

# In Brief

## How UNY can help those hit hard by Hurricane Dorian

By Mike Block, UNY Director of Missional Engagement

Hurricane Dorian has devastated the Bahamas, especially the islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama. The storm basically came to a standstill as it pummeled the islands, causing major flooding, extreme destruction, and even death. While the storm was short in duration, rebuilding will take years.



As the Director of Missional Engagement for the Upper New York Conference, I urge you to do the following:

- Pray for those affected and in the path of Hurricane Dorian.
- Urge your congregation to take up a special offering. Make the announcement in advance so people can be prepared. Forward these funds to the Conference Office with a single check, made out to Upper New York Conference with "Disaster Relief" written on the memo line.
- If you have a Facebook account, visit the Upper New York Conference's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/uppernewyork/>) and click the blue "donate" button under cover photo using a credit/debit card. All donations will go to relief efforts.
- Assemble UMCOR-approved cleaning and hygiene kits either with the help of your church or individually. All kits should then be brought to UNY Mission Central HUB in Liverpool for transportation to UMCOR Sager-Brown Depot in PA. Visit <https://unyumc.org/mission/umcor-supply-list> for assembly instructions.

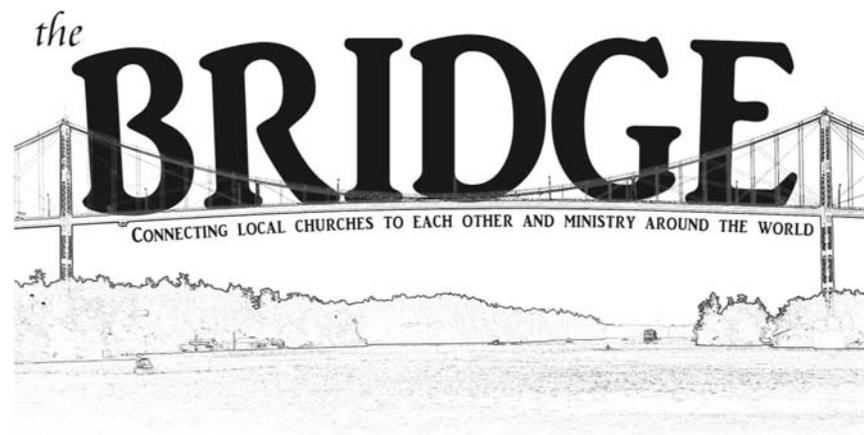
There will come a time when United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) will ask for volunteers to assist with the clean-up and rebuilding process. If you want to be a part of an organized UNY mission team, please wait for the call to respond and don't act in advance. To become part of an Early Response Team (ERT) or Team Leader Training (TLT), visit <https://www.unyumc.org/mission/vim> to learn about and register for a course in November. Check back often as the page is updated often with new information.

Donations outside of the UMCOR-approved supply lists will not be accepted. For questions or more information, please contact me at (315) 898-2066 or [mikeblock@unyumc.org](mailto:mikeblock@unyumc.org). Together, we can make a difference.

*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. For more news and stories visit:*

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

To support the Upper New York Mission Central Hub as it response to Hurricane Dorian and other natural disasters visit: <https://unyumc.org/mission/donate-to-mission-central>



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.

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# UMCOR starts Bahamas relief efforts after Hurricane Dorian

**Excerpt from article by Linda Bloom, UM News**

As Hurricane Dorian continued to threaten the U.S. east coast, United Methodists were connecting with Methodists in the Bahamas to start relief efforts.

The Bahamas Conference of the Methodist Church already is fielding requests to help those being evacuated from the “unprecedented devastation” to receive basic supplies and find a place to live, says its president, the Rev. L. Carla Culmer.

But the survivors also need someone to hear their stories. “We want to see how we can counsel and listen and be there for them,” she told UM News in a Sept. 5 phone interview.

After striking the island nation on Sept. 1, Hurricane Dorian caused “vast devastation” and left 70,000 people in need of immediate humanitarian relief, says Mark Lowcock, head of the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Bahamas Prime Minister Hubert Minnis called Dorian the most damaging storm ever to hit the island group, Reuters reported. Worst hit was



the Abaco Islands in the northern Bahamas and Grand Bahama Island. As of Sept. 5, the death toll was 20.

Culmer, who also serves as the pastor at Wesley-Grants Town Church in Nassau, agreed.

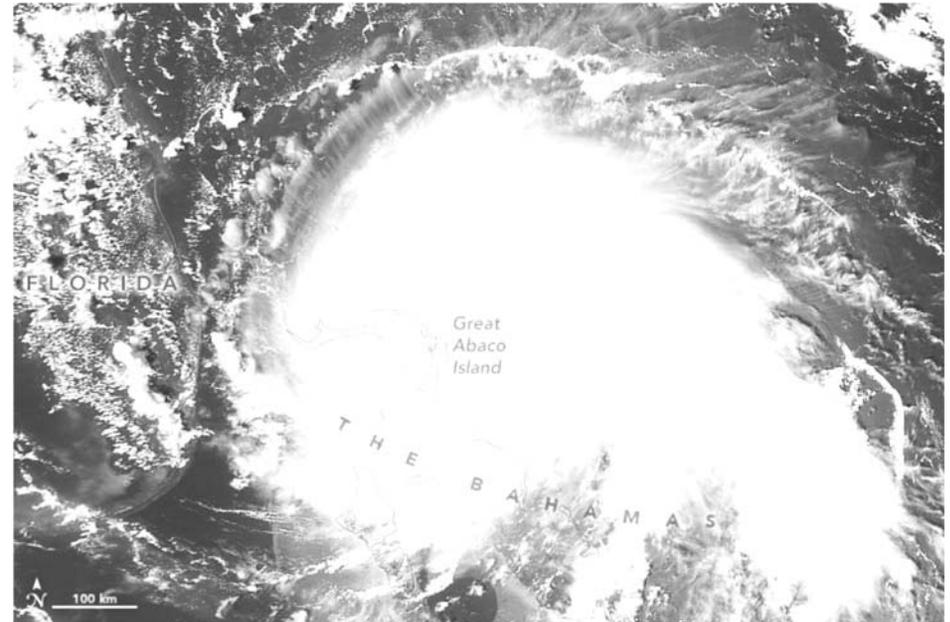
“People are traumatized because the storm lasted so long,” Culmer said. “We heard about 20 deaths, but we believe there are many more deaths.” The receding floodwaters “will reveal a lot,” she added. “And maybe some of the things it will reveal we won’t be ready for.”

Her Conference’s disaster response ministry, Bahamas Methodist Habitat, is based at Camp Symonette on Eleuthera Island. The Rev. Stephanie Gottschalk, a former Volunteers in Mission coordinator for the United Methodist Western Pennsylvania Conference, has served as the organization’s executive director since January 2018.

About 80 miles south of the Abacos and Grand Bahama islands, Camp Symonette escaped major damage from Dorian. But Gottschalk pointed out that, “Everyone is going to know somebody who was affected or who was injured or died.”

She noted that the population of the Bahamas is similar to Pittsburgh and that the 70,000 or so in the Dorian-affected areas “represents about 18 percent of the population ... so this is felt nationwide.”

New York Area Bishop Thomas Bickerton, who is president of the United Methodist Committee on Relief’s board



of directors, sent a letter Sept. 5 to his fellow bishops about the need for church members to respond to the 2019 hurricane season.

“As we go through the peak of hurricane season, we see so much devastation, especially in the Bahamas,” he wrote. “The United Methodist Committee on Relief, our global humanitarian aid and development agency, is actively providing assistance in the midst of these challenges. However, we are in need of your intentional and faithful support in order to continue this work.

“Hurricanes Dorian, Harvey, Irma, Maria, Michael, and Matthew showed us that storms are now more intense and more devastating than ever before,” the letter said, “which means those working in disaster response and recovery must

become more innovative and creative. This requires additional resources.”

UMCOR has awarded a solidarity grant to Bahamas Methodist Habitat for immediate, emergency short-term funding to address basic human needs. The relief agency also expects to partner in the Bahamas with the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas.

At this stage, donations to UMCOR are the best way for church members to respond, Bickerton said. Placements for volunteer teams will come later, after conversations with partners and the building of an infrastructure for that work.

To read more about relief efforts in the Bahamas as well as some personal anecdotes, visit [http://bit.ly/UMCOR\\_Bahamas\\_Relief](http://bit.ly/UMCOR_Bahamas_Relief).