

Brethren Disaster Ministries, CDS respond to Hurricane Helene

Soon after Hurricane Helene hit the southeastern United States in late September, Brethren Disaster Ministries and Children's Disaster Services (CDS) began active responses to aid survivors.

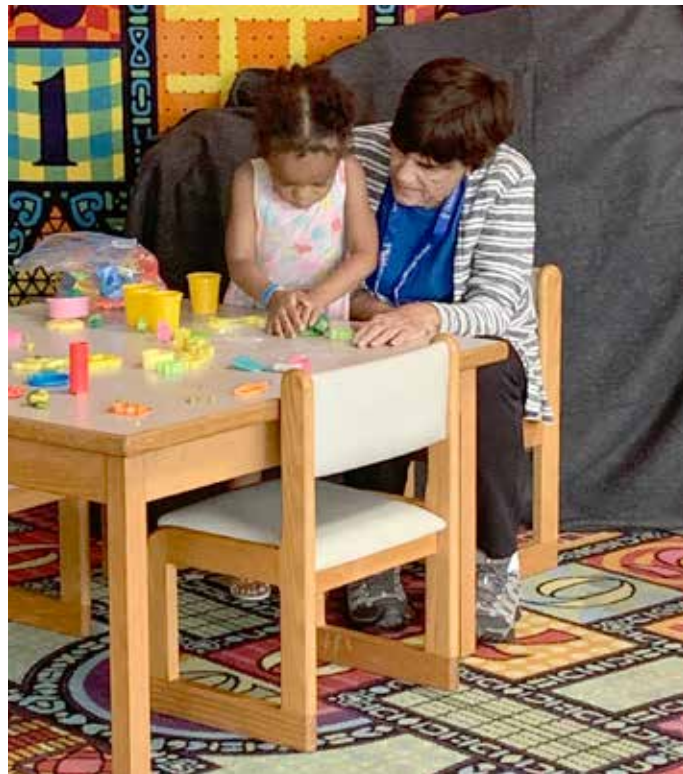
A call for prayer was made by general secretary David Steele. "All those who have suffered from this devastating storm are in need of our prayers and our help," he said. "I invite your prayers for everyone who has lost loved ones, those who have lost homes or businesses, the communities that have been destroyed, and those who are displaced and those lacking basic necessities like food, water, and power."

In early October, CDS deployed two teams of volunteers to care for affected children and families in North Carolina. One team of four people responded in Fletcher, N.C., serving at a Red Cross shelter beginning Oct. 3. The second team of four began work Oct. 7 at a shelter in Asheville, N.C., also in partnership with the Red Cross. The teams were expected to work for two weeks at those locations, while CDS staff prepared to deploy more teams as needed.

Brethren Disaster Ministries staff, in communication with leaders in the most affected church districts of Southeastern and Virlina, requested grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) for the initial response. A grant of \$10,000 helped pay for and transport relief supplies to affected areas of Southeastern District and a grant of \$20,000 gave emergency funding to local relief efforts of the district and its congregations. Other church districts also began collections of relief materials and monetary donations.

With congregations in the mountainous region of western North Carolina and southwestern Virginia, where massive flooding occurred, Southeastern District reported catastrophic damage. The congregation most affected was Walnut Grove Church of the Brethren in Taylors Valley near Damascus, Va. Carl and Linda McMurray, who are leaders in the district, were among church members who lost homes in that area. They gave a moving television interview about their harrowing experiences when they were swept away as their home was carried off its foundation in Taylors Valley. The couple have been married for 57 years, noted WCYB Channel 5 News.

An Oct. 2 coordinating call between Brethren Disaster Ministries staff and the leadership of Southeastern and Virlina Districts developed a plan for providing relief supplies and financial resources. The districts began work to



CDS volunteer Lydia Dorje plays with a child in Fletcher, N.C.

coordinate clean-up and relief supplies and identify staging points for getting supplies into the area of most need.

The \$10,000 grant paid for a shipment of clean-up and relief supplies including Church World Service (CWS) Clean-up Buckets, Hygiene Kits, Period Packs, gloves and masks, and gallon containers of Concrobium mold treatment along with related equipment.

The \$20,000 grant provided emergency funds to Southeastern District to help district leaders and congregations meet financial needs and provide humanitarian assistance for people affected by the flooding. Proposed uses for the funds included aid such as bedding and supplies for people in shelters, food and water, generators and fuel, temporary housing needs, medical needs, and more. Brethren Disaster Ministries staff worked with the district to monitor and document the use of the funds.

Give to the work of CDS and Brethren Disaster Ministries at www.brethren.org/givehurricaneresponse.



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Proposed NDAA includes automated draft registration for men and women

The Office of Peacebuilding and Policy issued an alert in September that a proposed version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) would put into law automated Selective Service—or military draft registration—for both men and women. The NDAA is the major defense policy bill put forward by the Senate Committee on Armed Services.

If passed by Congress, the provision would take effect in the next federal fiscal year. The alert urged church members to contact their representatives in Congress to oppose the measure. Go to www.brethren.org/peacebuilding/legislator-lookup.

The Church of the Brethren since its beginning has repeatedly declared its position against war, based in the church's peace witness and discipleship to Jesus Christ, and has historically opposed draft registration and military conscription.

The Office of Peacebuilding and Policy signed a letter to the Senate committee, which was sent jointly by a range of faith-based partner organizations, opposing the version of the NDAA that includes those provisions. The letter urged the committee to “excise concerning provisions to automate Selective Service registration (Sec. 598A of S. 4638 and Sec 531 of H.R. 8070) and to expand registration to women (Sec. 598C of S. 4638).” It continued, in part: “Rather than look towards automation and expansion of Selective Service registration, the time has come to abolish it entirely. . . . [Expanding] draft registration to women, does not represent a move forward for gender equality. Instead, it represents a move backward, imposing on young women a burden that young men have had to bear unjustly for decades—a burden that no young person should be forced to bear.” The letter urged the Senate committee to consider instead a measure to repeal the Military Selective Service Act.



Brethren Volunteer Service

The Fall 2024 unit of Brethren Volunteer Service, Unit 336,

completed orientation in September: (front row, from left) June Scheidemann from Bielefeld, Germany, will serve at La Puente Home, Alamosa, Colo.; Ace Anteby from Brooklyn, N.Y., will serve at SnowCap Food Pantry, Portland, Ore.; Lisa Abele from Hamburg, Germany, will serve at the San Diego (Calif.) Peace Campus, which is related to San Diego First Church of the Brethren; Pierre Schatz from Strasbourg, France, will serve at La Puente Home, Alamosa, Colo.; (middle row) Keke Phooko from Mohale's Hoek, Lesotho, will serve with Brethren Disaster Ministries in Kentucky; Lorena Nordmann from Nordenham, Niedersachsen, Germany, will serve at Abode Services, Fremont, Calif.; Hannah Nelson of La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren, will serve with the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy in Washington, D.C.; Megan Roth from Wichita, Kan., will serve at Christ House in Washington, D.C.; Alyson Heckerth of Messiah Church of the Brethren in Kansas City, Mo., will serve at Highland Park Elementary School, Roanoke, Va.; (back row) Justine Eckert of Harrisburg (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren, will serve at Camp Mardela, Denton, Md.; Sue and Brad Cox of Lynchburg (Va.) Church of the Brethren, will serve at the World Friendship Center, Hiroshima, Japan; Elizabeth Long of Eel River Church of the Brethren in Silver Lake, Ind., placement pending; Magdalena Müller from Schleiz, Thuringia, Germany, will serve at WATER in Washington, D.C. Not pictured: Wed Naji from Bonn, Germany, who also will serve at WATER.

Personnel

Sharon Norton begins Dec. 2 as executive director of Global Mission for the Church of the Brethren, working remotely from Goshen, Ind. Her career in missions spans 27 years including, most recently, 4 years as co-administrator for

Europe and Africa with the Mennonite Mission Network. She previously spent 14 years as a mission worker in Germany with Eastern Mennonite Missions/Mennonite Mission Network. Ordained in the Mennonite

Church, Norton has been transitional pastor at Fellowship of Hope Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind., and from 2014 to 2017 was a licensed minister with the Church of the Brethren in Goshen. She holds a master's

degree from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and has studied Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Her language skills include German, Spanish, and some French.