



Volunteers deploy to Florida

On Sept. 29, 2022, Ian made landfall on the southwest coast of Florida as a category 4 hurricane.

This powerful storm caused more than \$120 billion in damage. Sadly, more than 140 people lost their lives. None of our WELS members were killed but many had extensive damage to their homes and property. Five of our church properties were also seriously damaged requiring thousands of dollars in repairs. A few days after the storm, our assessment team traveled to Florida to survey the damage and make plans for disaster relief operations. Soon after, volunteers were deployed to assist with cleanup and repairs. This deployment was conducted

in partnership with volunteers from Builders for Christ (Kingdom Workers) using Prince of Peace in Englewood, Fla., as home base. Much work was accomplished, and much gospel comfort was brought to those who were hurting. WELS members supported this effort with more than \$300,000 in special gifts of love. We are grateful to all who helped in any way. What an opportunity to “do good to all people” (Galatians 6:10) and to “let [our] light shine before others” (Matthew 5:16) as we shared the compassion of Christ with the people of southwest Florida.



Speakers Available

Want to learn more about the ministry of WELS Christian Aid and Relief? Need a speaker for your school or group? Would you like a pastor to preach on Sunday and present to your Bible class? Speakers are available! You can request one at wels.net/relief or by contacting Pastor Sims (contact info below). We'd love to meet you and “share our stories.”

WELS Christian Aid and Relief attends leadership conference

From Jan. 16-18, 2023, about 1,300 WELS called workers and lay leaders gathered at the Hilton in downtown Chicago for the WELS National Conference on Lutheran Leadership. For three days these WELS leaders enjoyed worship, keynote presentations, workshops, and many conversations all focused on becoming better leaders and doing all we can to share the precious gospel of our Savior. Pastor Sims was privileged to lead three breakout sessions with Pastor Ryan Kolander of Palabra de Vida in Detroit. Their workshop was entitled “Doing Good: The Vital Role of Compassion Ministry in a Congregation’s Plans to Reach the Community.” More than 60 people attended this workshop to learn about the theology of compassion ministry and to pick up some practical hints and tips and how to start, improve, or expand such ministry in their own congregations. We are excited to note that more and more WELS congregations are engaging with their communities through compassion ministry. Praise the Lord!



Improving our disaster relief capabilities

One of the main goals that will keep us busy for a few years is improving and expanding our disaster relief capabilities. Toward this end, a Disaster Relief Task Force was formed back in the fall of 2021 with this mission: “The purpose of the Disaster Relief Task Force is to research and produce disaster relief training methods

To learn more, make a donation, or volunteer, visit wels.net/relief and like us on Facebook at fb.com/WELSChristianAidandRelief.

If a need arises for humanitarian aid or disaster relief in your area, please contact Director Rev. Daniel Sims.

and materials to enhance disaster relief efforts across the synod.” The task force is currently working on a training manual and enhanced disaster relief process with the goal of rolling out the new system in 2026. It even hopes to have an annual “Disaster Conference” where leaders and volunteers can come together to discuss ways to improve our disaster relief ministry. One new item that has already been introduced is our new volunteer management software and website located at welsdisasterrelief.org. Through this new system volunteers can set up a profile, input their skills and availability, and even track their volunteer hours. WELS Christian Aid and Relief leaders can use this system to recruit volunteers for deployments while matching skills to the jobs that need to be done. Check it out!

Humanitarian aid grants approved

At its meeting on March 31, the WELS Christian Aid and Relief Commission approved more than \$500,000 in humanitarian aid grants for WELS Home and World Missions in fiscal year 23-24. These grants support projects that relieve suffering, meet community needs, help to establish relationships of trust, and lead to many opportunities to share the good news of our Savior. Some highlights from this year’s grants include:

- **Home Missions:** Backpacks and school supplies for underprivileged kids, food for the hungry, and support for the homeless, special needs children, and a pregnancy counseling center.
- **World Missions:** Funding for the Central Africa Medical Mission, support for widows and orphans, boreholes to provide clean water in Zambia, assistance for persecuted Christians, health clinics, sewing classes, free smokeless stoves in southeast Asia, and food for the hungry in Albania.