



Project Crossroads provides 'bridge aid' to flood victims

By Steven MacKay

Smyth County News & Messenger

NEBO, Va. — When heavy rainstorms flooded portions of Smyth County in late July, a number of small bridges were washed away. The residents who rely on those bridges were left with only a few choices: stay away from home, stay at home or find another way in and out. For the elderly, pregnant women and others who may be reliant on emergency services, the hardship was greater.

This is where Project Crossroads entered. The United Methodist organization, best known for repairs to the homes of low-income or elderly families, was asked to switch gears and build bridges, according to Project Crossroads Director Harry Howe.

"Looks like we're going to be in the bridge business for some time," the Rev. Howe said as he stood near a footbridge under construction on the property of Wallace Myers on Lick Creek Road.

The bridge was destroyed during heavy rainstorms on July 28 and 29. High waters, dragging trees, rocks and debris, slammed into the bridge. Built 20 or so years ago, it just gave way, according to Myers.

"I'm 69 years old and that's the most (rain) I've ever seen," Myers said, adding that he has lived on the property for 56 years.

When Howe received a call from the Smyth County Department of Social Services asking the nonprofit group to help rebuild the bridge, he was unsure of what to



Patrick Moore, left, and Adam Lawson work to install an upright support for one of the new bridge rails. Both are from Allen Memorial UMC, Cleveland District. M

Photo by Dan Kegley/
Smyth County News & Messenger

do. Howe said he mentioned the problem at a Sunday church service, and congregation members from First Marion UMC offered to help. Area industries were contacted and offered metal, welding and lumber supplies, transportation and other needs for free or at a reduced cost, Howe said.

Various churches in the Project Crossroads family have lent assistance, including youth workers from the Cleveland District's Allen Memorial and Trinity UMC and Chattanooga's Harrison UMC. A Presbyterian church from Canada also helped.

Reminders of the flood are evident everywhere. Along the river, grass, trees, bushes and other vegetation is bent from

the current of the rushing waters.

At the corner of Mill Dam Road and Old Wilderness Road, James Cregger's swinging bridge was also destroyed. Pieces of the bridge can be seen from the road. As floodwaters rose two weeks ago, Cregger and his family left their home. They were unable to return for more than a week.

"It's a mess," Cregger said, adding that he is expecting help from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Administration soon. The family is next on Howe's list to call.

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FLOOD UPDATE

Just as the Aug. 17 edition of *The Call* was being mailed, the latest in a series of floods afflicting the conference occurred Aug. 13 and 14 in Pound, Va.

Preliminary estimate of the damage will top \$1.5 million, bringing Wise County's total flood loss during the last month to \$4 million.

Armed with a total \$80,000 in United Methodist Committee on Relief funds, Holston Conference has participated in flood cleanup efforts since Tazewell District was hit by surging waters on July 8. Updates:

Pound, Va., Big Stone Gap District: Flood victims are in need of bottled water, canned foods, bleach, paper products and bath products, says the Rev. Ken Pierce, disaster coordinator and pastor at Clintwood/McClure UMC. Supplies may be delivered to Pound Hardware store. Work teams are currently not being requested. Contact Pierce at (540) 926-6853 or (540) 926-6021.

Greene County, Morristown and Johnson City Districts: Johnson City Disaster Coordinator Brian Rosecrance said that local ministerial organizations are now mobilizing to help repair 350 damaged homes recently denied federal assistance. Work teams are requested. Funds are also requested for building materials. Contact Rosecrance at (423) 929-9967 or (423) 975-5565, or Morristown Disaster Coordinator Millard Johnson at (865) 993-3363 or (865) 993-2378.

Bishop, Va., Tazewell District: Work teams are still welcome, especially skilled workers who can help install new flooring, repair plumbing, re-insulate, put up sheetrock, etc. Building materials are also requested. Contact: Kenny Fields, (540) 979-1443.

How to send money: Churches wishing to receive conference credit for flood donations should make checks to "Holston Conference." Address: Holston Conference, Treasurer's Office, P.O. Box 2506, Johnson City, TN 37605. Please indicate if you wish your contribution to benefit a specific region.

Campaign

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stops in Holston July 31 and Aug. 1, visiting the Knoxville Conference Center, Lincoln Park UMC, Asbury (Knox) UMC, and Munsey Memorial UMC in Johnson City.

Eighteen days into her 14-week itinerary, Potter-Miller said she saw evidence that Methodist churches are tailoring their campaigns to their communities.

For example, in Chevy Chase, Md., "a

town that has more Ph.D.s per capita than any other city in America," churches are using lectures and concert series to draw people in rather than traditional methods.

"They know their community; that's important," the Johnstown, Pa., district superintendent said. "And that's one of the geniuses of this campaign." The Igniting Ministry kit allows local churches to custom-make their welcoming efforts, she said.

Not all clergy are enamored with the campaign, however.

In an email to the denomination's communicators, United Methodist

For more information

■ For a full schedule of Igniting Ministry commercial airtimes or reports on the Rev. Jaime Potter-Miller's cross-country trek, visit www.ignitingministry.org.

Communications General Secretary Larry Hollon recently addressed open letters and news articles he said took "the form of an attack."

"The campaign has been criticized by those who say the campaign theme misrepresents the church because it is not open, in their view, to gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual persons. And others say the campaign is not well grounded theologically," Hollon said in an Aug. 9 statement.

For example, one open letter — addressed to the Council of Bishops, signed by 46 clergy members from seminaries and United Methodist churches, and appearing on an ecumenical website — stated the TV commercials "shortchange United Methodism by trading the riches of our tradition for a pottage of vacuous if catchy slogans."

Refusing to "enter into theological debate," Hollon said the campaign is built on solid research.

"It entails the risk that we will not communicate effectively enough, or that we will not embody community in a way that incorporates seekers into our midst," he stated. "But it is a risk worth taking, carefully, prayerfully and with sensitivity to the presence of God in the culture, calling us to speak works of comfort, healing and new life."



Photo by A.S. Bender/ *The Call*

Back-to-school ministry at Bookwalter

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Pencils, crayons, paper, backpacks — if the children of nearby Inskip Elementary needed it, Bookwalter UMC provided it. About 70 students from the low-income community turned out for the church's recent "Pack-a-Backpack" ministry on Aug. 18. Parishioners donated supplies then sent an invitation to the school's principal. "We want to meet the students and their families and we definitely want them to know who and where we are," said the Rev. Tom Ballard. M

First charge conferences, by district

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■ **Abingdon:** South Bristol, Rev. Mark Huffine; Virginia Avenue, Rev. Laura Rasor; Sept. 23

■ **Big Stone Gap:** Alley's Chapel, Rev. Robert Cloud, Oct. 1

■ **Chattanooga,** Brooks Memorial, Rev. Amos Taj, Sept. 16

■ **Cleveland:** Spring City/Reed's Chapel, Rev. Ronald Goodman; St. Clair, Rev. Anthony Ramsey; Evensville/New Bethel, Rev. Lonnie Eldridge, Oct. 3

■ **Johnson City:** TBA

■ **Kingsport,** Mt. Zion, Rev. Louis Forrester, Sept. 24

■ **Maryville:** Sevierville Circuit, Rev. Charles Copeland, Sept. 17

■ **Morristown:** Mosheim Central/ Mt. Pleasant, Rev. Bruce Hensley, Sept. 10

■ **Oak Ridge:** Mt. Zion, Rev. James Mullens, Sept. 23

■ **Tazewell:** Mt. Pleasant/Steelesburg, Rev. J.C. Johnson, Sept. 16

■ **Wytheville:** Glenwood/Bishop's Chapel, Rev. Gleasanna Johnson, Sept. 24