



Church of the Brethren

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In these disaster and crisis filled years, Paul's letter to the Galatians has given us strength and reminded us to "not become weary in doing good". Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) and Children's Disaster Services (CDS) were focused on relief and recovery from the major hurricanes of 2016 and 2017, when Hurricanes Florence and Michael, wildfires and new waves of violence severely stretched program staff, volunteers and program resources. The rapid growth of the Camp Fire in northern California burned most of the town of Paradise, including the Paradise COB, resulting in a response by CDS as well as joint programming with the Pacific Southwest district.

The BDM rebuilding network was repairing and rebuilding homes damaged by Hurricane Matthew (2016), when Hurricane Florence hit the same areas of North and South Carolina in September 2018. After a brief closure during the storm, BDM volunteer teams expanded the project to help clean up and muck out re-flooded homes. One homeowner shared, "I am a resident and I give you all my heartfelt thanks. Thank you for not giving up on twice flooded Nichols, S.C."

The rebuilding of homes in Puerto Rico (Hurricane Maria), in partnership with the Puerto Rico district, started in September with volunteers based at the Castañer Iglesia de Los Hermanos (Castañer COB). The rebuilding project is serving the three mountain churches and will also rebuild homes on the northern coast of PR in 2019. This program is building on earlier relief work included the distribution of supplies, food and tools and the creation of a recovery committee by the PR district. The materials used to repair the homes are being supplied by a FEMA program called Voluntary Agencies Leading and Organizing Repair (VALOR) and COB Emergency Disaster Funds.

Rebuilding volunteers also worked in Eureka, Mo., through March 2018, providing recovery from floods in 2015 and 2017. The total from all rebuild projects in 2018 shows that more than 80 families received repair or rebuilding support in North and South Carolina, Puerto Rico, and Missouri, as well as in short-term responses in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). This work was extended by the Disaster Recovery Support Initiative (DRSI), a BDM partnership with other denominations that worked in St. Thomas, USVI, through August 2018. This effort provided training, technical assistance and support to the St. Thomas Recovery Team as it developed its long-term hurricane recovery program.

Children's Disaster Services volunteers responded with enthusiasm and compassion to care for affected children in diverse and challenging disasters ranging from Hawaii's earthquake and volcano eruption, to the shooting at a synagogue in Pittsburg, Pa., the Camp Fire in California and the devastation of Hurricanes Florence (North Carolina) and Michael (Florida). CDS also provided specialized care for refugee children in McAllen, Texas after they were released by immigration authorities. In total, volunteers cared for 6,799 children in 11 different responses.

Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.

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Lisa Crouch was named the new CDS associate director in August, after Kathy Fry-Miller's retirement.

The Nigeria Crisis Response remains the largest BDM international response in 2018, and in BDM history. Working in partnership with Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN) and the European organization Mission 21, BDM is helping lead and support a major response that also involves four other nonprofit partners. This extensive program includes four camps for Internally Displaced Persons, food distributions, medical assistance, seeds and fertilizer for self-reliance, new drinking water wells, education assistance for orphan children, livelihood training centers for widows and orphans, trauma workshops, training of one-on-one counselors, a peace conference with Christians and Muslims, home repairs for the most vulnerable and continued development of a long-term soybean program for farmers. This relief occurs amidst the continued killing of farmers, kidnappings, food shortages and malnutrition. Even with these challenges, EYN has planted many new churches where families have been relocated.

Other 2018 international responses include Hurricane Matthew recovery in Haiti, with the Haitian COB completing the construction of 10 new homes in a small remote community outside Les Cayes. BDM is supporting a smaller response to an October 5.9 magnitude earthquake that struck far northwest Haiti, damaging Brethren homes and a Brethren school. Another sister church response was support for recovery from spring flooding in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Grants to Church World Service (CWS) supported Venezuelans fleeing the humanitarian crisis; a relief and recovery program in Indonesia after an earthquake and tsunami; and survivors of flooding in Kenya. A shipment of canned meat and supplies and a grant supported flood recovery work in southern Honduras through partner Proyecto Aldea Global. A grant of \$40,000 provided psycho-social support for Syrian refugee children in church-based educational programs through partner Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development.

The total 2018 program expenditures were \$730,022 for U.S. responses, including the Rebuild Program and CDS; \$548,662 for the Nigeria Crisis Response; and \$237,297 for all other international responses.

This ministry is only possible because the whole church is working together. Individual members and supporters, volunteers, churches and districts are part of the body of Christ coming together to pray, serve, give hope and help families heal. Through all this we pray more people come to God and know God's amazing love.

Thank you for your support. You are part of the body bearing witness to God's love for all who are lost and need Christ.



Roy Winter, Associate Executive Director

On behalf of BDM staff – Sherry Chastain, Lisa Crouch, Jenn Dorsch-Messler, Sharon Franzén and Terry Goodger

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