

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses



675 Red Mills Road Wallkill NY 12589-3292 Phone: (845) 306-1100

November 3, 2017

TO ALL CONGREGATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES BRANCH TERRITORY

Re: Update on Recent Natural Disasters

Dear Brothers:

We wish to provide an update on natural disasters recently experienced in our branch territory and what can be done to provide further assistance. Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria affected 250,000 publishers and damaged more than 6,000 dwellings in Florida, Puerto Rico, Texas, and the Virgin Islands. In addition, fires in areas of California affected hundreds of publishers, with more than 1,400 having to evacuate. Sadly, 29 of their homes were completely destroyed. Because of these disasters, seven active Disaster Relief Committees are operating throughout our branch territory. Despite the many tragic events our brothers and sisters have experienced, we have found it truly heartwarming to see how the brotherhood has come to the aid of all in need.

In addition to the millions of dollars made available by the organization to the Disaster Relief Committees, thus far 1,600 tons of relief supplies have been donated by hundreds of congregations and individuals throughout the country. In the past few weeks, humanitarian aid supplies were sent to the islands of Puerto Rico, Turks and Caicos, and the Virgin Islands via 27 air flights and 35 shipping containers. Because of the ongoing need, shipments of food, water, and other supplies will continue to be sent to these islands during the next several months. Your generous donations to the worldwide work and the response of various circuits in gathering specific supplies when requested are greatly appreciated. Such generosity shows the love that you have for Jehovah and for your brothers and sisters in need.—**Read Proverbs 17:17**; 1 Cor. 12:26.

Many have asked what other practical aid can be given to those needing relief assistance. In the areas where our brothers and sisters have been displaced, many of you have opened up your homes to provide shelter, knowing that the recovery efforts will take time. The patience of all is deeply appreciated. In addition, while elders and circuit overseers continue to take the lead in shepherding, all of us can carry the burdens of one another by providing encouragement and displaying compassion and kindness.—Gal. 6:2; Col. 3:12.

Meanwhile, throughout Texas, Florida, and all of the affected islands, there is an immediate need for volunteers with construction skills to assist with the recovery work. Because of current circumstances, only brothers will be invited to work in the areas hardest hit. At this time, we are requesting brothers who can serve either for three weeks or for 6-12 months. To volunteer for this work, please contact your congregation secretary. For volunteers who have an application on file, please ensure that your *Local Design/Construction Volunteer Application* (DC-50) is up-to-date. The relief organization will invite volunteers through *Builder Assistant*. We request that you do not go to a disaster area without an invitation from the relief organization, *Builder Assistant*, or a specific branch assignment letter.

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The branch office has received numerous calls asking about sending donations of clothes and other items. In a few cases, we have identified circuits near our shipping operations to provide specific humanitarian items. In other cases, it is more practical to purchase items locally rather than managing warehouse facilities to store and ship materials. Thus, unless your congregation is given specific instructions through the circuit overseer, it is recommended that you continue to support the relief efforts through donations to the worldwide work. Additionally, the relief organization is making every effort possible to help brothers and sisters who qualify to receive insurance and FEMA assistance. Of course, it is also important to remember our brothers and sisters in our prayers.—Rom. 12:12.

At 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4, the apostle Paul identified our Grand Creator as “the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our trials.” The outpouring of material support, love, concern, and prayers that you offer are an extension of Jehovah’s love and spirit in action, which has brought great comfort to thousands. May we not be afraid or anxious as we rely on Jehovah, who is fortifying and helping each one affected by these disasters “with [his] right hand of righteousness.”—Isa. 41:10.

With this letter, please accept an expression of our warm Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

c: Circuit overseers

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PS to congregation secretaries:

Please arrange for this letter to be read to the congregation at the conclusion of the first midweek meeting after its receipt. Thereafter, it should be posted on the information board. **However, this postscript should neither be read to the congregation nor be posted on the information board.**

Please send the names of available qualified brothers from your congregation to the Local Design/Construction inbox via jw.org e-mail, along with the following information. Include “Disaster Relief (your state)” in the subject line of the message.

- Full name
- Birth date
- Available dates to assist
- Serving as (elder, ministerial servant, regular pioneer, publisher, etc.)
- *Builder Assistant* number

All volunteers who are not considered local support should have a current *Local Design/Construction Volunteer Application* (DC-50) on file with your congregation. If they do not, please submit one on their behalf and make sure they are added to your congregation jw.org domain.—See letter dated December 16, 2016, to all bodies of elders.