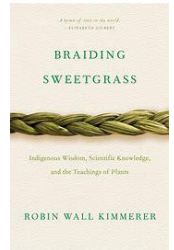


### **#1 – Wishing Everyone a Blessed Christmas!**

I'm reading Braiding Sweetgrass as one of the recommended resources for the intercultural training our Allegheny Leadership Council is engaging this year. It's a wonderful window into a native perspective of creation care and specific First Nations wisdom. Author Robin Kimmerer remembers how family rituals and ceremony place deep understandings of "who we are" into our souls. In a conversation with the land (which "knows you, even when you are lost") she recollects her father's regular offering of the first morning coffee poured out to the earth, and his words of thanks to the Great Spirit for the creation of mountains and land. She says, "I hear at the end of the words the land murmuring to itself, 'Ohh, **here are the ones who know how to say thank you.**'"



In recent years I have come to think of Christmas celebrations in a similar way. With so much focus on how Christmas sales affect the economy, the making of lists and checking them twice, I am more dedicated, not to oppose our gift-giving mentality, but to approach the whole season as an opportunity to teach myself (and hopefully those with whom I celebrate) that a better approach to the gift of incarnation is to be thankful. How can each of us grow and operate in ways that the land where we live will know us as "**the ones who know how to say thank you**"? Thank you, Creator God, for Emmanuel. Thank you for the Gift of being with us!

### **#2 – Winterville at Laurelville** – Allegheny and Laurelville are partnering for a winter event for kids from



Grades 2 to 8. Discounts for AMC youth are available! Check out all the details at

<https://laurelville.org/program-events/youth/church-winter-camp-pa/>

### **#3 – Thank you for remembering Allegheny's ministries with year-end giving**



We are grateful for your response to our annual donor opportunities again this year. Giving Tuesday emails and the annual fund letter, this year highlighting our commitment to fund children and youth ministry in this current time of discernment, resulted in gifts of \$2,225 so far for this important work. This brings our giving totals from individuals to 49% of budget at 50% of the year!

Giving from congregations at the 50% mark is a bit behind. As you look at your congregation's giving cycle, we ask you to be mindful of sending offerings to conference as you are able going into the New Year, to keep cash flow at levels where we are able to pay expenses without dipping into reserves. Again, thank you!

### **#4 – Annual Leadership Council Retreat Scheduled – January 13-15**

Each January, the Allegheny Conference Leadership Council holds a retreat with a two-fold purpose – 1) to get to know one another better, in an in-person setting, in order to improve communication, laugh together and dive into the work of conference; 2) to specifically focus on the coming calendar year priorities, including the crafting of a budget for delegate approval at the March Faith & Life Gathering. Updating our commitment to intercultural and anti-racism training, with Ruth Yoder Wenger as our denominational consultant, will also be a major focus of the retreat. Pray for the work of our conference and all of our member congregations!

### **#5 – Plans coming together for the 2023 'Spring Study' for pastors and leaders at Laurelville – April 24-27**

I am excited to share that Dr. Deb Bergen will be our primary resource person for Spring Study this coming April. "**Harvesting Treasures**" will focus our attention on the various levels of trauma we have been experiencing as leaders in recent years. Deb will lead us to "**uncover the relevance of accumulated wisdom from our own lives**" and to which we can make "**applications in specific mental health situations, challenges of the new normal, and pastoral transitions.**" Trained in child psychiatry, Deb grew up on the Canadian prairies and brings the experience of being the daughter, wife and mother of pastors. She moves easily between the languages of science and faith. Look for more detailed information in a soon to be released event flyer. The second half of the week will find us participating with the Anabaptist Bible Project - creating commentary around three biblical passages we will study together. Mark your calendars for this time of recreation, study, fellowship and retreat!