Meat enables hands and feet of Christ in Puerto Rico

In May 2017, MCC shipped 200 boxes of beef canned in Fairview, Oklahoma, to Puerto Rico, for use in peacebuilding work with Mennonite churches and schools. Guided by Rolando Flores, MCC program director for Puerto Rico, it aided more than 500 people in three months.

On Sept. 20, 2017, Flores, his family, church and fellow Puerto Ricans experienced Hurricane Maria.

“This event (created) the moment to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ on our island,” he says. With the remaining beef, Flores and his family began a local hurricane response.

Days later, Flores requested more meat. MCC shipped 800 boxes of canned chicken, processed in Spartansburg, Pennsylvania.

The chicken reached more than 40 percent

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of the island’s municipalities. For many, it was the first sign of relief. Soon, other church denominations and nongovernmental organizations partnered with Flores.

In December 2017, Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS), Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) of Mennonite Church USA and MCC shipped turkey and staples like rice and seasonings. The 4,008 cans of turkey came from Hinton, Virginia, and Myerstown, Pennsylvania volunteers.

MDS and ACC churches paid for food, supplies and shipments. MCC and Material Resources Center in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, gave logistical support. Oregon Dairy, a grocery store and restaurant in Lititz, Pennsylvania, provided food supplies at heavy discounts.

“It’s important that [volunteers] know the reach that the cans of meat have,” says Flores. “They’ve served not only to feed people and families, but to build bridges between churches, families and communities.”

MCC has seconded Flores to MDS to coordinate its long-term hurricane recovery response in Puerto Rico.

“**This event (created) the moment to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ on our island.**”

Rolando Flores, left, delivers this and 39 additional boxes of canned chicken to Pastor Walter Montañés of Iglesia Mennonita Maná del Cielo (Manna from Heaven Mennonite Church) in Vega Baja. Because of this assistance, the church could respond to the needs in their community after Hurricane Maria. Flores is MCC’s program coordinator for Puerto Rico, currently seconded to Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS). (MDS photo/Kevin King)

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