



November 6, 2022

Additional Mission Trip Opportunities

In my home state of Mississippi, the only presence of the United Church of Christ that I knew of for many years was Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, MS. I've taken a youth group from Houston and led members of two congregations, one from rural Michigan and another from Chicago, to help rehab houses of those who can't afford to do so on their own. It was during one of the first trips to Back Bay Mission that I learned the history of this lonely outpost of the UCC in a state that had no UCC churches at the time.

It was in Biloxi that the beaches of the South begun the process of integration. Up until the last sixties, most beaches were segregated, but between 1959-1963, three "wade-ins" happened in Biloxi, causing a fierce and violent backlash by white



residents and police officers. The African American physician Dr. Gilbert Mason led the fight, with few allies from the white community. However, the three white pastors of the local UCC joined him and the local black community in this effort, only to find that their churches were closed by the early seventies as their white parishioners deserted their congregations. Back Bay Mission had been formed decades earlier to help the fishermen and their families during some of the lean months of the year. In the end, Back Bay Mission was the lasting legacy of those three closed churches, and it continues its service to the most vulnerable of Biloxi. It's also a reminder to me that sometimes when you do the right thing, death is often the consequences of that choice (see Jesus) – and that God still deals in resurrection, over and over again.

The worth of mission trips such as the ones my churches and youth groups went on can be debated, but more than the labor provided by us, it was what we learned about others and ourselves in places like Back Bay Mission that was the most important piece of the trip. I'd invite you to consider doing some "mission work" in places like Biloxi or in Eastwick in Philly, or wherever your helping hands are needed, including right next door to your church. I've been part of an Association-wide adult and youth mission trip to Back Bay Mission, and I know of churches who have done a mission trip together. One of my fondest memories of a Back Bay mission trip was when our Houston youth group had just helped to rehabilitate a home, only to have Hurricane Katrina swept through the area a month later. The care and concern of those youth about the damage done to mission itself and the safety of that older couple they had just helped made me so proud of them – I do think God changed some of our hearts that week and the weeks afterwards.

For more information about Back Bay Mission and it's volunteer opportunities, go to <https://thebackbaymission.org/> and to learn more about local opportunities to serve, contact the Rev. Karl Jones, our PSEC Disaster Relief Coordinator at kjones275@comcast.net

Rev. Kevin J. McLemore

Associate Conference Minister for Search & Call



2022 PSEC Fall Meeting

NEXT SUNDAY—Register Now!

Hybrid Meeting @ Salt & Light Community Church UCC

5736 Chester Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143

November 13th / 3:00 pm—5:30 pm

There is no fee for this meeting!

Register at:

<https://psec2022fall.eventbrite.com>