



Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) – Ministry Engagement with churches of Central District Conference

During the past 18 months, Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) strengthened its partnership with congregations of Central District Conference (CDC) through worship leadership and coordinated volunteer engagement. These interactions increased congregational awareness of MDS’s mission, expanded volunteer participation, and reinforced relationships between MDS and CDC congregations. MDS desires to have an active Church Contact Person (CCP) in every anabaptist congregation. A CCP shares information about MDS with their church and has direct access to area MDS leadership, usually a MDS Unit within their state, when a local response is needed.

MDS leadership engagement in worship settings resulted in direct connections with five CDC congregations. Kevin King, Executive Director of MDS, preached at Peace Mennonite Church (Archbold, Ohio) and Emmaus Road Mennonite Fellowship (Berne, Indiana). Lawrence Matthews, Volunteer Development Coordinator for MDS Region 2, preached at Grace Mennonite Church (Pandora, Ohio), Maplewood Mennonite Church (Fort Wayne, Indiana), and First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana (Illinois). These engagements supported volunteer recruitment, strengthened communication channels, and encouraged ongoing congregational participation in MDS and MDS’s support of church ministry.

As a result of these relationships, dozens of volunteers from CDC congregations served with MDS in multiple capacities. Volunteers filled key roles as Church Contact People, supported local community disaster responses, served as weekly volunteers, and provided leadership on both local and national MDS projects. This volunteer engagement increased MDS’s operational capacity and contributed directly to disaster response and recovery efforts locally and beyond.

A significant outcome of CDC–MDS collaboration is the partnership with City Peace Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. Through a CDC ‘Rise Up! Take Courage! Mutual Aid Fund’ award and collaboration with the Western Ohio Unit of Mennonite Disaster Service, City Peace Church increased its capacity for local ministry and community engagement. Grant funding from CDC enabled coordinated planning, volunteer mobilization, and leveraged resource sharing, resulting in a strengthened City Peace Church’s response to neighborhood needs and outreach.

The City Peace Church story is one of many examples that demonstrates the impact of equipping local congregations with MDS resources and support to extend their ministry and service.

Report submitted by:

Lawrence Matthews, First Mennonite Church
Bluffton, Ohio
Mennonite Disaster Service
Region 2 Volunteer Development Coordinator
Lmatthews@mds.org / 419.303.8056