

Hurricane Dorian

The pictures from the Bahamas are stunning and the devastation beyond comprehension. We have watched with horror as pictures and stories of loss pop up on the news and social media.

You, the people of The United Methodist Church, have made countless, sacrificial offers of assistance to help those impacted, and we are grateful.

What We Know

The Florida Conference Disaster Recovery Ministry is on daily phone calls with responding organizations and those with immediate relief and response as their mission. To date, these agencies report:

- US AID (www.USAID.gov/Dorian) and FEMA are on the ground conducting search and rescue and lifesaving humanitarian missions;
- Allowing first responders to complete search and rescue first, is imperative to their safety and the safety of those they are trying to help;
- Once this is complete, they will know and communicate with other responding organizations what materials and resources are needed, and where.

What We Can Do

Disaster Recovery and the Florida Conference will:

- Initiate communications with potential partners (Bahamas Methodist Habitat, Methodist Church of the Bahamas and the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, etc.);
- Work with District Offices and local churches to identify teams willing to stay committed to management of the relief effort in the conference for the next 4-6 months, seeding the future for recovery and rebuild teams;
- Work with District Offices and local churches to connect smaller communities in the conference (local churches, Sunday School classes, interested constituents who may not be related to the UMC) with places of need (yet to be identified) in the Bahamas;
- Reinforce and leverage the power of our connectional system through triaging of needs and exhaustive communication;
- Work with UMCOR to provide opportunities for trained volunteers to assist when they are invited to do so – as we did in Puerto Rico after Maria.

What's Next

Experience and healthy models of mission teach us the importance of being patient, asking the right questions (what do you need?) and staying focused on those who stand at the center of this story – the survivors. Once we know what resources are needed, we can develop relief channels (staging areas, transportation options, etc.) to get the resources to where they are needed most, in cooperation with Bahamas Methodist Habitat, UMCOR and our other partners on the ground.

We also understand that:

- Giving generously to trusted organizations like UMCOR, where every dollar given goes to help those impacted is one of the best ways to help -- allowing the recipients of those dollars to buy exactly what's needed and when;
- Meeting the needs of the survivors is the real goal;
- Recovering from disaster is a marathon, not a sprint;
- Praying to the God who provides more than we can hope and imagine will see all of us through the long days ahead. (Eph 3: 20-21)