

## 2017-2019 Hurricane Response Summary of Activities

### Introduction

The 2017 Atlantic Hurricane season emerged as one of the most destructive in recent history, with Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria causing major damage in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and throughout the Caribbean. Episcopal Relief & Development and church partners in the US and Caribbean provided immediate relief to urgent needs of those impacted by the storms by distributing critical food, water, medical and other emergency supplies. In collaboration with its partners, the organization moved into the recovery phase, providing ongoing technical and financial support to help communities rebuild. Below is a summary of activities in response to these storms.

### Episcopal Diocese of Texas—Long-term Recovery Continues

- In the wake of Hurricane Harvey, the Episcopal Diocese of Texas and Episcopal Relief & Development provided initial emergency support including the distribution of gift cards to purchase food, water and other supplies as well as funding for temporary housing for people who lost their homes. Spiritual care teams offered compassionate care and distributed gift cards to those impacted by the storm.
- Long-term response efforts are focusing on identifying resources that are already present in the communities. The specific work of each parish hub varies by the needs and resources in its community with activities such as homebuilding and repair, domestic violence counseling and mental health services. In 2018, nearly 1,000 people have been served by these programs.
- As part of the parish hub program, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Pearland conducted work to rebuild and repair the homes of people impacted by the storms. This work included mold remediation, roofing, electrical work, insulation and sheetrock repair and deck construction. 70 volunteers provided over 450 hours of service during the week of Thanksgiving 2018. Between April and June of 2019, 30 new homes were constructed.
- St. Paul's Episcopal Church provided a behavioral health program to serve Latino communities in their parish. The program is working towards helping clients and their families learn coping skills, recognize mental health symptoms, and change the stigma regarding mental health. Through this program, 92 individuals have received mental health services.
- The Abundant Harvest parish hub in The Woodlands continues to run a pantry program to help ease food insecurity resulting from Hurricane Harvey. Abundant Harvest hired a part-time construction coordinator in the spring of 2019 to oversee and expand home repair efforts.

- Diocesan-wide efforts include programs such as “Done in a Day” and “Home for the Holidays” that make it easy for volunteers to participate in short term projects. “Home for the Holidays” provided a Christmas community resource supper for 180 individuals in 2018.

### **Episcopal Diocese of West Texas—Unmet Needs Addressed**

- With the support of Episcopal Relief & Development, the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas provided gift cards to those living in impacted areas along the southern Texas Coast in the initial days and weeks after Harvey. This includes the west side of Corpus Christi, four inland communities and the coastal areas of Rockport and Port Aransas. These gift cards enabled 111 families to purchase food, water and basic hygiene products as well as cleaning supplies, power tools and other equipment.
- The long-term response activities are focused on identifying and assisting with unmet needs for affected families, including administering aid for household goods, repairs and rebuilds. Housing repairs were made for approximately 43 families and housing was provided for 350 people.
- This diocese also offered a mini-grant program to congregations in the 15 affected counties. 60 grants were distributed to members of the community. These grants were funded by Episcopal Relief & Development and income raised by the diocese.
- To date, these programs have impacted the lives of 1,160 people.

### **Episcopal Diocese of the Virgin Islands—Localized Solutions Emerge**

- On the islands of St. Thomas and St. Croix in the US Virgin Islands, Episcopal Relief & Development and the Episcopal Diocese of the Virgin Islands initially provided cash and cash vouchers for food, water and critical supplies for several hundred people in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. On Tortola and Virgin Gorda in the British Virgin Islands, Episcopal Relief & Development targeted support for drinking water, tarps, plywood and nails.
- As part of a long-term response plan, the diocese launched a mini-grants program with funding from Episcopal Relief & Development. The program supported wellness programs for affected clergy and expanded existing ministries to offer more meals, hygiene kits, pastoral support and specialized care for the elderly.
- The diocese is hiring three part-time case managers to aid the recovery of people who could not be helped immediately following the storms. This program will serve 500 households and focus particularly on senior citizens and low-income families.
- Future disaster preparedness is a priority of the diocese as they rebuild. The diocese has formed a Disaster Risk Reduction Management Committee and is collaborating on a disaster preparedness plan which will be used in outreach and education for the community.

- The diocese is in the process of renovating what was once St. Dunstan's Episcopal High School in St. Croix to serve as a headquarters for community development initiatives and to house volunteers.

### **Episcopal Diocese of Puerto Rico - Recovery Process leads to Strengthen Networks**

- In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Maria, the Diocese of Puerto Rico played an enormous role in the emergency response across the island, serving close to 100,000 families (or about 300,000 people) with provision of basic goods like food packets, hygiene kits, medicines and medical care reaching deep into rural communities. The diocese continues to use and leverage its extensive network of ministries, particularly those related to health care stemming from the strong medical programming based at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital in Ponce. This hospital has regular clinics in remote, rural areas of Puerto Rico that were devastated by the storms, and Episcopal Relief & Development was able to support the diocese as it continued to provide health services, as well as food, water and other immediate needs after the storm.
- As the diocese transitions to longer-term response efforts, it is focusing on addressing food and nutrition challenges, economic livelihoods and health promotion, case management, housing reconstruction and disaster preparedness. The diocese will launch three ministry hubs in 2019, serving over 60,000 families through community resilience workshops and outreach events. Each workshop and event will feature access to a clinical psychologist, women's health doctors, and disaster preparedness resources.
- The diocese is also strengthening the economic sustainability of marginalized groups through a micro-enterprise coaching program for single mothers with entrepreneurial aspirations in Loiza, where single mothers, elderly and children are still struggling as a result of Hurricane Maria's impact. This outreach places heavy emphasis on coaching and preparing individuals to develop their own small businesses.
- In early May 2019, leaders from diocese convened for a "train-the-trainers" Savings with Education workshop to launch a groundbreaking initiative intended to teach micro-finance principles to marginalized communities.
- Diocesan staff and church partners held eight trainings for archdeacons on congregational preparation, four volunteer trainings and 14 program awareness presentations.

### **Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida - Families Supported Through Several Phases of Recovery**

- Episcopal Relief & Development sent emergency support to the Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida after Hurricane Irma in 2017. This assistance helped the diocese coordinate initial relief efforts with local congregations by providing food to several food pantries, feeding over 20,000 people for several months, as well as other essential emergency assistance to displaced Puerto Ricans.
- Through a long-term response plan, the diocese created community spaces in Orlando and Kissimmee to assist families in need and established a new food pantry in Kissimmee. The

diocese also strengthened the capacity of both the Azalea Park and Orlando food pantries. Staff and church leaders trained nine interns in disaster preparedness and response and 715 individuals to be part of a pastoral/spiritual care team for the community.

- As displaced families continued to arrive to the Orlando and Kissimmee area, the ongoing program provided crisis assistance for 501 families in the form of food, direct donated goods, gift cards and checks to rental companies and utility providers.
- The diocese assisted over 400 individuals through housing, employment referrals and internships.
- A program was developed specifically for children to address their issues of grief, loss, assimilation and language skills as needed. It includes music, academic tutoring, therapy animals and community dinners.
- In 2018, over 7,600 individuals were supported by these programs.

### **Episcopal Diocese of Southeast Florida - Shelter For The Displaced**

- With support from Episcopal Relief & Development, the Episcopal Diocese of Southeast Florida provided critical assistance to those hit hardest, including migrant workers, homeless individuals, seniors and youth, as well as children and families who were displaced immediately following Hurricane Irma. The most vulnerable residents received emergency food, water and bedding as well as personal hygiene items.
- In the weeks after the storm, St. Columba Episcopal Church housed almost 100 people in its parish hall and youth house and provided critical food and other supplies. Electricians and builders volunteered to rebuild the congregation's homeless shelter. St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Palmetto Bay served as a food and supply drop off spot and, with support from Episcopal Relief & Development, purchased food to help prepare meals. Additionally, St. Nicholas Episcopal Church used its mobile food truck, The Holy Grill, to feed those displaced by the storm.
- The diocese is concentrating long-term activities in Marathon Key to identify affordable housing, particularly for low income families. The diocese has purchased an 18 unit abandoned apartment complex which they are restoring with the assistance of the congregation. The building will be used for housing for working families and adults.

In 2018, Hurricanes Florence and Michael caused extensive damage in parts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. Episcopal Relief & Development and church partners again responded to provide immediate relief with generators and gas to address power outages, cleaning supplies, clothing, baby supplies, gift cards, food and water for over 5,000 individuals who were impacted by the storms. As focus shifts to long-term rebuilding, diocesan staff are continuing to evaluate and assess needs to determine appropriate response efforts.

Updated: September 1, 2019