

What is the Pennsylvania Council of Churches?

We are...

...a beacon of hope for our vulnerable neighbors

The phone rings in the 2:30AM darkness. The BP Station is calling Rick, the chaplain of the I-80 Trucker-Traveler Ministry, because a Michigan family of five that stopped for gasoline has discovered that their vehicle is steaming, and they need help. When he meets the family, they explain that they decided to spend the Labor Day weekend visiting the Statue of Liberty, to make the history their eleven-year-old is studying come alive. It all seemed like a great idea, until the steaming began, and there is no money for a hotel room. Rick sends them to the hotel and calls AAA to tow the vehicle to a mechanic, who happens to serve on the Trucker-Traveler Ministry board.



Chaplain Rick Youngdahl

In the morning, the mechanic discovers the water pump needs to be replaced, and Rick calls Advance Auto Parts. The store is open, so upon purchasing the pump and installing it, the family was back on their way to Michigan by noon. Just another episode in the ongoing adventure of ministry along the interstate!

As part of its mission statement to “share this Good News with our neighbors in words and deeds,” the Pennsylvania Council of Churches reaches out to our neighbors who travel the interstate highways of Pennsylvania to deliver the food we eat and the products we consume. We are partners with three trucker/traveler ministries that not only reach out to truckers, but are a friends to other travelers who face a crisis situation.

Chaplain Rick Youngdahl says, “The I-80 Trucker/Traveler Ministry is grateful to the Council for its support for the 35 years we have been able to help those in need along the interstate.”



Fruitbest Farmworker Christian Ministry ministers to all workers, regardless of their nationality or immigration status. The majority of those who come are men traveling alone, but there are also a number of families each year. As chaplains talk to the workers, they find out what needs they may have and try to meet those needs. The Ministry regularly provides blankets and warm clothing as the weather becomes cooler throughout the fall. Every year FFCM has volunteers transporting workers to doctor’s appointments, and if necessary providing translation services during these appointments. The Ministry also assists by translating various papers and documents the workers occasionally receive.

The Pennsylvania Council of Churches is the state-wide ecumenical presence in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Formed by 42 church bodies and agencies representing 20 Anabaptist, Anglican, Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Protestant communions (denominations), the Council works for Christian unity for the sake of the world. [John 17:23]

...a place for learning and growth

My students and I have been enriched and inspired by participating in events organized by the Pennsylvania Council of Churches. The Council is equipping Christian faith communities in PA to faithfully engage some of the most urgent issues of our time, and during these turbulent days when faithful and informed Christian leadership is so crucial, I am deeply appreciative and supportive of the Council's courageous and relevant work.



--George F. Pickens, Ph.D., Director, Program in Peace and Conflict Studies, Professor of Theology and Mission, Messiah College



Messiah College students
2016 Shalom Conference
Hartman Center

The Shalom Conference not only solidified my desire to be involved in defending human rights, but also gave concrete, tangible examples of work I may do once I graduate college. It showed me that I need not think in such broad, sweeping terms when going about making change in my community, but that everyday efforts can bring about transformations in people's lives as well. I thank the Shalom Conference for giving me that insight. I also thank the staff that organized the event for rallying together a community of people just as passionate about spreading God's love as I, and for serving as a reminder that there are men and women, all around me that seek to make this world a better place. Connecting with and working alongside them will only make our efforts that much more powerful.

--Chloe Oustrich, student, Messiah College

...a partner in ministry



Mennonite Central Committee (East Coast) entered into an advocacy partnership in 2016 with the Pennsylvania Council of Churches. MCC has a long history of doing advocacy at the national and international level, but has not done state level advocacy in a formal way. Through partnership, MCC will benefit from the PCC because of its experience of doing advocacy in Pennsylvania and many ecumenical relationships. MCC's advocacy priorities in Pennsylvania are to reform criminal justice, immigration and gun violence prevention legislation. MCC is happy to partner with the PCC to that end.

--Curtis W Book, Peace and Justice Coordinator, MCC East Coast

Partnership and collaboration with the Pennsylvania Council of Churches has greatly enriched the work of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) since our founding, adding leadership and relationships that enhance and strengthen our collective moral voice for human rights and human dignity. Through the coordination of conferences, media and public education events, and tireless advocacy, we are thankful that the Council is a partner we can rely on to be steadfast, strategic and prophetic."

- Rev. Laura Markle Downton, National Religious Campaign Against Torture

Logo, 2015 conference: "Lord, Let Our Eyes Be Opened: Breaking the Chains of Mass Incarceration." NRCAT was a sponsor.



Healing Communities USA develops partnerships with faith communities across the country in order to mobilize congregations around reducing and providing alternatives to mass incarceration. We identify partners of like spirit who understand that pastoral ministry and prophetic witness exist as necessary dimensions of a holistic ministry. In that regard, our partnership with the Pennsylvania Council of Churches, and its Advocacy and Ecumenical Outreach represents a tremendous opportunity to assist congregations in fulfilling their mandates to care for prisoners and their families, as well as advocate for ethical criminal justice reform consistent with the best of Christian practice. We are well on our way to introducing and supporting our model partnership throughout the state, with congregations in ten counties already represented in training and implementation.

—Harold Dean Trulear, Ph.D., National Director, Healing Communities USA

...joining with others to make a difference for the common good



Through its comprehensive weekly newsletter, the Pennsylvania Council of Churches has helped a wider group of Christians find PA IPL events, connect with us, and work with us to prepare for faith-rooted climate advocacy as well as expanding congregational and judicatory programming on environmental concerns. Through participation on both our Nomination Committee for board members, and our Selection Committee, the Council expanded our pool of applicants, and led its thoughtful voice to our conversations about who would best serve PA IPL as we—often jointly with the Council—respond to climate concerns. The Council’s warm support in the form of occasional meeting space and guidance on both

clear faith voices and elected ears that need to hear those voices has been crucial to us as PA IPL staff—we have been able to meet in Harrisburg for occasional in-person workdays which allow for a much different quality and depth of work than our locations in Philadelphia and State College would otherwise permit.

—The Rev. Alison Cornish, Executive Director, PA Interfaith Power & Light

—Cricket Eccleston Hunter, Director of Program and Outreach, PA Interfaith Power & Light

The Pennsylvania Council of Churches (PCC) is a strong and steady voice of compassion on issues of social justice in the Commonwealth. From resisting predatory lending and unconventional drilling to advocating for immigrant families or shining a light on the consequences of mass incarceration, the PCC is a leader, giving a voice to those who are often ignored or marginalized. PCC represents a thoughtful, caring and merciful presence in the public square.



—Anita Mentzer, Executive Director, Unitarian Universalist Pennsylvania Legislative Advocacy Network

...a partner to help in finding God’s presence—Campground Ministry



We have been Pennsylvania campground enthusiasts for 30+ years. Camping in PA campgrounds will always be a part of some of the great memories our family (2 kids) we share. My Scouting years from Cub Scout through Boy Scouts and leadership have also included many weeks in PA State Parks since 1965. It would be hard to imagine a camping experience without Sunday church. Your efforts provide a very welcome addition to a complete camping experience. Cannot imagine being surrounded by family, friends and all of God’s creation without a brief time in organized worship.

—Testimony from camping family, 2016

The purpose of the chaplains’ position is to offer a ministry of presence to those who come to the parks for leisure and renewal. Neal McCulloch, our 2014 chaplain at Colonel Denning State Park and Dogwood Acres Campground described his experience last summer in these words: “Pray, go, walk, sit, listen, share, laugh, cry, trust, hope, and Love. Be yourself, as you experience each moment and know that God is molding each of us in his dreams as a loving parent in our lives.” He also observed, “Know in your heart that God has sustained a ministry in the parks, not always to find peace in leisure, but many times to discover his presence in our search for that peace.”



—Pastor Glenn Simmons, Ecumenical News, Winter 2015

The Pennsylvania Council of Churches is...YOU. We can’t do this work without your support. Please make a generous contribution to our work so that we can continue to be in ministry together for the next 100 years!

Janet A. Gulick
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