



# PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE

OUT OF CHAOS, **HOPE**

## Principles of Partnership for Work Teams

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We send work teams because an invitation has been extended to us to come and help with the witness to recovery in 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. It is the local church partner 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.

*“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

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 organization 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.

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 an organization's priorities by funding special projects 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, organization, 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, and we go to learn about ourselves by seeing how others find strength and to support them in the process of recovery. We go having a servant's heart. We go to listen to their stories because this is an important part of their healing process.

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.

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