – Social Media Survey  
Joni Hufford – Living Waters Fundraiser  
Ryan Lucas – Mission Conference  
Jill Marie – Hoffman Homes for Youth

**Workshops One**

“Moving from Surviving to Thriving”  
Pastor George Steffey

“Financial Stewards”  
Tom Croner, Debbie Long, and Pastor Judith Tobias

“Water (Conversation) with David”  
Pastor David Ackerman

“Mission Grants Training”  
Pastors Bruce Ashlock and Doug Satterlee

“Penn West Academy”  
Pastor Joseph Hedden

“General Synod Thirty One”  
Pastor Diane Wiley

(5)

“Hands on Mission in a Small Church”  
Pastors James Neatrour and Mary Hendricks

“Justice and Witness: Our All Association Spring Meeting”  
Pastor Ron Pedersen

“Choir Rehearsal”  
Ruth Miller

“Youth Time  
Chelsea Neatrour

### **Session One with Pastor Tom Johnson**

Tom Johnson is an ordained United Church of Christ minister in the Pittsburgh Association. He is the Head of School, Co-Founder, and Ethics Instructor at the Neighborhood Academy. He previously served as Pastor of Allegheny United Church of Christ in Pittsburgh.

The focus of his first presentation was how we may and should respond to those who are in need. The example he used, with Pastor Matt Deal as the “victim,” dealt with the man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho who had been attacked by robbers. (Luke 10:25-37)

Many thoughtful, reflective, and compassionate responses were heard from the delegates. There are many and diverse ways in which we can respond to those in need. What we can “cobble together” in our faith communities can equip us to do God’s work right where we are.

### **Calvary United Church of Christ** **Turtle Creek, Pennsylvania**

Pastor Diane Wiley spoke about the vandalism that occurred recently to the Calvary Church meeting house. The damage was extensive with walls torn apart to get at copper piping. We will receive a special offering to assist the congregation in repairing the damage. Please remember the people of Calvary United Church of Christ in prayer.

(6)

### **Evening Prayer**

Following dinner, we reassembled for the evening session. The Evening Prayer Service was led by Donna Jarrel, Pastor of The Abbey Reformed Church, United Church of Christ, in Huntington, Pennsylvania.

The worship booklet stated in part, "Evening Prayer serves to refocus us on God and to reflect on the closing day. There is also a reminder in Evening Prayer that the Penn West Conference is to be the instrument of God's justice in the world. This particular Evening Prayer Office is based on Evening Prayer from The New Century Hymnal. It follows closely the patterns of Daily Prayer that were in use by The Church at the time of the Reformation."

### **Evening Celebration**

#### **Penn West Academy Graduate**

Pastor Joseph Hedden, Dean of the Penn West Academy for Ministry, recognized and congratulated Mrs. Shirley Musick, member of Christ United Church of Christ, Latrobe, who graduated from the program this spring. Shirley is currently serving as the Student Pastor at Trinity United Church of Christ, Greensburg.

Hedden also spoke briefly about the Penn West Academy and invited interested people to speak with him about what the Academy offers.

### **Five for Five Congregations**

Five for Five Congregations are those Churches in the Penn West Conference who not only provide Basic Support to Our Churches Wider Mission, but also support the four special offerings of the United Church of Christ: Neighbors in Need, The Christmas Fund (Veterans of the Cross), One Great Hour of Sharing, and Strengthen the Church. The Five for Five Congregations were read and recognized.

(7)

### **Ministers New to the Penn West Conference**

David Ackerman introduced those pastors new to the Penn West Conference or who have returned from “far countries.”

### **Ordination and Licensure Anniversaries**

Ackerman recognized those persons who are celebrating five year incremental anniversaries of ordination or licensure, and presented certificates to those individuals.

### **Mission Grants Celebration**

During 2016, over \$30,000.00 in mission grants was awarded to 20 United Church of Christ congregations in the Penn West Conference. Those faith communities that benefitted were recognized and congratulated.

### **A Special Celebration Honoring The Rev. Dr. Paul L. Westcoat, Jr.**

Paul Westcoat, Penn West Conference Minister Emeritus, was ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament in 1957 and is observing the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that milestone event in his faith journey. He is still actively serving as the Stated Supply at St. John’s (Harrold) United Church of Christ, Greensburg (Hempfield Township).

The following people offered words of admiration, love, and gratitude: Joni Hufford, Barry Fillman, Linda Miller-Pretz, David Ackerman, Marsha Ackerman, Bob McKie, Joe Beer, Liddy Barlow, Bob Newell, Dick Seigfried, and Glenn Sadler.

Westcoat spoke briefly and thanked everyone for their kindness and best wishes. He urged the delegates to continue being committed to the Penn West Conference and the United Church of Christ. He expressed gratitude for all the people with whom he has worked over the past 60 years.

Following adjournment, an informal reception was held honoring Paul and Glenda Westcoat. Their son, Todd, and his middle child, Megan, also attended. It was a most joyous occasion!

(8)

Following the reception, delegates had the opportunity to attend one of several presentations: Proposed Constitution & Bylaw Changes, the CCRC (Continuing Care Retirement Communities) Resolution, Adult Fellowship, and Youth Program, led by Chelsea Neatrour.

### **Saturday – June 10, 2017**

#### **Necrology Service**

The Necrology Service, remembering those Penn West pastors who joined the Church Triumphant since the last Annual Gathering of the Penn West Conference, was led by The Rev. Judith Tobias, Pastor of St. John's United Church of Christ, Larimer, in the Westmoreland Association.

#### **Business Session Two**

Mr. Tom Croner, Chair of the **Financial Stewards Committee**, and a member of Trinity United Church of Christ, Berlin, Somerset Association, spoke about the Financial Stewards, with a video following his presentation.

#### **2018 Proposed Budget**

Before the actual motion and vote, Jim Neatrour told the delegates that if 2,600 people give 25 cents more a week to OCWM, our current deficit of \$34,781.00 would be laid to rest.

Paul Westcoat reminded the delegates that we owe our Conference staff more money or their dedication and hard work. We must do our share to support the ministry of the Penn West Conference, as it is carried out by David Ackerman, Valarie Poole, and Diane Fox.

**Motion/Second** – To adopt the 2018 Budget as printed in the 2017 Annual Gathering and Budget booklet. **MOTION CARRIED WITH ONE ABSTENTION**



(9)

**Proposed Changes in the  
Constitution and Bylaws of the  
Penn West Conference**

**Motion/Second** – To adopt the proposed changes to the Constitution and Bylaws. Because there was a division, a standing vote was taken. **MOTION CARRIED**

**Continuing Care Retirement Communities Resolution**

**Motion/Second** – To approve the Continuing Care Retirement Communities Resolution. **MOTION CARRIED**

**Weber Memorial**

Weber Memorial, outside of Youngwood, Pennsylvania (Westmoreland Association), is a wooded property that is owned by the Penn West Conference, with administration provided by the Pittsburgh and Westmoreland Associations. There is a picnic pavilion and rest rooms, and the nearby Milliron Chapel. The remains of John William Weber, the first German Reformed pastor west of the Allegheny Mountains, are interred in the small cemetery behind the Chapel.

Weber Memorial is available to all the congregations of the Penn West Conference. For more information, please go to [office@pennwest.org](mailto:office@pennwest.org), Weber Memorial, or call the PWC office at 724-834-0344.

**National Youth Event 2018**

Valarie Poole, Penn West Associate for Youth Ministry, spoke about the 2018 Regional Youth Event (July 19 to 22, 2018) to be held on the campus of California University of Pennsylvania. It is anticipated that 350 United Church of Christ youth from the four Pennsylvania Conferences, plus New York, Central Atlantic, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts, will attend.

Valarie challenged the delegates to “step up to the plate” and fill out the yellow volunteer cards, included with the Annual Gathering materials, that are seeking help with pre-RYE projects, coordinating the mission and service

(10)

component, fund raisers, helping during the actual event, or assisting wherever needed.

### **Speak Outs Two**

Liddy Barlow – Christian Associates of  
Southwest Pennsylvania (CASP)  
Meredith Hutchison – Social Media Survey  
Linda Miller-Pretz – Days for Girls, and prayers for  
Calvary United Church of Christ, Turtle Creek  
Joni Hufford – Friends of Living Waters certificates  
Kristina Rugh – PWC Women’s’ Retreat (Sept. 16 & 17, 2017)  
“Fired Up to Pray with Purpose”  
Cara Neatrou – Disaster Ministries  
Shirley Musick – VBS at Trinity United Church of Christ, Greensburg  
(June 19 to 22, 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM)  
Ryan Lucas – Church Planting

### **Tom Johnson**

Pastor Tom Johnson led his second presentation on ministry and witness.

### **Workshops Two**

The various workshops, offered yesterday, were repeated after the morning session.

### **“Days for Girls”**

Following lunch, Christine Pashley, a member of Zion’s Reformed United Church of Christ, Greenville, Lake Erie Association, spoke very passionately about the “Days for Girls” ministry for young women in extremely poor third world countries. She encouraged the delegates to support this mission.

(11)

### Global Mission

Pastors Joseph Hedden and Ryan Lucas spoke about the “Sheep Fund.” SHEEP stands for “Sustaining Hope with Educational Expenses in the Philippines.” This is the next step in enhancing the partnership between the Penn West Conference and our sisters and brothers in the Northwest Luzon Conference of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. Administered through the Penn West Conference, and the national setting of the United Church of Christ, the fund will be devoted to providing educational assistance to the children and seminarians of the Northwest Luzon Conference of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

Donations may be sent to **“Sheep Fund”** % Penn West Conference, 312 South Maple Avenue, Suite PWC, Greensburg, PA 15601. On line donations may be made at pennwest.org. Whether donating by check, or on line, please clearly indicate that the donation is for the **“Sheep Fund.”**

Bishop Elorde Sambat, from our Mission Partners in the Northwest Luzon Conference, United Church of Christ in the Philippines, sent a message of greeting to our Annual Gathering and Meeting.

### Adjournment

Retiring Moderator, Jim Neatrour, prior to adjourning the Gathering and Annual Meeting, thanked everyone for their support, prayers, and commitment to the ministry and witness of the Penn West Conference of the United Church of Christ.

**Motion/Second** – To adjourn the 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering and Meeting.  
**MOTION CARRIED**

### Closing Worship

The Saturday afternoon Service of Word and Sacrament was led by the youth of the Penn West Conference and by David Ackerman. His scripture text was Matthew 28:16-20 (Jesus’ Great Commission), and his sermon was titled, “Go.”

**(12)**

Following the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, Ackerman installed the newly elected officers of the Penn West Conference.

Faithfully submitted,  
Robert S. McKie  
Secretary Pro Tem

