Fall/Winter, 2020

THE STEWARD

Trustworthy insights into insurance concerns of churches.



Churches: Our Everyday Superheroes

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INSURANCE BOARD
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Churches: Our Everyday Superheroes

Stories of Hope and Inspiration from Our Churches Across the Country

St. John's United Church of Christ in Lawrence, KS

As we are approaching the end of 2020, it is important to reflect back and think critically about what we have achieved in making a positive impact on ourselves and others. Not only have the leaders and organizers of St. John's United Church of Christ made an impact on members of the church, they have positively influenced other families in the community as well. This small congregation, located near Lawrence, KS, has continued on a wonderful journey of faith and perseverance.

Robin Colerick, the Pastor of the church, explained the difficulties of predicting Covid-19's impact on the congregation. To follow health and safety approaches, St. John's instantly switched their worship services to virtual Zoom meetings in March. Robin had just started her pastorate there in February, giving her no choice but to meet her congregation virtually. Transitioning from in-person meetings to Zoom meetings is not always easy, especially for those who are less technology-driven; however, the leaders of this congregation have worked diligently to accommodate its members. Sunday school classes are held on Zoom along with congregational conversations. Anyone who wishes to join can even call and participate on the phone! These meetings are open to everyone, giving individuals the opportunity to catch up with one another, develop relationships, build trust, share feelings, and express emotions.

Connecting with others has been vital during this time. Robin states, "It's really enabled us to learn more about each other. I've met several guinea pigs that live with one family. We have met dogs who join us for worship and cats who walk across phones and keyboards. Several congregants have joined together for birthday celebrations and it's been really fun to see where people live." Although Covid-19 has prevented physical gatherings, there are still many advantages to video conferencing. It is very accessible and brings a sense of comfort by allowing the community to gloriously support one another. Zoom meetings have also encouraged visitors, who generally do not attend in-person service, to join virtually as it feels more comfortable for them. Robin also mentioned that her mother serves a church in Missouri, which wasn't meeting for a period of time due to the pandemic; therefore, Robin invited her to meet with them via Zoom. She stated, "We work together on the sermon and lead worship for a UCC and a DOC congregation. The people have embraced each other and my Board even suggested having a meet/greet with them once Covid-19 is contained!"

St. John's UCC continues to support their regional ministries and find ways to reach out to the community including back to school celebrations, providing school supplies, and hosting a safe scavenger hunt over the summer. This fall, families and other members of the congregation participated in a fun work day!

"We are continuing to be the church." Robin says, "We may not be able to do big ministries to the homeless or those at risk....but we are continuing to be the church. We are finding ways to worship, learn, and fellowship."

Submitted by Carolyn Colerick-Shinkle



Don’t Put Off Until Tomorrow...

Churches have become very creative at stretching their budgets in order to meet the decline in donations and the increase in costs. The need for a multitude of outreach ministries within communities has gone up, but the financial contributions coming in have decreased. As a result, churches find themselves at a crossroads where they are forced to make difficult decisions. We want to go on the mission trip, so we’ll wait on repairing the cracked sidewalks leading up to the sanctuary. If we purchase a new organ, the congregation will appreciate the music during worship, so we can hold off on getting a new roof. Although making the decision to defer maintenance or repairs may seem like a good decision at the time, it will cost your church more in the end.

Deferred maintenance is the practice of postponing maintenance or repairs on your church property to save on costs that will allow churches to meet a reduced budget, or to free up funds from the budget to be put toward other expenses. However, the long-term implications of choosing not to perform necessary repairs or maintenance could lead to serious issues for your church. Some may think waiting another year or two won’t have much of an impact, that is until something goes wrong.

If one of our beloved elderly congregants trips and falls on the sidewalk on her way to worship on Sunday and requires surgery, or the leaky roof falls in on the brand new organ, we can’t help but reconsider the choice we made to delay maintenance and repair. In any facility, there are always things that need to be fixed or updated on a regular basis; if we choose to postpone routine updates and repairs, it will likely be much harder and more costly to fix these issues in the future. Churches that establish and follow an equipment maintenance schedule and maintain a detailed repair log will find their buildings and equipment are more economical and safer to run. It is important to remember the cost of deferring maintenance is much greater in the long run.

The high cost of deferring maintenance in your facilities also means the facilities will have a shorter life cycle. Aside from the direct impact this will have on your individual congregation, it also has a significant impact on your brother and sister churches at Insurance Board. The purpose of our financial ministry is to protect your church, its assets, and its people from the financial consequences associated with insurance loss. If churches make the conscious decision to actively engage in maintenance and repair, they are doing their part to help mitigate and prevent losses, and to help lower the cost of insurance for all.

The most overlooked deferred maintenance item for our churches is aging roofs! Water leakage results, sanctuary ceilings fall in, roofs are blown off in moderate to heavy winds, roofs mildew and mold! Having your roof regularly inspected and repaired can keep minor problems from turning into major remediation. For this reason, we recommend having a roof contractor inspect the roof:

- Provide a comprehensive inspection including the roofing materials for holes, broken or cracked surfaces, and flaking paint.
- Examine flashing around chimneys, skylights, vents, pipes, drains, HVAC units and near the walls.
- Check if previous repairs/patches are secure and holding.
- Drain the roof of any standing water.
- Clear gutters and downspouts of debris and ensure they are firmly attached to the building and ground.
- Inspect caulking around planned openings (ducts, pipes, conduits, etc.), clean out dry caulking and replace with fresh caulk.
- Clean skylights.
- Remove any debris from the roof: tree limbs and twigs, leaves, nails, glass, etc.



Claim Lessons Learned

The outlay of financial resources, time and emotional toll of any claim can be challenging. While many claims are unavoidable, we've found that many can be prevented through the use of effective loss control measures. Below are four scenarios from actual claims; each scenario contains valuable lessons that participants can use to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.

- Scenario #1: A guest attending a church service slipped and fell on the walkway due to an accumulation of ice and snow. The claimant sustained a severe ankle fracture that resulted in surgery.
- Scenario #2: A group of children were playing around in a gymnasium during a church afterschool childcare program. As a result of their rough horseplay, a child was pushed off a stack of floor mats and hit his head on the ground. The fall resulted in a significant injury.
- Scenario #3: A plaintiff slipped and fell on the sidewalk in front of a business that was leasing space from a church. The plaintiff alleged that the church negligently owned, operated and maintained the sidewalk and other premises leased by the tenant, and is suing the church as the landlord for damages. The church's lease agreement with the tenant did not contain any risk-transfer language.
- Scenario #4: A contractor using a torch to perform repairs on a church roof accidentally caused a massive 4-alarm fire when sparks from the torch ignited the asphalt shingles. The fire consumed the church administration building and a good portion of the sanctuary. The total cost of the fire was more than $15 million. The damages sustained were unable to be recouped from the contractor who did not have adequate insurance coverage to reimburse for the loss or to pay for the additional damages sustained by the other businesses that used the church facilities.

The common thread in all of these is that they could have been either avoided or significantly mitigated. Many accidents are caused by preventable hazards such as wet floors, broken and/or cracked sidewalks, and poor lighting. Others, particularly those involving tenants and contractors, can be mitigated by a contract containing an effective risk-transfer and insurance clause.

For example, slips and falls can commonly occur during the holidays – even with COVID-19 restrictions – because of increased foot traffic. Approximately one million people go to the emergency room each year because of injuries from these types of accidents, and according to the National Floor and Safety Institute (NFSI), fractures are the most common injury. This fits our first scenario involving the church attendee who slipped and fell on the walkway. Taking simple precautions such as routinely salting and clearing walkways of snow/ice would have prevented this accident.

Slip and fall claims due to icy or cracked pavement and/or compromised indoor surfaces have accounted for 50% of the general liability claims reported to Insurance Board since 2015. These claims can run from tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars. Utilizing a program of routine maintenance for sidewalks, parking lots and walkways is an effective way to lower the frequency of these incidents or prevent them entirely. Poor lighting can be another cause of slip and fall incidents. Churches should make sure parking lots are well-lit, especially with the shorter daylight hours during fall and winter seasons.

Playground accidents, much like our second scenario of a child who fell in the gymnasium, frequently involve children under 10 years old. According to the CDC, children between ages 5 to 9 have the highest rate of emergency room visits due to injuries from playground accidents with most occurring at school. In this claim, the child was under the age of 10. The CDC also says one of the ways to prevent these accidents is by providing adequate supervision. In fact, according to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, close supervision of young children may be the most important factor in minimizing playground accidents. In the scenario, it was alleged that there was little to no supervision at the time of the accident. The injury the child sustained underscores the need for our participants who offer afterschool care to ensure they provide a safe environment.

If a church is allowing a third party such as a tenant to use its facilities, the lease agreement should contain an effective risk transfer clause including requirements for indemnification, certificates of insurance and additional insured language. In scenario #3 the church didn't have this type of contract with the tenant. As a result, the church had no recourse against the tenant who would have been responsible for the upkeep of the sidewalk.

A fire can cause significant damage to property and the

Why Insurance Board?

Borne out of the wisdom of thought leaders within the United Church of Christ, Insurance Board was created by churches, for churches--to support and protect their ministries. As the only non-profit insurance program exclusively serving six denominations, we operate as a financial ministry. This unique distinction sets us apart from any other property-liability insurance provider. As your ecumenical partner, we understand your ministry; we know your stories, we visit your ministries, and we walk with you in the event of a claim.

Insurance Board is committed to providing superior property, casualty risk, and insurance management services. For 35 years, Insurance Board has been committed to ensuring your ministry receives superior coverage and top tier service. At Insurance Board, reducing risk and claims directly translates to lowering the cost of insurance for all churches.

Insurance Board also offers a suite of Loss Control services, most of which are available at no extra cost for participating churches. We provide a variety of tools and resources, including informative webcasts, publications, and claims mitigation services designed to keep your ministry and congregants safe. We continue to update critical COVID-19 considerations to assist ministries in planning, preparing and adjusting their ministries during these unprecedented times.

In celebration of our 35th Anniversary, we invite you to share how your ministry is lowering its risk. The first 35 entries submitted will receive a $35 gift card.

Join us in our campaign to #LowertheRiskLowertheCost! Click here to tell us how your church is lowering the risk. https://www.insuranceboard.org/lowertherisklowerthecost/



Claim Lessons Learned, continued

resulting interruption to daily operations can affect church ministries even after the damages have been repaired. On average, fires are the most severe of all the property damage claims reported to Insurance Board. Unfortunately, some are unavoidable. However, many can be mitigated or prevented by effective loss control measures. In the fourth scenario above, the church fire was caused by a contractor that used a torch to repair the roof of one of the church's main buildings. Most roofing contractor insurance carriers will not cover accidents involving roof repairs where torch work or similar methods are used due to the inherent danger that exists whenever heat or fire is applied in repairing asphalt materials. The contractor in this claim also did not have the appropriate insurance limits to pay for accidents caused by negligence. Because of the contractor's inadequate insurance, there was a question of whether the contractor possessed the necessary expertise to perform the work.

This claim eventually went to mediation and the issue with the contractor's insurance proved to be a factor in prolonging the settlement. In contrast, a few years ago one of our participants reported a significant fire claim caused by contractor negligence. The amount of this claim was in excess of $10 million. A mistake by the contractor caused the fire. In this claim, however, the contractor carried enough insurance to pay for most of the damages. Like the claim involving the church roofer, this claim was also settled at mediation. The contract's adequate insurance enabled the more timely resolution of this claim, and Insurance Board was able to obtain reimbursement from the contractor's carrier.

Before a participant decides to hire a contractor to perform major repairs, that contractor's insurance limits should be carefully reviewed. If the contractor is a roofer, the church should make sure repair methods involving torches will not be used, or that the contractor has the required skills and insurance to perform "hot work."

Additional information about contractor/vendor/tenant contracts and language can be found in the story on page 8.

Churches: Our Everyday Superheroes

Stories of Hope and Inspiration from Our Churches Across the Country

Homedale Presbyterian Church in Homedale, ID

What is a Superhero?

He or she appears to be an ordinary human being until circumstances suddenly require a rescue and the Superhero steps in to save the situation. Such a person is Sherman Takatori. Sherman is the husband of the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Homedale, Idaho, a small rural community on the Snake River west of Boise. During ordinary times he contributes music, singing a contemporary Christian song for our special music, and conducts the children's sermon time. He also bakes the communion bread from his sourdough starter.COVID-19 struck and on March 26 Governor Brad Little issued a statewide stay-at-home order. Many churches suspended all services and closed up. Sherman got ready. On Sunday March 26, Homedale Presbyterian Church went on as usual, with no congregation in the pews—we went on the air. Sherman attached his cell phone to a tripod with a bungee cord and live-streamed the entire service over our Facebook page. The response was amazing.

Viewers checked in from all over the Northwest, far outside the range of its membership and in far greater numbers. One signed in from British Columbia. A former foreign student watched from Pakistan. The following week the phone was replaced by a camera with Sherman behind the camera. Words to hymns were printed out in large print and shown before the camera so viewers could sing along. The responsive readings were shown for viewer participation. Sherman turned the pages in sync with the music and readings. He learned to cope with an obsolete router, limited broadband, and worn-out internet linkage. However, broadcast limitations did not bring an end to Sherman's other contributions.

On the contrary, circumstances continued to demand even more from this versatile individual. As related by nominator, Carolyn Rees, "When we were again able to meet in person, we arrived to hot coffee ready before the service, and freshly baked cookies from a novel recipe for the fellowship hour. Sherman discovered that our cleaning person was no longer cleaning, so he took on her chores as well. Two core Sunday School teachers resigned their positions. One new teacher was recruited and Sherman took the other class. There were other benefits to the live broadcast; when we reopened there were new people joining us, some of whom came a fair distance. We recognized from the locations of viewers that there were many people in the rural Northwest who were interested in our ministry, and we now envision continuing the live stream service. Rural, agricultural life is quite different from city life; city pastors make references to TV shows and movies never seen out here in an effort to connect with worshipers' daily lives. This falls flat. We are familiar with the life-giving properties of water, the persistence of weeds, the speed with which the seasons pass. A farmer is often faced with a sudden problem he must solve on the spot with available materials. Sherman comes by his versatility from broad life experience. He grew up on a farm and got a scientific education. He is a veteran. He is the go-to man on plant and animal pest control in the Idaho State Department of Agriculture and wrote the manual on control of gophers and voles. He comes up with surprises: a member contributed grapes from her vines. He pressed these into the tastiest communion juice served this side of heaven. Sherman is still filming with the phone but a neat adapter has replaced the bungee cord. So I nominate Sherman Takatori as Superhero of the year of COVID-19."

Submitted in by Carolyn Rees

Churches: Our Everyday Superheroes

Stories of Hope and Inspiration from Our Churches Across the Country

First Presbyterian Church of Downey, CA

All because of Karen.

Every member of the small congregation in Downey, California feels blessed to have the leadership of Dr. Karen Claassen. She came to the small congregation three years ago as a Designated Pastor to help them heal, and she has not left. Her progressive thinking coupled with her ability to be the hands and feet of Jesus in their midst, enabled Dr. Claassen to fulfill her job with care, compassion, vision, and clarity as she helped her congregation and community with true leadership skills during this pandemic.

First Presbyterian Church of Downey is not the only small congregation with limited financial resources whose many members have faced significant financial challenges during this time. Dr. Classen, when the opportunities arose for the church to apply for grants and other funds to support the ministry and staff, was quick to action, thus ensuring the church had the necessary resources to continue paying staff as well as meeting their other financial obligations. Dr. Claassen even took a personal cut in salary which started on week one, but she also donned her mask and led the first of many worships from the church steps.

With a servant heart, but limited technological resources and know how, Dr. Claassen was able to quickly put together weekly worship videos. She continues to be on the steps each Sunday morning during the traditional worship service time so that she can meet with anyone who needs prayer, and she coordinated additional drive-up/outdoor services. She sends handwritten personalized notes each month to every household within the congregation. She encouraged leadership to increase their personal communication with the membership, especially the most vulnerable. Under her leadership, the church held its first ever virtual VBS for children of all ages with stories, a magic show, an artist creating a Bible story animation, and so much more. Each day, Dr. Claassen welcomes everyone to "The Neighborhood" sharing stories and ways to be good neighbors.

Dr. Claassen has taken the challenge of the pandemic as an opportunity to rethink how the small congregation can do ministry within the community. During a recent sermon, she stated, "We have the opportunity to sigh deeply and keep our hearts soft so that what comes out of us is good and the Holy Spirit's fruit."

Submitted by Donna Huff

United Church of Christ
New Smyrna Beach, Florida



All because of Cindy.

Our everyday ministry superhero is our Insurance Board agent, Cindy Howell. Over the years Cindy has always been available, responsive and helpful. But this year, during difficult COVID times, she rose as our champion.

Her story follows: Unfortunately, we have been unable to have in Church services since March. Also, our thrift store was closed since March which accounts for 34% of our income. Tithing is often driven by in person worship. That said, every penny we can get/save is essential for our sustainability. After a workers' comp audit with our carrier, our bill rose from $900 to $2500! We had no changes of employees or pay rates! We called Cindy, she was calm, took initiative contacting the carrier rep, worked with us to provide documentation and helped us clear up the misunderstanding which occurred due to changes in business process by the carrier. We actually received a small credit!

Cindy is invaluable to us! We are surviving and continuing to do God's work because of Cindy! Thank you!

Submitted by Veronica Sciullo

Working with Contractors and Vendors:

Selection, Insurance, and Indemnity; Ways to Protect Your Church

Churches are known for welcoming the community with open arms. They operate many wonderful ministries that are a vital part of the community; this is what makes being part of a church so special. It is possible for them to maintain a welcoming environment and make decisions that are in the best interest of the church and its ministries.

Accidents can happen, even if we do our best to prepare. A person visiting the church in any capacity has the potential to sustain an injury or have their property damaged, even contractors, vendors, or outside parties who use your church. Although your church may not be directly responsible for the incident, the injured party can still submit a claim against the church's insurance. Without the proper contracts and documentation, the church may be responsible for paying the damages incurred by the injured party. It is critical for leadership to perform their due diligence with any individual who comes onto church property.

To ensure the future and sustainability of your congregations, it is wise to take appropriate steps that will help insulate the church from potential liabilities. Church leadership should require a well-drafted, formal contract; proof of insurance with proper limits that match the exposure/risk; and hold harmless agreements with indemnity language for any contractor, vendor or outside party who uses the facility for gatherings, events, or leases space (also known as tenants or third party users).

Although the church is a place to worship and enjoy fellowship, the church sometimes wears the hat of a business, as well as a landlord. Informal agreements could have unintended, financially disastrous consequences. Lack of formal agreements may constitute a breach of fiduciary duty for board members.

Whether or not rent is paid, churches should require a formal lease or third party use agreement with all non-church user groups. Lease/use agreements should:

- Provide a release and indemnification to your church for accidents that result from their operations.
- Outline insurance requirements for the tenant understanding that the amount of coverage should be reflective of the activity being conducted. Sample contract language could read: "Commercial General Liability coverage on an 'occurrence' basis, including products and completed operations, property damage, bodily injury, and personal & advertising injury with limits no less than $1M per occurrence, $3M aggregate." Tenant must provide a Certificate of Insurance (COI) documenting that the tenant's insurance fulfills the contract requirements, and demonstrate financial means to defend a claim under the lease/contract.
- Require "additional insured" status on the tenants' policies.



SELECTION *Is key*

What if the third party does not have insurance?

An alternative is available if the tenant has occasional use of church facilities and does not have insurance (such as support groups and weddings). Through a product called TULIP (Tenants and Users Liability Insurance Program), a third party can obtain liability insurance specifically for use of your church. TULIP allows the Tenant or User to purchase a low cost general liability product to cover their liability related to the utilization of the church premises, protecting the entity as well as protecting the church by providing an extra layer of insurance and including the church as an additional insured.

Upon approval of a short application, and premium payment from the third party user, Insurance Board is able to provide TULIP coverage. If your church has interest or a need for a TULIP policy for a third party user of your church, please contact your agent for more details.



Vendors, Contractors and Service Providers

Churches will frequently hire service providers to help maintain church property or provide a business service, assisting with anything from occasional tasks to urgent repairs. Vendors may also be used to provide on-going services such as cleaning.

Consider developing a contractor selection procedure. The process should include screening of vendor/ service provider, reference checks, licensure verification, and an evaluation of the contractor's insurance. Church board members or senior staff should review all selections and approve/ disapprove of any deviation from the procedure.

When your church selects a provider/business you should carefully screen the individual/company before hiring them.

Engage contractors or other service providers only with a written contract which contains a "hold harmless and indemnity agreement" and insurance requirements, and which requires that your church be provided "additional insured" status on insurance policies. The contract should also require the vendor to provide a valid Certificate of Insurance that demonstrates evidence of the coverage you outlined for the provider. There are several considerations:

- Business license – Require documentation of a business license as it may be required by the state and/or local jurisdiction.
- FEIN or SSN – If the business has employees, require a FEIN (Federal Employer Identification Number) as evidence the contractor will be paying employment taxes. Otherwise, require a SSN for a sole proprietor.
- Trade license – For construction or trades, require an appropriate license. States vary greatly on requirements for licensing of construction and building trades.
- Workers' compensation – Require proof of workers' compensation insurance. In states where very small employers are exempt from the statute, either require the coverage or consult an attorney regarding necessary contract terms to protect your church from a contractor employee's injury claim.
- IRS Form 1099 – Make it clear that you will be preparing an IRS Form 1099 for services exceeding $600 during the calendar year.

As previously stated, vendors and contractors should provide proof of insurance for General Liability, Products & Completed Operations Liability and Workers' Compensation. Additionally, coverage for Automobile Liability should be required for vendors using vehicles on your property, such as snow removal companies.

Churches should contact their local insurance representative when any claim-related issue arises. Certain issues should always be referred to your local agent.

Wondering if your activity requires a contract? In addition to all of those mentioned previously, consider all of these scenarios that should have a contract:

- Allowing another entity to use your church or even your parking lot to gather or conduct a meeting or activity. Either formal groups like Weight Watchers or AA or informal like a local knitting group.
- Any type of construction/repair work. If you think you are saving money by using a well-intended congregant, think again: use only licensed, insured and bonded contractors that you have vetted. Call references!
- Some churches benefit from having significant business expertise as membership – accountants, attorneys, insurance agents, human resource professionals, financial advisors and such. However, if the church plans to engage these individuals as professionals conducting work for the church, secure a contract before engaging.

Churches: Our Everyday Superheroes

Stories of Hope and Inspiration from Our Churches Across the Country

Community Presbyterian Church in Lee Vining, CA

Community Presbyterian Church, located in Lee Vining California, created a special program called "Lee Vining Cares: Neighbors Helping Neighbors," to specifically address the unfortunate impacts of COVID-19. With support from their local Superhero Lynn Boulton, the Church Treasurer, Community Presbyterian Church was able to assist members from their small town of three hundred.

Rev. Rebecca Watkins who submitted this story shared: "Our economy relies heavily on tourism. Most of our town folk are hardworking people, who work multiple jobs year-round." Just about everyone in the town was affected by the pandemic as small businesses could not open, leaving most of the community members without employment.

In addition, there was one person hospitalized with COVID-19 which closed a local business that had just opened; employees were asked to stay home and shelter in place. When the stimulus checks arrived, "Several young adults in town wanted to give their stimulus checks to support our local families heavily impacted by COVID-19. This desire to give was the impetus for our new community non-profit," said Rev. Rebecca Watkins. Prior to this outpouring of support there wasn't an avenue to give directly to the community, Rev. Watkins knew just who to talk to about creating a non-profit within the ministry.

Lynn Boulton, a servant leader in the church and former schoolteacher, did not hesitate when asked to assist. She promptly worked to establish this new non-profit arm of the church. With her previous experience in the banking industry and her giving heart as a former member of the Peace Corps, she was ready to serve the church in an expanded capacity. With support from the local community, Neighbors Helping Neighbors paid the rent and utilities for fifteen families in their town for several months, with one family still receiving that support today. Rev. Watkins shared, "To date, community members and others from surrounding areas have donated more than $22,000." In addition, they are continuously looking for ways to support those who have been impacted by COVID-19. "We could not have begun this non-profit without our Superhero Church Treasurer, Lynn" said Rev. Watkins. They are now looking for ways to support families in the future.

This small town, with one grocery store and two gas stations, is preparing for the end of the tourist season. They also plan to continue the "Lee Vining Cares: Neighbors Helping Neighbors" program after seeing its impact. With such a small, but generous population in the Eastern Sierra, the Community Presbyterian Church formed a board led by Paul McFarland and five others who gather by Zoom to talk about the needs in the community. They anticipate additional needs will arise in the slow season, and with the help of the congregation and the community, they are ready to address those needs. Rev. Watkins shared, "While we have several people who make this community service run smoothly; those who are out front and gathering the needs, it is Lynn who is our glue!"

Submitted by Reverend Rebecca Watkins

Churches: Our Everyday Superheroes

Stories of Hope and Inspiration from Our Churches Across the Country

Kaumeakeapili Church in Honolulu, Hawaii

Kaumakapili Church was founded in 1838 for the maka'ainana, or common people. The church has a long history of outreach ministry that began in 1975. A fire in the area left many homeless and Kaumakapili took them in and later established a Food Pantry and Free Store where people could get canned goods, clothing and household items. This progressed to an agreement with the Hawaii Food Bank that allowed the church to distribute up to 500 bags of food each month. With increasing numbers of homeless persons in the neighborhood, a special day was designated for them.



In 2018, a returning church member, Eugene Muratsuka, began to bring his truck that was adapted to create a kind of roll-out kitchen with a propane stove that allowed them to add a hot breakfast service and an invitation to linger for conversation. Eugene planted the seed to allow other church members to get involved with the hot breakfast service. Getting to know our homeless visitors as individuals created other possibilities for the Outreach Ministry to serve the community. The church was awarded a Neighbors in Need grant to offer Kuka Kuka to homeless persons, a "talk story" spiritual intervention using Hawaiian cultural metaphors. They were all set to start in May, 2020.

Unfortunately, COVID 19 hit the islands. Their neighborhood became the zip code with the highest percent of cases in the state. At the same time, the unemployment rate in Hawai'i was the highest in the nation. They had to close the sanctuary as well as suspend the Food Pantry, Free Store and hot breakfast wagon. Crisis brings opportunity, and so they adapted to the new requirements for social distancing. A new location for Kuka Kuka was found on the Windward side at a homeless kauhale (village) with an outdoor setting for social distancing.

In Eugene's words, "During quiet time, these words suddenly came to my mind…Set my People Free. Of course, I was taken by complete surprise because of the magnitude of what was being asked of me. When I sat down at service, I was further surprised that the Scripture that morning was from Isaiah 61:1-3. I took the words as confirmation to start the Houseless Outreach Ministry. It felt great to be an instrument of God in His work with the needy."

Working with the homeless can sometimes be difficult. According to Eugene, "It is a much more challenging ministry because a person needs to open their heart. This action will come at a cost to the giver because there will be hurt when one chooses to serve the needy with an open heart. It also requires passion and compassion from the servant and God provides the rest. God is the only One who can teach us how to truly love in the way that He does and our obedience in joining Him in His work is the beginning."

Eugene's ministry has grown to include 2 additional church members who have been able to gain the trust of visitors and help them with much more than food. Donations from church members and friends of the church have allowed the ministry to spread God's love to those most in need. A member of the Outreach Ministry takes his pickup truck filled with bags of food and distributes this while remaining safe in the cab of his truck to collect information required by the Hawaii Food Bank. Using Community Mission funds, the church provided supermarket gift cards to people in need. By adapting to the restrictions required during the pandemic, the Outreach Ministry has been able to continue its mission to extend the reach of Christ by partnering with the community for positive change. Kaumakapili church says, "Mahalo, Uncle Eugene, and thank you for all you do!"

Submitted by Ann Leake

Words To Live By
(By Mother Teresa) Guides Eugene's ministry

At the end of life we will not be judged by
how many diplomas we have received
how much money we have made
how many things we have done.
We will be judged by
"I was hungry and you gave me to eat
I was naked and you clothed me
I was homeless and you took me in."
Hungry not only for bread
but hungry for love
Naked not only for clothing
but naked for human dignity and respect
Homeless not only for want of a room of brick
but homeless because of rejection.

HR End of Year Wrap-Up

As we move into the holiday season and look towards spending time (remotely!) with family and friends, Human Resource Departments have several things on their plates to address before the end of the year. Below are some points to keep in mind as you prepare to wrap up 2020.

- Families First Coronavirus Relief Act (FFCRA) expires 12/31/20. This act provides for paid emergency sick leave (ESL) and paid emergency Family Medical Leave (EFMLA) for employees. Both of these programs expire at the end of 2020. At this time there is no indication whether the government will extend them into 2021.
- Now is a great time to review your employee handbook and make sure it addresses employment law updates, COVID-19 related policies, telecommuting, social media, attendance, emergency procedures, etc. If you have any questions or need assistance in creating a policy, Insurance Board participants have access to EPL Risk Manager (https://www.eplriskmanager.com/user/login?destination=my-littler) which contains a wealth of valuable information on employment practices.
- Schedule required compliance training. Several states (CA, CT, DE, IL, ME, NY) mandate regular training on preventing sexual harassment; additionally, 16 states (WA, OR, CA, NM, MN, MI, IL, KY, VA, NY, ME, VT, NH, MA, RI, CT) require COVID-19 workplace safety training. Even if COVID-19 training is not required in your state, you may want to consider training consistent with OSHA and CDC guidelines. Insurance Board's website has a dedicated resource page at https://www.insuranceboard.org/safety-central/covid-19-resources/ for all things COVID-19, with links to helpful sites and suggested best practices.
- Review your job application form – 35 states and more than 150 cities have instituted "ban the box" laws, which prohibit employers from including the question: "Have you ever been convicted of a crime?" on job applications. Depending on the jurisdiction, "ban the box" laws may regulate when an employer can ask about criminal history, provide background check disclosures and authorization forms, and conduct a background check. Even if this is not yet required by law in your locale, HR best practices suggest not including this on the application.
- Update your state labor law posters if you are in one of the following states: AK, AZ, CA, CO, FL, LA, ME, MN, MO, MT, NM, NY, OH, SD, VT, VA, WA. You can usually find free versions of the poster on your state's website; they are required to be displayed in a common area, accessible to all employees.



- Remind employees to check their personal information (address, SSN, etc.) on their paystubs in anticipation of W-2's being issued in January.
- Additionally, ask them to review and adjust their Form W-4 withholding information, especially if their number of dependents has changed during the year.
- Review employee and Form I-9 files with an eye to record retention guidelines. Dispose of outdated job applications and termination files.
- Ensure that employees' personnel and medical information are kept in separate files. There are multiple Federal and state laws that mandate confidentiality of employee medical records. HR best practice is that any employment-related documentation containing medical information must be maintained in confidential files completely separate from the general personnel file. That way, medical information won't be inadvertently shared with those who don't have a legitimate business need to see it. This includes applications for health benefits, leave information, and lists of medications.
- If you have questions or need additional information on any of these items, please reach out to us:
  - Website: www.InsuranceBoard.org,
  - Email: losscontrol@InsuranceBoard.org,
  - Phone: 800.437.8830, ext. 6.

Merry Christmas and Welcome 2021!

Churches: Our Everyday Superheroes

Stories of Hope and Inspiration from Our Churches Across the Country

Ashburnham Community Church in Massachusetts

Ashburnham, Massachusetts is a rural town. Main Street features two pizza shops, a hairdresser, town hall, a bank, a local grocer, a craft store, a shop for bagels, for hardware, and for liquor. The steeple of Ashburnham Community Church is lit at night, a beacon on the edge of a two-block downtown. Envision it on a postcard, covered in snow.

As beautiful as Ashburnham is, it is also small. The congregation struggles to keep its footing. Those coming to worship are aging, but not old. A few children, a tiny choir, the attendance dropping slowly, the income not enough to pay the bills. And yet, so many in the community depend on Ashburnham Community Church for food: a community meal six times a year, delivering dinner to a local shelter monthly, and a food pantry where food and conversation is shared with 24 local families.

All of that changed in March. Like churches everywhere, their first response was to clean everything really well, wash hands, greet with the elbow, and laugh nervously about staying away. As many congregations did, Ashburnham too moved to online worship with little or no technological expertise. But they saw church to be about who they were in the community; the light in the darkness, and to ask: "What about our neighbors?" When the sheep and goats of Matthew 25:31-46 ask the question: "When did we see you hungry?" both are surprised to discover that they did, or did not, feed Jesus. With no small amount of discussion, Ashburnham Community Church decided that now is the time they were called to see Jesus in those who are hungry, and to respond with food. Brenda, their pantry director, called all of the families to make sure they knew the pantry was open, asking that they keep six-foot distances, come in one at a time, and let others know that food is available. It was only a few days later that calls started coming. People had been laid off. Brenda packed an emergency bag of groceries for one family; the next day there were two more requests. Then the senior center closed, suspending their weekday lunch. A couple of people called to ask if they could donate food, money, or time. Pastors of street churches reported that enough programs had closed that people without homes are hungry, and afraid. One woman called to explain she was laid off; and she starts to cry as she asked for food for her granddaughter. A neighbor called asking for a way to get food to the man next door, who lives alone.

Volunteers were afraid of getting sick, and of infecting others. People in need were cautious of illness, while more immediately anxious about hunger. "We just have to figure out how to do this as safely as possible," Brenda says. "That's what we do at this church, we take care of our neighbors."

So the pantry is now open three mornings a week. People wait their turn in cars, or stand on the front lawn, six feet apart wearing masks. Volunteers work alone, stacking cans and bags of rice, or filling bags with non-perishable foods, or accessing the church voicemail so nobody gets missed.

It's hard to say what will happen to the light from Ashburnham Community Church. They have lost income from renters, and they worship online. But they haven't lost their faith that Jesus is there. For now, they live out the good news that the light shines in the darkness.

Submitted by Elizabeth Magill



Lower the Risk

Lower the Cost

Share with Us!



In celebration of our 35th Anniversary, we invite you to share how your ministry is lowering its insurance risk.

The first 35 entries submitted will receive a $35 gift card.

Join us in our campaign to #LowertheRiskLowertheCost!

Click here to tell us how your church is lowering the risk.

https://www.insuranceboard.org/lowertherisklowerthecost/



Saving Grace: Insurance Board Water Sensors

Insurance Board has partnered with HSB sensor technology to offer water sensors that can monitor, predict, and prevent water losses when you're not present. HSB is offering their innovative, 21st century approach to reducing water damage for our participants through the Sensor Systems by HSB program; this technology is part of the Internet of things (IoT) solutions for the insurance industry. By leveraging detailed data from sensors and local weather conditions, the program provides precise monitoring capabilities that can detect environmental changes and help to reduce or mitigate freeze and water losses.

Since Insurance Board implemented our new water sensor program, the first house of worship experienced the saving grace of water sensors less than one month after installing them! As a result of heavy rains that took place during Thanksgiving week, water began to leak into the church basement. Thankfully, the sensors detected the presence of water, and the church was notified immediately. Church members were able to identify a leak in the wall and seal it off to mitigate at least $21,000 of damage, with no significant disruption to their ministry.

Pandemic conditions and the arrival of the freezing season leaves many buildings, particularly churches, frequently empty and more vulnerable to loss. The current pandemic has introduced a new normal where many buildings, particularly houses of worship, are sitting empty for several days. Because this church had the benefit of being notified immediately, they were spared the frustration and misery of experiencing a cleanup during a pandemic this holiday season, as well as further disruption to their ministry.

Local Insurance Board Agent, George Hulme, from Fitts Insurance in Massachusetts stated, "While there is no good time for a loss, we are grateful the loss occurred in a church that had already signed up and installed the system. Churches want to be good stewards, and we are glad to be able to offer this technology to help them."

Over the last eight years, Insurance Board has averaged an $18,000 water claim every two days. In order to create a cost-effective program for houses of worship of varying sizes and construction, HSB developed three sizes of customized kits. This "virtual watchdog" system is comprised of sensors placed in strategic locations to monitor facilities 24/7. The sensors are easy to install and long lasting, up to 5 years on batteries.

As they never sleep, they are always on duty to detect water, freezing temperatures, power outages, and more. The sensors deliver alerts when critical adverse conditions are detected, such as dangerously low temperatures or the presence of water. HSB utilizes proprietary algorithms and live weather data to deliver accurate and actionable alerts. Alerts are sent to a designated list of people via email, text, or phone when an adverse condition is detected. Learn more about the water sensors available through Insurance Board at https://www.insuranceboard.org/safety-central/ib-water-sensors/ and sign up for your water sensor today.

Sign up today!



CEO Corner

Timothy S. Harris, CPCU
President and CEO

Highlight: Insurance Board Initiatives

For our participating churches and ministries, it may be apparent that Insurance Board is pursuing a number of initiatives for 2021. Included among them are the implementation of water sensors for selected participants, the adjusting of participant deductibles, and increased efforts to validate participant property values. These may seem ambitious, but all of these initiatives are designed to improve results and to ensure stability of the program long term.

Insurance Board was formed by churches for churches, as a vehicle to make churches safer places for ministry by offering an exceptional property and liability insurance product designed to protect church people and property. The program provides among the best coverage in the industry, including comprehensive property and general liability insurance, directors and officers insurance, employment practices liability insurance, pastoral counseling liability, sexual misconduct liability, crime, umbrella, and others. Insurance Board also provides a suite of free loss control services developed to help prevent or mitigate claims at your church or ministry. Often, it is difficult to appreciate the value of one's insurance coverage until faced with the financial consequences of an insurance loss. However, despite the best efforts claims do occur, and for 35 years we have stood by our participating insureds during their time of need. Because our program is only for ecumenical church and ministry partners, each participant shares in the losses of their brother and sister ministries. As a non-profit organization, any earnings generated by Insurance Board are reinvested in the program and inure to the benefit of all program participants.

Over the past several years, the insurance industry has been plagued by a myriad of adverse claim trends. Many will recall the 2017 hurricane season involving hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria. These storms caused record wind and flood damage. Hurricane Florence in 2018 caused catastrophic losses in the Carolinas. And the 2020 hurricane season has been the most active Atlantic hurricane season on record. Since 2016, CA and Pacific Northwest wildfires have also set records. Insurance Board has not been immune from these trends. For instance, as a result of these and other weather events, Insurance Board has paid more than $15M in hail claims over the past 5 years. While weather related claims are certainly anticipated by the insurance industry, the volume and frequency of such claims have exceeded expectations. In addition to weather related losses, Insurance Board has paid more than $20M in claims over the past 5 years related to water damage. These water damage claims are not flood claims. They are claims related to water intrusion from sewer backups, broken toilet tanks, sump pump failures, leakage from boilers, failure of water lines on appliances, roof leaks, sprinkler leaks, etc. While all of these claims are not preventable, we believe that a considerable number of them are. There are also a substantial number of these claims that are exacerbated by deferred maintenance at church properties. We believe that technology available today gives our participants and us the ability to mitigate the severity of, or entirely eliminate, the incidence of these claims.

$4,000,000 per year in water damage claims equates to nearly $900 per insured participant, per year. On average, this equates to roughly 7.6% of a participant's annual premium! It should be no surprise that mitigating water related claims has a direct impact on insurance premiums. To manage the financial impact of these claims, Insurance Board has invested considerable dollars to provide identified churches the ability to employ this sensor technology for an entire year, free of charge, at their facilities. After one year, selected participants will only pay the costs of monitoring. We receive no financial benefit from the program other than the benefit of reduced claims which positively impacts all participants.

We also made the decision to institute deductible adjustments for 2021. The average homeowner's deductible is $1,000, and yet we have participants in the program with property values over $5M and $10M with $1,000 deductibles. It actually costs us $1,000 to open a claim file on a new claim. In talking with industry experts, we realized that our deductible structure was simply out of line with industry and claim trends. Consequently, we made the decision that only participants having total insured values at or below $3M could maintain a $1,000 deductible.

Finally, you may have noticed that over the past several years we have been applying more scrutiny to property valuations. We have had several notable claims where, at the time of loss, it was determined that the participant's property values were far greater than the values listed. Because our policy is quite broad and does not include a coinsurance penalty like some competing programs (which penalizes insureds who do not carry a minimum amount of property insurance), in such instances we were essentially not collecting the correct amount of premium for the insurance actually provided. Discrepancies in valuation have the potential to create issues at the time of loss if the values indicated are insufficient to cover the actual loss. While it is the participant's responsibility to provide an accurate valuation of their insured properties, we are more intentionally working to identify where such valuation differences exist to assist the insured participant in arriving at a more accurate estimate.

While these changes may seem untimely during a pandemic year, claims have not subsided. In some instances, the pandemic has increased the severity of claims at churches having less personnel on site to notice emerging issues. Participant property claims have already eclipsed the amounts paid for in 2019. Each one of the initiatives highlighted is intended to ensure our ability to continue to provide the best value for the coverage provided, benefitting all participants within our faith community.

Our insurance serves you so you can serve God. Serve God

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