

UCC Conference Disaster Coordinators Conference in Puerto Rico, April 2-3, 2019

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United Church of Christ Disaster Ministries (UCC DM) has been a formal, national ministry of the United Church of Christ since 2001. UCC Disaster Ministries exists wherever and however members of the United Church of Christ show up to care for their neighbors in the aftermath of a natural or technologically-made disaster, in both the short- and long-term.

The UCC Conference Disaster Coordinators Conference had 22 participants from conferences from all over the United States. It was held at Yuquiyu Camp/Conference Center next to Yuquiyu National Forest, the only tropical rain forest in the United States.

Every attendee actively participated in the presentations and discussions. Topics included: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) programs, and Hurricane Maria recovery efforts.

Some main points that were brought up:

- Recovery after a disaster begins and ends locally; the whole community approach is essential for the community to get back on its feet.
- FEMA Public Assistance is available if a church sanctuary is damaged from a disaster.
- Every church needs to build a Church Preparedness Toolkit (more to come later).
- Volunteer recruiting and retention is critical– find projects to do, build a team, make it a positive experience, provide recognition.

Follow-up articles will include more on the CDC Conference as well as Maria recovery efforts.