

## Celebration Moment #10

### Outreach, Benevolence and Missions

This morning we look at the history of outreach here at Friedens.

From the earliest days of our denomination, members of the UCC have shown compassion for any who need our help.

Congregationalists were among the first Americans to take a stand against slavery. Founding members of our mother church, Zion Evangelical, assisted escaped slaves by using their homes as stations on the underground railroad.

Building a place of worship and Christian nurture could be called the initial outreach of Friedens congregation. Members sponsored newly arrived immigrants and took them into their homes, and sent aid to victims of the Second World War.

Church World Service—that you know from CROP Walk fame—was founded in 1946 to help deal with refugees in Europe and Asia following WWII.

The organization obtained permission from the United States government to send U.S. Army surplus to Europe. Our members sent hundreds of these care packages to millions in danger of starvation. The church also sponsored the Henry Heise family from Germany, who had become displaced during the war.

Two missionaries who served in Japan in the 40's later served Friedens as pastors. They were Dr. Ralph Holland and Rev. Marcus Engelmann.

We traditionally have four all church offerings for outreach activities.

One Great Hour of Sharing supports our missionary activities around the world. It is important to know that the United Church of Christ does not establish congregations in foreign lands but works with agencies and organizations already in place.

Neighbors in Need supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States

Blanket Sunday provides disaster relief around the world.

Veterans of the Cross, also called the Christmas offering supports our retired clergy.

Locally, the social service arm of our Women's Guild has been tireless in their efforts since the fifties. Some of their activities include cancer pads for the Little Red Door, pillows and clothing for residents of the Altenheim, clothing for Central Ave. Methodist outreach program, canned goods and toys for Wheeler Mission,

gifts for Juvenile Center, eye glasses for the Lions Club, and rolled bandages for the Fire Department.

We first participated in the Crop Walk in 1992. In 1998 our members helped build a home for Habitat for Humanity.

In 2000 Friedens adopted support of a Sri Lankan orphanage and we continue to support Joicy Seevaratnam (Cee-Vera-Nam), a student at a girls' school in Sri Lanka.

Each year the Christmas Giving Tree and the Christmas in July Tree provide assistance for a designated local charity.

Members have assisted the Exodus program in helping refugees from Bosnia, and Burma.

Other recent outreach programs include active support for the Bread for the World program, Salvation Army Food Pantry, Concord Center, Thanksgiving Pies for Wheeler mission, the Greenwood Samaritan Center, Perry Township Volunteers, and Weekday Religious Education.

In 1995, Pastor Marc led the youth of Friedens on their first work camp. Since then our youth have participated in eight mission trips. In 2008 youth took their first international Mission trip to Mexico to build a new home.

In June of 2000, an Evansville church sent word that they needed two people to complete their mission to Nicaragua. Roger and Betsy Alting answered that call and traveled to Nicaragua to build block homes. They came back inspired by what Betsy called an "awesome experience." They then formed a Friedens group, and two more trips were made to Nicaragua. In 2010, several members traveled to the Dominican Republic.

Concern for the world we live in us has led to the formation of an Environmental team. Their projects include the community garden, the butterfly garden, and the recycling program.

May we continue to be challenged to share the love of Christ around the world in answer to His words from the parable of the Good Samaritan "in as much as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto me."