



# Hurricane Recovery— Hospitality & Help

“To help somebody get back home—it’s something you never forget.” Miss Mary, Katrina Survivor

## HURRICANES 2005 UMCOR ADVANCE # 982523

### HURRICANE RESPONSE BY THE NUMBERS

Funds assist annual conferences and United Methodist mission institutions' hurricane recovery programs for the next 3 years.

|                                  |              |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Louisiana                        | \$19,288,798 |
| Mississippi                      | \$11,223,770 |
| Texas                            | \$7,930,119  |
| Alabama-West Florida             | \$2,104,314  |
| Florida                          | \$1,584,468  |
| North Carolina                   | \$102,900    |
| Memphis                          | \$500,000    |
| San Diego                        | \$220,561    |
| International Hurricane Recovery | \$1,500,000  |

UMCOR's board of directors continues to approve annual conference requests for funds to support their hurricane response efforts. These funds provide for long-term disaster response ministries that will take place for many years to come. Of the \$65.1 million donated to this effort, \$55 million has already been approved for annual conferences and mission institutions to use for extended rehabilitation, direct cash assistance, family-by-family problem solving, and ministries to evacuees.

An additional \$10,550,000 was made available to fund grass roots efforts, provide for social service funding gaps, provide for volunteer teams' housing, and fund UMCOR's consultants to the annual conferences.

More than a year after Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita caused untold damage throughout the Gulf Coast, UMCOR's long-term recovery work is in full swing. UMCOR staff and consultants have been working with the five annual conferences directly impacted by these storms to establish effective and far-reaching disaster response ministries that will continue for years to come.

"This has been a year of overcoming unprecedented challenges," said UMCOR director, the Rev. Paul Dirdak, "and United Methodists stepped up to the challenge: giving more financially, materially, and physically than ever before. For that, we give thanks."

### HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is a big part of the hurricane response effort. From the beginning, strangers welcomed stranger into their homes when people were first evacuated from the storm. Today, strangers are still welcoming strangers. Volunteers have arrived by the thousands to help in the reconstruction effort but a place for them to stay has remained a challenge.

The widespread and total destruction caused by Katrina and Rita meant that there simply was nowhere for volunteers to stay. Some stayed in tents set up in parking lots; others in churches that were only partially damaged. Still others had to stay some distance from where they were working. UMCOR is helping Louisiana and Mississippi annual conferences construct facilities to house the volunteers who will be on site during the next few years. Later, these facilities will revert to church and community uses. They will be available in future disasters to house volunteers and relief supplies.

Volunteers are a critical part of the recovery effort. They offer much more than removing debris and replacing roofs, they also bring encouragement to homeowners. "The relationships between our homeowners and volunteers are built forever," explained Dale Kimball, Operations Coordinator of the Slidell Station. "In fact, we have many 'repeat teams' who come more than once because of the positive

Photo: Miss Mary shares her delight in her new kitchen with Dale Kimball, Slidell-Northshore Recovery Station, LA. Kimball is the Operations Coordinator at the station.  
Susan Meister/UMCOR

“The storm wipes out everything you know,” Miss Sylvia said. “It is the worst. It even wipes out your **support system** because everyone is traumatized.”

In Miss Sylvia’s situation, the emotional support offered by her case manager is obvious and **welcome**. She says, “I talk to Abby about anything.”

experiences they have here.”

Volunteers help people like Miss Mary and her family whose home has been rebuilt with the help of United Methodist volunteers from throughout the country. She couldn’t say enough about those who helped.

“I’m 72 years old,” Miss Mary said, “and a 75 year-old volunteer was putting new tile down in my house! And a pastor from Oklahoma came right after he had foot surgery. And college kids from Indiana University came on their break to help with my roof. To help somebody get back home – it’s something you never forget.”

### **HELP FOR AS LONG AS IT TAKES**

UMCOR’s work doesn’t end with replacing roofs and repairing homes, it continues for as long as it takes to help survivors reestablish their lives after the storm.

Miss Sylvia was living in one room of her storm-damaged and mold-covered house when she met Abby McMurry, a case manager through the Louisiana Annual Conference. Ms. McMurry arranged for volunteers to finish gutting the house that Miss Sylvia was trying to do herself. She also helped Miss Sylvia move into an apartment with her daughter so she would have a clean and healthy place to live.

UMCOR is well known for its success in helping disaster survivors in the long term through case management. In fact, FEMA recognized UMCOR’s expertise by asking the organization to lead a consortium of nine case management agencies called Katrina Aid Today.

Annual conferences, too, are hiring and training case managers to advocate for families. Case managers develop relationships with survivors and ensure they get the help they need. Forms are filled out, volunteer teams brought in, insurance companies contacted, local organizations are called, and when there are gaps in the resources available to the family, local case managers can use United Methodist funds to help meet specific unmet needs.

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