

First Unitarian Society of Westchester

A member of the Unitarian Universalist Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

The First Unitarian Society of Westchester (FUSW) congregation finished their Sunday, April 15 service earlier than usual in order to be out before the rain water cut off the exit from Old Jackson Avenue. Little did they know that it would be weeks before they could have another service in their building.

As was true all over the county, the waters rose to unprecedented levels. At the FUSW congregation's building the water rose to nearly a foot and a half throughout, ruining the floors, carpets, computers, but most important of all, their archives tracing their 151-year history.

The supplies and equipment of the Hastings Nursery School, which shares some of the space, were equally devastated.

By Monday, the Board, headed by President Susan Greenberg and aided by the Minister, Rev. David Bryce, and by Director of Religious Education John Cavallero, began planning to handle this disaster. Congregation members started immediately to rescue the archives and strip the building of all the soggy materials. The Men's Group pulled out the ruined carpeting. Electricians were brought in to redo the wiring, and the work of drying out the building was begun.

Local organizations and companies also immediately began to help. The North Yonkers Community Church donated space for Sunday services and classes, and the Community Church of White Plains hosted FUSW's monthly Common Ground Coffee House. Stop and Shop of Dobbs Ferry helped store archival materials.

The total financial loss for the congregation is still undetermined, but is estimated at not less than \$100,000. An Emergency Recovery Fund has been set up to cover these unprecedented expenses. Anyone wishing to contribute to this fund may do so by mailing a check payable to The First Unitarian Society of Westchester, 25 Old Jackson Avenue, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706. The Board is also investigating the possibilities of financial assistance from federal, state, and county sources.

On May 6, the congregation will move back into the building. The floors will be bare, the walls still open in places to ensure complete drying, and familiar furnishings and supplies will be missing, but the spirit and heart of its members will be as unquenchable as ever.