

## Disaster Recovery Update July 26, 2025 Anne Waple, Disaster Recovery Coordinator

### **Volunteers and Rebuilding:**

All three volunteer host sites have been hopping this summer, and we are more or less ‘full’ for the rest of the season. By the end of July, 18 mission teams will have been through our sites and will have worked in at least five counties.

In total, over 35 teams are scheduled this year (including two trips from our own PWNC!), hundreds of volunteers will have worked here, dozens of homes will have received their energy, time, skills, heart, and prayers, and homeowners will be back in safe and secure housing, feeling the love of our denomination and that of our partners.

The three host sites are amazing, and their hosting ministry enables all this to happen. Please thank Rev. Esta Jarrett (Canton PC), Rev. Kim Wells (New Hope PC Asheville), and Rev. Michael Poulos (First Pres Spruce Pine) and their teams for the incredible work of hosting volunteers from around the country. And if your church would like to help host a dinner for the teams, or help welcome them on a Sunday evening, or bring the teams cookies, or other support, please reach out to any of the host sites to offer that help.



The rebuilding is estimated to last at least 5-10 years and so a little later in the season, we will be reaching back out to teams to schedule next year's trips. We would also love to have some more opportunities for our own presbytery to get engaged in either week-long trips or weekend and day-work as well, so we can get youth, working people, and others involved in the efforts.

### **A PWNC Tool Trailer! Request for tools.**

The response of volunteers has been amazing, and because we have so many teams, our work partners (the Western NC Conference of the United Methodist Church/United Methodist Committee on Relief) have requested that we fund more tools for the teams to use. SO, very shortly, we will have our very own PWNC tool trailer!

We will send out a google doc link in the newsletter and are **requesting that each church in our presbytery consider donating one or more tools on the list.** If any of your congregations have tools in good shape that they're no longer using, or you'd like to purchase new ones, or send a donation so that we can buy new tools, then please check the relevant box on the google doc we will send out. It would be so much appreciated, and we hope that everyone will know that they have a tangible part in the rebuilding.

Once we no longer have an active recovery in WNC (God willing!), we hope to be able to loan our trailer to other presbyteries in need.

If any church would also be willing to secure the trailer over the winter, please let us know. Thank you!

## **Helene Anniversary:**

In late September, before the next Presbytery meeting, we will hit the one-year mark since Hurricane Helene devastated parts of our community.

It will be a fragile time for some of our congregations, our neighbors, and all of us too. We will be sharing liturgy from PDA, more mental health resources, and other communications, and if any of you would like to share prayers or other words or resources, we would love to share it widely.

We're also planning a retreat in Montreat for October. More details following in the newsletter. Please keep your eyes open for that.

PDA is also bringing a communications team to the mountains around that time, and we may ask several of you to meet with them to tell your stories, if you're willing.

**There are also some grants from PDA to assist ministers and church leaders in taking a break, and if this is you, please, please let us know.**

## **Funding and Grants:**

We have received over \$70,000 from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance so far, and we expect to receive at least another \$140,000 this year to support case management and construction personnel.

From our own PWNC Helene fund, we have shared around \$126,000 with at least 14 churches. This has been for direct support of neighbors/construction, church rebuilding, or for community support. We expect to be able to fund more projects in August, and another round in November. You will see in the budget report, that we currently have around \$500,000 remaining, and because of the incredible generosity of our denomination, we are still receiving donations from around the country.

**PLEASE, if you have not submitted a request to the PWNC fund for Helene-related expenses for your church, your neighbors, or your community, please reach out as soon as possible to Anne Waple (contact details at the bottom).**

In the months to come, we will also focus more energy on assessing the possibility of external grants to help us look ahead to long-term recovery and resilience beyond the next couple of years.

## **Finally:**

Earlier this year, while our teams were working on a house, it turned out that the homeowner was/is suffering from an addiction and was charged with a drug offense. We worked with the case manager to ensure that this homeowner was receiving additional help, and that our teams were all safe (they were/are), but it was an important reminder:

**Disaster does not create vulnerability, it reveals it, layer by layer in all its systemic complexity.**

Our job in disaster recovery is not only putting nails into boards – critical though that is. It is about lifting individuals, whole communities, and ourselves from despair into hope, from neglect into love, and from the sidelines into agency. We use faith to help us do that, and we understand that our work is really God's work, but regardless of what our neighbors in need believe, they rely on *our* compassionate presence, our deep understanding, and our partnership in their journey, no matter their - or our - circumstances.

Our recovery work in WNC will not end when the last house is repaired. Preparedness and resilience-building is our lifetime work, and we are being called towards it in new ways in WNC – together. Thank you for your tireless love and faith, and your care for all.