

As these vignettes of calamity and hope show, United Methodists, through the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), work to discover the most constructive ways to respond when the most vulnerable experience the effects of natural disasters. Resources provided by the congregational church reinforce local relief and recovery efforts.

Louisiana

When hurricanes Lili and Isidore swirled through Slidell, La., a week apart, they tore part of the roof from the home of an 88-year-old woman. She suffers from the effects of Alzheimer's disease and depends on her daughter's care. They live on a small income from Social Security, without access to funds for repairs. In August, members of First United Methodist Church, Slidell, repaired the roof and built a wheelchair ramp. Interior walls and floors need additional work.

An older Opelousas, La., couple feared falling through rain-soaked pressboard floors in their trailer, heavily damaged by the hurricanes. After the storm, no electrical outlets worked. Fuses blew daily, and the heat was smothering. United Methodist Disaster Response (UMDR) staff persuaded a local trailer dealer to donate a used trailer in excellent condition for the family. Volunteers plan to install a new septic system.

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Lili and Isidore's wind and rain damaged the roof and interior walls at the home of a 57-year-old mentally disabled man whose kidney disease keeps him confined indoors. He did not understand how to apply for assis-

tance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Louisiana United Methodist volunteers are supplying materials and labor to repair the roof.

A recently divorced mother of two boys will need long-term assistance, and United Methodist volunteers will be there for her. Her mobile home roof sustained wind damage. Her only income is child support, and she didn't apply to FEMA. But she is job hunting and plans to return to school. Volunteers will assist with a comprehensive recovery plan as well as help with repairs.

Indiana

A Kokomo, Ind., couple in their 80s watched helplessly as floodwaters filled their basement to the rafters. Partnering with Mennonite volunteers, Indiana United Methodists removed water-damaged items from the basement and cleaned the area. After the area dried, they sealed the walls. The couple recently called to report how grateful they are to have no mold in their newly sealed basement.

Volunteers removed soaked carpet and damaged tile from the home of a Kokomo woman whose diabetes worsened with an infection from polluted surface water. They assisted her with her FEMA application and installed new carpeting and tile.

Tennessee

The boy climbed into the case manager's lap. Three years old, the boy lives with his parents in a home where the May tornado blew out the windows, tore off the roof and caved in some of the ceilings. He said, "My house got broken." The United Methodist case manager reassured him. "We're going to see if we can get your house fixed." UMCOR volunteers are known in western Tennessee for their leadership, expertise and guidance in recovery efforts.

In Jackson, Tenn., where recovery efforts from storms four years ago were just winding down, the May tornado clubbed one of the state's most

marginalized areas. Strapped for cash, families can't replace their roofs, much less restore their homes to pre-tornado condition. United Methodist volunteers have scheduled 80 major repairs and 26 rebuilds. One Jackson homeowner wrote of how heartwarming it is to know "there are good people out there wanting to help other people get their lives back on track."

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After the tornadoes, United Methodist volunteers came to western Tennessee. One team, from Trinity United Methodist Church, Rockport, Ind., with its excellent carpenters and teen helpers, worked on a home where the owners had begun some repairs. The family worked with the volunteers. In just a few days, they completed the job. One family member said, "You have done such a wonderful thing for us. We'd like to go with you on your next mission."

Maryland

What people in southeastern Baltimore County need most in the wake of Hurricane Isabel is people to care about them, said the Rev. Laurie Gates-Wood, Lodge Forest United Methodist Church. She called every person in her 200-member congregation who lived on the waterfront. Since the night of the hurricane, she's been visiting the hardest hit. "There is a family who was very poor—they didn't even have running water—and their house was destroyed. I don't know what happened to them." She worries that people in these neighborhoods will be forgotten. "They just want to know somebody cares. To me, that's the bottom line in ministry."