

Mission MOSAIC



**PRESBYTERIAN
DISASTER
ASSISTANCE**

OUT OF CHAOS, HOPE

Year in Review 2018



MICHELLE MUÑIZ



LAURIE KRAUS



US COAST GUARD



ACT/SIMON CHAMBERS



Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Presbyterian Mission



FEMA/ROBERT BARKER

Mosaic Musings: a word from the director of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance



Working with presbyteries and their congregations to support their humanitarian work is part of the DNA of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA). Being welcomed after a fire, a hurricane, a public violence event, or amid humanitarian crises involving refugees and asylum seekers is a privilege our staff and national volunteers receive as a sacred trust. For me, it is also a window into worlds very different from my own in Louisville, and a chance to learn and reflect

theologically. In my role as PDA's director, I have many opportunities to see the work directly, here and across the world, and to hear from survivors and leaders how their work is made lighter by the prayers and gifts of PDA's supporting communities. Still, there are many places we cannot go, and we must wonder, especially in a world where so many suffer, whether our prayers and our efforts cross the boundaries between us.

For several years, PDA has had the privilege of working with Pacific Presbytery as they practice Christ's command to welcome the stranger. In an environment that is increasingly difficult for our neighbors from Central America, congregations and the presbytery are supporting immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees to find safety and a place to call home. I was invited to join them in Tijuana this year to mark the 25th anniversary of a cross-border *Posada* — a liturgical tradition from Latin America that follows Joseph and Mary in their efforts to find shelter before the Christ child is born. For many of these 25 years, this celebration was held across the border fence, where neighbors separated by location could touch, exchange small gifts and worship as one community. This year, two walls and a wide empty space patrolled by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement divided the worshiping community. The reading of names of those whose lives were lost in 2018 attempting to reach safety continued for more than 10 minutes. Names of individuals were interspersed with those only identified as *desconocido*, "unknown," a sobering reminder of how many are lost worldwide due to disaster, war or violence, and how challenging it is to remember and bear witness.

The *Posada* song enacts the way the Holy Family was rejected by fearful and indifferent neighbors before finally receiving an invitation to take shelter. When the time came to sing and conclude the service, neighbors from Mexico sang the part of Joseph, while those of us from the U.S. began with verses of refusal, finally yielding to welcome. But because of the distance, we could not hear each other sing, and there was silence between the verses, as though Christ's church was straining for one voice, but falling short. We sang on anyway, knowing that hope, like justice, has a long arc in history, and if we keep faith with one another and with God, hope will not disappoint.

As I turned away from the border, I imagined hands clasped in a long line of fellowship that transcended national and human boundaries. In that line were women from South Sudan, children from Syria, volunteers working in Texas or the Carolinas, farmers in Indonesia, teachers in Haiti, families fleeing violence in Honduras, and church members putting a check into an offering plate, whispering a prayer that someone in distress and need would know that someone far away cares. In that moment of imagination, it seemed to me that the silence between verses was not, as I thought, a sad sign of our many divisions, but rather a space for holy listening and our sung response a welcome that could resonate across God's kingdom. Thank you for being an essential part of this sacred song.

With peace,

Laurie Kraus



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OUT OF CHAOS, HOPE

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Beyond the postcard

While tourist attractions in Puerto Rico are in good shape, much of the island is still in recovery

Rich Copley and Rick Jones

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – It's a pretty port of call.

Blocks from where cruise ships pull into San Juan terminal, visitors can find Old San Juan, with its mix of history, shops and restaurants, all open for business.

"People go to hotels, Old San Juan and they see the stores open, lights ... and they say, 'Oh, everything is back to normal,'" says the Rev. Edwin A. González-Castillo.

Except it's not.

You don't have to look far to discover how far from normal this United States territory is more than a year after being ravaged by Hurricane María, which was a high-Category 4 storm when it made landfall in Puerto Rico on Sept. 20, 2017. It's considered the worst natural disaster on record for the island and the worst Atlantic hurricane in more than a decade.

Just a five-mile drive from historic old San Juan, you find that many homes are still covered by the blue tarps they were given after having their roofs blown away

in the storm. Head out into the island, and there is plenty of evidence of the storm, from ravaged vegetation to structural debris to roads still in need of repair.

González-Castillo, who was a pastor in Vega Alta and stated clerk of the Presbytery of San Juan when María struck and is now the associate for Disaster Response and Refugee Ministry for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA), says that while people put on a brave face, especially for visitors, emotions are still fresh.

"Inside, they're destroyed," he says. "They're tired of waking up every morning to figure out how to lift themselves and their families out of their situations."



EDUARDO MARTINEZ

Survivors in Canóvanas, Puerto Rico pose in front of their home

"BUT IT'S NOT THERE ANYMORE"

The mere mention of the storm causes Lares farm owner Lourdes Perez's chin to tremble, and tears fill her eyes. Everything was lost: the coffee trees, the plantain trees — everything from the farm she and her husband, César Oliver, had been building for more than three decades.

Evidence of María's wrath on Hidropónicos César y Lourdes' farm in the steep mountains of this northwestern Puerto Rico town is obvious: twisted metal lies on paths cut through the farm, some structures are still broken and tattered, and on a tour through the property, Lourdes describes what was in certain sections, punctuated by the refrain, "but it's not there anymore."

There is also modest evidence of revival, from building materials to sweet pepper marmalade, Lourdes and César's attempt to create a little revenue in the aftermath of the storm.





Volunteers from Knox Presbyterian Church gather for a prayer outside of La Casona de Monteflores Presbyterian Church

“The most important thing that we need to do is rebuild the farm, so we can again give the community a place to work,” Lourdes says.

Before the storm, the farm employed about a dozen people in the community — primarily seniors who don’t have many sources of income in the mountainous region.

“The reason you see them cry so many times is it’s not the same when you lose part of your house, because it’s just your house, and it’s sad, but it affects only you ... but in this case, it’s the jobs of a dozen people in that community, a dozen families affected,” González-Castillo says.

“CHURCHES WERE THE FIRST RESPONDERS”

Recovery, González-Castillo says, is very much tied to income and social status, with a lot of the government’s priority going to highly visible areas of San Juan and other populous areas. The island has also suffered from neglect by the government, which he says has hired “in many, many cases, inefficient contractors”



to carry out recovery jobs such as delivering meals and repairing homes. He also points out that many citizens have trouble finding help because of poorly marked Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offices and most information being online, where people without computers or electricity can’t access it.

In many communities, González-Castillo says churches were the first responders to the disaster and remain primary players in recovery, from local congregations to national organizations like the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

In the three presbyteries that cover the island, Presbyterian churches acted immediately to help their communities. Emergency needs were met by supplying food, first aid, water, tarps, filters and more.

YOUR GIFTS TO ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING AT WORK

In San Juan, PDA partnered with the Presbyterian Hunger Program and

the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People, the three offices supported by the One Great Hour of Sharing offering, to support the work of Fideicomiso de la Tierra del Caño Martín Peña, a community land trust that manages 200 acres along the canal, through collective ownership of its members. The trust was created to protect the rights of residents, many of whom for many

from Lares to Guacio. “It’s been 15 months and a woman in Vieques is still putting pots around her house to collect water that leaks through the roof that FEMA was supposed to have fixed.”

One place where work is underway is Campamento El Guacio, a retreat center in the western part of the island.

Guacio was one of the initial recipients of PDA funds in the days following Hurricane



decades informally built on the land, which was previously owned by the government.

One of the chief concerns is gentrification, which could occur with coming ecological projects along the canal to improve water flow and reduce pollution in the canal. The \$15,000 grant goes to support personnel to manage the complex documentation required to establish residents’ ownership of the property.

In addition to the \$15,000, PDA contributed an additional \$25,000 for roof repairs with Fideicomiso.

“Fideicomiso is so big and well-respected, for the community to see the Presbyterian Church get involved is a very big thing,” says González-Castillo. “People see that we are not doing it to get more people into the church but to reflect Christ to the community.”

MORE THAN A SUMMER CAMP

Jim Kirk, PDA’s associate for national disaster response, was on his third trip to Puerto Rico in December and noted that he has moved from working with government, community and church leaders in the beginning to more one-on-one interactions, which has been revealing.

“Fifteen months is sticking in my mind,” Kirk says, driving the twisting mountain road

María. “We made a connection early through José González-Colón,” Kirk says, referring to the moderator of the Sínodo Presbiteriano Boriquén in western Puerto Rico. “We awarded a grant to meet the needs at Guacio to help them continue to do the good work they were doing.”

Though the camp itself was hard hit by María, it quickly became a resource for the surrounding community in the weeks and months following María, helping supply needs from water and ice to a psychologist to help people shattered by the storm and its aftermath.

In addition to providing agricultural opportunities to the community, Guacio is at the forefront of projects such as introducing solar power to the community and restoring one of its dorm complexes to house volunteers who come to work in the area. There are also ambitions to revitalize decades-old projects, such as functional crafts and construction from bamboo on the property.

“Instead of dampening the revitalization efforts, the storm lit a fire under them,” Kirk says. Since the first time he visited Guacio, Kirk says, “There has been exponential progress to improve the camp, which has put it in a position to better serve the entire community.”

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- » Designate gifts to DR000194-Puerto Rico
- » Volunteer: visit www.pcusa.org/pdavolunteersites or email pda.callcenter@pcusa.org

Members of Savannah Presbyterian Church and Knox Presbyterian Church volunteer in Puerto Rico after Hurricane María. Photos by Michelle Muñiz

Your Gifts At Work in the U.S.



YOU have what it takes to join PDA on the ground!

DO YOU WANT TO volunteer to rebuild? For information about volunteer work teams, visit www.pcusa.org/pdavolunteersites and email pda.callcenter@pcusa.org for more information

DO YOU WANT TO be a Presbyterian Women Disaster Preparedness Trainer? Visit www.pcusa.org/PWDP

DO YOU WANT TO connect with a PW Disaster Preparedness trainer to train your church or presbytery? Please email PDA@pcusa.org

DO YOU WANT TO join the National Response Team or National Volunteer Team? Visit www.pcusa.org/NRT

BOOTS ON THE GROUND

- PW Disaster Preparedness Trainer
- Volunteer work teams
- NRT deployed
- Grants

Flags represent a presence in the state and do not pinpoint an exact location

U.S. Facts & Figures

Total dollars granted: **\$3,559,424.38**

In 2018, PDA processed one-third more grants and more than doubled the designated funds distributed than in previous years..



Hurricanes
69 grants, 99 NRT deployed*



Floods
31 grants, 23 NRT deployed



Human-Caused Disaster/Trauma
7 grants, 8 NRT deployed



Tornadoes
10 grants, 5 NRT deployed



Fires
12 grants, 24 NRT deployed



Storms
7 grants



Refugee ministry
15 grants, 45 NRT deployed



Earthquake:
2 grants

9,146

blue shirt volunteers
gave more than

490,000

hours of volunteer labor,
valued at more than

\$12 million

(according to the Independent Sector)

*The PDA National Response Team consists of about 100 members who represent PDA and the PC(USA) in the field following a disaster. They provide support to presbyteries and synods as they assess the impact of the disaster on both the church and the community, and they assist in connecting presbyteries to recovery resources.



PDA films inspire conversation and action

Filmmakers David Barnhart and Scott Lansing bring important stories and issues to audiences with their documentaries

By Rich Copley

From the door next to their studio just outside of Atlanta, filmmakers David Barnhart and Scott Lansing have been able to watch the comic book kingdom of Wakanda come to life and iconic cars of “The Fast and the Furious” in full chase.

While Presbyterian Disaster Assistance’s (PDA) Story Productions is a relatively modest operation next to the studios that crank out blockbusters such as “Black Panther,” the documentary outfit is making some noise of its own with true stories designed to spark dialogue and action.

In January, Barnhart and Lansing were somewhat surprised to find themselves at the Sundance Film Festival, where their latest film, “Flint: The Poisoning of an American City,” was shown as an “in-progress preview” to a select group of potential supporters and distributors.

“It actually wasn’t as glamorous as it sounded, because we basically were in a screening room for three days doing private ‘work-in-progress’ screenings ... with environmental leaders and others,” Barnhart recalls. “We were really encouraged, though, because the response was so strong and, in particular, we noticed how visibly angry and deeply moved people were by the film. One of our main hopes is that this film can be a resource to move people to action.”

The film about the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, in which more than 100,000 residents have been exposed to lead poisoning through the municipal water system, is the latest offering in a career that has used the art of storytelling to motivate people to get involved in issues such as gun violence (“Trigger: The Ripple Effect of

Gun Violence,” 2014), immigration detention (“Locked in a Box,” 2016), refugee resettlement (“To Breathe Free,” 2017) and the impact of natural disasters (“Kepulihan: When the Waters Recede,” 2015).

“We want these films to be resources for people to engage with an issue,” Barnhart says, sitting in the studio of Lansing’s Sabotage Film Group, where the documentaries are produced and edited. “So much of the media now is demonizing and making money off fear and shock. What we do is humanize: tell the human story that’s there and try to connect people through that story.”

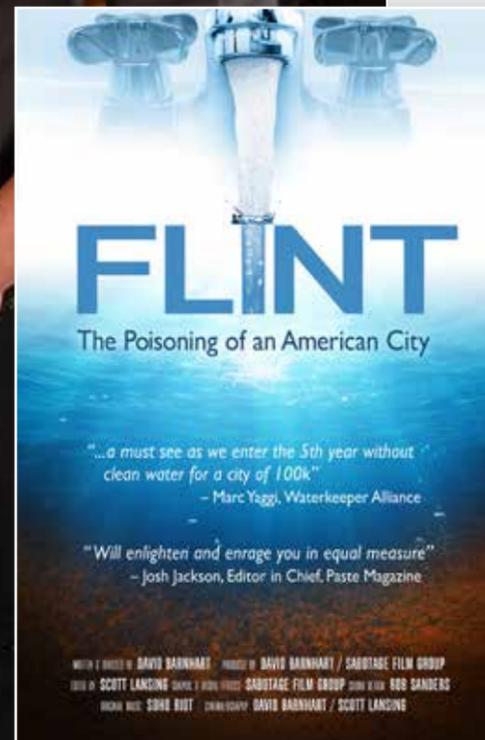
“They’re resources for organizing, they’re resources for people to say, ‘Hey, let’s get together. Let’s watch this. Let’s have a panel. Let’s bring in experts locally, have a screening, and let the film be a point of reflection. Have a panel and talk about how people can engage.”

That’s precisely what has happened in several communities, such as Dayton, Ohio, where screenings of Barnhart’s films led to a film forum where issues were explored.

In Eau Claire, Wisconsin, the Rev. Kathryn Reid Walker of First Presbyterian Church said “Trigger” became the centerpiece of an event in response to the Valentine’s Day 2018 school shooting in Parkland, Florida.

“There were a lot of youth there,” Walker says. “It was a great film and a great way to get people to talk about what happened. It does a really good job showing how far reaching the effects of gun violence are.”

Walker says the group heard about “Trigger” from some people who saw a screening in Milwaukee, and that there is now interest in using “Locked in a Box,” about U.S. immigration detention centers run by





A recent report found that 5,300 American cities were found to be in violation of federal lead rules

5 years later Flint residents still do not have clean drinking water



for-profit companies, for an event focused on immigration.

The films are a particularly effective resource for attracting youth and young adults, Walker says.

“This is such a great resource,” Walker says. “I’m really proud to say it’s Presbyterian.”

The films were a natural outgrowth of Barnhart’s work for PDA as an associate working in Mexico and then Central America around the turn of the 21st century. One of his jobs was bringing back reports from his work in the field, and that’s where his filmmaker side kicked in.

In addition to writing reports, he started taking his camera to record video interviews with people he worked with and what he was seeing in order to provide a record of the work.

“I saw how important, particularly in times of disaster, narrative is,” Barnhart says.

That led Barnhart to Chicago, where

he studied story as ministry at McCormick Theological Seminary.

When he returned to PDA, he began working on projects such as “Kepulihan,” which follows a tsunami survivor for a decade. Then in 2012, he started working with Lansing, and together they have formed a creative collaboration that both agree has been mutually beneficial.

“He’s the best editor I’ve seen,” Barnhart says of Lansing. “My problem is I’ve got too much on the plate, and he comes in and says, ‘Let’s bring this here and cut this here,’ and he helps me cut it down and find those threads, because I always want to include everything.”

Lansing flips that script, talking about Barnhart: “Dave will bring a lot to the table, which an editor loves, and I’ll say, ‘Great.’ We don’t start with a producer saying, ‘Bring me something cool.’ We start with a story. As an editor, that’s a gift.”

“Dave’s really good at not forcing a story. He lets the story run its course. He lets the story define itself without forcing it into the narrative people push for.”

And that is a major way Barnhart’s filmmaking aligns with the PDA ethos of working with people impacted by tragedy and asking them what they need and how the church can help them navigate through crisis.

“We don’t start with an agenda, so we don’t know where it’s going,” Barnhart says of his and Lansing’s process.

“If you’re going with an agenda, then you’re dictating what you’re looking for. ... We always start with, ‘What do you want to talk about? Where do you want to start?’ We have a conversation.”

3 officials are charged in Flint water crisis



Flint resident Gordon Strozier shows the damage done to his kitchen pipe from the Flint water

“The biggest problem we found with Flint was the instant response we got. Nine out of 10 times we tell people about it, they say, ‘That’s all fixed, right?’” Lansing says. “Fixed’ is such an odd term when you’ve poisoned an entire group of people, and that poison continues to be in their systems for years.”

The film has already attracted the attention of some powerful environmental groups such as Robert F. Kennedy Jr.’s Waterkeeper Alliance and World Water Week, the world’s largest water conference in Stockholm.

It’s also getting rave notices from people such as Paste magazine editor Josh Jackson, who wrote that the in-progress preview of “Flint” he saw is “a fantastic doc about the history of a great American city and a great American tragedy that will enlighten and enrage you in equal measure. State government incompetence, institutional racism, criminal negligence. We’re coming up on five years without clean water in a city of 100,000 people.”

The awareness Barnhart and Lansing aim to raise is that Flint is not an isolated incident, but a harbinger of crises forming around the country as water systems age and pollution seeps into drinking water.

Barnhart says the film, which should be available later this year, is part of starting the conversation and “letting it go where it needs to go. Our goal is to incite conversation relevant towards looking to resolution of very complex issues.”



REFUGEE MINISTRY

2018 was filled with changes in official U.S. policies to limit both international aid and refugee status to thousands of people in desperate need of a new country to provide them a place to live and thrive. When viewed through the lens of U.S.-based churches and organizations that minister with refugees, asylum seekers and others who have been forcibly displaced, it was a year of great despair and great inspiration.

The impact of new government policies and procedures in 2018 related to the resettlement of refugees in the U.S. has caused heartache and put thousands of refugees in jeopardy. Faced with the largest humanitarian displacement in modern times, the U.S. administration has set the lowest resettlement targets since the passage of the 1980 Refugee Act. For fiscal year 2018 (October 2017–September 2018), of the goal of 45,000 refugees, just 22,491 were resettled in the U.S. Then, in September, the U.S.

government pulled back even further from its commitment to resettlement with a new goal of 30,000 refugees in fiscal year 2019. All of this was within the context of previous government policies to ban the admission of refugees from several predominantly Muslim countries, including Syria.

Thousands who had been offered resettlement by the U.S., and cleared by its authorities, wait in limbo overseas. After going through months of vetting, health screening and other steps, they must go back into the line and start over. In fact, 13,000 refugees from Africa alone did not arrive last year due to changes in U.S. policy.

Meanwhile, most of the national focus in 2018 was on Central Americans seeking asylum at the southern border. The demographics of the people coming to the U.S. through Mexico have shifted over the past several years, at a time when the overall number of people approaching

the southern border is down. One of the most significant changes has been the increased number of young families, primarily mothers with very young children, from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. With home countries embroiled in various humanitarian emergencies — decades of poverty, failed government policies, broken families, lack of protection for women and children, and widespread violence — these mothers are forced to leave for the sake of their children. They take what United Nations data says is a 60- to 80 percent chance that they and their daughters will be raped while migrating. They leave knowing that they could be one of the 54 migrants kidnapped each day while transiting through Mexico. Physically and emotionally abused while their captors contact family members for ransom, victims are often killed or trafficked into forced labor or commercial sexual exploitation.

The refugees who make it to the border after these insurmountable odds face a number of punitive measures that the U.S. adopted in the past 18 months in an effort to stop them from reaching the U.S.-Mexico border and effectively making an asylum claim. In April, then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a “zero tolerance policy.” At least 3,000 children were separated from their parents, who were then charged with a criminal misdemeanor (“improper entry”) for entering the U.S. illegally. Parents were placed in the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service and children were transferred to the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Department of Health and Human Services — a program set up in 2003 to care for unaccompanied

children, not those whose parents were also in detention. The children were placed into their own immigration court proceedings and the parents were subject to “Operation Streamline,” a bulk processing of pleas in the federal district courts. During this procedure, as many as 80 migrants are arraigned, found guilty, convicted and sentenced in as little as 25 seconds per individual. These migrants are deported before they have any meaningful way to assert their need for protection.

As part of the same “zero tolerance policy,” the government called for the rejection of “credible fear” claims based on domestic and gang-related violence — two of the most frequently cited reasons for asylum by those from the Northern Triangle of Central America.

Parents who chose voluntary deportation report that they believed they would be immediately reunited with their children and allege that not only were they coerced into their decision, they also did not understand that they would have to leave their children behind. As a result, approximately 400 parents were deported without their children last summer. Attempts to find these parents are extensive, and reunification could take years.

Additionally, the continued influx of new refugees as well as an increase in immigration enforcement (such as raids) adds more cases to the immigration court docket, further slowing the process for those seeking asylum. The number of immigration-related deportation cases awaiting decision reached a new record in August — 764,561 cases.¹ The number of defendants within each case varies, spanning individual adults, parents with a minor child (if they arrived together and weren’t separated), or unaccompanied and separated children.

Despite all of the deterrents in place, Central Americans mobilized into migrant

1. According to TRAC, a court data analysis program at Syracuse University, there were 764,561 cases pending at the end of August 2018, a 41 percent increase over the number of cases pending at the end of January 2017 (542,411).



ACT/SEAN HAWKEY

Central Americans travel through Mexico to the U.S. border to apply for asylum

caravans that received extensive media attention as the first large caravan moved toward the U.S./Mexico border. Estimated numbers of the group hovered around 7,000, including families — UNICEF estimated that the group contained at least 2,300 children — all hoping to seek asylum within the U.S. Once they began to arrive at the U.S. border, they were told that only a handful would be processed on any given day. By November, about 4,000 individuals had arrived in Tijuana, forcing the mayor to set up an emergency shelter (El Barretal), while international organizations and national and local churches scrambled to set up additional shelters and provide water, food, showers, clothing and other basic services.

Not only did the administration use legal

deterrents to throttle refugee admittance, it also further dismantled the refugee resettlement infrastructure in the U.S. Prior to President Donald Trump taking office, there were over 300 resettlement offices in approximately 200 cities. In keeping with lower goals for the foreseeable future, the U.S. Department of State reduced the size of its resettlement network, diverting employees from interviewing refugees overseas to handling asylum claims in the U.S., and shuttering offices that received fewer than 100 refugees. Due to the new network policy, local resettlement offices run by one of the nine nonprofits responsible for providing the services — which are paid on a per capita basis of actual arrivals — are cutting staff or closing offices altogether.

² “America’s System for Resettling Refugees is Collapsing.” The Atlantic; Sept. 9, 2018: theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/09/refugee-admissions-trump/569641

“Every time an office has to shut its doors, the impact isn’t just about the initial people affected,” said Mary Giovagnoli, the executive director of Refugee Council USA, a coalition of 24 nongovernmental agencies focused on refugee protection. “Once that office has closed, the people with the expertise and the knowledge of working with particular groups have to find other jobs, find other work, and it’s not necessarily going to be in refugee resettlement. We start to lose the skills and capacity. The more you do that, the more you’re likely to lose the critical infrastructure.”²

In the face of these challenges, Erol Kekic, executive director of the Immigration and Refugee Program for global humanitarian agency Church World Service (CWS), remains committed to serving arriving refugees. “We continue to work on welcoming the few still coming through and building additional support mechanisms at the local level. CWS will not go out of business even if we don’t get the cooperative agreement for domestic resettlement.” In the final days of December, CWS learned that the Department of State would continue to work with all nine national organizations in 2019, while confirming that even more local offices will no longer be eligible to receive new refugee arrivals. In light of this news, Kekic again reiterated the agency’s commitment to serving refugees, including developing new programs and services for refugees and asylum seekers already living in the U.S.

Where is the opportunity in all of this?

“This administration’s plans for [refugees] go against this nation’s global agreements and asylum laws, and our call, as followers of Christ, is to welcome the newcomer and love our neighbor. To inflict harm on our siblings in Christ, to attempt to make us believe we must fear them, is not who we are called to be.” — Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

In response to greater scrutiny of U.S. detention, deportation, and resettlement practices, it is natural to wonder what can be done to make a meaningful difference in the system. The most important way to offer assistance is to continue to advocate for policy change. By staying up to date on what is going

on at the border, you can move the conversation with friends and family from being about a “border emergency” to one dedicated to the long-term need for individuals and churches to engage with the immigrants in their local communities.

For example, in the past two years, the 120-member Rutgers Presbyterian Church in Manhattan has received two refugee families from Syria and two special immigrant families from Afghanistan, welcoming a group of 25 people seeking safety, security and a new home in the U.S. The church gladly receives them due to their Christian faith as well as biblical commandments to love and care for strangers and people in desperate need. Reflecting on Matthew 25:31–46, the Rev. Ondrej Stehlik says “they might be Muslims, but we believe that in meeting them, we meet Jesus.”



ACT/SEAN HAWKEY

In September, PDA participated in a call for prayers with and for refugees. When asked about how Rutgers Presbyterian Church prays with refugees, Stehlik replied: “Accompanying an ill member of one of these families to a doctor’s appointment is an act of prayer. Brainstorming

Asylum seekers walking before dawn from Huixtla to Pijijiapan, Mexico

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- >> Designate gifts to refugee ministry in the U.S. (DR000095) or internationally (DR000165)
- >> Educate your congregation, neighbors and friends. Screen the documentaries *Locked in a Box*, *To Breathe Free* and *The Genesis of Exodus*
- >> Show your neighbors that you choose welcome! Download a yard sign at pcusa.org/WeChooseWelcome
- >> Connect with the Office of Public Witness for action alerts at presbyterianmission.org/OPW

with a colleague how to overcome widespread prejudice against refugees and help one of the families to rent an apartment (finally!) is also a prayer. Protesting peacefully on the streets against unjust and hateful orders of the government is also a form of prayer. These are our prayers of action and resistance. We also have liturgical prayers during worship, just like any other church would do, lifting up those in need, giving thanks for joys, successes and accomplishments, asking for imagination and guidance in difficult times. ... In all these ways, we pray about these four families and with them all the time — literally without ceasing.”

In addition to local advocacy, interfaith collaboration at the border and beyond is crucial, and established “boots on the ground” organizations — some assisting refugees and asylum seekers for more than 40 years — provide a proven foundation upon which to successfully support those in need. For example, even though the number of people coming to the Mexico border has decreased, the large population being released from detention on a daily basis is staggering. Having cleared background checks and customs, refugees are discharged to local shelters with only their immigration papers and the clothes on their backs. Historically, this transition was coordinated beforehand; however, in late October, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) began releasing people without making prior arrangements. Local nonprofits were left to scramble because every person released requires accommodations, meals, hygiene, warm clothing, miscellaneous travel needs, orientation and encouragement. Faced with this new reality, the faith community came together and put out a call for aid to expand transitional housing.

Frequent situations like these mean the burnout rate for staff and volunteers is high. Many nonprofits in the border’s immediate area find themselves in desperate need of volunteers for “immersion” experiences in a wide variety of support roles, such as doing laundry, managing donations, assisting with the transport of immigrants, hosting volunteers from other locations and providing legal support. In addition to volunteer assistance, the need for financial support remains considerable. Opportunities for individual and congregational

involvement are vast.

PDA has been responding in cooperation with mid councils and congregations along the border, the Office of the General Assembly’s Office of Immigration Issues, the Office of Public Witness and our ecumenical and interfaith partners working with refugees and immigrants. PDA supports these local initiatives through individual consultations, the deployment of National Response Team members and grant making. The following are some of the projects supported in 2018:

Located in El Paso, Texas, Annunciation House (AH) was founded in 1976 as one of several border-area missions, which has since evolved to serving refugees and is entirely funded by the spontaneous generosity of the public. Presbyterians have long volunteered with AH, and as the need grew, AH opened a satellite shelter to expand capacity, where they serve roughly 90 asylum seekers per week.

Approximately 770 miles away in McAllen, Texas, the nonprofit Humanitarian Respite Center (HRC) has received up to 500 refugees and immigrants a day. Currently run out of a building rented from the local sheriff, HRC’s capital campaign to fund construction of a two-story, 15,000-square-foot building downtown is in progress, but for now HRC is often left without beds — or, in this case, mats — for those in the center’s care. During the last week of September 2018, Presbyterian volunteers at the facility transported “overflow” refugees to other locations for the night. Volunteers that week also made the acquaintance of a young mother and her daughter who were stuck in a holding pattern as their sponsors were displaced as a result of Hurricane Florence in the Carolinas. They were both in good spirits, however, and while the mother cooked, the daughter helped assemble travel snack bags.

Just up the road from McAllen in San Antonio, the Interfaith Welcome Coalition (IWC) continues to minister with and provide public witness for mothers and their children who are detained at the family immigration detention centers in Dilley and Karnes City, Texas. Similar to the other ministries near the border, they meet families who are released by ICE after months of incarceration with only the clothes on their backs and their immigration papers. In addition, the IWC is active in



ACT/SEAN HAWKEY

advocating for the end of family detention and more humane immigration practices.

The Inn Project in Tucson, Arizona, organized by the United Methodist Church in 2016, provides safe temporary assistance to Central American refugee or asylum-seeking families. As one of the newest transitional shelter programs in Tucson, the nonprofit assists hundreds of predominantly Central American individuals per month. In October, due to an increase in ICE releases, St. Mark’s Presbyterian Church in Tucson set up rooms in the church as an overflow site.

Also located in Tucson, Casa Alitas is run by Catholic Community Services in partnership with the Mennonite Central Committee. Like the Inn Project, it serves up to 450 asylum seekers released from detention per month. Without the Inn Project, Casa Alitas and the other satellite shelters, many of these asylum seekers would be dropped off at the local bus station without money or knowledge about what to do or where to go.

Those ministering along the U.S./Mexico border remind us that there are many groups of asylum seekers arriving each day. And, while arrivals have been much lower at the Agua Prieta/Douglas, Arizona, port of entry than at other sites in Arizona (intel says this is due to cartels restricting entry into this corridor), Frontera de Cristo, a Presbyterian border ministry, has found a way to help. Knowing that Douglas has the capacity to initiate the asylum process for eight people a day, but was only receiving four to six per week, Frontera worked with their partners in Nogales to transport vulnerable populations 112 miles to Agua Prieta. Without Frontera’s help, pregnant women, the elderly and extremely ill people would be stalled at Nogales for a three- to four-week waiting period.

These and other organizations at the border primarily focus on the immediate physical needs of transitioning asylum seekers because they are necessary and obvious. An equally important need is bearing witness to what is

Asylum seekers sleep on pews at San Francisco Church in Huixtla, Chiapas, Mexico



Welcome to the United States" sign wrapped in barbed wire at the port of entry in Nogales, Sonora, Arizona/Mexico

happening during legal processing. The Texas Interfaith Center for Public Policy/Texas Impact asks people of faith to participate in "Courts & Ports: Faithful Witness on the Texas-Mexico Border." Volunteer participants spend two days observing the proceedings in a federal criminal court and sharing their findings with the ACLU and other attorneys. Observers are an integral part of the immigration court system, potentially encouraging an asylum seeker to plead not guilty as well as empowering judges to request modifications in the court's process.

Bearing witness can also take the form of visiting the border and offering spiritual support to refugees waiting for admission to the U.S. The Rev. Elizabeth Gibbs Zehnder wrote a wonderful account of her November trip to the Chaparral/San Ysidro crossing. She joined her co-chairs, pastors Ada and Melvin Valiente and professor Robert Chao Romero and his wife, Erica Shepler Romero, on the Matthew 25 Movement-sponsored delegation to find out how Presbyterians can best assist members of the migrant caravan. Their goal was "to add dimension to the stories circulating in the international and local media — particularly

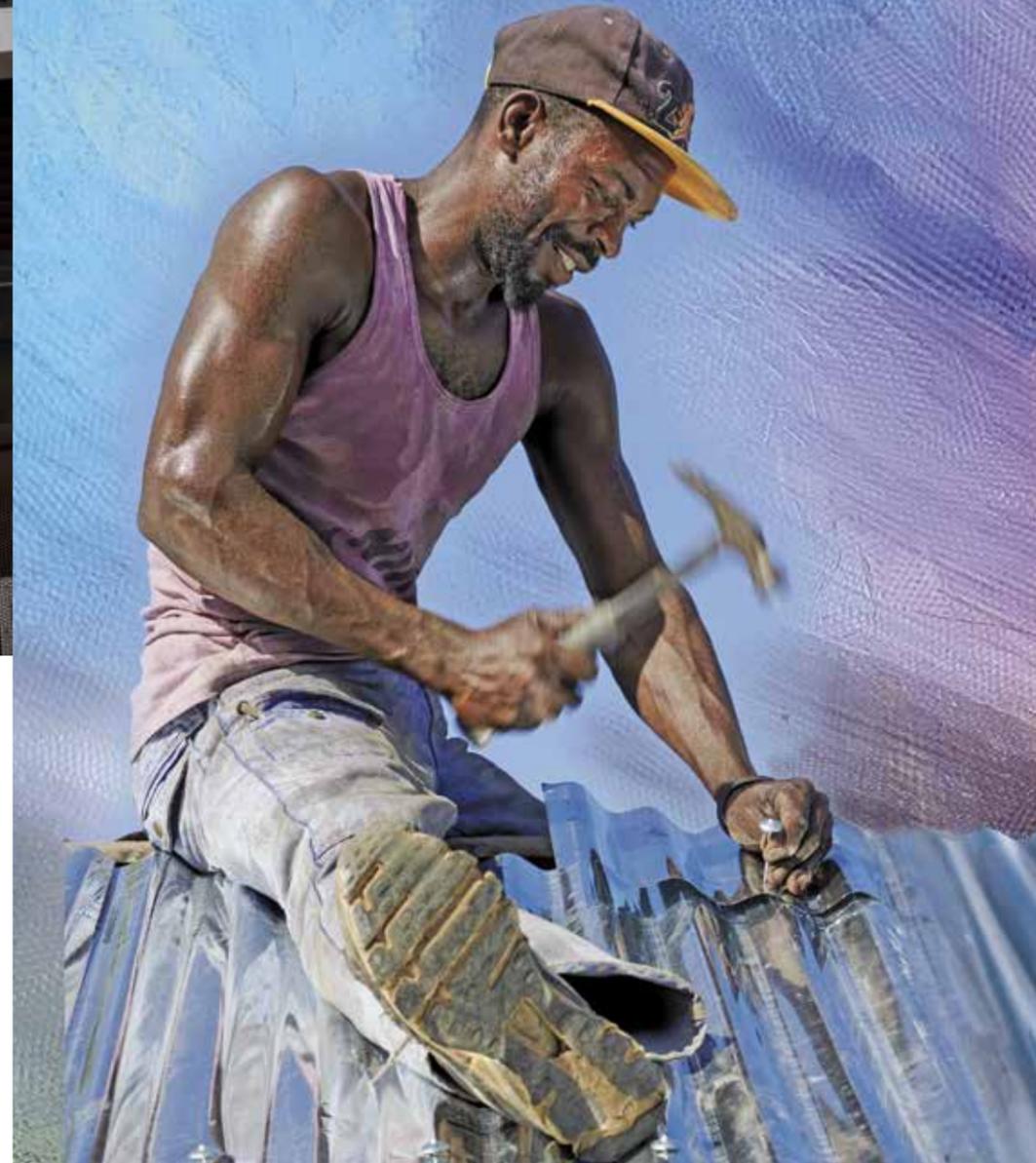
highlighting the vulnerability and gratitude of the caravaners for the hospitality they are receiving and the need for communities on both sides of the border to receive and support them."

Gibbs Zehnder says that while they saw some minor upset between the waiting migrants, it was easily de-escalated by other members of the group. People are open to the spiritual and emotional support they are offered, and they repeatedly mention their appreciation for being in a place of relative safety. After all of the difficulties they faced during their march northward, they are aware that they need to gather their strength for what lies ahead.

These stories reflect the importance of our connectional church. It is easy to believe, in the face of devastating media images and reports, that there is no hope, but many are working hard to find every avenue to make a difference at the border and beyond. PDA will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to all refugee families with basic needs, legal orientations and family reunification assistance, even as we advocate for more humane treatment by the U.S. government.



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— ISAIAH 58

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in sharing God's love with our neighbors-in-need around the world by providing relief from natural and human-caused disasters, food for the hungry, and support for the poor and oppressed.

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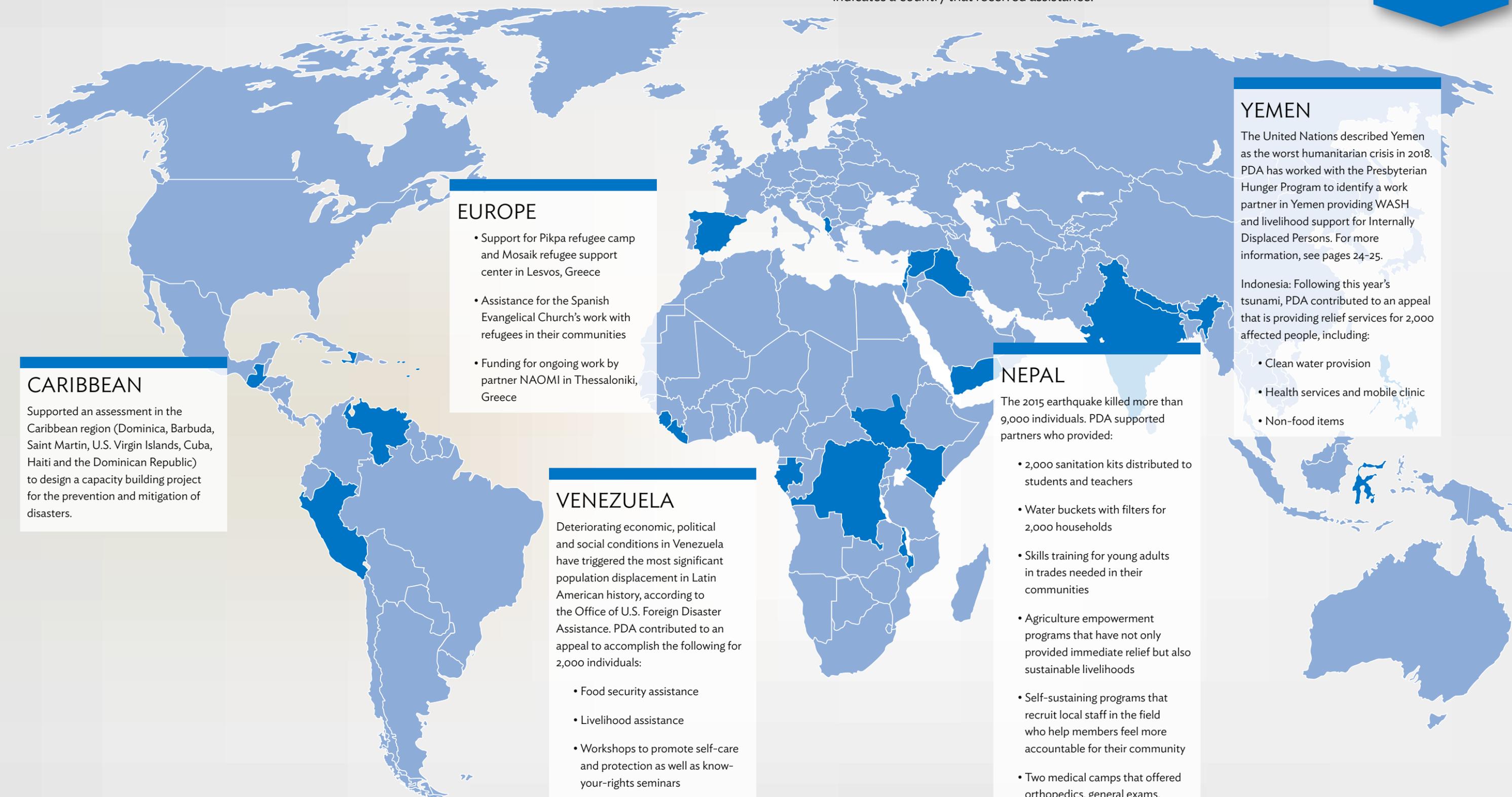
To learn more, go to presbyterianmission.org/give-oghs

Your Gifts At Work Internationally

Total amount granted: **\$2,095,376.40**

In 2018, PDA responded to disasters in 24 countries outside the U.S. Dark blue indicates a country that received assistance.

DESIGNATE GIFTS TO A SPECIFIC AREA—
See our website for a list of active Disaster Response accounts.
pcusa.org/PDA



CARIBBEAN

Supported an assessment in the Caribbean region (Dominica, Barbuda, Saint Martin, U.S. Virgin Islands, Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic) to design a capacity building project for the prevention and mitigation of disasters.

EUROPE

- Support for Pikpa refugee camp and Mosaik refugee support center in Lesvos, Greece
- Assistance for the Spanish Evangelical Church's work with refugees in their communities
- Funding for ongoing work by partner NAOMI in Thessaloniki, Greece

VENEZUELA

Deteriorating economic, political and social conditions in Venezuela have triggered the most significant population displacement in Latin American history, according to the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance. PDA contributed to an appeal to accomplish the following for 2,000 individuals:

- Food security assistance
- Livelihood assistance
- Workshops to promote self-care and protection as well as know-your-rights seminars
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) support

NEPAL

The 2015 earthquake killed more than 9,000 individuals. PDA supported partners who provided:

- 2,000 sanitation kits distributed to students and teachers
- Water buckets with filters for 2,000 households
- Skills training for young adults in trades needed in their communities
- Agriculture empowerment programs that have not only provided immediate relief but also sustainable livelihoods
- Self-sustaining programs that recruit local staff in the field who help members feel more accountable for their community
- Two medical camps that offered orthopedics, general exams, gynecology, pediatrics and general surgery

YEMEN

The United Nations described Yemen as the worst humanitarian crisis in 2018. PDA has worked with the Presbyterian Hunger Program to identify a work partner in Yemen providing WASH and livelihood support for Internally Displaced Persons. For more information, see pages 24-25.

Indonesia: Following this year's tsunami, PDA contributed to an appeal that is providing relief services for 2,000 affected people, including:

- Clean water provision
- Health services and mobile clinic
- Non-food items

Presbyterians partner to assist with ‘the worst humanitarian crisis in the world’

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance joins the Presbyterian Hunger Program to respond to famine in Yemen

By Rich Copley

The crisis demands attention.

In war-torn Yemen, 75 percent of the population lives in poverty, with 60 percent food insecure and 8.4 million people unsure of where their next meal will come from, according to United Nations statistics. By any measure, the crisis is escalating quickly, with a 61 percent decline in gross domestic product per capita over the past three years and 1.25 million civil servants not being paid in the past 18 months.

As the situation deteriorated in Yemen, its urgency was obvious to the Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP) and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA).

“We were very worried about the situation on the ground, and we also had a lot of churches calling, saying, ‘Things look really bad in these places. What are we doing?’” recalls Valéry Nodem, PHP’s associate for international hunger concerns. “So, we reached out to establish some connections.”

And therein lay the challenge.

“Yemen is a place where we have no partners — church partners, in a sense,” says Luke Asikoye, PDA’s associate for international disaster response.

Yemen is an Islamic nation with a very small Christian population and no Presbyterian presence. So, when PHP and PDA decided they wanted to become engaged in helping address the nation’s humanitarian crisis, the first order of business was to identify an organization already responding on the ground.

“We connected with partners in the region and with sister churches in the U.S. to see if they had connections in Yemen,” Nodem says. “With a list of groups that we were provided, we started engaging in conversations and organizations to understand the situation on the ground better, what was being done and what the needs were.”

PHP decided to partner with Generations Without Qat, a development organization that was formed in 2007 to work in education and awareness of issues related to poverty, health and youth. In 2014, with the crisis in the country, the group began to work on providing rapid response activities and relief support to conflict-affected communities.

The initial PHP funding was \$13,000, to which PDA added \$10,000.

The project is in Al Mukha district in the southwest corner of the country. The project will provide fishing kits and training to almost 500 families of internally displaced people. The partnership does two things strategically: it puts local people in charge of the projects, and it provides a long-term solution to hunger and poverty.

“It’s important, even in situations of conflict, to still think about long-lasting solutions,” Nodem says. “By providing fishing nets and training to families, they can feed themselves for the duration of the project and beyond. The project will also help generate revenues for families, as they can sell fish in local markets.”

In situations like this, Asikoye says, PDA and PHP aspire to help increase the local group’s capacity by adding additional assistance to scale up the project. And, particularly in a difficult situation like Yemen, the church grows from their partnership.

“We have not worked in a place that had so many challenges,” Nodem says. “And if I look at the amount of funding we are currently sending to Yemen, it’s really a drop in the bucket.”

“As the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, this is for sure the hardest crisis we have worked on.”

PDA and PHP look forward to continuing this partnership through 2019 and beyond, as needed.



PHOTOS BY GENERATIONS WITHOUT QAT



HOW YOU CAN HELP

» Give to One Great Hour of Sharing to support PDA and PHP — pcusa.org/oghs

» Connect with the Office of Public Witness for action alerts to advocate for peace in Yemen — presbyterianmission.org/opw

» Support PDA’s response in Yemen — designate gifts to DR000082



Presbyterian Disaster Assistance in Nepal goes beyond recovery

Since 2015 earthquake, PC(USA) ministry has worked to build a sustainable community

By Rich Copley

Four years ago, Chana Maya Shakya's home in the Katunje Village in Nepal was leveled by a 7.9 magnitude earthquake that, nationwide, killed more than 9,000 people and inflicted economic losses of nearly \$10 billion on the mountainous nation.

Today, Shakya has a small tailoring business through which she earns a monthly income that has helped improve her life and the lives of her family of five.

Padam Prasad Khanal lost the house he had just built for his wife and six children when the earthquake struck. His land and his buffalo were his sole possessions. Last spring, the buffalo died.

But this year, Khanal's rice crop was triple what was expected, and he is selling surplus rice.

"Now, I'll buy a buffalo again," he said.

Shakya, Khanal and their families are a few of the thousands of people who were helped through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) following the massive earthquake.

The ministry reacted quickly after the April 2015 quake, working with agencies within the country to address immediate needs of people affected by the catastrophe.

"Anytime a disaster strikes that is major, Presbyterians ask, 'What is Presbyterian Disaster Assistance doing about it?' because for Presbyterians, they know that PDA is their vehicle for that," says Luke Asikoye, associate for international disaster response for PDA. "So, whether we are there or not, we always have to know what is happening at what magnitude and be able to give them answers."

But Nepal presented challenges with no established or natural partners for PDA to work with, which is essential to the way the ministry works.

"Before this earthquake, I had never been to Nepal," Asikoye says. "So, the only way to determine their needs was to tap into the local knowledge; what they were telling us, what had happened, and using the experience and the skills that they have to be able to work with them to clearly articulate that."



ACT/PAUL JEFFERY



TOGETHER FOR NEPAL

Chana Maya Shakya's house was destroyed by the 2015 earthquake. She was selected for the sewing skills training organized by Together For Nepal and now runs a tailoring shop in the heart of Katunje Bazar

Ultimately, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance partnered with a few non-governmental organizations, primarily Together for Nepal and Juneli Nepal, and focused on Gorkha and Katunje Village.

Both partners shared five main focus areas: social mobilization, awareness raising and capacity building; support to the health and education sector; water sanitation and hygiene; agriculture empowerment; and scholarship and skill training.

Among the efforts undertaken by the Katunje project were two medical camps that offered services including general exams, orthopedics and general surgery; 2,000 sanitation kits distributed to students and teachers; and 2,000 water buckets with filters, along with instructions on how to use them and the importance of clean, safe drinking water.

None of this was easy in one of the most mountainous countries in the world, which is plagued annually by monsoons.

"Logistically, it's a very challenging country to move around, move stuff," Asikoye says. "There's a window of opportunity to move stuff up there. But after three months, it is very hard

to move up and down due to rains."

PDA aims to do more than just restore areas like Katunje Village and Gorkha to the way they were prior to the tragedy. The ministry seeks to help people improve their lives and better prepare the community if a similar disaster strikes again.

Working with local staff, programs geared toward young adults focused on sewing and electrical installation and maintenance, two of the most needed trades in the community. Efforts also supported agricultural empowerment programs including livestock, farming methods and quality seeds to create sustainable food and income sources.

"This is one of the really good international projects that we have done in PDA," Asikoye says. "It's taken us time, but at the same time, we've been able to focus on the real needs of the people."

As it enters its final phase, after a \$1,150,000 investment by Presbyterians, work in Nepal is starting to wind down.

Asikoye says, "Hopefully, by next year, we'll be able to transition out, and they'll be able to run."



Nepali woman winnows grain

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- » Designate gifts to DR000192
- » For more information, visit www.pcusa.org/pda

2018 in Review



In 2018, because of your generous support, PDA was able to grant more than **\$5.6 million** across the globe; support **9,146 work team volunteers** who helped those affected by disaster; **deploy 438** National Response Team members who spent **2,379 days** in the field in **58 presbyteries**; train **167 Presbyterian Women** in disaster preparedness; screen PDA films for more than **11,000 people**; and with Church World Service, aid in the collection and distribution of over **174,000 Gift of the Heart Kits and blankets**.

THANK YOU!



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