



Public Witness Statement from UCC National Officers
Getting It Right: Responding to Hurricane Harvey

“We can grow from our desperate moment. I hope we get it right. We strive for getting it right.”
Rev. Mona Lopez, UCC Conference Disaster Coordinator, from her home in Houston on August 29th

In truth, the question for our country in this desperate moment is how can we get this right? How can we best respond with compassion in the midst of the catastrophic damage being inflicted on people from Hurricane Harvey and the continuing storm? We write as the waters still rise and as search and rescue operations are in full swing.

For many people of faith, one of our actions is prayer. We pray for comfort for those whose lives have been lost and for those who grieve. We pray for refuge and strength for those who continue in harm’s way and for those whose lives have been immeasurably disrupted. We pray for the courage and fortitude of first responders. We pray for immigrants and refugees and others who cannot access emergency assistance without fear. We pray for those who have physical and mental challenges that put them at greater risk than others. With Rev. Mona, we pray to get it right.

Getting it right requires a commitment to persist. The storm is long and the damage widespread, but the rain eventually will stop and people will need to return home. Much of the world’s attention will turn to another crisis event, but we know it is at this moment that the significant work of recovery and rebuilding begins. It is in this long-term recovery that we challenge ourselves and others not to forget nor to move on, but to move within the enduring steadfast love of God of which the psalms speak.

Getting it right is not something one can do alone. Recovery work is about rebuilding in community and for the sake of community. We know from experience in other places that long-term recovery can either strengthen bonds of mutual relationship or reinforce previous patterns of discrimination. It can either further justice and equity or tarnish these sacred values. The voices and concerns of those most vulnerable or excluded must be our guide. This is how we can embody love of neighbor.

Getting it right is also not a private affair. Justice is the voice of love speaking in the public square. Now is the time for justice to speak difficult truths. When temperatures rise and oceans warm, severe weather events like hurricanes become supercharged. They become even more extreme and even more dangerous. We must name the reality of climate change, and, with a sense of moral responsibility, we must reckon with the human contributions to it. We must reckon with the need for urgent action. Otherwise, we face the prospect of more and more events such as this.

Officers of the Church

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Rev. Traci D. Blackmon
Executive Minister
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Rev. James A. Moos
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So it is that we commit ourselves to getting it right for the sake of Rev. Mona and her community, for the sake of those in India, Sierra Leone and Nepal where floods and mudslides have killed thousands, and for the sake of all those impacted by the potent combination of severe weather, climate change, and denial of reality. We commit ourselves to get it right through the power of prayer, community, and justice. As we do so, we invite you to join us in our commitments. With those in your faith community, your school, or elsewhere, call upon elected officials to fully support and fund long-term recovery efforts. Call upon elected officials to acknowledge the reality of climate change. Seek to be the voice of love speaking where others can hear.

The United Church of Christ lives out its commitment to those affected by disaster by specializing in long-term recovery. Join in this commitment by donating to the UCC's Hurricane Harvey Response.



The Rev. John C. Dorhauer



The Rev. Traci D. Blackmon



The Rev. James A. Moos