

## Holy Spirit, Inspire Us in Our Work Together!

For those of you familiar with the work of author, C.S. Lewis, Narnia is the other-world he creates in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*. It is the world that the Pevensie children discover through the quiet recesses of the home they are sent to in order to keep them safe from air raids during World War II. In Narnia, the children meet Aslan, a tender, powerful, and giant-hearted lion. When the children discover they are the prey of The White Witch, they understand that only the deep love that Aslan has for all beings can save them. Then, readers are led on an exciting quest to find the path of good in a world of evil.

In this past year, we have been confronted by numerous complexities and challenging circumstances. And if it wasn't obvious before, it is certainly clear now, that there are profound feelings of unrest, fear and dissatisfaction in every corner of America. Sometimes I find myself in despair amidst the problems we face today. Overcoming challenges in today's world sometimes doesn't seem as thrilling and epic as those same pursuits in Narnia. However, when I catch my breath, I find excitement in problem solving with others. Here are examples of where this has taken place with Lutheran Congregational Services.

- At the workshop for Lay Eucharistic Visitors on January 30<sup>th</sup>, we came up with new ideas on how to combat isolation for homebound individuals who feel more secluded than ever due to COVID-19. For example, we will reach out to neighbors of people who are homebound and ask them to help us. Together, we also created a solution for those who do not use technology by finding a service that generates calls so homebound individuals only

need to answer their phone, rather than going online or dialing in.

- Tropical Storm Isaias left many in eastern Pennsylvania without heat and hot water. Lutheran Disaster Response – Eastern PA, along with our partners, has discovered there are more needs than available resources. Thanks to congregations, local emergency managers, and local small businesses, we have been able to meet more needs than we ever thought possible to help our neighbors stay warm this winter.
- In the *Journeys Through Grief* Facebook page, our bereavement counselor, Sylvia Havlish, lifts people up with her encouraging words. The magic is in the comments themselves as people who are grieving share books, prayers, and comfort with one another.

Reflecting on these moments reminds me of the power of the Holy Spirit, and that's just as exciting to me as imagining the adventures in Narnia. For me, it is the same kind of spirit we are reminded of in *Luke* Chapters 1 and 2. In the midst of a world of tedious head hurting challenges, let us remember that the Lord is Lord and ponder that with joy in our hearts.

Sincerely,



Julia Menzo  
Director of Community Outreach



Julia Menzo

# Our Journey to Environmental Justice: Supporting Disaster Response in the Eastwick Community

## Tropical Storm Isaias dropped seven inches of rain on parts of eastern Pennsylvania on August 4, 2020. Wind damage and tornadoes left hundreds of thousands without power and widespread severe flooding led to injuries and one death. Many in eastern Pennsylvania are still recovering.

While damage in eastern Pennsylvania was widespread across several communities, the Eastwick neighborhood of Philadelphia was hit especially hard. With their homes under several feet of water causing immense damage to ground levels, this community has the greatest amount of troubling unmet needs related to heat, hot water, and mold.

Many of the residents impacted are elderly, have medical conditions, or significant exacerbating circumstances due to the pandemic. Most are at or just above the poverty level. To make matters worse, many did not have flood insurance as it was not disclosed to them at the time of sale that their properties were in a flood zone. Some families have gone into significant debt to pay for urgent home repairs and don't have the means to repay these loans.

Amidst the cold months of winter, families are using space heaters or finding other inefficient ways to stay warm, often times creating unsafe conditions. At minimum there are over 120 families who are in immediate need. With heaters costing between \$5,000 and \$9,000 each, these families are facing incredible hardships. In addition to these most extreme needs, it is estimated that more than 40 families need washers, dryers, and refrigerators.

Lutheran Disaster Response – Eastern Pennsylvania (LDR-EPA), in partnership with SEPA VOAD (Southeastern Pennsylvania Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) is actively working with environmental justice and leadership organizations in Eastwick like Eastwick United and the Eastwick Neighbors and Friends Coalition to bring relief and justice to the people of this community. In particular we are focused on case management and construction coordination to meet these challenges.

As an active leader in Eastwick United, Ted Pickett is familiar with the history of environmental injustice that has been occurring throughout the neighborhood for the past several decades. He sheds light on the larger challenges. “The homes of Eastwick should not have been built where they are. Our neighborhood sits at the bottom of where two creeks merge, Darby Creek and Cobbs Creek. Because of that location, whenever there is a storm, flash flood, or heavy rain, many of our residents’ homes are flooded.”

*Above: Isaias flood water in Eastwick, August 2020.*

*Right: Brian Baer and Carolyn Mosely from the Eastwick Unmet Needs Roundtable survey recovery efforts.*



“When your home gets flooded, it’s not a short journey to recovery. It takes a really long time. You have to throw everything away that was damaged and then you need to rebuild all of that and replace it,” Ted adds. “Amidst COVID-19, families have been facing even more challenges. People have lost their jobs and they can’t afford the repairs or replacement of appliances.”

In addition to residents’ homes being built far too close to two merging creeks, another challenge the Eastwick community faces is their proximity to a very large landfill. Ted notes, “In the path of the floods that we

experience, is one of the largest landfills in the country, Clearview Landfill. As you can imagine, this creates a whole other set of difficulties. Also, many of the homes in our community were built on silt. So now, these homes are sinking.”

Tropical Storm Isaias has been just one more natural disaster that has devastated residences in Eastwick. Few federal or state resources have been made available to assist residents. “Our greatest unmet need is to develop a system to mitigate the flooding,” Ted says. “For the past 15 to 20 years, there have been several studies and research projects taking place, and as of today, none of the results or information from these studies have been implemented.”

Leadership in Eastwick is dedicated to providing relief for their neighbors in need. Thanks to collaborating agencies of SEPA VOAD, including Lutheran Disaster Response – Eastern PA, The Elevated Studio, The Salvation Army, UCC Disaster Ministries, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief, Chester County Food Bank, Team Rubicon, local houses of worship, community organizations, and Philadelphia Office of Emergency Management, combined efforts have resulted in the formation of the Eastwick Unmet Needs Roundtable for Isaias. This group identified resources through Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, LIHEAP, Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation and other grants and foundations to meet an estimated \$300,000 needed to assist residents.

Thanks to these collaborations, LDR-EPA is working closely with Eastwick leaders to provide direct financial relief for flooded residents and to advocate for support from various disaster agencies. We are also actively guiding residents through the complicated process of obtaining resources to repair flooded homes by providing case management services. Our efforts are partially funded thanks to a grant of \$20,000 from the ELCA Lutheran Disaster Response program. Additionally, Eastwick United has been holding webinars with experts in architecture, landscape architecture, and civil engineering to explore possible long-term solutions for flood mitigation. They are also advocating with federal legislators to expedite funding for construction of a levee along Cobbs Creek to protect vulnerable residents who live in constant fear of the next flood.

The journey to recovery is long and winding, but with fortitude, determination, and spirit, LDR-EPA remains committed to supporting the Eastwick community. Amidst these challenging times, so many needs are still unmet and the people of this neighborhood need help. With hundreds of families in need of assistance, your support can help provide funding for appliances and repairs like hot water heaters, heaters, and mold maintenance that will help the people of this community get back on their feet.

Because of contributions from congregations and individuals, LDR-EPA is also able to provide similar support to a number of families devastated by Isaias in the Lehigh Valley and Montgomery County.

Top: Gift card distribution to Isaias survivors at Pennrose Elementary School, Eastwick.

Bottom: Julia of LCS with volunteers from Tzu Chi Foundation.



*Top: Gift card distribution to Isaias survivors at Pennrose Elementary School, Eastwick.*

*Bottom: Julia of LCS with volunteers from Tzu Chi Foundation.*



## Before and After: Isaias recovery work in Northampton County

The blue tarp piece around the bottom is a flood sock. It's part of our efforts to increase resiliency of homeowners to future flooding.

Lutheran Congregational Services provided leadership for long term recovery efforts. In addition, LCS provided case management and spiritual and emotional care services to this homeowner.



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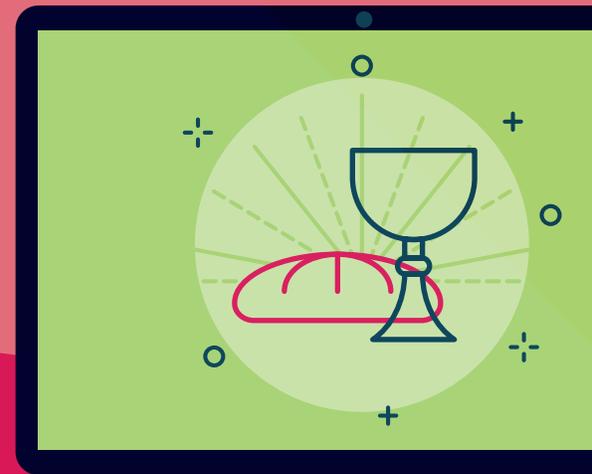


## LCS will host one virtual Lay Eucharistic Visitor Training in Spring, 2021!

Those interested must attend  
both virtual training sessions on  
Saturdays May 8th and 22nd, 2021,  
from 9:00am - 12:00pm.

Training will discuss options  
for how to deliver the Eucharist  
in times of social distancing.

Fee for the training is \$25.00.



To register or learn more, please visit  
[LutheranCongregationalServices.org](http://LutheranCongregationalServices.org),  
or contact Julia Menzo at  
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