



Puerto Rico

2017 Hurricane

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Disaster

On September 20, 2017, Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico as a high-end Category 4 storm. It was the tenth-most intense Atlantic hurricane on record and is considered the worst natural disaster on record in Puerto Rico. Many residents spent months without power or running water, and it is estimated that it could take up to a year to restore power to everyone. Tens of thousands of homes were damaged or destroyed.

Mennonite Disaster Service

MDS began doing cleanup work in October with small groups of volunteers. Repair work began in January on a limited basis, as we work with engineers to produce roof and house designs for the hurricane and earthquake risks of Puerto Rico. Volunteers will be scheduled on a regular basis when jobs are identified and assessed, and designs are in place for rebuilding.

We welcome prayers for the people in Puerto Rico and those who are working to help in the best ways that we can. MDS is connecting with the Mennonite Church Conferences in Puerto Rico and planning to respond in locations including Utuado, Arecibo, Vega Baja, Cayey, Coamo, Ponce, Aibonito, and others. Volunteer accommodations have been in guest houses and church members' homes.

Please note: Volunteers should be particularly aware and mindful of the diversity of cultures, customs, and faith beliefs in the communities in which they are serving. We require that anyone serving with MDS in Puerto Rico read and sign the Weekly Volunteer Guideline Agreement and take note of the ways that respect is demonstrated while serving. Volunteers might have limited or no electricity, and no running water. Any access to showers could be cold showers. Volunteers should be prepared to be very flexible as the location of work can change from week to week.

Transportation Options

MDS will coordinate travel from the airport in San Juan to the MDS site, and return travel to San Juan. There will likely be just one pick-up and one drop-off at the airport each week, so volunteers should be prepared to wait for everyone in the group to arrive. As soon as travel plans have been made, please send them to Deanna Frey at dfrey@mds.mennonite.net or call (800-241-8111) so that we can coordinate trips. If you need assistance making arrangements, we recommend contacting Golden Rule Travel at 719-550-3599 and talk with Sandy Watkins.