



Brethren Disaster Ministries BRIDGES

Rebuilding Homes • Nurturing Children • Responding Globally

Vol. 23, Fall 2022

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Church of the Brethren

2022 Hurricanes Response

Although the 2022 Atlantic hurricane season started off slowly, September brought two strong storms to which the Church of the Brethren responded: Hurricanes Ian and Fiona.

The Church of the Brethren Material Resources completed five shipments of emergency supplies in response to Hurricane Ian, sending woolen and fleece blankets; baby, hygiene, and school kits; toothpaste; and clean-up buckets to Florida. A shipment of blankets; baby, hygiene, and school kits; and toothpaste were sent on behalf of Church World Service first to Jacksonville, Fla., and then on to Puerto Rico following Hurricane Fiona.

Hurricane Ian

Hurricane Ian caused catastrophic damage along Florida's southwest coast when it made landfall on Sept. 28 near Fort Myers



Connect Four was a popular game at the CDS childcare center at the South Econ Rec Center in Orlando, Fla., where imagination also transformed boxes into rooms and corrals.

Photo courtesy of BDM

as a strong Category 4 hurricane. With the death toll over 120 in Florida, this storm is one of the deadliest in the state's history. The level of damage impeded initial relief and response efforts and delayed the return of power and water in some areas.

The scarcity of volunteer housing and rental cars, as well as difficulty accessing affected areas, initially restricted travel by Church of the Brethren staff and volunteers to Florida. While awaiting the opportunity to send Children's Disaster Service (CDS) volunteers, local volunteers of CDS partner Child Life Disaster Response (CLDR) were able to begin providing services for children in the Hertz Arena shelter in Estero, Fla., on Monday, Oct. 3. They cared for about 30 children per day until CDS teams arrived on Oct. 8.

Moving quicker than FEMA or Red Cross could provide volunteer support, CDS initially deployed a small team of four volunteers who traveled to North Fort Myers. They were housed by Brethren and their friends in the area and supported by

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Children sheltering at the Hertz Center in Florida after Hurricane Ian worked together to create a "restaurant" complete with menus and play dough food.

Photo by Linda Cooper

a grant from the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF). This team provided childcare initially at the Estero Rec Center shelter before settling into the Hertz Arena, where a large Red Cross shelter had been established.

Once housing became available, the team transitioned to Red Cross volunteer/staff shelters, while a second CDS team was deployed by Red Cross to the South Econ Rec Center in Orlando, Fla., where many displaced families were being sheltered.

On Oct. 19, the Del Tura shelter opened in North Fort Myers, combining the nearly 600 residents of the Hertz Arena and the Estero Rec Center and operated by a local contractor under the auspices of the Florida Division of Emergency Management. CDS was specifically requested to continue to serve the children and was allocated a large space in the FEMA tent outside the shelter. A third CDS team of five volunteers arrived on Oct. 21 to serve there. Volunteer support changed back to EDF funds providing travel support, with the shelter management providing volunteer housing and Red Cross providing volunteer meals.

The three teams of CDS Hurricane Ian volunteers had a total of 418 child contacts between Oct. 9 and Nov. 1. We are grateful for these women and men who spent long days providing a safe and caring environment for the children while at the same time giving parents and guardians the gift of time to begin their own and their families' recovery.

Jenn Dorsch-Messler, Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) director and Lisa Crouch, CDS associate director visited the CDS response sites and some Church of the Brethren church facilities in mid-October. While there they provided encouragement to volunteers and churches helping provide relief.

BDM continues to communicate with the Atlantic Southeast (ASE) District leadership to better understand needs and planned hurricane response activities. The district leadership reports some minor to moderate roof and exterior damage

to the North Fort Myers, Sebring, and Arcadia church buildings. The mainly Haitian congregations in Naples, Lehigh Acres (Gospel Assembly), and Orlando had damage to their church equipment, musical instruments, and supplies due to roof damage. All of these congregations have been active in hurricane response in their communities, some as shelters, others providing relief, others helping feed the people in their communities. (See the article on page 4 about the neighborhood outreach of the North Fort Myers church) While EDF funds specifically support the humanitarian programs of congregations, those desiring to help with the building repair and resupply of the affected churches may contact the ASE District at atlanticsoutheastcob@gmail.com or by mail at Atlantic Southeast District Office, c/o Victoria Ehret, 9112 Tansel Ct, Indianapolis, IN 46234.



Puerto Rico Church of the Brethren congregations reached out to neighbors affected by Hurricane Fiona. Here Pastor Carmen Mercado, of Rio Prieto, delivers water and food to a family.

Photo by José Acevedo



Puerto Rico Brethren youth participated fully in Hurricane Fiona relief programs as an expression of their faith. These children from the Vega Baja church helped to organize a distribution in Maricao.

Photo courtesy of Vega Baja Church of the Brethren

Hurricane Fiona

Hurricane Fiona brought rain and winds to Puerto Rico even before it strengthened into a Category 1 storm and made landfall on the southwest coast on Sept. 18. Arriving just two days short of the five-year anniversary of 2017's Hurricane Maria, both the anticipation and impact of the storm made an already traumatizing time for Maria survivors worse. After weeks of heavy rain Fiona's additional rainfall—as much as 30 inches in some areas—and winds led to flooding, landslides, and mudslides; felled trees; damaged, destroyed, and blocked roads and bridges; and a loss of power and potable water.

As the hurricane approached, BDM reached out to offer support to the Puerto Rico Church of the Brethren. District executive José Calleja Otero and district disaster coordinator (DDC) José Acevedo were prepared for an immediate response and worked right away with the seven churches on the island to assess and respond to expressed needs following the storm. Fortunately, among the churches and their neighbors there was no major damage to structures and no major injuries.

Water and power outages (the entire island experienced a blackout) hampered the ability to prepare and store food and to have safe drinking water. Immediately after the storm,

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the DDC began delivering water to neighbors in 55 gallon drums from the back of his pickup. When parts of the island, particularly rural and/or mountainous areas, lagged behind in recovery of these essential services, the Brethren churches looked for ways to assist their members and neighbors. A \$5,000 EDF grant is supporting these efforts, mostly through the purchase of bottled water. The churches are supplementing the water distribution with hot meals, non-perishable food items, and encouragement. Many of those being served are not church members but know that the Brethren serve everyone in need, no matter their church affiliation. The Puerto Rico District continues to reach out to areas lacking consistent services.

There are many stories of blessings coming out of the hardship that Fiona brought to Puerto Rico. When church leaders purchased water from a few suppliers, they donated entire pallets or even refused payment. Several church members formed a “mini recovery team” to help clear roads of trees and boulders and to free power lines from branches. Brethren have partnered with other denominations to bring relief to isolated areas. The Brethren youth are fully engaged in service as an expression of their faith. Many people are experiencing God’s love through these simple acts of love and compassion. The reports of tireless activities reach the BDM staff almost daily.

Hurricane Fiona also had a major impact on agriculture with farms flooded, crops flattened, and fruits dropped before ripening. José Acevedo is assessing the status of the farms with storm damage in the church communities, the majority of which are small, face disproportionate risks from natural disasters, and are less likely to receive services. With longer-term recovery and mitigation in mind, discussions have begun between the Puerto Rico District, the Church of the Brethren Global Food Initiative and BDM on how to support these small farmers through programs such as education, training, and cooperation. The BDM staff hopes to soon announce a large EDF grant to help small farmers purchase inputs to replace damaged plants.

BVS Volunteer Joins BDM Rebuilding Team

Martha “Martie” Hummer joined the Rebuilding project leadership team for her term of service with Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) on Aug. 20, 2022. She is currently serving at the Rebuilding site in Waverly, Tenn., after a brief orientation at the BDM office in the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. Martie began to apply for BVS as a high school graduate, but circumstances led her in a different direction. She is serving a one-year term with BDM.



BVS volunteer Martie Hummer

How To Support Hurricane Response and Recovery

The most essential assistance for hurricane survivors and those working to help them, including church leaders, is prayer. The journey to recovery will be long and arduous, and prayer will be needed for months and years to come.

Donations to the Emergency Disaster Fund to support response and recovery efforts for both Hurricanes Fiona and Ian may be made online at www.brethren.org/givehurricanerponse or by sending a check with hurricane response in the memo line to Emergency Disaster Fund, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120. (or use the envelope included with this Bridges)

Another way to help is to make clean-up buckets, and school and hygiene kits. Information can be found at <https://cwskits.org>. Kits should be sent or brought to the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md.

NYC Service Project

In July 2022, over 350 youth and leaders at the Church of the Brethren National Youth Conference (NYC) in Fort Collins, Colo., assembled 3,102 school kits for Church World Service. This service project was made possible

through a partnership with the Brethren Disaster Relief Auction (BDRA) in Pennsylvania. BDM staff coordinated the project with help from other Church of the Brethren staff. Funds for the supplies and logistics came from the BDRA and Emergency Disaster Fund. NYC participants and supporters also contributed funding and items.



National Youth Conference participants from various districts assembling School Kits during the Service Project time.



North Fort Myers Church of the Brethren: Responding to God's Call

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
"Whom shall I send, and who will go for
us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"*
Isaiah 6:8

The small North Fort Myers (Fla.) Church of the Brethren spent the past several years building up their service to the vulnerable community around their church, little realizing that they were being equipped to become a beacon of hope and help after Category 4 Hurricane Ian devastated the area.

The congregation has been without a pastor since May, but the small group of about 20, many of whom are only there in the winter, continue to live out their call. Led by Danny (Leadership Team chair) and Cheri Miller, they are facing this new challenge feeling unprepared but open to where, and how, the Lord is calling them to serve. They believe that they are specifically present in the greater Palmona Park neighborhood to minister to their neighbors and to be "a bright and happy and concerned light in the community," which, Cheri notes, is "basically low income, unemployed, homeless, and all ages" and may also include people who are "passing through."

Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) first partnered with the North Fort Myers church through a 2020 COVID-19 grant of \$5,000 which supported its budding outreach and service to the community with a hot dog ministry on the church lawn, food pantry, "blessing bag" distribution to those experiencing homelessness (often delivered by bicycle), and a weekly meal, followed by a Bible study for those who wished to attend.

The fact that the church programs and expanded partnerships were already up and running before Hurricane Ian hit meant that they were ready to serve even greater needs immediately afterward. Although the church building had some damage and some of the members, including the Millers, had damage to their own homes, the congregation has been bold and courageous in offering what assistance they can to their neighbors. Even before their electricity was restored, they held worship and Bible study, offered hot dogs and water, served a hot meal, and opened their food pantry for those in need. Open to whatever was needed, the church and parking lot were made available to other organizations and churches providing relief, including food, water, clothes, and hot showers. In her first communication to BDM Cheri said they were "busy, tired, and very blessed and excited seeing God at work." In God's timing, through a partnership with a much larger United Methodist church, the first night of a Dinner Church program, planned prior to the storm, took place just twelve days after Ian, allowing the Brethren to serve their community that week with an additional hot meal.

The North Fort Meyers church has received a \$5,000 Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) grant to support their efforts to respond to the additional needs created by Hurricane Ian. Pointing to the church sign laying on the ground, the Millers told BDM staff, "Our sign and light might be down but it still shines" and they are called to be a light for the Lord in their neighborhood.



All are welcome: the lights of the church sign, and through the cross, at the North Fort Myers Church beckon neighbors.
Photo courtesy of BDM

Tom Brown, Lafayette (Ind.) Church of the Brethren (South/Central Indiana District) wrote this cinquain poem after returning from the October 2022 BDM short-term Rebuilding project in Dawson Springs, Ky.

**Brethren
Driving away
To help rebuild houses
After tornadoes, floods, and fire
Blessings.**



Having fun on the job: Tom Brown (l) with Udo Sommerhoff.
Photo courtesy of Tom Brown

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Brethren Disaster Ministries now offers our Bridges newsletter electronically. If you would like to receive Bridges by email, you may contact us at bdm@brethren.org, or give us a call at 800-451-4407. Bridges is also available online at www.brethren.org/bdm/updates.

Rebuilding Updates

Short-Term Western Kentucky Tornado Response and New Project Location

Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) Rebuilding volunteers from multiple districts participated in a short-term project in October as part of the long-term recovery in Dawson Springs, Ky., where a Dec. 10, 2021 tornado, part of a string of storms, devastated the town and took the lives of 15 residents. Of the 1,200 housing units located in this small town prior to the disaster, 410 were totally lost. For many homes, the foundation is all that remains resulting in the predominate need for new homes to be built. BDM teams worked for three weeks on two new homes that were identified by local partners at Habitat for Humanity Pennyryle Region and the Fuller



Rebuilding volunteers Maria and Arlyn take on drywall sanding in a new house in Dawson Springs, Ky., with a smile. Photo courtesy of BDM

Center Disaster ReBuilders.

BDM anticipates a return to Dawson Springs starting in January 2023, when volunteers scheduled for Project 1 will continue working on new homes. Volunteer housing will be located in nearby Princeton, Ky., at the Ogden Memorial United Methodist Church, and work will come from the previously established local partnerships. This project is scheduled to continue through 2023 and will support the goal of building 20 new homes, including some as part of a program to help impacted and qualified renters to own a new Habitat home.

Maryland Tidal Flooding Response

Volunteers from the Mid-Atlantic District (MAD) have been working in their district to help families impacted by tidal flooding in October 2021 in Maryland's Dorchester and Somerset Counties, located on the Chesapeake Bay. Over 200 homes were damaged when an unnamed storm caused a high tide to flood residents' homes. An example of a low attention disaster—a new phenomenon across the country—there has been very little media coverage about this event. The number of impacted families may be smaller than in bigger events that receive



Volunteers from the Mid-Atlantic District replace a floor in a house damaged by tidal flooding in Dorchester County, Md. Photo by Doretta Dorsch

a federal or state declaration, but the interruption and need for recovery support is still great, especially for the most vulnerable in those areas.

Small groups of up to five MAD volunteers have traveled on four different weeks as of the end of October, with more teams scheduled before the end of 2022. Typical weeks involve three to four workdays and include rebuilding work in both counties. This work is partially funded by a grant from Lowes and National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD), which provided \$30,000 in gift cards to purchase construction materials at Lowes as well as funding to help support volunteer expenses incurred while serving.

Serving the Community in Waverly, Tenn.

by Kim Gingerich, Rebuilding program assistant

The Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) Rebuilding Program site based in Waverly (Humphreys County), Tenn., has been open since April 2022 and will close after the last volunteer week of Dec.10-16.

Over the course of this project the leadership teams have developed close relationships in this small tight-knit community. Homeowners and community members are very vocal about sharing their appreciation for

our presence there, whether we are in their homes, walking around town, in a store, or at church. They are ready with words of awareness and gratefulness for the work BDM

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Volunteers working on a home in Waverly. Homeowner Cindy remarked: I told all my friends who are still waiting for work to be done that they should hope that the Brethren get assigned to their homes. They come every day. They work from 8-5 and they stay until the house is finished. They do very good and very careful work. Photo courtesy of BDM



volunteers are doing to help restore their lives and community.

I was blessed to serve for a week in October in a house that was home to a couple and their three children. They had purchased it just three days before the flooding event and had only spent one night there before it was flooded. During the weekends the family stays on the property in a camper so they can work on the house—evidence of their desire to return to this community and build their lives there—but during the week they live over 60 miles away with family in Nashville.

The crew I worked with was invited by another crew to stop in and visit the home that they had been working on

that week. The homeowner was initially quiet and non-communicative but was now talkative and very willing to share his story with them, and us, even though we were strangers who had just stopped in. He spent some time telling us about his experience during the flood and how much he appreciated the work that BDM has done. It was a truly humbling and spiritually uplifting experience.



This family (front row), posing with BDM leaders, is determined to build their lives in Waverly, Tenn., even after the flood damaged their newly purchased home.
Photo courtesy of BDM

Eastern Kentucky Flood Response

Eastern Kentucky faced heavy rains July 27-28, 2022, which ran down the mountainsides creating mudslides, destroying roads and bridges, and causing massive flooding. Homes and whole towns were damaged or washed away, displacing thousands of people and killing at least 39.

The Southern Ohio & Kentucky district disaster coordinators, Helen and Burt Wolf, immediately began

A member of the Salem (Ohio) Church of the Brethren with some of the 99 quilts donated, along with food and cleaning and hygiene supplies, to Christian Appalachian Project's program for Eastern Kentucky flood survivors.
Photo courtesy of Southern Ohio & Kentucky District



coordinating a district response to the disaster. Among other things, they requested donations of needed items such as cleaning and hygiene supplies, and non-perishable foods, which were initially collected during the district's Annual Disaster Ministries Ice Cream Social in early August. On Aug. 11, one pickup truck load of supplies, delivered by Sandy and Rick Dobberstein, was taken to a distribution center at the Oneida (Ky.) Fire Department. Sandy said that the delivery "easily quadrupled the supplies they had on hand. They were thrilled to receive what BDM had collected."

A second load of items was delivered in September by Becky and Jim Osswald to a Christian Appalachian Project (CAP) warehouse in Mt. Vernon, Ky. A large part of that

delivery included 99 comforters/quilts made by six women from the Salem (Ohio) Church of the Brethren and other quilts and pillowcases in children's fabrics. Robyn Renner, CAP Manager/Director, Home Repair and Disaster Relief, expressed this in appreciation for the donation: "Thank you so much for these. You guys are amazing and the quilts are beautiful. We are currently doing repairs and as we get them completed, we will be providing them with household items including the ones you delivered. Blessings to all!"

Thank you to everyone in the Southern Ohio & Kentucky district—and all throughout the denomination—who donated items and funds toward relief and recovery for flood survivors of all of the 2022 summer storms!



Some of the many items donated by Southern Ohio & Kentucky District members which were delivered to Oneida, Ky., for Eastern Kentucky flood survivors.
Photo courtesy of Southern Ohio & Kentucky District

CDS Updates

Training

Children's Disaster Services (CDS) volunteer training workshops took place in July and October for new volunteers to learn about working with children after disasters. With numbers of volunteers interested in attending training at a low since the pandemic, CDS staff is considering how to reignite a spark to get more volunteers that want to help children after disasters! Spring Training information will be released soon.

Uvalde School Shooting Brings CDS CRC Team to Texas

On May 24, 2022, Uvalde Elementary School suffered a horrific event that has become all too common in our country when a shooter opened fire inside the school, killing 19 children and two teachers. The nation was rocked. Hearts opened and prayers descended down on the town and families of Uvalde. Working with city officials, Red Cross created a Family Assistance Center (FAC) to comfort and support the families and requested a CDS Critical Response Childcare (CRC) team to provide services for the children. When Red Cross ended their deployment and the FAC transitioned to a Resiliency Center managed by a local non-profit, CDS was asked to continue serving the children. A new CDS team served for another week. Over the 31 total days deployed in both centers during this response, 15 volunteers served 285 children. CDS received many

praises for the impact the volunteers had on the children, families, and fellow responders. The CDS CRC deployments are always heavy on everyone's hearts and minds. CRC volunteers receive additional

training for these types of responses to help equip them for the emotional toll a tragedy of this magnitude brings. CDS was grateful to be able to be part of the children's healing in Uvalde.

Summer Weather Events Keep CDS Volunteers Busy

Beginning on July 25, 2022, a single storm system moved across multiple states, causing flash flooding from Missouri to Kentucky to parts of Virginia and West Virginia. The St. Louis, Mo., metropolitan area received historic rainfall at the rate of more than two inches per hour, causing massive flooding and damage. CDS received a request from the Missouri State Emergency Management Agency, through Gary Gahm, Church of the Brethren Missouri/Arkansas district disaster coordinator, to set up a childcare center in a St. Louis church hosting a Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC), where flood survivors sought assistance. The team was present

during the last two days of the MARC and served 36 children. Team member Ruth Karasek said, "I felt satisfied that, at least for a short time, the parents and children both could be relieved of some part of their stress and that our team was a part of a larger operation bringing relief to those in need."

The storm system moved



CDS volunteers cared for children in a MARC in St. Louis, Mo., in August 2022.
Photo by Donna Savage

on to eastern Kentucky, inundating the steep slopes and narrow valleys and causing devastating flash flooding and landslides, destroying entire towns and leaving many families homeless. Red Cross requested CDS to send a childcare team. Four volunteers served in a shelter in Jackson, Ky., serving 40 children. See project manager Pearl Miller's reflection on page 8.

Asylum Support in California and Washington, D.C.

CDS volunteers from Southern California hosted weekly sessions in conjunction with the United Methodist Church (UMCOR) for the children of asylum seekers at a shelter in Claremont, Calif. Volunteers worked with children from Haiti, as well as Afghanistan, Brazil, Russia, and Venezuela. The children's adaptability was striking. They were enthusiastic and open to new experiences and learned quickly despite all the change they had experienced. Many of them have been in transit their entire lives. Over 100 children were served since April 2022.

CDS was also requested to serve in Washington, D.C., working through a Church of the Brethren congregation and a collaborative of mutual aid organizations with families seeking asylum in the area. The volunteers, who served Sundays through September 2022, provided a safe space for the children, many of whom had

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CDS volunteers served in Uvalde, Texas, after the school shooting there.
Photo courtesy Carolyn Neher

Reflections on CDS Eastern Kentucky Flood Response

by Pearl Miller, CDS project manager

As a result of July 2022 flooding in Eastern Kentucky, Red Cross called for childcare assistance through Children's Disaster Services (CDS). A team of four, Pat Leiter, Joyce Smart, Phil Miller and I, traveled in mid-August. After visiting several shelters, the decision was made to work in Jackson, Ky. We were headquartered at Paintsville at a Red Cross staff shelter, residing with other volunteers from around the country.

Our child care center served children who were living in the Jackson shelter, including a large extended family with eight children. The flood had displaced the family, and the young man who took on the responsibility for them remarked that he'd made some mistakes in life, but he knew he had a special purpose now in caring for them. This attitude was indicative of the strong family bonds and the generosity of the communities that were hard hit by the floods. Everywhere we went we saw kindness and care for one another. "The families we served were amazing—resilient and caring," remarked team member Pat Leiter.

In the response, the caregivers



Children heal through imaginative play.
Photo by Joyce Smart

found that we also needed to be resilient and caring: adapting our daily schedule, preparing a clean and safe space for the children, and determining creative activities as we learned to know the children. On a typical day children could be found trying out drawing skills and other creative crafts, painting in favorite colors, constructing mini-homes, "cooking" on a cardboard stovetop, playing UNO or Crazy Eights, practicing giving "medical" care, or retreating to a quiet under-the-table nook to listen to a story or to just chill.

The Kentucky experience was challenging, but also rich and rewarding, made so by the children and families we served, the Red Cross volunteers (who attended to the needs of the people there and our needs as well), and our sharing of gifts as a team to support one another in our service.



Books are an excellent way to engage children!
Photo by Joyce Smart

CDS Hires New Program Assistant



Michael Scalzi has been hired for the position of program assistant for Children's Disaster Services, based in New Windsor, Md., at the Brethren Service Center. He recently retired from Carroll County (Md.) Public Schools as a school counselor and behavior intervention specialist. Michael's experience developing training programs and in crisis intervention will be a huge asset for the CDS program. Michael, a member of the Westminster (Md.) Church of the Brethren, began his work on Nov. 9, 2022.

CDS Updates

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been traveling and living in difficult circumstances for a very long time. It was a place to play and be a kid again. A handful of area CDS volunteers traveled into the city to work with children. The teams had 51 child contacts.

CDS volunteer Gladys Remnant gives an idea of the impact this type of service can have: "What I saw there was a gift from the heart to the families who are transitioning. The families appeared to be so appreciative, and the children were just precious. They were engaged with the activities we provided, with lots of smiles. And like the energizer bunny...just kept going and going, even when they were obviously well past exhaustion status, no meltdowns or anger issues. It was actually pretty amazing! And we received the biggest, most wonderful hugs from the last two children right before they left!"

Global Response Updates

Ukraine in Crisis

Often the most valiant efforts made during a war are those made by people without weapons. In Ukraine and the surrounding countries churches, church members, aid agencies and NGOs are giving heroic levels of aid to the millions of displaced families. United Nations agencies (UNHCR & IOM) have identified 7.5 million Ukrainian refugees sheltering across Europe and 6.2 million more Ukrainian people internally displaced (displaced from their homes but still living in Ukraine). The devastation and impact of this war is staggering and difficult to quantify. Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) is celebrating our partnership with some of these heroic groups supporting vulnerable populations, especially those in locations getting less news coverage, relief aid, and critical support.

One of the heroes is an Orthodox priest in Poland who converted “his parish house into a home for refugee women and their children, so they all have a safe place to stay” reports BDM partner International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC). An Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) grant is helping IOCC meet three crucial needs: providing humanitarian aid to people still in Ukraine; helping families and institutions hosting refugees in Poland and Romania; and leveraging IOCC’s expertise to

offer emotional care and counseling.

A \$100,000 EDF grant to Church World Service (CWS) is supporting Ukrainian refugees and the families hosting them with food and much more, including equipping refugee centers; special efforts to include ethnic populations (such as the Roma community) in refugee programing; and the distribution of CWS blankets and school and hygiene kits.

Another group of heroes are the staff of a Ukraine orphanage and volunteers with Children’s Disaster Services partner Child Life Disaster Response (CLDR). An EDF grant funded a CLDR program that provided the orphanage staff with information, materials, and support. CLDR volunteers also worked directly with children in a virtual format with live interpreters. A Ukrainian official reported that through this pilot program, “the children reported that after the lessons their mood improved, their anxiety decreased, and they understood each other better.”

The L’Arche community has long supported people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, a group often forgotten in a crisis. An EDF

grant is supporting the organization’s efforts in Ukraine and surrounding countries to provide special programming, transportation, medication, adaptive equipment, and staff to assist displaced clients. After fleeing Ukraine and finding support through L’Arche, one mother said, “With the beginning of the war, I had a feeling that a great darkness was approaching, but fate showed that there is room

for light, goodness and joy in our world.”

The war in Ukraine also has far reaching and cascading impacts on the global economy, food and energy. The ripple effects are already felt around the world, most heavily in developing countries, and especially by the most vulnerable people. Brethren Disaster Ministries is considering ways to respond to these increased needs.



One of the new homes being built in Haiti through the 2021 Earthquake Response in Saut Mathurine.

Photo courtesy Haiti Church of the Brethren

Haiti Earthquake Response—Homes for Haiti

Through a partnership with the Church of the Brethren in Haiti, ten new cement block homes have been completed in the 2021 earthquake response in the southwestern community of Saut Matherine. The goal of building at least 25 homes is part of a comprehensive response program that earlier provided emergency food, temporary shelter, water, and trauma relief training for children and adults. These accomplishments are amazing and only possible through God’s grace, considering the challenges presented by ongoing gang warfare, lack of security, increased civil unrest, failed government at all levels, and skyrocketing inflation. The people of Haiti, the church, and church leaders need our ongoing prayers and support during this very difficult period in the country’s history.



Ukrainian refugees in Moldova choose items from a food pantry supported by BDM partner Church World Service.

Photo courtesy of CWS

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Haiti Earthquake Response coordinator, Ilexene Alphonse, traveled to Haiti in October to check on the progress and provide encouragement. He reported hearing “heart-felt appreciation for the project.” Because the Brethren serve people, without regard to their church affiliation (or lack thereof) they are “respected in the community and beyond” and the church is growing.

Nigeria

Extensive July flooding in the Nigerian states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa led to a joint BDM and Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (EYN) response in Mife, in the Chibok area, where 83 homes and food supplies were destroyed, and in the Madagali area where flooding destroyed homes and farms in six villages. A special grant of \$5,000 provided food, sleeping mats, blankets, and other items to 830 beneficiaries.

The flooding adds to the challenges many families still face from violent unrest and terrorism in the same states. Since 2014 BDM and EYN have worked closely together through the Nigeria Crisis Response to support displaced families, help rebuild lives, and keep the Church strong. The ongoing effort to provide seeds, fertilizer, emergency food, livelihood programs, new water wells, and more continues to be vitally important, and even more challenging with high inflation limiting the impact of this aid. Please continue to pray for our

Nigerian Brethren and to support the Nigeria Crisis Fund (www.brethren.org/nigeriacrisisfund).

A separate \$10,000 grant supported BDM partner the Center for Caring Empowerment and Peace Initiatives (CCEPI), a Nigerian aid organization with EYN connections. These funds enabled CCEPI to pay fees to secure the land in Jos on which a new headquarters and training center is being built, and also supports its mission of training women to be self-sufficient. CCEPI founder, Rebecca Dali, said: “Thank you for saving CCEPI building which will benefit most vulnerable people and be a safe space for survivors of sexual abuse, bullied, brutalized and those who were stigmatized because they are physically challenged and disabled.”

Responding to Multiple Crises in the DR Congo

The Church of the Brethren in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo or DRC) has been challenged by many different emergencies in the last several years. In the spring of 2022 violence once again erupted between a large well-armed rebel group and the government military, displacing thousands of people in the North Kivu province. A joint DR Congo Church/BDM response provided emergency food and other supplies for some of the most vulnerable families with EDF grants totaling \$15,000. Through BDM connections, the Congolese church was also able

to access another



Women displaced by fighting in North Kivu Province (DR Congo) dance and sing after receiving relief items from Eglise des Freres au Congo (Church of the Brethren).

Photo courtesy of DR Congo Church of the Brethren

\$15,000 grant from World Relief.

Families made vulnerable by past violence, destruction to property, and poverty, have been further impacted by rapidly rising prices for basic needs and gasoline, which is exacerbated by the effects of the Ukraine war. DRC Church of the Brethren leader Ron Lubungu says this has resulted in “the doubling of costs of transport, food shortages, and difficulty of supply” which have “increased the rate of vulnerable people at all levels.” In response, an EDF grant of \$5,000 is assisting the DRC Church to reach 1,200 people with food, household supplies, and clothing in nine towns in the South Kivu and North Kivu provinces.

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EYN Disaster Relief Management director, Rev. Yuguda Mdurwva (r), presents relief items to a grateful flood survivor in Mife, Nigeria.

Photo courtesy of EYN



Rwanda Church of the Brethren leader Etienne Nsanzimana (white t-shirt) and others provide a weekly hot meal for vulnerable children in Gisenyi.

Photo courtesy of Rwanda Church of the Brethren

Lebanon in Crisis

The intersection of multiple crises in Lebanon has left the vast majority of the Lebanese people and millions of refugees living in dire situations, at or much below the poverty level. This includes high levels of Syrian and Palestinian refugees, hyperinflation/economic crisis, a failed government, the explosion that destroyed part of the primary seaport, and the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war, which have created severe shortages of food, medical supplies, jobs, and public services such as electricity.

In the midst of this daunting environment BDM partner the Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development (LSESD) has found ways to continue all of their ministries. A \$50,000 EDF grant is providing food programs, medical aid, and education programs through LSESD for vulnerable and out of work Lebanese, migrant workers and Syrian refugees.

Rwandan Vulnerable Children

In the Gisenyi area of northern Rwanda the combination of heavy rains that ruined crops and caused erosion, a very high inflation rate of 19.6 percent, and the increased cost of food (especially vegetables and bread/cereals), partly due to the war in the Ukraine, is seriously affecting the ability of poor families to provide for their needs. This has resulted in an alarming increase in the number of street children, many of whom are suffering from Kwashiorkor and malnutrition.

Individual Brethren families began providing food for some of the children but the need became overwhelming. In partnership with the Rwandan Church, a \$5,000 EDF grant is providing one hot meal a week for nearly 150 of the most vulnerable children, many of whom beg on the streets nearest to the church. The children are also given soap to aid with hygiene. Pastor Etienne Nsanzimana reports that “we are feeding many children than the number we initially budgeted for. So many other children

are coming to our center and it is impossible for us to send them away.”

South Sudan

An EDF grant of \$11,000 is supporting the Church of the Brethren mission in South Sudan in providing aid to vulnerable families impacted by violence, civil war, and famine. The program will provide food, water, and medicines to 500 households in the Acholi (Magwi) and Pari (Lafon) communities. Similar supplies will be distributed to 500 vulnerable people of the mostly Ifoto community (near Torit). The majority of these are women and children who have lost their husbands or parents, and elderly and/or disabled people.

Honduras

BDM continues to support recovery programs from November 2020’s Hurricanes Eta and Iota, both powerful Category 4 storms. A total of \$210,000 in EDF grants have supported the relief and recovery responses of Proyecto Aldea Global (PAG, Project Global Village) and Church World Service (CWS) through the provision of emergency relief, medical care, repairs to community fresh water systems, livelihood programs, and home building. A current PAG program is providing funding for small animal projects such as chickens, pigs, fish, and bees.

BDM staff recently approved a \$20,000 EDF grant to partner Christian Solidarity Programs (CSP) to support emergency relief for 1,000 vulnerable people (mostly women, children and the elderly) who are survivors of massive flooding in northern Honduras due to an above average rainfall in September and October, 2022, complicated by Tropical Storm Julia. CSP is partnering with local churches to provide food, medicines, water, and other basic necessities.



Survivors of a deadly mudslide in Uganda, who lost everything including their homes, received rice, flour (corn and cassava), cooking oil, salt, beans, hygiene products, laundry soap, plates/bowls, water purification tablets, and mosquito nets.

Photo courtesy of Church of the Brethren Uganda

Uganda

A \$10,000 EDF grant is supporting the Church of the Brethren Uganda in their emergency response to flooding on Sept. 7, 2022, in Kasese in Western Uganda. The floods and a large mudslide destroyed homes, household supplies, stored food, and crops in the fields, and caused outbreaks of water-borne diseases because of flooded water and sanitation systems. The Uganda Church project is providing the most vulnerable survivors—300 families (about 2,400 people)—with food, household supplies, water purification tablets, hygiene supplies and psychosocial support.

Venezuela

Heavy rains on Oct. 8, 2022, led to extensive flooding and a terrible landslide in the city of Las Tejerias, southwest of Venezuela’s capital, which displaced thousands and killed over 100 people. The Church of the Brethren in Venezuela (ASIGLEH), supported by an EDF grant of \$10,000, is responding with emergency assistance to survivors, including food, water and clothing.

**For updates go to
www.brethren.org/bdm**



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Ukraine Crisis Auction

Seeing the extensive need in Ukraine and for the Ukrainian people because of the Russian invasion, four friends who have gathered regularly for years decided they wanted to do something.



Some of the 181 items donated for the Ukrainian Online Art Auction.

Combining their different skills and talents, they created the Ukrainian Online Art Auction that included 181 donated items. The auction closed on Oct. 22, 2022, raising nearly \$6,000 for the Brethren Disaster Ministries Ukraine Crisis response.

The ecumenical fundraising event was the vision of Lucretia Crum, a member of the Lutheran Church, joined with Margie Fultz (Mechanicsburg, Pa., Church of the Brethren), Mitzi Jones (Lutheran Church), and Marilyn Zywiec (United



These four friends, gathered around a painting called "Tears for Ukraine" by a Ukrainian artist, developed the Ukrainian Online Art Auction and chose the Brethren Disaster Ministries Ukraine Crisis Response as the recipient of the nearly \$6,000 in proceeds.

Methodist Church) to develop the auction, seek donations, and hold the very successful event. Thank you, Lucretia, Margie, Mitzi, and Marilyn, for this incredible gift to support the people of Ukraine.

Bridges is published three times a year by the
Brethren Disaster Ministries of the Church of the Brethren.
Executive Director for Service Ministries: Roy Winter Director of Material Resources: Loretta Wolf
Editor: Sharon Franzén Design: Debbie Noffsinger