Disaster Update, How to Help

Event: California Cyclone and Atmospheric River Events

Event Date: January 10, 2023

What Happened and Where: Source Newsweek-As the latest storm to batter California begins to let off on Tuesday, leaving severe flooding and destruction in its wake, residents will be bracing for another "enormous" cyclone to slam into the Pacific coast on Wednesday, forecasters have predicted. According to the latest short-range forecast from the National Weather Service (NWS), this "rapidly intensifying" weather system will impact areas from northern California and up the coast into the Pacific Northwest. It anticipates that the total precipitation over the coming days will range between 3 and 7 inches. The latest storm to hit the state on Monday brought on average between 5 and 10 inches of rain across coastal regions, it said earlier, with rain levels as high as 15.5 inches recorded at certain locations. Wednesday's cyclone will be the latest in a series of high-intensity storms to hammer California since New Year's Eve, leading to thousands of homes without power, thousands of families evacuated due to flooding and at least 14 deaths. For updates on Federal Declaration visit disasterassistance.gov

Impact to the UCC: 5 reports from UCC Churches thus far. Davena and the Conference Disaster Team led by Kenneth Moore are conducting welfare checks with each congregation and are assessing ways to assist UCC churches for emergency needs this week and next. The UCC Disaster Minister for Response and Recovery, Ms. Lesli Remaly is supporting this outreach effort and has been in touch with our partners at Church World Service and the Northern California Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NCAVOAD) who will conduct an initial coordination call with communities and organizations on Thursday. In an effort to try to respond to congregations in our conference that may be impacted by the January 2023 weather events, the team sent out an email to all the of the clergy in the conference. They heard back from five congregations that have been impacted by these storms.
Mary Conant, who serves as the pastor of The Little Brown Church in Sunol reported that their congregation was not able to meet for an extended period of time because of power outages. She sent me dramatic photographs of the flooding around the church and in the surrounding community.
Laura Barnes serves the El Dorado County Federated Church in Placerville. Their congregation has made a long and heroic effort to respond to the needs of persons in that area because of the Caldor fire. She would welcome additional gift cards to assist families in need near Placerville.
Melanie Weiner serves the Skyland Community Church in Los Gatos. Her congregation has a food distribution program that could use a generator to power the four refrigerators that the congregation uses to meet local hunger needs. She has been encouraged to apply for a UCC solidarity grant.
Curran Reichert notified us that First Congregational Church in Sonoma did have some damage from the recent storms. Their church is exploring ways that they can assist the church's Hispanic neighbors in need of assistance. They are exploring ways that they might partner with the La Luz Center (www.laluzcenter.org) to meet the needs of these neighbors. He would be interested to knowing if a grant to this organization is something our team would support.
Arlene K. Nehring Eden United Church of Christ Hayward, CA-they are serving asylum-seekers, economic migrants, and refugees from Mexico, Central and South America, and Central and East Asia. Also serving a rapidly growing number of unhoused, US born adults who are suffering profound mental illness and multiple addictions. The storms have been brutal. The shelters are full. People are coming to us for food every day and sleeping in our porticos at night.

UCC in Early Response: Global H.O.P.E. Disaster Ministries will support the California Conferences and the Conference Disaster Coordinator as they begin raising awareness of the needs, we invite all concerned to support this disaster by making a donation to the Emergency USA fund. This fund will offer solidarity grant support for the emergency needs to conferences and congregations. Disaster Ministries will also continue to connect emerging needs with resources such as Kits and Clean up Buckets, and we will engage in coordination calls with our partners through their state Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD).

UCC in Long-Term Recovery: Recovery from these devastating events will likely take years. Community centered and locally led Long-Term Recovery Groups are forming or reforming across the state, many will need to be reorganized. In addition, there are ongoing recovery efforts across the State from fires and the most recent December 2022 earthquakes. We will look to assist these groups and their emotional and spiritual care needs as well as support the longer process of repairing and rebuilding homes. Long-term funding will be necessary as the UCC is a leader in helping communities organize for recovery, repair, and rebuild. Volunteers will also be needed, and churches should consider organizing teams to help in this process when they are needed and for the long haul, bringing hope and healing to devastated communities. Please help us focus on persons and communities in need of support thru volunteering or providing financial support please join us in this Immediate and Long Term Disaster Recovery Ministry.

How to Help: How-you-can-help-Disaster-Survivors-2022

Join the Willing to Respond Network of Churches: Willing to Respond Preparedness Network
Assemble Kits and Clean Up Buckets: CWS Buckets and Kits | Help Communities in Need Around the World (cwskits.org)
Donate Emergency Funds-Designate to Emergency USA: Donate Now - United Church of Christ (ucc.org)
Sign up to Volunteer: https://support.ucc.org/volunteer-opportunity-form
Volunteer Opportunities: UCC Ministry Opportunities

Connect for news and updates:
News - United Church of Christ (ucc.org),
Disaster Ministries - United Church of Christ (ucc.org)
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Extreme Drought to Flooding in California nonpareilonline.com



Thousands without power, extreme flooding expected with more heavy wind and rains.
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Scenes from California's severe weather, flooding Chippewa.com

Flooding from huge amounts of rain are seen in a neighborhood off of Holohan Road near Watsonville, Calif. on Monday, Jan. 9, 2023.(Brontë Wittpenn/San Francisco Chronicle via AP)

Prayer: Holy One You have called us to respond, to Be the Church. We are here to offer our response to your call. Like a bridge that spans disasters, we too are committed to share our time, our talents, our financial support for those who are negotiating troubled waters. Through coordinated efforts of our conferences, churches, and disaster leaders across the states we are equipped with kindness, compassion and love. Please accept our heartfelt prayers as we support communities who are in the midst of this devastation. May we bring this hope, through your grace. Amen.