Volunteers begin cleanup after Hurricane Michael

WELS Christian Aid and Relief is now coordinating volunteers to help with cleanup and rebuilding efforts after Hurricane Michael. Efforts are primarily focused on Amazing Grace, Panama City, Fla., which was hit directly by the storm.

WELS Christian Aid and Relief quickly mobilized two of its relief trailers after Hurricane Michael struck the Panama City area and began coordinating volunteers to help with the cleanup project, including a group of 10 students from Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn.

“These students had so much energy and enthusiasm,” says Elizabeth Zambo of Christian Aid and Relief. “They gutted the church and parsonage that had been flooded, ripping out drywall and insulation. It was messy work, but they never complained.”

“It was an eye-opening experience,” says Hailey Stade, a sophomore at MLC and a member of Immanuel, Farmington, Wis. “I had no idea what to expect until we crossed the bridge to Panama City. Buildings were flattened. Every tree you saw was on the ground or bent in half. Power lines were all over the sides of streets and sidewalks. Large boats were tipped to their side in the water, and a building was considered lucky if it even had some of its roof intact.”

“This experience was definitely life changing,” notes Becky Pruss, a junior at MLC and a member at Redeemer, Fond du Lac, Wis. “When people who have lost so much still greet you with a smile and genuine conversation, it puts everything in perspective. Our God is definitely greater than the storms that may come our way in life. It really showed me that every day is an opportunity to live your faith.”

Amazing Grace is currently worshiping at a nearby Christian camp facility, and its vacancy pastor, Rev. Jerome Enderle, and his wife are living in rented housing provided by Christian Aid and Relief.

Christian Aid and Relief has provided $108,000 toward this relief effort to this point, and more grant requests are expected. Monies distributed have been allocated for items such as supplies, building materials, gift cards, and volunteer expenses.

Christian Aid and Relief is partnering with Kingdom Workers’ Builders for Christ as the rebuilding process begins. Builders for Christ provides volunteers with building skills to serve alongside Christian Aid and Relief volunteers. To apply to serve as a volunteer to help with cleanup and relief work through WELS Christian Aid and Relief, visit wels.net/relief and fill out the volunteer form. 🌐

TOGETHER

Synodical Council holds fall 2018 meeting

The Synodical Council (SC) held its fall meeting on Friday and Saturday of last week. Here are some of the highlights:

- Larry Schlomer, administrator of the Board for World Missions, provided an overview of the work currently being done in our mission fields around the world, with an emphasis on new opportunities that are presenting themselves. A new opportunity to provide theological training to pastors of the Hmong Fellowship Church in Vietnam will be given high priority.
- A special committee reviewing the WELS Pension Plan presented its recommendations to the SC. The SC asked the committee to study additional options and hopes a pension plan design will be prepared for consideration by the 2020 district conventions and ready for action at the 2021 synod convention.
- Scott Neitzel was appointed to the WELS Foundation Board of Directors.
- The Church Extension Fund (CEF) reported healthy net asset, liquidity, and cash flow numbers. Overall loan volume has been lighter than normal this year, but it is picking up in recent months. Total investments in the CEF have increased. Because of healthy net asset levels, the CEF was able to provide a special grant of $1 million to Home Missions. The WELS Foundation also reported strong financial results, enabling a transfer of its unrestricted net assets to support WELS ministries.
- Communications Services and Northwestern Publishing House are studying how to boost readership of Forward in Christ magazine as well as increase the number of subscriptions.
- The Ministry of Christian Giving, with the approval of the Conference of Presidents and in coordination with WELS World Missions, is conducting a special offering from December through June to build and operate a theological training center for Hmong outreach in Vietnam. Rev. Kurt Lueneburg also outlined the joint plans of Martin Luther College, the Conference of Presidents, and Ministry of Christian Giving to increase recruitment of future called workers, to provide additional financial assistance to those training for ministry at MLC, and to build a new dormitory at the college. This “Equipping Christian Witnesses” effort will be launched at the 2019 synod convention.

WELS

To sign up for the e-mail version, visit wels.net/together.
Hundreds gather to celebrate 125 years of Apache mission work


The event commemorated the 125th anniversary of WELS World Missions work in the Apache reservations of Arizona.