



## Disaster Ministry Report to the 2021 Spring Conference Meeting

More than a year ago, we started seeing the first COVID-19 cases in Pennsylvania. It has been a challenging year for all of us – one that has tested us in many ways. We have lost too many family and friends to the virus. We have not been able to gather for worship, for fellowship, or even to do mission or rebuild trips. This pandemic has brought changes to how we do disaster ministry.

As if COVID-19 was not enough, our Conference was hit by several other events in the past year. Through the PA Southeast Conference Disaster Ministry Team, you have brought hope and recovery to people who have suffered from the pandemic and other “storms”:

- The recovery work in Schuylkill Association from the storms of 2018 and early 2020 is finished! The Schuylkill Association Disaster Fund has a balance of \$1,000. Since 2018 more than \$30,000 has been used.
- In response to TS Isaias the Conference secured a \$5,000 recovery grant from the national setting of the UCC to be used by the Eastwick Unmet Needs Roundtable in Philadelphia. Rev. Denise Statham and I are part of the Roundtable. To date the funding have been being used to restore heating units, hot water heaters, and other necessities. Currently the Roundtable meets each Friday morning at 10 am to coordinate efforts. As the work continues, another \$7,000 grant has been requested from the national UCC setting. This funding is expected in mid-April.
- The work continues throughout eastern PA in response to TS Isaias. Besides Philadelphia, homes have been restored in Chester, Delaware, Berks, and Montgomery counties. To help manage the rebuild work that is needed the national setting of the UCC is supporting Judy Moore, a Volunteer in Service volunteer, who will work for the next year as the Volunteer Coordinator. We began receiving volunteers for a day at a time in May 2021. We cannot accept week-long mission groups. To learn more about how you can help go to <https://www.ucc.org/volunteer-in-disaster-recovery-isaias-recovery-philadelphia/>.
- The UCC/PNEC tool trailer has been deployed to Eastwick for the duration of the Isaias rebuild project.
- Our churches were not able to have many work/rebuild/mission trips this past year due to the pandemic. However, opportunities are beginning to open, so watch the Conference communications for news.
- The Conference has supported the Spiritual Care Warmline of the Keystone Disaster Spiritual Care Network as it answered calls and gave people comfort and hope during the pandemic.

We have been active on the SEPA VOAD, Berks and Schuylkill county COAD calls, coordinating with food banks, volunteer centers, and other agencies to collaborate with

those who are providing needed services. We have been working with county agencies in every county of the Conference regarding the vaccination sites. There are two major FEMA sites in Philadelphia, plus many smaller local sites. Every county has their own plan, which makes supporting these sites with needed volunteers difficult. We have sent information to our churches about how we can support these sites.

Our churches are using the UCC mini-grant to put together CWS kits and buckets. We have taken on load to CWS in Maryland. With the help of Tim Kissling we are preparing to take another load to the warehouse in Maryland. There is a list of our Conference's collection sites on the Conference web site, as well as information on building the kits and applying for a grant from the national setting.

We thank the Conference staff who are very helpful as we get vital information into our churches for preparedness and now response and recovery. If you would like to work on your church's preparedness or COOP plans, contact Karl Jones.

We are planning a webinar on how disaster ministry can help a church increase its ministry and mission. Watch for details.

Our Conference Disaster Coordinator continues to serve as the Secretary and Operation Lead for the PA Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (PAVOAD). Much of the work in 2021 continues to be COVID-19 and Isaias related. He has also had a major role in voluntary agencies supporting the unaccompanied minor site in Erie.

He is also active in the national setting of the UCC:

- The Conference Disaster Coordinators meet month to coordinate and share resources. This group is led by our new UCC Disaster Minister, Lesli Remaly.
- The coordinating ministry setting in the national church is now called Global H.O.P.E. The new Team Leader of this ministry is Joshua Baird.
- You can learn more about it what is going on through the UCC Disaster network at <https://uccfiles.com/pdf/2020-DM-Highlights-Final.pdf>.
- As a representative of the UCC Karl served as the vice-chair of the National VOAD Community Preparedness Committee. His term ended in May 2021, but he is being nominated by the national setting to remain on this committee.

Thank you for your prayers and support in this unique and challenging time. If you would like to become involved in this vibrant ministry or have your congregation take advantage of any of the programs mentioned above, contact Karl.

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