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Houses of Worship, Homeless Shelters, Soup Kitchens Receive Funding From FEMA For Disaster Recovery

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Southgate Baptist Church completes repairs to its Lighthouse Mission and continues to serve meals and support the community in Christiansted. FEMA will reimburse Southgate about \$242,570 for hurricane repairs to its church and mission. By. FEMA/YOLANDA BRANNIGAN-HODGE.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency said Monday that through its Public Assistance Program it is partnering with the V.I. Office of Disaster Recovery to support the repair and restoration of houses of worship, homeless shelters, soup kitchens and schools managed by churches.

Recovery projects include 21 houses of worship of various denominations, the Diocese of St. Thomas with its seven parishes, 11 schools run by houses of worship and two homeless shelters run by Catholic Charities across the territory.

Churches include:

St. Croix

- City of Refuge Worship Center, First Assembly of God, Inc., Lutheran Social Services of the VI, Inc., Midland Wesleyan Holiness Church, Inc., Moravian Church Virgin Islands Conference, New Life Resort, Inc., Pentecostal Movement Council, Inc., Refuge Tabernacle Church, Southgate Baptist Church, Inc., Sunny Isle Baptist Church, The Way of the Cross Baptist Church and Twigs Ministry, Inc.

St. Thomas

- Anna's Retreat Church of God, Inc., Church of God of Prophecy, Hebrew Congregation, Hernhut Moravian Church, Nirvana Healing Temple, Nisky Moravian Church and Word of Faith International Christian Center

St. John

- Bethany Moravian Church and Emmaus Moravian Church

Nirvana Healing Temple and Southgate Baptist Church have made progress with their recovery projects.

According to FEMA, winds, wind-blown rain, flying debris, sliding rocks and mud from hurricanes Irma and Maria damaged Nirvana Healing Temple in Estate Mandahl on St. Thomas. Repairs to the roof and rooms of its retreat house, as well as repairs to the temple and entrance gate, were completed. FEMA's Public Assistance Program obligated \$746,000 to Nirvana Healing Temple to help fund repairs to its hurricane-damaged buildings.

On St. Croix, Southgate Baptist Church's two buildings were damaged by Hurricane Maria. Both the metal roofing, and windows, as well as damage to interior walls and floors, all of which have been repaired since the storm. FEMA has obligated about \$242,500 for Southgate Baptist Church's hurricane repairs at both locations, the agency said.

"The Lighthouse Mission and Southgate Baptist Church of St. Croix have made extensive repairs to both facilities enabling each to fulfill our purpose of 'shining the light of Jesus into Christiansted by programs of compassion and education,'" said the Rev. Edward Cullen. "We are appreciative of the small army of FEMA employees that have offered us guidance and encouragement throughout the disaster recovery process. We were recipients of not only their professional assistance, but many even volunteered their time to help us in serving our community."

FEMA said it has obligated nearly \$3.2 million in Public Assistance funds for Irma and Maria damage to houses of worship to date, including repairs to homeless shelters, churches, soup kitchens, and schools. Nearly \$1.3 million was obligated for damage caused by Irma, and nearly \$1.9 million was obligated for damage caused by Maria.

Houses of worship often serve as a place of comfort for communities before, during and after a disaster, FEMA said. The agency also vowed to continue assisting these sanctuaries in moving their storm-impacted construction projects forward and ensuring structures are strengthened to better withstand future storms.

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