



God
is still
speaking,

penn Central Connection

The Newsletter of the Penn Central Conference United Church of Christ

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pccucc.org

Historic flooding Damages Penn Central churches

Many Penn Central Conference churches experienced damage from the flood waters that hit our area on September 7 and 8. The conference sent out e-mails and facebook messages via our conference page to discover which ones were damaged and how we could help. In addition, our association disaster response coordinators were in contact with churches in their association and have kept in touch sharing news from FEMA and checking in on what churches need. Many churches reported back. Here are some of the worst reports we heard.

Faith, Grantville has never been flooded before. Their public preschool, located in the lower level of the church, which was set to



open for the new year the following Monday, had more than a foot of water on Wednesday. After getting most of it out and under control, water flooded the downstairs again the following day. In addition to furniture, toys and books being damaged, all of the tile floors will have to be pulled up due to mold.

After taking a lot of pictures

to document the damage, Hummelstown UCC members cleaned out the entire basement after substantial flooding. The restoration company responded quickly and removed the carpeting and other flooring that was damaged. Hummelstown had to trash a lot of stuff, but were able to save much. On Sunday, September 11, Hummelstown canceled their Rally Day and 8AM worship.

Dover UCC's Rev Aris Fokas shared that they had a foot of water on Thursday in their church basement but the boy scout troop who uses the church building were helping right alongside the fire company to get the water out of the church and save items.

Dreisbach, Lewisburg had about 5 inches of surface water in the basement. They found it quickly and started the cleanup process immediately. Larry Snook, a member of Dresibach shared, "Dreisbach sits in the middle of the Buffalo Valley with many Mennonites doing the farming. When we started to clean after the fire company pumped us out—we discovered that we needed more manpower than originally thought to cut up and take out the carpet and pads filled with water to the dumpster. We made a quick call to a close neighbor and asked if he knew of some fellows who could help us for a few hours. The next morning, 13 young Mennonite farmers came on their bicycles and helped us totally get the soaked carpet and ruined furniture out of the church. What a blessing."

Overnight on Wednesday, September 7, St. Mark's, Lebanon's sump pumps in their boiler room and elevator shaft failed. They had over 6 feet of water in the boiler room and the fire department pumped out the affected



area. Pastor Rick Luciotti reported that on Sunday, 9/11, their boiler room was finally free of water although their elevator shaft continued to draw water as the water table had not finished lowering.

Within a few days of the flooding, Conference Minister Marja Coons-Torn was in communication to Florence Coppola, Executive of the UCC National Disaster Ministries. Florence has shared that grants of \$2000 from One Great Hour of Sharing will be made to several of our churches who were severely impacted by the flooding.

A message from marja

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The jokes about Noah's ark have abounded here for the last two weeks, haven't they? It's good to look at life a bit light-heartedly, but all of us are also aware of the tragedy of the flooding that has hit Central Pennsylvania since the 7th of September. And as I write this, we are expecting yet another day of heavy downpours tomorrow. In an odd way, however, our congregations are often at their best when they are standing beside people who are facing crises. No, perhaps it's not so odd--isn't the community of the church intended exactly for that, to be with us through the most difficult circumstances? We are called to be a visible testimony to the presence of God.

It was my privilege to visit last week with a family, active at one of our churches, whose business had been flooded. That didn't keep them from teaching Sunday School the morning I was there. What's more, I learned that they had been out in canoes helping to rescue other people who were trapped in their homes, even while their own business was being flooded. Grace abounds, and it almost always comes to us in the form of people of faith who do extraordinary things.

Throughout this week, I have heard from other pastors about people whose homes have been filled with six feet of water, and who are living somewhere else, but who have continued to press on with life, surrounded by the love of family and church members. It inspires me, as well as

reminding me that I have not faced this particular challenge, and therefore God might expect something of me on behalf of those who have.

This is where the wider church comes into the picture. In addition to families who have been affected, we also have at least five churches that have experienced major damage from the floods. The gifts that you have given to One Great Hour of Sharing in the past [OGHS is received every spring, usually around March] will come back to help those congregations with their recovery. Because of your generosity, I can apply for grants for each of those churches that have expenses which are not covered by insurance. What's more because you are moved to give to One Great Hour of Sharing, I can apply for a grant to help families in our Conference.

Churches large and small are collecting gifts right now that, even though it is not spring, will go to flood relief through One Great Hour of Sharing to help us as well as brothers and sisters in New Jersey or Vermont or

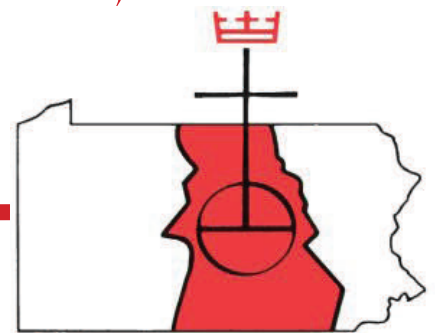


North Carolina. That's wonderful and we rejoice and celebrate your generosity! Some of you have also said to me, "We could do a second mile gift. Could it be used in the Conference?" The answer is yes. Funds sent to the Conference for flood relief, with the instruction for it to stay local, will be divided to help individuals, families and churches in Penn Central.

One last thing is important: We need to give our gifts, but we need to also offer prayers and reach out to those facing this burden. So please continue your calls, your meals and your offers of clean up help. God is good, and we are God's children, sisters and brothers with Jesus, heirs to God's promise.

Blessings,

marja



Connection

Marja Coons-Torn, Conference Minister

Brenda B. Waleff, Editor

Penn Central Connection is published four times a year (October, December, February and June) to inform local church members about the mission and ministry of Penn Central Conference and its local churches. Subscriptions are available for an electronic edition or mailed version by contacting the conference office. News items and photos should be e-mailed to the editor by the 1st of each month prior to the publication date.

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Telephone 717-652-1560

Conference Transition

new positions

Julie Beall, pastor, Trinity, Palmyra
Rick Cowles, designated pastor, Church of the Apostles, Lancaster
Jim M. Crawford, pastor, Salem Stone, Carlisle
Art Grahe, part-time supply pastor, St Stephen's, York
Ken Heasley, co-interim pastor, Trinity, Gettysburg
George Heberling, co-interim pastor, Trinity, Gettysburg
Mary Jane King, pastor, Zion, Newburg
Bill LaSalle, interim, Trinity, Hellam
David Longstreet, pastor, Duncannon/New Bloomfield charge
Lois Martin, interim, Faith, State College
Dawn Meir, pastor, Emmanuel, New Berlin
Patricia Mullen, interim, St Pauls, Dallastown
Gary Nottis, pastor, St Paul's, West

Milton
Harry Royer, interim, St Luke's, Lancaster
Jason Royle, pastor, St Paul's, Schaefferstown
Sheresa Simpson-Rice, pastor, Mt Olivet, East Berlin
Curtis Zemencik, pastor, Stone Valley charge, Dalmatia/Pillow

Robert Muise, chaplain, Ephrata Manor
Diane Prosser, retired, Faith, State College
Amy Schultz, interim, Trinity, Palmyra
Elmer Scofield, St Stephen's, York
Sharon Von Blohn, Ebenezer, Laurelton
Curtis Zemencik, St Matthews, Spring Glen

goodbyes

Bob Baldwin, Zion, Newburg
Julie Beall, First Middleburg
John Binkley, interim St Paul's, Schaefferstown
Bob Koch, retired, Zion, Blain/Sandy Hill, Loysville
Henry Korinth, interim, Heidelberg, York
Linda Lauman, Elias, Newmangtown
Sharon Littrell, SoulLink, Mansfield
George Martz, interim, Duncannon/New Bloomfield charge

ordinations

David Butz, Trinity, Hallam, August 14, 2011
Christian Creyer, St Pauls, Bowmanville, July 31, 2011
Gloria McPherson, Faith, Ickesburg, September 18, 2011
Sheresa Simpson-Rice, Emmanuel, Abbottstown, June 26, 2011

deaths

Don Creager died June 24, 2011.

changing lives That's Our Church's Wider Mission

HARTMAN CENTER'S FALL FESTIVAL

Saturday, October 15, 9am-3pm

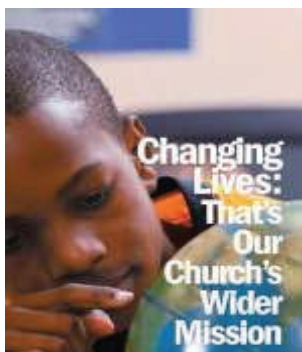
»Annual Silent Auction

»Hayrides & Games

»Barbecue Chicken, hot dogs, chicken corn soup, ice cream, homebaked goodies & lots more great food!

»Live Music featuring: ChrisWick, Higher Ground and Unusual Suspects

Hartman Center is located on Old US Hwy 322 in Milroy, PA.



Hartman Center changes lives by Our Church's Wider Mission

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Has your church joined the Mission:1 Campaign?

Mission:1 is an initiative of the entire United Church of Christ from 11-1-11 to 11-11-11.

All local congregations, associations and conferences are urged to participate. There is a focus on 3 areas related to hunger. **1)** 1 million food items to be donated to local food banks/ household items donated to local agencies. **2)** \$111,111 in online donations for Neighbors in Need and UCC's East Africa Famine Appeal **3)** 11,111 letters to Congress to support Bread for the World's 2011 Offering of Letters asking that U.S. foreign assistance be reformed to more effectively serve the world's poorest people.

How will your congregation participate?

Determine your piece of the overall national goal and set your own

goals for your church. How about collecting 1,111 food items for a local food bank? Can you find and celebrate 11 or 111 persons or families that will contribute at least \$11 to Mission:1 online during this 11-day period? Will your congregation commit to writing at least 111 letters to Congress? (Penn Central Conference will collect all letters going to our US Senators and personally deliver them to our Senators' Harrisburg offices the week of November 14).

The Mission:1 campaign manual (found at www.ucc.org/mission1) will give you ideas, provide a giving card so members can share what they donated online and help you coordinate letter writing. Publicize and promote your church's goals and devise a strategy by which you will reach and

How will the UCC and Penn Central Conference Keep Track of What we Do?

A continuously updated tote board at www.ucc.org will keep the entire church apprised of our collective efforts. Designate at least one person in your congregation who will be responsible for tallying and reporting your church's participation.

In Penn Central Conference, we are asking you to post what your church did on our Penn Central Conference Facebook Page. (Every church has someone who is a member of Facebook.) **Your incentive:** Every church that posts on our Penn Central page will be entered into a drawing for one all expenses paid 2012 annual meeting weekend registration that your congregation can use to send someone to annual meeting in June.