



## ***Southern Conference UCC monitoring Hurricane Harvey Response:***

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I'm saturated with images and my heart is broken to see the television and internet coverage of the latest catastrophe to impact the United States -- Hurricane

Harvey -- and I know you are too. The images remind me of my response to Hurricane Katrina in Baton Rouge and New Orleans and the similarities between the two and the unique and extensive challenges that Hurricane Harvey will bring to Texas and the entire country. Recovery will not be complete in a year. This will be a multi-year, perhaps even a decade long recovery.

I'm sure you, like me, have wondered what can be done? How can I help? We are so very blessed to live in a country as generous as the United States and in a Conference where people know how to help their neighbors, but in a disaster, this thinking isn't enough. Truly, all of us must think before we act to bring relief to flood survivors.

Millions of Americans like us who truly want to help will, in their stubbornness, decide to do what they want and what they feel is best but, sadly, this leads to what is known as the second disaster in recovery - what humanitarian workers call the crush of useless, often incomprehensible contributions - the "second disaster." People with loving intentions donate things that can't be used, which frustrates response and recovery efforts, and can be harmful.

Already for Hurricane Harvey, I've had offers of cards, stuffed animals, clothing, and cleaning supplies to send to Texas. Offered with good intentions BUT with no concept of how these things would get to Texas. Who will pay the cost? Who would receive them in Texas? What location is flooded? Who will pay to store them? Who would manage them? Who will pay to manage them and distribute them?

"Right now local, state, and federal authorities are in the process of saving lives and setting up emergency shelters and providing emergency evacuation, health, and mental health care. No one is available for the monumental task of sorting, cleaning, organizing, and managing donated goods - especially goods that aren't needed, likely won't be needed, and that would damage the local economy."

In New York following the 9/11 attacks thousands of teddy bears were shipped to the Bayonne Marine Terminal that no one knew what to do with. In our own Hurricane Matthew piles of clothing infected with virus caused severe gastrointestinal illness among the survivor population. These and so many other "second disasters" caused a waste of time, money, harm, and took resources desperately needed for the immediate and long-term recovery of the victims and survivors of disaster.

What is needed the most is cash, right now and into the long term. Yes, CASH. Banking and auditing requirements of non-profit and faith-based organizations enable effective and appropriate utilization of funds, making them available at the point of need. Cash will enable vouchers to be written so flooded families have the dignity of selecting and purchasing the clothing and shoes and items they choose for their families. Cash will enable responders and long-term recovery organizations to help with unmet needs both now and into the future. Cash will help local communities recover quicker. Cash will help the

United Church of Christ Disaster Ministries meet the needs of the Hurricane Harvey devastated south for a long time to come.

The Southern Conference United Church of Christ supports the UCC National Expression's call for cash financial donations at this time. Please join SOC Conference Minister Reverend Davis (D.Min.) and me in praying the prayer below in closing.

Make your cash donations at:

[Emergency USA Fund for Hurricane Harvey Relief](#)

"Lord of compassion and power, be with those who have survived and who continue to toil and suffer in this disaster Hurricane Harvey; minister to their needs of mind and spirit, body and circumstance; help those who are hurt; give peace to the dying; comfort and support the bereaved; and to all who are working to bring relief and restore order, give strength and resilience to do their work well and in safety; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen. Prayer 416 (enhanced) "Chalice Worship."

If I can answer any questions you may have or be of assistance please contact me. I am available for presentations and to preach as you need.

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