

A Pastoral Letter to The Diocese HURRICANE DORIAN

From: Bishop Laish Boyd

(To be read in every parish of the Diocese at all services on Sunday, 8th September, 2019)

My Sisters & Brothers,

Hurricane Dorian hit Abaco and Grand Bahama with category 5 fury on Saturday 31st August to Wednesday 4th September. We in New Providence Island had rain, wind and flooding in low areas, but nothing to speak about compared to the Northern Bahamas. Other islands, like Bimini and the Berry Islands had rain and high wind.

- The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev. and Rt. Hon. Justin Welby, The Archbishop of the West Indies, the Most Hon. Dr. Howard Gregory, and every other diocesan bishop of the Province of the West Indies, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry from the Episcopal Church, Bishop Peter Eaton of our Companion Diocese of Southeast Florida and many other friends from across the Anglican Communion have been in touch with me to express their concern, to offer encouragement to me and to you all, and to pledge any assistance that they can give.

It was sheer agony to wait for the system to leave the Bahamas. It is deeply worrying since we had not heard from so many persons in both islands. We have begun hearing from more and more persons but, at this juncture, there are still persons unaccounted for.

Dorian is a monster storm, unprecedented and extensive, which visited an historic tragedy upon these islands: the devastation has been catastrophic, such as has never been seen or imagined in these parts.

Archdeacon Keith Cartwright, Fr. DeAngelo Bowe and I were able to fly over Marsh Harbour and surrounding areas on Tuesday. While images and video in social media and on television have been heartbreaking, the actual scenes are far more horrific: buildings and infrastructure have been decimated, extensive flooding, hundreds of acres of crops destroyed. Both islands will have to do a lot of rebuilding.

It is so important for us to be sympathetic towards others, to feel their pain and to share in their suffering.

Many of us have relatives, friends, colleagues and associates in the devastated areas, and so that brings the pain even closer to home. Let us continue to bear their burdens in our hearts and to keep them in prayer.

The most heartbreaking aspect of this is the humanitarian crisis: so many persons (65,000 plus) being in upheaval or displaced, suffering and in anguish.

At present there are 20 persons confirmed dead in Abaco alone. There will be more deaths recorded.

As your bishop, I am asking you to do a number of things:

1. Please continue to pray daily for persons in the affected islands and their families. Keep them in mind and in your heart.
2. Commit to reaching out to those that are in the affected areas: call, WhatsApp, email, tweet and message them. Stay in touch and let them know that you care. Send supplies, if you can. Commit to this for at least one year or more. Recovery will take many years.
3. I officially launched the **Diocesan Hurricane Dorian Appeal** today. Commit to being as generous as you can, as often as you can, in the second collections **and** using the special hurricane appeal envelopes.
4. Plan to take a relative, a friend or some other person from the affected islands into your home if they need it. The destruction on the ground and the devastation of the terrain and the economy make it impossible for those areas to sustain the current population. Some persons will have to relocate, even if only temporarily. This is not optional.
We have to take them into our homes and hearts and help them over this crisis period.
5. Be positive. With all of the images in the news media and particularly the bombarding in social media, it can be overwhelming. All around us there are persons who are complaining and negative.

Make no mistake: the situation is dire, the stories are heartbreaking, the suffering is great, and we are faced with something that we have NEVER faced before. However, we have to take every opportunity to look on the bright side, to count our blessings, to celebrate what did not go wrong, and to encourage others to do so.

Note: as part of our response to Hurricane Dorian, The Diocese has established a **Go Fund Me** Account for the ease of international donors in particular.

The link is: [gf.me/u/u6xsi7](https://www.gofundme.com/u/u6xsi7). Please share widely with your relatives and friends abroad.

This road we are on is a long one, so we have to be prayerful and positive and praising. This will carry us over the short and long haul. Let us trust God even as we press on.

Yours in Christ,

The Rt. Rev'd. Laish Z. Boyd
**BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF THE BAHAMAS AND
 THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS**

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