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

God is our refuge and strength, therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. (Psalm 46:1-3)

2017 was a fearful year of record-breaking natural and un-natural disasters. Within the space of a month, three catastrophic hurricanes swept through Texas, Louisiana, Florida and the Caribbean. Many neighbors in Puerto Rico still lack electricity, dry shelter and potable water. Fires ravaged the northwest states and California—the largest fire in California history, the Thomas Fire, broke records for damage and scope, and in the aftermath of that and other fires, the terror and misery of landslides continued the devastation. Globally, the refugee crisis continued to intensify—now more than 66 million people displaced by natural disasters and raging conflicts across the globe. South Sudan, Syria and neighboring Lebanon, Central and East Africa, Bangladesh and Myanmar all struggle with feeding, housing, protecting, rebuilding and surviving in the face of drought, war, flooding and ethnic tension. Across the world the effects of climate change challenge the human family’s ability to nurture and promote a world in which there is enough for everyone. In the realm of un-natural disasters, human inhumanity has driven the Rohingyas out of their homes and country, deepened instability in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and brought terrorist attacks to places we never imagined to be vulnerable. Mass shootings in the U.S. continue to worsen in frequency and scope; our hearts are broken. This is not an exhaustive list of the trouble in the world and the places PDA responds, but it is an exhausting one. No wonder we need a refuge; no wonder we need to be told: Do Not Fear.

Why don’t we fear? Because, as the psalmist continues: there is a river whose streams make glad the city of God … God is in the midst of the city. God will help when the morning dawns. (Psalm 46:4-6). There is a river…a river fed by streams of generosity that have turned these overwhelming floods of disaster into a nurturing source of refreshment in the wilderness. Thousands of financial gifts have flooded places of hurt across the globe to rebuild and restore. Tens of thousands of volunteer hours – teams from across the church and beyond it, have shown up in a ministry of presence to listen, help rebuild, and be the tangible presence of Christ. PDA’s National Response Teams have shown up and stayed, accompanying presbyteries across the nation respond to disasters within their borders and healing their communities. Colleges, film festivals, churches and neighborhood groups have gathered around short PDA documentaries like To Breathe Locked in a Box to discuss and learn how to be part of the great work of Matthew 25: welcoming the stranger. Congregations have welcomed refugees and immigrants, offered sanctuary, lifted their voices in advocacy and put their money where their mouth is so that the words of the psalm still ring with truth: God is our refuge and strength, therefore we will not fear, though the mountains shall change, though the mountains shall tremble with their tumult. (Psalm 46:1-3).

Thank you, and thanks be to God.

Laurie Kraus

To view this issue online, visit pcusa.org/missionmosaic17

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Mission MOSAIC 1
A trio of HURRICANES wreak havoc on the South & Southwest

Recovery to take years

Rick Jones

Responding to hurricane-ravaged communities is nothing new for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. Work continues in states and cities impacted by storms that occurred years ago. But the hurricane season of 2017 was different, generating a trio of devastating storms that hit Texas, Louisiana, Florida and Puerto Rico within days of each other.

A storm named Harvey was the first to make its presence known in Texas, leaving a path of damage from Corpus Christi to Houston and beyond. In the early weeks after the storm, streets were littered with debris as homeowners cleared out old carpeting, furniture and appliances. The roofs were ripped off businesses, power lines were down and tangled metal became a common sight.

At Community Presbyterian Church in Port Aransas, the sanctuary, classrooms and fellowship center became unusable. A multi-faith food pantry at the church was in ruins. The Florida Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) has been working with state officials to identify potential host sites for volunteers interested in the rebuild.

For the long-term, the need for volunteer teams will be great over the next two or three years along with the need for funding," she said. "I think that our communities have really stepped up to deal with the cleanup and recovery."

Broyard says they will be closely watching for compassion fatigue among presbyteries and church leaders in the state. "We are requesting several resilience workshops, not just for presbyteries and churches, but for anyone working in the response and recovery effort," she said. "The need for these kinds of workshops began surfacing within a couple of months of Irma."

PDA has been working with state officials to identify potential host sites for volunteers interested in the rebuild.

"Five of the state’s six presbyteries were significantly impacted,” said the Rev. Jim Kirk, PDA’s associate for domestic response. "We also discussed another layer of the response in that tens of thousands have come from Puerto Rico, at least temporarily. FLAPDAN is aware of the need to help there."

In November, PDA officials, including Kirk, Kraus, and David Myers, senior advisor for 2017 hurricane recovery, visited the community...
enough room for one car.

Work to remove debris and repair roads is often hampered by the continued heavy rains that pound the mountain, starting new mudslides and causing newly established utility poles to fall in the oversaturated earth.

The town of Maricao is described as the poorest town on the island. “Most of this community’s 5,000 people live up in the mountains. Many are farmers and coffee growers, but lost everything with the hurricane,” said Rev. Angel Suarez-Valera, moderator at Iglesia Presbyteriana Church. “If you go to the center of the island, it is a different Puerto Rico. There are still people without electricity and water. In some cases, there is one gas station working in the whole municipality. We still have problems on the roads because of rain. Bridges have collapsed or are in bad shape.”

Reaching remote, mountainous communities in the western part of Puerto Rico can be challenging. Downed trees and power lines, along with mudslides, kept many roads closed in the weeks that followed Maria. But for the narrow roads that are open, there is barely enough room for one car.

TO BRING VALUED PERSPECTIVES TO COMPLEMENT THEIR TEAM, PDA HIRED THREE TERM EMPLOYEES FOR THE 2017 HURRICANE RESPONSE: DAVID MYERS, SENIOR ADVISOR FOR 2017 HURRICANE RECOVERY; REV. EDWIN GONZÁLEZ-CASTILLO, HURRICANE MARIA CONSULTANT FOR PUERTO RICO; AND KATHY RILEY, ASSOCIATE FOR HURRICANE 2017 EMOTIONAL & SPIRITUAL CARE MINISTRY.
From volunteer work teams giving their time to rebuild homes across the country, to Sunday School classes writing cards for those affected by disaster, to Presbyterian Women training presbyteries on disaster preparedness, to congregations participating in Blue Shirt Sunday, to a Young Adult Volunteer dedicating a year of service to PDA, to congregations hosting concerts and children holding a lemonade stand and bake sale with donations designated for hurricane relief, to National Response Team members deploying into areas of crisis, to churches assembling Gift of the Heart kits; PDA was blessed in 2017 with the many ways you creatively supported our work. We celebrate your work and thank you for your faithful gifts of time, prayer and donations.
DO YOU WANT TO volunteer to rebuild? For information about volunteer work teams, contact the PDA Call Center at 866-732-6121 or email PDA.CallCenter@pcusa.org

DO YOU WANT TO be a Presbyterian Women Disaster Preparedness Trainer? The next training is being offered at the Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women August 1, 2018. The application deadline is July 7, 2018. For more information, 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

Flags represent a presence in the state and do not pinpoint an exact location
In the U.S.:
The eb and flow of refugee and asylum movements and changing circumstances within the U.S. make for a very dynamic ministry context for local communities. Presbyterians are stepping out as leaders among their interfaith colleagues and developing strategic partnerships with local nonprofit organizations and immigrant communities to welcome newcomers and protect long-term neighbors now faced with the possibility of deportation. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) offers its support to these local initiatives through individual consultations, the deployment of National Response Team members and grant making. The following are some of the projects supported by PDA in 2017:

- Immigrants fleeing poverty and violence from more than 60 different countries end up at the Eloy Detention Center in Arizona where they feel isolated, hopeless and powerless. Casa Mariposa hired a volunteer coordinator for the detention visitation program and partnered with Shalom Mennonite Fellowship to increase the outreach and training of volunteer visitors.

- Young families from Central America coming to the U.S. in search of safety are detained at family detention centers in Texas while they make their asylum claims. U.S. courts have ruled long-term detention of children detrimental to their well-being. The Interfaith Welcome Coalition in San Antonio educates local churches and community groups, training volunteers and advocates. Volunteers visit families in detention, provide food and backpacks with clothing and other basic needs for families when they are released, and advocate for the end of family detention.

- A congregation of Indonesian immigrants in New Hampshire face increased orders of deportation, potentially impacting half of the congregation. Many fear religious persecution. They failed to meet a one-year filing deadline for asylum when they arrived in the U.S. decades ago. Nevertheless, they were granted permission to remain. The Presbytery of Northern New England is organizing legal clinics and emotional, spiritual and basic needs support for the members and the pastor. They are partnering with local immigrant rights and legal organizations to ensure the best legal information and representation.

- In the Detroit area, refugees and asylum seekers struggle to find legal representation before the immigration courts. Southwest Detroit Immigration and Refugee Center, supported by the Presbytery of Detroit, is expanding its outreach into Pontiac, Michigan, where the First Presbyterian Church will host free legal clinics.

- The Los Angeles area is one of the largest destinations for immigrants and asylum seekers in the U.S. The Presbytery of the Pacific is an active member of the UCARE Coalition to connect unaccompanied children and their families with legal representation, basic needs support and volunteer mentors. As concern spread for immigrants’ rights, in 2017, several congregations adopted the Matthew 25 pledge to stand with the vulnerable.

Presbyterian churches also have a long history of involvement with refugee resettlement. It is estimated that as many as 800 PC(USA) congregations supported or volunteered with resettled refugees across the U.S. In 2017, PDA provided basic funding to the Church World Service Immigration & Refugee program for both national operations and their network of local resettlement offices.
During a recent consultation in Lebanon with international partners supporting the response to the war in Syria, Hadi Ghantous, pastor of a Presbyterian-partner congregation in the town of Minyara, led us in Bible study. We considered the importance of interfaith community, dialogue and cooperation, especially in the Middle East, as war continues to rage in Syria and impact neighboring countries.

Hadi used the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel (Gen. 32), asserting that we cannot be Christian if we are not willing to encounter the Other. He said, “If the Other doesn’t wish to meet you, you still have to meet the Other within yourself. Sometimes we have a lot of work to do to meet the Other within ourselves.”

His words resonated with me. I was on my third trip to meet with Syrian and Lebanese partners. His words are even more powerful now, as I think about our rising resistance to immigration and our intensifying immersion in the structural and physical violence of racism and xenophobia. I’m so grateful to be part of a church that believes diversity is in the very nature of God (as is unity) and that, therefore, we who are God’s own must strive to welcome the stranger elsewhere in the country; 4.5 million of these displaced and distressed persons are in hard-to-reach areas within Syria, where food aid and essential support become difficult to deliver.

Since the war in Syria began in 2012, PDA has committed well over half a million dollars to ongoing efforts in the region to support refugees (in transit through Europe and in neighboring countries like Lebanon and Jordan); sustain persons and families who want to remain in Syria but who cannot support themselves due to the crisis; provide emergency fuel, food and shelter relief; rebuild houses in the city of Homs; provide education for Syrian children in five refugee camps in Lebanon; and rebuild schools in Aleppo. PDA is working with ecumenical partners through the global ACT (Action by Churches Together) Alliance; our bilateral Presbyterian partners in the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon (NESSL); and with the Middle East Council of Churches (based in Beirut).

In 2017, PDA also responded to refugee/IDP crises in South Sudan, Bangladesh and Serbia. For more information about PDA’s international work, see p. 18–19.

The U.S. resettled 85,000 refugees in 2016 and just over 50,000 refugees in the federal fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, 2017. This figure is in addition to the thousands who come to the U.S. as asylum seekers each year, in 2016, the most recent year for which there are comprehensive statistics, more than 20,000 were recognized as asylees from over 200 countries. The current administration set a refugee admissions limit of 45,000 for 2018*. Meanwhile, the immigration courts have a backlog of over 600,000 cases that includes people who arrived as asylum seekers, such as the women and children from Central America.

*Resettlement statistics from the U.S. Department of State, Refugee Processing Center.
Total dollars granted: **$1,710,381.76**

To see where grants were disbursed, NRT were deployed and volunteer work teams served, see pages 8-9

**U.S. Facts & Figures**

- **Hurricanes**: 46 grants, 95 NRT* deployed
- **Floods**: 21 grants, 27 NRT deployed
- **Human-Caused Disaster/Trauma**: 9 grants, 14 NRT deployed
- **Tornadoes**: 7 grants, 10 NRT deployed

**Fires**: 12 grants, 15 NRT deployed

**Storms**: 4 grants

**Refugee ministry**: 3 grants, 10 NRT deployed

*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.

- **7,136** blue shirt volunteers gave more than **200,000** hours of volunteer labor, valued at over **$4.8 million** (according to the Independent Sector)
Presbyterian documentaries on immigration and refugees become part of Dayton awareness campaign

Rick Jones

The original idea was to simply schedule screenings of the most recent Presbyterian Disaster Assistance documentaries on immigration detention and refugee resettlement (Locked in a Box and To Breathe Free) at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Dayton, Ohio. What Sally Dyer didn’t realize was that a number of organizations across the city were planning their own awareness events around these issues in fall 2017.

Dyer, a National Response Team member with PDA, began hearing about other scheduled events. The Dayton International Peace Museum, University of Dayton, Dayton Opera and Peace Literacy Dayton planned talks, concerts and a presentation of The Consul and Peace Literacy Dayton planned talks, concerts and a presentation of The Consul and Peace Museum were all doing something. It just kind of morphed into this big deal.”

Dyer also credits Jerry Leggett, president and CEO of 21st Century Peace Literacy Foundation, with helping to bring the event together. “I’ve been working for many years to create positive peace-building within communities,” he said. “How do the voices of the faith community get their powerful message heard in a world that doesn’t always come from that perspective? The challenge is creating a forum for people to come together and hear about immigration and detention.”

Both documentaries were shown as part of the Peace Literacy Dayton Film Forum. The documentaries have been selected to screen at various film festivals around the country. But PDA leaders believe scheduled showings at churches and other community organizations often lead to action. “We show our films at a film festival and people respond to it and then they go home. In this case, everyone was here for the purpose of learning, but also to engage and do something, whether as a faith community or a college student who is interested in visitation ministry at detention centers,” said David Barnhart, PDA associate for Story Ministry and director of the films. “Everyone that came wanted to learn and do something. That’s the purpose of these films and exactly what we want them to do, to be, a voice or medium to connect people and find their own way to engage with the issues.”

When she first saw Locked in a Box two years ago, Dyer said she had no idea how close to home the issue was. “I got online and looked up to see if there were any detention centers near Dayton and found there was one about 30 minutes away. This is happening in my backyard, and that is not OK,” she said. “No one knew the facility existed and it was happening so close to home.”

Dyer is hopeful the series of events and film showings will lead to more hands-on ministry. She encourages churches in other communities to duplicate the success they’ve had in Dayton and incorporate others to raise awareness. “Do some research in your own community to see who else might be involved in refugee resettlement or immigration issues and let them know about the film and see what develops from there. It could grow into something,” she adds. “I would have never thought about contacting the philharmonic or the opera to see if they have something going on around this topic. But now things have come together on immigration/refugees, and it has been just beautiful to watch.”

To access these and our other award-winning films, visit www.pcusa.org/StoryProductions

Projects currently in production:

• Flint: the documentary gives voice to the current struggle of 100,000 residents in the city of Flint who are finding a way forward through the tragedy and disaster of lead poisoning.

• The Everyday Epidemic: A Gun Violence Response Series focuses on the courageous efforts of a wide spectrum of individuals, communities and non-profits who are responding to the epidemic of gun violence in their own communities and contexts.

• Race and Racism: A Story Series (working title) – featuring animation by the comic artist who created the Black Panther, Brian Stelfreeze.
Princess Angel Moristo, 7, helps build a temporary shelter for her family in Tacloban, a city in the Philippines province of Leyte that was hit hard by Typhoon Haiyan in November 2013. The storm was known locally as Yolanda.

Debris piles in Columbia, SC. The rainfall from this storm exceeded that of any tropical storm in South Carolina history. (source: The Weather Channel)

HOW YOU CAN HELP
›› Designate your gift to the Philippines (DR000012) or U.S. Flooding (DR000191).
›› Make Gift of the Heart kits; flood buckets, hygiene kits and school kits are always needed. See the PDA website for more information.

Kenya
Supported an initiative to enhance competency of the member churches to design and implement appropriate responses to hunger and poverty through agricultural and sustainable food production. As a result:
• 236 households benefited from seed distribution
• 1,031 households trained on climate resilient agricultural practices
• 150 farmers trained resulting in the establishment of 29 farm organizations, 104 demonstration farms and the mobilization of 16 congregations

In response to a drought resulting in food and water scarcity, response activities provided more than 1,500 people with emergency relief assistance, including items such as water, maize, beans, vegetables, food vouchers and livelihood recovery

Supported peace activities to campaign for peace throughout Kenya’s presidential election process.

Mexico
Supported the relief efforts of the Comunidad Teológica de Mexico in the aftermath of the earthquakes, which included: emergency food assistance, distribution of clothes, medicine and other non-food items.

Cuba
Following Hurricane Irma, PDA provided the following assistance:

Solidarity grant to support the relief efforts of the Evangelical Seminary of Theology in Matanzas
800 households received shelter kits and basic training on safe roofing techniques
3,000 households supported with non-food items
4,100 households received food kits
5,000 households received hygiene kits
600 households received household water purification systems
2,250 households received community water purification systems and integral sanitation systems
20,000 households received psychosocial support, child safeguarding and protection

SYRIA/LEBANON
Supported the restoration and rehabilitation of two schools in Aleppo, benefitting 2,439 Syrian people.

Rebuilt/repaired the homes of 25-30 displaced Syrian families living in Homs.
Support for schools in Lebanon for more than 200 Syrian children residing in refugee camps included:
• Educational services to combat illiteracy and increase access to education
• Items to meet basic human needs such as meals, uniforms, winter clothes and medicine

Support for accounting services to the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon’s Syrian humanitarian relief and educational projects.

When responding to disasters and crises internationally, PDA, as a member of the ecumenical and global ACT Alliance, often combines resources with other members to have a larger collaborative impact.

Some of the numbers in this report are the target outcomes of appeals and may represent the shared work of several partners.

In 2017 PDA responded to disasters in 22 countries outside the U.S. Dark blue indicates a country that received assistance. Below are some highlights from the year.

Total amount granted: $2,443,144.16
Severe famine and ongoing fighting between ethnic groups have made survival difficult for millions of people in South Sudan. As a result of the deteriorating conditions, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) issued an appeal in 2017.

"Half of the population, 6 million out of 12 million people, are experiencing food vulnerability, and lack of water is always a problem," said the Rev. Dr. Laurie Kraus, PDA director. "Because of the violence, another 4 million people are fleeing to camps for Internally Displaced Persons in the capital city of Juba, or leaving to refugee camps in neighboring countries."

Early last year, the United Nations declared a famine in the country. The ongoing conflict in the region has disrupted attempts by farmers to make any lasting improvements. The poor agricultural conditions, along with drought, have created life-threatening conditions.

"South Sudan is a 7-year-old country and for five of those years, it has been embroiled in internal conflict," Kraus said. "Widespread violence, much of which is targeting particular ethnicities, is making life dangerous throughout the country."

PDA is funding large-scale emergency relief projects and working through the Presbyterian Relief and Development Agency (PRDA), the humanitarian arm of the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan, to find solutions to the growing challenges that are now spilling over into neighboring countries as hundreds of thousands leave their homes.

"Uganda, for one, has been extremely committed to welcoming and supporting their neighbors. But it has put a strain on that country as well," Kraus said. "Many of the communities around the larger camps are also struggling for a decent livelihood."

Kraus recently visited one of the camps outside of Juba with colleagues from the PRDA and received a warm welcome.

"Women and men shared stories with us about what life is like in the camps. They told us reliable access to enough food and clean water is an ongoing challenge,” she said. “There is a lot of disease in the camp and the elderly and small children are very vulnerable. The death rate in the camps has risen because of a lack of nutrition and the inability to treat these diseases.”

Kraus says the conditions have made it difficult for the people to hold out hope.

"They took me to the Presbyterian church in the camp, a mud brick building with a metal roof. A thousand children sit side by side in class groupings, but there are no room dividers or supplies to support learning," Kraus said. "This is a tent camp, stretching as far as the eye could see. Those who did not have tents stayed in shelters, put together with sticks, mud and maybe a tarp. But people are working for the future, for a sustainable life. I also saw papaya..."
plants out of the back of some bums as people tried to cultivate and grow food to make a life for themselves as best they can. Kraus says the United Nations has established a few schools and one Presbyterian school has up to 1,000 children attending. “They meet when they can, sit on rocks or plastic chairs. They don’t have chalkboards or books but a lot of the young adults are willing to teach,” she said. “I don’t think I’ve ever been in a place that had fewer resources yet worked so hard to maintain education, faith and civil society.” Most of those fleeing their homes have headed for Juba. “Juba continues to experience periodic flare-ups of violence. A lot of the outlying villages experience violent attacks that impact their ability to cultivate their land,” Kraus said. “It is a complex emergency and it has been getting progressively worse in the last year.”

In 2017, PDA accomplished the following through their partnership with PRDA

Aided in the improvement of rural livelihoods through an increase in food security and the provision of clean and safe drinking water, resulting in:
- Seed and tool distribution
- Training for 120 farmers on improved agricultural methods to increase annual food production, benefiting 400 households
- Repairs, protection and maintenance of water wells, providing 400 households with access to clean water

In response to ongoing violence, provided emergency relief assistance to more than 4,000 displaced persons, which included items such as maize, beans, cooking oil, clothes, blankets, mosquito nets and medicine.

To support PDA’s work in South Sudan, designate gifts to DR000042.

Public Violence and Emotional & Spiritual Care

Bruce Wismer and Kathy Riley

The impact of a human-caused disaster is deep and far-reaching; it debilitates the human spirit. It knocks people off course and challenges core assumptions and beliefs. Violence often reshapes the landscape of relationships and alters congregational and community living. It changes people because a human-initiated violent event shatters, disorients and often overwhelms one’s capacity to cope and care.

When violence occurs in a congregation or community, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) is often invited to respond. Members of the National Response Team (NRT) journey into “the valley of the shadow” to provide skills and knowledge that help address the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of those affected.

This year PDA responded to 12 human-caused disasters, many of which were never covered by the national press. NRT members, who are trained and experienced in disaster response, work with affected congregations and communities to provide a ministry of presence. Team members help assess places of vulnerability and provide appropriate strategies for clergy, church leadership, congregations and presbyteries to be better positioned and more equipped to cope and care.

In addition to these programs, mid councils can request leadership retreats for respite and reflection. Workshops on resilience and renewal help equip those responding to or experiencing disaster to practice and teach effective self-care.

In 2017 the Emotional and Spiritual Care team of the NRT provided programs to church members, clergy, caseworkers, first responders and others who were serving in areas that had been affected by natural disasters. Those who attended the programs had a chance to experience practical techniques as they developed plans for their own self-care and learned more about the effects of stress on their physical and emotional health.

Through the years, PDA has sought to offer care and support to people affected by disasters within our Presbyterian family and their communities. Our commitment to this work will continue, supported by the generosity of Presbyterian who seek to reach out to all of God’s people, in the name of Christ, strengthened by the Holy Spirit.
In 2017, because of your generous support, PDA was able to grant more than $4 million across the globe; support 7,136 work team volunteers who helped those affected by disaster; deploy 418 National Response Team members who spent 2,122 days in the field in 70 presbyteries; train 110 Presbyterian Women in disaster preparedness; screen films in 6 festivals; and through Church World Service, aided in the collection and distribution of 243,942 Gift of the Heart kits and blankets.  

THANK YOU!
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