

UCC Disaster Ministries supports ecumenical assessment team to the Bahamas

Hurricane Dorian has left at least 50 dead, 2,500 reported missing and 13,000 homes severely damaged or destroyed on the Bahamas' Abaco and Grand Bahama islands - nearly 40 percent of all homes on the two islands. These numbers only begin to hint at the pain Dorian caused at the beginning of September. The Government of the Bahamas has requested help, including from NGOs and humanitarian organizations, to fill identified relief and recovery gaps.

Recognizing the scale of the emergency, a Rapid Assessment Team is being deployed through the ecumenical ACT Alliance, a 140-country coalition of churches and church-related organizations.

The United Church of Christ is an ACT Alliance member, and its Disaster Ministries is supporting the assessment team both financially and with technical expertise. The team will be led by the Servicio Social de Iglesias Dominicanas (SSID) in the Dominican Republic, on behalf of the Caribbean Sub-regional ACT forum. The assessment will identify needs of the affected population, assess local capacities to respond including those of churches, and provide recommendations for a possible ACT Response.

The assessment team includes individuals with experience in island recovery and Creole language skills in order to be able to work with the Haitian population in the Bahamas.

The ACT Secretariat is in touch with ACT members working with local churches and organizations to ensure coordination with the Assessment Team, and sharing information with the World Council of Churches and other actors.

UCC Disaster Ministries Executive Zach Wolgemuth on the urgency of preparedness

The plethora of disasters that we've already experienced in 2019 is yet another wake-up-call for all of us to have a preparedness plan and kit in place. With the effects of climate change the rules have changed and no one is exempt even if they live in a region historically considered 'low risk' for weather related disasters. We will always need to respond to disasters but response is not adequate. It's like treating an outbreak of an infectious disease but not investing in the development of new vaccinations or vaccinating when one is available.

As a nation we need to invest even more in preparedness and mitigation efforts if we expect to survive the impacts of climate change. If we don't, as a society, we will continue to chase our tail until we are so dizzy and fatigued that we collapse.

The church needs to play an increasingly key role in how we respond to disasters and where we invest our resources. This starts at home and in our congregations with a paradigm shift that underscores preparedness and understands the value of this investment along with long-term support after disasters.

Share the message of preparedness with your friends and family this Christmas!

Send joyful Christmas greetings and provide your friends and family a practical tool to get prepared for natural disasters at the same time.

These Disaster Preparedness Christmas Cards brought to you by United Church of Christ Disaster Ministries include a complete up-to-date list of what should be included in an individual 'Go-Bag' – a bag that is prepared to grab and 'go' when a disaster strikes.

A Go-Bag is a critical tool in being prepared for a natural disaster and thus able to help others. **A faithful reminder to start the year off prepared! Click here for more information and to order!**