

2019 Disaster Ministry Committee Report

- The committee currently has seven voting members of the committee with Pastor Morgan Gordy serving a temporary non-voting role managing the Tennessee spring storm response coordination. Our voting members are: Mary Brunso (chair), John Boettner (vice-chair), Pastor Matt Steinhauer (secretary), Pastor Katie Pasch, Pastor Hope Knobler, Jon Biggs, and Pastor Tom Clark. Pastor Stacey Parvin serves as a liaison between the synod and the committee. Pastor Jill Henning is Bishop Strickland's representative. Inspiritus has a non-voting role on the committee. Pastor Joe Chu, Jean and Dale Percy provide assistance from LDR.
- The disaster ministry committee continues to provide support logistically, financially, and spiritually to congregations and communities in our Synod in preparing for a disaster, during a disaster and following a disaster. We rely on partnerships with the Synod, LDR, Inspiritus, R3SM, State VOAD's, local and state Emergency Management agencies, the Red Cross and individual congregations.
- As part of the effort to educate the Synod on disaster preparation and response, the committee has presented workshops or talks to cluster and conference gatherings, WELCA's annual Synodical gathering, and Synod Assembly. It regularly submits contributions to the Synod e-news, and maintains a Facebook page.
- Since the committee is a part of the larger church, the committee attends the consultations provided by LDR to further the relationships between Synods and Social Ministry Organizations (SMO's) within the ELCA related to disaster preparation and response. This year LDR has focused on the climate and its relationship to disaster. In April, then chair John Boettner, Pastor Morgan Gordy, and Bishop Gordy joined leaders across the ELCA in Washington, DC to advocate for policies to care for creation, to curb global warming, as to provide funding for disaster response in the wake of climate crisis. In October, current chair Mary Brunso, Pastor Stacey Parvin and Pastor Morgan Gordy attended LDR's consultation "Climate Mitigation and Adaptation" held in New Orleans, LA.
- Several grant applications to LDR have been written to aid the Synod in Disaster Recovery. In the spring a \$23,600 grant was approved to respond to the spring 2019 storms that hit our Synod. This fall two grants have been written. One was written as a humanitarian disaster grant to help those impacted by the ICE raids in Mississippi and the other to continue our partnership with R3SM as they recover from flooding and tornado damage sustained in Mississippi. These grants have been submitted and are in the approval process. The grants we receive from LDR have a matching component from the Synod Disaster Funds. The spring grant has allowed the committee to approve funds for emotional and spiritual care for those impacted by these storms, allowed for supplies and work to facilitate the repair and rebuilding to be purchased, and support staff in the SMO's, like construction managers, to aid in the recovery.
- The Synod has a shower trailer and a tool trailer to aid in disaster recovery. Currently the shower trailer is located on the GA coast and is used for volunteer teams helping in disaster recovery. Currently the tool trailer is located in the Albany, GA area and is used by volunteer teams helping in disaster recovery.
- The committee has approved funds to assist Inspiritus in long-term recovery efforts in Georgia following Hurricanes Irma and Matthew, tornados in the Albany area. Recently, \$5000 was

approved for helping rebuild a home on the Georgia coast and \$1827.46 was approved to fix a bathroom for a client in Albany.

- In an effort to assist other Synods recovering from disaster the committee approved \$1100 to move a Camp Victor tool trailer to the Panama City area to help in disaster recovery.
- The humanitarian disaster following the ICE raids in Mississippi was a wonderful example of how “We are church together”. A congregation in Washington State offered to send 21,000 non-perishable meals to Mississippi to help the people impacted. The transportation of these meals was expensive and the committee approved \$2500 to cover the shipping costs in order for the generous meals could be delivered to Mississippi.
- Hurricane Dorian allowed the committee to work with our new Bishop in preparing for the possibility of a major disaster. Pastor Stacey Parvin contacted the dean and pastors in the projected area to offer prayers and support and to compile a list of where the pastors would be during the event. She updated the committee and the Bishop as to the needs and concerns. Mary Brunso monitored the Georgia VOAD calls daily and updated the Pastor Stacey and the Bishop as to the possible needs and projected path. The Bishop, Mary and Pastor Stacey coordinated with Inspiritus as to the plan should one be needed. The Bishop coordinated with his contacts to help arrange for shelter possibilities. Pastor Stacey, Pastor Morgan and Mary monitored the LDR calls for how the storm and response was progressing church-wide. Fortunately, our Synod was not impacted by this storm; however, it allowed us to practice the disaster plan that is in place.
- Currently there is some type of recovery in all four states of the Southeastern Synod.
 - In Alabama there is continued recovery from the tornados in Lee County. Additionally, this fall there have been localized storms that require debris removal.
 - In Georgia recovery continues on the coast from Hurricanes Irma and Matthew and in South Georgia from tornadoes and Hurricane Michael.
 - In Mississippi recovery from tornadoes, storms and delta flooding is on-going.
 - In Tennessee recovery from storms and flooding continues.
- Several congregations continue to support mission trips to help in disaster recovery. The committee appreciates their efforts and continues to recruit more teams to aid in recovery. Recruiting additional volunteer disaster responses coordinators is another goal. Currently there are two interested in this area of service and a training is in planning stages for early 2020.
- Disasters do not have to be big to impact those in the Synod. The committee stands ready to help in all disasters both large and small. The committee monitors news and weather and wants all to know that it stands ready to be there should the need arise.

Submitted on behalf of the committee,

Mary Brunso, Chair