HOUSTON RESPONDS

2021

ANNUAL UPDATE
Deepening and Widening in 2021

There's a Sunday School song, “Deep and Wide, that many may remember.

“Deep and wide, deep and wide, there’s a fountain flowing deep and wide.”

It simply but profoundly speaks of the fountain of God's love (Eph 3:18) and of how our vision of it deepened and widened through the person and work of Jesus.

It also speaks to the mission of Houston Responds in 2021, as our vision of it widened and deepened through the people and work of local churches. The mission of mobilizing churches for disaster response widened to mobilizing churches for collective impact in their community. The vision of having twenty disaster response coalitions was deepened into a coalition of interconnected churches and partners in every community of Greater Houston working together, loving their neighbors, and transforming their city.

That’s a God-sized vision. Thankfully, churches together have been blessed with God-sized resources. As the Annual Update shows, in 2021, churches in coalitions across Greater Houston and Southern Louisiana made a significant impact on critical community needs, from home repair and food distribution to racial reconciliation and financial literacy, to name a few.

Impact multiplies through interconnection. As church leaders in local coalitions embraced the vision, they began deepening their relationships and bonds of trust. As one pastor said of another, “Now that we know each other, we trust each other. Now that we trust each other, we can work together.” Resources and relationships are a powerful combination. When we bring together a network of interconnected relationships with the capacity for community-wide impact, it can transform a community and maybe even a city.

We invite you to read through this annual update and the updates for each regional coalition. They describe just a fraction of what churches do in our communities. Yet, they give at least a glimpse of what churches have done and what more they could do when we work together.

Deep, wide, and interconnected: That's how the fountain of God's love flows through the body of Christ. It's a fountain of life and flourishing for our city. We're blessed to be part of it.

We look forward to deepening and widening with you in 2022!

Houston Responds Leadership Team

Selected 2021 Highlights
Combined Totals for HR and All Coalitions
Thanks to the churches and organizations who made the collective impact in our community possible.

- New Coalitions Launched 3
- Participating Churches 600
- Volunteer Hours 690,000
- Homes Restored 1,600
- Pounds of Food Distributed 37,000,000
- Value Invested in the Community $82,500,000
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Map of Coalitions

1 Bay Area & Galveston County
  HR: Baytown
2 Beaumont Disaster Response
3 Mosaic in Action (Brazoria County)
4 Northwest Harris County
5 HR: Central
6 HR: Crosby-Huffman
7 HR: East Harris
8 Katy Responds
9 Lake Houston Responds
10 Liberty County Responds
11 HR: North Central
12 Northeast Houston Responds
13 S.H.U.R. (Southwest Houston)
14 HR: Southeast
15 HR: Spring-Woodlands
16 SWLA Responds (Southwest Louisiana)
17 The Restoration Team (West Houston)
18 Wharton County Responds
19 Houston Chinese Churches (Greater Houston)
20 Forming Coalitions
21 Bayou Responds (Houma/Thibodaux, LA)
22 Capital Region Responds (Baton Rouge, LA)
23 HR: Fort Bend County
24 HR: Montgomery County
25 HR: Waller County

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Looking Back at 2021

As we've often said, "don't waste your disaster," crisis, or critical community need. We would rather they not exist, but they bring new opportunities for loving our neighbors, and 2021 brought plenty of opportunities. They served to deepen relationships and widen the mission of local churches and their coalitions.

Leadership Teams & Work Groups

**Liberty County Responds** was born of a hurricane, **HR: Central** was established out of a pandemic, and **HR: Spring/Woodlands** developed in response to a winter storm. In 2021 they all had this in common: A deepening and widening of their mission through developing local leadership teams and workgroups.

As Pastor Revlon Belle from Liberty County Responds said, "If we're going to do anything together, we need to get to know and trust one another." So, they did, starting with a leadership team, followed by coalition gatherings for lunch, fellowship, and prayer. They interconnected One result was "Hope for Christmas," an initiative to bless impoverished children and their families. With one local church in the lead, others joined, and a work group formed to make "Hope for Christmas" a huge blessing to the community.

After helping launch the "Masks for All" project in 2020, HR: Central quickly realized the need for a diverse leadership team to model the interconnected relationships it seeks to develop in a coalition of ethnically and economically diverse churches. One result was a diverse outpouring of volunteers on Pentecost Weekend to beautify schools and parks in the Third Ward through the **Acts 2 Houston** event. The coalition also formed multiple work groups focused on critical needs in the community, including sheltering, mental health services, and life skill training.

You can read more about these coalitions in their individual annual updates. These coalitions are just a few examples of how new local leadership teams and work groups are deepening relationships and widening their mission as they seek the flourishing of the city.

Thank You

Our mission would not be possible without the generosity of congregations and the following organizations.

89.3 KSBJ / 91.7 NGEN Radio
American Red Cross
Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston
Arkos Global Advisors
Attack Poverty
Astros Foundation
Carey Baptist Association
Catholic Charities
Center for Disaster Philanthropy
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Christ In Action
Convoy of Hope
CrowdSource Rescue
David Weekley Homes
East Harris Co. Empowerment Council
The Episcopal Diocese of Texas
Eight Days of Hope
Every Shelter
Gloo
Good360
Greater Houston Community Foundation
Harris County Sheriff's Office
Hope in Him
Houston Food Bank
Houston Habitat for Humanity
Houston ToolBank
Industrial Scale Company
Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston
International Orthodox Christian Charities
Ironman Foundation
Jesus Alliance
Kurio Collective
Louisiana Annual Conference of the UMC
Louisiana VOAD
Love Acadiana
Marketplace Chaplains
McCord Development Group
Mercy Chefs
Michael & Susan Dell Foundation
The Moody Foundation
Minuteman Disaster Response
Moore Supply Company
National Christian Foundation of Houston
OneStar Foundation
Operation Blessing
Pathfinder Mission
Praying Pelican Missions
Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
Ron Blue Trust
Rebuild Texas Fund
ReachGlobal
SBP USA
Salvation Army EDS Texas Division
Samaritan’s Purse
Somebody Cares
Southern Baptist Disaster Relief
Stand Together Foundation
Swan Energy, Inc.
Texans on Mission
Texas Annual Conference of the UMC
Texas Plumbing Supply
Texas VOAD
UHP Health
UMCOR
Union Baptist Association
United Church of Christ
United Way of Acadiana
United Way of Greater Houston
United Way of Southwest Louisiana
William C. Schumacher Family Foundation
World Vision International
Home Repairs to Homelessness

Fixing Houses
In February 2021, record-breaking winter weather wreaked havoc across Greater Houston and Southwest Louisiana, leaving thousands of families without power and water and doing nearly $200 billion in damage in Texas alone. As usual, churches sprang into action, caring for displaced neighbors, providing shelter, food, and water, and eventually volunteer teams to rebuild damaged homes. Churches, coalitions, and other community partners all worked together. Plumbing parts poured in from around the country, and McCord Development Group and Inspire Church set up a warehouse to distribute supplies. Funds also poured in, including $300,000 from Harris County Winter Storm Relief Fund to aid repairs and financially support affected families.

Finding Homes
In the Spring/Woodlands area, a local congregation, Church Project, received over 300 requests from across Greater Houston for help with home repairs. Houston Responds helped Church Project connect these neighbors in need with coalitions around the city that could help. In Spring/Woodlands, a new coalition formed of churches responding to Uri as well. A core team formed of local church leaders who realized the power of building a strong “backbone” organization to help churches interconnect. Over twenty churches quickly came together, regularly convening and deepening their relationships. New work groups are forming to develop disaster readiness and to explore how churches might address other critical needs. For example, with an increasing number of homeless people seeking help from local churches, one priority is equipping church leaders with best practices for loving these neighbors and connecting them to existing resources in the community. Already, several churches guided people to a homeless ministry associated with another church in the coalition. That’s interconnectedness at work. As it deepens and widens, its impact on the Spring/Woodlands community promises to grow as well.

Uri Response within the first month…
400-500 homes were restored through local coalitions.
40,000+ meals were delivered.
150+ pallets of water were delivered.
1,100 fittings and 1,600 pipes were donated.
1,080 boxed meals and 12,672 MREs were donated.

Houston Northwest Church made its facilities available to the public for showers and laundry and provided food, water, and financial support to families with water damage from the winter storm.

HR: Baytown volunteers delivered water to Faith Family Church and The Good Neighbor Connection serving 59 apartments, several of which had broken pipes and were without water for a week.

Woodlands Church hosted a muck & gut training session for churches from HR: Spring/Woodlands. The session was led by The Restoration Team, who has been restoring homes since Hurricane Harvey.

In 2021, HR: Spring/Woodlands began hosting luncheons regularly to unite pastors and engage local churches with the coalition for collaboration to increase the coalition’s impact in the community.

Congresswoman Sylvia R. Garcia toured the Houston Responds Warehouse, were volunteers helped take inventory of plumbing supplies, food, and water being donated to help families affected by Uri.

Northeast Houston Responds partners, Freedom Church Intl., Community Works CDC, and Houston City Council Member Tarsha Jackson held a food and water distribution event.

More stories are available with each coalition’s individual annual update.

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Disaster Relief to Racial Unity

Responding

In August 2021, Ida hit Louisiana as a Category 4 hurricane and wrought an estimated $55 billion in catastrophic damage across coastal Louisiana. As with prior Louisiana disasters, Houston Responds quickly set up drop-off sites across Greater Houston for donated supplies and a supply chain to get resources from local churches and coalitions to Louisiana neighbors most in need. Thanks to trusted relationships with local and national partners, a network quickly formed, funneling millions of dollars in resources to Southeast Louisiana. Along with local coalitions, Houston Responds also helped hundreds of volunteers from local churches find places to serve.

Uniting

In Southeast Louisiana, “Don’t waste your disaster.” meant not just distributing resources but helping local pastors support one another and their communities. In the hard-hit area of Houma/Thibodaux, a leadership team was formed not just to help coordinate relief efforts but to help a disconnected community of church leaders deepen their relationships and widen their mission to meet ongoing critical needs in the community together. As a result, Bayou Responds was born.

In Baton Rouge, although less affected by Hurricane Ida, a new leadership team was formed initially to assist other more affected areas and develop readiness for future crises. Upon realizing the necessity of working together, the team also recognized that their churches and communities are disconnected racially, economically, denominationally, and otherwise. The realization led to a deeper common purpose: To use what was initially a disaster response coalition to build a new network of interconnected relationships representing the racial diversity of the community, reflecting the unity of the body of Christ, and seeking the general welfare of their city. As a result, the team formed Capitol Region Responds and began intentionally engaging a diverse group of church leaders across the region.

Ida Response Partners: Partner organizations working in Louisiana were critical to the Hurricane Ida response effort. They helped direct volunteers and supplies from Houston Responds coalitions to areas where they were needed most.

Generators were vital to the recovery effort immediately following Hurricane Ida. Love Acadiana and churches from Lafayette delivered over 200 generators to the Houma area. Local Pastors from the Houma/Thibodaux area met for the first time to discuss forming a coalition. Bayou Responds was formed soon after, and the collaboration has been critical to the recovery. Volunteers from The Bayou Church, Lafayette served Bayou Dularge Baptist Church in Theriot Louisiana. Many churches traveled to help other churches recover from Hurricane Ida.
Disaster Supplies to Refugees Resources

New Partnerships

In the wake of Hurricanes Laura and Delta, Houston Responds coalitions, their churches, and community partners needed an anchor for the supply chain to Louisiana. **Inspire Church & McCord Development Group** generously provided warehouse space to make it happen. When Winter Storm Uri hit, that warehouse became a critical hub, receiving and distributing supplies from over 25 local and national organizations that coalitions, churches, and their volunteers could use to repair and restore homes quickly. When the door closed for that warehouse space, the door opened to another provided by **Lakewood Church**. It served as a critical hub when Ida hit, receiving donations from local churches and sending them to Louisiana for the recovery efforts.

New Neighbors

Not surprisingly, through serving together, relationships formed, and the bonds of trust deepened. The mission also widened. A steady flow of products from generous corporate sponsors provided a stockpile of resources not only for disaster but also for other critical community needs. Houston Responds mobilized its network of coalitions and churches to help move these resources from the warehouse to the homes of people in need, including refugees and immigrants recently arriving in Houston. This new warehouse partnership provided local church volunteers with appliances, furniture, and other essential items to care for our new neighbors, welcome them as our own, and love them as ourselves (Lev. 19:34).

As the relationships deepen and the mission continues to widen, this kind of partnership promises to multiply its impact and provide a model for others who feel called to work together to love our neighbors and seek the flourishing of our city.

Volunteers from **Houston Habitat for Humanity** helped move donated items and supplies at the Warehouse to assist with relocating the Warehouse to its new location during the summer of 2021.

Charley Elgin, Warehouse Operations Coordinator for Houston Responds, worked countless hours moving donated supplies like the pallets of water donated by **Walmart** following Winter Storm Uri.

Fellowship of Purpose Church from **HR: East Harris** coalition send volunteers to deliver much needed food and essential supplies to the warehouse following Hurricane Ida.

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Collaboration to Transformation

From collaborating for crisis response, our mission deepened and widened to *interconnecting for community transformation*. In 2021, we caught glimpses of what that looks like. In 2022 and beyond, we see the vision of interconnected churches transforming their city becoming more fully realized. What will it take? First, it will take God’s grace. Thankfully, we’ve been given grace *upon* grace (John 1:16). Second, it will take church leaders who embrace the vision. We see an increasing number who do.

**Challenge**

They just need a little help. Why? Their priority is still shepherding their own flocks. They may partner with some like-minded churches and perhaps some non-profits but building church networks is not in their job description. As one said, “It’s challenging enough to get my own flock together, much less 50 others!” That's understandable. It also leaves pastors laboring alone, churches disconnected, and their collective impact diminished. What’s the solution?

**Solution**

We believe the solution is a “backbone” organization. As the spine interconnects the human body, a “backbone” organization helps interconnect the church body. Houston Responds provides the backbone that interconnects pastors, churches, and partners and multiplies their collective impact. As the annual update shows, resources and relationships are a powerful combination. When pastors know and trust each other and when their congregations work together, great things happen. Over the next four years, we will be strengthening the backbone in two key ways; building relationships & multiplying collective impact.

**Building Relationships**

We will work to deepen relationships in existing coalitions and launch new coalitions to complete a network that covers every community in Greater Houston. We will also develop cohorts of lead pastors and mission pastors for support and collaboration, as well as cohorts for racial unity, prayer, and unifying initiatives.

**Multiplying Collective Impact**

We will continue helping to mobilize churches and partners to multiply collective impact on food insecurity, housing, refugee resettlement, mental health, foster care, academic underachievement, disaster response and other critical issues. By launching work groups at both the coalition and network levels, we'll bring together churches locally and city-wide to share knowledge and best practices, learn from subject matter experts and create easy onramps for participation and collaboration.

**Transformation**

By bringing together relational strength and collective impact, we dream of helping churches go from meeting needs to transforming lives and communities.

That's a God-sized vision. Thankfully, churches are blessed with God-sized resources. We've seen glimpses of what can happen when we work together. We long to see more. In 2022 and beyond, we'll do everything we can to help make that happen. By God's grace, the power of the Spirit, and the body of Christ working together – it will!

*A coalition of interconnected churches and partners in every community of Greater Houston working together, loving their neighbors, and transforming their city.*
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