



MOMENT FOR MISSION

In early January of 2023, the rain began to fall on the rural farming village of Planada, California. Normally, this type of rain would be a welcome relief to this arid community. Except the rain did not stop. More than three inches fell in a very brief time—significantly more than the town’s drainage systems could handle. The rising waters ultimately breached Miles Creek sending a tidal wave of water down upon this small community of mostly migrant farm workers. More than fifty percent of Planada’s homes were damaged or destroyed. The local elementary school incurred so much damage that it would remain closed for months. The agriculture fields that were the foundation of the region’s economy instantly became useless swampland. Experts estimated that more than 83% of the residents suffered a substantial economic loss due to the flooding. Like the dark clouds that brought the rain, fear and despair hovered over the community.

Enter into this picture Alicia Perez of the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Planada. Ms. Perez realized the vulnerable state that these families were facing. Since English was not the native language for most, navigating governmental assistance was both intimidating and overwhelming. Perez immediately contacted Church World Service for support. CWS provided hygiene kits, school kits and cleanup buckets to aid in the recovery. “The children felt very happy to receive the school kits,” Perez reported. **“So many of them had just lost their Christmas gifts and the new school supplies were the only thing they owned that was not wet or destroyed.”** During a time when uncertainty was rising, kits from Church World Service offered a glimmer of hope.

Whether it be cleanup buckets sent to hurricane ravaged communities or welcome backpacks sent to welcome our new neighbors or school kits sent to Planada, California, Church World Service Kits provide glimmers of hope to people who feel as if the darkness has overtaken them. So on this day when we consider our involvement in the Church World Service kit ministry program, may we be that sparkle of hope and may we remember the words of the writer of book of Hebrews, “do not forget to do good and to share with those in need.”

