

February 10 2023

Turkey and Syria

a letter and update from the Executive Director

Dear Church,

All of us continue to pray for the people in Turkey and Syria as we hear and watch the impact of the 7.8 earthquake that has devastated so many lives. The death toll numbers continue to rise daily - as of this writing, over 22,000 - and this number is expected to rise with each day. Like many of you this week, my heart has been aching for the people in Syria and Turkey as thousands of families are searching for their loved ones. The winter cold continues to make the recovery efforts even more difficult.

"A crisis within a crisis" is how many of our partners on the ground are describing the devastating earthquake. Prior to Monday's earthquake, over 15 million Syrians were already in need of humanitarian help due to the ongoing war in Syria, which is going into its twelfth year. Since the beginning of the war, thousands of Syrians have fled into Turkey to start a new life, and now, once again, are forced to endure another disaster caused by this earthquake. Many parts of northwest Syria that were severely impacted by the earthquake do not have easy road access, and the additional sanctions in place in Syria mean responding and providing emergency aid continues to be a challenge.

We have heard from many of our partners on the ground as they are assessing and responding to the rescue efforts. The most urgent needs are water, food, and shelters and blankets, especially due to the harsh winter and storms moving through. **Week of Compassion has provided initial grants to our partners in the region for these relief efforts.**

Hospitals are overflowing with injured people, and patients who need medical support are not able to get help due to lack of medical equipment or available beds. Many families are without homes and are seeking shelter and tents as temporary housing. Rescue coordination efforts are slow and difficult due to the infrastructures and extreme cold weather and rain.

Week of Compassion continues to coordinate with our global partners to provide emergency life saving items and other immediate support that will be essential in the next several weeks and months. We know that it will take all of us in the coming days and weeks to provide vital relief as search and rescue is under way. Once search and rescue is finished and recovery can begin, our partners will transition to rebuilding homes, which will take many years in Turkey, and decades for Syria.

Many of you and your congregations have reached out asking what you can do to help.

Here is how we can respond, together, in the coming weeks and months:

PRAY : The relief efforts will take weeks, months, and years, and the families and first responders will need our prayers during this marathon recovery, both for the work they do and for the emotional and spiritual toll it will take. A prayer is included at the close of this letter, for your use at home, for sharing through social media, and lifting together as you gather this weekend in worship.



GIVE : Your contributions make a tremendous impact, and a financial gift is the fastest and easiest way to get support directly where it is needed. Designated gifts are used 100% in support of the response. Visit our [website](#), especially our [Special Offering page](#), to find resources to share with your church.

STAY : Right now, emergency personnel and trained responders need room to do their work and offer care. When the time comes that teachable and willing volunteers can connect, our partners will advise us on how best to engage.

As we continue to receive updates in conversation with our partners, we will share what we can and will continue to respond on behalf of the whole church. **Week of Compassion is grateful to serve the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and with our ecumenical and organizational partners. Thank you for your ongoing prayers, generosity, and partnership.**

Rev. Vy T. Nguyen
Executive Director, Week of Compassion

Every Number Is A Name

Creator of the stars of night,
who counts the hairs of our heads and the sands on the shore,
who counts each of us bless-ed and precious in your sight.
The numbers climb, and our sorrow alongside.

Every number is a name.

Every soul lost is a beloved to be seen no more,
a voice, a face, a spirit now only in memory.

Every one yet missing is a mixture
of overwhelming despair and only the faintest hope.

Every number is a name.

Every worker rushing to rescue and recover
will forever bear the weight of what they cannot forget.

Every offering received, shared in desperate hope,
is one unashamed to plead for grace.

Every number is a name.

The tolls rise in the news, and echo in our hearts.

For every one lost, for every one found,

for every gift of compassion, for every moment of mercy.

For every number and every name, Lord hear our prayer.



~ for the ongoing response in Turkey & Syria ~ 2.12.23

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