



Repairing homes in Puerto Rico
after Hurricane Maria.

One Year Later

Imagine waiting a year (or more) to get help fixing your home. Imagine how the damage may have compounded over time. Imagine losing hope that you would possibly live again in a home with stable floors, a roof that does not leak, or walls without holes.

Now, imagine how your story changes when, after waiting all this time, you learn that it is finally your turn to get help rebuilding, and a group of people wearing green World Renew shirts show up at your home. They come with smiles and tool belts, ready to work for you to get your house back in order. They have the Joy of the Lord, offering to pray for you and get to know you as they work.

Because so many people trusted World Renew DRS with their financial gifts after three hurricanes in

fall 2017, this experience will become a reality for many people!

A year after hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria hit the U.S., DRS is still active in the communities that were most-affected by the storms, assessing needs, meeting with community leaders, repairing homes, and offering hope to survivors and their families.

This is just the beginning of World Renew's response to last year's active, widespread hurricane season in the U.S.

It can take years to repair homes damaged by just one disaster. In 2017, three major hurricanes damaged tens of thousands of homes in three different areas of the U.S.

In the upcoming months and years, World Renew DRS volunteers will continue to help the elderly widow whose ceiling still leaks. They will

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Robert Laarman
Director, World Renew DRS

The mission of World Renew Disaster Response Services 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,

There are a number of DRS ministry areas that excite me. Stories of disaster survivors moving back into their homes are always uplifting. The laughter of returning volunteers, as they renew friendships with others who serve, makes me smile. Sometimes tears help move survivors forward when they share their story with volunteers in an Unmet Needs Assessment. The busyness of staff as they work together to arrange schedules and logistics for volunteers feels great when it ends with people having an successful time onsite.

Another area of the ministry of DRS that is gratifying is when Christians of different varieties serve together for a common cause. We may disagree on theology, politics, or worship music, but the people of God come together when they serve people in need. We work side-by-side to serve as God has instructed us. We serve God, we serve others, and we become a positive testimony in the world about a foundational characteristic of Christian faith – service.

Much of the time, volunteers with contrasting views end up working together without a lot of planning on DRS's part: we put teams together based on their skills and availability. When volunteers get to a site, they find that their bond in Christian service is more important than the ideas that separate them. If we intentionally planned to put different people together on a worksite, would our witness grow? It is an exciting thought.

There are more areas of DRS's work that show exciting potential. Does your church have combined youth group activities with a church from another denomination? The groups could do a joint DRS Service project. Does your church have special joint worship services with a church from a different ethnic group? A week-long service project with DRS could produce relationships and intercultural understanding that are not possible by only worshiping together. Are churches in your area working together on Vacation Bible School or another community event? Perhaps they could work together to represent your town in a disaster-affected area.

I encourage you to consider promoting these parts of DRS's work in your community. Where can you see diverse people working together to honor God and serve people in need? I look forward to hearing the ideas that emerge.

Serving Christ by serving others with you,

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

Bob Laarman
 Director, World Renew DRS

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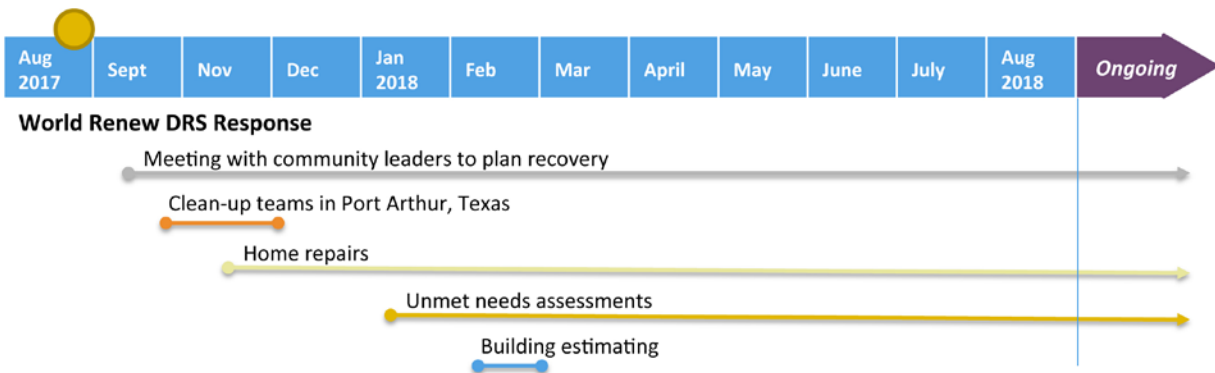
be there for the single dad who is living with his children in just one room of his home because the rest of his house is still in ruin. They will restore mobility to the veteran whose wheelchair can not navigate his home's damaged floors and handicap ramp.

Because of your support for World Renew DRS, compassionate, Christ-centered volunteers will continue to help people like these and many more survivors who have been affected by the hurricanes.

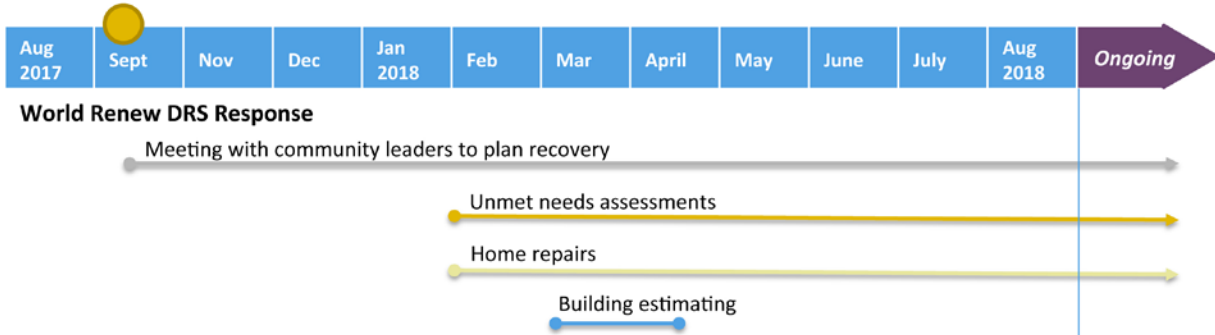
"Please continue to pray for hurricane survivors and World

Renew's work in hurricane response. Ask for God's continuing guidance as DRS helps those who are in the most need. Pray that this work will result not only in repaired homes, but also new hope for the future," said Bob Laarman, director of World Renew DRS.

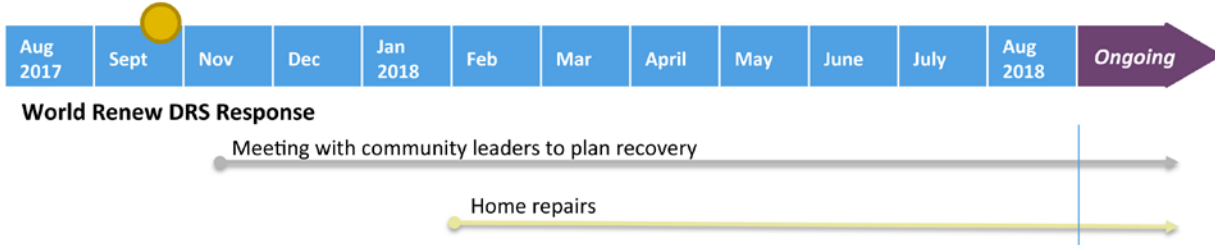
HURRICANE HARVEY



HURRICANE IRMA



HURRICANE MARIA



The lines show how DRS has been responding to hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria simultaneously over the past year, and how DRS continues to respond.

Across North America, DRS Volunteers Respond

Long-Term Reconstruction

Hurricane Harvey hit **Dickinson, Texas**, hard. Eighty percent of the town's homes were damaged by several feet of floodwater that swept through the town. To respond to the community's needs, World Renew DRS opened a new reconstruction site in Dickinson on October 27, 2018. Finding housing for volunteers is always a unique challenge, but the Lord led DRS project managers to



“This fall, DRS turned this gutted-out church building into housing for volunteers at the new Dickinson, Texas site. Watch the February Spotlight for pictures after construction is complete.”

an empty church that had potential. The building was completely gutted after the storm and flood, but DRS

volunteers built rooms, the kitchen, offices, and other workable space to make the church livable. We are thankful to the congregation allowing us to do so much construction in their old building and for welcoming us into their community to help repair homes. Volunteers will be living in the same community where they work.

DRS reopened the **Tarboro, North Carolina**, site on September 22, 2018. We are working in partnership with the United Methodists on homes damaged by Hurricane Matthew two years ago.

The site in **Rio Grande Valley, Texas**, reopened on October 1, 2018. Over the last two years, DRS volunteers

A home that DRS worked on with Mennonite Disaster Services in Williams Lake, B.C.

have given many families a safe place to live again. We had planned to wrap up work in December but have been asked to stay longer.

Home repairs began again in **Hammond, Louisiana**. The first team of volunteers arrived on September 22, 2018, and the local recovery group is delighted to have us back to work on homes damaged two years ago by flooding. Volunteers are once again living at Camp Living Water.

Thank you to everyone who helped open these sites this fall!

Long-Term Reconstruction Sites

Location	Disaster	Project Managers	Dates
Rio Grande Valley, Texas	Flooding 2015	Joel & Angie Ploegstra	Sept. 2016 – Dec. 2018
Tarboro, N. Carolina	Hurricane Matthew 2016	Rick & Bonnie Wiersma	Sept. 2017, ongoing
Hammond, Louisiana	Flooding 2016	Harv & Verla Klaver	Jan. 2018, ongoing
New — Dickinson, Texas	Hurricane Harvey	Doug & Pat Guikema	October 2018, ongoing
Thank you to the project managers for making sure that these sites run smoothly!			



Volunteers from Red River Reformed Church in North Dakota worked on Texas homes that were damaged by Hurricane Harvey.

Short-Term Reconstruction

The 2017 wildfires in **British Columbia** disrupted many lives and ruined homes across the province. DRS is working with long-time partner, Mennonite Disaster Services (MDS), to build several new homes in Williams Lake.

DRS is also sending volunteers to three different areas of **Puerto Rico** to help families recover from Hurricane Maria. Volunteers will spend two weeks at a time on the island, repairing damage or building new homes. Many homeowners are still in need of assistance.

Unmet Needs Assessments

Thank you to the many needs assessment volunteers who have been serving across the U.S. The following assessments have taken place since June.

- **Hendry and Glades Counties, Florida** (Hurricane Irma, 2017), led by Bruce and Christine DeBoer
 - **Orange County, Florida** (Hurricane Irma, 2017), led by Harry and Phyllis Kuipers
 - **Glynn and McIntosh Counties, Georgia** (Hurricane Irma, 2017), led by Denny and Judy Stoel
- DRS has been testing whether volunteers will shift from filling out a paper assessment form as they interview survivors to entering survey data directly into a computer. This potential change is still in the testing phase. Computer use will not completely eliminate the need for paper forms. After all, paper can't shut down, lose battery power, or disconnect from the internet! Thank you for your patience and flexibility as we explore this opportunity to streamline the assessment process.
- **Sonoma County, California** (wildfires 2017), led by Walt and Carol Ackerman

Group Mission Trips

This summer, nearly 650 people from 36 churches from across the U.S. and Canada took a week-long mission trip to repair homes in California, Texas, Michigan, West Virginia, North Carolina, and other states. Several churches will also serve this fall, and dozens of congregations are already planning a DRS mission trip for 2019.

Behind the Scenes

Volunteers acting as DRS **area representatives** use their gifts to support DRS volunteers and activities in the area where they live. Some area reps write newsletters and notes of encouragement to DRS volunteers from in their area. Others hold picnics and get-togethers. Still others get involved in their area when a disaster hits, attending meetings and helping to plan a DRS response.

DRS often awards **grant** money to local recovery organizations. In the last year, DRS awarded \$60,000 to organizations in Texas and Puerto Rico to help get their work started, including purchasing building supplies and other materials.



In Memory Of

Jan Friend, Colorado,
December 2017

Donna Rosema, Michigan,
February 2018

Edwin Mulder, Indiana,
March 2018

James Vander Galien, Michigan,
March 2018

Eloise Faber, Michigan,
April 2018

Jake Schierbeek, Michigan
April 2018

Case Van Mastrigt, Michigan,
May 2018

Case Van Mastrigt, Michigan,
May 2018

Georgie Laarman, Michigan,
May 2018

Ellie Vanderberg, Alberta,
July 2018

John Pranger, British Columbia,
August 2018

If you know of a DRS volunteer who recently passed away but has not been mentioned in a Spotlight, please contact 800-848-5818 or drs@worldrenew.net to have them recognized in the February edition.

Healing Trauma in British Columbia

By Ida Kaastra Mutoigo, August 2018



Have you been in a room with so much smoke that you could feel it in your lungs? In August, I went to Williams Lake in British Columbia where the smoke-filled air irritated my lungs and formed such a thick fog outside that airline flights were canceled. Why was there so much smoke? Lightning strikes ignited wildfires that were driven by too little rain and trees killed by a beetle infestation.

According to Jim Tanis, an elder at Cariboo Community Church (CRC) in Williams Lake, last year's forest fire season was devastating. More than 57,000 people were evacuated, including his family. A million acres of forest were destroyed. Homes were burned down and a livestock and wildlife were killed. By God's grace, there was no loss of human life.

As Jim's church searched for ways to respond to the crisis, they discovered that they had a unique gift—the gift of pastoral care and trauma healing. So when World Renew's Disaster Response Services (DRS) offered to train some of their leaders in trauma healing, Jim Tanis and Audrey Veal volunteered. The two eventually became certified facilitators who train other group leaders. Together with myself and Mary Crickmore, a master facilitator, they organized a trauma healing session at their church.

It was inspiring to hear the testimonies of indigenous leaders who attended the workshop.

"Everything seemed to be going against my attending this training session. But in the end, God shoved me out the door. When I picked up the lesson manuals, I was comfortable with the format and content. I became aware of my weaknesses, and I learned how the Scriptures answer my questions."

"Having a framework rooted in the HOPE of living Word of God is of tremendous value in my life and ministry. The dynamic simplicity of a healing group is something I am eager to take back to my community to encourage fellow believers there."

As a participant and facilitator in this training, I personally realized how important it is to restore hope on the journey of healing from trauma. Hope in God grows beauty from the ashes of trauma's fire.

The training was also a reminder to me about the importance of World Renew's integrated, holistic program approach, so that "faith" and "food and water" are nurtured in our disaster response and community development strategies. Without food and water for the body, we cannot move forward. Without faith and hope to feed the soul, we cannot heal from trauma.

In the Office



For the last 10 years, Luanne Mellema has worked at the front desk at the DRS office in Byron Center. This summer, she decided it was time to retire. Lu's last day at DRS was September 28, and she is missed! Thank you, Lu, for all you have contributed to this ministry. May God bless you richly in retirement.



Chris Gibson (right, with his wife, Tami) joined DRS in September and is responsible for the group mission trip program and facilitated sites, as well as the early and rapid response programs. Welcome, Chris!

Hurricane Florence



Photo by Reuters

More than a million residents received evacuation orders as Hurricane Florence approached the US East Coast, with extensive power outages and freshwater flooding resulting from extensive rainfall over the next few days.

Florence produced more than 35 inches of rain in some areas of North and South Carolina, Virginia and other inland locations.

World Renew is accepting donations to respond to Hurricane Florence.

In September as the rains still poured and rivers had not yet crested, Regional Managers from World Renew's Disaster Response Services (DRS) began preparations for a response to the storm. The representatives and World Renew DRS staff are collaborating with government and other non-profit

World Renew Around the World



Over the last two years, World Renew has been helping some of the most vulnerable people in Bidibidi, Uganda. They are refugees from South Sudan who live with a disability, are elderly, orphaned, or a female-headed household. Humanitarian assistance programs often leave these groups of people behind. However, World Renew is prioritizing the construction of latrines for the most vulnerable at the refugee camp in Bidibidi. Our local team has already built 1,550 latrines, and we want to build even more. Learn more at worldrenew.net/latrines.

organizations to plan for the possible launch of early assessment and rapid response teams into the damage areas after an "all clear" is issued by search and rescue personnel in the days ahead.

"We are well positioned with several communities in the Carolina's that will help in allowing us to respond quickly," said Bob Laarman.

DRS Sunday 2019



Meet Renee and Harold.

In an exciting new video for DRS Sunday 2019, which will be released early next year, you will meet Renee and her uncle, Harold. Talk to your church about scheduling a Sunday in 2019 to show the view video and take an offering to support the DRS ministry.

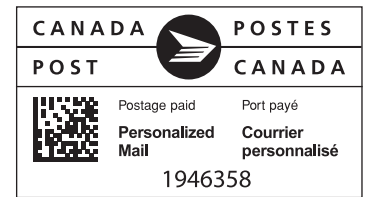
“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”

1 Peter 4:10



After Renee and Harold’s home was badly damaged in 2016, DRS volunteers completed major reconstruction work to make it a safe space for them again.

If you would like to change how you receive this newsletter (email or postal mail), please let us know using the contact information below.



RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED
PORT DE RETOUR GARANTI

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