

# 2017 HURRICANES

TWO YEARS LATER



**Lutheran Disaster Response**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

TWO YEARS LATER

“I am very happy and satisfied. They have done a fabulous job! At first, the volunteers were like strangers in my house. But soon they became friends.”

–Rosa, Puerto Rico



## UNITED STATES



“The kind and professional services we received from these groups did much to relieve our stress associated with the emotional and economic hardship caused by the devastating flooding of our home.”

–Ellen, Georgia



# Thank you

In 2017, hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria swept through the United States and the Caribbean, causing widespread damage and interrupting the lives of millions. **You and other supporters of Lutheran Disaster Response reacted to these events with incredible generosity, giving nearly \$15 million to hurricane response efforts and showing your dedication to helping our neighbors.**

Thanks to you, survivors of hurricanes in Texas, Georgia, Florida, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Haiti and Cuba have been connected with life-changing support — from emergency relief supplies to emotional and spiritual care, as well as the repairing and rebuilding of their homes. The damage caused by the 2017 hurricanes was so catastrophic and extensive that the recovery is still underway and is expected to take three to five years or more. Lutheran Disaster Response is known for staying until long after the headlines change. Thanks to your support, Lutheran Disaster Response continues to accompany hurricane survivors until this response is complete.

## POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS

Lutheran Disaster Response works in partnership with congregations, synods, social service organizations and other partners in the United States and around the world. With their deep knowledge of local needs and how to address them, these partners help us work in ways that are relevant and effective for each community. Through these partnerships, we accompany survivors from the time a disaster strikes until communities are rebuilt.

This work is made possible by the Lutheran Disaster Response network. We are particularly grateful to:

- The Caribbean Synod
- Diakon
- Inspiritus (formerly Lutheran Services of Georgia)
- Liberty Lutheran/Lutheran Congregational Services
- Lutheran Social Services Disaster Response (Upbring)
- Lutheran Social Services of Puerto Rico
- Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands
- Lutheran World Federation
- Lutheran World Relief

We are also grateful to collaborate with the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other implementing partners.

### SHELTER

After the 2017 hurricanes, more than 4.9 million households in the United States registered for FEMA assistance to repair their homes. In Puerto Rico alone, out of nearly 1,800 houses engaged by Lutheran Social Services of Puerto Rico, at least 80% expressed need for home repairs.

Lutheran Disaster Response is coordinating and supporting volunteer programs to help people rebuild their homes in Texas, Georgia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. We are also supporting construction management in Georgia.



In Texas, for example, Hurricane Harvey knocked a tree onto Ms. Alma's home. Lutheran Disaster Response supported a case manager to help guide her through the process of receiving support to rebuild her home.

In Puerto Rico, Hurricane Maria tore the roof off Luz Maria's home, which allowed the rain to destroy everything in it. She received help to tear down soaked drywall, clear debris and dispose of her ruined belongings. Later, she received assistance to renovate a small home that was vacant and get appliances such as a refrigerator and a stove, which gave her a functional and comfortable place to live after the hurricane destroyed the place she had called home. "I felt very fortunate and blessed," Luz Maria said.



Hurricane Maria also ruined Teresa's home in St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands helped connect Teresa with volunteer power to remove waterlogged drywall and prepare the building for major repairs. "We need to trust God and move forward," Teresa said. In Pennsylvania, Lutheran Disaster Response supported evacuees from Puerto Rico with case managers to help identify their needs and connect them with services, as well as material support, including food, clothing (including winter clothing), housing and infant car seats.

“Hurricane Irma took a huge toll on our family physically, emotionally and financially.”



## ELLEN'S STORY

“Assistance from government resources was limited. Although we had flood insurance, it didn't cover temporary housing, travel expenses or all of our needed repairs and replacement of furniture and appliances. Dealing with our flood insurance company was a nightmare experience.

“Before we arrived home, assistance for our community had already begun. Members of Lord of Life Lutheran Church had cleared our driveway of several downed trees and a massive amount of debris caused by the storm surge — marsh racks, etc. Our daughter and her fiancé had also arrived earlier and had begun cleaning floors and removing furniture from the house. Our pastor arrived early and also helped with cleanup and packing.



“Our evacuation and recovery process was made all the more difficult because one of us is wheelchair-bound and there were no FEMA or insurance allowances for the extra expenses incurred because of special needs. However, thanks to the special help and vigilance of Al Kates from Inspiritus (formerly Lutheran Services of Georgia), we received advice and assistance in filing additional insurance claims and applying for grants from local social service agencies (the Salvation Army, United Way and others). The kind and professional services we received from these groups did much to relieve our stress associated with the emotional and economic hardship caused by the devastating flooding of our home.” —Ellen, Georgia

## EMERGENCY RELIEF

Lutheran Disaster Response facilitated the delivery of critical supplies during a time when infrastructure was not functioning, including:

- baby formula
- batteries
- bottled water
- car power inverters
- diapers
- flashlights
- generators
- satellite phones
- solar lamps
- solar-powered cellphone chargers
- toothpaste and other hygiene items
- pots, pans and other cookware
- blankets
- sleeping pads





## EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL CARE

In the first five months after Hurricane Maria, the suicide rate in Puerto Rico spiked nearly 30%. Feelings of isolation and a long period without basic necessities left many without hope. Lutheran Disaster Response is working with local social ministry organizations, synods, congregations and other partners to address the emotional and spiritual needs of communities in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Florida.

In the Caribbean Synod, Lutheran Disaster Response provided emergency salary support for pastors so they could care for their congregations and communities. Lutheran Disaster Response addressed other emotional and spiritual care needs by supporting a social worker in Puerto Rico and a FEMA-funded crisis-counseling program for the U.S. Virgin Islands, administered by Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands.

In Texas, Lutheran Disaster Response sponsored a respite retreat for congregational leaders.

In Florida, Lutheran Disaster Response supported emotional and spiritual care through Lutheran Services Florida as it implemented a FEMA-funded crisis-counseling program for 20 counties.

TWO YEARS LATER



Because of the generosity of donors like you, Lutheran Disaster Response is able to make long-term commitments to help communities recover from disasters. Based on the severity of the damages and the large number of impacted areas, Lutheran Disaster Response has committed an estimated \$7 million and other forms of support over the next three to five years.

Our efforts will include rebuilding and repairing homes, ongoing support to help survivors create their own recovery plans and secure much-needed resources, continued emotional and spiritual care for survivors and leaders in the response, volunteer coordination, and intentional capacity-building for our partners and affiliates on the ground.

## WAYS TO GIVE TO SUPPORT THIS ONGOING RESPONSE AND OTHERS LIKE IT:

### ONLINE

[ELCA.org/disaster](http://ELCA.org/disaster)

### BY MAIL

Make a check out to Lutheran Disaster Response and send to:

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
ELCA Gift Processing Center  
P.O. Box 1809  
Merrifield, VA 22116-8009

### BY PHONE

Call 800-638-3522 to make a donation with a credit card. Operators are ready to assist you Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Central Time.



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