

NEWS UPDATE: Kansas Tornado Cleanup, May/June 2019
Lutheran Early Response Team - Kansas District Disaster Response
Donna Williams, District Disaster Response Coordinator

It's been a busy and eventful few weeks. The EF4 tornado that ripped through the Linwood/Basehor/Bonner Springs area May 28 has kept our teams busy. If not for the hospitality of Trinity Family of Faith and Risen Savior, Basehor, the organization of the relief effort would have been very challenging. Pastor Jason Boetcher and Pastor Robert Weinkauff threw open the doors of their churches and welcomed us, providing us with housing, meals and so much support! Their congregations have been an immense blessing in this process.

Immediately following the news of the tornado, we had a team on site to begin assessing the damage. Pastor Boetcher (Trinity Family of Faith) and Pastor Weinkauff (Risen Savior) worked in tandem to help our team identify congregation members whose property sustained damage. Both congregations were then instrumental in deployment of teams including, but not limited to, provision of housing and meals. As the vast majority of work needed was tree work, an email was sent to LERT teams calling for immediate deployment of chainsaw teams. My personal thanks to Rick Johnson, Christ, Overland Park, for his willingness to step in to take a vital leadership role in this response effort. The success we've experienced and the extent of our outreach is due in large part to Rick's involvement.

A heartfelt THANK YOU to the teams list below who answered the call to action:

- Trinity Family of Faith, Basehor
- Risen Savior, Basehor
- Concordia, MO
- Messiah, Hays
- St. John's, Lincolnville
- Zion, Newton
- St. John's, Topeka
- First, Paola
- King of Kings, Gardner
- Christ, Overland Park
- Beautiful Savior, Olathe
- Trinity, Shawnee
- Lutheran Church Charities/Northern Illinois LERT Chainsaw Crew, Illinois

Lutheran Church Charities answered the call to assist when we realized that to be truly effective in the relief effort, we needed bigger equipment and seasoned operators. In addition to MANY large trees requiring big saws, there were countless hanging limbs requiring a lift. Kathy O'Day from LCC and her team arrived on the scene and partnered with our teams, helping us complete 22 jobs with combined hours of 2150! This was our first opportunity to partner with LCC, and we were immeasurably blessed by their willingness to step into our disaster and lend aid. They made a huge impact on what we were able to accomplish! Adding their equipment and expertise to our seasoned crew and capable tractor team allowed us to make great progress on our projects. Our heartfelt thank You to Kathy and this chainsaw team from Northern Illinois for pouring into our lives and the lives of those affected by the storm! Our teams have completed two more jobs over recent weekend projects with another four pending. These jobs will be scheduled later in the season when the weather cools down, so there will be more opportunities to lend aid in this area of our District.

This is the first declared disaster in the Kansas District since I accepted the position as DDRC, and I had strong support from our volunteers, the Kansas District and Lutheran Church Charities. It was not easy. At first glance it looked overwhelming and more than a little daunting, but we pulled together as a team to be the hands and feet of Jesus and put Mercy into Action for these dear beloved children of God at a time when their world had been torn apart. I saw our teams reach out to people from all walks of life—families, couples, singles all trying to comprehend what had just transpired and come to terms that “it” had happened to them, their neighbors and their friends. It didn’t take me long to be reminded of what led me to say “yes” when asked to consider the position of District Disaster Response Coordinator in the Kansas District: Mercy in Action, compassion, generosity and selfless service. THIS is why I said “YES!”

May God continue to richly bless you!

Donna Williams
DDRC Kansas District

“Then I heard the voice of the Lord Saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” and I said, “Here am I. Send me!” Isaiah 6:8

Resources for photos and videos of the continuing Linwood Tornado effort can be found here:

- LERT Kansas District (Facebook)
- Lutheran Early Response Team – Northeast KS (Facebook)
- Lutheran Church Charities (Facebook)



