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# Changing Lives

## Penn Central Conference



March 2016

[www.pccucc.org](http://www.pccucc.org)

### Jesus has Left the Building

Emmanuel, York is trying something new this year. Under the theme "Jesus has left the building," the congregation will gather somewhere other than their normal meeting place in the Monarch Room of the Courtyard Marriott in East York on each of the fifth Sundays throughout the year. From a discussion on how they could be more visible in the community, they discerned that their mission efforts were broader than just the neighborhood where they meet.

Mike Loser, Emmanuel's co-pastor says, "It is our intent and desire to become more deeply involved in service to our community and the wider church and to be in dialogue with our sister faith communities, within and outside the UCC, including both Christian and other faith traditions. We will either do a service project or worship and/or dialogue with another faith community instead of holding our standard worship and discussion hour."

On January 31<sup>st</sup>, they worshiped with Heidelberg, York. On the fifth Sunday in May, they plan to do a service project. They are also willing to demonstrate their style of worship and discussion hour at another church.

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### Little Free Libraries

Last year at annual meeting, we heard Dwight Hein, pastor of Salem, Campbelltown speak about Little Free Libraries after putting one at Salem. Well, we have heard of two more Little Free Libraries in our conference. St John's, Red Lion and St Paul, Dallastown both now have them.

The purpose of a Little Free Library is to provide books for people in the community and beyond. The books usually appeal to all age groups from babies to adults. The concept is to "take a book, return a book" so that there will always be a varied selection available. The libraries are registered on the Little Free Library's world map so that people who are traveling can find the nearest library to borrow from. For more information on how your church can start a Little Free Library or locate one near you go to

[www.littlefreelibrary.org](http://www.littlefreelibrary.org).



And...let the conference office know if your church has one or is planning to complete one.

### What are your stories? How is your local church changing lives?

Have you started something in your church that is attracting new people? Is the mission work of your church changing your community? How are you changing lives in your part of Penn Central Conference? We want to hear from you. We'll feature some of these stories in this publication "Changing Lives or on our website. Contact Brenda Waleff, Minister of Communications with your stories and ideas. [bwaleff@pccucc.org](mailto:bwaleff@pccucc.org) or 717-652-1560.

# Changing Lives

## Partnership in Action

By Larry Smith (Larry is pastor of Mt Zion, Spring Grove)



Larry in the green stole with his colleagues in Germany.

Did you know? Penn Central Conference enjoys an official partnership with the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland, Germany. Several pastors from the Rhenish church have served congregations in our Conference over the years. For the past year, it was my great privilege and pleasure to represent Penn Central in one of their parishes—the Koenigshardt-Schmachtendorf Parish in Oberhausen, Germany. As you see in the photo, I was one member of a team of eight pastors serving a parish of roughly 9,000 members. So you will not be surprised to learn that the role of the pastor in that setting differs in some ways from that in a typical Penn Central congregation. The role of lay people is different in some ways as well.

Since my service in our German partner church was sponsored by Penn Central, I am very eager to share my experiences, impressions, and some ideas with our congregations on this side of the Atlantic. If any group or organization in your congregation, association or ministerium has any interest in learning more about our partnership, contact me. E-mail is best: lbs004@hotmail.com or leave a message on the church phone 717-225-4414. One of my goals is to continue to strengthen the life of our partnership with fellow Christians.

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## How Can We Assist Refugees

Recent media coverage of refugees has sparked an encouraging commitment among churches and groups to assist in resettlement in the United States. There are a variety of ways in which you can be part of assisting refugees.

**Prayers** are always needed and appreciated. The current refugee crisis is the worst since World War II, with more than 60 million refugees worldwide.

**Get involved** in the Co-Sponsorship and Welcoming Congregations efforts of the UCC as a member of Church World Service. Refugees from many parts of the world will benefit from your welcoming actions. Currently, there are many families who need assistance, and they have been in the resettlement system for several years. Contact Church World Service at [cwsglobal.org/our-work/refugee-services/irp-affiliates.html](http://cwsglobal.org/our-work/refugee-services/irp-affiliates.html) to get started.

**Be prepared to wait** if your desire is to assist Syrian Refugees. In 2015 and 2016, only a few number of Syrian Refugees are expected to arrive in the U.S. It is likely the process will take 2–3 years from now before the U.S. receives Syrian Refugees.

**Take Action.** You can get immediately involved with Syrian Refugees and other important justice concerns of the UCCt by signing up at: [www.ucc.org/join\\_the\\_network](http://www.ucc.org/join_the_network) and encouraging the U.S. Government to modify its policies to allow more refugees into the U.S.

**Make a Gift.** Donations are critically needed. Through the UCC's One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering which is traditionally taken this month, you are responding continually to the refugee crisis but only about 14% of the offering is dedicated to Refugee concerns. In addition to participating in the OGHS offering, designate an additional contribution to the "Syrian Humanitarian Crisis". Your special gifts will be used to more deeply and critically support the immediate and ongoing needs of Syrian Refugees even before they arrive in the U.S.

**Stay Connected** by visiting [ucc.org/refugees\\_index](http://ucc.org/refugees_index) and following the UCC on Facebook: One Great Hour of Sharing (UCC), and on Twitter: @OGHS\_at\_UCC, regularly.