



A large circular graphic with a blue mosaic background. At the top left is the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance logo, a stylized eye. To its right is the text "PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE" and "OUT OF CHAOS, HOPE". In the center, the text "Year in Review" is above "MOSAIC" in large white letters, which is above "2022" in even larger white letters. At the bottom left is the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) logo, a stylized cross. To its right is the text "Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)" and "Presbyterian Mission".





# Letter From the Director



Wow, so much has happened since our last Mosaic — not only around the world, but also within Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. The Rev. Dr. Laurie Kraus, who served as the director of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance for 10 years, is engaging a broader portfolio in Compassion, Peace & Justice as the director of Humanitarian and Global Ecumenical Engagement. Her unwavering commitment, passion and vision are evident in all aspects of PDA. Laurie's strategic thinking, innovative ideas and tireless efforts have been instrumental in this ministry.

As the new director of PDA, I feel humbled to continue the work of the Rev. Dr. Kraus. During the past five years I have fallen in love with the ministry of PDA and have come to respect even more the amazing staff who go above and beyond to serve our church, partners and communities. I began my work in PDA right after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico. After almost a decade of serving the church in different roles, pastor, Stated Clerk and Vice Mod of the San Juan Presbytery, the aftermath of María challenged me to serve the church and the communities in a new way. I started as a consultant for PDA's response to Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico. A year later I was given the opportunity to coordinate PDA's response as the associate for Latin America and the Caribbean, and as of November of last year, as director of this wonderful ministry.

In addition to the changes in our own areas, we have also been dealing with the major changes our world is facing. The effects of climate change are more visible than ever, and they affirm our obligation as a Matthew 25 church to continue taking action as faithful stewards of God's Creation to respond to climate change.

As part of our call, PDA recognizes the importance of providing safe and secure homes to marginalized and vulnerable communities. Last year, continuing the long-term commitment of our denomination with the Immokalee Farmworkers, PDA provided a grant that, in partnership with the Immokalee Fair Housing Alliance, Peace River Presbytery and many PC(USA) congregations in the area, has allowed the construction of 128 units that will provide safe, healthy, affordable housing for the community.

In Ukraine, PDA has been working with several organizations that are assisting refugees and internally displaced people including the immediate, ongoing and long-term recovery work needed to help people affected by the war.

While the outreach of "Flint: The Poisoning of an American City" and "Trouble the Water: Conversations to Disrupt Racism and Dominance," along with our previous documentaries continues to grow, Story Ministry is currently working on a new documentary focused on industrial pollution and environmental racism that grew out of our Flint documentary.

As we continue the work God has called us to do, we are grateful for the churches, partners, donors and volunteers that recognize the importance of visiting, feeding, clothing, serving and aiding the least of our siblings all around us.

Paz y justicia,

Rev. Edwin González-Castillo



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Matthew 25:31-46 calls all of us to actively engage in the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities.

By accepting the Matthew 25 invitation, you can help our denomination become a more relevant presence in the world.

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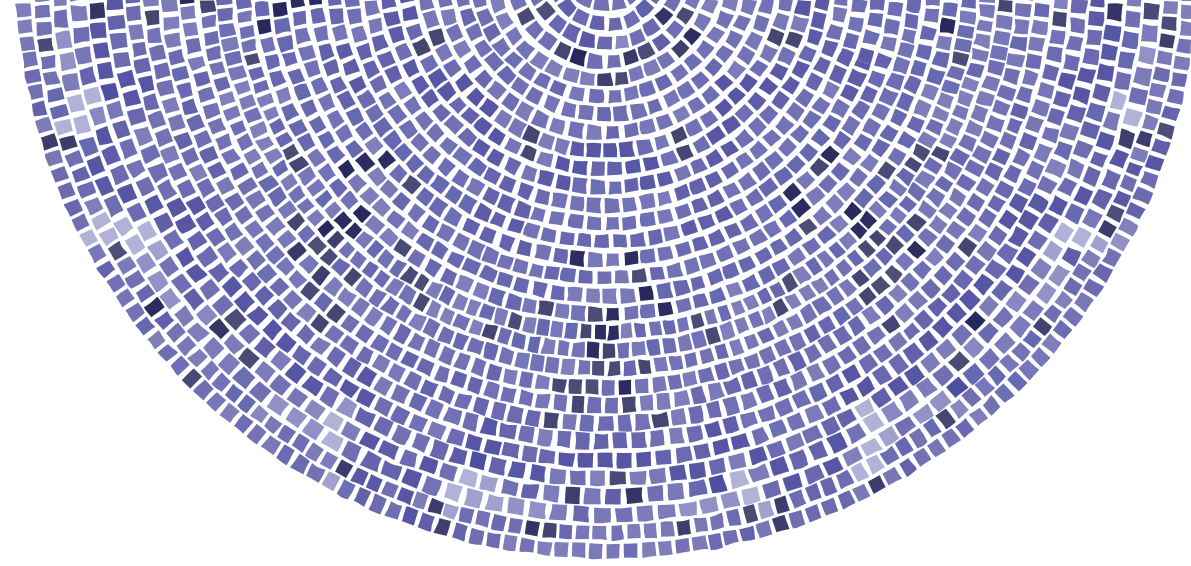
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# LIVING INTO MATTHEW 25



By Darla Carter, Susan Krehbiel, Jen Lockard and Rev. Emily Wilkes

In 2019, following the direction of the 222nd and 223rd General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Presbyterian Mission Agency issued the Matthew 25 Invitation. Following Jesus Christ’s direction in Matthew 25:31–46, the invitation guides ministries of the Mission Agency, along with churches and mid councils across the country, to work to eradicate systemic poverty, dismantle structural racism and build congregational vitality.

We know that the impact of natural and human-caused disasters often falls hardest on marginalized communities — people who are already hungry, oppressed and poor. These communities are often in precarious positions to begin with, located in places subject to disasters’ worst impacts and least equipped to deal with the outcomes. Guided by the compassion and justice of Christ and the clear commands of Matthew 25, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance focuses its efforts on serving these communities as it responds to disasters around the world. These stories and conversations are a glimpse of what that work looks like, and how it helps strengthen the church and the world.

## Migration Accompaniment Ministries help the PC(USA) live into its work of being a ‘Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church’

by Susan Krehbiel, Jen Lockard and the Rev. Emily Wilkes

Many things push people to flee their homelands: wars and internal armed conflict; the rise in authoritarianism; widespread human rights violations; and the impacts of climate change, just to name a few. Firm in its commitments both to welcome and to justice for these displaced siblings, in July 2022 the General Assembly declared the PC(USA) a “Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church.” This public statement articulated that treating immigrants and refugees with dignity and advocating for their rights is a matter of faith, and that offering welcome, accompaniment and resistance to oppressive policies are central to our understanding of the Gospel.

Following this pronouncement, and mindful that the traditional terms refugee and asylum seeker are not expansive enough to capture all the reasons people are compelled to flee their homelands, we renamed this part of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance’s work Migration Accompaniment Ministries (MAM) at the end of 2022. The word ministries (plural) recognizes that there are a variety of ways in which congregations and individuals guided by the Holy Spirit express their solidarity with refugees and other migrants — such as by providing basic survival needs (food, clothing, shelter), friendship, mentorship, teaching, access to services and legal representation. Thousands of migrants are detained in immigration prisons unless they have a sponsor who can host them. Becoming a sponsor is an important form of accompaniment in which a congregation or group promises government authorities to

assist with housing and other basic needs as a condition of release from detention. Advocacy for changes in public policy and its practice is also a form of accompaniment, as we seek to address the injustices of our immigration system, including xenophobia and racism. MAM supports those who actively do the



Randy Hobson

*Ruling Elder Commissioner Catreli Hunter, Young Adult Advisory Delegate Madeline Fields Halva, and Mission Co-worker Advisory Delegate the Rev. Cathy Chang watch a presentation at the Immigration Committee meeting on June 28, 2022, at the 225th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in Louisville.*

accompaniment with technical, spiritual and financial support, in addition to amplifying the voices of refugees and asylum seekers in front of decision makers. The following are two stories to illustrate how MAM partnered with such accompaniment ministries in 2022.



The Cameroon Advocacy Network (CAN), organized to stop the deportation of thousands of Cameroonians and to advocate for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), is led by Cameroonians and supported by human rights organizations and faith communities. MAM joined CAN at the end of 2021, and we soon found ways to be mutually supportive. Given the high number of Cameroonian PC(USA) members, we helped CAN disseminate the information through PC(USA) congregations. We shared CAN stories and information through emails and workshops, inviting Presbyterians to join the advocacy for TPS. When the U.S. government approved TPS on Good Friday, April 15, 2022, we celebrated this rare success with our Cameroonian friends.

early this year, providing work authorization and protection from deportation!

A word about TPS: Temporary Protected Status is not the same as asylum. The president grants TPS to specific nationalities — such as Cameroon — after conflict or a natural disaster causes a large number of its citizens to flee; it is offered for a specific period (which may or may not be extended) and only applies to people already in the U.S. In addition, while it does not affect an application for asylum or any other immigration benefit, TPS does not provide a direct path to remain in the U.S. long term. In contrast, asylum offers the possibility to apply for lawful permanent residence and then for U.S. citizenship. Asylum, however, requires an extensive examination of a person's/family's claim to asylum, and the process can take years. Many Cameroonians applied for both TPS and asylum.

When the Rev. Dr. Kevin Womack, pastor of Fletcher Hills Presbyterian Church (FHPC) in San Diego, learned that another local congregation had opened its doors to asylum seekers, he began wondering if their congregation could do the same. He approached Bridget Meckley, the church's director of Formation and Mission, with this question, who in turn designed an eight-week mission study to investigate. She assembled a small group of congregation members who conducted research into the organizations in their community that work with asylum seekers, and prayerfully discerned they could transform unused FHPC campus space into short-term housing for asylum seekers.

With session approval for the project, the mission committee approached MAM for support, beginning an ongoing partnership. For this relatively small congregation, it was necessary to ascertain both assets they could sustain to welcome families and (just as importantly) what they could not provide, as this clarified the types of community partnerships FHPC would need to build. Knowing the asylum process can stretch out over several years, they determined that their facilities fell somewhere between emergency response and a long-term housing solution. They estimated that they could host families for six to eight months, or however long it takes for people to receive

their work authorization and public assistance. Community partnerships — particularly with their local partner, Catholic Charities of San Diego, which connects them with families and provides ongoing case management — were vital in building out this program.

As part of their discernment, FHPC saw a connection between their international mission trips to a church school in Haiti for eight years and the Haitians crossing the border into the U.S. seeking asylum. The Spirit was now calling them to welcome these migrants into their own community. Therefore, they asked Catholic Charities if they could work primarily with Haitian families seeking asylum.

FHPC decided to convert two Christian education rooms into living and sleeping spaces of about 600 square feet each. They renovated a kitchen in the building next door and converted two utility closets into bathrooms with shower stalls for the families' use. A public registry was created to furnish the new facilities — despite initial concerns about potential pushback from some of its members — and the 125-member congregation (along with friends and family) bought everything on the list worth \$3,000! At the time of this article, the transitional housing

is ready, and the church expects to receive their first family any day.

To other small congregations interested in developing accompaniment ministries, Meckley offers this advice: “Don't try to do it all. Honestly discern the assets you have and how you can sustainably support an accompaniment — maybe someone has language skills, maybe another would like to accompany a mom as she gets to know the neighborhood services or watch her kids while she takes English lessons. Maybe you have space, but not the people, money or expertise to fill all the needs of a family migrating to the U.S. Even the smallest congregation has something other churches and organizations already accompanying migrants need.”

It is impossible to predict where the next humanitarian crisis will emerge, or indeed what will happen to those already displaced. We do know that the Holy Spirit is already leading many individuals and congregations to begin — or recommit — to accompanying those desperately in need of safety and welcome, in whatever form that might take. And we are certain that MAM will continue to advise, educate and assist those who answer that call.



*Susan Krebbiel presents at a PDA advisory committee meeting in California.*

What next? Concerned that there was not enough capacity among nonprofit legal services to meet the demand for TPS services, we analyzed information from CAN about where Cameroonians have settled in the U.S., and then reached out to well-known and respected legal service providers. MAM soon provided two grants for legal representation: one to CAN (multi-state approach) and another to Justice for Our Neighbors (in Maryland and Virginia). Both organizations offered workshops and legal clinics that were graciously hosted by Mt. Paran Presbyterian Church and Silver Spring Presbyterian Church. Thanks to these collaborations, TPS approvals started arriving

## Building capacity with international partners

by Darla Carter

From making it possible for refugees in Jordan to gain sewing skills to helping partners in Latin America and the Caribbean to be better prepared for natural disasters, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) is a vital part of empowering communities across the globe.

Last summer, PDA partners and ACT Alliance partners in countries such as the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Mexico received seven weeks of risk reduction management training online, thanks to funding from PDA. The training included nearly 50 participants and is expected to eventually expand to other regions that are involved in humanitarian response to disasters.

“We are working on providing our partners the preparedness and mitigation knowledge they need, so when disasters occur, they're better prepared and they have the tools needed to be able to face the situations, understanding that disasters are more common now, more frequent, more powerful, and the resources, both from partners but also from PDA and other organizations that provide funds, are more limited,” said the Rev. Edwin González-Castillo, director of PDA.

The training was conducted in Spanish and included teaching participants to do assessments after disasters, said the Rev. Jairo Barriga Jaraba, who helped coordinate the



training and serves as executive director of the PAZOS Diakonia Foundation. Assessments typically include things like food security, hygiene, shelter and other vital areas.

“Many faith organizations and churches who sometimes are involved in disaster situations do not know how to create or do an assessment of the situation,” Barriga said through an interpreter. “We have a profound conviction that it is important to lift up the capacity of the local communities.”

So, there’s a “synchronization of or a merging of that ancestral knowledge that they have on how to respond . . . with the humanitarian standards so they are better equipped to respond to a situation,” Barriga said.

Along with conveying that knowledge, the training provides churches and other participating organizations with tools that enable them to do their work in partnership with other organizations, such as governmental agencies and nongovernmental organizations.

The training has received positive feedback, and PDA hopes to “provide it in different languages in different regions, so all of our partners, both national and international, can receive capacity building in disaster management, preparedness, mitigation,” González-Castillo said. “This will not only facilitate long-term relationships with partners but also enable them to receive knowledge about how to acquire funds from beyond PDA and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),” he said.

Emily Reyes, executive director of the Council of Protestant Churches of Nicaragua (CEPAD), found the training to be very useful and appreciated it being offered virtually. She was interested in receiving the training because the frequency of disasters, such as hurricanes and earthquakes, in Nicaragua makes it important to continually work on mitigating risks.

It’s crucial “to be able to raise awareness among the families of the communities that are the most vulnerable . . . and, above all, to coordinate efforts with the main state agencies and humanitarian aid agencies,” Reyes said.

Barriga said he is thankful to PDA for its “continuous involvement and support, not only in this training” but in previous trainings as well.

*“We thank PDA for believing that we can contribute to (the) strengthening of capacities of our churches and faith-based organizations” and potentially reduce human losses in communities susceptible to being impacted by climate-related disasters.”*

*Rev. Jairo Barriga Jaraba*

#### **EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SEWING**

In a different part of the world, the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) is similarly grateful for a PDA-funded project that enabled about 20 women to learn how to do sewing, crocheting and wool knitting to help support their families. The five-month project, which took place from March to August 2022, benefited refugee women as well as some Jordanians and an Egyptian participant.

The training is not just about making aprons, coasters, purses, water-bottle covers and other useful items but transforming people’s lives, according to MECC.

“We have to put every penny in the perfect place, where people can benefit, where people can enter our training courses but leave different people,” said Wafa Goussous, director of the Middle East Council of Churches’ Jordan office.

The sewing program was born out of a desire to help the country’s large refugee population, which includes families that fled their own country because of the Syrian War, the Persian Gulf War, the Iraq War or other circumstances.

“As the Middle East Council of Churches, it is part and parcel of our Christian moral duty to be there, to be present for them,” said Goussous, noting that needs can range from food and clean water to clothing and schooling. “We have history in the serving of the most vulnerable” for many years.

Also, “we work with local churches,” strengthening them to handle “this big burden as well,” she said.

Three days a week from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., the women would come together in a community hall in Amman, Jordan, that was rented from the Syrian Orthodox Church to teach the women skills they can use locally or in any country where they might eventually settle. The training included sewing by hand as well as the use of sewing machines. The women also received training in social media marketing.

Being able to acquire such skills is particularly important for refugees, who can make money by doing informal jobs, such as sewing and tailoring, for their neighbors, Goussous said. The acquired skills also can be useful once they get into a position to obtain regular work.

“We give them a certificate of attendance so they can go somewhere and be able to do the job,” Goussous said. “Also, we did an exhibition and invited friends of MECC” to see the women’s products.

MECC saw the need for the project because during the Covid pandemic and periods of lockdown, many refugees reported loss of work, and women were among those affected.

“We started thinking that we need to teach those women, strengthen their abilities and capabilities,” Goussous said. The idea was “how can we provide something for them to become a person who can produce?”

In addition to being able to acquire a skill to earn income, there were social benefits. For example, participants were able to socialize with each other during coffee and meal breaks. Also, even receiving a small amount of money for transportation was meaningful after years

of trying to survive on humanitarian aid, said Goussous, who noticed an improvement in their morale.

“When you go around, everybody is positive, everybody is optimistic,” she said. “They don’t want this training course to end. You see them becoming friends,” and even hosting a pre-wedding celebration for one of the girls.



*Refugee women learn to knit, crochet and sew as part of an empowerment training course in Jordan.*

The training was so well-received that there is now a waiting list of many other women desiring to receive similar training. “Everybody’s looking to be part of these courses,” Goussous said.

An MECC report on the project notes that “empowering and educating refugee and vulnerable women plays a significant role in the development of the world” and that nations cannot progress fully when women are not empowered.

Goussous noted that refugees have often gone through traumatic situations and that the program can help to mitigate some mental health crises that they may be going through at home.



“We are dealing with very sensitive issues,” she said. “You’re taking this woman who is depressed. Nobody’s dealing with her depression. She can’t afford a coach. She can’t afford a psychiatrist. Nothing.”

But once she’s enrolled in the program, she’s able to leave the house every day, Goussous said. “She’s well-dressed. Everybody’s learning from each other. They compare notes. She’s productive. She is mentally healthy. . . . We are accumulating remedies.”

## Story Productions does ‘unique and important’ work while revealing truths in marginalized communities

by Darla Carter

Throw out the idea that filmmaking is about bringing to life one person’s vision. For Presbyterian Disaster Assistance’s Story Productions, filmmaking is an organic process that, over a period of years, includes hundreds of people who provide input into how the film should go.

The core creative crew is comprised of a small group, including a cinematographer, editor, production assistants and a digital imaging technician in addition to David Barnhart, the director and producer behind the ministry’s award-winning, issue-oriented films, including “Flint: The Poisoning of an American City,” “Locked in Box” and “Trigger: The Ripple Effect of Gun Violence.”

But if you ask Barnhart to tell you who shapes the direction of the film, he will point to the people who invite them to their communities to tell their stories. Rather than starting with a script in hand, an emphasis is placed on listening.

“From my experience, this work is both unique and important because we do not come with any agenda, except to listen and be in relationship with our partners — the community — amplify those voices and reveal the truth that is there,” Barnhart said.

This work, she said, is in line with Matthew 25, which says in part, “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.”

Indeed, when it comes to serving uprooted and vulnerable people, “this is behind everything we are doing,” she said.

“We are invited into these sacred spaces and relationships with community partners, and they guide us to what voices and stories need to be amplified and centered in the film. We are co-creators in this process and these films do not ‘belong’ to us and are communal expressions and voices, speaking truth to power and are counter-stories that challenge dominant narratives.”

Story Productions is perhaps best known for “Flint,” which traces the timeline of a water crisis in a Michigan city plagued with record-high levels of lead in the drinking water. The film documents the impact of abuse and neglect of both city infrastructure and environmental regulations as well as subsequent population decline and the 2013 appointing of outside emergency managers.

“I think ‘Flint’ has continued to resonate with audiences because we continue to see similar patterns of environmental racism happening in communities, towns and cities across the country,” Barnhart said. “In our documentary work, as we listen and amplify voices, we always try to look for patterns that reveal the systemic and structural injustices that are at the heart of these issues,” which is in keeping with the Presbyterian Mission Agency’s Matthew 25 invitation.





The film is the result of a five-year collaboration that began when Story Productions was invited to come to Flint. “For the first two months, we just had meetings with various groups, people working at the water stations, pastors visiting people in their homes that had lead poisoning, community groups, teachers in schools that were seeing the delays in the children,” Barnhart said on an episode of “A Matter of Faith: A Presby Podcast.” “So, it was a couple months of just listening and learning and kind of saying, ‘OK, so, you know, we’re interested in this project. What does it need to look like?’”

communities, who have been fighting industrial pollution in their own neighborhoods for years, saw the ‘Flint’ film and reached out to us because they saw their story in ‘Flint,’” said Barnhart, recipient of McCormick Theological Seminary’s 2021 Distinguished Alumni Award.

In a video about the production, Lisa Baker, a production assistant and PDA National Response Team member, said the film will include individual stories of hurt and harm. “You’ll hear cries from those individuals whose families have been damaged,” she said in a PMA video about the process. “You’ll hear learned pieces from individuals who study both the issue of racism as well as the issue of the science behind environmental pollution, and when you hear it, what I think will happen is that you’ll become engaged. It will give you something that will be your rally (cry) to go forth and say, ‘You know what? We need to do something.’”

Story Productions’ films become a point of discussion not only in the communities where they are grounded but across the country and beyond, from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to educational institutions.

“Over the years, our community partners, PC(USA) staff and film crew have been thrilled that the growth and overall outreach of our documentaries have received wider recognition and distribution far beyond anything the church has seen before,” Barnhart said. “All the films have been screened, distributed and broadcasted across a wide spectrum of audiences. Our first three films were initially distributed/broadcast on NBC and ABC networks, and eventually, were distributed across streaming platforms,” such as Amazon, Apple and Tubi, as well as all major video-on-demand providers on cable.

“Through the on-demand cable television distribution, we were able to reach 60 million households through multiple cable providers,” he added. “This has been in addition to the over 225 million people that Amazon, Apple, Roku, etc., also can reach. It was also an exciting moment when our distributor let us know that the ‘Flint’ documentary had reached

the 3 million streams milestone on Amazon in October 2022.”

Another way that people are exposed to the films is through screenings, which have taken place at the Sundance Film Festival, schools, museums, art and religious institutes and other locations, drawing praise from audiences.

At the 2019 premiere of “Flint” in Baltimore, the late Congressman Elijah Cummings, 10 days before his death, had a spokesperson attend on his behalf and share the following statement: “Films like the one you are going to see tonight are so important because they won’t let people forget what is still happening in Flint. Films like this one keep Flint’s story alive and underscore that what happened in Flint isn’t an isolated tragedy. It’s happening all over our country to people who don’t have the influence and the political power to fight back. But we will fight back, and we will not stop until every single American’s right to clean drinking water is safe and secure.”

The Environmental Protection Agency even took notice of “Flint.” “Last year, we were thrilled when the EPA licensed our ‘Flint’ documentary to do trainings on environmental racism for their regional offices across the country,” Barnhart said.

In addition to films, Story Productions has released an antiracism docuseries called “Trouble the Water,” in partnership with the Presbyterian Mission Agency and Office of the General Assembly. The first episode debuted in 2020 as part of the Presbyterian Week of Action and was followed by private viewings, then the full set of episodes was released last year with a discussion guide.

“‘Trouble the Water’ was delayed in its release while accompanying study materials were developed, but we feel it is a timely and important resource for community and congregational engagement around these issues,” Barnhart said. “Even with a limited release, we are thrilled that we have already received more than 450 different organizations and groups, who have registered to use the series. This includes a wide spectrum of colleges,

universities, seminaries, congregations, racial justice coalitions, community groups and presbyteries, among others.”

The docuseries is designed to encourage constructive conversations about race and racism that are critical even three years after the death of George Floyd, who died after an officer held his knee on the unarmed Black man’s neck. Floyd’s death, and those of other people of color, such as Louisville’s Breonna Taylor, led to protests in the streets and a thirst for discussion around race relations in this country.



“The issues around racial justice are fundamental to our day-to-day lives and if we aspire to live in true community, then we have to be able to tell the truth and co-create space and opportunity for all to live fully, be valued and respected, and have a place,” Barnhart said in a Presbyterian News Service article in November 2022. “Currently, given all the national conversations and disinformation around Critical Race Theory, we feel strongly that this docuseries can be a resource for that co-creation of community — to raise awareness, educate, speak the painful truths of our history, and facilitate deeper conversations and engagement around the issues of race and systemic racism. We have got to keep working toward that Beloved Community every day.”



Rich Copley



Lisa Baker, a PDA National Response Team member, uses a clapperboard for an interview with Kentucky State Rep. Pamela Stevenson.

Last year, much of Story Production’s time was spent working on a film looking at the impacts of industrial pollution and environmental racism. As part of that production, which is still in progress, the crew traveled to Louisville, one of several filming locations, and met with partners, such as the Molo Village Community Development Corporation. The film is the 10th documentary by Barnhart and Scott Lansing, director of photography.

“This new film came about because these





Fort Myers Beach in Florida was impacted by Hurricane Ian.

## Making connections in the aftermath of a storm

by Darla Carter

The Beth-El Farmworker Ministry in Wimauma, Florida, prides itself on being a valued resource for members of the farmworker community who face a mountain of obstacles as low-income laborers, so when the opportunity came along to host FEMA on-site last year, Beth-El welcomed the chance.

About 80 families showed up to register with the Federal Emergency Management Agency as the area was still reeling from Ian, which struck Florida as a Category 4 hurricane in September 2022, bringing damaging winds as well as tremendous storm surge and flooding.

Having FEMA present on-site at Beth-El was important because in addition to cultural and linguistic barriers, farmworkers don't always trust authorities, which can keep them from even inquiring about whether they're eligible for assistance. But "Beth-El is what we would call a trusted messenger," said Kathy Broyard of the Florida Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Network (FLAPDAN). "These families trust Beth-El. If Beth-El says it's OK, it's gonna be OK."

Beth-El's Executive Director Teresita Matos-Post made similar comments.

"We see Beth-El's work so much as a bridge in all capacities," she said. "So, when it comes to disasters, we know that our organization is trusted by that community, and so when they hear something from us, they tend to listen more closely."

Beth-El, which means "God's House," has a 20-acre site on U.S. Highway 301, about 20 miles south of Tampa, serving community members who migrate to the United States from Mexico, Latin America and other locations. They often have trouble making ends meet despite filling the important role of helping to supply produce to much of the country. A hurricane not only affects their safety but their ability to make a living.

"A hurricane just simply compounds the already critical stage that farm-working families live in,"

Matos-Post said. They face "a cycle of crises, and a hurricane is just one more."

Beth-El, which provides a multitude of services, including a food pantry, has strong ties to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). For example, "we are in covenant partnership with both the presbytery of Tampa Bay and Peace River, and we received aid through both of them."

"The monetary help to be able to do the work (is important) but also the knowledge that we know we can count on our extended network of allies and friends and family," Matos-Post said.

.....  
*"It's just so meaningful, not only to us, who are working here at the grassroots level, but also to the families who often feel forgotten, and so it's just a blessing to know that we are part of this network of people who care and who invest in making the lives of farmworkers a little easier."*

*Teresita Matos-Post*

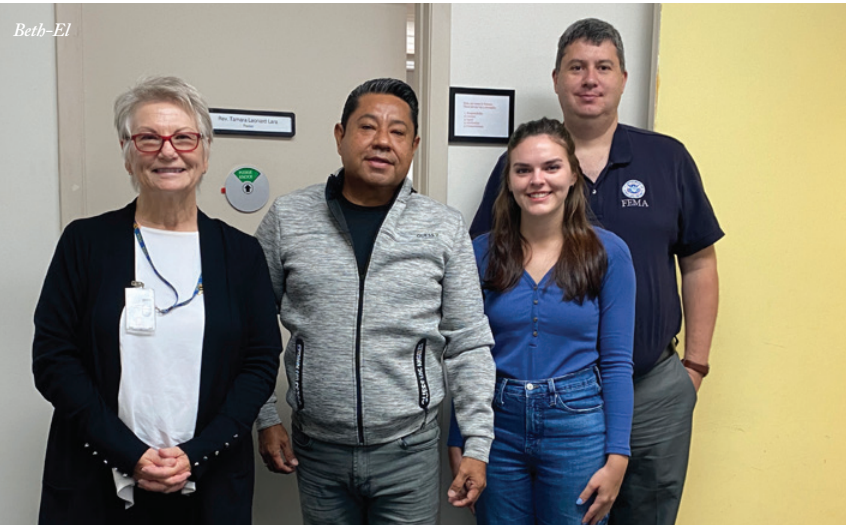
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The connection between Beth-El and FEMA was made with the help of FLAPDAN a short time after Ian made landfall in Florida.

"We're members of Florida VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster), and so one of my major roles during a disaster is to connect resources with needs" and to report them to our "VOAD partners, so we can all coordinate and communicate where those needs are, what resources are needed, that kind of thing," said



Broyard, FLAPDAN's executive director and emergency management specialist. She's also a member of the National Response Team of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA).

Beth-El stays in contact with FLAPDAN because "we just want to be equipped with the best information and FLAPDAN provides that for us," including how to "connect people with each other" within Presbyterian circles and beyond, Matos-Post said.



Representatives from FEMA and Beth-El.

In the aftermath of the storm, Broyard learned from Tampa Bay Presbytery that farmworkers in Beth-El's area were having trouble connecting with FEMA because of issues such as limited access to transportation, so she made some calls to her contacts and said, "Here's the situation. Is there a way we can help these folks to get registered?"

Working with FEMA, county officials and Beth-El staff, "we all got communicating, and they were able to form a bilingual disaster survivor assistance team that went out to Beth-El," Broyard said. "The FEMA folks on that team worked with the staff at Beth-El to create flyers to hand out to the families" as they came to Beth-El for other services, and "they had translators coming out. It was amazing."

Jim Kirk, associate for National Disaster Response for PDA, praised the effort. "This is one example of how we can leverage our

relationships to address the inequities in accessing deserved disaster response resources and more fully live into the (Presbyterian Mission Agency's) Matthew 25 invitation."

Many of the people served by Beth-El have low literacy and lack internet access. Hosting FEMA helps to debunk myths and fears, Matos-Post said.

Those who received help include a woman named Tania who evacuated to a nearby shelter ahead of Ian because she knew that the mobile home that she shared with her daughter would likely be damaged. When she returned home, she found that a tree had crashed into it, so she sought refuge at a neighbor's while they all tried to figure out how to move forward. Tania and her neighbor eventually came to Beth-El, which provided emergency food bags, hygiene kits and a month's rent for the family and her neighbor.

Just prior to the storm, electricity was cut off, so some families were already without food and use of their wells. Their situations were further worsened when the planting season was delayed, "so that's six weeks of work they missed out on," Matos-Post said. Beth-El is a trusted place that families turn to in times of need. Its food pantry serves 600–800 families a week. There's also a dental clinic and programs to assist with rent, utilities and other expenses.

Families, including those who move around and may be starting from scratch, also have access to a community closet to receive household goods, such as dishes and bedsheets, Matos-Post said.

Spiritual assistance and educational programs are among other services provided by Beth-El. "We have programs to help people of all ages to learn, so we have different types of classes and offerings that we provide in the community," Matos-Post said.

Farmworkers were not the only people affected by Hurricane Ian, a \$112.9 billion disaster. Many Florida churches and residences were damaged, impacting pastors, church members and other individuals.

"The people that I've talked to — hurricane survivors — your heart breaks for them because a lot of times they've lost everything they have," Broyard said. Sometimes, "they are struggling because they're fighting with their insurance adjusters" and "it's just tearing them up. It's really, really hard."

Peace River Presbytery was one of the hardest hit presbyteries in Florida. Chapel by the Sea, a church in the Fort Myers Beach area, was destroyed, and "to some degree, almost every church had at least trees down and some wind damage," said the Rev. Melana Scruggs, Peace River's general presbyter.

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in North Port "took on 3 feet of water from flooding and they are just going to sell their building and lease another space because it's not worth the money to do the mitigation," she said.

Also, Wintergarden Presbyterian Church in Port Charlotte "got a hole in the roof and it rained in for the entire storm, and so they've been meeting outside in a tent ever since Sept. 28, and they are hoping to be back in their building by the first of August," Scruggs said.

First Presbyterian, another Port Charlotte church, "where our offices actually are, got a lot of wind damage but no flooding."

Faith Presbyterian Church in Cape Coral "had to replace every roof on their building and their deductible was half a million dollars," Scruggs said. "They're just about to finish that work and they got water in their office building and they just finished that renovation as well."

While recovery is underway, assistance from the national church and other supporters is invaluable.

"We're grateful for the support of PDA and the national church at large," Scruggs said. That includes "the congregational support, the donations that go through One Great Hour of Sharing or for a specific disaster, from individuals, congregational offerings. It's incredible and it does come back right into the local community, through those grants from

PDA, either church damage grants or grants to long-term recovery groups."

There are at least 17 long-term recovery groups working to help Floridians recover, Broyard said, and FLAPDAN is engaging with them "either by getting Presbyterians on their committees, working with them somehow, connecting them with resources through PDA or other sources that we hear of."

Recently, PDA staff and members of its Advisory Committee traveled to Florida to meet as a group and with partners. The activities included working on three homes that were being gutted or demolished after being impacted by Hurricane Ian. "It was important for us as a staff and committee to include a workday during our meeting as an act of solidarity with our partners and the communities impacted," PDA Director Edwin González-Castillo noted in a PDA blog post. "In addition to the conversations and reports, we wanted to have an opportunity to contribute to the recovery."



Jim Kirk, Kathy Broyard and Marilyn Stone remove flooring from a home impacted by Hurricane Ian.

Ongoing support is important because there are no quick fixes. For the places hardest hit, it will take years to rebuild, Broyard explained.

"There is no 'going back to normal,'" she said. "It's more of finding a new normal."

Communications Strategist Layton Williams Berkes contributed to this report.







# U.S. Facts and Figures

Total dollars granted: **\$1,487,069**



## Hurricanes

36 grants, 12 National Response Team (NRT) members deployed\*



## Floods

18 grants, 4 NRT deployed



## Human-caused disaster

3 grants, 15 NRT deployed



## Tornadoes

16 grants, 11 NRT deployed



## Storms

5 grants



## Fires

7 grants, 1 NRT deployed



## Migration Accompaniment Ministries

20 grants, 7 NRT deployed

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



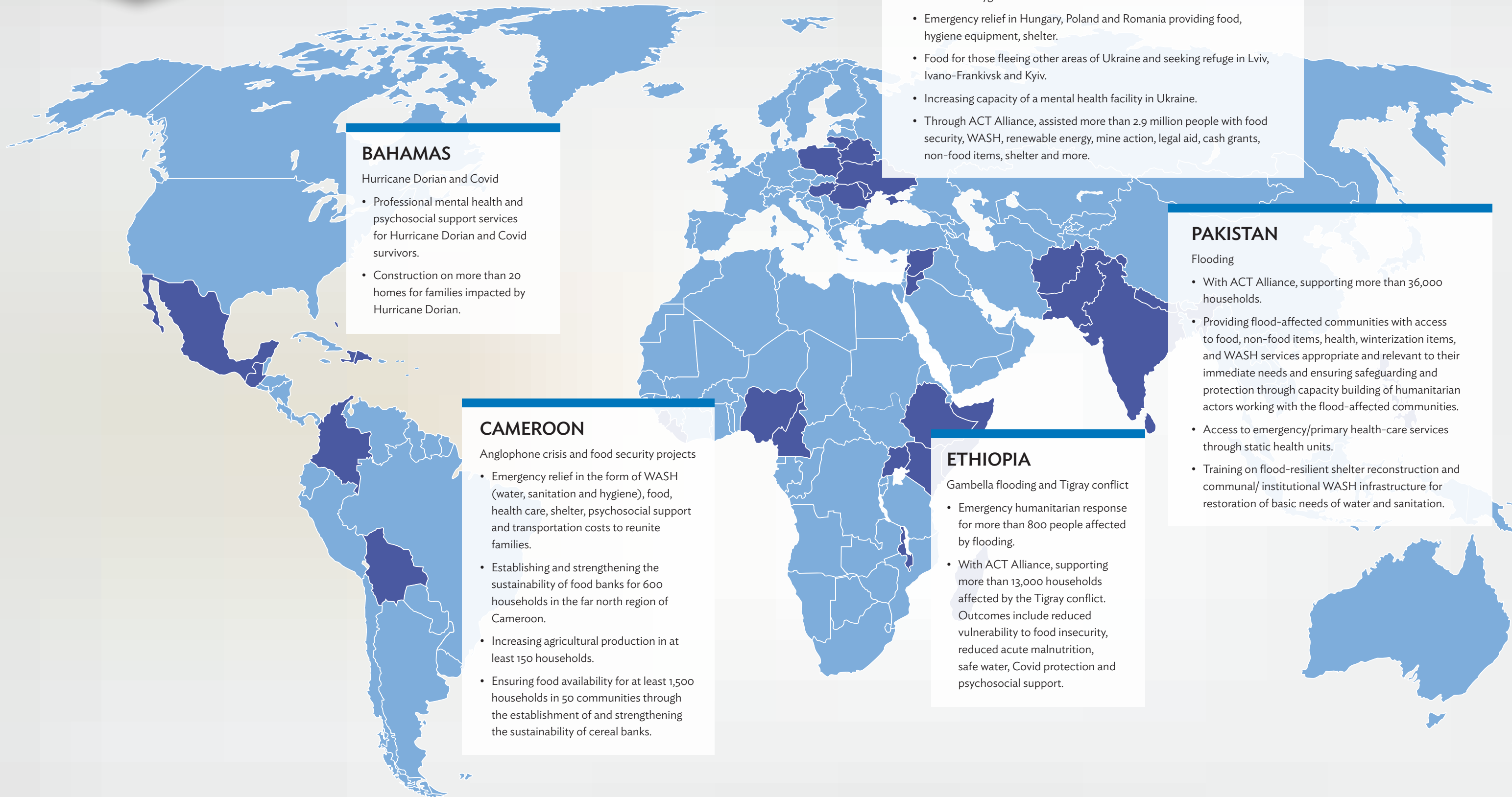


THIS PAGE HIGHLIGHTS  
ONLY A FEW PROJECTS  
FROM THIS YEAR.  
Visit [pcusa.org/pda](https://pcusa.org/pda)  
for more information

# Your Gifts At Work Internationally

Total amount granted: **\$1,652,461.46**

In 2022, PDA responded to disasters in 35 countries outside the U.S. Dark blue indicates a country that received assistance.



**BAHAMAS**

Hurricane Dorian and Covid

- Professional mental health and psychosocial support services for Hurricane Dorian and Covid survivors.
- Construction on more than 20 homes for families impacted by Hurricane Dorian.

**CAMEROON**

Anglophone crisis and food security projects

- Emergency relief in the form of WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene), food, health care, shelter, psychosocial support and transportation costs to reunite families.
- Establishing and strengthening the sustainability of food banks for 600 households in the far north region of Cameroon.
- Increasing agricultural production in at least 150 households.
- Ensuring food availability for at least 1,500 households in 50 communities through the establishment of and strengthening the sustainability of cereal banks.

**UKRAINE AND NEARBY COUNTRIES**

Ukraine war

- Psychosocial and medical care at border crossings in Moldova.
- Support for facilities in Lithuania that offer shelter, food packages, hot meals and hygiene services.
- Emergency relief in Hungary, Poland and Romania providing food, hygiene equipment, shelter.
- Food for those fleeing other areas of Ukraine and seeking refuge in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk and Kyiv.
- Increasing capacity of a mental health facility in Ukraine.
- Through ACT Alliance, assisted more than 2.9 million people with food security, WASH, renewable energy, mine action, legal aid, cash grants, non-food items, shelter and more.

**PAKISTAN**

Flooding

- With ACT Alliance, supporting more than 36,000 households.
- Providing flood-affected communities with access to food, non-food items, health, winterization items, and WASH services appropriate and relevant to their immediate needs and ensuring safeguarding and protection through capacity building of humanitarian actors working with the flood-affected communities.
- Access to emergency/primary health-care services through static health units.
- Training on flood-resilient shelter reconstruction and communal/ institutional WASH infrastructure for restoration of basic needs of water and sanitation.

**ETHIOPIA**

Gambella flooding and Tigray conflict

- Emergency humanitarian response for more than 800 people affected by flooding.
- With ACT Alliance, supporting more than 13,000 households affected by the Tigray conflict. Outcomes include reduced vulnerability to food insecurity, reduced acute malnutrition, safe water, Covid protection and psychosocial support.



# Q & A

*In an effort to center the voices of our partners and the communities they serve, we wanted to ask a few questions and share their answers.*

## What have you found useful in partnering with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) through PDA?

**Michelle Muñiz**  
*Disaster Recovery Coordinator in Puerto Rico*  
Besides connecting with the broader denomination and providing opportunities to develop relationships between congregations, PDA response in Puerto Rico has developed partnerships with grassroots and local organizations supporting and amplifying their work within PDA local and continental U.S. networks.

**Rev. Dr. Barbara A. Wilson**  
*Director of Collaboration and Community Partnerships for the Presbytery of Chicago*  
The Emotional and Spiritual Care ministry curricula and resources have been phenomenal in supporting the work of our presbytery's mental health committee. We are able, incrementally and over time, to deepen and broaden awareness through education, and increase capacity for congregational vitality and mission/ministry through skill/building. The call and need for ongoing care and nurture for congregations and persons serving throughout our presbytery is being normalized.

*Continued on page 24*





**Bridget Meckley**  
*Director of Formation and Mission for Fletcher Hills Presbyterian Church (San Diego)*

PDA is not just about disaster relief or about funding. As we ventured into serving asylum seekers, PDA not only provided funding, but they also shared insight and connected us to organizations already well-entrenched in these ministries. Their ongoing prayers, patience and encouragement have been a gift every step along our way.



*Faith groups and activists rally at the White House demanding the Biden administration restore the right to asylum.*

**Anita Chombeng**  
*Immigrant Organizing Coordinator for Presbytery of the Pacific (POP), Ruling Elder*  
By partnering with PDA, we have gained access to funding for our immigrant support ministry activities. Our work, providing accompaniment services to African immigrants in the POP, would not have been possible without your support. Through PDA grants, we have been able to provide mental health therapy to refugee women and girls, as well as transportation and basic necessities for their resettlement in the U.S. Our organization has taken some women to visit parks that provide mental health benefits. With these grants, we were able to provide immigrants with leadership, financial management, setting boundaries for mental health management, capacity development webinars, both in person and online, and participated in advocacy campaigns focused on refugee and immigrant leaders' experiences and voices. By investing in

refugee and immigrant leadership, we work for the dismantling of racism within U.S. policies and immigration systems. A client I work with burst into tears when they shared, "Before I started therapy, I felt that I was mad, but now I know much better and that has reduced my anxiety." Our ministry at the Presbytery of the Pacific would like to thank PDA for its continuous support.

**Saturnino Perez**  
*Director of Special Programs for Iglesia Cristiana Reformada en la Republic Dominicana Inc. (ICRRD)*  
The inter-institutional relationship between PDA and ICRRD has helped us to strengthen the work we have been doing for so many years.

We want to recognize and thank the PDA team for continually walking alongside our ministries in the DR. Thanks to their support, hundreds of families have been blessed to find answers in difficult times. We are pleased to report that, with their generous support, more than 2,471 people, including men, women, children and people with disabilities, have received various types of support and assistance in the form of medical care, home economic strengthening and income, housing construction, establishment of home gardens, trauma healing, water purification and sanitation interventions.

**Kat Smith**  
*Development & Communications Coordinator for Casa Mariposa Detention Visitation Program (CMDVP)*  
Since Casa Mariposa Detention Visitation Program runs entirely on community support, we find it extremely useful to have a partnership with the PC(USA) through PDA. Each year we rely on the generosity of churches, organizations and individuals to partner with us and support us financially, so to consider PDA as a consistent partner and to receive consecutive grants from PDA allows us to focus our efforts on the actual work, which is a huge blessing.

**Rev. James Shri Bhagwan**  
*General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches*  
PDA understands there is not a one-size-fits-all response and that partnership needs to be

contextual and co-designed. We are grateful for PDA's support and accompaniment.

**How have you seen the immediate and long-term impacts of climate change informing your work?**

**Michelle Muñiz**  
From local churches to partner organizations, the conversation of climate change is present. In Puerto Rico we could see it shown in the recent high strength of hurricanes (compared to historical averages of damage and wind forces) or in severe coastal corrosion, among others. Both of these examples are extremely relevant to our communities as they develop ways to prepare and face future disasters.

**Bridget Meckley**  
Climate change is one of the drivers of migration worldwide. As more of the world experiences the effects of climate change, more and more people will be displaced. Migration is not a choice, but a means of survival; this is our world's future.

**Anita Chombeng**  
Many of our training and advocacy tips have been tailored to help women combat climate change by reducing their carbon footprints. This can be done by carpooling to activities, using recyclable materials at home, opting for cloth masks instead of disposables, or reusing grocery bags to consume less plastic. When conducting training, we try to use biodegradable and recyclable materials. Many of our members recycle their plastic bottles to earn income and care for the environment at the same time.

**Saturnino Perez**  
This has affected the terrestrial atmosphere as part of the deterioration of the ozone layer and the abrupt changes in the environmental climate, both exceptional cold and strong heat, in which agricultural plantations are at risk by these unprecedented changes; in recent times, the crops of growers are being lost, the strong droughts, excessive rains that drown the plantations, thus making the terrestrial habitat a total lack of control in its environmental integration.

Droughts and water shortages are directly affecting the most vulnerable populations, and

these are some of the negative effects that we can immediately visualize. For this reason, our projects also encourage each participant to preserve the environment by taking preventive measures.

**Kat Smith**  
Climate change is a driving factor for migration, and many of those whom CMDVP works with have fled their home country for reasons related to lack of resources due to natural disasters created by rising temperatures and climate catastrophes. We tend to think that if the immigration system were "fixed" or if we invested more in sending countries, the "migration crises" would be diminished; however, experts predict that climate change will continue to be a factor in forcing people from their homes, so we must view migration through a climate change lens. To better receive people in transit, we must realize that how we live our lives in the U.S. directly affects the livelihood of people in other countries, and how we receive and treat those people matters significantly.



*Volunteers scrape paint from the façade of a building in Puerto Rico.*

**Rev. James Shri Bhagwan**  
The Pacific Conference of Churches has been engaged in climate justice work for more than two decades. This is a direct result of the physical, social and spiritual impacts of our communities in low-lying coral atolls as well as larger volcanic islands. We have seen both immediate and slow-onset impacts and disasters such as rising and



warming seas, extreme weather (high category cyclones, floods, droughts) coastal erosion and saltwater intrusion. We have to respond to these impacts and the effects on communities at a local and national level (pastorally and practically) and advocate on their behalf at a regional and global level (prophetic voice).



Christian Reformed Church, Saturnino Perez

After Hurricane Maria, and in collaboration with the Christian Reformed Church in the Dominican Republic, houses are rebuilt and raised in the community of Rafey.

### What are some challenges you are facing in your work and how can the church accompany you?

#### Michelle Muñiz

Cultural awareness may be underestimated when planning a volunteer trip to Puerto Rico. Understanding sociopolitical dynamics or bringing awareness to relevant issues in the community you're visiting contributes to a better-informed understanding of the volunteer role. In Puerto Rico, reflecting beyond the physical work has become as important. When promoting volunteer opportunities, our church must be intentional, engaging in ways that reflect mutual and intentional approach, at the same time it calls out perpetuating harmful habits.

#### Rev. Dr. Barbara A. Wilson

One challenge is the time and energy needed to build connection, relationships and partnerships to consistently move forward our collective work

for impact. I'm curious about possible avenues to co-create practical and fluid implementation for sustainability.

#### Bridget Meckley

At every level of the church — from local congregation to the denomination and outside of it as well — we need to build partnerships and use our combined resources efficiently and effectively. Connecting to organizations and people already serving a particular need is often a challenge — one that PDA has helped us meet. We also must use our own initiative to connect within our local communities and join forces with other church and non-church organizations.

#### Anita Chombeng

There are still financial difficulties and communication issues since Africans have peculiar problems that need unique solutions, and we cannot afford specialist help because it entails paying for it. As immigration policies change constantly, we must pivot along with the times. It is very difficult for us to accomplish our work due to the delay in getting feedback from immigration offices. Due to the pandemic, most housing options have been lost, making it difficult for those coming out of detention centers to find temporary housing.

#### Saturnino Perez

The Christian Reformed Church is composed mostly of Haitian immigrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent who have been exposed by the social inequalities that affect the church and the personal development of each of these members.

We currently want to strengthen our institutional capacity by training our leaders to work with people in high-risk conditions. There are alternate conditions that prevent people from connecting with God in a full way and one of them is mental poverty, the inequality in the differentiated treatment when it comes to providing a response in communities that are difficult to access.

#### Kat Smith

Our biggest challenge remains the fact that we have not been able to enter detention centers

since February of 2020. By now people in detention do not even remember a time when receiving visitors was an option, and it pains us to think that Covid is still being used as a pretext to stop our volunteers from visiting. We know that face-to-face interaction would positively benefit those who are in immigration detention, and we believe that there is a safe way to do so. We ask for prayers that hearts and doors would open so that we can again visit with detained individuals to not only increase morale but also the ability to access resources.

#### Rev. James Shri Bhagwan

Responding to slow-onset impacts of climate change and how this impacts our communities socially and culturally. PDA can consider how local knowledge and traditional resilience practice can perhaps frame the accompaniment process. Again, grateful for their understanding and support in this work.

### What do you wish our constituents knew more about the communities with whom you are working?

#### Michelle Muñiz

The communities in Puerto Rico are diverse, and so are their needs. Briefly answering “What does recovery look like in Puerto Rico?” is difficult. Both recovery-related issues and socioeconomic dynamics are conversations filled with layers of complexity. Those who have already developed partnerships with our communities are witnesses that it takes time to learn and identify the best ways to partner.

#### Rev. Dr. Barbara A. Wilson

My answer actually applies across the board: Honoring human dignity requires an asset-based approach. That what we share in common, and all of the diversity and difference, provides myriads of opportunities for mutuality, reciprocity and accountability in building sustainable communities that benefit all.

#### Bridget Meckley

We must discern which communities we are called to serve and how we can do that best. Then, we humbly use our advantage to empty ourselves in that service. “[Jesus] who being in very nature God, did not consider equality

with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant ... he humbled himself ...” (Philippians 2:6–8).

#### Anita Chombeng

We wish that they would gain a greater understanding of racial discrimination faced by African refugees and asylum seekers from the port of entry to the detention center and access to social services. There is a difference in cultural orientation, and some speak French, limiting communication since translation services are scarce. Understanding the cultural challenges of working with this group of immigrants will help to understand why some processes or methods of accompaniment services do not work.

#### Saturnino Perez

The communities we serve belong to a group that has been marginalized and therefore unable to access resources and networks to improve their health, literacy, productivity and human rights. Because of these conditions, our work involves not only working with the poor to improve their livelihoods, but also defending their fundamental rights.

#### Kat Smith

There are thousands of people who are detained in immigration detention solely for not having a contact in the U.S. who can serve as their sponsor. We would love to partner with more churches who are interested in welcoming a new member to their community. We believe churches are crucial in mitigating the effects and amount of people in detention and we encourage anyone reading this to learn more about what it would mean for your church to sponsor someone to be able to leave detention.

#### Rev. James Shri Bhagwan

We lament our loss of identity with each king tide wave that washes across an atoll.

We are resilient but resilience is not an excuse for inaction by polluting countries.

Our faith gives us strength, and hope. So, we can continue to praise God despite our experiences.





Rich Copley



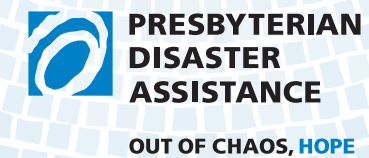
Nancy Disber



# 2022 in Review

In 2022, because of your generous support, PDA was able to grant more than **\$3.1 million** across the globe; **support 1,143 work team volunteers** who helped rebuild communities affected by disaster; **deploy 113 National Response Team members** to **29 presbyteries** (virtually and in person); offer more than **\$100,000** in grants supporting refugee and asylum advocacy programs and develop a new grant opportunity supporting refugee and asylum advocacy programs; present Spiritual Care programs to **13 presbyteries, 1 synod**, the American Red Cross and the Association of Mid Council Leaders; train **112 Presbyterian Women Disaster Preparedness Trainers** across the U.S.; register more than **450 groups and organizations** to use the docuseries Trouble the Water: Conversations to Disrupt Racism and Dominance; and with Church World Service, aid in the collection and distribution of **228,318 Gift of the Heart Kits and blankets**.

## THANK YOU!







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

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