

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST DISASTER MINISTRIES

A Time To Replenish



I will satisfy the weary, and all who are faint I will replenish, Jeremiah 31:25

The Global H.O.P.E. team in United Church of Christ Wider Church Ministries brings together the UCC's refugee and migration ministries, volunteer engagement, disaster response and recovery, and sustainable development work. The acronym H.O.P.E. makes clear the team's vision: **H**umanitarian. **O**pportunities. **P**rogress. **E**mpowerment. Lesli Remaly (remalyl@ucc.org) is the UCC Minister for Disaster Response and Recovery.

Hand in hand with UCC Partners in Service, congregations, conferences and partnerships, including a network of Conference Disaster (Response) Coordinators, UCC Disaster Ministries seeks to serve the most vulnerable populations, focusing on disaster preparedness, identifying and meeting unmet needs, and spiritual and emotional support.

A Conference Disaster Coordinator is an individual appointed by their conference to serve as a primary point of contact and team leader for a Conference Disaster Team (CDT). CDCs act as a liaison among the CDT, the conference and UCC Disaster Ministries. They are the backbone of UCC Disaster Ministries' domestic preparedness and long-term recovery efforts. "Conference Disaster Coordinator" is a volunteer position. Some CDCs are retired active volunteers and some have full-time jobs.

The growing UCC Emotional and Spiritual Care in Disaster Network is building the work the UCC already is doing to extend care to survivors of natural and human-caused disasters.

The UCC is an active member of National VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster), through which we partner with dozens of organizations, large and small, for holistic, community-based recovery.

Domestic grants show broad need, response

A review of some of the recent domestic grants from United Church of Christ Global H.O.P.E. reveals the breadth both of need and response.

Waverly, Tenn.: \$3,000 to the Tennessee Wing Civil Air Patrol for communications equipment essential to relief activities after torrential rains and a tornado struck on August 21, causing loss of life and extensive damage. The patrol is a UCC partner through Tennessee VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster).

Afghan Resettlement to the United States: \$7,000 to Church World Service to help support resettlement of Afghan Special Immigrant Visa holders (SIVs) and other

Afghan refugees in the wake of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. See also the UCC's [toolkit](#) "Welcoming and Advocating for Afghan SIVs and Refugees."

Immokalee, Fla.: \$95,000 to UCC partner the Immokalee Fair Housing Alliance toward construction of apartments for 128 families (farmworkers and other low-income residents) to replace housing damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Irma in September 2017.

Gun Buyback Event, Longmont, Colo.: \$3,000 to Longmont UCC for its September 25 gun buyback event. It's the latest in a series of events in partnership with RAWTools, in response to the mass shooting March 22 in Boulder, 18 miles away. In June, Global H.O.P.E. granted \$3,000 to Community UCC in Boulder for its June 13 gun donation event.

Haw River, N.C.: \$7,000 to Melfield UCC toward purchase of a walk-in freezer for the church's food pantry, which serves 500 families each month. It has had to increase its food purchases to meet needs due to continued economic stress caused by COVID.

Phoenix, Ariz.: \$15,000 in matching funds to the Southwest Conference UCC to help Cruzando Fronteras/Casa Misericordia, Yuma UCC and the Welcome Center support migrants' housing, food, clothing, and other basic needs in 2021.

Billings, Mont.: \$3,000 to the UCC Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference to help evacuees from the Robertson Draw fire with immediate relief and connections that can lead to sustainable assistance for employment and to "rehome." Red Lodge UCC has been actively involved in this effort.

In **Volusia County, Fla.**, it's mobile homes for hurricane survivors. In **Northern California**, it's tiny homes for wildfire survivors. In both places, disaster survivors are benefitting from "outside-the-box" thinking by partners of UCC Disaster Ministries.

UCC Disaster Ministries is working with FEMA, Red Cross and VOAD recovery team in **Eastwick, PA. and Detroit, MI** after spring rains and flooding caused damages to many homes and churches.

On the other side of the United States, a collaboration is building "Tiny Homes" for wildfire survivors in **Northern California**. The initiative of First Congregational Church of Oroville, the collaboration includes churches of the Northern California Nevada Conference and the Tiny Pine Foundation.



In Colfax, California, Rev. Janet Chapman, Pastor described the scene in the church's education building. "We have a family of five with their puppy living downstairs in the fellowship hall," she said. "A woman with two dogs and one cat are living upstairs in one of the classrooms. In the other classroom, another woman, 82 years old, is there with her 12-year-old cat.



In Redding California, three hours to the north, evacuees and their pets are staying in church classrooms and basements.

"TC" and her two dogs are among the fire evacuees staying at First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Redding, Calif.

Those are just two examples of how the United Church of Christ and its partners are responding to this summer's fires.

Everywhere, natural disasters are on the increase as Earth's climate warms. UCC Disaster Ministries is looking for churches that will declare themselves "ready and willing" to respond.

The UCC's network of Conference Disaster Coordinators (CDC) is still collecting reports on how Hurricane Ida affected UCC congregations and the communities they serve – from Louisiana and on up the East Coast.

Donations to the UCC's "[Severe Storms 2021 Appeal](#)" will support recovery from Ida and other storms. Donations received by the Illinois South Conference will be transferred to UCC Disaster Ministries. As always, gifts to Our Church's Wider Mission basic support and One Great Hour of Sharing make the UCC's disaster-response network possible.

In addition to financial donations, another way to help those affected by disasters is assembling Church World Service Kits and donating them so they are ready to be distributed when needed (emphasis on **when** and not **if**).

Disasters are affecting us more and more each year. We see and hear of devastating wildfires, droughts, floods, and storms affecting us and many others all the time. It's not a matter of **if** anymore, it's **when**.

Check out the Church World Service [website](#) for a list of particular items for each kit and more information.



Provide Hygiene Kits to make all the difference between sickness and health for struggling families.

Give children in impoverished communities and refugee camps the basic tools for learning by donating School Kits



Emergency Cleanup Buckets equip people after a flood, tornado, or other disaster.

The UCC Disaster Ministries has \$250 Kit Grants available – application and information are available at the ucc.org/disaster [website](#).

Thank you to everyone for your time, talent and treasure to help persons affected by these disasters and the recovery efforts done on your behalf through the UCC Disaster Ministries. All this information and much more can be found at the ucc.org/disaster [website](#) or contact me, Priscilla Self. I would be glad to discuss this information in more detail with individuals, your congregation and/or group.

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