

SEEK & SERVE

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

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PROGRAM FOCUS: Responding to an Unprecedented Season of Disaster

Last year's Atlantic hurricane season proved exceptionally destructive, with three Category 4 hurricanes making landfall in the United States: Harvey, Irma, and Maria. The loss of life and property damage made these disasters catastrophic by any measure.

Episcopal Relief & Development's US Disaster Program equips Episcopal dioceses throughout the United States to prepare for and respond to disasters like these. With our partners, we provide emergency assistance and help with long-term recovery, staying active in communities after the TV cameras and many other aid agencies have left.

TEXAS

Hurricane Harvey was the most powerful storm to hit Texas in more than 50 years, bringing punishing rains and unprecedented flooding to the state. But before Harvey was even on the radar, Episcopal Relief & Development had provided disaster preparedness training and resources for volunteer leaders in Episcopal Dioceses of Texas and West Texas, giving them tools and resources they would need to respond quickly and ably.

In the storm's aftermath, dioceses around the state began extensive relief and recovery efforts, and seven months later, they're still hard at work. In the sprawling greater Houston area Episcopal Churches and Episcopal Relief & Development partners are working every day to get people like Norma back on their feet.

Norma, a single mother who supports her family on a fast food worker's wage, saw her house lose its roof, floors, and several feet of walls. "I worked very hard to provide the necessities of life," she said. "We lost all of it."

But women and men from MOSAIC, the outreach arm of St. Andrew's Church in nearby Pearland, are helping her get back some of what was lost. They're pounding nails and putting up sheetrock to rebuild Norma's house.

"The children lost all the belongings, and their toys," Norma said. "But now the kids are happy because it is starting to come together and I'm happy. Very thankful."

FLORIDA

Less than two weeks after Harvey, Hurricane Irma, a ferocious 400-mile-wide storm, raged up the Caribbean, and crashed down on Florida, turning the streets of Miami and other cities into rivers. Episcopal Relief & Development's focus in Florida has been both on immediate relief and long-term rebuilding.

In Southeast Florida we worked with the Episcopal Diocese to provide critical assistance to those who were hardest hit: migrant workers, seniors, children, and the homeless, who already lacked a roof over their heads.

As part of the long-term recovery plans, the diocese has provided temporary trailers for those whose homes were damaged or destroyed. The diocese is planning to hire a part-time recovery coordinator to manage ongoing response efforts in the months ahead.

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Preparing for a Better Future

Lent is a time of preparation. We try, through spiritual discipline, to ready ourselves for the death and resurrection of Jesus. For some of us that includes giving up a treasured treat. For others it is about taking on a special new activity or ministry. For others of us it includes deepening our prayer life. All of these are important ways to prepare ourselves for the new life that we will enjoy at Easter time.

Episcopal Relief & Development's work is a lot like Lent. We are constantly preparing for rebirth and a better future. That takes planning and it takes thought. What actions can we take today that will make things better tomorrow? How do we transform tragedy into hope?

Between June and October 2017 Episcopal Relief & Development responded to over 17 disasters in the United States and around the world. The human suffering that we all witnessed was unprecedented. At home, we were all shocked and saddened by the devastation wrought by hurricanes and fires.

Yet long before the disasters were in our newsfeeds, Episcopal Relief & Development had been preparing for them. We had trained and equipped our diocesan partners in how to organize ministries in the aftermath of tragedy. We had ensured that they would have the resources to respond as soon as they were able. And in places such as Puerto Rico where communication systems were entirely decimated, we provided our partners with satellite phones that enabled them to coordinate urgently needed aid. We had gone through a time of preparation, just like Lent, to ensure that after the tragedy of the disaster, our partners were ready to bring new life to their communities.

The same principle applies to our long-term development work. It takes time and planning to make the smart strategic investments with our partners that in turn lead to better, life-giving, and sustainable outcomes.

The work we do with children to meet their health and developmental needs is a prime example of this. If we can ensure proper prenatal, postnatal, medical, nutritional, and developmental care for children in their first six years, their long-term prospects not only for health but a lifetime of economic prosperity are increased dramatically. Moreover, if we miss those years and a child falls behind essential health and developmental benchmarks they can never catch up. Those years are lost forever and the child will never realize their full God-given potential. I can imagine no greater sin.

It's sometimes frustrating not to see immediate results from the work that we do. But like Lent, it's about the long game. How can we help communities plan for disasters? How do we help families support their children in a way that will ensure a life lived to its full potential? How do we bring new life?

Your faithfulness makes it possible to endure Lent and ensure the rebirth we celebrate on Easter Sunday. Thank you.



With best wishes for a joyful Easter season,



Robert W. Radtke
President



PROGRAM FOCUS:

Fostering Resilience Through Early Childhood Development

The years in a child's life between birth and age five are critical for long-term health and development. That's why Episcopal Relief & Development is redoubling its efforts in support of this crucial period in the lives of vulnerable children. Investing in early childhood development is the best way we know to sow seeds of resilience and well being that will last a lifetime.

In Zambia, the forces of poverty and HIV/AIDS pose great challenges for families. The daily work of subsistence farming and the hardships of illness take their greatest toll on young children. In partnership with the Zambia Anglican Council Outreach Programs (ZACOP), we launched the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Program to help these vulnerable children to reach their full potential. ECD empowers primary caregivers to provide the consistent nurturing and early stimulation that helps foster healthy, thriving children. The program relies on a community-led, holistic approach to address the interrelated needs of families: parenting, health, nutrition, food security and livelihoods.

A 2016 external evaluation showed that as a result of participation in the ECD program, primary caregivers had strengthened their relationship with their children and changed the way they parented.

The program's biggest impact was on the amount of time caregivers spent engaging with their children

in activities that promote cognitive development. Through the program, caregivers learned and began incorporating new activities: providing play materials, playing counting games and praising children for good behavior. They also began promoting the development of fine motor skills, giving children small objects to pick up and sticks so they could draw in the dirt.

The external evaluation found that the ECD Program model was successful in changing primary caregivers' behavior, strengthening their nurturing care and stimulation with their children. It also concluded that the program has wide applicability in rural communities across Africa, particularly in areas where the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is high. Across the spectrum of challenges facing vulnerable families in rural communities, the ECD Program has sparked energy, change and hope.



A bit north in Central Florida, our team provided emergency support, helping the diocese coordinate its initial relief efforts there, delivering food and water, bedding, and personal hygiene necessities. Because church partners are deeply embedded in these communities, they were able to identify and serve those in the greatest need.

THE VIRGIN ISLANDS AND PUERTO RICO

And Mother Nature wasn't finished yet. Two weeks after Irma, Hurricane Maria unleashed its destructive force on Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, parts of which had already been pummeled by Hurricane Irma.

In advance of Maria, Episcopal Relief & Development sent emergency support, partnering with the Episcopal Dioceses of the Virgin Islands and of Puerto Rico as well as with Convoy of Hope. In the immediate aftermath, we were able to work with these partners to distribute critical supplies, ensuring that

necessary items were shared with vulnerable families, especially those in isolated communities.

In Puerto Rico, the emergency support we were able to send helped the Episcopal Diocese of Puerto Rico provide food, water and medical supplies to approximately 70,000 people in key areas outside of San Juan. Emergency support was also provided to approximately 600 people on the islands of Tortola and Virgin Gorda, which were devastated by Irma.

Today Episcopal Relief & Development remains active in both regions. A representative in the Virgin Islands is coordinating ongoing relief and recovery efforts with the diocese there. He's working closely with clergy and lay leaders to mobilize churches for long-term recovery and reconstruction. A component of this rebuilding effort will include preparedness measures for future disasters. And in Puerto Rico our representative is working closely with the diocese to strategize the next phases of the response.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR RELIEF AND REBUILDING EFFORTS, VISIT OUR WEBSITE: EPISCOPALRELIEF.ORG

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**A LITTLE BIT EACH MONTH
GOES A LONG WAY...**

Preparedness offers a measure of protection in the face of the unknown. For that reason, many compassionate Episcopal Relief & Development contributors have chosen to become members of our **Sustainers Circle** by making regular monthly gifts to ensure that we can be ready when we're needed, *where* we're needed.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR SUSTAINERS CIRCLE AND WHETHER IT'S RIGHT FOR YOU, PLEASE CONTACT US AT 1.855.312.HEAL (4325) OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT support.episcopalrelief.org/monthly TO START YOUR MONTHLY GIFT TODAY.

MONTHLY GIVING:

- Provides a dependable stream of income to support the full range of our work.
- Makes sense for donors, because it's easy to budget and allows you to spread your giving out across the year.
- Helps to fund the breadth of our efforts . . . responding to disasters with food, water, medicine and shelter, and assisting with long-term recovery . . . fighting poverty and hunger around the globe . . . promoting the health of children and families . . . and so much more.
- You can revise your commitment at any time.