It's safe to go home again ...

A Northampton County, Pa., family with an expectant mother and other medical issues rely on the bridge over the creek in front of their house to connect them with their community. This includes being able to get to doctor appointments or to receive emergency vehicles.

But in August 2020, Tropical Storm Isaias churned their quiet creek into rushing, swollen floodwaters. Their bridge was rendered structurally unsound and undrivable, cutting off the family’s life-line to their community.

“The only access in and out was on foot, and that with some difficulty,” said Karl Jones, Disaster Coordinator for the United Church of Christ’s Penn Northeast and Pennsylvania Southeast Conferences. “It involved carefully traversing the part of the damaged bridge that remained - then negotiating the last few yards between bridge and bank on a plank.”

The UCC’s Penn Northeast Conference, in cooperation with the Unmet Needs Committee of the Northeast PA VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster), applied for a $5,000 UCC Long-Term Recovery Grant, with rebuilding the bridge the top priority for the funds. Thanks to the UCC funds together with contributions from the family and Team Orwigsburg, an experienced volunteer bridge-building team from Schuylkill County, Pa. in the UCC’s Pennsylvania Southeast Conference, the 44-foot bridge was completed just before Christmas.

One team member, Susan McCartney, a member of St. John’s UCC in Orwigsburg, shared her joy: “The teamwork we continue to enjoy within our own ranks, and the expansion of some new faces involved for this project have been very heartwarming. We surely DO need to carry this joy and teamwork into a new year. The wacky year of 2020 brought out the best in our Team and that is truly a gift.”