

Penn West Conference

Committees and Ministry Teams 2023

“The Penn West Conference: Engaging in Covenantal Relationships; Sharing God’s Love with All!”
Teams and committees work within the Conference to offer individuals the opportunity to be a witness beyond their local church. Each committee and team is charged with supporting our churches, pastors and laity as they labor together to bring God’s love to all people.

Board of Directors

The Board serves as stewards of the ministries of the Penn West Conference between the Annual Meetings. They are charged with managing the financial and leadership gifts that churches and members give to it through Our Church’s Wider Mission. Members are elected by Associations and Officers are elected at the Annual Meeting. Our Moderator (through June, 2023, George Kepple), Assistant Moderator (through June, 2023, Dave Mears), and Conference Minister (David Ackerman) are ex-officio members of all our teams and committees. The Board typically meets six times a year and makes appointments for the following Committees:

Committees and Groups focused on Internal Aspects of the Conference

Annual Gathering & Meeting Planning Team

This group facilitates the planning of our Penn West Conference Annual Gathering & Meeting, including all worship, programmatic, and business aspects. This group usually meets around six times a year. Conveners: George Kepple & Dave Mears; Members: Lisa Griffin, Douglas Hearn, Meredith Hutchison, Donna Jarrell, Linda Miller-Pretz, Jim O’Connor, Jeanette Thomas, Diane Wiley

Association Presidents

This group of presidents of our six Associations seeks to live out our shared sense of mission by connecting on shared points of interest, such as an occasional All Association Meeting, within and among our Associations. The group usually meets quarterly. Convener: David Ackerman; Members: Stephen Fair (C), Jim Neatrou (J), Alice Niebauer (LE), Norm Tutino (P), Mary Alice Lynn (S), Don Watkins (W)

Committee on Ministry

The chairpersons/representatives from the Association Committees on Ministry of the Conference regularly meet to review church and ministry practices, support and oversee the PWC Academy and work to coordinate among Associations the policies and procedures for ministerial authorization. The committee meets about six times a year. Chairperson: Barry Fillman (C); Members: Jim Neatrou (J), Ericjon Thomas (LE), Dave Mears (P), Jay Shaffer (S), Shirley Musick (W)

Financial Stewards

Combining the work of a Finance Committee and Stewardship, the Financial Stewards prepare an annual Conference budget for the Board to recommend to the Annual Meeting and monitor the budget, finances and investments during the year. With workshops and resources, members also seek to provide inspiration, Biblical understanding and skills to guide churches and members to be faithful in their stewardship of God’s gifts. They celebrate churches’ OCWM gifts and the “5x5” churches at the Conference Annual Meetings. This team meets roughly quarterly. Convener: Deb Long; Members: Brenda Haws, Linda Miller-Pretz, Jim Neatrou, Linda Miller-Pretz, Diane Wiley

Investment Committee

The Committee provides oversight for the Conference Endowment Fund, including how funds are invested and how money is to be spent to meet the guidelines of the Endowment. The committee meets roughly quarterly. Chairperson: Tom Croner; Members: Mark Poole, Deb Long, Henry Cook, Jim Neatrou

Keystone Study Group

The Board officers comprise the members of the Keystone Study Group, which is considering ways in which the four UCC Pennsylvania Conferences might cooperate together in the future. This cooperation could land anywhere from doing certain events together to a full corporate merger, depending on how the conversations proceed.

Long Range Planning Team

The team focuses on long range goals for the life of the Penn West Conference, with an emphasis on how the Conference may function financially and structurally in the future. Convener: David Ackerman; Members: Diane Fox, Liddy Barlow, Tom Croner, Linda Miller-Pretz, Nancy Harclerode

Mission Grants Committee

From the interest income of the Corman Fund and the Thomas Fund, along with monies from Neighbors in Need and Strengthen the Church, the Mission Grants Committee solicits mission applications and awards grants to local churches following the stipulations of the funds. The Committee consists of a representative of each Association. The committee meets a few times annually. Convener: David Ackerman; Members: Jill Marie (C), Mary Hendricks (J), Alice Niebauer (LE), Jon Colburn (P), Joe Beer (S), Bob Krueel (W)

Nominating Committee

The Conference Nominations Committee is comprised of the Chairpersons of the Nominating Committees of each of the Associations. Responsibilities of this committee are spelled out in Article VIII of the Conference By-Laws. The Nominating Committee typically elects at appropriate times the Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Secretary, Treasurer, and Delegates to General Synod. The committee usually meets once or twice a year. Convener: David Ackerman; Members: Sam Swick (C), Mary Hendricks (J), Alice Niebauer (LE), Liddy Barlow (P), Matt Deal (S), Don Watkins (W)

Penn West Academy for Ministry

The Academy provides extensive theological and biblical studies, church history, practical theology and more to prepare persons for authorized ministry as well as personal growth. The program is four years, and there are four sessions annually. More details can be found on the Conference website. Dean: Joseph Hedden; Faculty Members: Stephen Fair, Meredith Hutchison, George Kepple, David Longstreet, George Steffey, Julia DiFiore

Personnel Committee - The Committee relates to the staff of the Conference and works to create a positive work climate, provides support for the staff and conducts staff evaluations. Members are appointed by the Board of Directors. The committee typically meets quarterly. Chairperson: Douglas Hearn; Members: Don McIlvaine, Betty Royer, Rich McCarty, Wendy Stemple

Search & Call Team – This team helps the Conference Minister with Search & Call matters in the life of the Conference. Convener: David Ackerman; Members: Stephen Fair, Jerry McCuller, Linda Miller-Pretz

Weber Committee – The Committee provides oversight of the use and care of the John Weber Memorial Site, created in memory of John Weber an itinerant minister in the 1700's who was influential in the establishment of several churches within the Conference. The site located east of Youngwood includes a chapel, caretaker house, cemetery and pavilion with restrooms. It can be rented by churches and families for picnics. The group currently meets on an "as need" basis. Chairperson: Kris Long; Members: Joel Pretz, TBD

Ministry Teams – Anyone with a passion for the focus of a particular Team is invited to join!

Caring for Churches, Caring for Clergy Team

We have established a team to help with the campaign that our Conference Board is undertaking that involves both the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance and our own Mission Grants program. The team meets about six times a year. Members: Liddy Barlow, Tom Croner, Diane Fox, Diane Wiley

Discipleship Team

The mission and purpose of the Discipleship Team is to walk with our Pastors, Local Churches, and Associations to grow followers of Jesus in changing times. The team typically meets quarterly. Convener: Jim Neatrou; Members: Tom Croner, Matt Deal, Mary Hendricks, George Steffey

Global Missions Team

The team works with Global Ministries to enhance our cooperation in missional work around the world. Our recent focus is on the Conference partnership with the North West Luzon Conference of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. It is the hope of the Team to increase our awareness and knowledge of mutual ministries with our Partners and learn from our sisters and brothers how God is working through them. The team currently meets about six times a year. Convener: David Ackerman; Members: Andrea Coliaico, Vic Coliaico, Jodie Enterline, Keith Grimm, Ryan Lucas, Mary Alice Lynn, Dick Seigfried, Eileen Seigfried

Justice & Witness Team

The Team's focus is on Justice & Witness Ministries in keeping with the work of the wider United Church of Christ. We focus on a variety of justice issues, including but not limited to: creation care, racial justice/white privilege, hunger/homelessness, the Middle East, mental illness, etc. The group has currently been meeting monthly. Convener: Roxanne Tuinstra; Members: Julia DiFiore, Don Hammonds, Bonnie Kautz, Linda Lawson, Ron Pedersen, Ellen Sautter, George Steffey, Robin Stemple, Tim Tuinstra

Legacy Team

Our Legacy Team works with churches that are either in the closing process or are considering new ways of being in ministry in their communities. Using the "Living Legacy" resource from the United Church of Christ as a guide, our team aims to be of service to churches who need this kind of care at this point in their lives. The team meets on an "as need" basis. Convener: David Ackerman; Members: Scott Fuller, George Kepple, Jim Neatrou, Linda Miller-Pretz, Lois Morrison, Joel Pretz

Youth Ministry Team

In those times when we have an Associate for Youth Ministry, this team seeks to provide support and accountability for that person. In those times when we don't, it looks to the youth ministry/programming of the Conference. The team meets roughly quarterly. Members: Wendy Bigelow, Julia DiFiore, Chelsea Neatrou, Alex Ruzanic, Jay Shaffer

If you'd like to join one of our Ministry Teams, please see either the convener of the team or David Ackerman.