



# **PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

**OUT OF CHAOS, HOPE**

## **HURRICANE RECOVERY**

**TEAM ORIENTATION MANUAL**

**Thank you!**

**PDA would like to express its deepest thanks for your generosity and devotion  
in coming to assist the people in the Gulf Coast.  
They will never forget you, just as you will never forget them.**

## The Presbyterian Church

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has approximately 2.4 million members, 11,100 congregations and 14,000 ordained and active ministers. Presbyterians trace their history to the 16th century and the Protestant Reformation. Our heritage, and much of what we believe, began with the French lawyer John Calvin (1509-1564), whose writings crystallized much of the Reformed thinking that came before him.

Many of the early Presbyterians in America came from England, Scotland and Ireland. The first American Presbytery was organized at Philadelphia in 1706. The first General Assembly was held in the same city in 1789. The first Assembly was convened by the Rev. John Witherspoon, the only minister to sign the Declaration of Independence.

*"Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interest of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave..." Philippians 2:4-7*

### Presbyterians are distinctive in two major ways.

- They adhere to a pattern of religious thought known as Reformed theology.
- Our form of government stresses the active, representational leadership of both ministers and church members.

### Some of the principles articulated by John Calvin remain at the core of Presbyterian beliefs.

- Sovereignty of God, the supreme authority throughout the universe.
- The authority of the scripture, our knowledge of God and God's purpose for humanity comes from the Bible, particularly what is revealed in the New Testament through the life of Jesus Christ.
- Justification by grace through faith, our salvation (justification) through Jesus is God's generous gift to us and not the result of our own accomplishments.
- The priesthood of all believers. It is everyone's job - ministers and lay people alike - to share this Good News with the whole world. That is also why the Presbyterian Church is governed at all levels by a combination of clergy and laity, men and women alike.

### Our Position on Social Issues

#### In the 1958 Statement of the PCUA, p. 537: The General Assembly:

- Affirms its conviction that neither the Church as the body of Christ, nor Christians as individuals, can be neutral or indifferent toward evil in the world;
- Affirms its responsibility to speak on social and moral issues for the encouragement and instruction of the Church and its members, seeking earnestly both to know the mind of Christ and to speak always in humility and love;
- Reminds the churches that their duty is not only to encourage and train their members in daily obedience to God's will, but corporately to reveal God's grace in places of suffering and need, to resist the forces that tyrannize, and to support the forces that restore the dignity of all men as the children of God, for only so is the gospel most fully proclaimed.

## Volunteer Villages

Even as PDA continued to be inundated with the immediate hurricane needs, we looked towards the long-term recovery plans. With help from Norwegian Church Aid, PDA established six Volunteer Villages in Mississippi and Louisiana. The Volunteer Village concept is a tent “village” that can house and feed volunteers who are coming in from all over the U.S. (and the world!) to provide relief services for people in greatest need.

The Volunteer Villages are guided by a spirit of Christ-like cooperation between congregations, presbyteries, the General Assembly Council staff, and the volunteer teams. While designed for use by registered PCUSA teams, the villages are available to house registered volunteer teams from other denominations, faith traditions, partner organizations, colleges and civic groups.

Currently, there are 6 Volunteer Villages across the Gulf Coast:

- Pearlinton, MS
- New Orleans, LA (Olive Tree)
- Houma, LA (Good Earth Village)
- Lake Charles, LA
- Texas City, TX
- Port Neches, TX

*“Since there will never cease to be some need on the earth, I therefore command you, ‘Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbors in your land.’”*  
*Deuteronomy 15:11*

## Facilities

The villages are very basic, with conditions similar to a camping experience. The villages are located on church property, private land, or municipal property, each housing 40-90 volunteers. At some sites, housing consist of 2-10 person hard corrugated polypropylene pods with cots and a few permanent structures. Other sites are dormitory style sleeping in permanent buildings with cots or bunk beds. All villages have :

- Portable toilets
- Kitchen
- Shower facilities
- Dining area
- Sinks
- Cooling and heating
- Gathering area for groups
- Parking space
- Washer and dryer for limited use (Your Village Manager(s) will provide guidelines.)



## Staff

The Villages have a manager(s). Most villages also have a worksite assignment manager. Long-term volunteers (2-6 months) fill these positions. There is other long-term PDA support staff living on the Gulf Coast. All these individuals can answer the questions you have about the Village, the work, PDA's response, or anything else you need to know.

Staff members manage the Village according to established PDA policies, and it is important to recognize their role in enforcing these policies. They are also responsible for making your experience in the Gulf as meaningful and comfortable as possible, so feel free to speak with them about any problems or concerns.

## Teams

- A team is a group of 3-90 volunteers with a desire to help.
- Most teams make a one week commitment.
- Teams register in advance with the PDA Call Center in Little Rock, Arkansas, (866-732-6121) and receive their village assignment. The Call Center will need information for contacting the team leader, the trip dates and the approximate number of team members.
- Each team must have a team leader who will liaise with the Call Center staff, the Village Manager, the Worksite Assignment Manager, and the onsite Construction Supervisor.
- Before arrival, teams will be given detailed information about the village and information about PDA's local partner in the community.
- **Team members pay \$20.00 per night per person.** This helps offset the operating costs of the village, including all meals and lodging for all the volunteers on your team. (Please note: there is no reduced fee and all volunteers are expected to participate equally in the PDA Volunteer Village experience.)

Who can be a member of a team?

- Members of any faith
- Individuals aged 18 and up
- People in good physical condition
- Anyone with an open and flexible attitude
- Anyone willing and able to help with the reconstruction of homes and lives.

Who should not volunteer in a PDA Village?

- Anyone under the age of 18
- People with serious health problems or who are sensitive to heat
- People who are not team players
- Individuals who are not members of a team of 3 or more



## Team Leader Responsibilities

- Before arrival
  - The Team Leader should review with all team members materials sent from the Call Center and the Village manager .
  - Gather questions from your team to be answered by the Call Center or Village Manager.
  - Keep the Call Center aware of team number changes.
  - Contact the Village Manager apprising him/her of any special conditions/restrictions concerning the team or team members.
  - Advise the village manager of the team's arrival time.
  - Return the Volunteer Team Skills Assessment Form to the Call Center ([pdacallcenter@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pdacallcenter@sbcglobal.net)). They will forward it to the Village. Please return this form 4 weeks prior your arrival in the village.
  
- Upon arrival
  - Meet and greet the Village Manager.
  - Turn in legible and completed **General Release Indemnification Agreement and Authorization for Medical Treatment** forms for each team member. Be sure these forms have been signed and witnessed.
  - Submit payment for the team
    - \$20 per team member per night (\$20 X number of team members X nights at the Village)
    - Check should be payable to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance or PDA
  - Provide two cell phone numbers to the Village Manager and/or Worksite Assignment Manager.
  - Receive pod assignments for use by the team.
  
- While in the Village
  - Work with Village Manager to arrange the day-to-day activities of the team
  - Keep the Village Manager up to date on fluctuations in team numbers, logistics problems, or other items needing attention
  - Ensure that team members participate in the village cleanup, cooking, maintenance, administration as assigned by the Village Manager
  - Ensure that every team member has safety equipment appropriate for the jobs they are doing (masks, gloves, first aid kits, etc.)
  - Remind every team member to return tools and equipment at the end of the day to its proper place and to bring attention to any repairs or replacements needed
  - Complete an Incident Report form if there is an injury among the team members, or any incident of theft or altercation
  - The Team Leader is responsible for the conduct and effectiveness of the team while they are in the Volunteer Village and at the work sight. Any difficulties arising with an individual from a team will be referred to their Team Leader

## Shared Responsibilities

Teams will most likely be sharing the village with other teams from around the country. This is a community and the teams share the responsibility for keeping the village functioning and tidy. Teams will rotate village responsibilities and the team leader will assign members of each team to complete them. Everyone should expect to participate in some of these tasks throughout the week:

- Plan and cook meals for the entire village
- Clean kitchen
- Clean hand washing stations, showers and toilets
- Pickup around the grounds and empty trash cans
- Straighten meeting areas and supply tent
- Maintain equipment
- Build or repair structures at the village
- Lead the village community evening reflection time (devotions)
- Other tasks as assigned

*“We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.”*  
Romans 12:6

**Flexibility is the key!** Team members should be willing and available to pitch in where needed.

## Reflections

PDA strives to create a community within each village that is steeped in the Christian traditions of giving and reflection. Time is set aside for reflections every evening. This allows team members to process their experiences in the Gulf, as well as to contemplate the spiritual context of what, for many, is a life-changing experience. Teams are asked to designate a leader to guide the village through these reflections for sharing your daily experiences. Anyone not wishing to participate is free to be absent from these events, but everyone must be respectful of the ecumenical goals that guide PDA’s mission.

## Village Guidelines

- The Volunteer Village is a community. We encourage volunteers to interact with each other and form a bonding community. It is part of the whole experience.
- Please leave unnecessary valuables at home and plan to keep personal valuables with you or locked in vehicles. While there will be someone at the Volunteer Villages *much of the time*, there will be no way to secure items.
- Quiet time starts at 10PM and lights out at midnight. Volunteers need to be sensitive to the community and to realize their own and others need for rest.
- Smoking is allowed only in designated areas, and smokers are expected to use the ashtrays provided.
- Please keep the village clean and leave the village in better condition than how you found it. It only takes a little effort from everyone to pick up after himself.

- **Never** unplug anything in order to charge your electronic equipment. – that plug may be keeping hundreds of dollars of meat frozen, or your shower water hot! Ask the Village manager or use a car charger.
- PDA has a zero tolerance policy on sexual harassment or physical violence. No alcohol, drugs or other illegal substances are allowed in the villages. Any behavior deemed inappropriate by the Village Manager will be cause for the volunteer to be sent home at the team's expense.

## The Work

PDA works closely with recovery committees in each community. PDA also works closely with the local Presbyteries (the regional body of the Presbyterian Church) in ascertaining the needs and the response in the local communities. In many cases, a local partner organization is responsible for obtaining the work assignments the volunteers do in the community, overseeing that work and working with PDA to obtain building supplies.

Depending on the site, the type of work volunteer teams are engaged in will vary. Most sites are in the rebuilding phase, while a very few are still gutting houses and removing debris. Other assignments may consist of cutting trees or obtaining building materials. In all cases, PDA and its partners make every attempt to prioritize families receiving assistance according to the following criteria:

- Must not be rental property
- Must be primary residence (not vacation or second home)
- Must have registered with FEMA
- Must have contributed insurance payout, if any, toward some of the costs of rebuilding
- Elderly, handicapped or other special needs cases receive higher priority

*“No one has ever seen God. But if we love one another, God lives in us.”  
John 4:12*

Under no circumstances does PDA discriminate amongst aid recipients on the basis of race or religion.

## Oversight

In most cases, assessments of the homes will be done by one of PDA's partner's assessors or construction supervisors. From that point, the Worksite Assignment Manager generates a work order, and each job is then matched to an incoming team, through the team's returned skills assessment form. Volunteers with construction experience may be asked to participate in this assessment or work order development process. Every attempt is made to ensure that the required materials are onsite by the team's arrival time, and that the job is matched to the team's skills. However, **flexibility is key!**

After the job is explained to the team, teams **may** be supervised onsite either by the Construction Supervisor, the Work Site Assignment Manager, or an experienced member of the team. Because we work on many homes at the same time this person may not be there all of the time.

A few tips:

- Listen to all instructions and be sure you understand them before proceeding
- Ask questions if you don't know what to do next or how to do it
- Ask the team leader or the Construction Supervisor before you start a new project
- Refer to the team leader or Construction Supervisor any changes, suggestions or concerns.
- If you do not feel comfortable performing a certain task, speak up! Volunteers are expected to work to acceptable standards.
- **The work sites are not places for horseplay.** This is a disaster area, and the situations may be more dangerous than what teams may have experienced in other missions.

## Safety

While PDA, our partners and the team leaders will make every attempt to ensure that safety procedures are followed on the worksites, it is ultimately up to each team member to look out for his or her own safety. Teams will be provided with a map to the nearest medical facilities in case of an accident on the worksite. Outlined below are some guidelines to follow:

- It is highly recommended that **steel-toed boots or shoes with a steel shank** be worn on worksites. **Absolutely no flip-flops are allowed on worksites or while working with mowers, weed whackers or other power equipment.**
- Wear good work gloves
- Be mindful of sharp objects—nails, strips of metal, screws, hinges etc
- Wear respirator masks (provided by PDA) in moldy and dusty conditions
- Do not lift objects that are too heavy for you
- Take a break once per hour to get out of the sun
- Use sun screen and insect repellent when outside
- Wear a hat during prolonged sun exposure
- Clean all cuts and scrapes **immediately**
- Fill out an incident report whenever an injury occurs, and give it to the Village Manager
- Drink plenty of water!!
- Drink plenty of water!!
- Drink plenty of water!!



## Sensitivity

It's hard to predict what the emotional reactions of such a devastating disaster may be on the survivors. People who have lost their homes, their possessions, their livelihoods, their neighborhoods, their friends, their families, may react with a muted awareness, and their sense of security and well-being may be seriously disturbed. Many survivors will want to talk, and they will need to tell of their experiences. We need to listen without judgment and without

interjecting our own tales of “disaster”. It is OK to react with our own emotions – to cry with those affected. **Listening is helping**, so please be ready to listen with open hearts.

It is important to realize that disaster survivors may be unable to make simple decisions regarding themselves, their recovery and their personal property. These survivors may become dependent upon volunteers. Be careful about giving advice. It is best to gently direct survivors to disaster officials, who are better trained to help. Understand that some survivors are unable to help with clean up and repair because they are physically and emotionally exhausted.

Volunteer workers must respect all personal information obtained from disaster survivors. Ask permission before taking photos. Do not accept any gifts or cash from survivors.

**Above all, do not hand out cash to survivors!** See below for appropriate giving avenues.

## **ABOVE AND BEYOND SERVICE**

Travel costs and the time of volunteers are a tremendous contribution. Teams ask us about other ways to assist with the hurricane recovery work. Many of the homes that are being restored have been funded. However, there continue to be homeowners who lack sufficient funding to complete the work. Donations are accepted and appreciated, but in no way are expected.

Groups that want to provide support beyond hands on work can do so by:

- Purchasing Lowe’s or Home Depot gift cards to be used on building sites or at the village.
- Making a monetary donation to PDA, our local partner organizations, or another organization working on the disaster
- Purchase tools, equipment or building supplies to be used at the villages – ask the Village Manager or Worksite Assignment Manager what is needed
- Volunteering to assist at one of the villages for two months or more
- Spreading the word about your trip to your community when you return home
- Recruit volunteers to come as members on a team or as a long-term volunteer in the future!



### **Evacuation**

As thousands of volunteers plan to make their way here during the summer, it is necessary that a plan be in place to ensure their safety and the safety of our staff in the event of another hurricane.

PDA has an evacuation procedure for each village that will be followed in the event of a hurricane or severe tropical storm. Teams on the ground may be asked to assist in the evacuation of the village, or be

sent home if the environment is deemed unsafe. Priority Number One for the Village Managers is the safety of all volunteers at each village. At the time of evacuation, volunteers will be ordered to follow evacuation procedures. PDA will assume no responsibility or liability for any volunteer who willfully refuses to evacuate as ordered.

In addition, incoming teams may be advised to postpone their trips due to dangerous weather conditions. For this reason, **it is important that groups flying into the Gulf consider purchasing travel insurance.** This will allow groups to recoup the cost of their trip or reschedule at minimal (or no) cost.

Team leaders should stay abreast of current weather information prior to the date of the group's trip. If any tropical weather system (depression, storm, or hurricane) is approaching the Gulf of Mexico at that time, team leaders should call the Village Manager to seek guidance.

## **Self Care**

You will be entering a disaster zone of a magnitude that is hard to imagine from seeing it on TV or in photographs. Seeing this type of devastation has a different emotional impact from any other mission you may have been on. In essence, you may experience it as a **traumatic event**. The sense of tragic loss can be powerful, and the scale can be overwhelming.

It is very common, in fact, quite normal, for people to experience emotional aftershocks or stress reactions after experiencing a traumatic event. Sometimes the stress reactions appear immediately after the traumatic event, or they may appear a few hours or a few days later. In some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reactions reoccur. The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks or a few months. Please be mindful of these symptoms in yourself and in your teammates, both during and after the trip, so that appropriate support can be offered.

## SIGNS OF STRESS OR EMOTIONAL AFTERSHOCK

<b>PHYSICAL</b>	<b>COGNITIVE</b>	<b>EMOTIONAL</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shock, numbness</li> <li>• Nausea</li> <li>• Exhaustion</li> <li>• Muscle tremors, aches</li> <li>• Twitches</li> <li>• Chest pain</li> <li>• Rapid heart rate</li> <li>• Headaches</li> <li>• Weakness, Fatigue</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Profuse sweating</li> <li>• Elevated BP</li> <li>• Apathy</li> <li>• Chills</li> <li>• Insomnia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blaming someone</li> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Poor attention</li> <li>• Poor decisions</li> <li>• Poor concentration</li> <li>• Memory problems</li> <li>• Hyper vigilance</li> <li>• Nightmares</li> <li>• Intrusive images</li> <li>• Poor problem solving</li> <li>• Poor abstract thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Guilt</li> <li>• Numbing</li> <li>• Grief and traumatic grief</li> <li>• Denial</li> <li>• Panic feelings, startle response</li> <li>• Emotional shock</li> <li>• Uncertainty</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Apprehension</li> <li>• Intense anger</li> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• Agitation</li> <li>• Loss of emotional control; outbursts</li> <li>• Euphoria</li> <li>• Obsessiveness</li> </ul>
<b>RELATIONAL</b>	<b>BEHAVIORAL</b>	<b>SPIRITUAL</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Withdrawal from family, co-workers, colleagues</li> <li>• Withdrawal from organizations and affiliations</li> <li>• Withdrawal from social and faith-based affiliations</li> <li>• Isolation</li> <li>• Unemployment or underemployment</li> <li>• Discontinuation of educational goals or lack of motivation to attempt</li> <li>• Community involvement or lack of political involvement</li> <li>• Institutional involvement with: Social Security, VA, criminal justice, federal agencies, FEMA, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in speech</li> <li>• Withdrawal</li> <li>• Emotional outbursts</li> <li>• Accident prone</li> <li>• Potential for violence</li> <li>• Suspiciousness</li> <li>• Loss or increase of appetite</li> <li>• Alcohol consumption</li> <li>• Inability to rest</li> <li>• Pacing</li> <li>• Change in sexual functioning</li> <li>• Periods of crying</li> <li>• Proneness to accidents</li> <li>• Recklessness</li> <li>• Non- specific bodily complaints</li> <li>• Hyper-alert to environment</li> <li>• Ritualistic behavior</li> <li>• Criminal behavior; incarceration</li> <li>• Substance abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions about faith</li> <li>• Self-blame</li> <li>• Guilt, survivor guilt</li> <li>• Anger at God</li> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Realization of vulnerability and mortality</li> <li>• Withdrawal from faith and religion</li> <li>• Concern about hereafter</li> <li>• Questions about good and evil</li> <li>• Questioning God</li> <li>• Comfort in knowing deceased is with God</li> <li>• Redefining moral values and intangible priorities</li> <li>• Coping with fear;</li> <li>• Searching for meaning and hope;</li> <li>• Concern about vengeance justice and forgiveness;</li> <li>• Spiritual “awakening” or strengthening of faith and religion</li> <li>• Relying on faith and prayer</li> </ul>

## **PDA RESPONSE to HURRICANES**

**Presbyterian Disaster Assistance** became active on several fronts starting in September 2005:

- Organizing — Supporting Presbyteries in organizing their own response and planning for long-term recovery.
- Shelter — Training and supporting churches that have agreed to become short and long-term shelters for evacuees.
- Work Site Staging — Setting up, and initially running, staging sites for recovery operations with the support of Norwegian Church Aid. PDA worked with the American Baptist Church to direct volunteer teams to our National Call Center to register and to use our worksite staging areas while in the area.
- Care to the Caregivers — Long term pastoral and spiritual care for pastors and church leaders, as well as training for those who will do spiritual care in the community, was developed in the presbyteries affected.
- Organizing PDA to support all of these activities —the PDA National Call Center set up at Ferncliff Camp in Little Rock, AR.
- Water and Sanitation – Working with the Norwegian Church Aid, PDA coordinated the importation from Norway of site engineering technology and expertise for advanced water purification.
- Warehousing – A warehouse was set up in Houston to distribute Personal Hygiene kits and "Hope in a Box" kits for children. The warehouse served evacuees at Texas relocation sites. A second warehouse operation was made operational in Atlanta. A PDA warehouse was built at Ferncliff Camp in Little Rock for PDA storage.

Twenty-two members of the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Team (PDAT) were actively involved in the response.

With help from numerous Presbyterians both within the affected area, and around the country, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) began setting up "Volunteer Villages" in Mississippi and Louisiana that will house volunteers helping in the storm-stricken communities over the long recovery time.



Presbyterians across the nation generously responded to Hurricane Katrina. Thousands of individuals offered their time, talents and treasures to help the disaster survivors. Presbyterian congregations across the country participated in the feeding, housing, and caring for many of the displaced families.

PDA funds were directed to support relief efforts in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and states where Katrina evacuees were relocated. Funds were also provided to Church World Service incorporated as the international refugee resettlement model for providing assistance to Katrina's displaced.

## Presbyterian Disaster Assistance

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance enables congregations and mission partners of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) to witness to the healing love of Christ through caring for communities adversely affected by crisis and catastrophic events.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) is the emergency and refugee program of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. Its core budget including staff and administrative costs is funded through the One Great Hour of Sharing, and its program work additionally funded through designated gifts.

### Presbyterian Disaster Assistance:

- Focuses on the long term recovery of disaster impacted communities
- Provides training and disaster preparedness for presbyteries and synods
- Works collaboratively with church partners and members of the ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together) internationally, and nationally with other faith based responders
- Connects partners locally and internationally with key organizations active in the response — United Nations, NVOAD (National Voluntary Agencies Active in Disaster), World Food Program, Red Cross, FEMA and others
- Manages a number of specialized volunteer teams to work nationally and internationally providing consultation, program design and training
- Cooperates with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services in providing service structure for asylum seekers in the United States
- Cooperates with Church World Service in the resettlement of refugees to the United States

*“Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel.” Philippians 1:27*

### Strategic Vision

We recognize that the task before us is to bring God’s intended wholeness to disaster survivors in order that they may be strengthened and encouraged for the task of rebuilding their communities and livelihoods. We hold before us God’s vision of Shalom. We also recognize that we do not work alone. The task before us is greater than a single

organization or program. It requires commitment to and support of the local community, and cooperation with ecumenical and interfaith councils and agencies that are working in the area.

Most importantly for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the commitment is to strengthen as much as possible the local church and/or council. Many people and organizations come and go during the course of disaster response and recovery, but it is the local church that can become the enduring witness and reminder that love and support was found, help given, and wounds bound up. Therefore, we commit ourselves to equip Presbyterians worldwide to effectively and efficiently serve disaster survivors in Christ’s name so that out of the **chaos of disaster they will find hope.**

Where possible, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance will integrate international work with the International Health Ministries Office in order to be faithful stewards over limited resources and personnel, and in order to incorporate public health issues into its disaster response efforts and training.

We will consolidate our work to strengthen our ministry with a focus on building relationships and capacity. We recognize that we cannot be all things to all people and have an effective ministry; therefore we invite Presbyterians to trust in and support this vision whose purpose is to continue to build and expand the scope of disaster ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

### **Code of Conduct and Professional Standards**

- The humanitarian imperative comes first.
- Aid is given regardless of the race, creed, or nationality of the recipients. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone.
- Aid is not used to further a particular political or religious standpoint.
- We respect culture and custom.
- We build disaster response on local capacities.
- We involve program beneficiaries in the management of relief aid and the recovery.
- We strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs.
- We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to serve and those from whom we accept resources.
- In our information, publicity, and advertising activities, we recognize disaster survivors as dignified humans, not hopeless objects.

### **Principles of Partnership for Work Teams**

We send work teams because an invitation has been extended to us to come and help with the witness to recovery in a particular part of the world or the United States. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance only sets up recovery sites where churches have decided to invite others in to help as they seek to rebuild after disasters. Thus it is the local church partner, council, or faith based organization that has done the assessment, determined the nature of the work, and made all of the arrangements to provide for the arrival of volunteers.

When we accept the invitation to come work, that acceptance also brings responsibility. We are sent into communities as ambassadors of the particular church or council that has issued the invitation. Our behavior and relationships in the community where we work will directly reflect on our partner for good or for bad long after we have left. It is by virtue of our relationship with our partner that we come introduced to communities as an extended branch of the family of faith. We go recognizing the historical mission and ministry of our partners in that area.

*“So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”*  
*Matthew 6:2-4*

We are challenged to consider Christ as our model. Christ emptied himself of all power, of all riches, to come to us humbly in human form. When

we go into communities and then leave special gifts, or change a partner's priorities by funding special programs directly, then in essence we are sending a number of serious messages to that community.

Among the messages we must be careful not to send are the following:

- I have more wealth than you
- I can solve your problems
- I have more resources and should be respected more than the local church, council, etc.



Always we have the choice to either meet our own emotional needs or to choose to humble ourselves in Christ-like simplicity. We make a difference when we see accompaniment as a core value and when we recognize that we have much to learn.

Often the work that we do is not that important, however, being present is. Funds we spend to travel could be used to provide local jobs and income. So why do we go? We go so people will know they are not forgotten, we go to stand alongside and offer encouragement, we go to learn about where God is active in the world, and we go to learn about ourselves by seeing how others find strength and how our partners support them in the process of recovery. We go having a servant's heart.

We must not only seek to serve, but find the grace to accept the warm hospitality and invitation extended to us to be part of a community for a while as they work towards recovery.

### **Material Aid Policy**

- The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Partner who is to receive them must base material aid on a specific request for such materials. This implies that aid will not be sent without prior consent and that donations should be made with full respect for the wishes and the authority of the recipient.
- So that in-kind donations (material aid) benefit the recipient to the maximum extent possible, they must be based on the beneficiaries' expressed needs.
- Material aid will not be sent when the same items are available on the local market and there are funds to purchase them.
- There should be no double standards in quality. If the quality of an item is unacceptable in the donor country (U.S.A.), it is also unacceptable as a donation.
- PDA is not licensed to receive drug donations. We can make referrals to organizations that are licensed to receive and appropriately handle prescription drugs.
- Any material donation to a partner must be accompanied by sufficient funds to cover transportation, handling to distribution point and also all distribution costs.
- Donations of clothing are generally not appropriate for disaster response. Warehouse space and transportation costs must be focused on critically needed supplies