



## Action Update, May 19

*On Sunday, Week of Compassion learned from our partners in the Philippines that Typhoon Vongfong had made landfall in Luzon. Evacuations were complicated on this highly populated island because of COVID-19. Meanwhile, Cyclone Amphan is rapidly gaining strength in the South Pacific and threatens many extremely vulnerable areas-- including Cox's Bazaar, the refugee camp in Bangladesh where more than **1 million Rohingya** people live. Last week, the first case of COVID-19 was reported in the camp. Clearly, this is a dangerous confluence of events in parts of the world where people are already struggling from the effects of poverty and violence. We are grateful for our partners who continue to work for the health and safety of vulnerable people, even in the most challenging circumstances. Please join us in prayer for those affected by, and in the path of, these storms. We will share more as we learn more.*



*Prior to social distancing, members of the Miami Valley Long Term Recovery Group met to discuss immediate needs and long-term rebuilding, along with Josh Baird of Disciples Volunteering, and Week of Compassion Associate Director Caroline Hamilton-Arnold (not pictured).*

## One Year Later, Dayton Recovery Continues Amidst COVID-19 Restrictions

*I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. (Ephesians 1:15-16)*

On May 28 of 2019, a series of severe tornadoes caused widespread damage throughout Ohio, especially in and around the city of Dayton.

Now, approaching the one year anniversary of the storms, the COVID-19 pandemic is heavily impacting recovery. Not only has the outbreak disrupted work already in progress; it has also delayed plans for rebuilding projects that were slated to begin this Spring and continue into the summer. All in-person meetings of the local Repair and Rebuild Task Force have been postponed, while members continue to communicate digitally and coordinate as best as they can. Out of town groups of volunteers have been asked to postpone their trips for the foreseeable future.

Because of these limitations, a collaborative response between the Disciples of Christ, the United Church of Christ, and Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM)--using volunteer teams to help increase the supply of affordable housing--has been scaled back for now. Local partners continue to do "drive-by" assessments that do not involve going inside the homes. This helps keep inventory of homes that still need work. In cases of urgent need, the community resource table works together to find a solution and provide assistance.

BDM hopes to begin leading volunteer teams again by July, if it is safe to do so. These would be volunteers who could stay in their own homes at night, bring their own meals, and minimize the risk of exposure for themselves and tornado survivors. "We want to do good and not do harm," says Sammy Deacon, BDM project leader. "We want to behave responsibly and not spread the coronavirus, so we have chosen to suspend our operations until a time it's free to move about the country."

Laura Mercer, Executive Director of the Miami Valley Long Term Recovery Operations Group, along with Volunteer Coordinator Emmy Fabbich, gave interviews this week for a [local news feature about the recovery](#). They discussed the challenges of not being able to access equipment and materials, and the limitations on gathering volunteers in groups. However, they emphasize that work is still being done, mostly on home exteriors, as much as possible in the meantime. "The coronavirus has disrupted our timeline," says Fabbich, "but we will still be doing this vital work."

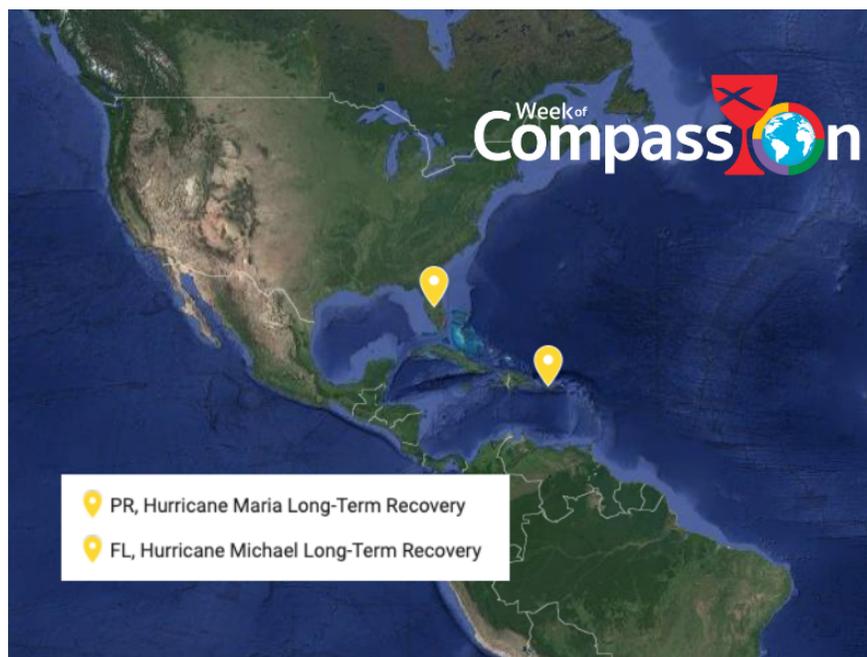
Many of our disaster response partners across the country are adapting in similar fashion, working to continue recovery as much as possible while also observing safe social distancing. These communities and organizations continue to develop protocols to minimize risk and keep volunteers and survivors safe. Disciples Volunteering made the difficult decision last week to extend the closure of all Disciples Mission Stations through the end of the summer. The goal is to work with local partners toward resuming overnight

accommodations in September, if it is safe to do so. In the meantime, DV is emphasizing local service opportunities, such as the recovery work with BDM in Dayton.

“Local mission is at the heart of our Christian witness,” says Josh Baird of Disciples Volunteering. “For the safety of those who will serve and those they will serve with, it is important to find servant opportunities close to home. In any community struck by disaster, there are always needs that precede the disaster. Because disasters draw resources and attention away from those pre-existing needs, they only exacerbate those challenges. For guidelines about volunteering safely, visit the [DHM website](#).

In this week’s lectionary text, Paul writes to the church at Ephesus: *I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers*. As ongoing recovery from previous disasters is disrupted nationwide by health concerns and social distancing regulations, Week of Compassion is grateful for the ways in which our partners and wider Church continue to share and serve, in spite of the challenges. We continue to be in prayer for communities in recovery, and all those who serve, and we invite you to join us in that spirit.

*Week of Compassion responses since May 5.*  
For an interactive map of all 2020 responses, [visit our website](#).



*Week of Compassion is the relief, refugee and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.*

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