



September 10, 2017

## Rally, Return and Reconnect

Christians enjoy a good return story. The Bible is full of stories about family members and entire groups of people returning after long journeys, prolonged wars, and endless exiles. We proclaim that Jesus returns from a death. Returning is exciting and hopeful. It can be joyful or risky; extraordinary or ordinary. But it is certainly part of life's rhythm-- from family reunions at summer picnics, holidays and weddings to the beginning of new school years. August marks the return of the 'annual parade of human change' from kindergarten to college.

Many churches mark this time with "Rally Day" -- a grand welcome back to the rhythms of church attendance. I hope you use these particular Sundays as points of entry for people returning to church after short or long absences. Most folks will be joy-filled at reconnecting after a summer away. For visitors, it is a risky return trying something new. Give a careful welcome to them as they join in the vibrant but unfamiliar rhythms of your church's life.

As we all return to the rhythms of school, work, and church, I hope that you add another return-- return to the spiritual disciplines that sustain you. Don't let the busyness of this season of return ruin your reflection time with God. Our prayers, big and small, long and short, are a type of returning. When we offer a prayer of thanksgiving, a prayer of hope, or a prayer of confusion, we are rallying our spirits towards The Source of our life. We rally, return, and reconnect.

This is what our shared faith life is all about--staying connected through the rhythms and returns of life.

May it be so for you and the people you love.

- Pastor Bill

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## Reflections on Hurricane Harvey

As we watch the flood waters in Texas and Louisiana, we wonder about the response of our churches in southeast Pennsylvania. What can we do?

### Be committed!

First, if you know someone who is responding in Texas or Louisiana and can offer direct support through text messages do it and keep doing it.

Second, worship, pray and sing. You can find updates and worship resources at [http://www.ucc.org/disaster hurricane harvey](http://www.ucc.org/disaster-hurricane-harvey). Pray without ceasing for the survivors, the responders, the faith communities that are involved, and the government disaster response officials.



*Christ United, Cypress, Texas*

Third, begin a Clean-up Bucket project in your church. There is a critical need for them. There is matching grant money available from the UCC to assist in the project. For more information go to [http://www.ucc.org/disaster 2017 matching grants for cws kits home page](http://www.ucc.org/disaster-2017-matching-grants-for-cws-kits-home-page).

Four, become a contributor to UCC Disaster Ministries. Give through your local church. Clearly mark gifts for Hurricane Harvey and send them to the PSEC office. Cash is the best way to contribute. Here is a link to a video that explains the importance of cash in a disaster: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzH-7k035sM&t=9s>

Five, become a volunteer, if possible. There will be a need for all types of volunteers for years to come. There is always something you can do. Find it.

Six, let this experience be a reminder of how important it is to stay prepared. "Preparedness Month" begins on September 1. The UCC has prepared many resources that can help you and your congregation be prepared. You can access them at [http://www.ucc.org/disaster national-disaster-resources](http://www.ucc.org/disaster-national-disaster-resources). FEMA also has preparedness resources at <https://www.ready.gov/september>. If you are a parent, stay prepared with a plan for how to speak to your children about what they are seeing on TV and talk with them about how you all can be safe if you have a plan. Finally, stay prepared as a person of faith. Keep your faith vibrant. If there is a way that I can be of help to your congregation please feel free to contact me.

- Rev. Karl Jones, PSEC Disaster Response Coordinator