

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Even though we know that many of our local congregations and individuals are struggling during this difficult economic time for the entire world, we are asking you to help us to keep the ministry of our region going strong. You can help us by:

- **Praying daily for the region's ministry**, our leadership and our finances. We cannot emphasize the need for prayer enough. We need the Spirit's wisdom to guide us through this difficult time. We need your prayer support. This financial situation is a spiritual issue and must be addressed as such. We are determined not to let finances drive our ministry!
- **Promoting the Christmas Offering** in your congregation, since it represents 15% of the annual income of the region. Materials will be coming to you in two mailings: a book of stories and resources for Advent Lighting ceremonies, Minutes for Mission and newsletter articles by the second week of November and a five-minute DVD, which will come out the first of December, to played in worship, Sunday school, youth group meetings, etc.
- **Sending your contributions in a timely fashion** so we receive them prior to December 31, 2008.
- Planning to support and participate in the **Listening Conferences and pulpit exchanges** this winter and spring and in the **Region-wide Work Camp** at Laurelview this summer.
- Participating as you are able in the **Debt Busting calls** this fall and the **Annual Fund** in May/ June 2009.

Please know that it is our desire to keep you, our regional brothers and sisters, as informed as possible about the challenges and the directions of our region. As the politicians say, we want to be as transparent as possible about the state of our region. We also want to remain as available as we can as your co-moderators to any questions and suggestions you have for the future of our region. Please do not hesitate to contact us, our interim regional minister, Bill Allen, or any members of the Executive Committee or Regional Board with your concerns for your local congregation or for our regional church.

Blessings in our Lord,

Janet and Steve Hellner-Burriss
Co-Moderators

Letter to the Region

NOVEMBER 3, 2008

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

We give thanks to God every time we remember you and the amazing ministry that is happening in Christ's name across our region. We are humbled and honored to be your co-moderators for such as time as this as we prepare for a new regional minister. Because there is so much happening in our region at this time, we are writing this letter to keep you fully informed and to encourage a dialogue across our region as we discern God's will for us in this season. Let's begin with our blessings which are many.

THE BLESSINGS

- **Rev. John Crist** taking time away from his family to be our Acting Regional Minister for six weeks, which gave our Executive Committee time to call an interim regional minister.
- The calling of **Rev. William Allen** as our Interim Regional Minister. Bill has a deep passion for prayer and a great love for Christ's church. He comes to us with much needed experience not only in regional ministry, but also in finances and stewardship.
- The beginning of a **transformation process** for our region which will turn this time of leadership transition into a season of transformation – of deep listening for the Spirit's call for our regional church. In order to do this deep listening, we will create a Transformation Team with two representatives from each district. In addition, during the winter, we will hold a listening conference with the Regional Board, another with the Clergy Consultation and several more with our new church starts in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Mansfield. We will be creating a Communication Tree with a pastor and a board chair from each region that will make personal phone calls to talk and listen with the churches in their districts. We will be starting a region-wide pulpit exchange so that we can get to know and support each other's ministries better across the region. In addition we hope to host a Region-wide work camp in August 2009 at Laurelview with the desire to host a work camp on the eastern side of the state in 2010. This is truly an exciting time for the Pennsylvania Region!

- The outstanding leadership on **the Executive Committee**, which has met eight times already! What a gift they are to us and to the whole regional church.
- A wonderful **regional board** whose commitment to our church is outstanding. Truly, God has called the right leaders in place for this critical time in the life of our region. We all felt the blessing hand of our Lord upon us as we dealt with difficult issues during our recent regional board meeting on October 25.

OUR CURRENT FINANCIAL SITUATION

But, just as the nation and the world are going through painful economic times, so are we as a region. Over the past few years, in order to maintain our ministries, we have borrowed against our reserves with the full intent of paying them back. However when funds did not come in as we anticipated, we continued this practice of “borrowing from Peter to pay Paul.” There was no malicious intent in this practice. We were doing what many households across America were doing – living beyond our means. Now our reserves and lines of credit are exhausted and we can no longer continue living in this way.

Specifically we are forced to deal with some harsh financial realities:

- We have depleted \$33,000 of our permanent funds
- We have depleted \$129,000 of our temporary restricted funds
- We have exhausted \$190,000 of our Capital Campaign funds
- We owe approximately \$45,000 to creditors
- We have maxed out our line of credit at \$25,000
- There are no funds in reserve to borrow against.
- We are not bringing in enough money to cover our expenses.

To put it simply we are operating in the red.

WORKING TOWARDS THE SOLUTION

Thanks to our new and renewed leadership, we are taking firm steps toward solving our financial problems.

- First of all the Executive Committee voted that all **Capital Campaign monies** which come in after October 1 be set apart to insure they are used according to their restricted purposes and not for operating expenses. The Regional Board approved this action as well at the recent October 25 board meeting.
- The Executive Committee called forth a **new Finance Committee** to work on these troubling financial issues. We have gathered several bright and financially gifted people to help us work through a plan of getting us out of debt.
- The Finance Committee created a **balanced budget** which was approved by the regional board. This budget calls for some painful sacrifices including the consolidation of the three youth and camp staff positions into one position for 2009, the relocation of the regional office by July 2009 when the lease has expired to a less expensive location and raising co-payments for the Clergy Consultation and camp fees by \$15 per camper.
- The Finance Committee will be working with the Regional Minister to manage to the approved balanced budget which may include making additional tough decisions to **reduce our expenses** this fall and next year if our income does not meet our expenses.
- The Finance Committee will work on a **financial policy** to be approved by the spring board meeting so that we can be better stewards of the gifts you give to us.
- The Finance Committee also is working on a way to **restore our Capital Campaign monies**.
- The Stewardship Committee is working hard on creating inspiring and usable materials to promote the **Christmas offering**. Also with the approval of the board, we will start an annual fund campaign in May/ June of 2009.
- The Stewardship Committee will be implementing **debt buster calls** this fall to insure we pay off our accounts prior to the year end.