



2018

HURRICANES

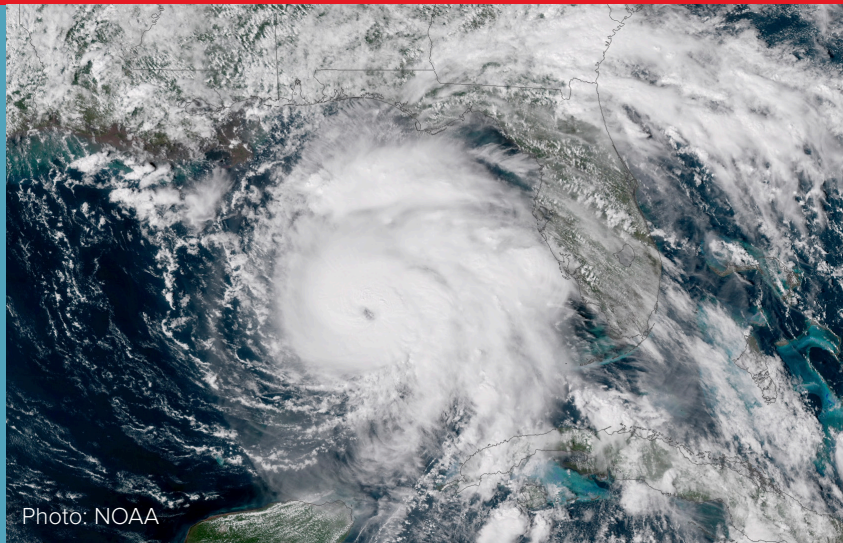
ONE YEAR LATER



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

Thank you

In September 2018, Hurricane Florence struck the Carolinas and surrounding states with dangerous winds, storm surge and extensive flooding. Many coastal cities experienced more than 20 inches of rain. The hurricane caused more than 50 deaths, displaced thousands of people from their homes and caused billions of dollars in damage.



Then, in October, Hurricane Michael made landfall as a powerful Category 5 hurricane with winds over 150 miles per hour, striking several states including Florida, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina. More than 30 people died, and Mexico Beach and Panama City were devastated. The storm caused major damage from extreme winds and storm surge.

You responded to these disasters with generosity. Thanks to you and other Lutheran Disaster Response supporters, people whose lives were interrupted by these disasters have been connected with crucial support — from emergency relief supplies to emotional and spiritual care, as well as the repair and rebuilding of their damaged homes. Thanks to your support, Lutheran Disaster Response can accompany survivors of these hurricanes.



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 Florida-Bahamas Synod, ELCA
- In Spiritus (formerly Lutheran Services of Georgia)
- Lutheran Services Carolinas
- The North Carolina Synod, ELCA



THE RESPONSE

Lutheran Disaster Response has provided hurricane survivors with immediate relief such as groceries, bedding, clothing, daily life necessities and temporary supplies. And thanks to you, we can stay until long after the headlines change and support people all the way through their recovery.

Long-term support for Hurricanes Florence and Michael includes connecting survivors with case managers who can help them formulate an individual recovery plan and then connect with existing resources, as well as coordinating volunteers, providing financial assistance and managing construction. In Florida, for example, Lutheran Disaster Response funded the Florida-Bahamas Synod to support a local disaster coordinator and construction manager. In Spiritus, formerly Lutheran Services of Georgia, is focusing its response efforts on repairing or furnishing the homes of veterans, older adults and families with individuals with disabilities so they all have safe, secure and functional housing.

In addition, a respite retreat for impacted congregational leaders in North Carolina helped ensure that those providing emotional and spiritual care to communities recovering from disaster could continue that hard work.

RITA AND BILL'S STORY

Rita and Bill, members of Messiah Lutheran Church in Panama City, Florida, had been living in their home in nearby Lynn Haven for 36 years when Hurricane Michael charged toward the Florida panhandle. Thinking this would be just another hurricane, Rita and Bill decided to ride out the storm in their weather-tested home. Except this time was different. Hurricane Michael intensified rapidly; by the time they seriously considered leaving the house, it was too late.

For hours, while they waited out the storm in the interior rooms of their home, they could hear nothing but the violent howling of the winds and the shaking of the ground and the house. The storm had triggered tornadoes; these fearful tempests caused the tall trees around them to sway fiercely back and forth and in circles; eventually many of them were uprooted or snapped in half. One of these trees fell on their living room, and a second fell on their roof. The trees landed only 10 to 15 feet away from their hiding places.



When the storm subsided, they went outside to assess the damage and were stunned. Though their house was standing, all its windows were blown out. The property was littered with uprooted trees and debris. They managed to stay in their garage for a few days in the muggy summer heat, without electricity or water. But thankfully, their lives were spared.

Compared to many survivors, Rita and Bill were fortunate. Their adult children came to assist them right after the storm. An insurance adjuster also came relatively quickly, and soon they were able to move to a temporary home in Enterprise, Ala. A week or so after the hurricane, Messiah Lutheran Church entered into a partnership with Christian Aid Ministries (CAM), a Mennonite and Amish Christian voluntary organization specializing in assisting survivors with cleanup and construction-related work. Because of it, volunteers from CAM helped Rita and Bill clean up the debris and fallen trees around their property. All the assistance and support has enabled Rita and Bill to consider what to do next: whether they should rebuild their home or sell the property. “We are very grateful to everyone for their help,” Rita said.

“Even so, our hearts are broken every time we come back to our home of 36 years,” Bill added.

Their experience with disaster and loss has caused them to reflect. Asked about what had been on their minds since then, disaster, Bill said, “Over the years, I watched disasters, like Katrina, other hurricanes and fires from the comfort of my chair. I always wondered, ‘How do people survive and continue?’ And now I know.”

Rita has wrestled with her faith since the disaster. “My faith has been tested,” she said. “I don’t know how I feel sometimes as I am still numbed. I guess I still have faith because I have hope.”

But their sense of loss has also triggered in them a sense of compassion and understanding for others. “We are all equal in God’s eyes,” Rita said. “Sometimes we look at those who are homeless and wonder what happened to them. But one day, all of a sudden, it could be you.”

LOOKING AHEAD

Lutheran Disaster Response has committed **\$3 million** in long-term recovery for survivors of the 2018 hurricanes.

Please **give to support** this response and others like it, and show disaster survivors that they are not alone.

WAYS TO SUPPORT THIS ONGOING RESPONSE AND OTHERS LIKE IT:

ONLINE

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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