



The heavy rain and wind brought by Hurricane Maria caused a landslide that destroyed this home in the Municipality of Utuado.

Photo credit FEMA/Yuisa Rios

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## Hurricane After Hurricane

### August 25

Hurricane Harvey hit the gulf coast of Texas as a Category 4 hurricane.

### September 6

Hurricane Irma plowed into the U.S. Virgin Islands as a Category 5 hurricane and while it didn't make landfall in Puerto Rico, Irma's high winds caused major damage.

### September 10

Hurricane Irma made landfall in Florida as a Category 4 hurricane.

### September 20

Hurricane Maria rocked the U.S. Virgin Islands as a Category 5 hurricane and then Puerto Rico as a Category 4.

What damage does a Category 4 or Category 5 hurricane cause? The National Hurricane Center says that

“catastrophic damage will occur to structures and trees.... Power outages will last weeks to possibly months. Most of the area will be uninhabitable for weeks or months.” This describes the places hit by hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria.

In response to this cluster of destructive storms, World Renew Disaster Response Services (DRS) is laying the foundation for long-term response in all four of the states and territories that were affected. This includes clean-up, unmet needs assessments, guidance to communities as they organize, building estimates, and home repair services. Due to the type of services we offer, World Renew DRS is not the first response organization on the scene of disasters like these, but we are often the last one to leave.

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**Robert Laarman**  
**Director, World Renew**  
**DRS**

**World Renew  
 Disaster Response  
 Services' Mission is:**

To show God's love and bring hope to disaster-impacted communities in North America by restoring the homes and lives of those who are most vulnerable,

To help communities build their capacity to prepare for and recover from disasters, and,

To provide opportunities for Christians to honor the Lord by using their time, talents, and financial resources in service to others.

## Letter from the Director

### Dear Friends:

This fall, World Renew DRS has taken an important step forward in communicating with volunteers. DRS staff are readying new technology that gives volunteers to access a wealth of information on our new, online orientation platform called, *Teamwork Projects*.

As a first step, we made Teamwork Projects live on DRS reconstruction sites and next will activate the software for needs assessments, group mission trips, and rapid response teams over the next year. Volunteers with assignments will have access to their specific Teamwork Project and receive instructions on how to use it.

There will be information about volunteer reimbursements and the necessary forms to fill out to claim expenses. Information specific to each reconstruction site will be available, including maps, area demographics, and pictures of the housing arrangements. Pictures and information about the Byron Center staff will also be available so volunteers can see who they are connecting with on the phone and through email. We hope you enjoy and benefit from having this information, and much more, at your fingertips.

DRS staff will also make videos available to volunteers for learning and as refreshers. These may be training on how to safely use tools or navigate cross-cultural encounters while on site. Spiritual care videos will be available to help volunteers practice caring for others and themselves while in helping relationships.

We are eager to roll out this next step in better communication and training for volunteers. Please let us know your helpful suggestions for improvement as you begin to use it. Finally, do not fear. If you have questions, staff are happy to answer them. We will also continue to send out packets in the mail for those who request them in addition to providing Teamwork Projects software options.

We trust that this will be positive step forward in our future, working together to serve our Lord in working with disaster survivors.

Serving Christ by serving others with you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Laarman". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Bob Laarman  
 Director, World Renew DRS

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Thank you to all who are supporting hurricane survivors this fall with your prayers, time, and financial gifts,

ensuring that together, we can offer people assistance long into the future.

To learn more about the response to these hurricanes, visit [worldrenew.net/drs](http://worldrenew.net/drs).

## Area Representatives

DRS Area Representatives (area reps) are a special group of people whose role is to support and encourage DRS volunteers and represent DRS in many ways (often quietly, behind the scenes). Some area reps have stepped away from the more physical activities of DRS volunteers but hold fast to their love and passion for serving Christ through their representative role. Others remain active by going out on assignment. Each one brings unique skills and resources to their role.

How does such a diverse group do the same “job?” DRS staff is refining the current role description for the area rep position, with input from them, to ensure that current and future volunteers in this position know where to focus their energy for the most impact while also holding on to the individual nature of their abilities. The next step will be to develop training opportunities in which area reps can share their successes and challenges. By interacting with staff, we hope that each area rep can strengthen their ties to the rest of this group and become even more effective in their role. (If you are an area rep, please consider how you can contribute to this process, and share your thoughts when Shirley connects with you.)

There are many creative individuals involved with DRS who find unique and exciting ways to help volunteers in their region feel connected, informed, and energized. For example, Erv and Gayle Fopma in Iowa send out a folksy newsletter that makes everyone feel like family. Gary and Bev Van Noort of Indiana include DRS in their church newsletter. Groups in British Columbia, the Pacific Northwest, and Ontario areas hold picnics for volunteers. Steve and Linda Schroeder in Michigan help volunteers identify and use their skills. We’re sure that there are many creative efforts that we don’t even hear about! We are so grateful for those who have served in the role of area rep in the past, and for the many volunteers who continue to do so. Special thanks to recent “retirees” from these ranks: Albert and Marcella Veldstra, Randy and Jan Bode, Rich and Joy Anema, Len and Marie Boersma, and Marc and Nancy Faasse.

If you are a former volunteer who is no longer able to help out, but would still like to be involved from home by sending encouragement to volunteers who are going out or sharing opportunities with your church, you can be a DRS Area Representative. Contact the DRS office to learn more.



**Harry volunteers in the DRS office and warehouse in a daily basis.**

### Behind the Scenes

What goes on behind the scenes at DRS? Did you know that our office includes two large warehouses? On days when all nine staff are present, and a dozen volunteers are working in the back, the office is humming with activity. Volunteers pack trailers, unload trailers, fix tools, organize tools, inventory tools, wash trucks and trailers, move mattresses, and much more.

Harry Faber is one of these behind-the-scenes volunteers. Harry has been involved with DRS since 2009 in needs assessments, as a driver, an area representative, and for many years, a daily warehouse volunteer.

On Monday through Friday mornings, you’ll find Harry in our offices, putting away green shirts (If you wear one, Harry probably folded it.), organizing tools, fixing whatever needs fixing, washing trucks, and loading trailers. . . . You name it, he does it. Harry has been battling cancer for several years, and though the treatments have taken a toll on him, he says, “It’s a blessing to be able to come here every day, to volunteer and to get out of the house. I am tired, but I am still on my feet.”

Thank you, Harry, and the many other volunteers who work alongside DRS staff in the office and warehouse. We couldn’t do it without you.

## Across North America, DRS Volunteers Respond

### DRS-Managed Reconstruction Sites

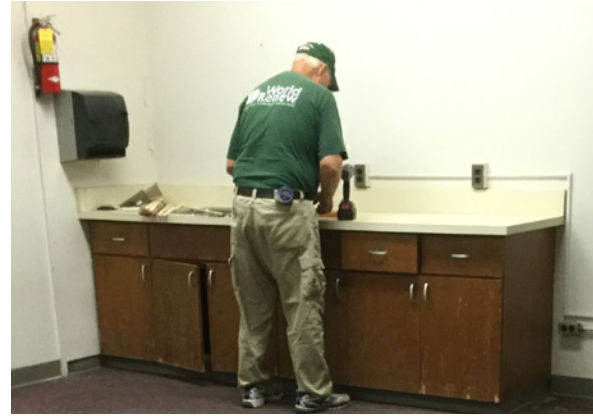
Both the San Marcos and Rio Grande Valley, **Texas**, sites were not touched by Hurricane Harvey, so they were reopened on time this fall. We plan to continue working in both communities through May 2018. We hope to complete all of the work that is scheduled on time and then be ready to meet the needs in other areas of Texas affected by Hurricane Harvey. Thank you, Project Managers Joel and Angie Ploegstra (Rio Grande Valley), and Doug and Mary Van Der Meulen (San Marcos), for ensuring that all of the details were ready for the reopening this fall.

The housing at our new site in Tarboro, **North Carolina**, is a former city office space, and it needed a lot of retrofitting. We send a big thank you to Project Managers Rick and Bonnie Wiersma for coordinating the site set up and operation, and to the set-up team for getting the housing ready. The activities scheduled at this site are in response to Hurricane

Matthew in October 2016. The first teams took care of hanging drywall, doors, and trim, to return the houses to livable condition. We are collaborating with our long-time partner, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) in North Carolina.

This summer, DRS volunteers served in Fort McMurray, **Alberta**, repairing fire-damaged homes and helping families make their newly-built homes livable after losing theirs in wildfires last year. Thank you to those who served and to team facilitators for your flexibility in adjusting to your new role.

In early 2018, a new site will open in Tangipahoa Parish, **Louisiana**. The work is a response to flooding in 2016. So far, DRS volunteers have assisted the community with an unmet needs assessment in October 2016, and they are now working with homeowners on repairs. Harv and Verla Klaver are the project managers for this site, and we thank them for putting all of the details in place.



**Kitchen at the Tarboro, North Carolina, site before it was rehabbed.**



**The same kitchen after it was completed and ready for use by our cooks.**



**A home completed by volunteers from World Renew and Mennonite Disaster Services.**

### Short-Term Facilitated Site

The short-term site in Manning, **South Carolina**, that was open this past winter has once again opened for the fall. With DRS facilitators onsite to provide continuity and added value, it has been an ideal location for group mission trips. Thank you to the group facilitators, Steve and Linda Wester, Paul Hesse, and Stan and Arlis DeWeerd, and the many volunteers who are serving at this site, making much-needed home repairs after damage from flooding in 2015.



**“All I wanted was a floor in my house so I could move back in. But the Lord sent angels who are doing way more than that,”** said Mary (right), with DRS volunteer Nancy Johnson. Mary is a caregiver for an elderly woman as well as a key source of support for her neighbors as they struggle with difficult situations. Mary has been out of her own house since it was flooded in October 2015. She worked with the World Renew DRS volunteers helping to repair her home.



**DRS Volunteer Fred Visser speaks with disaster survivors in Ripley County, Missouri.**

Rich and Pat Grasmann visited one community and offered a needs assessment to help the local recovery group set a foundation to help their residents. An assessment, led by the Grasmanns, took place in August.

### Rapid Response

DRS volunteers are helping with clean-up in Port Arthur, Texas in response to Hurricane Harvey. Thank you to leaders Lois Hecksel and Marc Faasse for leading the teams, as well as Mt. Sinai Missionary Baptist and Port Cities Rescue Mission for welcoming us to Port Arthur.



**World Renew DRS volunteers, in green, help Ella, in red, clean out her home after it was damaged by Hurricane Harvey.**

### Early Response

Several Regional Managers are working in Texas and Florida setting the stage for long-term recovery, meeting with survivors, networking with responding organizations, and coordinating with local officials. Much of the early work in Puerto Rico involves coordinating calls and emails. DRS is actively seeking ways to respond immediately and in the long-term in all three disaster-affected areas.

### Unmet Needs Assessments

Constance Bay, **Ontario**, suffered flooding in May 2017. In July, a small needs-assessment team assisted the local recovery group with connecting residents who had disaster-related needs to local support. Thank you to Bruce and Christine deBoer for your preparation and for leading the assessment team.

Summer flooding in southwest **Missouri** left residents in Ripley and Carter counties wondering what they would do next. Regional Managers

### Building Estimating

DRS Building Estimators Neil and Gertie Minnema spent three days helping the recovery group in Constance Bay, **Ontario**, determine the cost of rebuilding a number of homes that were damaged by flooding in May 2017. Many of the homes were identified during a DRS needs assessment that was completed in July. Dale and Joyce Rhodea spent a week in Hattiesburg, **Mississippi**, in June helping the recovery group respond to a tornado in January 2017.

### British Columbia Wildfires

Cariboo Community Church in Williams Lake has identified a need for trauma healing training as members of their community cope with the losses they endured during wildfires there. DRS is helping three people from Cariboo Community Church to receive training in trauma healing group facilitation.

## Cultural Competence: What is it? Why Does it Matter?

**Cultural competence is:** the ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures, to be respectful and responsive to other's health beliefs and practices, and the cultural and linguistic needs of diverse population groups.

Maybe you've heard DRS or others use the term *cultural competence*. What does that mean and why should we care?

Maybe we should first ask, what is culture?

**Culture is:** the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group. It is also family traditions, social norms, learned behaviors, expectations, and values of a group.

What are your traditions? What are the expectations you have of yourself, your family, and your friends? What are the values of your faith?



By definition, cultural competence is the ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures; to be respectful and responsive to the health beliefs and practices, and to value the cultural and linguistic needs of diverse population groups.

**Why is this important for DRS staff and volunteers?** Being culturally competent is important for us because the communities where we work are different from our own. Those from the Jersey shore have different cultural norms than those living in southern Texas, and from those in Iowa or Alberta. Culture is even different between households in the same community.

As Christians, our goal is to share Christ's love with others. What better way is there to do that than by showing respect for one another, recognizing our differences in language, dress, speech, food, social norms, etc. **These differences are a gift of beauty designed by our Creator, not something that we pass judgement on or make assumptions about.** First and foremost, disaster survivors and volunteers and staff (in a DRS context) are children of the Lord.

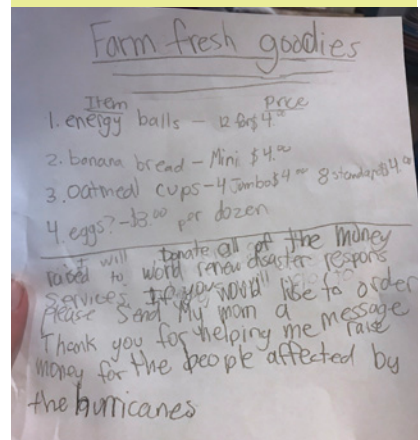
"Let us love one another as Christ loved us!" One way we can do that is by learning to increase our cultural competence, recognizing and respecting the beauty of diversity God created.

If you would like to learn more about improving your cultural competence, call or email the DRS office for suggestions.

## Unique Generosity

Aubrey is a 10-year-old from Hudsonville, Michigan, who wanted to do something to help people after September's hurricanes.

Here is what her mom, Sarah, said in a recent Facebook post: "Aubrey has been trying to come up with a way to help with the disaster relief efforts of the recent hurricanes. She asked me if she could bake some goodies and sell them to raise money. I told her she needed to come up with a plan. This is what she wrote:



### Farm Fresh Goodies

#### Items for Sale

1. Energy balls — 12 for \$4
2. Banana bread — 1 mini loaf, \$4
3. Baked oatmeal cups — 4 jumbo or 8 regular muffin size, \$4
4. Eggs — \$3/dozen (subject to availability)

"I will donate all of the money raised to World Renew Disaster Response Services. If you would like to order, please send my mom a message with what you would like. Thank you for helping me raise money for the people affected by the hurricanes."

## Where Are We Going Next Year?



Six of 30 DRS volunteers from the Reformed Church of Highland Park, New Jersey.

“In the van, the students asked, ‘Where are we going next year?!’ We weren’t even halfway home, and they were looking forward to the next work trip,” said Anthony DiGrigoli.

Anthony, who has volunteered as a Green Shirt (a World Renew DRS volunteer) four times, led a group of students and adults from three New Jersey and one Staten Island church as they fixed homes in Detroit, Michigan, for a week in July.

What did they like it so much? Anthony said that, in part, they liked the things that young adults often enjoy: they were away from home, they stayed up late, and they spent time with their friends. But a big part of the trip’s success was the work itself. The students liked helping others, they felt important, and they felt like they had a positive impact on people’s lives.

What shocked the entire group, all 34 of them, was the amount of mold in homeowners’ basements three years after the flood.

The teens met one gentleman who was living in a house with a moldy basement. His neighbor, who knew that he spoke only Chinese, offered to connect him with assistance.

“The flood was three years ago, and this gentleman’s entire basement—*entire basement*—was covered in black mold,” said Anthony. “Harry (a fellow volunteer who is certified in mold remediation) and I went downstairs and immediately turned around and went right back outside. We were quickly outfitted with full-body protective suits, instructed in handling toxic mold, and then we gutted and sanitized

the entire basement. We were amazed that the homeowner was living in those conditions, but we quickly realized that the language difference was the reason he wasn’t able to get his basement taken care of. We were very thankful to be able to get the mold out of his home.”

*Note: Black mold can cause serious health concerns and needs to be treated properly. Volunteers are given the specific instruction, protective gear, and the resources required for handling surfaces covered with black mold.*



## New Gift Catalog

*“I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and **stand before me in the gap** . . . but I found no one.”*

—Ezekiel 22:30

In the Old Testament book of Ezekiel, God was looking for people with willing hearts who walked in His Spirit, people who would hold each other up before Him when life got hard. He was looking for someone who would “stand . . . in the gap.”

Invite your church and family to help fill the poverty gap this Christmas!

Here are some ways to participate in World Renew’s gift catalog project.

- Distribute Gift Catalogs to your congregation.
- Set up a Giving Tree using a set of 38 custom ornaments.
- Hold an offering for items in the Gift Catalog on Christmas Day.
- Pick one or more items from the Gift Catalog for your church to support. Set a fundraising goal and work towards it over Advent using the thermometer tracking poster available with the project.
- Get that hard-to-buy-for friend or family member an item from the Gift Catalog in their honor.
- Pick an item as a stocking stuffer for your or others’ children or grandchildren, and talk about the difference this gift will make for a child far from your home.

Learn more and print or order copies at [worldrenewgifts.net](http://worldrenewgifts.net) or by calling 800-552-7972 in the U.S. and 800-730-3490 in Canada.



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## Flexible and Affordable Mission Trips

Are you looking for a mission trip that fits your church, school, or family? And one that fits your travel, budget, and date preferences? Then a home-repair trip with World Renew DRS may be the trip for you.

There are more than a dozen locations across the U.S. to choose from. Most locations accept groups throughout the entire year. The costs range from free to \$25 per person, per day. Some locations provide meals, and others offer facilities to make your own food. It's entirely up to you.

**Find your fit at [worldrenew.net.volunteer](http://worldrenew.net.volunteer).**

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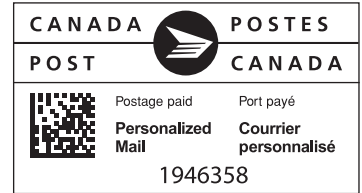
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