

# STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST



Our nation is amazingly diverse, representing different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. Yet most of us live in communities marked by sameness, among people who think, act, and look like us. The vision of Pentecost is to experience unity among a diverse crowd. Yet how do we realize this vision?

Through the funds provided by the Strengthen the Church Offering, The Penn West Conference provides a wonderful example. To support youth programming, this year, the Conference awarded grants to First Church in Irwin and First Church in Greensburg to send young people to the National Youth Event (NYE). Conference Minister David Ackerman explains why it matters, saying, "At National Youth Event, our youth get a sense of the width and breadth of the UCC. Most of our youth come from smaller rural churches. At NYE, they meet other youth from different backgrounds and come away with a sense of being united."

Every UCC conference uses your generous gifts to Strengthen the Church. The grants provided by the Penn West Conference will help young people, at a national gathering, experience God's dream of a truly united and uniting Church, amid differences in cultures and backgrounds. Every Conference faithfully uses your gift to invest in God's vision for the Church.

Please give generously to the Strengthen the Church Offering on May 31st. Together, we can invest in God's vision of Church.

## **How is a minister formed and prepared for ministry at every stage of their vocation?**

Ministers are formed like Jeff, who discerned a call to ministry while participating in a UCC-related summer camp. And they are formed like Darrell, who found a home in the UCC as the congregation he founded voted to affiliate with the denomination. And, like Kaji and Jennifer, they are formed in part through a heritage of generational church leadership in the pulpit and beyond.

Through it all, the Pentecost Spirit blows where She will, inspiring and calling forth new generations of leaders. Nurtured and challenged in congregations, supported by committees on ministry, and further shaped through educational experiences, these leaders become authorized for ministry in and on behalf of the UCC.

## **Do you ever wonder how the UCC prepares individuals for ministry and continuing authorization within the UCC?**

The Ministerial Excellence, Support, and Authorization (MESA) Ministry Team thinks about ministerial formation and continuing authorization every day. Committed to the vision that every ministry setting deserves gifted and accountable pastoral leadership, MESA shares the Church's best practices for ministerial formation, authorization, and ongoing oversight through training, resources, and cooperation with Associations and Conferences.

MESA's most recent Manual on Ministry, published a year ago, provides practices and resources to support the UCC in their work to provide discernment, authorization, and oversight of ministers in the UCC.

Please give generously to the Strengthen the Church Offering on May 31, 2020. You will support MESA and help people like Jennifer, Darrell, Kaji, and Jeff respond to the Spirit of God, leading them to new missions and ministries.