

MCC Hurricane Disaster Response

COVID-19 was not the only thing impacting daily living in 2020. Many communities throughout the world were also impacted by natural disasters. In the United States, the West Coast and the state of Colorado experienced wildfires. A particularly active hurricane season brought loss and destruction to multiple countries and regions in the Atlantic and Gulf Coast areas.

In the midst of these challenging times, MCC churches came together to bring hope and assistance to disaster survivors. The weekend of October 24-25, MCC members and friends gathered together in Vinton, Louisiana, USA, to serve alongside this community that had been severely impacted by more than one hurricane this season. Rev. Vance Haywood, Pastor of St. John's MCC in Raleigh, North Carolina, USA, has family that live in Vinton and heard first hand of the devastation. Immediately, St. John's MCC organized a response. The church collected donations of water and other supplies and several members rented a truck to deliver them to Louisiana.

At the same time, Ellen Waguespack, a member of MCC New Orleans felt called to respond as well. She organized a Zoom meeting to talk about the possibilities. From Ellen's vision and that early call, that one weekend of collaborative ministry was born. MCC churches from multiple networks came together to assist and serve the people of Vinton, Louisiana.



On Saturday, October 24th members of St. John's MCC, MCC New Orleans, and MCC Baton Rouge arrived in Vinton in the early hours of the morning. They partnered with a local non-denominational church to serve a meal to over 500 people. This church had been serving the community daily for over a month. MCC members not only fed the hungry, but also gave respite to tired volunteers. While there, the group had conversations with local organizations on additional needs and ways that MCC might offer

support. New relationships were formed and COVID-19 safety protocols were in place.

The meal wasn't the only assistance offered that weekend. Another truck load of water and other cleaning supplies arrived with the team from St. John's, as did donations from other areas. Ellen Waguespack shared that "there was even the opportunity to provide some emergency repairs to a family whose home was in desperate need of roof patch and repair."

Cornerstone MCC in Mobile, Alabama, where Rev. Sara Sills is Pastor and also serves as the South Gulf Coast Network leader, offered their church building as a drop off place for donations. MCC Baton Rouge also served as a drop off and storage location for donations and supplies. Velma Garcia and Jude Litzenberger, MCC Network facilitators, and Huey Lee, Texas-New Mexico Network leader, also helped this effort by sharing information and opportunities with churches in their regions. Plans are being made for future trips and assistance projects.



MCC Church Support and Development Coordinator, Rebecca Wilson shares her excitement about this collective effort, “While MCC does not have the infrastructure or the financial resources for a large-scale disaster response ministry, we certainly have the capacity to make a difference. This is just one example of how we are stronger together and what I see as a new season of collaborative ministry for our churches.”

If your church or Network would like to discuss disaster preparedness or response, please contact Rebecca at rebeccawilson@mccchurch.net.

If you would like to engage with ongoing efforts to support hurricane survivors in the Gulf Coast area, please visit www.stjohnsmcc.org.

Speaking of this mission trip, Rev. Vance Haywood said, “What better way to live out our Statement of Faith as MCC—to be God’s healing presence in a hurting world”.