



Church of the Brethren

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Brethren Disaster Ministries and Children's Disaster Services staff, volunteers and supporters work tirelessly throughout the year to bring hope and healing to those whose lives have been upended by disasters, bearing in mind Paul's entreaty to "Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." (1 Cor. 15:58 NIV).

Although this report is intended to give an overview of 2019 activities, we must first address the challenge that is affecting all of us in 2020: being the church during the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to the widespread disruption, hardship and severe illness that has a particularly difficult effect on vulnerable people, BDM instituted the COVID-19 grant program, financed through the Emergency Disaster Fund (<https://covid19.brethren.org>), to enable U.S. Churches of the Brethren and global Brethren congregations and partners to provide humanitarian relief for those in need in their congregations and communities. BDM and CDS on-the-ground activities were postponed in mid-March due to local restrictions and safety concerns for volunteers, host communities and those we serve. The Rebuilding Program developed safety protocols and is working with communities and partners to safely re-enter areas, when that is possible, to continue to repair and rebuild homes. By the time you read this report we are hopeful that this work will have begun. CDS faced the difficulty of not being able to serve children face-to-face following a disaster by designing individual kits of comfort for children to be assembled by volunteers and distributed to families displaced from their homes. Throughout this period our mission to serve remains steadfast as we adapt to meet the circumstances we are all facing and we are trusting that our labor is not in vain.

BDM and CDS remained committed during 2019 to responding to immediate and long-term needs resulting from flooding, tornadoes, mass shootings, wildfires, global disasters and crises, and storms from as far back as 2016.

Children's Disaster Services responded early in 2019 to flooding from spring rains and snow melt in Nebraska, Iowa, and Missouri as volunteer teams cared for children in resource centers. After tornadoes swept through Ohio over the Memorial Day weekend, volunteers tended children affected by the strongest tornado in Dayton, Ohio. CDS pre-positioned volunteers in North Carolina in areas expected to be hit by Hurricane Dorian while others remained on standby. Fortunately, the storm had much less of an impact than expected and these volunteers were no longer needed. CDS volunteers also served in California following the Saddle Ridge wildfire and in Beaumont, Texas when Tropical Storm Imelda hit the same area that was damaged in 2017 by Hurricane Harvey, retraumatizing children who once again faced intense rains and flooding.

Sadly, CDS Critical Response Care (CRC) volunteers, who are specially trained to work with children and families traumatized by mass casualty events, were called to serve in 2019 in the communities of Gilroy, Calif., and El Paso, Texas, following mass shootings. Such communities are always grateful for these volunteers who bring open hearts to tend to children and family members thrown off-base by these sudden traumatic events. In all of these 2019 deployments, CDS volunteers gave of themselves "fully to the work of the Lord" to care for children.

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BDM Rebuilding volunteers labored for the Lord to serve survivors of storms, many of whom waited years to see their homes returned to a safe, sanitary, and secure state. In North and South Carolina, volunteers continued to work on homes damaged in Hurricanes Matthew (2016) and Florence (2018). Nine of those homes were affected by both storms, some having been repaired once and then repaired again. In Florida, Hurricane Irma (2017) survivors in the Jacksonville area were grateful for repairs that restored their homes to a safe and secure status after two years of waiting. As 2020 began, the focus on Irma survivors switched to homes in the Tampa, Fla., area.

Recovery from 2017's Hurricanes Irma and Maria continued on St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands and in Puerto Rico. A short-term rebuilding trip in January to St. Thomas was the fourth in which volunteers participated. In Puerto Rico, BDM, in partnership with the district leadership, continued long-term recovery programming and home repairs, concentrating in the mountainous areas around Castañer. In addition, EDF funds supported home repair by a few local contractors for work the volunteers could not do, including on houses on the northern coast.

BDM's largest global response continued to be the Nigeria Crisis Response, in partnership with EYN (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), European partner Mission 21 and four local non-profit agencies. Although facing the challenge of continuing or renewed instability in some places, NCR continued to support both relief and recovery through activities such as sponsorship of internally displaced persons in four camps; food and medical assistance; self-reliance through seed and fertilizer distribution and agricultural and livelihood training; trauma workshops; home repairs; educational assistance for orphans; and community wells for safe drinking water. Strengthening of EYN leadership through capacity building and training was also an important activity.

EDF funds supported grants to both new and established partners around the world, many in places, or responding to events, that were not well-known. Displaced families were assisted through Church of the Brethren mission points in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In Mozambique and Zimbabwe, IMA World Health and the ACT Alliance provided relief and recovery from Cyclone Idai, one of the strongest cyclones to ever hit Africa. Grants in response to Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas were sent to Church World Service (CWS) and two new partners, while CWS also received a grant to respond to Typhoon Hagibis in Japan. Assistance was also provided to Syrian refugee children in Lebanon and the families of Ebola victims in DRC.

The total 2019 program expenditures were \$489,580 for U.S. responses, including the Rebuilding Program and CDS (\$236,004 of that amount supported the Puerto Rico hurricane response); \$555,367 for the Nigeria Crisis Response; and \$193,510 for all other international responses.

The foundation of this ministry to bring healing, hope and God's love to disaster survivors to which each of us is committed is the partnership of individuals, congregations and districts who contribute their individual and collective gifts of prayer, compassion, physical labor, time, finances and other support. We cherish this partnership and are grateful for each one of you.



Roy Winter, Associate Executive Director

On behalf of BDM staff – Sherry Chastain, Lisa Crouch, Jenn Dorsch-Messler, Sharon Franzén and Terry Goodger

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