Peekskill Presbyterian Church holds 2016 Peekskill Music and Hope Festival

One of the values of Hudson River Presbytery is Passion – making visible the energy and power of the Holy Spirit. This past weekend that passion was evident as the Peekskill Presbyterian Church held a Music and Hope Festival. Isn’t it interesting that when one of the values, like passion, is present, that so many of the others are as well. As you read Daniel Harrison’s reflection what are the other HRP values you see at work? How is your congregation making visible the energy and power of the Holy Spirit?

By Daniel Harrison of Peekskill Presbyterian Church

The Good News Ministry of the Peekskill Presbyterian Church held its second outdoor evangelical festival on church grounds Saturday, October 8, 1:00pm to 6:00pm after an anxious week of tracking weather in the wake of Hurricane Matthew. The theme of the festival was Hope (1st. Corinthians 13:13) and was directed to the Peekskill community, a significant portion of which is unchurched or are lapsed Christians. More than half of the population is Black or Hispanic and the young people in this group are facing many challenges; a message of Hope seemed to the Ministry to be something that the community needed.

To achieve this a program was developed that tried to reach a variety of people, particularly the young, and we settled on a combination of Christian rock, dance, rap, classical, hip-hop, and message. A diversity of music was the principal feature of the event. Utilizing a Showmobile rented from the City of Peekskill, a combination of five groups and one individual vocalist offered the music; two rap artists also presented.

And two pastors offered messages of hope. The featured speaker was Rev. Andre Barnes of the Word of God Church and Ministries of Columbia, South Carolina. Brahms also made an “appearance” via a violin, oboe, and piano concerto. Our church partner, Gates of Heaven/Puerta Del Cielo, presented Hispanic Praise Gospel in Spanish. A children’s dance group, God’s Disciples X, presented an interpretative dance program; they are mostly seventh and eighth graders. Our pastor, Rev. Stephany Graham, opened the festival with a rousing opening prayer and welcome and Rev. Barnes closed the day’s event by gathering all present in a group prayer circle. We also had a supervised children’s craft section which operated throughout the program.

To make this event possible the church self-funded the event, with additional donations from two members of the congregation. The day’s event was staffed by a 38 members of the congregation (operating in two shifts), more than a quarter of the entire congregation. A food truck on the premises offered a variety of delicious foods. We also had a first aid table staffed by health care professionals. A number of planning meetings held over a number of months were needed to launch this event, including 2016 budgeting requiring session approval. Last minute program changes had to be dealt with as well. Cost of the event was approximately $4,300.
We estimate that about 100 people, not counting church members staffing the event, took advantage of the offering. At one point, the Mayor of Peekskill stopped by for a greeting and one of the music participants, a City Council member, also conveyed city greetings and welcome.