



Vol. 19, Fall 2018

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Rebuilding Homes • Nurturing Children • Responding Globally

Responding to Hurricanes Florence and Michael

The two strongest storms of the 2018 Atlantic hurricane season caused overwhelming damage from rain, wind, flooding and storm surge. Hurricane Florence made landfall on September 14 on the North Carolina coast as a slow moving Category 1 storm. It brought record levels of rainfall in North and South Carolina, flooding many of the same areas hit by Hurricane Matthew two years earlier. Less than a month later, on October 10, Hurricane Michael came ashore near Mexico Beach, Fla., as a Category 4 storm, the strongest hurricane to ever hit the Florida panhandle and the third strongest to hit the continental U.S. Brethren Disaster Ministries and Children's Disaster Services are once again serving the most vulnerable members of the community facing challenges presented by these devastating storms.

Hurricane Florence caused initial flooding when up to 35 inches of rain fell in some places, and secondary flooding as rivers continued to crest for several weeks afterward. The storm claimed at least 53 lives. By mid-October, a month after landfall, North Carolina shelters still housed survivors and FEMA had reported over 140,000 individual assistance applications.

CDS volunteers, on stand-by before Hurricane Florence hit, were requested by the American Red Cross to deploy a few days after landfall to shelters in both Carolinas. They faced extreme challenges getting to their assigned locations due to impassable roads. The South

Carolina team was eventually re-deployed to North Carolina. The first teams were relieved by additional volunteers. In three and a half weeks, 32 CDS volunteers provided a calm, safe and reassuring presence for 550 child contacts. Another team of three volunteers served 15 children in two days in a Maryland shelter for families displaced from the Carolinas.

As Hurricane Florence developed, it was clear that the BDM Carolinas Rebuilding site in Lumberton, N.C., was in the projected path of storm. In anticipation of the wind, rain and flooding to come, BDM weekly volunteers, who had come to work on Hurricane Matthew (2016) recovery, committed to finish repairing a roof and to help move items in a shared warehouse to higher shelves before evacuating just a few days after they arrived. BDM leadership moved vehicles to a safer area, secured the trailers, filled up water containers and prepared to stay during the storm at the project housing site in a

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With Hurricane Florence headed toward Lumberton, N.C., BDM project leaders strapped down the shower and other trailers and moved vehicles to lots with fewer trees.

Photo courtesy of BDM

God at work in Puerto Rico

by Carrie Miller, Jeff Bruens and Roy Winter

Despite the continued challenges in Puerto Rico a year after Hurricane Maria hit the island, Brethren Disaster Ministries has moved forward in its hurricane response. Working with the Church of the Brethren Puerto Rico district Recovery Committee and other dedicated volunteers, the home rebuilding phase of the recovery began in September 2018. Carrie Miller stepped forward to be the volunteer manager, case work support and translator for the response. As the rebuilding project began, Carrie was initially supported by Jeff Bruens, an experienced BDM project leader with 18 previous service work trips to PR.

The bulk of the current response work involves building and securing metal roofs and treating homes for mold to create a safe living environment. Most of the building materials come through a special FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) program called VALOR, at no cost to the homeowner or BDM. Hurricane Maria also had a major impact on employment and farmers. The COB's Global Food Initiative and BDM are working together to support farmers to recover, plant new crops and in turn support the employment of farm workers.



BDM volunteers work on the roof of a house in Puerto Rico that was mostly rebuilt after it was damaged during Hurricane Maria.

Photo by Carrie Miller

In the months since the rebuilding project began we have seen God working through people in amazing ways.

God worked through a delegation from the Dominican Republic COB who helped rebuild the home of David and Suheil, completing a circle that began when a delegation from Puerto Rico responded to Hurricane David in 1979, inspiring the start of the COB in the DR.

God is working through the Puerto Rican COB, a “not so big” group of seven churches. The district Recovery Team is identifying families that need our help and provides critical case management support for the project.

God has provided volunteer housing through the Castañer Church of the Brethren in the central mountains of PR, as well as volunteers who responded to the call on short notice. We are confident that God will continue to provide volunteers in 2019 who are physically fit, can do heavy lifting and are able to work in a hot and humid climate. Potential volunteers can learn more by contacting Terry at 410-635-8730 or tgoodger@brethren.org. Assistance with flight costs is available, if necessary, through the district or the BDM office.

The Puerto Rico project is not a typical BDM project in many ways, particularly due to the daily challenges. Like many communities, Castañer continues to struggle with unreliable water and electricity. Communication in Spanish can be a challenge



God's timing: Volunteers from the Church of the Brethren in the Dominican Republic had the exact expertise needed to rebuild this home damaged by Hurricane Maria.

Photo by Jeff Bruens

for leaders and volunteers alike. On the other hand, the project leaders have shared the many blessings they have seen. For example, the Puerto Rican brothers and sisters and they have been inspired by David, the homeowner of the project's first rebuild, as he works alongside the volunteers and continues on his own in the evenings and the weekends.

In a recent reflection Carrie shared: “The churches of the Puerto Rico district have shown dedication to helping their communities recover even though they are very busy and are recovering from the hurricanes themselves. My favorite experiences so far have been going to host family's houses for dinner and leading an apple pie workshop with a group of women from the church. The best part of working in sometimes difficult conditions is continually seeing how God teaches me patience, flexibility, and the beauty of His faithfulness and timing in everything. **It is undeniably our God's victories that we are able to accomplish what we do here.**”

Rebuild Program updates

Carolinas Site

The BDM rebuild site serving both North and South Carolina, with double the capacity of a typical BDM site, is still operational. Housing remains at the First Presbyterian Church in Lumberton, N.C., as a base from which volunteers can work in both states. Multiple groups, with as many as 30 volunteers, arrive each week to serve together repairing homes damaged in 2016 by Hurricane Matthew. Some of that work now involves clean-up at homes that were re-affected by Hurricane Florence in September 2018. Given this new

disaster, the project site is anticipated to stay as a double site until at least April 2019, with the possibility of continuing there as a double site or splitting into two separate sites either in the same area or elsewhere. Much depends on the work available through our partners.

DRSI in USVI

September 6 and 16, 2018 marked the one year anniversaries of Category 5 hurricanes Irma and Maria, respectively, which hit the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) impacting over 120,000 people. The Disaster Recovery Support Initiative (DRSI), a partnership project with the disaster ministries of the Church of the Brethren, United Church of Christ (UCC) and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), deployed staff shortly after the events to start supporting the long-term recovery group that was forming on St. Thomas. Two DRSI staff and two UCC volunteers continued that support until August 2018, when they were all demobilized. BDM has served as the fiscal agent for this partnership, accepting outside grants worth \$262,000 from Church World Service and the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands to support the work of the St. Thomas Recovery Team (STRT). DRSI will continue to support STRT and the recovery on the island both remotely and through volunteers from the denominations.

New DDC Orientation

On September 26, 2018, the BDM office hosted new district disaster coordinators (DDCs) Jeff McKee (Mid-Atlantic) and Ron and Kelly Junkins (West Marva) for an orientation aimed at sharing information and preparing them for the role they have been called to serve by their districts representing BDM. Each district of the Church



North Carolina: A double crew of BDM volunteers race to complete this Hurricane Matthew damaged roof before the arrival of Hurricane Florence.

Photo by Paul Stutzman

Remembering Bob Pittman

Robert “Bob” Pittman died on October 12, 2018. Bob and his wife, Marianne, served BDM as Interim Directors from January to June 1999. Bob also led many disaster leadership trainings and served over many years as a disaster project leader. Marianne recently shared that working with BDM had brought much meaning to their retired life. Upon learning of Bob’s passing, BDM volunteer Dale Ray expressed what many felt about Bob, saying, “He was a fantastic leader and seemed to have a kind, gentle, loving way of life. I feel blessed to have been in the same room with such a witness for our Lord.”



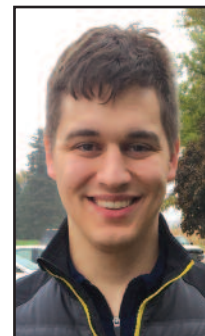
Bob Pittman, here with his wife Marianne, exemplified servant leadership in his many roles with BDM. His passion for disaster recovery was an inspiration. Photo courtesy of BDM

of the Brethren appoints at least one person as DDC to recruit for, and share information about, the BDM programs as well as to serve in their local areas when disasters strike. Several DDCs have recently retired and we want to thank them for their service to BDM and their districts: Laura Pfeiffer (Mid-Atlantic), Wallace Whittaker (West Marva) and Jim Kropff (Virgina, now served by Ed and Susan McKimmy). To find out who your district’s DDC is, visit our website at www.brethren.org/bdm/contactus.html.

Welcoming Niko Sosna, BVS volunteer

Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) volunteer Nikifor “Niko” Sosna began his year of service with BDM on October 22 and will work on the Carolinas rebuilding site.

Niko, who hails from Saskatchewan, Canada, learned about BVS from his father, who had served in BVS in Poland. Niko has experience with Auto CAD (design software) and has worked as a machinist, a farm worker and in construction. Please take the time to welcome Niko when you see him!



Barbara Siney: Experiencing Florence—Experiencing God

BDM disaster project leaders Barb Siney and her husband Ron served as part of the BDM Rebuilding leadership team in Lumberton, N.C., in September 2018. Soon after they arrived, it became clear that Hurricane Florence was going to cross directly over Lumberton.

Out of her element, Barb contemplated God's purpose in having her there at that particular time. But that became clear as she reflected on her experiences. She recalled that "Looking back, I now see that now see that observing humanity after the storm had a significant impact on me." Firstly, as she saw the stress associated with the decision making by the BDM leadership before and after the storm, Barb was able to observe and appreciate how well the BDM leadership performed in response.

Three further instances of revelation came to Barb. While walking a few days after the storm and moving fallen branches out of the way of sidewalks and streets, Barb was met by an older woman, walking with a cane, who came out of her house to say thank you and told her story. Barb was touched, saying "There it was, **gratitude** in the midst of trauma, loss and destruction."

A chance to assist with unloading a truck with emergency supplies provided two more revelations, this time from persons living in marginal circumstances but filled with compassion and desiring to serve. An older man who was "painfully thin" with well-worn clothes, arrived on a bicycle and pulled a crumpled bill and some coins from his pocket, saying clearly, "I want to contribute too." Barb said, "He left those of us who witnessed this event stunned to have seen, before our very eyes, such **abundant giving out of poverty.**"

Another man worked steadily but kept to himself, obviously not belonging to the group. He was by far the most physically strong person

there. When Barb noticed others struggling with a load, she only had to touch the man on the shoulder and ask him to help and he would do so without a word, returning to his own work afterward. Later she asked who he was and was told "he's a homeless guy who just wanted to help." Taken aback, Barb observed, "**The one so many may reject** was the only one who could provide the help needed."

Hurricanes

continued from page 1

church in an area that does not typically flood. A little over a week later, the site reopened to regularly scheduled volunteers who continued to work on Hurricane Matthew cases and began mucking out previously rebuilt homes that had been reflooded during Florence, including in Nichols, S.C., where all the homes previously worked on by BDM volunteers had filled with six to 36 inches of water.

Hurricane Michael developed very quickly in the Gulf of Mexico, growing from a tropical depression to a major hurricane in just a few days. Damage from the storm surge, wind and rain was catastrophic. Two weeks after the hurricane, shelters in Florida and Georgia still housed close to 1,000 survivors and FEMA had already received over 100,000 individual assistance applications, with many more expected. At least 45 deaths have been associated with Hurricane Michael.

CDS identified volunteers willing to respond to Hurricane Michael on very short notice. On October 14, four days after landfall, a CDS project manager traveled to Florida to meet with American Red Cross and shelter staff to discuss a CDS deployment. By October 17 two volunteer teams began working in two large shelters in Panama City, one of the hardest hit areas to support the affected children and their families. Ten new

When Barb returned home and reflected on her experiences she recalled: "I recognize that although I was feeling out of place, I was exactly where God intended me to be. I was witnessing God first-hand in people I encountered from mainstream to marginalized, each one a child of God, each one a beacon of light out of the darkness."



CDS volunteers provide a safe environment where children whose lives have been upended by a disaster (in this case, Hurricane Florence) can play, be creative, use their imagination or perhaps just find a quiet space. It is a place where the focus is on them, rather than the disaster.

Photo by Erin Myers

volunteers relieved them and by the end of October these 24 volunteers had already seen 338 children.

BDM will continue to work on Hurricane Matthew damaged homes in the both Carolinas and will explore options for Hurricane Florence relief and recovery. CDS maintains close relations with its partners and will continue to respond in Hurricane Florence and Michael affected areas as needed.

To learn how you can support the BDM and CDS programs and volunteers responding to hurricanes, please visit www.brethren.org/bdm/hurricane-response.html or contact BDM at bdm@brethren.org or 410-635-8731.

CDS deployments, Summer/Fall 2018

Hawaii (May/June 2018)

CDS sent teams to Hawaii in June to continue the response to the volcanic eruption that was begun by local volunteers Petie Brown and Randy Kawate. Two teams of four volunteers served in three locations in Pahoa and Keaau. By the end of the response, on June 30, the ten volunteers had cared for 257 children.

McAllen, Texas (2018: August, October, November)

CDS volunteers served at the Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen, Texas, a center for immigrants waiting to be placed with a family member in the U.S. The August and October teams both served 1,600 children. Another team arrives in November.

Articles about the deployment are included on the Church of the Brethren Messenger website: www.brethren.org/messenger/articles/2018/every-day-is-a-new-beginning.html (by John Kinsel, project manager) and www.brethren.org/messenger/articles/2018/the-lucky-ones.html (by Carolyn Neher). Kinsel ended his article by describing the scene every day as a new group was warmly welcomed at the center, saying "Watching those faces change to looks of surprise, followed by broad smiles, made our day every time! It was a blessing to be a part of this humanitarian work, staffed by volunteers from many faiths from across the United States, as we 'welcomed the stranger'!"



Project manager John Kinsel led the initial CDS deployment to the Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen, Texas. Volunteers sometimes saw 70 or 80 children a day.
Photo by Kathy Fry-Miller

Tracey, Minnesota (August 2018)

A CDS team cared for 15 children at a Multi-Agency Resource Center following flash flooding in southern Minnesota. They had been requested by the disaster division of Child Care Aware of America, the national Child Care Resource and Referral network. The deployment provided the opportunity for a few new caregivers to get out on a response and have a good experience with a caring, supportive group of volunteers.

Hurricane Florence (September 2018)

The Hurricane Florence CDS response began four days after landfall. A total of 32 volunteers served 550 children in North Carolina (an average of 25-35 a day) over the course of 24 days. Thankful families expressed gratitude on the CDS Facebook page, with comments such as "*The kids have been so excited to see the 'playtime people' this morning*" and "*The children and parents REALLY needed you. Thank you for what you do!*"

At the request of the Maryland Department of Human Services,



CDS volunteers play "school" with children at a school in North Carolina that served as a shelter for families affected by Hurricane Florence. *Photo by Erin Myers*

three CDS volunteers served two days in a temporary shelter in Maryland for families displaced from the Carolinas. They saw 15 different children between the ages of two and fifteen.

Hurricane Michael (October 2018)

As Hurricane Michael made landfall on October 10, CDS had two volunteer teams on stand-by for deployment. A CDS project manager was identified and deployed to Florida after the hurricane to work with the Red Cross to locate the best place to send volunteers. Volunteers arrived in shelters in Panama City, Fla., on the eighth day after the hurricane hit and set up their childcare centers. A second wave of volunteers relieved them at the end of October.

Kathy Fry-Miller retires

We celebrate the work and service of Kathy Fry-Miller, who retired as associate director of Children's Disaster Services on September 13, 2018. Kathy will be missed for her leadership, passion for children and kindness to all. She plans to continue as a CDS volunteer and trainer and to help with special projects.

A note from Kathy: "I have thoroughly enjoyed this work, and as I



Photo by Kelly Boyd

have said many times, it could not be done without you, our dedicated volunteers! Your passion and compassion, your integrity, and your thoughtfulness are all inspiring to me, both personally and professionally. I will continue to be involved with CDS and even though we never hope for disasters to happen, I would be grateful to serve with any of you out on a disaster response! Thank you!"

Children's Disaster Services updates

CDS leadership development and support

The first online CDS Critical Response Childcare training was completed this summer by 35 experienced CDS volunteers. They did a combination of reading, watching video clips of national partners, written assignments, a group project, and final interview. Although many expressed that they missed face to face interactions, others appreciated being able to work at their own pace.

Another first was a coordination call of Area Coordinators, who have agreed to be the contact person for their multi-state region, state, partial state, or large metro area and who spread the news about CDS as they attend and/or present at meetings, exercises, task forces, and conferences. The conference call included updates as well as presentations by Mary DeWitt-Dia of national Red Cross and Katie Nees, director of CLDR. The group would like to hold a coordination call at least two times each year.

External funding

We continue to be grateful to funders who support the work of CDS and special projects –

- United Methodist Committee on Relief—a new two-year grant, “Strengthening Partnerships Project”, to develop more local partner connections and CDS leadership
- Week of Compassion of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)—continued funding to expand CDS work in the Gulf Coast and other vulnerable regions of the U.S.
- Save the Children—funding to support multiple volunteer deployments and children’s play materials

New resources from CDS

CDS has developed the following resources in English and Spanish: *Trauma and your children* and *El trauma y sus hijos* (for parents or guardians after disasters or traumatic events) and *From fear to hope* and *Del miedo a la esperanza* (helping

children cope with war, terrorism, and other acts of violence). These cards replace the previous children and trauma brochures and can be found, along with other resources, at www.brethren.org/cds/resources.html. Feel free to print these out on card stock or place an order for them through cds@brethren.org.

Spring 2019 Trainings

The following workshops are scheduled for spring 2019. Please spread the word about these opportunities. Registration information is available at www.brethren.org/cds/training/dates.html or by emailing cds@brethren.org.

- Washington, Pa.—February 22-23
- LaVerne, Calif.—March 23-24
- Chicago, Ill.—April 10-11 (Child Life Specialist specific)
- North Manchester, In.—April 12-13

Please take the time to update your contact information and current availability with CDS (cds@brethren.org) to ensure that we can contact you in the event of the next response request.

CDS welcomes Lisa Crouch as associate director



Lisa Crouch began as CDS associate director on August 27, 2018. Lisa graduated from Western Michigan University with a

bachelor's degree in Child & Family Development/Psychology. She is a Certified Child Life Specialist and participated in the 2017 Hurricane Responses as a CDS volunteer.

Lisa lives in Tekonsha, Mich. She and her husband, Chuck, have two

children and have hosted 13 exchange students from various countries since 2010.

A note from Lisa: *“I have always had a desire to help people, and quickly found my heart and passion is with empowering children to overcome obstacles they face. My hobbies include reading, scrapbooking, and anything fun in the outdoors. My daughter and I completed our first half-marathon earlier this year. I feel blessed to begin this journey with CDS and look forward to meeting lots of new people, traveling to different parts of the country, and have an impact on children facing disasters on a national level.”*

Position opening: Director of Brethren Volunteer Service

The Church of the Brethren is seeking a director of Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) who will be an energetic and dynamic leader who connects well with people of all ages, is skilled at leading through programmatic change and facilitates Christian discipleship formation. Major responsibilities include directing the program, ministry and staff of BVS and Brethren Workcamps. This is a full-time salaried position. For more information, visit www.brethren.org/about/employment.html.

Nigeria Crisis Update: Livelihoods, Soybean Initiative & Trauma Counseling

by Roy Winter and Jeff Boshart



Members of the women's Victory Soybean Cooperative near Abuja, Nigeria, work together to become self-sufficient.

Photo by Jeff Boshart

With a primary goal of helping families recover from the violence, return home and support themselves, the Nigeria Crisis Response (NCR) is currently focused on livelihood, agricultural recovery, trauma recovery, home repairs and education. Progress toward recovery is being made even though the northeast and middle belt areas of Nigeria continue to experience violence. There are also concerns about increased violence both before and after the upcoming congressional and presidential elections in February 2019. Despite this, the NCR will continue as a major Church of the Brethren program in 2019. The NCR partners, Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN), COB and Mission 21, will meet in December 2018 in Jos, Nigeria, to complete the 2019 planning process and to outline the planning for 2020 and 2021.

Highlights of the NCR include:

Livelihood (*supporting small business creation, job training and providing tools and equipment so families can support themselves again*)

In response to the need for tailors and seamstresses in displaced and resettled communities, several BDM partners are training displaced single mothers in sewing and running a small business. When training is

complete, a new sewing machine is provided. Surprised to be selected for a sewing machine, Hajara, a member from ECWA (Evangelical Church Winning All), said, "I now understand what is meant by agape love that it is unconditional."

Agriculture (*supporting livelihood and food production for farming families*)

One aspect of the multifaceted agriculture programming is the Soybean Initiative, a long-term project started in 2016 in partnership with the Church of the Brethren's Global Food Initiative (GFI). It provides technical training and support for community level education with the goal of increasing awareness of soybeans as a viable commercial crop and developing a value chain that will provide more economic support for farmers and farming communities.

The program is led by the Soybean Value Chain Team, consisting of Nigerian agricultural professionals, all of whom are members of EYN. The team is supported by Jeff Boshart, GFI manager, and Dr. Dennis Thompson, a researcher with the University of Illinois and the Soybean Innovation Lab. A soybean planting guide developed by the team can be found at <http://soybeaninnovationlab.illinois.edu/resources-9>.

Farmers have reported good soybean production and profits in

2018. An example of this success is the Victory Soybeans Cooperative, organized in 2017 by 10 displaced mothers, most of whom are from the northeast and are looking to permanently settle near Abuja. They work together to maximize production and earning with the goal of rising above poverty. The cooperative also operates a savings and loan for the members.

Trauma Recovery (*helping survivors of the crisis recover from and live with the violent stress they have experienced*)

For more than three years, NCR has supported group and community level trauma recovery. However, the EYN Disaster Response Team had noticed that "despite the positive responses received by those who are living in the camps from the Church and other non-governmental organizations, most of them are still traumatized and are living in fear." In response, in 2018 leaders were trained to provide individualized trauma recovery counseling to increase the impact of this program. Participants in the individual counseling "testified that they are relieved and healed from their trauma". Ladi lived in captivity with Boko Haram for three years, was forced into marriage at 17 and bore a child. She was deeply traumatized and suicidal but through the counseling sessions she "regained her hope and vision" for life and is considering going back to school.



These women have completed their training and are eager to receive their sewing machines so they can support themselves and provide a needed service to the community.

Photo courtesy of EYN Disaster Ministry



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Earthquake rattles northeast Haiti

During the evening of October 6, 2018, a 5.9 magnitude earthquake struck just off the coast of Northwest Haiti injuring 427 people and causing at least 18 deaths. The United Nations reported damage to homes and other structures along the NW coast, including the cities of Gros-Morne, Port-de-Paix, Saint-Louis du Nord and the island of Tortuga. This was the strongest earthquake in Haiti since 2010.

The Eglises des Freres d' Haiti (Church of the Brethren of Haiti) has a congregation in St. Louis du Nord impacted by the earthquake. An initial assessment of the situation by the Haitian COB leadership found dozens of injuries among members, damaged homes, one destroyed home and damage to the New Covenant School.

Ilexene Alphonse, pastor of the Miami Haitian Church of the Brethren, and former COB mission

staff in Haiti, traveled to Haiti on October 15 to represent BDM by helping to provide additional damage assessment and to begin response planning with the Haitian Church.

An initial BDM grant to the church will support emergency food and some initial home rebuilding. As these needs assessments are completed, a response plan and additional Emergency Disaster Fund grants are expected.

This home in Saint-Louis du Nord lost part of its wall during the earthquake that hit northeast Haiti on October 6, 2018.

Photo by Romy Telfort



Hurricane Matthew home rebuilding continues in Haiti. The last of the home repairs and construction are expected to be completed by the end of 2018.

Bridges is published three times a year by the Brethren Disaster Ministries of the Church of the Brethren.

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