

Report of the Associate for Youth Ministry



*"For You are my hope; O Lord GOD,
You are my confidence from my youth."
Psalm 71:5*

As I prepare to wrap up my first year as the Penn West Conference's Associate for Youth Ministry, I share with you a reflection of the year that is vastly different than the update I had planned to share.

In the midst of intense planning for the PWC Annual Gathering and Meeting, as well as the National Youth Event, the world seemed to hit pause this spring when the Covid-19 found its way into our communities and lives. That which we had planned was suddenly put on hold indefinitely and we found ourselves in uncharted waters, heading towards uncharted territory.

Despite the sudden mid-year curve ball, we have done some great things in the PWC to amplify the voice of our youth and young adults. Topics of discussion / action this year have included:

- Launch of a conference wide survey to gather input regarding youth programming and trends specifically in the PWC.
- Participation in conference dialogue via the "Youth Snippet" and regular communications distributed by the PWC.
- Increased social media presence.
- Connecting the PWC youth movement to the movements in the wider church – ensuring a voice at the table, as well as listening ears, and a servant's heart.
- Supporting the PWC through the increased regulations regarding background clearances and laws regarding volunteering with you.
- Connecting churches and clergy to resources to help begin to navigate the effect(s) of Covid trauma that our youth and young adults are facing and will continue to face.

I would publicly like to extend my thanks to Rev. David Ackerman, Diane Fox, and the entire AYMT for their wise counsel, careful guidance, and heartfelt prayers this year:

Wendy Bigelow
June Boutwell
Tom Croner

Julia DiFiore
Ryan Lucas

Shirley Musick
Jaye Shaffer

With the support and guidance of the Youth Ministry Team (AYMT for short), the Penn West Conference has begun to reimagine the youth and young adult work that we set out to do. We are always open for suggestions, and there is always room for improvement . . . as well as more members on the team!

As a final word, even though we are maintaining a steady course with youth leadership in the Penn West Conference, I would like to see us shake things up in the coming months!

And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:11-13).

It is true that we have been given uncharted and tumultuous waters these past few months. No one knows what the future holds. What we do know, is that we have a strong foundation and a steady boat with which to navigate the waters ahead. Like Elijah, we have a God that will weather us through the storm and meet us on the other side.

I humbly invite ALL of you, ALL of your churches, ALL of your members to join me as passengers on this journey that lies ahead.

The youth of our churches are our present and our future, and in them I see bright horizons ahead!

Blessings,

Melissa McLean,
Associate for Youth Ministry