

## Physical Storms We Have Weathered - Facilitator Guide

### Introduction

Over the last 50 years the DCGC has endured numerous storms, both literally and figuratively. We have felt the fury of major hurricanes and tornadoes. We have seen changes related to racism, theology, worship, sexuality, the ordination of women, the institution of marriage, and the adoption of a new prayer book. In the “Remembering” phase of our Jubilee this discussion guide provides a framework to look back at the various physical storms that we have weathered and learn from them and strengthen us for the inevitable storms to come.

### Opening Prayer

Calm me Lord, as you calmed the storm. Still me Lord, keep me from harm. Let all tumult within me cease. Enfold me Lord, in your Peace. (Celtic Prayer)

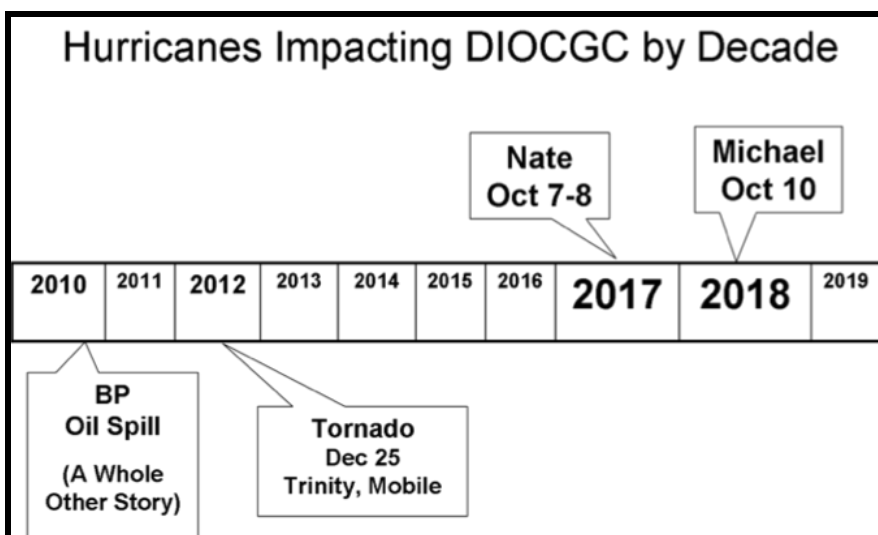
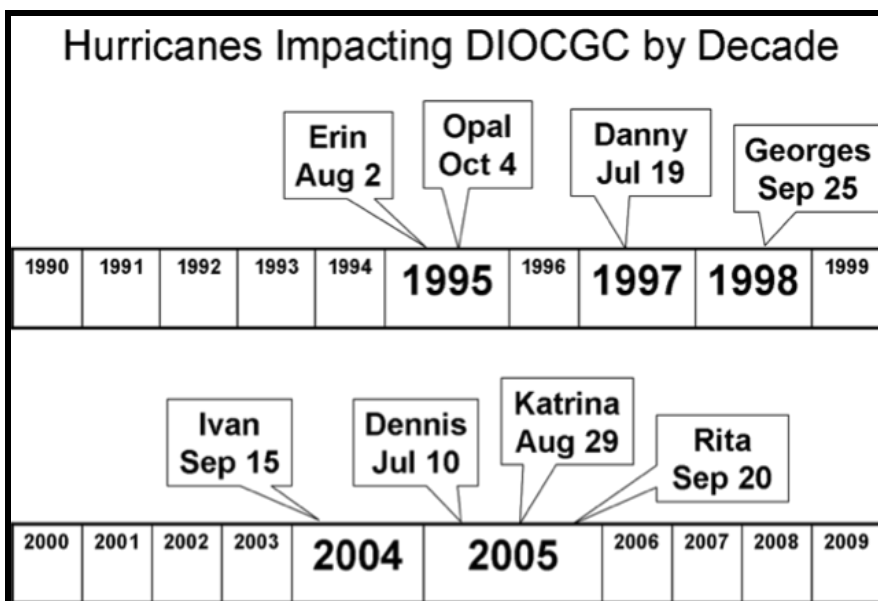
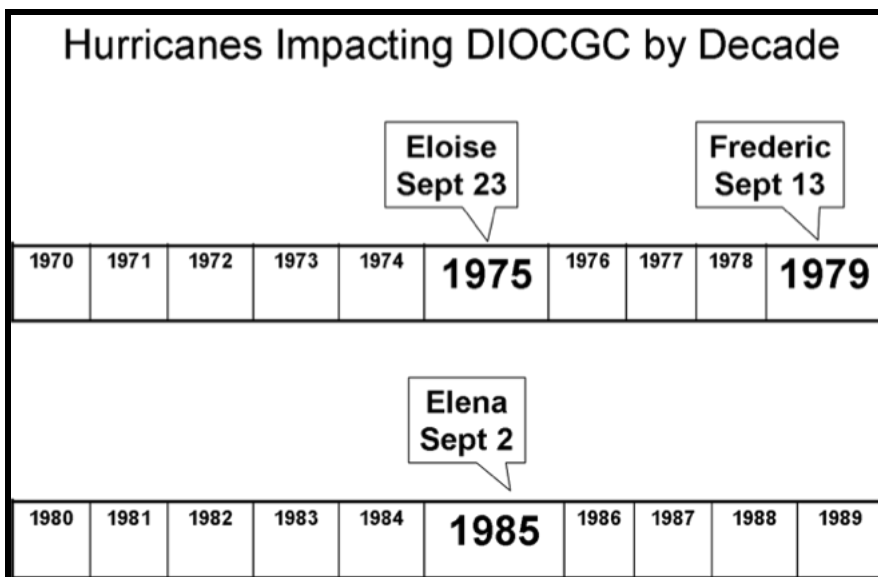
### Background/Reference Materials

Below is a listing of the major hurricanes that have impacted our diocese from 1970-2019. Since 1970, the people within the geographic boundaries of the Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast have experienced 13 hurricanes of various magnitudes. Some of us remember all of these storms. Most of us remember several of them...vividly. The stories are many, ranging in tone from quite sad to terrifying to highly humorous. Sharing stories binds us together and educates the younger generations. Reflecting upon past storms reminds us to prepare for the future as best we can. We will with God's help.

Use this material to discuss the storms that have impacted your church or a fellow church in the diocese.

### Post Discussion Questions

1. How does your church prepare for a potential hurricane or severe weather event?
2. Are you aware of your church's disaster preparedness and response plan?
3. Who is your disaster plan coordinator?
4. What role could you play in disaster relief at your church?
5. Discuss how your church could help a fellow church if disaster befell them.
6. Discuss how your church could help your community if a disaster occurs.



## Eloise -- September 23, 1975 | Category 1

- Only hurricane to hit U.S. in 1975
- Only hurricane to strike Panama City Beach in 20th Century (4 deaths & \$50 million in damage in Panama City Beach)
- Maximum sustained winds 125 mph in Panama City
- On Gulf of Mexico side of Hwy 98, between Fort Walton Beach and Panama City 75 motel foundations were destroyed and 400 other buildings damaged (Very few high-rise condominiums had been built at this time.)
- Extreme tree and crop damage all along the path (estimated agricultural losses in Alabama exceeded \$100 million)

## Frederic -- September 13, 1979 | Category 3 (landfall as Cat 4)

On the evening of September 12, 1979, Frederic crossed the west end of Dauphin Island as a Category 4 hurricane. It then traveled northward along the Alabama-Mississippi state line.

According to the National Weather Service...

- Frederic was the first hurricane to directly strike Mobile County since the 1930s.
- Damage costs were around \$2.3 billion at the time.
- It still had hurricane-force winds near Meridian, Mississippi.
- Mobile Bay saw up to 10 feet of storm surge while some Gulf Beaches saw up to 15 feet.
- A half million people in the region evacuated and that helped to keep the direct death toll to around a half-dozen.
- Some people were without electricity in Mobile for months.

## Opal -- October 4, 1995 | Category 1

- Opal was a fast mover. The storm was an intense 150 mph Category 4 hurricane on October 4 but abruptly weakened to a low-end Category 3 hurricane prior to making land fall near Pensacola later that day. The storm quickly weakened inland and became extra-tropical on October 5.
- Over 100,000 people were evacuated before the storm made landfall creating major traffic jams on many major roadways, including Interstate 65.
- The storm surge reached 10-15 feet in northwest Florida. Areas from Orange Beach to Dauphin Island in Alabama also got 4-7 feet of surge.
- In Escambia, Okaloosa, and Santa Rosa counties in Florida, nearly 300 homes were destroyed and 1,000 others suffered major damage.
- An F-2 tornado hit Crestview, FL, killing one person.
- Even though Opal made landfall in Florida, Brewton, AL., got the most rain from the storm -- 19.42 inches. Other areas in south and central Alabama got 5 or more inches of rain from the storm, including 8.7 inches at Evergreen and 7.48 inches at the Mobile Regional Airport.
- The storm left at least \$2.1 billion in damage in Florida alone.

## **Erin -- August 3, 1995 | Category 1 at initial landfall on August 2 / Category 2 at second landfall on August 3**

- Erin made landfall on the central eastern Florida coastline as a Category 1 hurricane on August 2 and again along the Florida Panhandle as a Category 2 hurricane on August 3, causing a moderate amount of damage. The system reached its peak strength of 100 mph just prior to the second landfall.
- Second landfall occurred at 9:20 am along Santa Rosa Island at Hwy. 399 between the National Seashore Day Use Center and the west end of Navarre Beach.
- Erin moved across Pensacola and into Baldwin County, AL near I-10 and the Perdido River areas around 11:30 am. The storm eye began filling in as it moved across Baldwin County causing progressive weakening. Erin continued to track northwest through southwestern Alabama during the afternoon on August 3 and weakened to a tropical storm as it moved into Mississippi overnight.

## **Georges -- September 25, 1998 | Category 2**

- Georges reached Category 4 intensity but weakened before making landfall Sept. 28, 1998, near Biloxi, MS as a Category 2.
- It moved slowly across Mississippi, then into Alabama after landfall and was the cause of one death in Mobile.
- Georges caused a 7-11 foot storm surge in Mobile and Baldwin counties and caused extensive damage along the coast, especially in Bayou La Batre and on Dauphin Island. According to the weather service many homes on the Gulf were pushed across the island from storm surge.
- One of the highest rain totals in Alabama from Georges was 29.66 inches in Bay Minette.

## **Danny -- July 19, 1997 | Category 1**

- Danny was the only hurricane to make landfall during the 1997 season.
- The storm slowed down as it neared Alabama and then stalled for hours over Mobile Bay. It finally made landfall near Mullet Point as a Category 1 hurricane and drifted over the state for the next three days.
- Danny's legacy was rain, not wind. The Dauphin Island Sea Lab recorded 36.71 inches of rain for the storm with almost 26 inches of that falling in just seven hours. Doppler radar in Mobile estimated more than 43 inches fell over southwest Mobile Bay.
- Danny was blamed for four deaths, including a sailor near Fort Morgan.
- The National Hurricane Center estimated Danny caused \$100 million in total damage.

## **Ivan -- September 15 - 16, 2004 | Category 3**

- Ivan peaked as a Category 5 storm but made landfall just west of Gulf Shores, AL on September 16, 2004, as a Category 3 with 130 mph winds and a “historic” storm surge. Ivan brought a 10-15 foot storm surge with it, overtopping the Interstate 10 bridge across Pensacola Bay and causing a quarter mile of the bridge to collapse.
- Pensacola, FL, was one of the cities hardest hit when Ivan blasted ashore. The occurrence of Ivan marked a major point in the history of the Pensacola area. The level of damage, unprecedented even to an area accustomed to tropical storms, has had significant long-term effects on nearly all aspects of the community.
- Along the Alabama coast, high surf and wind caused extensive damage at Orange Beach. Damage caused by Ivan in Baldwin County, AL, according to the National Weather Service, was worse than hurricanes Frederic and Opal.
- The Associated Press reported that up to 52 people died in the United States as Ivan made its way up the East Coast from Alabama and Florida.
- Total losses from Ivan were estimated at \$18.82 billion.

## **Dennis -- July 10, 2005 | Category 1**

- Dennis prompted the governors of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana to declare states of emergency in their states. In Alabama residents in all parts of Mobile County, and those south of I-10 in Baldwin County, were ordered to evacuate.
- Approximately 700,000 people in the Florida panhandle were evacuated in the days prior to Dennis. Evacuation orders were issued for coastal areas in the Florida Panhandle stretching from Escambia County to Bay County. Military installations including NAS Pensacola, Whiting Field, Eglin AFB, Hurlburt Field and Tyndall AFB were all evacuated days before the storm.
- At Navarre Beach, FL, sustained winds of 98 mph were reported with a peak gust of 121 mph. Pensacola Airport reported sustained winds of 82 mph and a peak gust of 96 mph.
- Milton received 7.08 inches of rain, the highest reported rainfall total in Florida caused by Dennis.
- The winds and rain of Dennis caused severe damage to cotton crops in the Florida Panhandle and in Alabama.
- Damages attributed to Dennis were estimated at \$6–\$10 billion.

## **Rita -- August 20, 2005 | Category 3**

- High seas from Rita on September 22 flooded parts of coastal Walton County, FL. Moderate beach erosion also occurred as a result of the high seas.
- On September 24, strong rip currents produced by the remnants of Rita resulted in the death of one person near Miramar Beach, FL.
- In Alabama, the storm produced 22 weak tornadoes, mainly rated F0, causing minor isolated damage amounting to roughly \$1.2 million. Heavy rains also fell in association with Rita in the state. Most of the western portions of Alabama received more than 3 inches with south-central portions peaking around 7 inches.

## **Katrina -- August 29, 2005 | Category 3**

- Katrina made landfall in southeast Louisiana on August 29 as a Category 3 storm.
- While Katrina absolutely devastated parts of Louisiana and Mississippi, this storm had a substantial impact on Alabama. Katrina caused a surge of 11.45 feet in Mobile Bay and 12-14 feet in Bayou La Batre, AL. Many homes were put underwater by Katrina's surge in Bayou La Batre, AL.
- So much of Mobile was flooded that a dusk to dawn curfew was implemented, and many businesses on the Causeway over Mobile Bay were damaged or destroyed.
- Major beach erosion stretched from Dauphin Island, AL to east of Destin, FL.

## **Nate -- October 7 – 8, 2017 | Category 1**

- On October 7, the National Weather Service stated that Hurricane Nate had broken the record for the fastest forward motion by a hurricane in the Gulf of Mexico, with a forward speed of 28 miles per hour. This top forward motion occurred during a 12-hour period on Saturday, October 7, as Nate sped northward towards the Gulf Coast.
- Florida's governor declared a state of emergency for 29 counties in the northern portion of the state. Nate spawned 10 confirmed tornadoes from Alabama to North Carolina, including at least one waterspout near Gulf Shores, Alabama, in the hours prior to landfall on Oct. 7.
- Nate made a pair of Gulf Coast landfalls, both as a Category 1 hurricane, first near the mouth of the Mississippi River in southeast Louisiana on October 7, then near Biloxi, MS, just after midnight on October 8.
- Gulf Breeze, FL, experienced the highest storm total rainfall -- 9.93 inches. Crestview, FL, received 8.15 inches of rain. Other notable total rainfall amounts occurred across Mobile and Baldwin Counties with 7.71 inches in Foley, 7.37 inches in Tillmans Corner, 7.20 inches in West Mobile, and 7.06 inches in Orange Beach.
- Surge flooding pushed over Dauphin Island, AL, and piled into Mobile Bay, with water levels reaching roughly 5.5 feet above normal high tide at Mobile, AL, and 5.8 feet above normal high tide at Bayou La Batre, AL.

## **Michael -- October 10, 2018 | Category 5**

- Michael made landfall as a Category 5 hurricane, with maximum sustained winds of 160 mph on October 10, between Mexico Beach, Florida and Tyndall Air Force Base in Panama City, Florida. Every structure on the base sustained damage, and some were completely destroyed by the intense winds. Large forests in the area were almost entirely flattened to the ground, while trees that remained standing on and around Tyndall AFB were completely stripped and denuded.
- In Mexico Beach, catastrophic and widespread destruction occurred as many homes were flattened or completely swept away by a 14 ft storm surge and Category 5 winds. Large sections of U.S. Highway 98 washed away. Entire neighborhoods in Mexico Beach were

reduced to nothing but bare foundation slabs. Vehicles, businesses, apartment buildings, and hotels were destroyed or severely damaged. Countless trees were lost.

- Severe damage from storm surge and intense winds also occurred at St. George Island, in Port St. Joe, and in Apalachicola, where a storm surge of 8.50 ft was recorded. Downtown Port St. Joe sustained extensive damage, and the storm surge left boats and other debris deposited in yards, streets, and parking lots in town.
- Michael's intense eyewall caused major structural damage as far inland as Marianna, where businesses in the downtown area were severely damaged. Homes and churches in town were heavily damaged, and countless trees and power lines were downed.
- The western half of Michael's eyewall passed directly over Panama City. Numerous businesses including restaurants, gas stations, shopping centers, office buildings, retail stores, and hotels sustained major structural damage or were destroyed. In residential areas, homes and apartment buildings lost their roofs and exterior walls, and many trees were toppled, snapped, or completely defoliated.
- Approximately 3 million acres of timber were damaged or destroyed in Florida, costing an estimated \$1.3 billion. Total agricultural losses statewide were at \$1.49 billion, while property loss reached almost \$5 billion. Insurance claims totaled \$5.53 billion.
- The National Hurricane Center assessed that Michael caused a total of 50 deaths in Florida by the time they released Michael's Tropical Cyclone Report in April 2019.

Information on hurricanes obtained from the National Weather Service website: [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov).