



# Hope Happens

Volume 3, Issue 4

November 2010

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*A regular publication of the 4 Our Churches*

*Something New Still Grows in the Oldest Church in Harrisburg*

**By Monica Dawkins-Smith**

When the children of Israel journeyed through their wilderness time, God provided them with manna which sustained them day by day. Journeys UCC and Salem UCC, located in the heart of the city of Harrisburg, have heeded the cries of the people in their city who are having their own wilderness experiences as they struggle through difficult times, trying to survive from day to day. They felt compassion for their

neighbors in need but knew compassion was not enough, they needed to take action.

In an effort to help, Journeys, Salem and Penbrook UCC churches joined hearts, hands and resources to begin, in a small way, to address issues of hunger -- and the Manna Food Pantry grew out of this.

Manna **Food Pantry** on the second floor of Salem/Journeys UCC opened its doors on July 13, 2010. Through September 30, over **252 people** have walked through their doors seeking help. Including

their family members and residents of a half-way house on Cameron Street, they have served over **831 people** (children, adults and seniors). This is amazing when you consider that the pantry is only open 2 days per week for 2 hours each day and clients can only visit the pantry once each month.

The pantry has been a wonderful way to meet their neighbors and begin developing relationships which have resulted in a few people worshipping with them on Sundays!

Volunteers come from the churches and Harrisburg community. Currently, there are over 60 volunteers. Some volunteers from the wider community came through

[www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)

The volunteers reflect the diversity (age, race, etc.) of the population served and several volunteers are bi-lingual. There are also supervised youth volunteers from Penbrook UCC.

As the saying goes "It takes a village..." and it's a village -- the community that has partnered together to help serve the needs of the urban Harrisburg community include the UCC congregations mentioned along with Hillside Seventh Day Adventist., Giant Food Store, Central PA Food bank, B'nai B'rith and the International House .

*See the Manna Food Pantry during refreshment time following the November 21 Conference worship at Salem.*



Youth volunteers at Manna Food Pantry.

## **Quick Facts about Manna Food Pantry**

**Client Choice** (people select what they want to eat)

**Evening Hours**

**Pet Food available**

**Youth and adult volunteers** (a few are bi-lingual)

**Promotes "green" practices** (re-usable grocery bags)

**Clothing/Linen items available**

**Promotes healthy choices** (low salt, low sugar items)

## The Road to Vitality Journey

By Bonnie Hollinger

I am hearing so many wonderful reports from the Road to Vitality small groups in our church, St Peter's, Lancaster. Many are commenting on how this is such a new path for them—the journaling, the taking time every day for Bible reading and study, the sharing of their lives with each other. We are receiving the results of our prayers already. There are new faces in worship, family wounds are being mended, healing has taken place, new volunteers are springing up, the Sunday attendance is up, giving is up (not enough but we are seeing increases!) and the work God is calling us to do continues! There is a wonderful spirit in our worship and a willingness by most to join in the fervor of growing our faith and our church.

And some of us are surprised! It makes me wonder if we have been

praying really *expecting* God to answer. I know that for me, I used to pray often as a ritual (which is good) but did not consistently visualize how God might speak to me. Now I am discovering that God **WANTS** to speak to me if I only take time to listen.

The more I ask God, “to whom do you want me to speak today?” or “what shall I do for someone today?” the more I am finding the way to love others more deeply, the more the doors open to share my faith with people, the more I desire to spend less money on myself and give God more. I am hearing stories that make my heart weep for joy. I can't share them all because we have taken a commitment to hold in confidence those things that are said in our small groups. This allows for much freedom to know that one's story, personal struggles and joys are honored.

St Peter's did not know what we would find when we started this journey on the Road to Vitality but God is leading the way. We are discovering people in our paths that are not there by coincidence, but rather because we are open to God. Many of us did not plan to be evangelists but amazingly we are finding that our love for God **IS** spilling out when we allow God into our hearts in a consistent, daily way! Let's keep going!

Currently 15 congregations are in the Road to Vitality program. Great things are happening in these congregations. The Conference Vitality team plans to continue Road to Vitality as an on-going program. Our 4th round will begin next spring. Capital Campaign funds help to supplement the cost our congregations have to pay. Vital Churches make the difference!

## Excitement Builds for Geoffrey Black's Visit to Penn Central



The November 20-21 weekend visit from UCC President and General Minister Geoffrey Black will be an exciting time for Penn Central Conference.

Geoffrey was installed as the new President and General Minister of the UCC in April. Penn Central Conference is fortunate to have him visiting in our conference so soon after taking office.

**Our Fundraising Reception and Dinner benefiting the 4 Our Churches Capital Campaign and the UCC's Strategic Initiatives Fund will be held Saturday November 20 at the Radisson Penn Harris, Camp Hill.**

The private reception from 6pm-7pm is open to the first 50 responses we receive. The cost for the private reception is \$35.\* The dinner banquet will begin at 7:15pm and Geoffrey will be our keynote speaker. Individual cost is \$75\*

There is a reduced rate for churches who purchase a table which seats eight. The cost is \$550. Several churches have already committed to purchasing a table which is a great way to bring folks from your church to hear Geoffrey and support two causes at once.

**Deadline to reserve space for the reception and banquet is Wednesday, November 10.**

A commemorative booklet for the conference worship service on Sunday, November 21 at Salem UCC, Harrisburg is also being printed. Congregations and individuals can purchase 14, 1/2 and full page ads. Profit from the commemorative booklet will also go towards the 4 Our Churches Campaign. **Contact Brenda Waleff at the conference office to place an ad by Friday, November 5.**

Go to [www.pccucc.org](http://www.pccucc.org) for all the weekend details.

\*If you'd like to come and can't quite pay the full cost, please contact Wendy at the conference office. No one will be turned away.