

Report of the Associate for Youth Ministry

Once again, in preparation for this year's Annual Gathering and Meeting, I find myself reflecting on the year that we have had individually and collectively. A year ago when I wrote this same report, I was convinced that this year we would once again be in person. How naive I was.

*what is it about the day of the Lord
that captures our imagination
that challenges our souls
that calls us up
into a hope
a wish
a challenge
a ministry*

While we might not be in the same physical places and spaces this year, I have no doubt that we are truly joined together as God's people. This year's Annual Meeting and Gathering theme is: "The Penn West Conference: Engaging in Covenantal Relationships; Sharing God's Love with All." I love this message! Just like the people of the Penn West Conference, it is a promise full of hope; a promise that I see lived out in the generations of youth that surround us.

*what is it about the day of the Creator
that prompts us to take cover
to deny we hear a voice
calling
insisting
that we move beyond our todays
into better, richer, fuller
more faithful tomorrows*

With the support and guidance of the Youth Ministry Team (AYMT for short), the Penn West Conference has spent this year continuing to reimagine the youth and young adult work that we set out to do. We have heard from many individual congregations who are slowly returning to in-person activities, and others who cannot yet see that option on the horizon. It is our hope to provide support for each, and all in between. Whatever journey has been chosen, we remain committed to being a willing companion on that journey.

Throughout this past year we have focused on the Ministry of Presence offering weekly drop-in sessions, forming more personal connections with local churches, and really visualizing where these new generations of leaders are taking us.

The Penn West Conference remains connected to the national youth setting through participation in the appropriate forums and groups. While the decision to cancel the National Youth Event for 2022 was not an easy one, it was one which all felt was in the best interest. We look forward to joining in person again; however, in the meantime, we will continue to connect youth to the wide array of virtual opportunities available throughout the national setting as well as the Conference.

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 Julia DiFiore Tara Thompson Chelsea Neatrou
June Boutwell Jaye Shaffer Tom Croner

Thank you to Shirley Musick and Ryan Lucas who have faithfully completed their time of services with the AYMT.

*what is it about the day of God
that we begin to see who we are
how we are
what we are
and realize
that our worship is full, but incomplete
our mission is strong, but lacks power
our caring is deep, but needs more compassion*

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 **ALL** shake things up in the coming months! For in the youth that surround us I see the “power” and “compassion” to reach our full and complete potential as partners with Christ and one another. 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

Excerpts in italics are from “Breaking the Fine Rain of Death,” written by Emilie M. Townes.