



*Action Update- August 20*

## Afghanistan and Haiti Responses: How to Help



Photo: CWS Asia

### Afghanistan

#### **How to help:**

- Donate** to support refugee relief
- Advocate** for a robust U.S. refugee resettlement program
- Get involved** with resettlement in your local community

**-Pray** for those who are fleeing violence and seeking refuge

In recent days many of us have witnessed the dire situation in Afghanistan. The Taliban entered Kabul, seizing control as the Afghan government collapsed. As U.S. troops withdraw from Afghanistan, Afghan allies and refugees are seeking to flee the country as the Taliban take over.

As this humanitarian crisis unfolds, Disciples are asking how to help. Week of Compassion is working with partners in the region to provide needed relief and help meet urgent needs. Those needs are still emerging, and the situation is very delicate. But know that gifts to Week of Compassion will go to the partners best situated to respond.

Alongside the humanitarian needs within Afghanistan and neighboring countries are the needs of those who have fled. *This is a critical moment in which to work for a robust refugee resettlement program here in the United States.*

Together with our partners, Week of Compassion has walked alongside communities in comparable times of turmoil and uncertainty throughout history. Emerging from the humanitarian crisis of World War II, Week of Compassion has been our wider church's response to human suffering for more than 75 years. In the 1980s for example, Week of Compassion helped support the robust United States resettlement of over 100,000 Southeast Asian refugees, including those from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. As we face this moment in Afghanistan now, Noel Andersen of Church World Service says, "This is a time when we really need to look at what is our moral role in the world, and it is really critical that we step up and honor our commitments to these folk."

Rev. Vy Nguyen, Executive Director of Week of Compassion, shares: "After the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975, hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese fled that day. Helicopters

and planes evacuated Vietnamese soldiers who worked alongside the U.S. But thousands remained, and in the years after the fall of Saigon, millions more fled Southeast Asia. The images coming out of Afghanistan are a glimpse of history and shed light on the present-- what is needed now and what is to come. My dad was one of the translators for the U.S. during the Vietnam war in the 1960s, and he had to flee after the fall of Saigon. As I have shared before, the church welcomed us back then, along with thousands of other refugees. I have seen boxes holding the names of thousands of families who were resettled by Disciples, who were welcomed by our churches-- those are real families and children who are now a part of our communities. At this moment, just as the church welcomed refugees then, we need to work with partners to make sure that those fleeing Afghanistan have a safe place to call home.”

When you give to Week of Compassion, your support will help those in need in places like Afghanistan, while also supporting resettlement in the United States. There are several ways you can help! [Learn more](#) about how to get your congregation involved in local refugee ministry, and prepare to welcome resettled families to your community. Get involved by calling your representatives and advocating for the administration to increase the annual cap on entry numbers; in particular, encourage them to expedite processing for Special Immigrant Visas for those who assisted U.S. Troops, ensuring that our allies in Afghanistan are brought to safety.

In times of instability and uncertainty within the global community, the support of our wider Church through Week of Compassion is critical. Our faith as Disciples of Christ compels us to action. Whether you give, participate in U.S. resettlement, or join in prayer for our siblings in Afghanistan, your compassion will have a long-term impact on the lives of many during this critical time.

## Haiti

In the wake of Saturday’s earthquake in Haiti, Week of Compassion partners have been working to respond to immediate needs such as shelter, food and clothing, WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene), and first aid. In the days since the earthquake, Tropical Storm Grace (since upgraded to a hurricane) made landfall in southwestern Haiti. The storm’s heavy rains caused flash flooding and landslides, making immediate response to the earthquake even more difficult and hindering search and rescue operations. Poor internet and phone connections make communication challenging. The death toll is now over 2,000, with nearly 10,000 injured, making the need for relief and medical care even more urgent.

Furthermore, the earthquake (and Tropical Storm) struck the country during the harvest season for beans, maize, and yams. This impact is likely to increase food prices and contribute to further food insecurity--in a time when the country was already struggling under the weight of the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic effects.

As the people of Haiti navigate the impact of these compound disasters, Week of Compassion partners continue to respond and take part in ongoing damage assessments. Plans are in development for long-term response as well. As with previous responses in Haiti, construction and building projects will aim to mitigate the impact of future disasters. With knowledge of past disasters to inform current response, our support will help the

people of Haiti prepare for the future while meeting present needs. Often, building for today can save lives tomorrow--as was certainly the case in this recent earthquake.

Week of Compassion is grateful for long-standing relationships with partners who know the needs now--and can foresee needs that might arise later as well. Together, we can make a difference, even when the need is so great.

### **To Give:**

[Donate online](#); text **WoC** to **41444**; or mail checks to:

P.O. Box 1986

Indianapolis, IN 46206

*Designate your gifts for Refugees; Earthquake; or Where Most Needed*

### **Prayer**

*\*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.*

Oh Lord, when the earth shakes and walls fall down--you are refuge and strength.

Be near to the brokenhearted, and those who have lost home and family.

When human leaders commit violence against people of goodwill--  
you are mercy and justice.

Be near to the persecuted, and give shelter to those who seek sanctuary.

*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.*

Holy one, when suffering is too deep for words, you hear the silent prayers of  
pain, loss, and grief. Be near to those who mourn.

When all seems to be lost, fallen, or broken, you restore life again.

Be near to those who wait, and draw hope out of the desolation.

*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.*

God of our lives, send your spirit of comfort and peace to move through the depths.

Awaken in us your spirit of compassion, that we might draw near to you as we love and  
serve our neighbors around the world.

Amen.

\*Psalm 34:18

*For an interactive map of responses, [visit our website](#).*

*Week of Compassion is the relief, refugee and development mission fund  
of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and  
Canada.*

**Donate**

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