BDM – Dayton, Ohio Tornado Response

The staff at Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) requested an allocation of $65,000 from the Emergency Disaster Fund to finance the tornado rebuilding work in Dayton, Ohio, in 2020.

Memorial Day weekend 2019 brought record breaking tornado activity to the state of Ohio, with the National Weather Service recording 19 tornadoes on May 27-28. The twisters affected 10 counties across the state. More than 7,000 homes were damaged and more than 1,500 destroyed, with most of the property damage occurring in the Miami Valley areas of Harrison Township, Trotwood, Northridge, Old North Dayton, Brookville, Beavercreek, and Celina.

The Southern Ohio/Kentucky District responded quickly by beginning clean-up and debris removal. District volunteers completed rebuilding work on several homes with materials funded by the district. Several Church of the Brethren members and BDM volunteers have been actively involved in organizing and planning for the long-term recovery, meeting with community leaders and serving on sub-committees looking at the rebuilding and construction aspects of the recovery.

BDM began plans to open a rebuilding site in the Miami Valley in April 2020, but restrictions due to COVID-19 put everything on hold. Local BDM leaders will begin working as soon as possible on volunteer housing at Memorial Presbyterian Church in Dayton. Project supplies will be transported to Ohio from the closed Tampa, Fla., site. Southern Ohio/Kentucky BDM leadership has been working for months with Memorial Presbyterian and local officials to ensure that repairs and safety measures are in place to house volunteers. Additional measures are being taken to address protocol related to COVID-19.

The Miami Valley Long-Term Recovery Operations Group will identify and vet cases and fund the materials for the project, which will be modified from the beginning to adapt to the COVID-19 realities. Only local BDM volunteers within driving distance will be accepted starting July 13 and serving a week at a time. Groups will be limited to 8-10 people and extensive COVID-19 protocol will be followed. The tentative plan is for out-of-state volunteers to begin serving in August. All dates are subject to change.

Grant funds will be used for volunteer travel and expenses, tools, equipment, and leadership and will enable recovery and rebuilding for qualified survivors who have seen a delay in help due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will continue the recovery work begun by the very active BDM network in the Southern Ohio/Kentucky District.

APPROVAL for this allocation was given by Roy Winter, associate executive director, Brethren Disaster Ministries; Ed Woolf, treasurer; David Steele, general secretary; and Mission and Ministry Board members Lauren Seganos Cohen, Thomas Dowdy, Carl Fike, Lois Grove, Heather Gentry Hartwell, Dava Hensley, John Hoffman, Paul Liepelt, Diane Mason, John Mueller, Joel Pena, J. Roger Schrock, Paul Schrock, Colin Scott, Christina Singh, Patrick Starkey, and Carol Yeazell.

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