

## **Faith Connection Story – Redeemer's UCC and Bethel UCC**

When Rev. Eric Marsteller was called to St. Mary's UCC in Westminster, MD, Rev. Sterling Fritz reached out to welcome Eric to the community. Both Eric and Sterling had something in common: they had roots in Berks County, PA churches. In fact, Eric's former pastor, the Rev. Barbara Kershner-Daniels (a pastor now serving in Frederick, MD) once attended the church Sterling served in Berks County because her father had been its pastor when she was a small child.

Fast forward several years: Eric was now ordained and serving St. Mary's UCC in Westminster, MD. Sterling was now serving at Redeemer's UCC in Littlestown, PA. And Sterling's wife, Sue, was now serving at Bethel UCC in Spring Grove, PA

Three churches – two Conferences (Penn Central and Central Atlantic) and a strong desire to take the ministry beyond the walls of the church. The seed of the idea for a mission trip started with Eric and spread to the two other churches, due to the welcome and friendship that blossomed with Rev. Marsteller moved to the community.

This summer, approximately thirty volunteers from Redeemer's UCC, Bethel UCC and St. Mary's UCC will share their love for God, their skills and their willingness to help others by working in cooperation with the Appalachian South Folklife Center (ASFC) in Pipestem, West Virginia. The ACSF serves needy populations in Appalachia and each summer, work groups can be found repairing homes, cleaning weed-infested yards, painting shutters and siding or sanding dry wall. You name it, they repair it or rebuild it!

The intergenerational group has been meeting quarterly since January. It has been a wonderful opportunity to meet new folks, share laughs and realize that good things are possible when you branch out and do things outside of your comfort zone. The group is already discussing what's next, perhaps in our communities after the trip is over. When there is a will, God paves the way. Alleluia!

