

CORNERSTONE

SANDYLANDS METHODIST CHURCH



Flooding Update - March 2016

As we approach the three-month anniversary of Storm Desmond, and the devastating flooding that struck much of the North of England, the focus of our work here in Kendal is beginning to transition from the immediate crisis response to longer-term support as people slowly begin to rebuild their lives.

Progress on restoration work is mixed and can vary hugely from property to property. Many houses have been declared dry and are now in the process of being restored; for some this is a long and complicated job. Sadly, some houses are yet to be dried and warmed, which is distressing and disheartening for householders. It is a strange atmosphere on the Sandylands estate with so many homes effectively building sites. Floors, walls, doors, windows, kitchens all need to be replaced, along with electrics, plumbing, and decoration – before furniture and possessions can be replaced and moved in. Some people have been away from their homes for many weeks now, with no moving in date yet on the horizon. Others are still camping out upstairs, not wishing to be away from their homes. Those affected by the floods continue to need our support and prayers. Hearts need strengthening, morale lifting and energy renewed until that light at the end of the tunnel grows from a mere glimmer to a blazing lantern.

However, we are very encouraged that the first of our residents on Sandylands will be moving back into their homes this week! Genuinely, an occasion for celebration. Others have been given potential moving in dates within the next few weeks. We are now seeing local businesses reopen their doors, which is also hugely encouraging!

We continue to be humbled and amazed by the generous outpouring of love and support from so many individuals, churches, communities, businesses and organisations. Our stellar team of volunteers is gradually expanding, and to these wonderful people we give heartfelt thanks, for their time and help is truly invaluable. We have now appointed a finance team to oversee our flood fund. We have been blessed to receive such generous financial support and it is essential that we treat this with responsibility and wisdom.

Restoration work is well underway in the church and with walls and floors being replaced is beginning to look again more like the church we know and love. Our congregation continues to worship together at a local primary school, and the various community groups that ordinarily use our church have been able to continue meeting, either at temporary venues, or in among the restoration works! It has been heartening to welcome new members into our church congregation; residents who have been flooded and able to bear witness to the demonstration of God's love through our work in the community. We give thanks for the opportunities we have been blessed with to share God's love in both word and deed.

The 'Encouragement Cabin' remains open each day offering advice, support, guidance, fellowship, practical help and hot drinks to those who have been affected by the floods. Relationships are being forged and strengthened within and throughout the community – truly a silver lining to Storm Desmond's dark clouds. The 'Encouragement Van' has been out and about in the community, with a team of drivers and volunteers helping clear waste from flooded properties, move furniture and possessions to temporary accommodation, and collect and deliver donations. We're now looking forward to using the Van for helping people move back into their homes!

Work has begun to build a new play area in Sandylands – a project that has been on the cards for the last 18 months – and looks set to open on the 2nd April. The previous facility was unsafe and uninspiring, so it is very exciting to have a brand new play area ready to welcome families as they return to their homes.

The Recovery Group – consisting of various council members, third sector organisations, churches, and agencies all working together towards the flood relief – continue to meet each week to discuss how best to move forward. BERG (Business Emergency Resilience Group – part of the Prince's Trust) will be coming to Kendal in the next few days. They will have a presence at Asda and will act as a drop-in for flood victims offering advice on dealing with insurance companies, insurance problems and applying for flood resilience grants.

The core team here at the Cabin have each taken a much-needed and much-deserved rest and are now returned to the operation refreshed and reenergised, ready for the next phase of flood recovery. We continue to feel God's love and blessings upon us daily, and continually pray for wisdom and guidance in how we proceed with the work we have been called to do. We are blessed to have a huge support network around us, helping to lift us up as we lift up those who have been flooded.

The sun is shining as I write this, and the first signs of Spring are in the air. Truly a time of year to be reminded of and give thanks for the grace of God upon us.

Laura

