

Commending Highlands and Westminster Presbyteries on behalf of those impacted by 2024 Hurricane Helene

WHEREAS, Hurricane Helene was a deadly and devastating tropical cyclone that caused widespread catastrophic damage and numerous fatalities across the Southeastern United States in late September 2024. The storm severely affected FL, GA, SC, NC, TN, and VA., leaving catastrophic destruction in its wake, especially in the remote rugged mountains of Western North Carolina and Upper East Tennessee. In total, 251 people were killed as a result. 107 hurricane-related deaths in North Carolina and 19 in Tennessee were confirmed. This outbreak was the 5th costliest hurricane and one of the costliest natural disasters in United States history, with total damages of at least \$78 billion; and

WHEREAS, Hurricane Helene has caused catastrophic damages to agricultural, industrial, commercial and residential infrastructure, distressing communities served by the PCA. North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper declared a State of Emergency ahead of Hurricane Helene's NC impact on Wednesday, September 25, 2024; and Tennessee Governor Bill Lee declared a major disaster and state of emergency due to severe weather and flooding caused by the historic storm.. The order states that the declaration is effective nunc pro tunc to September 27, 2024; and

WHEREAS, Highlands and Westminster Presbyteries, and through the relief efforts of Mission to North America, served those affected by Hurricane Helene by establishing a major base of recovery operations at Arden Presbyterian Church of Arden NC and a Shed of HOPE depot at Memorial Presbyterian Church of Elizabethton TN in partnership with Mission to North America; and

WHEREAS, many PCA congregations self-deployed to offer immediate assistance to their own and their neighbors stabilizing structures, blue-tarping, and debris cleanups. MNA Disaster Response coordinated local and traveling teams including mucking and gutting teams, chainsaw armies, and long-term recovery rebuilding teams. A coalition of congregations of Highlands and Westminster Presbyteries worked together in harmony to provide more than 80 Sheds of HOPE to displaced homeowners within the Appalachian Highlands region; and

WHEREAS, the collective skills of local and traveling PCA volunteer teams, their resources and ministry operating within the bounds of Highlands and Westminster Presbyteries in disaster relief made them highly valuable to Mission to North America and the churches and communities of the PCA during these difficult times; and

WHEREAS, Mission to North America expresses their appreciation to the Highlands and Westminster Presbyteries, their collective church staffs, sessions, diaconates, and communing members for the provision of facilities for our Disaster Response Staging Sites and for the hosting of and care given to PCA volunteers, providing assessment teams, secure volunteer housing, special events, delicious meals, and many other services on your part that more than met our needs over a period of 9 months. Hundreds and hundreds of tempest-tossed families were assisted; and

Truly the meaning of Biblical Christian hospitality has been shown in the way that you cheerfully worked together, in the way you graciously served us, and in your many demonstrations of Christian love.

God bless you for your sacrificial labors in the service of Christ.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Mission to North America on this 11th day of September 2025 thanks Highlands Presbytery of Western North Carolina and Westminster Presbytery of Upper East Tennessee and SW Virginia for their extraordinary, tireless, and sacrificial service to us, the Presbyterian Church in America and those affected by 2024 Hurricane Helene.