

**Disaster Ministry Committee
Report to Synod Council
September 2019**

Synod Council Action Requested: Approve new officers for 2019-2020: Mary Brunso, chair; John Boettner, vice-chair; and Pastor Matt Steinhauer, secretary. Remove Pastor Laurie Bentley from the committee.

Meeting Dates: From February 2019 until June 2019 the group met by teleconference on the 1st Thursday of the month from 8pm – 9pm Eastern. In July we changed our teleconference to the 2nd Tuesday of the month from 3pm – 4pm Eastern. We conduct additional calls if situation warrants. We also have met once by email to approve an emergency funding request.

Activities: The Disaster Response Committee continues to help prepare congregations and their communities for disasters or emergencies, provide assistance during and following a disaster, and provide long-term recovery help within our Synod. Assistance is both physical and spiritual. It takes many to effectively work in this area and we partner with Lutheran Disaster Response, VOADS (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster), congregations, state and local EMAs (Emergency Management Agencies), the Red Cross, other denominations, the American Red Cross, and social ministries like Inspiritus or R3SM in Mississippi.

Disasters can be both natural (hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding, wildfires) and humanitarian (ICE raid in Mississippi). These are the current responses in our Synod:

Alabama: Tornado recovery in Lee County. Pastor Tiffany Chaney is providing emotional and spiritual care for this area. A 10 house build is being conducted 30 Sept – 11 Oct and John Boettner is looking for teams to participate. More information can be found at www.Fullercenter.org/legacybuild.

Georgia: Georgia continues to work on long-term recovery on the Georgia coast from Hurricane Irma. They are in the long-term recovery process. Georgia also is working on damage sustained during Hurricane Michael. Currently they have 5 clients. Work in Georgia is in cooperation with Inspiritus. They are seeking teams to help with the work.

Mississippi: Mississippi has both natural and humanitarian disasters in the State. The natural disasters include finishing up the work in Hattiesburg from the tornados from 2017 and the flooding in 2019 in Humphreys, Issaquena, Sharkey, Warren, and Yazoo Counties. R3SM is our partner agency in Mississippi. We are using funds from the grant from LDR but are seeking teams to help with the recovery. The ICE raids in August also require our attention. Pastor Stacey Parvin and Pastor Tom Clark have been in contact with Catholic Charities, UMCOR (Methodist Disaster Agency), and LIRS (Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Services) to see what assistance we can provide. A church in Seattle, Washington reached out to offer 21,000 pre-packaged non-perishable meals to the area. Once we coordinated the details with Catholic Charities, the committee voted to fund the shipping of these meals to Mississippi. We are church together.

Tennessee: 2019 flooding in Washington, Sevier, Knox, Rutherford, Hamilton and Loudon counties. We are using funding from the LDR Spring grant to provide assistance in these areas. Pastor Morgan Gordy has been overseeing this project. She is coordinating with TN Baptist Disaster Response to see if we can work with them. We need to recruit teams to help with home repairs and property clean-up.

As I write this Tropical Storm and possibly Hurricane Dorian is churning in the waters. Its current path may bring it over the coast of Georgia and may impact our Synod. We continue to pray for all impacted and those who respond.

We continue to have a great need for Mission Teams that can help with both clean out and rebuilding damaged homes. We also need teams that can help provide the spiritual and emotional care that people need following these disasters. Pastor Stacey Parvin is available to help plug in congregations if they wish to help in these areas.

LDR is hosting a consultation in New Orleans October 14-17 to discuss the ways that climate impacts disasters, mitigation roles and the overall LDR program. Currently Pastor Stacey Parvin, Pastor Morgan Gordy and Mary Brunso will be attending.

Thank you for your continued support in this important ministry.

In Christ,
Mary Brunso, Chair
Disaster Ministry Committee