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2020 Year in Review



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ACT



 **PRESBYTERIAN
DISASTER
ASSISTANCE**

OUT OF CHAOS, HOPE

E12

SUSAN KREHBIEL

Mosaic Musings: a word from the director of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance



What a year ... where do we start? A colleague recently shared a comment from a longtime partner with whom we have worked in disaster response and grants for COVID-19 awareness and sanitation. I was reminded that in many countries in Africa, washing hands is a ceremonial practice observed just before the celebration of a shared meal. The partner said: "Everyone has been telling us to wash our hands, and we are washing our hands all the day long, but where is the food for our meal? We are washing our hands, but we are still hungry."

This statement encapsulates the challenges faced as we have together attempted to address the critical and continuing needs of communities fighting the pandemic while still enduring the devastation of disasters. Stretching resources to meet layered needs of communities across the world was challenging yet also deeply life-giving.

When it became clear that the world was facing an unprecedented outbreak, and that traditional fundraising and outreach would be difficult, we turned to the great cloud of witnesses whose work and generosity have grown PDA from its beginnings until the present day (see pages 10-15). When disaster strikes, many generous donors look at the big picture and send gifts to support both the immediate catastrophe and disasters still to come. Gifts to respond to needs not yet imagined gave PDA a modest nest egg of \$2.7 million that we pulled from reserves for a substantive COVID-19 response, here in the U.S. and globally. We knew the gifts would be small, to serve the broadest number of partners and communities. Decisions about how and to whom to award these grants became clear when we immersed our decision-making in conversations with presbyteries, longtime international partners and colleagues who, along with us, have committed to be a Matthew 25 church. We asked, "Who do you see in the midst of COVID-19 who is hungry? Thirsty? Without a home? Imprisoned in a camp or an unsafe shelter or detention? Who are the strangers in your community who depend on your church's fulfillment of Jesus' invitation in Matthew 25?" Hearing the answers, it was clear how to help and who was best suited in their local context to use the resources for healing and for hope.

It was not long before "the" pandemic became more clearly to all of us a twin pandemic of racism and COVID-19 — and then, a syndemic of racism, COVID-19, systemic poverty and the ongoing ravages of natural and climate-influenced disasters. We are grateful to those who have borne witness to the historic and sinful disparities of access to resources that make many in our communities more vulnerable in seasons of disaster, and all of us more vulnerable as we try to move toward recovery and wholeness. We can never be "recovered" or whole as long as some of us have not been made whole and free. We are only as strong as the least among us: Jesus taught us that and invited us to see their faces when we are looking for his face. I am grateful for the ways I have been shown the face of God throughout this hard and uncertain season. I am grateful for our partners, our churches and for you. In all circumstances, we are not alone. We belong to God, and we belong to each other.

With gratitude,

Laurie Kraus



PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE

OUT OF CHAOS, HOPE

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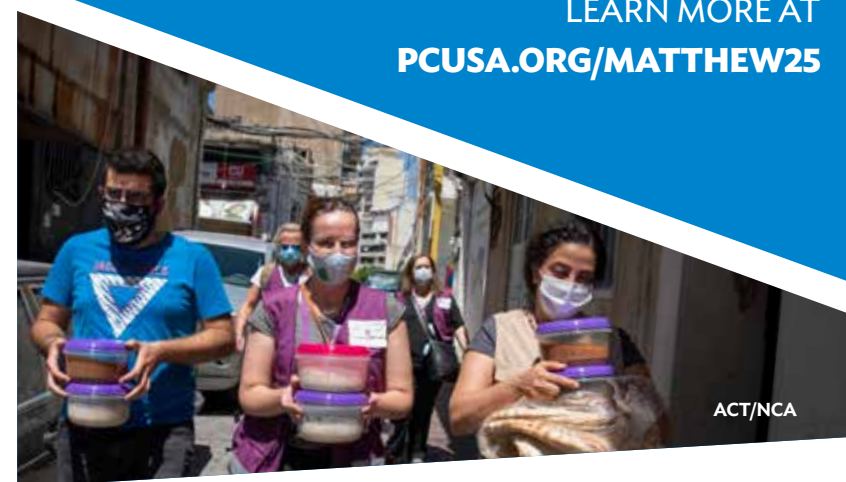
RICHARD CALDWELL



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Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Presbyterian Mission

CORONAVIRUS response

Partners respond to COVID-19 grants with compassion, creativity

By Rich Copley

An unprecedented calamity called for an unprecedented response.

“Every place in the world is impacted,” the Rev. Jim Kirk, Associate for National Disaster Response, said as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded last spring. “I can’t think of a time when an event had impacts across the globe to this degree — every community, every congregation, every partner has been impacted on many levels by the pandemic.”

Whether it was the impact of the disease, or the economic impact of efforts to combat its spread, such as lockdowns and shuttered businesses, or the toll stress and isolation took on mental health, the COVID-19 pandemic faced Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) with a disaster unlike any it had faced before. Even in the most massive disasters, support usually comes from unimpacted areas. But with

COVID-19, there were no unimpacted areas and the need was greater than ever.

So, PDA staff went to work in the early days of the pandemic, setting up a grant program to help congregations and communities, with a focus on marginalized communities that staff knew, from experience, would be hit hardest.

From the start of the pandemic through the end of 2020, the disaster response program gave 476 grants totaling \$3,469,619.28 to 56 countries and 125 Presbyterian mid councils supported in the U.S.

The ministry was able to make such a large contribution thanks to its general fund, which Presbyterians have given to over the years, allowing PDA to use the money where it saw the greatest need.

“There are a lot of Presbyterians and other people in our communities that have been incredibly generous through the years,” PDA Director the Rev. Dr. Laurie Kraus said. “A lot of people give not just in response to a particular disaster, but they give to our general disaster response fund knowing PDA responds to many disasters, not just those everyone hears about, and they trust our discretion.”

“This is the kind of rainy day that requires us to pull from our reserves. Without the Church’s historic generosity and One Great Hour of Sharing, we would not be able to pull \$2.7 million from reserves to respond to COVID-19.”

PDA also facilitated an additional \$300,000 for Matthew 25 Continuity of Ministry Grants of up to \$7,500 to congregations whose survival may be in question due to the impact



Families receive food and personal protective equipment in Yola North, Adamawa State, Nigeria in partnership with CISCOPE.

of COVID-19. The funds were set aside by Presbyterian Mission Agency Executive Director and President the Rev. Dr. Diane Moffett.

Moffett said, “2020 and all that came with it redefined what community means and the Matthew 25 grants were made available to help churches who, during these unprecedented challenges, continued to keep their focus on serving others.”

“Jesus calls us to act boldly and compassionately to serve people who are hungry, oppressed, imprisoned and poor. We wanted to come alongside those churches as they were doing God’s work.”

Kraus said, “Being able to offer grants both for outreach and for internal congregational support is a demonstrable way of balancing self-care with service in our congregations and presbyteries,

as together we face the impact of the pandemic. PDA is grateful to be part of a church that seeks to stand with those most vulnerable and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.”

Loving our neighbors means more, of course, than giving them money. PDA came alongside communities in other ways, quickly offering churches tips on how to safely operate in the midst of a pandemic. PDA did have experience and expert guidance to rely on from responses to Ebola and H1N1. And PDA’s Emotional and Spiritual Care team quickly adapted and offered webinars to promote resilience among faith and community leaders dealing with the spiritual and emotional toll brought about by the pandemic.

PDA staff marvel at the creative ways many grantees used the resources they were given.

Members of Orangewood Presbyterian Church in Phoenix, AZ pack boxes of food and supplies with the Presbytery of Grand Canyon. 1,200 boxes are prepared each month and delivered to the Navajo Nation and the Tohono O’odham Nation.



Top, L-R: delivering essential items to remote areas in Honduras, packaging hygiene kits in Palestine. Bottom L-R: Mercy Community Church packing food kits, distributing masks and hand sanitizer in Nepal.

Susan Krehbiel, Associate for Refugees and Asylum, cites Ridgetop Coffee and Tea in the Washington, D.C., area, a ministry of Riverside Presbyterian Church in Springfield, Virginia, which was being used as a training ground for young adults to enter the food service industry. But when the pandemic closed in-person dining, those people were out of work.

“It was really a community-based project and they had to shut it down,” Krehbiel said, noting its relationships with area farmers and other producers for its café. “The idea they had was because they had tried to keep paying these young adults who were learning the food service industry with this café, there’s also a huge group of day laborers — many of them

undocumented, a lot of them very nervous or for other reasons not able to access public services — and they weren’t working at that time either.

“So they said, ‘What if we took a grant from you all, and then we’re able to repurpose the café, bring everybody back in to do the work socially distanced to keep buying the food from these small farmers who also aren’t having any outlets for selling their goods? And we can do box meals for like 150 day laborers plus their families.’ It’s a really cool melding of congregation, community and vulnerable populations. And it was a pivot of an outreach that they had already had.”

Kirk said PDA worked with many programs across the country focused on serving

marginalized communities, such as the Plowden Mill Road After School Enrichment Program based out of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Alcolu, South Carolina. This program was borne out of the academic needs they witnessed following the March 2020 school closures and supports predominantly African American schoolchildren in grades pre-K through 11.

Kraus says the grant criteria were established in consultation with ministry partners, including fellow One Great Hour of Sharing ministries the Presbyterian Hunger Program and the Committee on the Self-Development of People, as well as Presbyterian World Mission, The office of Racial and Intercultural Justice and the office of Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries.

The Native American community was hit particularly hard by COVID-19, with many communities suffering higher infection and death rates than the broad U.S. population. Several Presbyterian mid councils received grants to support the Native American communities in their areas, including Dakota Presbytery, Navajo Nation and the Wind River Reservation.

In communities where many are employed in fields, some workers were required to continue working in person during the pandemic, despite having little to no access to protective equipment. Kirk recalls grants and work PDA did with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) in Florida to secure personal protective equipment and other help.

“What really caught my attention is how the farmworker population was deemed essential, yet disposable,” Kirk said. “Peace River Presbytery, through partnering with CIW, helped to address that narrative.”

Krehbiel added, “A big focus of CIW is advocacy and to get the governor to recognize the farmworkers as essential workers and needing PPE and everything. They were eventually successful.”

Kraus noted that PDA's relationship with the Immokalee workers started in the group's work with the Presbyterian Hunger Program and

Self-Development of People, again highlighting the collaboration inherent in One Great Hour of Sharing.

The international response to COVID-19 highlighted the ways in which the impact of a global pandemic falls particularly hard on communities already struggling with poverty, repressive governments, natural disasters and other challenges.

“We've heard from partners in countries who were already dealing with a crisis before the pandemic. They are working with communities that may not have access to food and clean water and COVID-19 added an additional layer of uncertainty to an already complex situation. Travel restrictions have limited people's ability to move around freely and those same communities are now being asked to wear masks and wash their hands multiple times a day,” Kraus said.

“Every time I talk about COVID, the image that is burned in my memory is a picture of the church in Honduras delivering food on a donkey,” said the Rev. Edwin González-Castillo, Associate for Disaster Response – Latin America and the Caribbean.

“We think of COVID and say, ‘We are all facing COVID, and we are all facing the same situation.’ Oh, no. Some people can stay in their house and order from Uber Eats. And some people have to get on a donkey and try to bring food to communities in need.”

In Latin America and the Caribbean, water and sanitation issues were front and center, and grants supported projects such as a group of women in Haiti making soap for their community, as well as the purchase of filtration and hygiene supplies, in addition to masks and other protective gear. González-Castillo says that in Haiti, some funds were used simply for a truck to go around broadcasting information about the pandemic.

Central America was also a prime example of the fact that other disasters did not cease because of the pandemic. In November, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua were struck by back-



to-back hurricanes, piling devastating flooding and the loss of housing and food on top of the virus. González-Castillo said people were reluctant to seek shelter for fear of contracting COVID-19.

Kraus said, “Disaster responders always say, when you've responded to one disaster, you've responded to one disaster.”

There were new lessons learned in 2020, as PDA responded to COVID-19. For instance, as the grant program was announced, PDA was differentiating between emergency and long-term recovery grants.

“One of the challenges in making that distinction is that for many in marginalized communities, even months after COVID started, they were still in crisis, still an emergency,” Krehbiel said. “They weren't really in a recovery mode. People were still unemployed, people were still getting sick. So, a lot of the second round of grants we made were short term. Many of them were still providing for very basic needs.”

But the resources were and continue to be needed.

“One of the things that was really interesting in this case is that due to the overwhelming need all over the world, many organizations had challenges allocating resources and partners available to assist, so they were grateful when PDA reached out and offered the possibility to help with some of their projects,” González-Castillo said. “Allocating that amount of funding has been a blessing and, in some cases, the only option for many organizations to be able to assist their communities.”

Kraus said, “So many communities stepped up and stepped in, even though they themselves were suffering. Leaders and communities throughout the world and in the U.S. looked beyond themselves and found ways to have an impact in partnership with folks who were even more vulnerable. Globally, communities that we've had relationships with have really led the way in letting us know how they needed to help themselves.

“It's a privilege that we're able to be a part of that.”

Coalition of Immokalee Workers distributing masks to farmworkers and their families.

PDA responds to climate-related disasters

By Darla Carter | Presbyterian News Service

As climate change continued to fuel natural disasters throughout the United States and around the world in 2020, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance responded with the help of partners and volunteers to bring help and hope to those in affected areas.

On the domestic front, wildfires in the West, hurricanes in the Southeast and catastrophic windstorms in the Midwest were among the events that had significant effects on individuals and property.

“We always have fire seasons. We always have hurricane seasons. But I think climate change has certainly intensified both the wildfire season and the hurricane season,” said the Rev. Jim Kirk, PDA’s Associate for National Disaster Response. For example, “there were seven tropical storms and hurricanes, so seven named storms, that made landfall in South Louisiana.”

Although a travel ban was in effect due to COVID-19 for much of 2020, PDA was able to utilize grants and virtual deployments to assist people in areas such as the Cascades Presbytery of Oregon, which was affected by wildfires.

“Because of the ability to respond virtually (around the country), we were able to be meaningfully engaged in ways that we would not have been able to had all the virtual platforms not been available,” Kirk said. “In other words, if this happened 15 years ago, we would have been limited to conference calls.”

In the U.S., the work of PDA was supplemented by volunteers living in or near areas impacted by disasters, who could provide help with things like storm cleanup without needing lodging or other special accommodations.

“Local volunteers are able to respond in safe,

appropriate ways, (and) in ways that deployed volunteers from out of the impacted area are unable to,” Kirk said.

Beyond the U.S., PDA offered financial support to help partners and communities that struggled to cope with natural disasters, which seemed to be coming in rapid-fire succession.

“When we talk to partners in, for example, South America, Central America, they are not used to having so many hurricanes during the same year,” said the Rev. Edwin González-Castillo, Associate for Disaster Response in Latin America and the Caribbean. “This past year was impactful with the amount of events happening.”

There were major storms, such as Hurricanes Iota and Eta, but also smaller events, and “the flooding was overwhelming,” González-Castillo said.

Droughts were another problem, said PDA Associate for International Program Administration Dayna Oliver and González-Castillo.

“You have severe droughts during one time of the year and then severe flooding another time of the same year,” González-Castillo said. “In a lot of our communities in Latin America and the Caribbean, people survive based on their crops and whatever they can sell, based on what they gathered from their fields,” so when natural disasters hit, the people “don’t have anything either to survive (on) or to sell and provide for their families.”

The people who bear the brunt of climate-related disasters tend to be those who are least able to withstand the impact, according to the Presbyterian Hunger Program. That includes individuals who are dealing with poverty and

hunger. “We know that we can’t talk about some of the environmental issues without looking at the ways in which those environmental issues impact low-income and communities of color,” Jessica Maudlin Phelps, PHP’s Associate for Sustainable Living and Earth Care Concerns, told the Presbyterian News Service in September. “We see the ways in which climate change is impacting BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) communities and poorer communities more deeply than other places.”

Being able to cope with or rebound from climate-related disasters was further complicated by the pandemic, which heightened concerns not only about the coronavirus but food insecurity, Oliver and González-Castillo said.

To slow the spread of the virus, people are told, “Oh, stay home, but we don’t have a home,” González-Castillo said, speaking from the perspective of impacted residents. “There’s a shelter we can go to, but the shelter is full of people, and I don’t know how many of those people are infected (with COVID-19). Stay home, but my home is not safe because it was recently impacted by a disaster, or there’s nothing around me to survive (on) ... so, it’s really a

horrible combination of things happening all around the world.”

Presbyterian Mission Agency Communications Strategist Rich Copley contributed to this article.



CZU

Wildfires rage in Santa Cruz, California.



ACT/SEAN HAWKEY

Survivors evacuate flooding as a result of Hurricane Eta in Honduras

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From **building relationships** to building back better, PDA increasingly **emphasizes preparedness**

By Rich Copley

Hurricane Irma was taking aim at Puerto Rico in the summer of 2017, and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) staff was trying to contact Presbyterian leadership on the island.

PDA eventually reached the Rev. Edwin González-Castillo, Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of San Juan, and let him know that the Church stood ready to help with anything they needed in the wake of the storm. That was the extent of contact, until a few weeks later when, after Irma had skirted the northern part of the island, Hurricane Maria dealt Puerto Rico a direct hit that the U.S. territory is reeling from to this day. That began a process of engagement that has continued and grown in ensuing years.

“Now, you know, we’re all on speed dial,” said the Rev. Jim Kirk, Associate for National Disaster Response. “We have policies and

protocols and procedures and understanding. So just having that disaster preparedness infrastructure within the presbyteries and synod is an incredible advantage in terms of our ability to assess and for the denomination to support.”

In recent years, PDA has been working to be similarly proactive across the country and around the world in its disaster preparedness so that response to catastrophic events is the continuation of a standing and trusted partnership as opposed to a getting-to-know-you experience. Establishing ongoing relationships also allows PDA to work with communities to prepare for disasters and reduce their impact.

“We purposely respond to immediate needs, but then look to long-term recovery, and beyond that, mitigation,” Kirk said. “It is important to remember that immediate relief is crucial, because people do need to be fed and sheltered and do need immediate attention. And we’re grateful for all of those organizations. But we also recognize the need to have resources available, once recovery is well underway, as communities not only clarify their needs, but clarify how to build back better.”

That, Kirk said, is where donors to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and One Great Hour of Sharing can see that their gifts have real long-term benefits.

It’s a subject that takes him back to Puerto Rico, the municipal island of Vieques off the



KINO BORDER INITIATIVE



ACT/SEAN HAWKEY



ACT/SEAN HAWKEY

In Honduras, survivors of Hurricane Eta move debris.

territory's east coast. In the days after Maria, the island was cut off from the mainland when electricity went out. But now, with support from PDA, partners on the island are creating a solar-powered emergency electrical supply to help with things like communication and keeping food and medicines refrigerated.

On the mainland in San Juan, where some homes still had tarps for roofs years after the storm, PDA partnered with Fideicomiso de la Tierra Caño Martín Peña to repair roofs with sturdier roofing designed to stand up to hurricane-force winds, so residents could breathe a little easier when storms stalk the island.

“It makes a powerful statement to say that gifts given in 2017 are still having great benefit, not only in 2021, but for decades to come, literally,” Kirk says.

International disaster response can present different challenges, and flexibility is critical. Dayna Oliver, Associate for International Program Administration, says that in places

like Africa, PDA has been able to work with long-term, trusted partners such as RELUFA in Cameroon, which has in recent years had to shift its focus from hunger programs to humanitarian aid for displaced people.

“Sheku Sillah, who is our regional staff person for Africa and Asia, has worked with them to build their capacity for humanitarian response,” Oliver said. “Like RELUFA, many partners over the years had to shift their focus, depending on what the need was within the communities that they serve. PDA has worked over the years with partners to fill in the gaps through trainings and other capacity-building methods.” In a report from RELUFA, Coordinator Jaff Bamenjo shares, “Collaboration with PDA in emergency humanitarian assistance has proven to be an important hallmark in the work RELUFA has been doing in Cameroon, as so many lives have been touched directly through support in provision of basic needs, nutrition, funds for petty trading and skills training for vulnerable people. RELUFA staff have in the process benefited from training and acquired skills



FEMA/JOCELYN AGUSTINO

in humanitarian intervention, which now is a component of work it has embraced as an organization.”

Susan Krehbiel, Associate for Refugees and Asylum, shares how PDA's refugee ministry partners have had to pivot over the past few years with various policy changes and most recently in response to COVID-19. “Since

2015, the San Fernando Valley Refugee Children Center (SFVRCC), in the Presbytery of San Fernando, has welcomed hundreds of unaccompanied children and families who have made the perilous journey from Central America to seek refuge in Los Angeles County. SFVRCC helps them transition to life in the U.S. by providing the necessary services to survive as well as connections with individuals

Blue tarps on roofs can be seen for months to years after a disaster.



RELUFA

RELUFA Coordinator Jaff Bamenjo greets beneficiaries.



The island of Vieques in Puerto Rico had many unnamed streets, making emergency response difficult. One long-term project has focused on naming the streets and installing street signs.

who went through similar experiences yet have since found ways to create their own happy family, home, career and life. Clearly SFVRCC could never have predicted the pandemic, but their pivot to support those they serve shows their dedication and imagination. Because of COVID-19, the SFVRCC has had to work harder and more creatively to aid their vulnerable clients. Remaining connected; continuing to provide mental, emotional and legal support; helping meet food and other basic needs; and financially assisting families are crucial areas in which the SFVRCC staff and volunteers have been called upon to help — all while staying at home themselves.”

In the Middle East, longtime PDA partners in Syria have seen the benefit of just these types of relationships as the country has fallen into the worst economic situation in more than 100

years due to U.S. sanctions and the COVID-19 pandemic.

“People are able to have food because of the church and the partners of the church,” said the Rev. Salam Hanna of the Presbyterian Church of Latakia, Syria. “They were with us from the very beginning when PDA, the Outreach Foundation, the churches, the European churches, the American churches, all stood with our synod or people, sending support, coming to visit us, entering Syria and Damascus when it was under conflict from the groups surrounding the city. We experienced that we really are not alone. We have sisters and brothers who are not only with us financially but with us physically, by visiting, by coming every now and then, by communicating, by knowing our stories and telling our stories. We experience the presence of Christ through our sisters and brothers and through their support.”

COVID-19 has limited the visitation portion of PDA’s ministry, as PC(USA) staff were under a travel ban for most of 2020 and that remains in place as 2021 starts. But relationships have remained strong through previous contacts, which has been important as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded.

Since Maria, González-Castillo has joined PDA as Associate for Disaster Response – Latin America and the Caribbean and spent the past several years establishing contacts in the region, sometimes joining in established partnerships by other One Great Hour of Sharing ministries the Presbyterian Hunger Program and Self-Development of People (SDOP).

“When COVID happened, we didn’t have to wait or start looking for partners,” González-Castillo said. “We were able to reach out and say, ‘We want to see how we can help your communities.’ And many of these partners, for the first time working with us, sent us requests. Some had a relationship with SDOP or the Hunger Program. But some of them were new to us. We already knew about them, but we hadn’t had a project going on with them.”

From Syria to Central America, PDA has also partnered with Presbyterian World Mission,



SCOTT PARKER

Syrian children in school during a visit PDA made in 2017.

which has been helpful in situations such as the recent back-to-back hurricanes in Central America. Unable to travel there to assess the situation himself, González-Castillo has been in regular contact with mission co-workers to find out how PDA can best assist.

“Sometimes we just have what we’re reading on the phone, on the feeds, and we read stories in the newspaper, but we don’t know the background,” González-Castillo said. “When you have people in the region who know what is happening, you get a better grasp of the situation in the communities.”

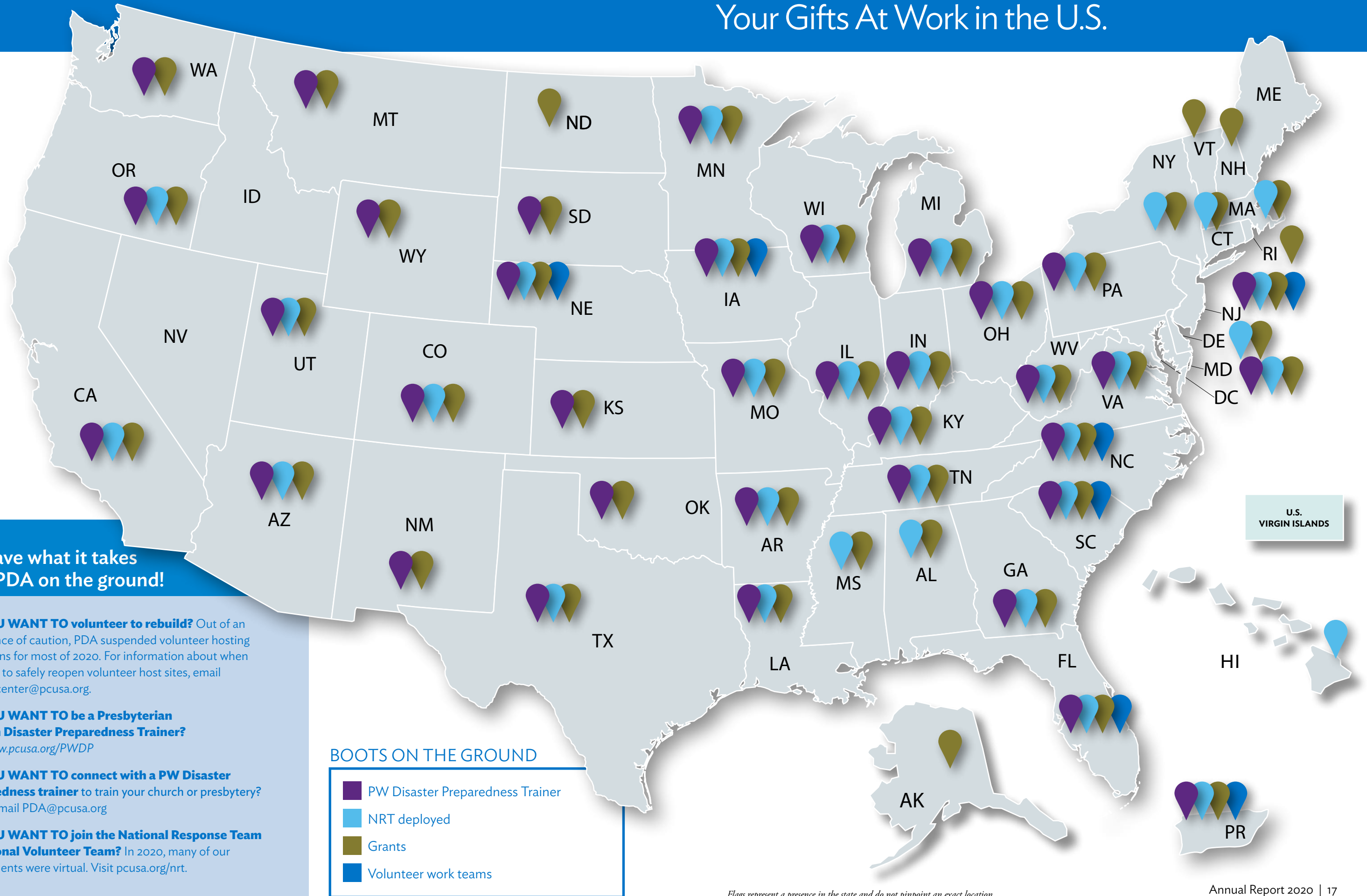
In the United States, Kirk also sees presbyteries stepping into a more proactive role in preparing for disaster, in some ways a product of major disasters such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005, which showed the impact proactive recovery efforts and preparedness can have.

“Where presbyteries have functioning disaster response committees, PDA can respond in a more timely, effective and efficient manner,” Kirk said. “PDA has been working on this, and it is definitely something that came out of the hurricane season of 2017. We’re looking to help develop, in partnership with mid councils (synods and presbyteries), regional and local disaster preparedness and response networks.”

Last year clearly demonstrated the importance of preparedness, as 2020 saw record numbers of hurricanes, wildfires and other natural disasters.

“We had a historic hurricane season and a historic fire season,” Kirk said. “And I believe this disturbing trend will continue. We all know the definition of insanity, doing the same thing and expecting different results. We must be smarter and help communities build back better.”

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DO YOU WANT TO volunteer to rebuild? Out of an abundance of caution, PDA suspended volunteer hosting operations for most of 2020. For information about when we hope to safely reopen volunteer host sites, email pda.callcenter@pcusa.org.

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DO YOU WANT TO join the National Response Team or National Volunteer Team? In 2020, many of our deployments were virtual. Visit pcusa.org/nrt.

Flags represent a presence in the state and do not pinpoint an exact location

Facts & Figures

United States

Total dollars granted: **\$4,918,829**



 **Hurricanes**
60 grants, 14 NRT deployed*

 **Floods**
5 grants, 2 NRT deployed

 **Human-Caused Disaster/Trauma**
1 grant, 5 NRT deployed

 **Tornadoes**
7 grants, 12 NRT deployed

 **COVID-19:**
380 grants, 137 NRT deployed to facilitate faith leader resilience webinars

 **Fires**
16 grants, 21 NRT deployed

 **Derecho**
11 grants, 7 NRT deployed

 **Refugee ministry**
12 grants, 5 NRT deployed

 **Earthquake**
7 grants, 4 NRT deployed



In 2020, we were inspired by Presbyterians who wanted to safely help their neighbors in the aftermath of disasters. “Commuter volunteers” are volunteers within driving distance of rebuilding efforts — since they don’t need overnight accommodations, this allowed for the following of COVID-19 regulations. This program was successful in South Carolina after the spring tornadoes and in Iowa after the August derecho.

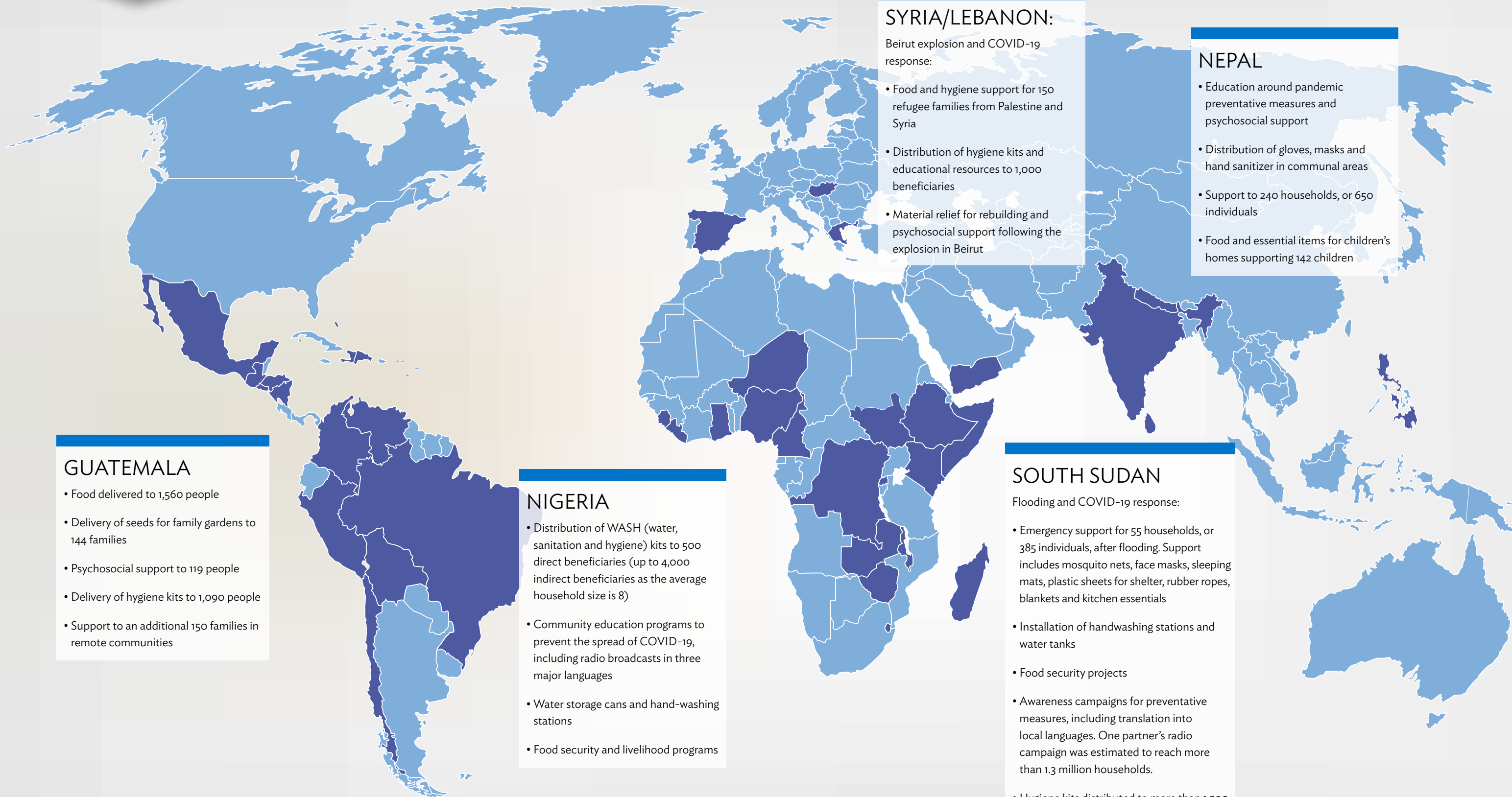
*The PDA National Response Team consists of about 100 members who represent PDA and the PC(USA) in the field following a disaster. They provide support to presbyteries and synods as they assess the impact of the disaster on both the church and the community, and they assist in connecting presbyteries to recovery resources. Through most of 2020, NRT members were deployed virtually.

THIS PAGE HIGHLIGHTS ONLY A FEW PROJECTS FROM THIS YEAR. Visit pcusa.org/PDA for more information

Your Gifts At Work Internationally

Total amount granted: \$1,609,486.76

In 2020, PDA responded to disasters in 56 countries outside the U.S. Dark blue indicates a country that received assistance.



GUATEMALA

- Food delivered to 1,560 people
- Delivery of seeds for family gardens to 144 families
- Psychosocial support to 119 people
- Delivery of hygiene kits to 1,090 people
- Support to an additional 150 families in remote communities

NIGERIA

- Distribution of WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) kits to 500 direct beneficiaries (up to 4,000 indirect beneficiaries as the average household size is 8)
- Community education programs to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including radio broadcasts in three major languages
- Water storage cans and hand-washing stations
- Food security and livelihood programs

SYRIA/LEBANON:

Beirut explosion and COVID-19 response:

- Food and hygiene support for 150 refugee families from Palestine and Syria
- Distribution of hygiene kits and educational resources to 1,000 beneficiaries
- Material relief for rebuilding and psychosocial support following the explosion in Beirut

NEPAL

- Education around pandemic preventative measures and psychosocial support
- Distribution of gloves, masks and hand sanitizer in communal areas
- Support to 240 households, or 650 individuals
- Food and essential items for children's homes supporting 142 children

SOUTH SUDAN

Flooding and COVID-19 response:

- Emergency support for 55 households, or 385 individuals, after flooding. Support includes mosquito nets, face masks, sleeping mats, plastic sheets for shelter, rubber ropes, blankets and kitchen essentials
- Installation of handwashing stations and water tanks
- Food security projects
- Awareness campaigns for preventative measures, including translation into local languages. One partner's radio campaign was estimated to reach more than 1.3 million households.
- Hygiene kits distributed to more than 1,500 households

Got a film for that? Story Ministry has built a catalog of resources

By Rich Copley

If a Presbyterian church is interested in discussing gun violence, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance's Story Productions has a film for that: "Trigger: The Ripple Effect of Gun Violence" (2014).

Immigration issues? PDA has a few films, including "Locked in a Box" (2016), a look at immigration detention in the U.S. Environmental issues? You might look to "Flint: The Poisoning of an American City" (2019), covering an environmental topic that just popped back into the headlines at the beginning of 2021.

And racism? The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in a collaboration with the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Office of General Assembly, just released a new series, "Trouble the Water: Conversations to Disrupt Racism and Dominance" last year, and Associate for Story Ministry David Barnhart will tell you that racism is a theme that runs through many, if not all, of the Story Productions films.

After more than a decade, Barnhart has developed a significant catalog of films, an endeavor that grew out of his twin passions for ministry and filmmaking fused with his work years ago as an associate with PDA in Mexico and Central America.

"I feel like our faith is rooted in story," Barnhart said. "Story was a core part of Jesus' mission and ministry. When he was challenged, when he was pushed, when he wanted to lift up issues of marginalization or dehumanization, he would use stories, he would use parable, and I think that's a really core part of our work. That's part of our calling as Christians, to be people who are connected through and see their faith through the lens of story and through narrative."

PDA Director the Rev. Dr. Laurie Kraus says the documentaries play an important role in the ministry's work and the church.

"PDA's Story Ministry keeps the story of survivors and their communities alive and provides a space of dignity for survivors to tell their own stories in their own way, rather than be the objects of someone else's pity or charity," Kraus says. "Story Ministry explores these stories in the context of their full complexity and invites those of us who watch and pray to step into appropriate roles of accompaniment and advocacy."

"The films and their accompanying study guides invite congregations and communities to come alongside survivors and their communities in respectful and transformative ways. They keep important stories demanding systemic cultural change before our eyes and in our hearts, and are a vital element of PDA's commitment to participate in the full cycle of disaster response and recovery, mitigating the effects of current disasters, effecting change to prevent future disasters, and centering the stories, needs and hopes of survivors."

Those human stories are essential to getting to the truth in the films, and they are also a key



to maintaining their relevance. "Trigger," for instance, preceded some of the United States' most notorious mass shootings, including the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, that took the lives of 17 students and faculty, and the 2017 Las Vegas concert shooting that killed 60 people and wounded 411. But the film wasn't about the headlines.

"'Trigger' was about the human impact of gun violence," Barnhart says. "What is that human impact? We don't talk about it. We see these headlines every day about shootings and oftentimes we just kind of skim over it. We don't think about how behind every headline, there's a sibling mourning at home, a doctor in the ER seeing this devastation every day, the teachers that are losing their students. There's this whole ripple effect where hundreds of people are affected by one shooting. That's behind the headlines. That's something that they don't talk about. So, with 'Trigger,' that's what we tried to do."

While most of the situations Barnhart approaches have made headlines, Barnhart says he and editor Scott Lansing work to keep those from coloring the story they ultimately tell. He also says they are very interested in untold and under-told stories that are important but have not been before national audiences.

Most visits to communities they are considering working in start with simple conversations. No cameras. And even when the cameras come out and the lights go on, an interview can be just a step toward deeper truths. That is a process that continued in 2020, even as the COVID-19 pandemic grounded Barnhart, along with all other PC(USA) staff.

Barnhart was exploring several projects and making initial visits early in the year before everything came to a halt. But he has tried his best to keep going, preparing projects for the day he can get back out behind the camera.

"It's been a challenge, just to do interviews on Zoom," Barnhart says. "It's just not the same. There's something about being in the room with someone and having a conversation. You kind of create this safe space where you're both sharing.

"It's tough to be sitting in your bedroom or in your living room doing this work. There's something that's just not the same about it. So, we are trying to adjust and have been doing virtual screenings and interviews. It's not how you want to do it, but it is the reality."

In addition to the world of filmmaking, COVID-19 has also changed the world of film distribution, closing many theaters and group exhibition venues and putting a stronger focus on streaming services. "Flint" and "Trigger," for instance, are both available on Amazon Prime and other streaming platforms. Barnhart says for the films to be effective they need to be aware of the shifting distribution channels, particularly as the films have successfully made their way into the mainstream film festival and documentary communities.

That is all rewarding, Barnhart says, but the goals remain the same.

"We're just going to keep focusing on these films as resources and using them for community engagement," he says. "That's our goal. We want these films to be resources for churches and communities to engage these issues."

A mural at Pojoaque Valley High School in New Mexico, one of many communities affected by gun violence. The mural was a project by New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence.



Refugee Ministries: Stepping Out in Faith

BY SUSAN KREHBIEL AND JEN LOCKARD

Forced to leave their homes and their countries, migrants often set out on journeys with a vague understanding of where they are headed. Refugees and asylum seekers know that even when the physical route itself is direct, their metaphorical journey is much less certain.

People who accompany refugees and migrants, either in transit or in their final destinations, also embark on a journey of sorts. Through these encounters — whether offering short-term respite, nourishment to those passing through, or volunteering to assist someone settling in a new community — their paths cross and their journeys become entwined.

Providing support from the national office, PDA is a long-distance partner on these journeys. Long distance because we provide support from afar, assisting from a different vantage point. But more importantly, because we are there to accompany our partners over time, to “go the distance” with them as their ministries evolve and shift to address changing circumstances.

Last year challenged all of us to take risks and explore fresh roads to ministry to meet the combined threats of displacement and the pandemic. It brought new relationships and deepened existing ties. It determined our priorities in how and when to expend our financial and personnel resources. And through it all, we saw the hand of God at work. In the sections that follow, we share how refugee ministries continue to evolve and the work of PDA evolves with them.

THE EVOLUTION OF REFUGEE MINISTRY

Our long-standing partnerships with ministries in Southern California have grown considerably since 2014, when PDA reinvested in refugee and asylum ministries. That fall, much of the country’s attention was on the unaccompanied children and young families from Central

America arriving at our southern border. Following a consultation with Presbyterians in the southwest, PDA began working directly with the Presbytery of the Pacific in the Los Angeles area, one of the key destinations for these children and families. With PDA support and encouragement, the Presbytery of the Pacific stepped out into this new ministry.

As we became more involved, other presbyteries soon invited PDA to partner with them to expand refugee and asylum ministries in their respective regions. By 2019, PDA was partnering with Los Ranchos, San Gabriel and San Fernando Valley presbyteries, and in 2020 welcomed Riverside Presbytery.

In each of these five presbyteries, different priorities and needs lie beneath the surface, resulting in distinct strategies. For example, Pacific mobilizes Presbyterians to join interfaith advocacy and is a lead partner with the Ecumenical Collaboration of Asylum Seekers (ECAS) to prepare congregations to receive asylum seekers. San Gabriel is focused on education and expanding the number of Presbyterian churches active in immigrant ministry. Like Pacific, they have joined in detention visitation and establishing host churches to accompany asylum seekers. Riverside’s participation is crucial due to Adelanto Detention Center’s presence within their bounds, offering logistical support to volunteers from the other presbyteries and key transitional assistance to those released from detention. Other presbyteries serve most effectively by providing support to partners with an existing ministry, such as San Fernando. PDA provides support to each presbytery, allowing them to meet unprecedented demands and opportunities for ministry.

NEW APPROACHES AND NEW PARTNERS

As highlighted on pages 2-7, the impact of



ALICIA MACIAS

ALICIA MACIAS

STEPHEN MELKISETHIAN

BROOK BINKOWSKI



Protesting the Muslim Ban in 2018

FOOTNOTE

- 1. FRANCO, PATLER AND REITER
- 2. BLACK ALLIANCE FOR JUST IMMIGRATION

COVID-19 on the health and economic survival of immigrant communities was evident in the high proportion of grant requests we received from immigrant congregations and worshiping communities. What we have learned from the COVID-19 grant cycles and the contacts we have made will help inform our work for years to come.

COVID-19 wasn't the only major news story of 2020. George Floyd's death saw a dramatic increase in racial justice and civil rights protests across the country and brought Black Lives Matter to the global stage. As the summer progressed, the U.S. grappled with its long-term commitment to systemic racism, which upholds racial inequality and leads to discrimination in housing, education, criminal justice, employment, health care and immigration policies. The call for racial justice has been a clarion call for PDA to be more intentional in addressing the impact of racism in immigration policy and in the way we respond. For years, media attention on immigration enforcement has focused primarily on Mexicans and Central Americans. In fact, according to research done by the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services, nearly half of all families locked up by Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) in March–June 2020 were Haitian. In addition, if Haitians are declared eligible for a release bond, the bond will average 54% more than those of other immigrants, making Haitians more likely to remain in jail. In reality, Haitians

were 2020's largest detained nationality. And, while detention is never a good experience, ICE is especially hard on Black immigrants: They are six times more likely to be sent to solitary confinement¹ and make up 20% of those facing deportation — with most deportations due to minor offenses.²

As a member of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, PDA (and other PC[USA] offices) advocated with Haitian Bridge Alliance and Shut Down Berks Interfaith Witness to end family detention and to reunite families. We joined interfaith efforts to end immigration detention in Georgia where ICE-contracted prisons have the highest rate of COVID-19 infections in the country and widespread medical abuse. In both instances, immigrants of color have been the most impacted.

Black and Central American refugees face different challenges, both while in detention and once they are released into the U.S. That is why we are called to support faith initiatives such as ECAS (mentioned above) that allow for immigrant-centered, immigrant-led, immigrant participatory (“not for us without us”) models that challenge the white savior/white supremacy Christian church model of asylum hospitality in the United States.

NEW GUIDANCE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Scripture has many calls to welcome the stranger, so it is no surprise that the modern-

day practice of welcoming refugees and asylum seekers to the U.S. has its roots in churches, synagogues, and ecumenical and interfaith task forces. And yet, what was once understood as a source of national pride and core to our Christian teaching — to embrace those who yearn to breathe free — has become a topic of debate. In today's world, we cannot expect welcome to just happen; it takes intention and preparation.

As we approached the end of 2020, it was clear that we would soon have a chance to rebuild the U.S. refugee resettlement program and we needed to get the word out. Knowing where to begin can be challenging for churches interested in organizing a Welcome Team to accompany refugees. To assist congregations as they navigate what could be a long period, PDA created *Preparing Welcome*³, a new guide that explores different aspects of the refugee experience as well as outlines actions that congregations can take in preparation for their arrival. Laying this groundwork encourages groups to assess their strengths and weaknesses and to enter this type of cross-cultural ministry with our eyes open to learn from those whom we seek to serve and be guided by their vision.

SAVING ASYLUM

Changes in the United States' asylum policies over the past four years have created multiple barriers for bona fide refugees seeking legal protection. These sweeping changes do not allow for adequate consideration of the individual stories, increasing their risk of harm in Mexico or U.S. detention centers. Each has made the arduous journey because they are desperate for a life in the U.S. where they and their families can survive and thrive. Most have experienced threats, violence, and persecution in their home country as well as in Mexico. If these people are forced to return home, the possibility is great that they will eventually be put to death.

In the face of the U.S. government's abandonment of the basic right to seek asylum, the Kino Border Initiative (KBI), located in the twin cities of Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales, Mexico (collectively known as Ambos Nogales), found a unique way to bear witness as part of a campaign to Save Asylum. Established in

2009 by six Catholic partner groups on either side of the border, KBI provides for migrants' immediate needs and promotes U.S.-Mexico border and immigration policies that affirm the dignity of the human person and encourage a spirit of binational solidarity. In 2020, several ecumenical and interfaith partners, including Presbyterians in both de Cristo and Grand Canyon presbyteries, joined KBI in their advocacy.

Centered around individuals seeking asylum who have been held for months in Mexico, the KBI Save Asylum coalition assisted them in documenting and reading aloud testimonies from both sides of the border wall. By sharing them on social media, their stories of persecution can reach everyone, including those in political power. Starting with their first event in August 2020, KBI's Save Asylum events have been broadcast live from Ambos Nogales, and videos of past events are shared on their Facebook page. All the testimonials KBI gathers at Ambos Nogales will be added to the asylum testimonial exhibit in the archives of the Holocaust History Center at the Jewish History Museum in Tucson.

CONCLUSION

Life can be challenging at the best of times, but 2020 demanded more of us than anyone could have predicted. From January onward, the bombardment of bad news left many shell-shocked: Large numbers of Americans found themselves with no roof over their heads; no jobs to provide for their families; no way to cope with the pandemic; and no way to hide from the systemic racism that informs the lives of our BIPOC siblings. It might seem counterintuitive to turn our focus away from our national discomfort right now and toward the government's rulings on immigration and resettlement, but there's no better time to acknowledge our shared humanity and recognize the personhood of every person waiting in detention. They, too, long for a better life in the U.S. PDA invites you to join us as we continue our mission to provide humanitarian assistance to all refugee families with basic needs, legal orientations and family reunification assistance as we advocate for more humane treatment by the U.S. government.

FOOTNOTE

- 3. THE PREPARING WELCOME GUIDE CAN BE FOUND AT PCUSA.ORG/PDA/REFUGEE UNDER THE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT SECTION.



RICHARD CALDWELL

RICHARD CALDWELL

JOHN ENGLART

ACT ALLIANCE NCCP

ACT/NCCP

ACT/MECC

2020 in Review

In 2020, because of your generous support, PDA was able to grant more than **\$6.5 million** across the globe; **support 523 work team volunteers** who, prior to COVID-19 lockdowns, helped rebuild communities affected by disaster; launch the commuter volunteer program, which was successful thanks to Presbyterians on the ground who wanted to help their neighbors; **deploy 210 National Response Team members** to **52 presbyteries** (virtual deployments started in March); develop **4 new congregational resources** to educate and guide congregations in their local refugee and asylum ministries; host more than **700 people** in **55 Emotional & Spiritual care webinars** and meetings; **train 12 new Presbyterian Women Disaster Preparedness Trainers**, bringing the total to **179 trainers** across the U.S.; amass more than **1 million streams** of Flint: The Poisoning of an American City on Amazon Prime; and with Church World Service, aid in the collection and distribution of **101,472 Gift of the Heart Kits and blankets.** **THANK YOU!**



**PRESBYTERIAN
DISASTER
ASSISTANCE**

OUT OF CHAOS, HOPE



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YOU SHALL BE CALLED REPAIRERS OF THE BREACH

— ISAIAH 58

As Jesus says in Matthew 25, the Church belongs with those in need — whether it is offering relief from natural disasters or the ravages of war; access to food, water and healthcare; or coping with the pandemic.

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MATTHEW 25
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