

United Church of Christ Disaster Ministries

<https://www.ucc.org/disaster>

Priscilla Self, ISC Conference Disaster Coordinator

"Where Faith Meets Works". UCC Disaster Ministries is a nationally recognized ministry that engages volunteers, congregations, UCC conferences and partners to serve the unique needs of disaster survivors. Every year disasters in the United States leave impacted families in need of spiritual, physical, financial and psychological support. UCC Disaster Ministries provides assistance with acute and long-term disaster effects, which can last years following an event. With a special focus on serving in communities where long-term needs persist, UCC Disaster Ministries volunteers' work and support extend beyond immediate assistance and the coverage of news stations. Through our network of [Conference Disaster Coordinators](#) and local congregational connections, volunteers are organized for early clean-up work and long-term rebuilding efforts. UCC Disaster Ministries also provides resources and support for preparedness and technology-caused disasters.

Representatives and I from most of the UCC 39 Conferences serve as UCC Conference Disaster Coordinators. A Conference Disaster Coordinator is a volunteer appointed by the conference to serve as a primary point of contact and team leader for a Conference Disaster Team (CDT). CDCs act as a liaison between the CDT, the conference and UCC Disaster Ministries. They are the backbone of UCC Disaster Ministries' domestic preparedness and long-term recovery efforts. Since March of this year, this group has met virtually every other week to discuss issues around disasters and the Covid-19 pandemic in each of our Conferences, Churches, Communities and each Coordinator's well-being. Rev. Phyllis Richards is the Acting Team Leader and facilitates these meetings. Disaster Ministries is under the umbrella of Wider Church Ministries. Rev Karen Georgia A. Thompson is the Associate General Minister of Wider Church Ministries & Operations and Co-Executive for Global Ministries.

2020 UNITED STATES DISASTERS

IOWA DERECHO

Three United Church of Christ congregations were in the high-impact area August 10 when a 140 mph winds of hurricane-strength "derecho" swept across Central Iowa. Three UCC Congregations were impacted: Hope UCC in Hiawatha, First Congregational UCC in Cedar Rapids, and First Congregational UCC in Belle Plaine. Even as they dealt with the derecho's damage to their churches and homes, pastors and members stepped up to help their communities.

And as word spread through social media of the destruction, the broader UCC (local, conference and national) stepped up to help. "it was like Pentecostal fire for the churches," said the Rev. Darrell Goodwin, a UCC associate conference minister. Rev. Bryce Hughes, UCC Disaster Coordinator and Pastor in Burlington, Iowa, is facilitating responses from UCC Disaster Ministries for recovery in these areas. The long-term recovery response may last for several years.

WESTERN WILDFIRES

Massive wildfires burning in California, Oregon and Washington have created havoc for many UCC members, churches and their communities. Many homes and businesses have been lost to these fires; many people have been evacuated in all three states. Lives and many livelihoods are also lost.

In California, some of the blazes are nearly contained as several new fires ignite, fanned by strong winds. In Washington, more acres were burned in the state on one day than were charred in the past 12 fire seasons, more than 300,000 acres have burned across the state. UCC Conference Ministers in these areas are still checking in with pastors and assessing what's happening in each community.

UCC Officer's and Disaster Ministries' staff continue to monitor the situation and offer support. The damage in some areas will be extensive according to early assessments by local government. The long-term recovery response may last 3 -5 years or longer.

HURRICANES

2020 is acting according to predictions that it would be a particularly heavy hurricane season. To date (Sept. 23) there have been 24 tropical depressions, of which 23 became tropical storms. Eight became hurricanes, including two major hurricanes. So far hurricanes have impacted and caused damages in several Atlantic coastal cities in Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Mississippi and Alabama. Once Long-Term Recovery Teams are established and case managers identify those in need after insurance and FEMA work is completed, UCC Disaster Ministries will be involved in recovery work here for several years.

COVID-19 US PANDEMIC

We all know about this issue – we hear and see reports daily on the national news, local news, from our State Governors, internet and social media feeds and so on – it is an “up front and center” issue on our minds. This is also an issue that the UCC Disaster Ministries has been working on and paying attention to. Barbara Baylor MPH, Temporary UCC Disaster Ministries Health Liaison, distributed to Conferences and others a COVID-19 Daily Briefing from UCC's Humanitarian and Development Team that separates facts from falsehoods and fear and supplies valuable information throughout the duration of the pandemic.

https://www.ucc.org/daily_covid_19_brief

COVID-19 GRANTS AVAILABLE TO UCC CHURCHES

The United Church of Christ National Setting is offering financial assistance to local churches whose ministries have been challenged by the novel coronavirus pandemic.

As one, the national officers have collectively identified \$2.6 million in COVID-19 relief, \$1.5 million in loans that will be [administered through the Cornerstone Fund](#) and another \$1.1 million in micro grants. Go to <https://www.ucc.org/disaster> and click on the tab for Covid 19 Grants for more information and the application process.

RECOVERING HOPE – Resources for Emotional and Spiritual Care

Click on this Covid-19 tab at <https://www.ucc.org/disaster> for a variety of resources and webinars offered for support and educational opportunities revolving around Covid-19.

FUNDING FOR UCC DISASTER MINISTRIES IS PROVIDED BY:

One Great Hour of Sharing, as part of Our Church's Wider Mission, is the special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that carries God's message of love and hope to people in crisis. The UCC works with Mission Partners to provide disaster preparedness and recovery response. On average, of every dollar given to One Great Hour of Sharing, 95 cents are used directly for mission programming; and 5 cents for interpretation materials.

Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support provides administrative cost for UCC Disaster Ministries and OGHS UCC Mission Trip Opportunities, and it is your OCWM at work. Through your contributions to OCWM basic support, you are maintaining the infrastructure to make possible the networks, partnerships and supplies that provide these service opportunities and long-term relationships in local communities. OCWM - Changing Lives!

2020 UCC Mission Trip Opportunities

Go to:

https://www.ucc.org/volunteer_mission-trip-opportunities for information on each site



MISSION INN SITES

UCC Hospitality Spots for Groups Traveling for Mission Trips can also be found at the previous mentioned website.

UCC DISASTER MINISTRIES CURRENT VOLUNTEER WORK SITES

Note: Deployment of volunteer work (mission) teams is on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic, until it is safe to do so. Feel free to be in touch with site contacts about getting on the schedule once things open up. And/or check back here for any updates.

Eastern North Carolina (Dorian, Florence and Matthew)

Volunteer(s) and groups can register to help repair and rebuild homes in Eastern North Carolina. Hurricanes Dorian (2019), Florence (2018), and Matthew (2016) caused severe flooding and wind damage. There are 15 centers accepting volunteers of all skill levels to help repair homes affected by natural disasters. For more information and to register go to https://www.ucc.org/disaster_volunteer_north_carolina_hurricane_recovery

Florida Panhandle (Hurricane Michael)

Volunteer(s) and groups can register to help repair and rebuild homes in the Florida Panhandle. Hurricane Michael caused extensive damage when it made landfall there as a Category 4 storm in October 2018. The storm's heavy rain, high winds, and extreme storm surges caused massive destruction in its path and spawned numerous tornadoes. Work is in Bay and Washington counties, which suffered significant home, crop and tree damage. The work is a variety. Roofing is a number one priority. All skill levels of volunteers are accepted. Groups are matched up with work that is suitable to their talents. For more information and to register go to

https://www.ucc.org/disaster_recovery_florida_panhandle

Volusia County, Florida (Hurricanes Irma & Matthew)

Volunteer(s) and groups can register to help repair/rebuild homes. Roofing, gutting interiors, replacing insulation, siding, drywall repair and painting, flooring and other interior work as needed. For more information and to register go to

https://www.ucc.org/disaster_matthew_and_irma_recovery_volusia_county_florida

Puerto Rico (Hurricanes Irma and Maria)

Volunteer(s) and groups can register to help repair and rebuild homes in Puerto Rico. Work may include repairing cement roofs, light carpentry, metal and wood roofing repair, and painting interior ceilings and walls. Most of the work will be done in the Humacao city area, the hardest hit area in Puerto Rico. For more information and to register go to

https://www.ucc.org/ucc_hurricane_maria_irma_recovery_puerto_rico

DISASTER KITS

UCC Disaster Ministries promotes assembly and donation of these kits in conjunction with Church World Service. The Kits include Clean-Up Buckets, Hygiene Kits, Baby Kits and School Kits. Groups and individuals complete these kits based on a supply list and ship or take them to a CWS Depot. Each fall CWS organizes pick-up depots in various cities in the US. Closer pick-up depots for us in Illinois are St. Louis on the first Saturday in October and Evansville, IN for a week in September.

CWS Kits make all the difference between sickness and health for struggling families, give children in impoverished communities and refugee camps the basic tools for learning and equip people after a flood, tornado or other disaster with supplies to get back on their feet. Go to this website for more information on these kits, supplies needed and dates and times for the depots. <https://cwskits.org/>

Click on this link to watch a video about CWS kits <https://youtu.be/KpiWk9G4Olw>

THANK YOU - GRACIAS

Thank you to each ISC Congregation, group and individual for your donations, mission trips and continued support of UCC Disaster Ministries. Your gift to UCC Disaster Ministries provides relief for suffering resulting from hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, and other natural or man-made disasters. 100% of funds designated for disaster relief to the United Church of Christ are used for disaster relief and rehabilitation programming. Donations can be made through your local Congregation, earmarked for Disaster Ministries or at the ISC website <https://iscucc.org> click on the Disaster Ministries tab at the bottom of "Changing Lives" on the right side.

You can contact me, Priscilla Self, at pjj48@hotmail.com and 618/318-0083 for more information about or to discuss UCC Disaster Ministries. I am also available to speak about UCC Disaster Ministries to your Congregation or group. Thank you for the honor of serving as your UCC Disaster Ministries ISC Conference Disaster Coordinator.