

**What does the Lord require of us?  
Acknowledging the one-year commemoration of  
Hurricane Maria's devastation of the Island of Puerto Rico**

On September 20, 2018, we commemorate the one-year marker of Hurricane Maria's devastating landfall across Puerto Rico. Our solemn attention to this time of remembrance is made more poignant as we pray and begin humanitarian response to tens of thousands of people impacted by Hurricane Florence in the Mid-Atlantic and Typhoon Mangkhut in Southeast Asia. As the Apostle Paul said, when one part of the body suffers, we all suffer (1 Cor. 12:26).

Throughout scripture the people of God are challenged to pay attention to what is revealed as the church strives to bear faithful witness to the gospel in times of particular challenge and crisis.

Hurricane Maria is such an event. By the numbers Maria is a historic storm: 100 percent of the electrical grid was impacted, the overwhelming majority of Puerto Ricans did not have access to safe water, life-saving medical services, gasoline, and, in many cases, food for months. Twelve months after the storm, areas of the island remain without basic services.

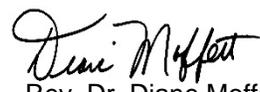
Only now is there widespread understanding of the breadth of the devastation Maria engendered. Thousands of U.S. citizens on Puerto Rico died as a direct result of the hurricane. Some studies put the number of deaths as high as 4,000. The hurricane has exacerbated the exodus from the island. As a direct consequence of the devastation caused by Maria, estimates suggest Puerto Rico could lose as many as 470,000 residents between 2017 and 2019.<sup>1</sup> The church must pay attention.

Throughout scripture the people of God are compelled to remember, to act; and to live into God's vision of a new heaven and a new earth. What does the Lord require of the church in light of so many failures to protect and care for U.S. citizens? What does the Lord require of the church as preexisting, unjust economic and political realities are laid bare and we begin to understand the extent to which they exacerbated the catastrophe?

The PC(USA) will remember the hardships and losses as well as the moments of grace. The PC(USA) will seek to be faithful as we discern what the Lord is requiring of us to meet the immediate and the long-term needs of Puerto Rico. In solidarity with our Puerto Rican church family, we call upon the whole church to pay attention to what is being revealed. We urge the whole church to continue to work with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance as they support the island's recovery.

We are grateful that the Co-Moderators will be with you this week to stand in solidarity and affirm with their presence that Puerto Rico and the family of faith that serves and bears witness in this place are not forgotten.

  
Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II  
Stated Clerk  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

  
Rev. Dr. Diane Moffett  
Executive Director  
Presbyterian Mission Agency

  
Rev. Cindy Kohlmann  
Co-Moderator  
223<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly (2018)

  
Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri  
Co-Moderator  
223<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly (2018)

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/RB2017-01-POST-MARIA%20EXODUS\\_V3.pdf](https://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/RB2017-01-POST-MARIA%20EXODUS_V3.pdf); see also <http://blogs.platts.com/2018/04/09/jet-fuel-demand-puerto-rico-hurricanes/>.