

How the UCC is helping African countries against Ebola

Adapted from an article written by Anthony Moujaes -- October 1, 2014

The United Church of Christ Disaster Ministries executives expect a long fight against the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa. But they remain undeterred in their consistent support of partner organizations, donating \$12,000 during the last two months to assist with the care of those people affected by the deadly virus that has so far killed 3,000.



Zach Wolgemuth, executive for Disaster Ministries, is hopeful the UCC's efforts will help minimize the spread of the virus in the African countries of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia – where the recent outbreak is most prevalent. The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention believes that containing and controlling the virus at the source is the best way to stop the Ebola outbreak in its tracks. The CDC is practicing that approach in Dallas, after confirming the first case of the virus diagnosed in this country on Tuesday, September 30.

CDC doctors say, however, that the risk of an outbreak here is low compared to West Africa because of strong infection control and public-health measures. It also makes the UCC's involvement all the more important in reducing the number of infected patients.

“The Ebola outbreak has been extremely difficult to contain and many of the West African governments and facilities are ill-equipped to deal with such a widespread outbreak,” Wolgemuth said. “It has been important for the UCC to engage as much as possible, as we have direct connections and relationships with several partners working in the region who are focused on educating the public and preventative measures aimed at stopping the spread of the virus.”

Disaster Ministries sent \$7,000 on September 25 to the ACT Alliance, a global alliance of churches and related organizations focused on humanitarian assistance that is working with partner organizations in Liberia. Response through the Global Ministries' partnership with the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone has also positioned the UCC and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the midst of some of the earliest effected communities in western Africa.

“Funding through UCC Disaster Ministries, from One Great Hour of Sharing, is making a difference as we have been able to support sanitation efforts, education and personal protective equipment needed by healthcare professionals,” Wolgemuth added.

Ebola is considered one of the most aggressive viruses with no cure or vaccine. It can cause death within one week of exposure and has a fatality rate as high as 90 percent. Medical personnel say it spreads through direct contact and bodily fluids, but not through the air, water or foods.

“I would encourage individuals to continue to keep our West African sisters and brothers in your prayers,” Wolgemuth said. “This is going to be a long fight against this virus and funding will continue to be a need.”



HOW YOU CAN HELP

1. Pray for the people and communities affected by the Ebola virus, for the medical personnel seeking to provide aid and assistance, and for persons seeking to find a cure and a vaccine.
2. To help support the UCC efforts in providing aid in Africa, please make a gift payable to “St. Paul’s UCC” marked “Ebola Relief Aid.”