



Dear Friends:

Is it 2016? Did we just go through Hurricane Matthew? No. We have just experienced Hurricane Irma, a storm that ravaged the Caribbean and Florida, breaking many records with its strength. During this time I, and possibly you, have had anxiety; anxiety praying for the safety of family and friends. In addition, your heart may be hurting for those completely without homes, or food, or water, in the Caribbean. Storms of this size can change the landscape of the world. On the other hand, each time we have a storm, we come back more resilient. During the 2004 hurricanes of Charley, Frances, and Jeanne, our roofs blew open, hymnals and choir music got wet, Bibles got wet, and landscaping was beat up. We rebuilt. During Hurricane Matthew, we had leaks and lost lots of shingles but not whole roofs. We had water blow under the doors in brand new Peninsula Hall and cover our brand new floor with water. My office had water run down one of the walls. And our steeple was weakened by the wind. We learned and we rebuilt. Along came Hurricane Irma. Our new steeple stood strong; the lights inside started popping off and on at night for three days, but that was caused by a brown-out electrical condition. Once full power was restored, the lights worked again (and the new steeple is under warranty!) We had wet spots in the choir loft again- from sideways rain. But Dennis Hall sandbagged the front sanctuary doors, and the Peninsula Hall doors- no water! Two outside light fixtures blew down; one was repaired by Tom Arbogast, and one will be replaced. Our overflow parking lot sign broke, but Sam Bookhardt gave us \$202 dollars that he saved from his Eagle Scout project on that land. We will use that money to buy a new sign. All in all, we seek to keep making Westminster a “Mighty Fortress” physically and spiritually, to withstand the storms of life. Thank you to those who helped prepare God’s house for the storm, and to those who helped clean up: Tom Arbogast, Dennis Hall, Serge Moderie, P.J. Doyle, Carla Moorhouse, Kristin Downer, Wyc Woodfin, Gay Thoman, Jarrett & Ethan Moorhouse, Rodney Bookhardt, Steve and Beth Parker, and Deanna Minaberry, and Mary Ann, Donald Coleman and me. Perhaps others. That is a form of Stewardship - taking care of what God has entrusted to us. In addition we kept giving food through our food pantry. And over two Sundays, your generous hearts led you to contribute \$4,008.38 to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance through Westminster! We mailed the check on September 20th.

Almost everyone counts on insurance companies for protection, but I take issue with their calling a storm like a hurricane “An Act of God.” No; it is an act of nature. I do not believe God hurled storms on any of the communities hit by hurricanes, tornadoes, or earthquakes. Listen to the lesson of Scripture from 1 Kings 19.

Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind, an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; after the fire a still small voice. (And as Felix Mendelssohn concluded in his Oratorio “Elijah:” And in the still voice, onward came the Lord.)

The Lord is with the helpers, the angels, those who are standing with those who are broken.

Faithfully yours,

Jeff Sumner