

Action Update- June 3

Calling Disciples Volunteers: Opportunities to Serve in Disaster Recovery



Photo:
Miami Valley Long Term Recovery

The nineteen tornadoes that struck Ohio on Memorial Day 2019 devastated thousands of lives, homes, and businesses. Over 7,000 homes were damaged and of these, over 1,500 had major damage or were destroyed. Among those damaged were multifamily units, dramatically limiting the availability of affordable rental housing, which was already scarce before the storms. Many of the tornado-impacted renters have had to relocate multiple times since the tornadoes due to substandard housing conditions or inflated rent.

In the greater Dayton area, Week of Compassion has partnered with the Miami Valley Long-Term Recovery Operations Group and several local and national organizations on the Tornado Survivors' Pathways to Homeownership Project. The goal of this project is to leverage the skills of volunteers and the support of local nonprofits to transition "nuisance" properties and vacant lots to affordable, single-family housing options for tornado survivors, stabilizing both families and the community.

At the groundbreaking in March of 2021, Montgomery County Commission President Judy Dodge shared: "This Pathways Project is an excellent example of our communities working together in the face of tragedy. Montgomery County is proud to be one of the many organizations involved in helping tornado survivors become homeowners. With this home, and planned future builds, we will be setting several local families up for success." *Now, the Pathways Project is receiving volunteer groups! Disciple volunteers can have a significant impact in restoring this community, and empowering families as homeowners for the first time.*

Disaster recovery sites faced significant challenges during the pandemic--from supply shortages to distancing measures that meant volunteers could not come to work at all. So as gathering becomes possible again, volunteers will be needed more than ever!

"We need people back out volunteering again," says Sammy Deacon, Brethren Disaster Ministries Long-term Project Leader. "We're making sure everyone has as much protection as possible. There is still a whole lot of need out there... We need volunteers to help make it happen."

Deacon shares that the Pathways program could be of great benefit down the road for other communities that want to try this approach to housing. "It's very exciting," she says.

"When you reach out to help someone else, the blessing comes back to you as well."

As we see increasing access to vaccines, and as our partners are having success with COVID-19 protocols for volunteer teams, we have identified several volunteer opportunities for disaster recovery, including hurricane recovery in Louisiana and North Carolina, along with the Dayton project. The pandemic remains a fluid situation, with regional spikes in cases, new variants, and continued risks and uncertainties. *Currently, Week of Compassion requires that all volunteers who are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine do so before serving.* While we recognize that in-person volunteer opportunities may not be suitable for everyone at this time, we hope that those who are able to do so safely will contribute to the important work of disaster recovery, supported by our wider Church.

For more Information about current and potential volunteer opportunities, [visit our website](#).

*Congregations that plan for disaster are better positioned to respond and serve their neighbors following a disaster. Week of Compassion is here to help church leaders be prepared. Visit our website for more [**information and planning resources**](#).*





Texas,
Storm Relief



Alabama,
COVID-19 Relief



Alabama, Hurricane Sally
Long-term Recovery



Louisiana,
Flood Relief



Ecuador, Women's
Empowerment



Kenya, Women's
Empowerment



Cambodia,
COVID-19 Relief



Sierra Leone,
COVID-19 Relief



Bosnia & Herzegovina,
Protection of Children



Liberia, COVID-19 Relief
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For an interactive map of 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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