



## Report of the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference UCC To the Disaster Ministries, Global HOPE, United Church of Christ January 29, 2022

**Members of Conference Disaster Ministry Team:** Karl Jones, Maureen Duffy-Guy, Jenny Smith, Ray Riegel, Jason Stump, Sherie Mohn, Jeff Butz, Gary Rarick, Tim Kissling.

As 2021 began we were engaged in finishing work begun in 2020. (1) The Spiritual Care Warmline of the Keystone Disaster Spiritual Care Network, which operates with the help of a grant from the PA Southeast Conference, operated 7 days a week from 9 am to 9 pm. Rev. Jenny Smith was one of the staff on the line and I am the line administrator. That Warmline was terminated in April 2021 when a 24/7 line was established by a FEMA grant by the Commonwealth.

The recovery work in Schuylkill Association from the storms of 2018 and early 2020 was finished! The Schuylkill Association Disaster Fund has a balance of \$1,000. Since 2018 more than \$30,000 has been used. In addition, the Disaster Fund at St. Mark's, Cressona, has spent more than \$6,400.

Zion's Union Church, Maxatawny, Kutztown, completed their work assisting a family in Berks County who had flood damage in 2020.

In 2021 the Conference Disaster Team worked in response to multiple storms and events in southeast PA. Ongoing work includes disaster case management, planning for long term recovery groups in Philadelphia, Bucks, Montgomery, Chester, and Delaware Counties, and working with individual cases in Berks County.

The work of supporting the rebuild in the Eastwick Community of Philadelphia goes on:

1. The Unmet Needs Roundtable of the Southeast PA Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (SEPA VOAD) now meets every other Friday morning at 10 am to coordinate efforts.
2. We continue to work with the national setting of the UCC, who are providing the services of a Partner in Service, Judy Moore, to serve as the Volunteer Manager for the recovery work. We are grateful for the work of another Partner in Service, Jaye Herrick, who has finished her assignment to serve as the Construction Site Manager. We have issued an invitation to Global HOPE Volunteer Ministries to name another Partner in Service to continue Jaye's work – Ms. Eileen San Pedro, an Eastwick resident.
3. The tool trailer owned by the Penn Northeast Conference continues to be located at the Eastwick United Methodist Church for work teams to use.
4. Volunteer groups have supported the work, even under difficult COVID circumstances.
5. The Conference serves as the financial sponsor for the work and manages a \$50,000 grant from the Center for Disaster Philanthropy.
6. Salt and Light Community Church has provided hospitality and lodging for our volunteers.
7. We have set the end of 2022 as the close-out date for our work.

Another response to Isaias was the building of a private bridge in Berks County for a resident. It was my pleasure to be with Team Orwigsburg on May 1 as they finished the work. The Covenant Association made a significant donation to this work.

We have been working with our government partners and county coordinators to prepare for long-term recovery and case management in response to Ida. This will be a long-term process. This is a federally-declared disaster. As of January 10, there have been 78,014 registrations. FEMA has awarded \$100,432,306.82 to Pennsylvanians. In response to damage from Ida we have assisted two of our churches to apply for and receive Solidarity Grants from the national UCC setting:

- St. Paul's, Pottstown – for repairing their Fellowship Hall floor so they can serve the community. They have also offered their facility for housing for volunteers
- St. Stephen's, Perkasio – to enhance the church's ministry to impacted low-income families.

Here is a sampling of what some of our team members did in response to Ida:

1. Jason Stump did amazing work in northern Berks and Schuylkill Counties. He visited with our affected churches, distributed clean up kits to affected areas, and worked with some of our pastors and VOAD partners.

2. Tim Kissling and his team delivered 50 clean up kits and 60 hygiene kits that were housed at Trinity UCC, Mt. Penn. They delivered to Philadelphia (Salt and Light Community Church), Chester County (Brownbacks UCC), and Montgomery County (Acclamo – a Hispanic neighborhood partner). Retail value of these kits is nearly \$5,000.
3. The PSEC had a major presence in the Multi Agency Resource Centers that were held in Chester, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties. A MARC is a one-stop-shop for people who need help following TS Ida. Since MontCo and Chester County both decided to have a MARC on the same days and at the same time, the SEPA VOAD partners had to be creative. Therefore, Julia Menzo, my Lutheran colleague led a staff team at the ChesCo MARC and I at MontCo. Serving at the MontCo MARC were Cathy Jones, Jenny Smith, Dwayne Mosier, Frances Chester, Bob Fogal, and I, along with Paulette Obrecht, a Lutheran pastor. Along with Julia Menzo and Ed Kline, a Salvation Army volunteer, I was in the Philadelphia MARC.
4. We continue to work with Bucks County, which has had 4 events in the same area in the last 6 weeks. We have no churches in the immediate area, but I am aware of some church members who live in the area.

The Team has done a great job in 2021 encouraging our churches to participate in putting together cleanup and other kits. We maintain geographically located drop off sites. Our church volunteers maintain this inventory and deplore these kits as needed. In 2021 we deployed more than 200 buckets to survivors and a truck load more to CWS in Maryland.

The work with the COVID response is slowing down some. We were engaged in messaging and supporting testing and vaccination sites. We have also tried to support the work that our churches are doing.

I continue to meet monthly with the other Conference Disaster Coordinators and our UCC Disaster Minister, Lesli Remaly.

In November we started the planning process for a campaign in conjunction with the Susquehanna Mission Team of the Penn Northeast Conference for the High Five for Disaster Relief initiative to raise money for disaster ministries during Epiphany 2022. That campaign is going on right now. A video has been made (which is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BdEys3tZHMI>). There will be a virtual celebration at 3 pm on Sunday, February 27.

In January I became the Eastern Area lead and Communications Lead for PAVOAD and serve on the Board of Directors. At the present time I am facilitating a weekly coordination call for eastern PA. I also serve on the Council for Southeast PA VOAD, on the Berks County COAD and the Schuylkill County COAD. I also continue to serve as the representative of the UCC on the Community Preparedness Committee of NVOAD.

Shalom,  
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