



## Spring 2023 Report to the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference UCC



**Members of Conference Disaster Ministry Team:** Karl Jones, Maureen Duffy-Guy, Jenny Smith, Ray Riegel, Sherie Mohn, Tim Kissling, Ed Bibic, Jim See, Gary Rarick

The PSEC Disaster Ministry Team is a part of the national UCC *Global H.O.P.E.* team, which facilitates the UCC's response to natural and human-caused disasters across the United States and its territories and around the world. The PSEC Disaster Coordinator, Rev. Karl Jones, is a part of the network of *Conference Disaster Coordinators*. Our goal is to serve the most vulnerable populations, with a focus on disaster preparedness, identifying and meeting unmet needs, and spiritual and emotional support. Karl also serves on the Environmental-Technology Caused Disaster Working Group, with a focus on human-caused disasters.

Our Disaster Emotional and Spiritual Care lead, Rev. Jenny Smith, is a part of the national UCC ESC team. Jenny has been a part of responses in Pennsylvania, Florida, and Colorado in the past year.

The UCC is an active member of *National VOAD* (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster), through which we partner with dozens of organizations, large and small, for holistic, community-based recovery. The PSEC is a member of the Pennsylvania VOAD and the regional and local VOADs and Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COADs) within the Conference's boundaries. Karl serves as the Eastern PA Representative to the PAVOAD Board of Directors and also serves as PAVOAD's Communications Coordinator. He also represents the UCC at the meetings of Nation VOAD and serves on the NVOAD Communications Committee. Jenny is providing emotional and spiritual care for survivors and case managers in southeast PA due to Hurricane Ida. Other team members are actively engaged with their local VOADs and COADs.

Internationally, Global H.O.P.E. maintains direct relationships and partnerships with organizations and faith communities able to respond to emergencies and long-term needs appropriately and effectively. Joshua Baird, Team Leader, works with Area Executives of *Global Ministries* and through organizations such as *Church World Service* and the *ACT Alliance* to direct financial support and ensure the United Church of Christ stands with vulnerable people during times of crisis. In the past year attention has been focused on Ukraine.

In 2022 the Conference Disaster Team worked in response to multiple storms and events in southeast PA. Ongoing work includes disaster spiritual and emotional care, supporting rebuilding and recovery in Philadelphia, Bucks, Montgomery, Chester, and Delaware Counties, and working with the COADs in Berks and Schuylkill counties. The Team is pleased to be working in our Conference with two national UCC Partners in Service: Sharon Sgriccia, Volunteer Coordinator, and Eileen San Pedro, Construction Site Manager. These Partners in Service are supported by Global H.O.P.E. (We also celebrate the work of Partner in Service, Jaye Herrick, who was with us in 2021, who is still serving. She is using the training she received with us to now serve in Kentucky.)

In 2022 the Conference served as the Financial Manager of the Eastwick Unmet Needs Roundtable, managing a \$5,000 grant from the national setting, a \$50,000 grant from the Center for Disaster Philanthropy, and a \$25,000 Lowe's grant through NVOAD and the national UCC setting. Those books were closed at the end of 2022, but the Conference has now accepted the responsibility to be the Financial Manager for the Long-Term Recovery Committee of Southeast PA VOAD. Donations and grants

have begun to come in. Thanks to everyone who has supported this work.

Our Conference Team works closely with our colleagues in the other Pennsylvania Conferences. We are using a tool trailer owned by the Penn Northeast Conference for our rebuild work. We have also tried to support our colleagues in the Heartland Conference, as they respond to the 2023 train derailment in Ohio.

Our churches have been active in our work:

1. Volunteer groups and individuals have done amazing work in rebuilding. If you would like to get involved with this work, please contact Sharon Sgriccia at [isaiasrecoveryvolunteers@gmail.com](mailto:isaiasrecoveryvolunteers@gmail.com).
2. Salt and Light Community Church has provided hospitality and lodging for volunteers. If your church would like to be a part of the hospitality ministry, please contact Karl at [kjones275@comcast.net](mailto:kjones275@comcast.net).
3. Several churches have put together CWS cleanup buckets and kits. You can learn more at [www.ucc.org/disaster](http://www.ucc.org/disaster). The national setting is still providing a \$250 mini-grant to get you started. Several of our churches are serving as drop-off/storage points for the kits and buckets. Thanks to Tim Kissling, Jason Stump, R & J Transportation, and several others we have sent kits and buckets to both Mission Central and the CWS warehouse in Maryland for distribution, as well as serving our own communities.
4. Other churches have gotten UCC grants for the work they are doing in their communities. Contact Karl for details.

If you would like to get involved in this vital ministry, please feel free to contact me or any other members of the team. One of the ways your church can get involved is by joining the **Willing to Respond** program. It is simple – go to the webpage, [www.willingtorespond.org](http://www.willingtorespond.org), register your church, name a local church contact, and begin to use the resources. Our Conference is a Willing to Respond Conference and these churches have joined to network: Zion Union Church, Maxatawny; St. Mark's, Cressona; and St. John's, Orwigsburg. Look for information on this campaign on the Conference website or at the Spring meeting of the Conference.

You can also send volunteers for the rebuild work – right here in our Conference. Is there unused space in your building today? Contact us to find ways to put that space to use for your community. Could you house volunteers, or a shelter, or provide meals or clothing? The possibilities are endless.

It is my privilege to serve as the PSEC Conference Disaster Coordinator. I want to thank you for your prayers and support. I also want to thank Bill Worley and all the members of the Conference staff. They are amazing. If you would like to have me or other members of the Team to come to your church to speak, present a program, or help your church become more prepared and resilient, please contact us.

Shalom,  
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