



Prayer and Preparation for Hurricane Season

Bishop Valerie J. Melvin, Regional Minister

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As the forecast for Hurricane Isaias continues to shift, with potential impacts in Georgia and the Carolinas, we are checking in with you. Given the unique moment in which the hurricane comes, there are some additional considerations for ensuring our people's safety and well-being. The risk of COVID-19 necessitates changes to typical evacuation orders and recommendations, processes and locations for storm shelters, and safety measures through and after the storm. I encourage you and your congregations to check advisories from local emergency and public health officials for specific area changes.

The CDC and the Red Cross have both released guidance for preparing for hurricanes in the COVID-19 environment. Both of these links and some general preparedness tips are available on our Week of Compassion website: <https://www.weekofcompassion.org/how-to-prepare-for-a-disaster.html>. Some of the CDC details can be found at the end of this notice.

Additionally, our churches may have a more critical role in safeguarding our more vulnerable members, especially those who are isolated or have limited mobility. With the increased isolation, some typical supports may not be available (e.g., assistance with evacuation, provision of emergency food and supplies, etc.).

Week of Compassion:

Week of Compassion is committed to serve and support Disciples in moments of disaster. Solidarity grants are available, should there be need – Household Solidarity Grants for Disciples who have damage at their homes or experience significant hardship due to the storm (e.g. evacuation, extended power outage, etc.).

Congregational Solidarity Grants for congregations who have damage at their church buildings; and Community Solidarity Grants to support congregations in providing relief to their neighbors. For more information or assistance, contact Caroline Hamilton-Arnold, Associate Director for Domestic Disaster Response via Email: caroline@weekofcompassion.org or Phone: 203-772-8597.

If a severe weather warning is issued for your area, the weather poses more immediate danger than COVID-19.
Prioritize shelter from the storm.

Severe weather is not on quarantine.

Make a plan now.

- ✓ Find your safe place (a basement or windowless interior room).
- ✓ If your home is not a safe option for shelter, consider alternatives. Note that public shelters may not be open.
- ✓ If sheltering outside your home, take precautions like wearing a mask and practicing distancing.
- ✓ Pay attention to local weather and emergency alerts.
- ✓ Communicate your plan with neighbors and loved ones.



Preparing Your Church for a Disaster:

<https://disciples.org/congregations/10-steps-toward-disaster-preparedness/>

Thinking about preparing your church for a disaster can be overwhelming. How can leaders begin such a big task with so many variables and unknowns? The best way to begin is simply to begin! Every step you take toward preparedness, even small steps, will help protect people and assets and—most importantly—better enable your community to help others after a disaster or emergency event. Here are ten simple ways for your congregation to become more prepared:

1. Post the church address, phone number, and emergency contacts by every phone, fire alarm, defibrillator, and first aid kit at the church.
2. Sign up for local emergency alert systems, and keep a battery or crank weather radio at the church.
3. Create evacuation and shelter-in-place signs and have evacuation and shelter-in-place drills.
4. Locate the emergency shutoff valves for gas and water and the main electrical breakers for your church buildings. Make sure multiple leaders know these locations.
5. Put flashlights in main rooms and by emergency shut offs. Check the batteries regularly.
6. Back up important church documents—with hard and digital copies—and store in safe locations both on- and off-site.
7. Update the church's insurance information.
8. Introduce church leaders to city and county emergency officials.
9. Update the church directory, including emergency contact information and notes about members who would need assistance in an evacuation, prolonged power outage, or other emergency situation.
10. Stock water and non-perishable food in case people need to shelter at the church.

Finished with those steps? Check out the [congregational disaster preparedness guide](#) available from [Week of Compassion](#) and [Disciples Volunteering](#), or consider hosting a Week of Compassion and Disciples Volunteering disaster preparedness training for your congregation or Region.

Camp Caroline:

Casey Perry, Camp Caroline manager, would have us know that the staff is watching the weather closely, and all necessary steps are being taken to ensure the protection of our property. On Sunday, August 2, a team of volunteers will spend ½ day battening down the camp. For next week, any scheduled guests have been notified that we are in 'storm watch' mode and their reservation may have to be modified.

NC Disaster Response Task Force:

To streamline communication, if you have any damage to your church facilities or homes of the pastors/members, please contact your pastor first and have your pastor contact the Regional Minister and our partners in disaster response as soon as communication is

possible. If your pastor is impacted, please contact our Regional Minister directly via mobile phone 336.303.2159.

The NC Disaster Response Task Force

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/covid-19/disasters_severe_weather_and_covid-19.html

Prepare for hurricane season

- Understand that your planning may be different this year because of the need to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.
- Give yourself more time than usual to [prepare your emergency food, water, and medicine supplies](#). Home delivery is the safest choice for buying disaster supplies; however, that may not be an option for everyone. If in-person shopping is your only choice, take steps to [protect your and others' health when running essential errands](#).
- Protect yourself and others when filling [prescriptions](#) by limiting in-person visits to the pharmacy. Sign up for mail order delivery or call in your prescription ahead of time and use drive-through windows or curbside pickup, if available.
- Pay attention to local guidance about updated plans for evacuations and shelters, including [shelters for your pets](#).
- When you check on neighbors and friends, be sure to follow [social distancing](#) recommendations (staying at least 6 feet from others) and [other CDC recommendations](#) to protect yourself and others.

Prepare to evacuate

- If you may need to evacuate, prepare a “go kit” with [personal items](#) you cannot do without during an emergency. Include items that can help protect you and others from COVID-19, such as hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, bar or liquid soap, disinfectant wipes (if available) and two cloth face coverings for each person. Face covers should not be used by children under the age of 2. They also should not be used by people having trouble breathing, or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- Know a safe place to shelter and have several ways to receive weather alerts, such as National Weather Service [cell phone alert](#)[external icon](#), [NOAA Weather Radio](#)[external icon](#), or [\(@NWS\)](#) Twitter alerts.
- Find out if your local public shelter is open, in case you need to evacuate your home and go there. Your shelter location may be different this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- If you need to go to a disaster shelter, follow CDC recommendations for staying safe and healthy in a [public disaster shelter](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Follow guidance from your local public health or emergency management officials on when and where to shelter.
- [Make a plan and prepare a disaster kit for your pets](#). Find out if your disaster shelter will accept pets. Typically, when shelters accommodate pets, the pets are housed in a separate area from people.
- Follow [safety precautions when using transportation](#) to evacuate. If you have to travel away from your community to evacuate, follow [safety precautions for travelers](#) to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

Staying with friends or family

If you will be staying with friends or family outside your household to evacuate from the storm:

- Talk to the people you plan to stay with about how you can all best protect yourselves from COVID-19.
- Consider if either of your households has someone who is at [higher risk of developing severe illness from COVID-19](#), including older adults or people of any age who have underlying medical conditions. Make sure everyone knows what they can do to keep them safe from COVID-19.
- Follow [everyday preventive actions](#), including covering coughs and sneezes, washing your hands often, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Consider taking extra [precautions for people living in close quarters](#).
- Know what to do if someone in you

Stay safe after a hurricane

In addition to following guidance for staying safe and healthy [after a hurricane](#), note that:

- You should continue to follow [preventive actions](#) to protect yourself and others from COVID-19, like washing your hands and wearing a [cloth face covering](#) during cleanup or when returning home.
- It may take longer than usual to restore power and water if they are out. Take [steps to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning](#) if you use a generator.
- If you are injured or ill, contact your medical provider for treatment recommendations. [Keep wounds clean](#) to prevent infection. Remember, accessing medical care may be more difficult than usual during the pandemic.
- Dealing with disasters can cause stress and strong emotions, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is natural to feel anxiety, grief, and worry. [Coping with these feelings and getting help](#) when you need it will help you, your family, and your community recover.

- People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms. Additional information can be found at the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administrationexternal icon](#) page.
- After a hurricane, it's not unusual for rats, mice, and other pests to try to get into your home or building. Be aware that with restaurant and commercial closures related to COVID-19, there are already reports of [increased rodent activity](#) as they try to seek other sources of food. Follow recommendations for [keeping pests out of your home](#).

For more information

- [CDC: Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [CDC: Prepare your health for the 2020 hurricane season](#)
- [National Weather Service: Prepare for Hurricane Season 2020](#)