



PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE



Celebrating 60 Years of Ministry

A Message from PCC

September 14, 2022

Members and friends of Penn Central Conference,

This week, we wanted to highlight these new Church World Services kits and matching grants available when your church wants to start creating them.

Welcome Backpacks and Period Packs join CWS service kit lineup; matching grants available

by Carol Fouke-Mpoyo | published on Sep 2, 2022 on ucc.org

United Church of Christ congregations have long assembled school kits and cleanup buckets to help others through Church World Service.

They now have two new opportunities. Church World Service Kits now include a Period (Menstrual Hygiene) Pack and a Welcome Backpack.

These join CWS's well-established Hygiene and School Kits and Emergency Cleanup Buckets. And UCC churches assembling and donating any of the CWS Kits can apply for UCC Match Grants of up to \$250 to help stretch their contribution.

For refugees, asylum seekers

That's what Longswamp UCC in Mertztown, Pa., did. Church members had already started to fill 10 Welcome Backpacks when Jill Shade, the congregation's 2022 missions "lead," contacted the national office. She reached Craig Hoffman, Global H.O.P.E. program assistant, who administers the CWS Kits matching grants. Shade wanted to be sure that the congregation could apply for the \$250 grant.

Welcome Backpacks are created to respond to needs of refugees or asylum seekers who've just arrived in the United States, carrying few if any possessions and sometimes still facing a long bus ride to their final destination. They are

Contact us!

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Prayers for Penn Central Conference

Ephesians 6:18 (NLT)

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

This week, we pray for each other as we continue to live into God's calling...

First UCC, Carlisle

St. Matthews UCC, Carlisle

Salem Stone UCC, Carlisle

Trinity UCC, Cashtown



Continues on back

stocked with food bars, water, a blanket, crayons, a coloring book to occupy children, and more.

Hoffman not only confirmed Longswamp UCC could access the grant – the congregation became the first to receive matching grant money to assemble those backpacks.

This is not the church's first mission project to underscore its concern for refugees. Most recently, in April, Longswamp UCC contributed \$1,150 to the denomination's Ukraine Emergency Appeal.

Expensive hygiene

Church World Service developed the new Welcome Backpacks and Period Packs based on what CWS partners indicate "would be helpful to respond to the daily needs of the people they serve," said Matthew Stevens, CWS director of congregational campaigns.

Affordability comes into play especially with Period (Menstrual Hygiene) Packs, which address what has come to be called "period poverty."

The person in need could be an immigrant or refugee arriving to a border shelter or local resettlement office "with little more than the clothes on their backs," Santos said, with no money or access to menstrual hygiene supplies. Or it could be someone who has lost everything to a disaster.

Implications at school

Or, as Ellen Nolan in Medina, Ohio, learned, it could be someone whose household simply cannot afford the estimated \$13.25 a month per person for menstrual hygiene supplies, which are not covered by government assistance.

When Nolan and other members at Medina UCC talked about assembling discreet Period Packs for their menstruating teenagers to take to school, they quickly came face-to-face with their own families' privilege and the extent of period poverty.

As Nolan told the Medina Weekly News, they learned that some of their children's classmates skipped school when menstruating, because they did not have the products and did not want to be embarrassed. She said this was especially acute in families below the poverty line just struggling to put food on the table.

Church members also learned that many menstruating teens already relied on their school's nurse to provide hygiene products each month – and that Proctor & Gamble

had missed its latest annual donation of these products to the area schools.

Medina UCC stepped in to make a difference. An appeal brought an outpouring of donations from the Medina community. The Rev. Luke Lindon and congregants assembled 1,230 packs and shared them among 11 Medina County middle and elementary schools.

Nolan said the packs could become a regular outreach for the Medina UCC.

Powerful activity

Assembling Period Packs is easy and supports recipients' dignity and health, Santos said.

All CWS's established kits remain very much needed. This summer, the Medina congregation also packed 22 Emergency Cleanup Buckets.

"This was a great project in which to involve our youth," said Becky Bauer, a volunteer with the congregation's local missions team. "They sorted items then worked together to fill the buckets."

Kit and grant instructions

In 2021, thirty \$250 grants totaling \$7,500 allowed 30 churches to produce 202 Emergency Cleanup Buckets, 944 Hygiene Kits and 753 School Kits. CWS calculates the total value of these 1,899 items at \$40,605.

Not all churches that assemble CWS Buckets and Kits apply for UCC matching grants. As CWS reported, at least 132 UCC churches assembled CWS Kits in 2021.

This CWS webpage provides complete information on how to assemble CWS Kits and where to send them. Congregations and agencies may request CWS Kits and blankets for their program needs from Digna Bautista, CWS Business Coordinator, at dbautista@cwsglobal.org.