

Tips for preparing for a hurricane

With the approach of Hurricane Irma, here's what you can be doing to prepare yourself and your church for what the massive storm might bring.

While we still do not know the exact track Irma could take, nor the level of damage it could inflict, there's plenty that pastors and other church members can do to make arrangements in advance.

Please share this information with as many people as you can within your church and community. The more information we can get out to more people, the better prepared we will be to respond to whatever need presents itself.

Before the storm

Assistance for people with disabilities

The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies has created a hotline number for people with disabilities in affected areas to call to find services and resources they may need: [800-626-4959](tel:800-626-4959)

For everyone:

- Check in with the elderly, homebound and vulnerable church members and others who might need assistance evacuating or transportation to a shelter.
- Pray for families who are impacted by this disaster through loss of property and livelihood.
- Pray for first responders, Early Response Teams, and all those who put themselves in harm's way to care for the vulnerable in our midst.
- Pray that communities will come together and forge stronger relationships and connections in the recovery process.
- Pray for God's sustaining grace through it all.

For pastors only:

Contact your District Superintendent and [District Disaster Response Coordinator](#) and let them know:

- Whether you plan to evacuate.
- If so, provide information on when and where you will go, how to contact you and your plan and timeline for returning.
- Whether your church will be providing shelter or other resources during the storm. [Click here to complete an Emergency Shelter Assessment.](#)
- Whether your worship services will take place or not.
- Local emergency agencies to let them know what help your church can provide.
- Your church trustees to make sure insurance and other important documents are safe, backed up, or being transported away from danger.
- Church members, to notify them of any changes in your worship schedule or closure.

After the storm

If you need assistance, dial 2-1-1

The United Way's 2-1-1 system is teaming up with Crisis Cleanup, a collaborative disaster work order management platform, to better coordinate the response to needs following a hurricane or other disaster.

The efforts of the South Carolina Conference's Disaster Response and Disaster Recovery ministries and other response agencies will be coordinated through this system to decrease the potential for duplication of efforts.

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For everyone:

- Continue to pray for those affected by the storm and those rushing to help them.
- Check in again with the elderly, homebound and vulnerable church members and others who might need assistance.
- Give generously of your compassion and your financial resources, but please refrain from making unsolicited donations of things like clothing and food. Respond only to identified needs.
- The most direct way to support United Methodist disaster response efforts is to give to the United Methodist Committee on Relief's [Advance U.S. Disaster Response](#), (#901670), which allows UMCOR to respond quickly and appropriately to emergencies in the United States.
- If you want your donation to go directly to relief efforts in our state, give to the [S.C. United Methodist Conference's Disaster Response](#) efforts.
- Consider being trained and volunteering for recovery efforts through United Methodist Volunteers in Mission. Much effort will be required in the coming days and weeks to bring new life into devastated areas. Consider offering your time and talents to that effort.
- Collect UMCOR relief supplies, such as cleaning buckets or health kits. Go to umcor.org to learn how.

For pastors only:

- Contact your District Superintendent and District Disaster Response Coordinator to update your status. Stay in communication with them as your situation develops.
- Check with your church trustees to assess church and parsonage property.
- Assess the needs of your church members.
- Assess the needs of your neighborhood and community.
- Open your church to host volunteer teams, if possible.
- Provide food, laundry showers or other services to volunteers.
- Work with your District Superintendent, United Methodist Early Response Teams and local Emergency Management officials to assess needs in the community that the church can respond to, when appropriate.

Shower trailers needed

With a possible influx of volunteers working clean-up efforts, we are in need of shower trailers. Anyone who has access to a shower trailer that can be loaned or donated to the South Carolina Conference, please contact Disaster Response Coordinator Matt Brodie at mbrodie@umcsc.org or [803-546-1513](tel:803-546-1513).