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Bishop Larry Goodpastor
Council of Bishops
100 Maryland Ave NE
Washington, DC 20002

My dear friends:

Greetings to you in the name of Jesus Christ!

Our confidence is in the Risen One, who walks with us on this muddy road to Emmaus. As we make our slow progress, we are mindful this spring of our brothers and sisters across the United States, and particularly in the South, who are experiencing calamity upon calamity. "In you, O Lord, I seek refuge," they, with the psalmist, affirm. "Incline your ear to me," they cry; "rescue me speedily."

We are the hands, the feet, the eyes, and indeed the ears of Christ on earth. We can do no other than hear the cry of God's people and respond. As president of the board of directors of UMCOR, I appeal to you with great urgency to once again elicit the compassion and generosity of the faithful of your conferences that they might come to the aid of their sisters and brothers in urgent need.

Specifically, I appeal to you to take up a **special offering** in your conferences in support of **US Disaster Response, UMCOR Advance #901670**, and then to do so again—to take up a **second offering**—during your annual conference sessions. Even as cleanup is under way in those areas hardest hit by April's historic tornado outbreaks, and as the muddy Mississippi rises today to levels unseen in more than seven decades, the work of UMCOR is just beginning.

In the past six weeks we have disbursed close to \$200,000 in emergency grants to annual conferences dealing with the fallout from massive tornadoes, flooding, the threat of flooding, drought, and wildfires. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration called this past April "a month of historic weather extremes, including: record-breaking precipitation that resulted in historic flooding; recurrent violent weather systems that broke records for tornado and severe weather outbreaks; and wildfire activity that scorched more than twice the area of any April this century." Thousands of people have been displaced and many of our churches have been damaged or destroyed.


Many of you know, as I do, from personal experience the toll natural disasters take on our communities. Yet they respond with a spirit of compassionate sacrifice, giving of their time and resources to help their neighbors. Many choose to give directly to their own annual conferences, and this is laudable. But as I can personally attest, these funds will be **insufficient** to cover the needs of immediate relief and long-term recovery. Our annual conferences rely on UMCOR's funds to fill in the gaps and provide the support our disaster response teams need in training, case management, spiritual and emotional care, and guidance.

This spring, the sheer magnitude of storms and other emergencies has far out-paced UMCOR's financial ability to respond. Already we have drawn on reserves in order to fulfill our unshaken and absolute commitment to the annual conferences and communities that have been impacted by this year's historic spring storm season. Although we have replenished that money thanks to generous offerings, our US Disaster Response fund remains perilously low. I am deeply concerned about this as we have not yet even started the real work of recovery in the wake of current disasters. Even more troubling, we stand now at the doorway to the 2011 hurricane season, and recovery needs provoked by it will draw on the same, nearly depleted Spring Storms Advance.

The near depletion of UMCOR's US Disaster Response fund is due in large part to the necessary diversion of attention and giving to survivors of "super disasters" elsewhere in the world. I am grateful for the generosity of our United Methodist family for their support of UMCOR's work around the world and I am mindful of the sacrifice their compassion so often implies.

With all of this in mind, and with the confidence we share in the power of Christ's resurrection, I urge you to appeal to the faithful of your conferences to once more "incline their ear" and "rescue speedily" those who today need their support.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janice Rizzella Huie". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Bishop Janice Huie