

Disciples Volunteering Fall 2019

Disciples Volunteering connects, supports, and equips Disciples serving in mission. This work is carried out in three ways: Sending Teams in Mission; Shaping Servant Leaders; and Supporting Local Missions. At the core of this work are three faith-values: learning, serving, and growing relationships. As DISCIPLES, we are students, learning through action and reflection, striving to deepen our faith by living it with others. In SERVING, we model ourselves after the one who came not to be served but to serve, giving and receiving in humility, and respecting the gifts of each one. Through COMMUNITY, we connect our faith and our lives with others, with deference for those with whom we serve, growing together in faith. Disciples Serving Community move from volunteer to servant to neighbor to friend as we get dirty for Jesus together.

Sending Teams in Mission

One area of focus for Disciples Volunteering is [supporting disaster response and recovery](#). Disciples Volunteering responds to disasters in partnership with Week of Compassion, Regions, and local congregations (as well as ecumenical, interfaith, other NGO, and government partners) with a particular focus on long-term recovery and the recruitment, when appropriate, of mission teams for serving with those affected by the disaster. Disciples provide core leadership to a national disaster network (National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster; or National VOAD): three Disciples (including myself) serve as chair or co-chair of three out of eight standing committees. As an ecumenical colleague recently affirmed, “Disciples have an outsized presence among our national leaders.”

Disciples Volunteering directly supports mission responses in communities across the country. A Mission Station with First Christian Church, [Texas City, TX](#), begun in late 2017 continues with commitments to serve through 2020. After supporting repair work at a number of congregations affected by Hurricane Harvey, Disciples Volunteering is now planning for repairs at Victory Christian Church, Port Arthur, whose needs were recently communicated. Also in Texas City, this summer marked a second partnership with Reach Beyond Mission leading four weeks of service.

Mission opportunities are also available in [Puerto Rico](#). The response has been steady this year and will extend through 2020. The collaborative response, Program Edifiquemos, includes Week of Compassion, Global Ministries, and the Iglesia Cristiana (Discipulos de Cristo) in Puerto Rico (ICDCPR). Through Disciples’ membership with National VOAD, Program Director José Molina Resto accessed up to \$5,000 worth of building materials from FEMA for every home Disciples worked on. Although that program recently ended, partners are working to ensure funding is available to continue the mission. Post-trip reports from mission ambassadors share as much or more about the relationships they have formed and the impact of the experience on their lives. While the service is important, it is exciting to think about the surprising ways that these experiences will bear fruit in the years ahead. The collective response in both Texas City and Puerto Rico remain strong and there is plenty of space still for teams to travel and serve. (So sign up today!)

In August, the Disaster Recovery Support Initiative (DRSI), a cooperative effort with Week of Compassion and the disaster ministries of the Church of the Brethren and the United Church of Christ, transitioned to Church World Service. This affirms the important community-focused work and collaborative witness of DRSI as partners collectively support communities affected by disaster.

Disciples Volunteering is also calling for servant mission teams to aid in the recovery of communities impacted by disaster in Pamlico County, North Carolina, Taylorville, Illinois, Florida, and northern California. Support is also being offered in Nebraska, Missouri, and Ohio, with a likely need for mission teams in these communities in 2020.

Disciples Volunteering supports a growing network of Disciples-based mission sites and resourced the Local Missions Planning Team for the 2019 General Assembly which presented more than a dozen opportunities for attendees to serve across Des Moines, IA. Also at General Assembly, Disciples Volunteering was pleased to facilitate a panel presentation with Rev. Dan Paul (Pacific Grove, CA/Blue Theology), Rev. Danielle Cox (Texas City/Disaster), and Rev. Miguel Morales (ICDCPR/Disaster).

Shaping Servant Leaders

Building on the strength of relations with Church of the Brethren colleagues, Disciples Volunteering is co-leading the fourth joint servant leadership training event in November. Participants will be prepared to serve as long-term volunteers and mission station managers after a disaster. Training together provides for a richer, deeper, and broader experience, equipping new leaders to support missions with each of the participating denominations. In an effort to expand the reach of long-term volunteers, Disciples Volunteering continues to encourage and equip these servant leaders to identify, resource, and support other missions that are developing within their local and regional settings.

The [Summer Mission Intern](#) program provided direct support to First Christian Church, Texas City and Ridglea Christian Church, Fort Worth as they identified and engaged young adults for servant leadership in their respective mission programs. Support was offered to other mission locations; however, they were unable to identify intern candidates. This reflects an on-going challenge which Disciples Volunteering is addressing in conversation with other young adult ministries.

Supporting Local Missions

Because answering the call to serve begins at home, Disciples Volunteering is making strides toward a broader effort of supporting, connecting, and resourcing those missions and ministries as they exist or are emerging from congregations and regions/areas. A variety of resources are also being collected, ranging from basic information about serving to specifics such as planning a mission trip and how best to serve after a disaster. Disciples Volunteering and Week of Compassion continue to support the development of disaster preparedness and recovery networks. Following on last fall's organizational event with the Christian Church in Oregon and Southwest Idaho, a second training was offered in March. A similar event took place in Alabama-Northwest Florida in early September and conversations for future trainings are unfolding. Other local missions support has been referenced above, for example, working with congregations which are hosting mission teams for service and learning opportunities, and a special project which may emerge from the tornado response in Jefferson City. Disaster response also provides an opportunity for supporting locally led missions as church members are educated and resourced for engaging in long-term recovery within their own community.

I am grateful, as always, to the Board of Disciples Home Missions and the Week of Compassion Board of Stewards for your support in this ministry that we share,



Josh Baird
Director, Disciples Volunteering



To: Week of Compassion Board
From: Tana Liu-Beers, Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel, Disciples Home Missions
Date: September 24, 2019
Re: Ministry Update: April-September 2019

Dear Week of Compassion Board,

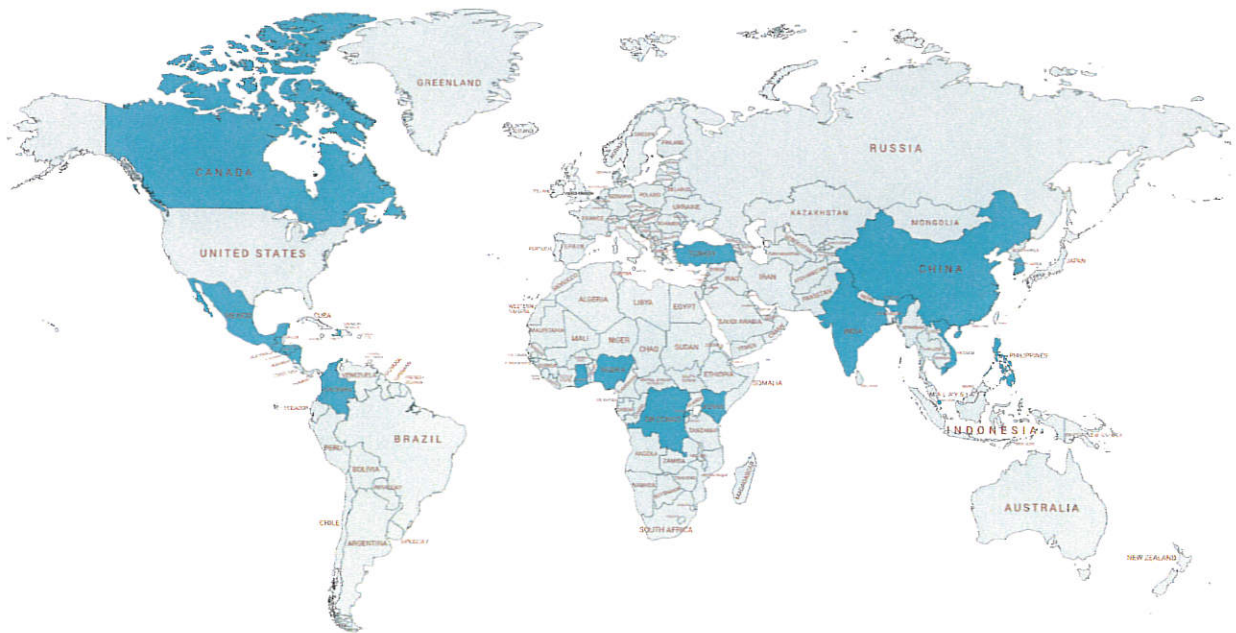
I've been thinking a lot of about hope. Sometimes I look head-on into the suffering of immigrants whose very existence is threatened on a daily basis. It's impossible for the injustices to ever be made right. It's impossible for families ripped apart to be made whole. It's impossible to get back the years stolen by detention and deportation. And yet that is what I believe: that impossible hope. I believe that God who has defeated death and is renewing all of creation will restore even these things.

But the waiting is hard, and desperation breeds false hope. I regularly counsel immigrants who have fallen victim to false promises. I often advise against dangerous actions while clients falsely hope God will protect them from the normal limitations of law. I warn well-meaning U.S. citizens, conditioned by their privilege, against giving false assurances based on their inability to imagine the harshness of reality.

Like most of the issues Week of Compassion faces, the work of Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel is steeped in a harsh reality. Yet we can look harsh reality in the face because we have impossible hope. Thank you, as always, for your ongoing support.

Peace,

Tana



Countries of Origin of Clients Served by Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel April-September 2019

By the Numbers (past 6 months)

New cases opened: 43

Total active cases: 67

Regions served: 19

Southwest, Pacific Southwest, Greater KC, Florida, Northwest, North Carolina, Northeastern, Georgia, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Northern California & Nevada, Arizona, Capital Area, Virginia, Great River Region, Illinois & Wisconsin, Mid-America

Countries of origin of clients: 21

Guatemala, Vietnam, Mexico, Samoa, China, Haiti, Nigeria, Kenya, Philippines, South Korea, El Salvador, Nicaragua, India, Canada, Democratic Republic of Congo, Singapore, Ghana, Turkey, Colombia, Rwanda, Honduras

Approvals

Despite the crisis-level backlogs at U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services, we continue to celebrate long-awaited approvals of permanent residence, employment authorization cards, advance parole for travel, and renewals. The victories are perhaps sweeter for having overcome the “invisible wall” of regulations set up by this administration to deny as many applications as possible.

Outreach & Communications

Getting the word out about this ministry to those who need it is an ongoing endeavor. This summer I enlisted the help of several general ministries staff to create a Frequently Asked Questions video explaining the ministry of Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel, including what help is available, who can get help, and how to get help.

Social media continues to be a good means to share late-breaking updates about immigration law and policy, know-your-rights reminders, and helpful resources. Interest in immigration, detention, deportation, and asylum issues continues to grow among Disciples.



watch video on disciplesimmigration.org

Community Education

As always, General Assembly was an opportunity to connect with individuals from across the church and collaborate with other ministries. I joined Refugee & Immigration Ministries, Obra Hispana, NAPAD, and NBA to present a workshop titled “On Becoming Immigrant Welcoming Congregations.”

Additional collaborations with Disciples Peace Fellowship and NBA’s Prison & Jail Ministries have been good opportunities to educate Disciples about current immigration issues.