



# Gatlinburg Wildfire Response

## *The Presbytery of East Tennessee*

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Friday, December 2, representatives of churches in the Presbytery of East Tennessee met to develop our response to the Gatlinburg wildfires.

### Things to Know:

The **Gatlinburg Presbyterian Church** was largely untouched. Two years ago, GPC converted several rooms into dormitory space for visiting groups. **This space will be occupied soon by “All Hands,”** a non-profit that addresses immediate and long-term needs of communities impacted by natural disasters by engaging volunteers, partner organizations and local communities.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance will be involved in long-term relief efforts in the area. While the Red Cross handles immediate disaster relief, PDA stays until the work is complete. They anticipate **at least 2 years of recovery efforts.**

### RESOURCES NOT – NOT – NEEDED:

- **Donations of water, food, clothing, etc.** At this point, the biggest problem is where to store all of the of the resources. There will be needs down the road, but for right now, the Red Cross is asking us to wait to before sending anything.
- **Volunteers (at present).** Right now, volunteers are primarily being used to sort the overabundance of donations. Only today (Friday) are property owners and renters being allowed to assess the damage. As much as we want to help our neighbors, coordinators ask that we wait until we know more so that in our rush to help, we don't create more of a problem.

### RESOURCES NEEDED NOW:

**Monetary donations.** *We are encouraging congregations and individuals to donate to the Presbytery of East Tennessee Disaster Relief fund. You may make a check to your church and note “PET Disaster Relief”, or “Gatlinburg Fire,” or “PDA” in the memo line.* You may also donate directly to PDA (see below).

**Gas Cards.** Many of those displaced by the fires are the most vulnerable – hourly workers who staff the resorts in Gatlinburg, and will have to find work, perhaps in Pigeon Forge or Sevierville. They can use the cards to help them get back and forth to work. We will collect those in the church office, and they will be given to the Red Cross in Gatlinburg for distribution.

**Hosting sites.** PDA will be looking for area churches to host volunteer groups coming in, and are asking for a two-year commitment.

*Congregations and individuals may donate to the Presbytery of East Tennessee Disaster Relief Fund. Make a check to your church and note “PET Disaster Relief” or “Gatlinburg Fire”, or “PDA” in the memo line. You may also donate directly to PDA, DR000165.*

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance [pda.pcusa.org](http://pda.pcusa.org) (U.S. Wildfires: DR000165 to designate to ET Fires)

Tennessee Valley Coalition for the Homeless  
888-556-0791 for longer-term housing needs.

Volunteer/Donations Distribution Center  
865-804-1661 where donations are being received and sorted (the “Boyd’s Bears” building).

East Tennessee Volunteers [www.volunteere tn.org](http://www.volunteere tn.org) is clearinghouse for volunteers for immediate short-term volunteer opportunities

All Hands Volunteers [www.hands.org](http://www.hands.org) is the group staying at Gatlinburg Presbyterian Church to coordinate volunteer groups and efforts.