

## **Penn West Conference Committees and Ministry Teams 2025**

*“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 supports 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 manage the financial and leadership gifts which churches and members give to it though Our Church’s Wider Mission. Associations elect members and the Annual Meeting elects officers. Our Moderator (Rev. Dave Mears – [dave.mears33@gmail.com](mailto:dave.mears33@gmail.com)), Assistant Moderator (Rev. Liddy Barlow – [lbarlow@casp.org](mailto:lbarlow@casp.org)), and Conference Minister (Rev. David Ackerman – [david@pennwest.org](mailto:david@pennwest.org)) are ex-officio members of all our teams and committees. The members and emails addresses of our Board officers are as follows: Rev. Dave Mears (Moderator – [dave.mears33@gmail.com](mailto:dave.mears33@gmail.com)), Rev. Liddy Barlow (Assistant Moderator – [lbarlow@casp.org](mailto:lbarlow@casp.org)), Wendy Bigelow (Secretary – [wbigelow5@comcast.net](mailto:wbigelow5@comcast.net)), Deb Long (Treasurer – [deblong672@gmail.com](mailto:deblong672@gmail.com)), and Nancy Harclerode (Assistant Treasurer – [harcle@centurylink.net](mailto:harcle@centurylink.net)). Our Board members are Rev. Frank Sapp (Clarion – [revfranksappjr@yahoo.com](mailto:revfranksappjr@yahoo.com)), Rev. Mary Hendricks (Juniata – [pastormary653@gmail.com](mailto:pastormary653@gmail.com)), Rev. Nicole Pickens (Lake Erie - [revnicolepickens@gmail.com](mailto:revnicolepickens@gmail.com)), Rev. Dr. Leanna Fuller (Pittsburgh - [leannafuller@yahoo.com](mailto:leannafuller@yahoo.com)), Rev. Sharon Fox (Somerset - [ssfox60@yahoo.com](mailto:ssfox60@yahoo.com)), Rev. Paul Sarver (Westmoreland – [psarverfarm@aol.com](mailto:psarverfarm@aol.com)), Ken Tack (Clarion – [maxtack1015@gmail.com](mailto:maxtack1015@gmail.com)), Ellie Long (Juniata – [jelongpa@comcast.net](mailto:jelongpa@comcast.net)), Alice Niebauer (Lake Erie – [alicen14@verizon.net](mailto:alicen14@verizon.net)), Robin Stemple (Pittsburgh – [robstemple@comcast.net](mailto:robstemple@comcast.net)), Rev. Diane Smith (Somerset - [dianesmith72@verizon.net](mailto:dianesmith72@verizon.net)), Mark Brautigam (Westmoreland – [embrautigam@msn.com](mailto:embrautigam@msn.com)). 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: Rev Dave Mears ([dave.mears33@gmail.com](mailto:dave.mears33@gmail.com)) & Rev. Liddy Barlow ([lbarlow@casp.org](mailto:lbarlow@casp.org)); Members: Theresa Cook ([teecook1014@gmail.com](mailto:teecook1014@gmail.com)), Rev. Lisa Griffin ([lgucshot@verizon.net](mailto:lgucshot@verizon.net)), Douglas Hearn ([hearndouglas@aol.com](mailto:hearndouglas@aol.com)), Rev. Meredith Hutchison ([meredithhutchison@comcast.net](mailto:meredithhutchison@comcast.net)), Rev. Donna Jarrell ([jarrell.donna@gmail.com](mailto:jarrell.donna@gmail.com)), Rev. Linda Miller-Pretz ([lpmp811@zoominternet.net](mailto:lpmp811@zoominternet.net)), Jim O’Connor ([jp.oconnor@lhtot.com](mailto:jp.oconnor@lhtot.com)), Jeanette Thomas ([jeanetterp.thomas@gmail.com](mailto:jeanetterp.thomas@gmail.com)), and Rev. Diane Wiley ([dwiley48@aol.com](mailto:dwiley48@aol.com)).

#### **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: Rev. David Ackerman ([david@pennwest.org](mailto:david@pennwest.org)); Members: Bob Newell (Clarion – [rwn102@windstream.net](mailto:rwn102@windstream.net)), Rev. Jim Neatrou (Juniata – [jabez1924@gmail.com](mailto:jabez1924@gmail.com)), Alice Niebauer (Lake Erie – [alicen14@verizon.net](mailto:alicen14@verizon.net)), Rev. Norm Tutino (Pittsburgh – [ntutino@hotmail.com](mailto:ntutino@hotmail.com)), Rev. Matt Deal (Somerset – [jmdeal@gmail.com](mailto:jmdeal@gmail.com)), and Rev. Rev. TJ Lucas (Westmoreland – [pastor@lovestrucc.org](mailto:pastor@lovestrucc.org)).

#### **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: Rev. Barry Fillman (Clarion – 814-427-2468); Members: Rev. Jim Neatrour (Juniata – [jabez1924@gmail.com](mailto:jabez1924@gmail.com)), Rev. Steve Craft (Lake Erie – [lpastorsteve@gmail.com](mailto:lpastorsteve@gmail.com)), Rev. Lisa Griffin (Pittsburgh – [lgucshot@verizon.net](mailto:lgucshot@verizon.net)), Rev. Dr. Joe Beer (Somerset – [joseph.beer175@gmail.com](mailto:joseph.beer175@gmail.com)), and Rev. Don Watkins (Westmoreland – [dmuccpastordon@gmail.com](mailto:dmuccpastordon@gmail.com)).

### **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' OCFM gifts and the "5x5" churches at the Conference Annual Meetings. This team meets roughly quarterly. Convener: Deb Long ([deblong672@gmail.com](mailto:deblong672@gmail.com)); Members: Tom Croner ([tomcroner@yahoo.com](mailto:tomcroner@yahoo.com)), Nancy Harclerode ([harcle@centurylink.net](mailto:harcle@centurylink.net)), Rev. Linda Miller-Pretz ([lp811@zoominternet.net](mailto:lp811@zoominternet.net)), Rev. Jim Neatrour ([jabez1924@gmail.com](mailto:jabez1924@gmail.com)), and Rev. Diane Wiley ([dwiley48@aol.com](mailto:dwiley48@aol.com)).

### **Henry Berg Scholarship Committee**

The Henry Berg Scholarship Committee has responsibility for administering scholarships from income received annually from the Henry Berg Scholarship fund to "children of aptitude" in accordance with the list of priorities established by the court order. Convener: Rev. David Ackerman ([david@pennwest.org](mailto:david@pennwest.org)); Members: Rev. Shannon Garrett-Doege (Associate for Youth Ministry – [shannon@pennwest.org](mailto:shannon@pennwest.org)), Rev. Diane Wiley (Westmoreland – [dwiley48@aol.com](mailto:dwiley48@aol.com)), Rev. Linda Miller-Pretz (Pittsburgh – [lp811@zoominternet.net](mailto:lp811@zoominternet.net)), Keith McDonald (Lake Erie – [dad4brains@yahoo.com](mailto:dad4brains@yahoo.com)), Peggy Mortimer (Clarion – [peggymortimer@hotmail.com](mailto:peggymortimer@hotmail.com)), Dwyane Hay (Somerset – [dxh42@psu.edu](mailto:dxh42@psu.edu)), and Austin Buttry (Juniata – [buttry61@gmail.com](mailto:buttry61@gmail.com)).

### **Investment Committee**

The Committee provides oversight for the Conference Endowment Fund, including the investment of funds and adhering to the guidelines of the Endowment on spending. The committee meets roughly quarterly. Convener: Deb Long ([deblong672@gmail.com](mailto:deblong672@gmail.com)); Members: Tom Croner ([tomcroner@yahoo.com](mailto:tomcroner@yahoo.com)), Mark Poole ([mpoole716@gmail.com](mailto:mpoole716@gmail.com)), Nancy Harclerode ([harcle@centurylink.net](mailto:harcle@centurylink.net)), Henry Cook ([ghenrycook@somersettrust.com](mailto:ghenrycook@somersettrust.com)), Rev. Jim Neatrour ([jabez1924@gmail.com](mailto:jabez1924@gmail.com)), and Rev. Diane Wiley ([dwiley48@aol.com](mailto:dwiley48@aol.com)).

### **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 work 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: Rev. David Ackerman ([david@pennwest.org](mailto:david@pennwest.org)); Members: Diane Fox ([office@pennwest.org](mailto:office@pennwest.org)), Rev. Liddy Barlow ([lbarlow@casp.org](mailto:lbarlow@casp.org)), Tom Croner ([tomcroner@yahoo.com](mailto:tomcroner@yahoo.com)), and Nancy Harclerode ([harcle@centurylink.net](mailto:harcle@centurylink.net)).

### **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: Rev. David Ackerman ([david@pennwest.org](mailto:david@pennwest.org)); Members: Jill Marie (Clarion – [marieje@comcast.net](mailto:marieje@comcast.net)), Rev. Jim

Neatrou (Juniata – [jabez1924@gmail.com](mailto:jabez1924@gmail.com)), Alice Niebauer (Lake Erie – [alicen14@verizon.net](mailto:alicen14@verizon.net)), Jon Colburn (Pittsburgh – [jongcolburn@aol.com](mailto:jongcolburn@aol.com)), Megan Evans (Somerset – [meganglessner@hotmail.com](mailto:meganglessner@hotmail.com)), and Don Kelly (Westmoreland – [dpk24@comcast.net](mailto:dpk24@comcast.net)).

### **Nominating Committee**

The Conference Nominations Committee is comprised of the Chairpersons of the Nominating Committees of each of the Associations. Article VIII of the Conference By-Laws spells out the responsibilities of this committee. 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: Rev. David Ackerman ([david@pennwest.org](mailto:david@pennwest.org)); Members: Sam Swick (Clarion – [sosucc@comcast.net](mailto:sosucc@comcast.net)), Rev. Mary Hendricks (Juniata – [pastormary653@gmail.com](mailto:pastormary653@gmail.com)), Alice Niebauer (Lake Erie – [alicen14@verizon.net](mailto:alicen14@verizon.net)), Rev. Liddy Barlow (Pittsburgh – [lbarlow@casp.org](mailto:lbarlow@casp.org)), Rev. Jay Shaffer (Somerset – [jayeshaffer@gmail.com](mailto:jayeshaffer@gmail.com)), and Rev. TJ Lucas (Westmoreland – [pastor@lovstrucc.org](mailto:pastor@lovstrucc.org)).

### **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. The Conference website provides more details on the program. Dean: Rev. Joseph Hedden ([hills.church.3618@gmail.com](mailto:hills.church.3618@gmail.com)); Faculty Members: Melissa McLean ([mclean.melissa.a@gmail.com](mailto:mclean.melissa.a@gmail.com)), Rev. Meredith Hutchison ([meredithhutchison@comcast.net](mailto:meredithhutchison@comcast.net)), Jonathan Lawrence ([lawrenc7@canisius.edu](mailto:lawrenc7@canisius.edu)), and Ciera James ([cjames@pts.edu](mailto:cjames@pts.edu)).

**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. The Board of Directors appoints committee members. The committee typically meets quarterly. Chairperson: Jill Marie ([marieje@comcast.net](mailto:marieje@comcast.net)); Members: Douglas Hearn ([heardouglas@aol.com](mailto:heardouglas@aol.com)), Rev. Cindy Holmquist ([cindyleeho@aol.com](mailto:cindyleeho@aol.com)), Wendy Stemple ([wendy.stemple@comcast.net](mailto:wendy.stemple@comcast.net)), and Jeanette Thomas ([jeanetterp.thomas@gmail.com](mailto:jeanetterp.thomas@gmail.com)).

**Search & Call Team** – This team helps the Conference Minister with Search & Call matters in the life of the Conference. Convener: Rev. David Ackerman ([david@pennwest.org](mailto:david@pennwest.org)); Members: Rev. Jerry McCuller ([gwmcculler@hmwd.org](mailto:gwmcculler@hmwd.org)), Rev. Linda Miller-Pretz ([lp811@zoominternet.net](mailto:lp811@zoominternet.net)), and Rev. Nicole Pickens ([revnicolepickens@gmail.com](mailto:revnicolepickens@gmail.com)).

**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. Churches and families may rent the space for picnics/events. The group currently meets on an "as need" basis. Chairperson: Kris Long ([long.kris@comcast.net](mailto:long.kris@comcast.net)); Members: Joel Pretz ([pretz811@zbzoom.net](mailto:pretz811@zbzoom.net)), Rev. Shirley Musick ([bjsmusick@verizon.net](mailto:bjsmusick@verizon.net)), and Mark Brautigam ([embrautigam@msn.com](mailto:embrautigam@msn.com)).

**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: Rev. Liddy Barlow ([lbarlow@casp.org](mailto:lbarlow@casp.org)), Tom Croner ([tomcroner@yahoo.com](mailto:tomcroner@yahoo.com)), Diane Fox ([office@pennwest.org](mailto:office@pennwest.org)), and George Kepple ([gkepple@pts.edu](mailto:gkepple@pts.edu)).

### **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 as needed.

Convener: Rev. Jim Neatrour ([jabez1924@gmail.com](mailto:jabez1924@gmail.com)); Members: Tom Croner ([tomcroner@yahoo.com](mailto:tomcroner@yahoo.com)), Rev. Matt Deal ([jmdeal@gmail.com](mailto:jmdeal@gmail.com)), Rev. Mary Hendricks ([pastormary653@gmail.com](mailto:pastormary653@gmail.com)), and Rev. George Steffey ([gssteffey@aol.com](mailto:gssteffey@aol.com)).

### **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 among them. The team currently meets about six times a year. Convener: Rev. David Ackerman ([david@pennwest.org](mailto:david@pennwest.org)); Members: George Donner ([georgedonner@verizon.net](mailto:georgedonner@verizon.net)), Jodie Enterline ([joenter1950@gmail.com](mailto:joenter1950@gmail.com)), Rev. Keith Grimm ([kgrimm1472@gmail.com](mailto:kgrimm1472@gmail.com)), Rev. Ryan Lucas (PWC Disaster Ministries Coordinator [ryanplucas@gmail.com](mailto:ryanplucas@gmail.com), along with David Fox, [foxfire15563@yahoo.com](mailto:foxfire15563@yahoo.com)), and Eileen & Rev. Dick Seigfried ([rseigfried@msn.com](mailto:rseigfried@msn.com)).

### **Justice and 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 ([roxyinpa@yahoo.com](mailto:roxyinpa@yahoo.com)); Members: Rev. Don Hammonds ([dhammonds@pts.edu](mailto:dhammonds@pts.edu)), Bonnie Kautz ([bmkautz@mac.com](mailto:bmkautz@mac.com)), Rev. Linda Lawson ([lin4196@icloud.com](mailto:lin4196@icloud.com)), Ron Pedersen ([rpir4@comcast.net](mailto:rpir4@comcast.net)), Theresa Cook ([teecook1014@gmail.com](mailto:teecook1014@gmail.com)), Rev. Shannon Garrett-Doege ([shannon@pennwest.org](mailto:shannon@pennwest.org)), Rev. George Steffey ([gssteffey@aol.com](mailto:gssteffey@aol.com)), Robin Stemple ([robstemple@comcast.net](mailto:robstemple@comcast.net)), and Tim Tuinstra ([ttuinstra@psea.org](mailto:ttuinstra@psea.org)).

### **Legacy Team**

Our Legacy Team works with churches that are 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: Rev. David Ackerman ([david@pennwest.org](mailto:david@pennwest.org)); Members: Rev. Scott Fuller ([revscottfuller@gmail.com](mailto:revscottfuller@gmail.com)), George Kepple ([gkepple@pts.edu](mailto:gkepple@pts.edu)), Rev. Jim Neatrour ([jabez1924@gmail.com](mailto:jabez1924@gmail.com)), Rev. Linda Miller-Pretz ([lp811@zoominternet.net](mailto:lp811@zoominternet.net)), Rev. Lois Morrison ([loiscgmorrison@gmail.com](mailto:loiscgmorrison@gmail.com)), and Joel Pretz ([pretz811@zbzoom.net](mailto:pretz811@zbzoom.net)).

### **Youth Ministry Team**

This team works with our Associate for Youth Ministry, the Rev. Shannon Garrett-Doege ([shannon@pennwest.org](mailto:shannon@pennwest.org)), to provide her with support and accountability. The team meets roughly quarterly. Members: Wendy Bigelow ([wbigelow5@comcast.net](mailto:wbigelow5@comcast.net)), Chelsea Neatrour ([ccneatrour@gmail.com](mailto:ccneatrour@gmail.com)), Alex Ruzanic ([clashbear@hotmail.com](mailto:clashbear@hotmail.com)), Rev. Jay Shaffer ([jayeshaffer@gmail.com](mailto:jayeshaffer@gmail.com)), Deana Rugh ([deana@yourhlc.com](mailto:deana@yourhlc.com)), Robin Brautigam ([embrautigam@msn.com](mailto:embrautigam@msn.com)), Jennifer Ward ([wardjennifer@embarqmail.com](mailto:wardjennifer@embarqmail.com)), Rev. Lisa Griffin ([lgucchet@verizon.net](mailto:lgucchet@verizon.net)), and Roxanne Tuinstra ([roxyinpa@yahoo.com](mailto:roxyinpa@yahoo.com)).

If you would like to join one of our Ministry Teams, please see either the convener of the team or Rev. David Ackerman ([david@pennwest.org](mailto:david@pennwest.org)).