

“Restore Streets to Live in”

PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE RESPONDS QUICKLY TO HURRICANE-RAVAGED PUERTO RICO

Even before Hurricane Maria made landfall in September, Edwin González-Castillo and other Presbyterian leaders in Puerto Rico received promises of help from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA).

Edwin, the stated clerk of the Presbytery of San Juan, says PDA lived up to its word quickly. Days after the storm hit, the first wave of PDA grants arrived and immediately pressing community needs were being met.

In the presbytery, funds were distributed among each of the 15 congregations, and the presbytery matched PDA’s initial funding for community assistance. Desperately needed items such as food, water, diapers and medical supplies were swiftly in the hands of hurricane survivors. “We were able to help families who had lost almost everything,” Edwin says. Maria’s 150 mph winds destroyed homes, infrastructure and vegetation across the island and resulted in the death or injury to many. In addition, Maria left millions without electricity or drinkable water.

Your generosity helped PDA respond immediately after three major hurricanes pounded the United States and/or the Caribbean, a devastating earthquake shook Central Mexico, and raging wildfires wreaked havoc across the Pacific Northwest. One Great Hour of Sharing gifts enabled PDA to mount responses that were timely, nimble and effective.

In Puerto Rico, Presbyterians never doubted that PDA would respond fast, and they know that PDA will remain for the long haul, Edwin says. “The help PDA brings is long-term, and we are grateful that when other groups leave Puerto Rico we will still have PDA giving us a hand.”

Puerto Rican Presbyterians appreciate the prayer support and encouraging words they have received from across the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). When people from the mainland ask them about providing tangible help, Edwin says Puerto Rican Presbyterian leaders have a standard reply: “We tell everybody the best way to help us is through PDA.”

The hurricane response has elevated Presbyterian visibility in Puerto Rican communities, and Edwin expects that denomination’s name recognition will continue to grow as the recovery efforts continue.

“In many places here, Presbyterians are not very well known, but through things like this, when we attend disasters and when our communities get the kind of help PDA is helping to provide, the Presbyterian name becomes familiar and people see that our church is here to help,” Edwin says.

Your gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing enable our church to bear this kind of caring witness in Puerto Rico and around the world. Please give generously.

Let us pray:

*Gracious God,
we pray for the survivors of disasters.
Comfort them as they struggle with
unspeakable grief and the monumental
task of rebuilding their lives.
Help us to extend neighborly love
to them wherever they live.
Amen.*

This Minute for Mission is available online to download/print for your convenience. presbyterianmission.org/oghs/resources