



asked if they had space at Aldersgate for a food pantry and if they would be able to host a Thanksgiving and Christmas gathering for the Puerto Rican families. Pastors Rivera and O'Connor agreed. Happy to have doors, minds and hearts open to serve the community, Pastor Rivera has gone far beyond the initial request with the help of many volunteers.

Immediately, a food pantry was set up at Aldersgate. Amazing culturally-aligned Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations were offered. LeRoy UMC has established a clothing closet with a lot of winter attire, very much needed this frigid winter. And Pastor

Rivera and his wife Maria started new English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to suit the needs of the Puerto Rican families. Maria teaches the classes. Transportation is provided to and from the classes; nursery services are also provided during the classes.

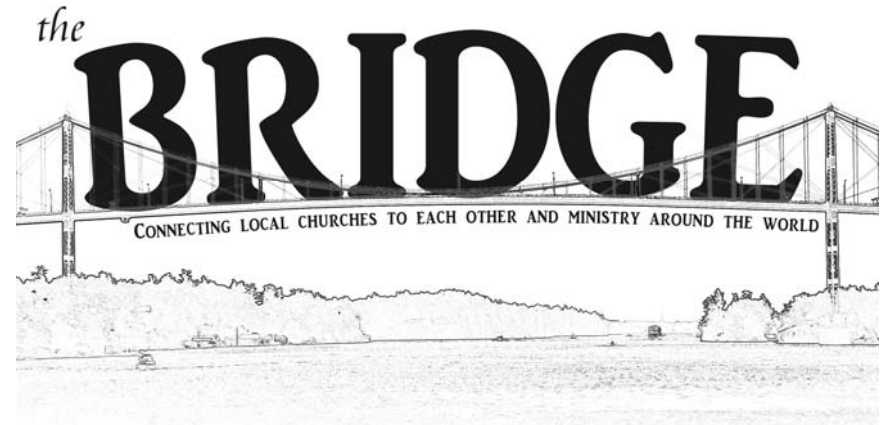
It's amazing how the Lord calls upon us to help people in distress. To learn more or to help with this ministry, contact Pastor Hector Rivera at 585-802-0998 or [hrivera@aumcgreece.org](mailto:hrivera@aumcgreece.org).

*Editor's Note: To read a longer version of this article, visit [bit.ly/PastorRivera1](http://bit.ly/PastorRivera1).*

*The **Bridge** is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York Conference and the world.*

[www.unyumc.org](http://www.unyumc.org)

It's time for you to enter your 2017 statistics in the Ezra system. You can log in at [www.ezra.gcfa.org](http://www.ezra.gcfa.org). Stats are due by Feb. 15, 2018.



The Upper New York Conference's vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places.

## A look inside!

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# My first day in Puerto Rico for Humanitarian Relief

By Thaddeus Pinckney

"Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,  
At all the times you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as ever you can."

John Wesley

Good-works, inspiration, persistence are all qualities that describe Pastor Yeika Huertas as she is trying to lead her church in storm-struck Carolina Puerto Rico. Her church suffered severe damage to its roof and sanctuary, while her parishioners were left to literally hunt for food, water, and shelter. Still today, months after Hurricane Maria, it's an everyday occurrence in Puerto Rico of having to simply survive.

Can you imagine living for over four months without electricity or clean water? Now can you imagine tending to the needs of hundreds of church members and the entire community, who all wonder when this misery will end? Surely, it would be easy for Pastor Yeika to just cope only with her losses and concentrate on fighting for her own survival.

Some say the secret to happiness is helping others, but what if that promise of immediate happiness seems to be so far in the distance? What if your challenges were so great (even life-threatening) that the perks from helping others don't feel perky at all? Could YOU ever do more for someone else, knowing that you're doing less for yourself? Living and helping can make us feel depleted, burdened, and sometimes even taken advantage of.

Why, Pastor Yeika could choose to follow these commonly expressed feelings that I'm sure have entered her mind, but instead she chooses to "represent the hands and feet" of Christ to help people in all places at all times. Pastor Yeika even confides about the surprise on the faces of many when they discover that she is a young, female pastor cast into such a huge role. But, her passion through the love of Christ burns! Jeanette Graulau, from the UMC of Puerto Rico, reminds us that no one expected for the conditions in Puerto Rico to be so severe and lasting. American citizens in Florida, Texas, and Louisiana received an outpouring of humanitarian aid, but for

## Called to help displaced Puerto Ricans now living in Rochester

By Shannon Hodson, Writer/Editor

While UMCOR and other mission teams are traveling to Puerto Rico and engaging in continuous disaster relief, there is a way you can help closer to home!

You can assist displaced Puerto Ricans

who now live in Upstate New York. For example, more than 500 Puerto Ricans have moved to Rochester to live with family members since September. Many of these families are supported by public assistance and they do not have the resources to help their beloved family members beyond providing shelter.



Puerto Rico? Seemingly, Puerto Rico has been forgotten by many. The United Methodist Church and UMCOR though is committed to being helping others like Pastor Yeika and her community, get back on their feet.

Pastor Vieka said, "We can't give up, because the people depend on us...and no matter how burdened I will be, and I am, I have to because it's my responsibility. It's my privilege; it's my passion."

*Editor's Note: You can help support relief efforts in Puerto Rico, by making out a check to Upper New York Conference with FUND # 483 - "2017 Hurricane Maria Disaster Relief" on the memo line. This is the first of three articles; each also has a video associated with it. To see the video associated with this article, visit [vimeo.com/250322733](https://vimeo.com/250322733).*

In early November 2017, Hector Rivera, pastor at LeRoy UMC and Aldersgate UMC, as well as leader of the New Faith Community Aldersgate: Hispanic UMC, and Anne O'Connor senior pastor at Aldersgate UMC, were contacted by, a newly formed non-profit organization comprised of residents in Rochester, NY.

Puerto Ricans United in the Distance helps Puerto Ricans who have relocated to Rochester after the devastation they experienced from Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

Pastors Rivera and O'Connor were

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