

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is providing support and prayers for its siblings in Christ in Venezuela, where twin earthquakes have reportedly taken nearly 600 lives and caused widespread damage.

More than 4,000 people are estimated to have been injured as a result of the 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes that occurred earlier this week, just 39 seconds apart, collapsing structures and necessitating ongoing search-and-rescue operations.



“We’re carrying out an extraordinary effort across the country,” Health Minister Carlos Alvarado stated in a Bloomberg News report. “Hospitals in the La Guaira region, the worst-hit region, are at maximum capacity and we’ve started to set up field hospitals.” In a conversation with [Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#), the Rev. Berla Andrade, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Venezuela, added, “We are seeing buildings severely affected by the earthquake, houses severely affected by the earthquake,” and people who have had to leave their residences “to preserve their safety and to protect them, given the damage to their homes. Our Presbyterian Church of Venezuela is declared in permanent session” as it works to respond.

In a show of solidarity, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has approved an emergency grant to the Presbyterian Church of Venezuela, which noted that the damage to residences has affected “members and associates, especially staff and students from our schools, who have had to evacuate,” according to correspondence with PDA.

“The initial actions of the Presbyterian Church of Venezuela are focused on providing food, medicine, personal hygiene products, and assistance in securing temporary housing for those affected, with particular emphasis on children, adolescents, and the elderly,” according to the correspondence. “We are awaiting infrastructure assessments by public and private organizations, including specialized personnel from our church, to understand the full extent of the situation and evaluate our long-term response.”

PC(USA) representatives, such as the Rev. Edwin González-Castillo, director of PDA, and the Rev. José Manuel Capella-Pratts, a Global Ecumenical Liaison, have been following the situation, and PDA has written [a prayer](#) to share with those affected or concerned.

"Our hearts are deeply shaken as we receive news of these devastating earthquakes. The suffering of the Venezuelan people is also our own as Scripture reminds us: 'If one

member suffers, all suffer together with it," said Capella-Pratts, quoting 1 Corinthians 12:26 (NRSVUE). "In response, we call upon all to stand in solidarity — through prayer and through tangible support for our Venezuelan siblings, especially the Iglesia Presbiteriana de Venezuela (the Presbyterian Church of Venezuela), through the ministry of PDA."

PDA has been in touch with the ACT Alliance Latin America and the Caribbean forum and said some people are sleeping in their cars out of worry that their homes might collapse as the country is rocked by aftershocks.

ACT reported that the "doublet" quakes struck north-central Venezuela near Morón (Carabobo State), triggering a State of Emergency and generating strong shaking that was felt across Caracas, Carabobo, La Guaira, Miranda and Aragua as well as in neighboring Colombia and parts of the Caribbean.



The Rev. Edwin González-Castillo (Courtesy of PDA).

"Our hearts break as we hear and see the damage of the earthquakes and have conversations with partners," González-Castillo said. "We especially recognize the fragile situation the people in Venezuela have been facing for many years. We are grateful to have the relationship we have with the Presbyterian Church in Venezuela and how it allows us to respond to disasters quickly."

The emotional impact of the disaster also has been felt at the PC(USA)'s 227th General Assembly, which included online committee meetings Monday through Wednesday and picks up in Milwaukee this weekend with in-person gatherings through July 2.

The Reformed Identity Around the World Committee, which includes Andrade, paused to pray after learning of the earthquakes. The committee's moderator, Rachael Eggebeen of Presbytery de Cristo, prayed for Andrade as well as others impacted, saying in part, "We pray for all the people who are going to be affected by the earthquake in Venezuela. We pray that you wrap your arms of protection and hope and safety around everyone and those who are impacted both directly by the earthquake or those who are worried about friends, family, and loved ones."

*To assist with the response in Venezuela, consider donating to PDA's fund for international disasters and emergencies [here](#).*