

***“When through the deep waters I call thee to go,  
Thy rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;  
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,  
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress”.***

Dear Friends,

The words from that favorite old hymn have been playing through my mind as I have listened to the vividly painful stories of Hurricane Florence. Those of us who experienced Sandy know how quickly lives and communities can be affected. I have been moved by what I have seen, as I am sure you have been too. And thinking about what we might be able to do to help. The article that follows this will give you an idea of how our congregations in the South have been affected and how the greater Episcopal Church is responding.

I ask you to pray for our churches and her people. And do more than pray. I urge us to come together to show support (do we not know how much this means to those in such distress?). Community resources are bound to be scarce and the needs are so great. It seems like just yesterday that we were busy providing food to St. Mark’s Soup Kitchen along with clothing, bedding, and whatever else might be requested. We had one vestry person whose sole focus was helping with housing needs in our area.

We have urged our members to donate to ERD (Episcopal Relief and Development) but I would like us to do more. It just so happens that the Reverend Bill Thomas who has just retired from our sister church Christ Church, Middletown, and his wife Edna Marie, are in the process of building a house in New Bern where they have family (they tell me their house has been unaffected, which is a great relief to us all). They finish up in Middletown September 30th, and will be moving down the next week. I am in conversation with them about how we might partner with a church (or churches) in New Bern in the months to come. I would like to form a committee which can give some thought and prayer as to what we might do. ***If this is something the Lord is laying on your heart, please let me know.*** You can email me or leave a message with the office. In the meantime, below is an article published by the ENS.

Peace,  
Mother Lisa+

## **The Episcopal Churches in the Carolinas assess damage, offer help after Hurricane Florence**

(By David Paulsen, Episcopal News Service, Posted September 17, 2018) The storm has moved on, but the impact from Hurricane Florence still is being felt by the dioceses, congregations and Episcopalians in the Carolinas as they deal with power outages, downed trees, flooded neighborhoods and impassable roads.

The bishops of the five Episcopal dioceses in North and South Carolina issued a joint statement Sept. 15 pledging their support for those affected by the storm and asking for Episcopalians everywhere to help by giving to Episcopal Relief & Development.

“We are assessing the damage to our communities, which as you will know from news reports, varies widely. Conditions will continue to change for days due to rising rivers,” the bishops said. “We are blessed by your prayers and assurances of support and give thanks to God for you. As the Body of Christ, you give us tremendous strength and encouragement.”

[At least 23 people have died](#) in North and South Carolina due to the storm, which brought hurricane-force winds as it made landfall early Sept. 15 near Wilmington, North Carolina. The storm weakened as it continued west, but flooding remains a threat, even days later. [Hundreds of roads were still closed Sept. 17](#), including parts of Interstate 40 and Interstate 95.

Each Episcopal diocese has been in regular contact with Episcopal Relief & Development while coordinating pastoral response with clergy members. The storm forced many congregations to cancel Sunday services on Sept. 16, and lists of closures are being updated day to day.

The Episcopal Church in South Carolina, which encompasses the coastal half of the state, reported that [at least 15 of its congregations had canceled services](#). Bishop Skip Adams postponed a visit to St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Kingstree "due to the likelihood that the road near the church may not be passable on Sunday."

The Diocese of East Carolina is updating its "hurricane hub" webpage with the latest information about the storm's aftermath, including the continued closure of the Diocesan House in Kinston. [On its Facebook page](#), the diocese is sharing highlights of the post-Florence experience of its congregations, located in North Carolina's coastal region.

One photo shows a large tree that split and toppled on church property at St. James Episcopal Church in Wilmington. The tree did not appear to have hit the church building. St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Currituck, North Carolina, posted a photo of the message that now is displayed on its sign: "Welcome back. We made it out fine. Pray for the rest of N.C." Trinity Episcopal Church in Chocowinity, North Carolina, shared a photo of its Sunday service on Sept. 16, attended by about a half dozen members who were able to make it to the church safely. "In spite of no electricity, our small family was able to Worship God and pray for all of those less fortunate. We continue to keep our Trinity Family in our prayers as well as all who are affected by the hurricane," the Facebook post said.

Members of Church of the Servant in Wilmington worked last week to secure the church building and to wrap furniture in plastic before Hurricane Florence hit. The Rev. Jody Greenwood, the church's rector, reported Sept. 17 that the property appeared to be in good shape after the storm. "I stopped by the church this morning and we do have power. Tree debris and some fence panels are down, but nothing major in the yard," [she said on Facebook](#).

The Diocese of North Carolina, which includes the central third of the state, [sent an email newsletter to its members](#) on Sept. 17 noting that the scope of the disaster is still being assessed. So far, its congregations have reported no major damage from the storm. It also will be working with clergy members to plan relief efforts. Volunteers will be needed, the diocese said, but it asked members not to go to the affected areas on their own until the precise needs are confirmed. In the meantime, donations are welcome.

Episcopal Relief & Development said before Florence made landfall that it was working with 11 dioceses on response plans. [During the disaster recovery, it will work](#) "to equip congregational and diocesan leadership with critical tools and resources as they prepare to serve the most vulnerable communities impacted by the storm."

Some of the worst flooding from the storm happened in the city of New Bern, North Carolina, which is northeast of Wilmington and sits on the Neuse River near where it empties into the Atlantic Ocean. More than 4,300 homes and more than 300 businesses in the city [reportedly were damaged](#).

Christ Church, the Episcopal congregation in New Bern, reported that the church property made it through the storm without sustaining serious damage, but it called members of the congregation together Sept. 17 for an [afternoon Eucharist and cleanup](#). It also is working to match resources to needs in the community and has asked anyone interested in helping to consider buying items for the local shelter or [donating money to support the church's efforts](#).

"I know more than a few of our Christ Church family will need immediate help in getting their homes and yards cleaned up. Thank you to those who have offered your labor, and please do not be shy about asking for help," the Rev. Paul Canady, rector at Christ Church, [said in a Facebook post](#).

– *David Paulsen is an editor and reporter for the Episcopal News Service. He can be reached at: [dpaulsen@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:dpaulsen@episcopalchurch.org).*