

Iowa, Midwest Communities Struggle Following Storms



A downed tree caused significant damage to the education wing of Marion Christian Church in last week's storm.
Photo: Jim Michel, Disciples Church Extension Fund

On August 10, a 40 mile wide *derecho* blew across the upper Midwest; the effects were especially devastating across a large portion of Iowa. During the *derecho*-- a sustained, powerful straight-line windstorm-- the winds at times exceeded 100 miles per hour. Those are wind speeds equivalent to a Category 2 hurricane.

Communities in the Midwest continue to struggle following last week's storm. While public

assistance was approved on Monday, making available federal funds for things like debris removal and utility repairs, 27 counties in Iowa still await approval for federal assistance to individuals and households.

Meanwhile, recovery is complicated by COVID-19, with Iowa currently averaging 458 new cases a week across the state. Disease-prevention measures pose challenges to the usual types of response following a disaster, and because of the economic toll of the pandemic, many households have already exhausted what savings and supplies they had.

Rev. John Richardson, Interim Regional Minister in the Upper Midwest Region, says, "An estimated 10 million acres of corn and soybean crops were destroyed or heavily damaged. Barns, silos, grain bins, and houses were crushed across many counties. Countless decades old trees have been uprooted. At one point over 400,000 people were without electric power. As of today, around the cities of Cedar Rapids and Marion, crews are still working to restore power. Cell phone service was disrupted for several days. And, as is so often the case, the vulnerable are struggling the most. One apartment building, now deemed uninhabitable, housed 75 refugee families.

"The recovery effort will take a long time. As of today, local groups, faith communities and non profits are beginning to offer support and services. Disciples Church Extension Fund has been reaching out to Disciples congregations with damaged buildings since last week. Week of Compassion has been offering support since early last week. We are grateful for both of these vital Disciples of Christ ministries. Your prayers and gifts to Week of Compassion for disaster response are welcome."

At least 10 Disciples congregations have been directly affected--with damage to church buildings, members with damage at their homes, or both. With your help, Week of Compassion is responding to meet the needs of both congregations and families at this time.

Disciples are helping in other ways as well. Christian Conference Center, the camp facility for the Upper Midwest Region, has opened as a respite center and day shelter. They are providing a place for people to shower, do laundry, charge devices, or just cool off and rest for awhile.

With support from Week of Compassion, New Disciples Christian Church in Cedar Rapids is preparing to provide food and charging stations. And Disciples across the state have been clearing up debris, preparing meals, and opening their homes to neighbors in need of a place to cool off, charge electronics, or take showers.

Thanks for your care, concern, and continued prayers for those affected by the storm. We will continue to share updates about how Disciples are working to meet needs throughout the long recovery ahead.

For more about Week of Compassion's COVID-19 Response, and for resources to promote an offering in your congregation, [visit our website](#).





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For an interactive map of all 2020 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.

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