October 2017

Dear Friends in Christ,

*When the righteous cry out, the Lord listens; he delivers them from all their troubles. Psalm 34:17*

Our neighbors in Florida, Texas, Puerto Rico, and beyond are crying out. We see it on our televisions, on the internet, and on social media. The Lord hears their cries and is calling us to serve as His hands and feet to deliver them from their troubles. As United Methodists, let us stand together in prayer and support of all of those who have been affected by the horrific storms.

In Minnesota, we know something about flooding and the devastation that results. Twenty years ago, we experienced massive flooding of the Red River. We know what it is like to cry out for the Lord in despair. We also know how the Lord answered our prayers, by sending us hundreds of volunteers and tens of thousands of dollars to rebuild.

It is our turn to respond to God’s call to help our neighbor. I urge all Minnesota United Methodists to continue your prayers for the people in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico; for those who have been affected by damaging hurricanes and flooding; and for those responders who are coming to their aid.

In addition to prayer, God calls us to action. We are sending Emergency Response Teams to Houston in October and November. There will be future Volunteers in Mission Team trips as the recovery work will be long and extensive. Even if you cannot go in person, you can participate. I encourage each congregation to receive a Thanksgiving offering for United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) recovery efforts. UMCOR has been aiding families affected by natural and man-made disasters around the world since 1940 and is noted for these three hallmarks:

1. 100% of all funds collected for UMCOR are dedicated to relief;
2. UMCOR provides in areas that do not get much media attention; and
3. UMCOR remains until the job is done.

I am fully aware of the generous response many of our congregations and individual Minnesota United Methodists have already made to hurricane relief in past weeks. However, the need at this time is unprecedented. Puerto Rico, in particular, has been utterly destroyed. Hurricane Maria inflicted unimaginable devastation and suffering that will persist for years. The people are crushed in spirit. Thus, I boldly ask you to receive a Thanksgiving offering to continue our relief and recovery efforts.

May we respond freely to the Lord with gratitude and humbleness born of a giving God. Thank you for sharing your blessings and bounty that others might have life.

In Christ’s love,

Bishop Bruce R. Ough
Dakotas-Minnesota Area
The United Methodist Church