

—May 10, 2019—

“But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So, his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.” — Exodus 17:12

Dear Friends,

I am writing to ask for your help for a special need. Typically, when a new disaster happens I will make a one-time appeal for resources to help with our recovery operations. MNA then coordinates the response with the resources God provides. When those resources are expended (i.e. volunteers and funds) we conclude operations and give thanks for whatever impact we made. In the last 15 years I have only once made a second appeal for any disaster response; this is the second time. During 2018 MNA Disaster Response coordinated three new major responses: Hurricane Florence, Hurricane Michael, and the Paradise, CA wildfire. When these new disasters occurred we were still responding at a high level to the damage to PCA communities affected by 2017 Hurricane Harvey in TX and Hurricane Irma in FL and PR (Puerto Rico). Also, our staff and volunteers were already weary from our robust responses to Hurricane Matthew and the Great Baton Rouge Flood of the prior years.

The PCA/MNA Hurricane Michael response has been strong. Likely one of our strongest responses volunteer-wise on record; thousands of disaster response volunteers have served in Panama City, FL and Albany, GA at our recovery sites. The amount of funds given to this disaster has been \$448,000 as of today. However, the amount of funds channeled through MNA has been relatively small compared to the damage our three PCA physical plants incurred in Panama City, FL. I attribute this to the major overall level of support channeled to the many disasters occurring here in the US and globally. It's not very hard to become weary in doing good; maybe that is why the Apostle Paul in Galatians 6:9 reminds us to keep going even when we are near the limit!

A major focus of our efforts in Panama City has been investing our energies to demo the interior of First Presbyterian Church PCA, which was effectively destroyed by the hurricane. The entire roof systems of the sanctuary and connected two-story education wing were removed by the storm. MNA Disaster Response Specialist Keith Perry has been on-site since day five coordinating our volunteer teams, which have diligently and systematically gutted the entire structure, readying the buildings for the day that they could be turned over to a contractor for rebuilding. Other MNA Disaster Response Specialists including Rick Lenz, John Browne, and Marty Huddleston, and MNA ShortTerm Missions Specialist Curt Moore have invested many days and weeks on-site. This was a major and necessary step to ready the physical plant for structural engineers, architects, and building department officials who would then develop a rebuilding plan. First Presbyterian Church also owns buildings on adjoining property including a large school building and free-standing Fellowship Hall and kitchen. These buildings were also effectively destroyed and unusable.

To date, with your generous support, MNA has met every PCA need as defined by the diaconates of the three congregations we are assisting in Panama City. Funds were used to provide financial grants to affected families for urgent needs such as food, temporary housing, to offset employment losses, to provide insurance deductibles to families and churches, to assist diaconates in keeping their church budgets in the black, and to keep staff paid during a season when communing members were displaced. Funds are being used to transport supplies and equipment from our warehouse in GA, and to operate 'Camp Faith', our recovery-site volunteer base camp on the grounds of First PCA. With your strong support, Covenant PCA and Panama City Korean PCA are on the mend.

What is the current need?

The congregation of First Presbyterian Church PCA has made a decision to rebuild their sanctuary and connected education wing, and to sell the non-mission-critical storm damaged properties. My role is to support this decision in their day of need. The cost to do this has been estimated by the architect to be approximately \$2,500,000: a cost informed by new, and stronger, wind codes, compliance with ADA requirements, re-configuring spaces for current needs, etc. When adding in the cost of replacing the furniture, musical instruments, unforeseen expenses, etc., the architect and proposed builder believe an overall budget figure of \$3,000,000 is realistic.

The congregation has made a decision to sell the school building and fellowship hall, since the cost to restore them alone has been estimated to be approximately \$5,000,000. They are currently soliciting bids until May 31 on these properties and praying for a good response so that the realized funds can be applied and reduce the cost of the sanctuary and education wing restoration project.

First Presbyterian Church had no wind coverage in effect at the time of the storm. Instead they had approximately \$1,000,000 in an account earmarked for storm damage, with good hope that that amount would cover any possible damage. An additional \$209,000 has been given to the church since the storm, 84% of which is outside giving. Many of the communing families are tending to their own rebuilding needs, which limits their ability to give to this cause; however, regular tithes and offerings have been adequate to keep the church budget in the black during this difficult time. Attendance has been steady and near pre-storm numbers.

Please prayerfully consider giving a special gift to help First Presbyterian Church restore their physical plant and return to their church home. The figure needed is approximately \$1,791,000 less the amount recovered by the sale of the adjoining property. Please pray that the sale of the adjoining properties will bring a good return.

How to give to this need:

My intention is to hold Pastor Ron Brown's and this lovely congregation's hands up as long as I can. Won't you join me in this great opportunity to demonstrate to a watching and waiting world that we are a connectional church that cares for each other deeply? MNA has set up a dedicated fund to receive gifts for this specific appeal; 100% of your gifts will be channeled directly to First Presbyterian Church PCA of Panama City. MNA never charges administration fees, so your entire gift will go directly to this need.

- To give to this need electronically [click here](#).
- To mail your gift, please mark your gift for the First PCA Panama City Fund and mail to:
**Mission to North America, PO Box 890233, Charlotte, NC
28289-0233**

Should you wish to provide support for any of my MNA DR or ST Staff serving in Panama City please let me know.

Serving you with my whole heart,
Arkie Hooten
MNA ShortTerm Missions & Disaster Response Director
Mission to North America / Presbyterian Church in America