



January 2012

Help during life's storms

On Sunday, August 28, Hurricane Irene passed through the Metropolitan New York Synod territory and moved north and east, causing a deluge of record-breaking floods and winds. Among the hardest-hit towns in the Catskills were the towns of Prattsville and Fleischmanns.

Soon after the flood waters carried away houses, cars, trees, and people in Prattsville, Pastor Sonja Maclary of Christ's Lutheran Church in Woodstock received information and pictures of the devastation there from friends. Flood waters with the power of Niagara Falls had washed through the center of town, lifting many houses and businesses right off of their foundations.

Pastors Greg and Becky Town, colleagues of Pr. Maclary's friends, serve the Dutch Reformed Church of Prattsville. While the church and the parsonage remained standing, the family barely escaped. The church was so damaged that it was necessary to gut the interior up to seven feet above the flooring in the sanctuary. Parsonage damage caused the pastors to lose all their belongings on the first floor, along with many church records. The church's fellowship hall, which had housed the Prattsville Head Start program, had to be torn down.



Volunteers work in the sanctuary

While Pr. Maclary began bringing food to flood victims and serving in a relief center, she told her Hudson Conference clergy colleagues about the great need just half an hour north. Using conference funds, the clergy voted to send \$500 to the Prattsville congregation right away. Pastor Dennis O'Rourke, dean of the conference, contacted the Town family, and a visit was scheduled.

A number of the Hudson Conference clergy made the trip to Prattsville in November. We saw the volunteers working to restore the house, which will also serve as a worship space until church repairs



Meeting the pastors in the parsonage

are completed. We saw the mud-covered and water-soaked church. The organ, the wiring, and the heating system were ruined. Very few items were salvaged from the church following the flooding: just the communion table, the pulpit, the lectern, and—after eight weeks of searching—the baptismal font, which was found down on the banks of the Schoharie Reservoir. It is being restored by a talented group of volunteers from a sister Reformed Church of America congregation.

The clergy's effort to help reminded Pr. Maclary of the care and concern the Metro New York Synod pastors received from colleagues across the country following September 11. The Hudson Conference has now adopted the Dutch Reformed Church of Prattsville. Three local Lutheran churches are having a skating event this February to raise money for the Prattsville church's rebuilding project. All twelve of our congregations are currently gathering items for "Welcome Home Baskets" which will be given to people moving back to Prattsville in the spring.

Water can do so much damage, and if we aren't proactive about reducing our carbon dioxide emissions, water may wash entire communities and cities away. Please pray for the people of Prattsville, Fleischmanns, and other Catskill Mountain towns which are suffering. **✚ THE REV. EDWARD SCHREIBER** is pastor of Atonement, Saugerties.

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