

The Sandy Hook Restoration Fund

June 2013 Six-Month Ministry Update



The Sandy Hook Restoration Fund & Walnut Hill Fellowship

www.walnuthillfellowship.org

Purpose: The Sandy Hook Fund exists to aid in the healing and rebuilding of the Sandy Hook/Newtown community by enabling and supporting immediate and long-term *community, counseling and school* needs and initiatives. All monies are given in the name of Jesus with the purpose of being His hands and feet.

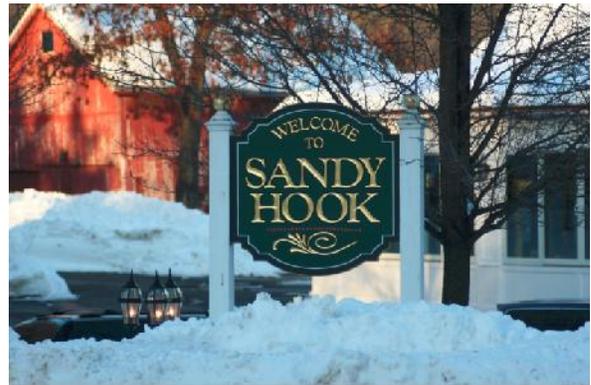
Guiding Board: Chairman Hal Wibling (Savings Bank of Danbury), and board members Rev. Dr. Clive Calver (Senior Pastor, Walnut Hill Community Church), Rev. Phil Morgan (Senior Pastor, Brookfield First Assemblies of God), Adam DePasquale, John Dischinger, Vicky Kowarick, Jacinta Mathis and Denise Shockley.

Fund Size: \$200,000

Contributors: More than 300 unique individuals, churches, schools, universities, non-profit organizations and businesses from around the world have given to the fund.

Fund Activity: Through the ministry of the local church and local organizations, the Sandy Hook Restoration Fund has provided comfort, help and healing to thousands of people in the Greater Newtown/Sandy Hook community.

- **Counseling and Support:** Providing ongoing professional counseling and trauma support to families who lost children, families of surviving children, first responders and the broader community via one-on-one counseling, public seminars, the Grief Share ministry, women's programs and counselors being available following major events. Hundreds have already been impacted by this initiative. As every child's birthday, as well as six-month and annual anniversaries of the tragedy, bring the pain back to the surface, counseling support will be needed for at least another decade.
- **Equipping and Training:** Providing professional equipping and training in how to help others work in the areas of trauma and grief for local church leaders, prayer teams, care teams and therapists. In addition to workshops and seminars, resources have been developed and dispersed. These resources are shared with the local community, as well as with several Boston churches following the bombing and with several Oklahoma churches following the recent tornados.
- **Healing, Comfort and Unity:** Organizing or hosting large-scale community events that bring together thousands from the area to heal, receive comfort and experience community. We have already hosted little Dylan Hockley's Memorial Service, "Standing in the Midst of Tragedy" with Philip Yancey, "Healing Newtown" with counselors and local organizations, "James Taylor Concert" for the Sandy Hook Elementary School community, and "Heaven is for Real" with Todd Burpo and family.
- **Evangelism:** With approximately 4,000 visitors having come through the doors of Walnut Hill Community Church in the past six months, the gospel has been clearly preached and the love of Jesus clearly shown. We have already seen more than 100 people surrender their lives to Jesus since the tragedy. Hundreds more are on a journey toward Him.



As a church of 3,500 people located 10 minutes away from Sandy Hook, Walnut Hill is well-positioned to make an impact in the community. In addition to some 800 Newtown/Sandy Hook residents who are connected to the church, several pastors and elders live in The Sandy Hook/Newtown community and call it home.

- **Financial Support:** Funds were provided to help those directly involved in the tragedy with pressing financial needs immediately following the tragedy in order to give them necessary space to heal. Funds continue to be made available for these purposes.

Future Opportunities:

Following a six-month assessment of the ministry needs in Sandy Hook/Newtown, we see great opportunity in three additional areas. While initiatives in these areas can be developed and launched relatively soon, we see them needing to be active for the next 5-10 years. Accordingly, additional funding is necessary to see long-lasting impact.

1. **Family & Marriage Support:** While it is easy to only focus attention on the individuals and families who were directly impacted by the tragedy, the reality is that thousands upon thousands of families in the Greater Newtown/Danbury area are experiencing strain and stress in their families. This data is easily measured by the great increase of care cases we are working on at Walnut Hill since December 14, 2012. Following the tragedy, the regular marital and financial stresses present in the community became magnified as pains of the past were brought to the surface. As a result, families that would have normally made it through a hard season find themselves in an emergency state. We are working on Christ-centered initiatives that will provide effective support in these areas and literally save families.

2. **Community:** We receive frequent comments from people in Sandy Hook that many families are lonely and attempting to walk through the pain, confusion and hurt alone. While this is true, Walnut Hill has five Community Groups operating in the town. Members of these groups communicate how well-supported and connected they feel. Additionally, these groups have been active in reaching out to friends and neighbors and even volunteering in the Sandy Hook School. Accordingly, we are working to begin a major initiative around launching additional Community Groups so that every person will have the opportunity to be part of a vibrant, Christ-centered “family.”

3. **Special Needs:** Following the tragedy in Sandy Hook, many rumors and wrong information were spread through social media and the news regarding those who live with special needs. As a result, fear,



Dylan Hockley's Memorial Service took place on December 21, 2012.



On December 28 and 29, the community was blessed by Philip Yancey's comforting words and wisdom.



During the weekend of June 7-9, 42 people surrendered their lives to Jesus through the “Heaven is for Real” event with Todd Burpo and his family.

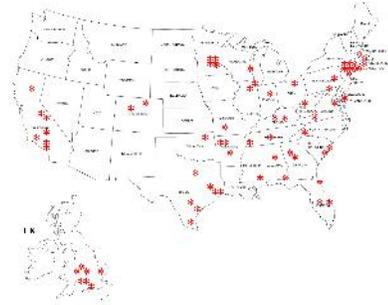
judgment and general confusion exists on the subject. This has not only impacted the general population, but also parents and families who have children or siblings with various disabilities. There is great need in our community to love and help those who have special needs and to support families as they care for their loved ones. We feel called to further invest in this area by becoming a truthful “voice” for those who struggle to speak for themselves and being a very tangible example of the love of Christ.

How to Give:

To enable long-lasting Sandy Hook ministry for the next 5-10 years, we are seeking to raise an additional \$200,000 to double the size of the fund.

Donations can be made online at: www.walnuthillfellowship.org or checks can be made out to *Walnut Hill Community Church* with “*Sandy Hook*” written in the memo and sent to:

Walnut Hill Community Church
156 Walnut Hill Road
Bethel, CT 06801



There are 88 churches currently engaged in supporting efforts to minister to Sandy Hook through giving or prayer.



James Taylor played for the Sandy Hook Elementary School community at Walnut Hill on May 26.

How to Keep in Touch: www.walnuthillfellowship.org

On the website, you will find resources geared to help you pray, speak to children and adults about tragedies, and find information about upcoming events and the latest news.

The Walnut Hill Fellowship is on Facebook. “Like” us to receive updates and prayer requests.

For more information, contact Adam DePasquale at adepasquale@walnuthillcc.org



On January 25, the Walnut Hill Worship Center was packed full of people from across Connecticut as part of the 7NOW worship and prayer series to pray for Sandy Hook and our region.

How to Pray:

The following page outlines specific prayer themes related to Sandy Hook, with the hope that they will both inspire your personal times of prayer and help mobilize others to join in. Our website and Facebook page will continue to communicate the most current prayer needs.

PRAYER THEMES

Pray for the Families That Have Lost Loved Ones: During this unimaginable time of grief, pray for comfort, peace, healing and hope.

Pray for the Children of Sandy Hook Elementary School: For the painful memories they continue to carry, pray for comfort, peace, healing, safety and protection.

Pray for the Sandy Hook Elementary School Staff: For the heroic teachers, administration and staff, pray for comfort, peace, healing and strength.

Pray for First Responders: For those who were first on the scene of this horrific massacre, pray for the police, firefighters, EMT workers, funeral home directors and hospital emergency room staff who cared for the victims. Pray for comfort, peace, healing, and strength for them to carry on.

Pray for Community Leaders: For civic, business and educational leaders whose decisions continue to make a difference in the community. Pray for wisdom, guidance, peace and strength for them to respond with godly leadership.

Pray for Teachers: As they finish the school year this month, pray for comfort, peace, strength, encouragement and wisdom.

Pray for Parents: As they seek to provide love, stability and a sense of safety to their children, pray for comfort, courage, peace and wisdom.

Pray for Newtown: As the town continues to move forward, pray that the Lord would allow Newtown to become a beacon of God's love and a symbol of hope.

Pray for the Counseling Community: For those who continue to listen, give counsel, guidance and care. Pray for strength, peace, and wisdom and comfort.

Pray for Protection: Acknowledging that this massacre was directly inspired by the evil one, Jesus taught us to pray, "Deliver us from the evil one." Pray for the Lord of heaven's armies to create a wall of protection around us, preventing any further attacks, and that Satan and all his works would be cast out of our community in the name of Jesus Christ, our victorious King.

Pray for a Revival in New England: May God move suddenly in our midst to bring a great harvest of Yellow Flowers (representing lives surrendered to Jesus) here in New England. May this be a turning point – toward surrender to Christ – for many children, youth and adults in the region.

Pray for New Believers: For those who are new to faith in Jesus, that these insidious events wouldn't undermine their newly forming faith. Pray for increased faith, peace, comfort, strength and encouragement.

Pray for Youth and Young Adults: Those under the age of 25 are at greater risk of being discouraged in their faith as a result of this tragedy. Pray that, as they continue to ask questions, God would speak to them, and bring encouragement, peace, comfort and increasing faith.

Pray for the Church: May the Holy Spirit equip, empower and unite the Church in this area – across all denominations – to preach the gospel with boldness, to be the hands and feet of Jesus, and to shine His light into the darkness, ushering in the Kingdom of God here in New England.



WORDS OF THANKSGIVING

"When tragedy is experienced, families are bewildered, hurt and overwhelmed. This fund provides individuals and families a safe environment to understand and work through the impact of this enormous event. It is so helpful to have a counseling fund that is readily accessible to those who were impacted by the Sandy Hook tragedy. Clients are able to receive counseling in their time of need without worrying about their finances. It bears witness to the love of Christ and the church's outreach to them."

– ***Georjean Lubus, Director of the Christian Counseling Center of Greater Danbury***

"Walnut Hill, you have been a true answer to prayer, providing a beautiful venue and volunteers for this James Taylor concert for the Sandy Hook/Newtown community. At every turn, no problems arose that could not be solved. What an element of calm I have had ever since you said, 'Yes.' God is still covering us! Thank you for all the prayers."

– ***Jen Rogers, Vice Chairman of the Newtown Arts Commission***

"My Community Group has meant the world to me and has helped provide my family with continual support and encouragement over these past six months. I cannot imagine how difficult it is for others who are not connected to community or are trying to get by on their own without knowing the love of Jesus."

– ***James Hsieh, resident and father in Sandy Hook***

"In the aftermath of December 14th, I could not have predicted the incredible response to this tragedy from the global and local church. I literally speak with families and individuals on a weekly, sometimes daily basis, who have been directly impacted by our work here in the Newtown and surrounding communities. Through the support of the Church, we have been able to help provide Grief Share, trauma counseling or family support resources."

– ***John Dischinger, Pastor of Care at Walnut Hill Community Church***

"While there are days when the magnitude of the pain and grief we feel is near overwhelming, I can testify that we see God at work in the lives of people throughout the community. The Sandy Hook Restoration Fund is enabling us to not only impact individuals, but also an entire community with the love of Christ."

– ***Craig Mowrey, Campus Pastor at Walnut Hill Community Church who directly ministered to families on 12/14***

"During our Bible study last evening in which a few moms from Sandy Hook attend in my home, a teenager who attends to help with my children during bedtime asked a question, 'What do those families who don't know the Lord do when they are so sad?' I answered her, 'That's the greatest thing about prayer. We can all pray for those who are angry with God right now and He will open the doors for believers to enter their lives and the light to be shone in the dark room.' In the months after the tragedy and the devastation that occurred, the fact that our loved ones are no longer with us was something so very overwhelming. The support and prayer from fellow believers are things that have personally held my family together. Our belief in the Lord and all He CAN and WILL do for us is truly something that gives us peace. Thank you to all the people who have prayed for our community, for I know that without God, this community cannot be restored."

– ***Anka Roberto, resident and mother in Sandy Hook***

