



Letter from the
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What we're all about

Reach Out, Columbia is committed to presenting the heart and works of Jesus Christ in clarity and purity. We strive to encourage a deeper, more steadfast love toward others as well as provide a vehicle for the body of Christ to come together as one voice in corporate agreement and expression of faith.

My heart sinks every time I drive down Trenholm Road. And Burwell Lane. And Rockbridge Road. And Jackson Boulevard. And Shady Lane.

Acres of mud dotted with tree stumps take the place of glistening lakes. The white egret that fished near the shore off Rockbridge Road no longer guards his corner like a morning sentinel. Gaping lots still littered with flood debris sit empty. Other homes, their bottom floors stripped of everything but the two by fours, look like fine ladies with their skirts hiked high crossing a muddy street.

A 75-year-old woman sits in my dental chair and tells me how she watched everything she owned, including her family photos, her grandmother's antique dresser, and her collection of 50-year-old love letters drown in the deluge. "We escaped with the clothes on our backs," she says, tears filling her eyes. "I didn't even have a toothbrush."

Seven months after the historic 1,000-year flood, Columbia is only beginning to heal. Children still turn fearful eyes toward their parents every time it rains. Families continue to wrangle with insurance companies, FEMA, and the bank. *Go? Stay? Rebuild? Tear down? Salvage or start over?* I weave in an attempt to dodge potholes on I-77, expecting to be pulled over at any moment and questioned for drunk driving.

Some days I wonder whether we'll ever recover. Other days I know we will. It's not the first time South Carolinians have rebuilt. We have a long history of reconstruction. Our statehouse stands as a testimony that it can be done. Charleston, Edisto, and Hilton Head Island remind us that recovering from a flood can not only restore, but refine—not just the buildings, but the people.

Stories like this month's cover piece about Mary Kent Hearon's love knot t-shirt project continue to surface. Every week I hear how individuals, families, churches, and companies continue to help South Carolinians put the pieces of their lives together. They assure me that while floods can wash our buildings away, nothing can drown our hope.

I've called South Carolina home for more than thirty years. I haven't always been proud of my adopted state, but after living through the 1,000-year flood, I'm holding my head high. Keep up the good work, Columbia. The best is yet to come.

Lori