

Testimony before the New York City Council Finance Committee by Matthew McKeon-Slattery,
Disaster Relief Facilitator for the Diocese of Brooklyn, on Legislative Resolution 4379
February 7, 2013

Thank you, Chairman Recchia and Members of the New York City Council Finance Committee. I am Matthew McKeon-Slattery, serving as the Disaster Relief Facilitator for the Diocese of Brooklyn. I am here in support of Resolution 4379 and to add further information to the testimony of Joe Rosenberg, Executive Director of the Catholic Community Relations Council.

The Diocese of Brooklyn includes Queens and is organized separately from the Archdiocese of New York. We are currently engaged in the FEMA process for requesting public assistance. Although the FEMA representatives we have met with have been very cooperative and helpful so far, they cannot do what the regulations prohibit them from doing.

Soon, the Diocese will be scheduling FEMA site visits for our affected schools, halls, centers, and gyms – all of which may qualify for assistance. This does not include the actual houses of worship, which, as Joe Rosenberg said, have incurred millions of dollars in expenses. It also does not include any residential properties owned by the Diocese, such as convents and rectories. What follows is a description of just one of the many sites that we feel should be eligible for assistance.

Among the most affected parishes without much media attention is the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Red Hook.

The basement of the Visitation church has been the primary storage area for donations distributed to the community each Saturday, both before and after Hurricane Sandy. Simply because the storage area is the basement of a house of worship, it is currently ineligible to receive any public assistance. This is official policy even though the food, clothing, and other donated goods distributed from there go to anyone in the community who is in need, Catholic or otherwise. If this happened to be the basement of a community center, there would be no question of its eligibility. Here, the Visitation is providing a valuable public service that the government would have to provide if not for the Visitation.

Since the storm, the workspace for these community distribution events has had to move out of the destroyed public basement area of the rectory and into the private living quarters upstairs. It is also current policy not to offer assistance to rectories and convents except as mixed-use facilities, and only if they pass a poorly defined usage test. Residential properties not owned by a public/non-profit (PNP) are not subject to such a test. They are eligible.

Regardless of the outcome of Resolution 4379, the Visitation is still going to be a vital center for the people of Red Hook, just as the Diocese's parishes in Coney Island, Far Rockaway, Belle Harbor, Breezy Point, Gerritsen Beach, Canarsie, and many others will serve their neighborhoods.

Just two days ago, the Visitation received three tons of goods donated from a small group of volunteers in Florida. This large amount of food, coats, clothes, and bedding will sit in the now-dry church basement until much of it is given out to the community in a public event to be held this Saturday, and at future events until as many of the local community can be helped as possible.

Please support Resolution 4379 and support the viability of religious institutions to continue serving their communities.

Testimony on behalf of the



In support of New York City Council Resolution 4379, urging passage of legislation to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to clarify that houses of worship are eligible for certain disaster relief and emergency assistance on terms equal to other eligible private nonprofit facilities, and for other purposes.

David M. Pollock
Associate Executive Director

February 7, 2013

My name is David Pollock and I am the Associate Executive Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York (JCRC-NY). Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning.

First, I wish to thank Speaker Quinn, Chair Recchia and many members of the Council for their ongoing concern and attention to a broad range of assistance to Sandy survivors, and to this issue in particular. I especially wish to express our gratitude to Representatives Chris Smith and Grace Meng and their staffs for moving this issue forward in Congress.

Legislation commonly referred to as the *Stafford Act*, and subsequent rules and regulations, grant the authority of almost all FEMA activities. The *Stafford Act* authorizes FEMA to offer "public assistance" to governments and some nonprofits. The nonprofits are divided into two categories: critical and noncritical.

Critical nonprofits comprise a relatively short list. However, there is a relatively long and broad list of nonprofits eligible for "non-critical" assistance. The *Stafford Act* does not list houses of worship among its list of examples of eligible nonprofits; neither does the *Stafford Act* exclude houses of worship in any way.

Current Supreme Court jurisprudence makes clear that religious institutions may receive government financial aid in the context of a broad program administered on the basis of religion neutral criteria. This is why houses of worship and other religious nonprofits can, and do, currently receive grants from DHS to improve their security and the Interior Department for historic preservation:

Most houses of worship need FEMA's help to rebuild. Many operate at a subsistence level and insurance, if available, is inadequate. Many could not afford even minimal coverage. On the opposite extreme, I know of a synagogue that had a \$1 million flood insurance policy. Their damages exceed their coverage.

As of February 1, 2013, 86 houses of worship had individually registered with FEMA and requested Public Assistance. In addition, as you heard from my colleagues representing the Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn, 125 damaged Catholic churches are subsumed under their two FEMA applications.

My additional, ongoing concern is: who is missing? Every day I hear of desperate leaders of churches and synagogues who heard that houses of worship are not eligible, and therefore they have not even submitted an application. The deadline of February 27th is fast approaching and we do not yet have a handle on the total number of houses of worship affected.

Churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and other houses of worship throughout the communities of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and elsewhere play an essential role in the daily lives of our communities. Some of my colleagues will relate the specifics of affected houses of worship and their heroic efforts to continue giving services to their communities, even after Sandy inflicted mortal wounds to their edifices.

Under the proposed legislation, houses of worship would be limited to Emergency Work: Debris Removal (Category A) and Emergency Protective Measures (Category B), defined as measures to save lives, to protect public health and safety, and to protect improved property. As you can imagine, even this assistance to non-critical nonprofits is quite limited because there are no provisions for building restoration, as is the case in critical nonprofits.

Eligible nonprofits may qualify for additional FEMA assistance if the Small Business Administration declined the organization's application; or has eligible damages greater than the maximum amount of the loan for which it is eligible. Even this aid would be denied to houses of worship without the passage of proposed legislation.

Finally, as the members of the Committee know, there are Sandy-relief funds that are currently within the control of New York State and New York City. There are many incredibly important uses of the funds and Governor Cuomo and Mayor Bloomberg have already identified some of them.

We propose that New York State and New York City use a portion of the CDBG dollars to supplement FEMA payments to all non-critical nonprofits – including houses of worship – for work that is equivalent to New York City's "Rapid Repair" program. That program provides homeowners with "permanent or temporary restoration of heat, power and hot water, and other limited repairs to protect a home from further significant damage." We believe that a community's spiritual home deserves no less.

Thank you for your attention and support.

Testimony before the New York City Council Finance Committee by
Joseph Rosenberg, Executive Director of the Catholic Community Relations
Council
on Legislative Resolution 4379
February 7, 2013

Good morning Chairman Recchia and Members of the New York City Council Finance Committee. I am Joseph Rosenberg, Executive Director of the Catholic Community Relations Council (“CCRC”) representing the Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn on local legislative, regulatory and policy matters. I’m pleased to be before you today to testify on this very important Resolution.

The Archdiocese and the Diocese strongly support Resolution 4379 urging FEMA to provide disaster relief for houses of worship damaged by Hurricane Sandy. We agree with Speaker Quinn’s letter dated January 4, 2013 to W. Craig Fugate, the Administrator for FEMA that “churches, synagogues and mosques serve as the bedrock for our citizens and our communities” and that FEMA aid should be able to be utilized to rebuild these damaged houses of worship.

When Hurricane Sandy hit the New York City area, pastors, priests, rabbis and their congregations, longstanding sources of spiritual support and comfort to communities, did not ask first if their facilities would be eligible for federal assistance before providing food, shelter and relief to thousands of displaced and desperate residents of our City’s shorefront neighborhoods. These institutions were, instead, among the first responders and are still in the forefront of all recovery efforts. Now these sources of strength and compassion that weathered flood and fires last October and November are facing tremendous financial challenges in rebuilding their sanctuaries. To whom shall they turn, if not the government that accepts their aid and ensures their right to provide physical and spiritual sustenance to those in need.

Fifty four churches in the Archdiocese of New York were damaged by Hurricane Sandy. In Staten Island, 23 churches sustained over \$2.2 million in damages; in Manhattan 14 churches were hit with \$1.8 million in damages while in the Bronx \$627,000 in damages was incurred in 17 churches. In the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens, 71 churches were damaged with 32 of them located in Brooklyn and 39 in Queens. The cost to rebuild the Brooklyn churches is \$1.7 million, and the Queens churches, \$2 million. These numbers, for all five boroughs, will continue to grow as repairs are ongoing and invoices for work are submitted.

FEMA guidelines indicate that facilities eligible for assistance include utilities, education, irrigation, medical, emergency as well as those that provide essential governmental services. “Governmental services” is defined by FEMA as including museums, zoos, libraries and community centers. All of these are certainly facilities that feed the soul and social needs of New Yorkers. Yet houses of worship are not included in this category. Certainly all of the FEMA listed institutions are essential to the fabric of our City but it is a frightful omission to preclude houses of worship eligibility for such vital assistance especially when other non profits are, in fact, eligible for such financial help.

It is important to state that religious organizations in this situation do not seek preferential treatment, simply to be treated fairly as any other institution serving the public good of stabilizing and rebuilding our communities. This approach needs to be embraced and Resolution 4379 voices this priority very strongly.

It must be noted that our request for Federal financial assistance is in addition to and not to be at the expense of other Federal monies that have been allocated to assist New York City's recovery from Hurricane Sandy. To benefit one group involved in the recovery of Sandy at the expense of another is not supported and should certainly not be contemplated by anyone.

In conclusion, we fully support City Council Resolution 4379 which seeks to remedy this unfortunate omission and to recognize the invaluable contributions to the citizens of this City made by the houses of worship.

Thank you.

Dear Council Finance Chair Domenic M. Recchia Junior and members of the Council Finance Committee. My name is Adina Frydman, Executive Director of the SYNERGY program at UJA-Federation, a program that collaborates with and strengthens the work of synagogues across New York City and the surrounding counties.

Houses of worship for all faiths are a crucial part of the city's fabric and while they have always been beacons of support, comfort and community resources, since Hurricane Sandy New Yorkers have needed these institutions more than ever. These organizations are an essential part of neighborhoods and enable rites of passage, community gatherings, charitable activities and are sources of comfort and prayer. In the face of lost homes and distressed property, disruption of employment opportunities and dislocated families, houses of worship have helped many find stability and fulfillment in an uncertain time. In the aftermath of Sandy, as with so many other natural disasters, churches, synagogues and other houses of worship have been places offering essential response services to people in need – even while the church, mosque or synagogue itself is damaged.

Toward that end, UJA-Federation is proud to have funded close to \$1 million to 76 synagogues to help these institutions support their communities through respite and relief and enlisted dozens of volunteers to help rebuild damaged buildings. Our efforts have made a significant impact at synagogues including West End Temple in Belle Harbor, Queens, Congregation Khal Yeraim in Sea Gate, Brooklyn and The Jewish Russian Learning Center in Staten Island and these houses of worship have helped the Jewish and broader communities in the neighborhoods they are serving. For example:

Each of these synagogues serves as vital hubs of community providing physical, spiritual and emotional shelter for community members. During the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, many of the synagogues opened their doors to the broader community offering a warm meal, electricity, temporary child care and opportunities to volunteer in the crucial relief and recovery efforts.

Without this vital support, many storm affected residents would have been forced to relocate in order to participate in daily or weekly religious rituals essential to their lives. Assisting in this effort helped stabilize communities and helped minimize psychological and emotional damage suffered from Hurricane Sandy.

Many houses of worship function similar to other non-profits by providing day care programming, schooling for children and youth, senior centers and resource centers for immigrants. These services are the lifeblood for communities and many receive both city tax levy and Councilmanic funding for their work. Houses of worship have worked closely with elected officials and government on city, state and federal levels to coordinate disaster relief efforts to the benefit of the entire city.

The Stafford Act provides that private nonprofit entities – such as schools, hospitals and community centers – damaged in a natural disaster may receive financial grants from FEMA to repair their buildings. The Act does not list houses of worship among its list of examples of nonprofits so eligible; neither does the Act exclude houses of worship in any way. To the extent that FEMA has provided aid to eligible programs run by houses of worship, the aid has not been provided on the same terms as the aid provided to other eligible nonprofits. It is, therefore, entirely appropriate for FEMA's aid program for private nonprofits to assist houses of worship with their rebuilding needs.

Current Supreme Court jurisprudence makes clear that religious institutions may receive government financial aid in the context of a broad program administered on the basis of religion neutral criteria. This is why houses of worship and other religious nonprofits can, and do, currently receive grants from the Department of Homeland Security to improve their security and the Interior Department for historic preservation.

Numerous houses of worship have suffered financially from this crisis and federal funding would significantly alleviate the effects of building damage, damaged religious resources and proposed higher insurance costs post-Sandy.

Thank you for allowing me to testify on this important issue.

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February 4, 2013

Memo

To: Kihani Brea, in Speaker Quinn's office
Fr: Paul de Vries, PhD, President
Re: Testimony at City Council on February 7, 2013

Fixing Ugly

Churches Damaged by Superstorm Sandy Should Be Invited to Apply for FEMA Grants

The first people to reach out to benefit the communities in a crisis are the local churches and other houses of worship (hereafter: "churches") that are already in those communities. After Superstorm Sandy hit New York City and the metro area, hundreds of local churches came to people's aid. Also, at least 75 chaplaincy students of our New York Divinity School and its affiliate New York State Chaplaincy Task Force devoted thousands of hours, pouring out physical and spiritual help. Many of these student chaplains live in or near the neighborhoods most affected—and were present and ministering long before other helpers showed up. This is a splendid trait of the vibrant local churches.

There is a new and ugly wrinkle in the evolution of our American society that needs to be addressed: the Federal policy that absolutely anyone suffering the effects of a natural disaster may receive grants from FEMA—with the *single absurd exception* of churches, synagogues, mosques and other houses of worship. This is in spite of the fact that churches do tremendous work benefitting their communities, 365 days every year, as do other non-profit agencies and charities. The tutoring, feeding of the poor, after-school programs, senior-citizen care, emergency preparedness, and other good works are done by both churches and charities, except that the churches also point people to God. And for this positive, divine contribution to society, they are asked to shoulder their own repairs for \$100,000s of damages to their buildings, while charities receive generous FEMA grants.

This *FEMA anti-church policy* is both new and ugly:

- ✓ This policy is new because for decades FEMA has honored the needs of churches. After Hurricane Katrina, churches received (1) grants for repairs and rebuilding as well as (2) grants for the food they distributed and the shelter they provided for all the other victims. I personally helped lead in hurricane relief twice before, and federal assistance for churches was generous then. Now after Superstorm Sandy, both kinds of grants are newly cut off from churches only.
- ✓ This policy is ugly in four ways, as I will now show, and we ask you to join with us to try to fix FEMA's ugliness.

First, FEMA's new policy is ugly because it *treats churches as outsiders*—as if there were something wrong with churches, as if churches are out of place. Everyone can apply for a FEMA grant—individuals, families, retail stores, family businesses, manufacturing companies, government agencies, schools, clubs, restaurants, charities—everyone but churches! If the only difference is the churches' devotion to God—that difference should make no difference in public policy. After all, it is their God-orientation that empowers the churches in service to all the people in all the communities. And besides, many of those families, stores, schools, companies, clubs and charities are sincerely devoted to God, too.

With the same good reasoning, we believe that churches should be able to rent parts of school facilities on equal bases with all other groups, too—a right still under contention in New York City.

Second, this discrimination against local churches seems to open the door to *other risky discrimination*. If our devotion to God should keep churches from FEMA grants, what about fire department aid, police protection, and other long-established government services? If these fine benefits to churches continue with tax-payer support, so should FEMA grants. If we deny FEMA protection to churches now, are we starting down a *sinister slippery slope*?

Third, cutting off the resources of FEMA grants ignores *the immensely positive roles the churches* have already played after Superstorm Sandy—including the generous giving of tens of millions of dollars (\$10,000,000s) of food, shelter and clothing to all who needed help, without discrimination—much of it donated also through church affiliates. Thousands of churches were the trusted conduits of tons of generous gifts from all over America and the world. To not help the churches with damaged buildings in their present need, is literally to say that *we do not care* if those churches are fully operational for the next emergency. And yet, all lives would be unimaginably worse in the next emergency if the presently damaged church buildings are not there and open, and with good people offering generous help the next time, in the next crisis.

Fourth, blocking FEMA grants to churches is *to pretend to be ignorant of the continuing soul care needed by the many and various victims* of Superstorm Sandy. The churches are not the building but the people—the men and women, boys and girls, in the damaged areas, who are suffering in so many other ways already. Instead of the additional substantial and even debilitating sacrifice and burden of rebuilding their church buildings, these struggling victims will continue to need the *safe sanctuary of repaired churches* to seek and find the enduring soul-strength they desire and deserve.

Continuing this new FEMA policy is ugly—because it is (1) a senseless discrimination, (2) a step down an insane and sinister slope, (3) a severe penalty for great and generous deeds, present and future, and (4) a mindless undermining of the priceless soul-care needed by a huge variety of Superstorm Sandy victims. For God's sake and for people's sake, please urge our leaders—in the White House and in Congress—to fix the present vicious and vile ugliness of the new FEMA policy.

For God's sake and *for New York City's sake*, please urge our leaders—in the White House and in Congress—to fix this vicious and vile ugliness of the new FEMA policy.

**The Rev. William Baum
Saint Barnabas Lutheran Church
159-19 98th Street
Howard Beach, NY 11414**

**New York City Council
Hearing on FEMA Funding for Storm Damaged Houses of Worship
February 7, 2013**

Madam Speaker and members of the City Council. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of Speaker Quinn's request that FEMA reconsider its policies to allow funding for restoration of storm damaged houses of worship.

I am the Rev. William Baum, I have served for the past 20 years as pastor of Saint Barnabas Lutheran Church in Howard Beach, Queens.

Since Superstorm Sandy, our congregation continues to gather for church services as we always have. Our upstairs worship space was not damaged in the storm. However, the Community Hall in our church basement was destroyed. The congregation uses this large hall one hour a week for Sunday School classes. The remaining time, the hall is offered for use by the wider community.

When functioning, the Community Hall provides 6,000 square feet of safe and secure space, 250 folding chairs, 35 folding tables, a large equipped kitchen, a fully functioning stage and sound system, piano, restroom facilities, a caretaker, and even a coat check room.

Most important to note: The Community Hall is not for rent. There is no fee for its use. It is made freely available to organizations and programs serving the community. These include:

5 Girls Scout Troops
Regional Leadership Training Center for Girl Scout & Boy Scout Leaders
Boy Scout Troop
Cub Scout Pack
2 A.A. Groups
The Kiwanas
Civic Association
Community Blood Drives
Food Pantry
Red Cross CPR & First Aid Training
AARP Driver Safety Courses
Relay for Life Cancer Cure Fundraising
Elder Care Seminars

Piano Recitals
Local Historical Club Presentations
Community Rummage Sale
Election Debates Sponsored by the local newspapers
Public meetings hosted by local elected officials
Dance Programs led by a Community Youth Organization
Community Dinners
Community Social & Entertainment Events

In the days immediately following the 9/11 attacks, with the airports closed, our Community Board president found about 100 foreign travelers huddled in the subway station (that was the old rundown station before we got our shiny new one). She brought those stranded travelers to the Community Hall for shelter. The people of the community responded magnificently with enormous quantities of food, blankets and pillows. In the midst of the tremendous losses our city suffered, the community rallied to do all they could, even opening their home showers to these poor stranded foreigners caught in the midst of our disaster. Without the Community Hall none of this could have happened.

The congregation is made up of about 100 families from Howard Beach, Hamilton Beach, Broad Channel and Breezy Point. Together they support an annual operating budget of about \$150,000. Nearly all the families lost their cars and basements and contents to the storm surge. Roughly half of the families also suffered loss of their first floors. And in a number of cases everything they own. Although FEMA and various insurers have provided some relief, for the average family the uncovered losses far exceed their financial capacity. Therefore, the very people that would normally pull together to support a building restoration campaign by giving generously of their resources are unable to do so. Their own resources have been seriously diminished by tens of thousands of dollars.

The net result of all this is -- that although the congregation still gathers in its worship space upstairs -- the community has lost all of the programming and meeting space for organizations which would normally gather downstairs in the destroyed Community Hall.

The congregation is dedicated to serving God and neighbor. From our perspective all of what we offer freely to the community is part of our ministry. That's our mission. However, viewed from the perspective of the community, there's nothing particularly "religious" about use of the Community Hall. There is no proselytizing and no one is excluded based upon religious affiliation or background.

The Community Hall is located in a church, but in every real sense, it belongs to the community. Its loss has torn a gaping hole in the social fabric of our neighborhood. Assistance from FEMA in restoring this space would profoundly benefit the community.

Again, thank you, for this opportunity to testify.

Statement from

Rev. Savone “Bonnie” James, Assistant Pastor

representing

Rev. Constance Sanfilippo-Hulla, Pastor

of the

Coney Island Gospel Assembly Church

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in support of the

New York City Council Resolution to amend the

Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act

To allow aid to be given to Houses of Worship

presented at a hearing held on

Thursday, February 7, 2013

14th Floor Committee Room at 250 Broadway, Manhattan

My name is Reverend Savone James. I am the Assistant Pastor of Coney Island Gospel Assembly located at 2828 Neptune Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11224. I am here today representing our Senior Pastor, Reverend Constance SanFilippo-Hulla who could not be here today due to a scheduling conflict. Please allow a few moments for us to offer our voice of support so that Houses of Worship of all faiths would be eligible to receive federal assistance under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

My testimony today will introduce you to our church located in Coney Island and set forth the various activities with which we have been engaged before, during and after the recent Super Storm Sandy. It is our hope that you will come to recognize what many in the community have already recognized. Houses of Worship offer much more than just religious education and spiritual direction. This is especially true when they are located in inner-city communities such as Coney Island. As in the days when this country was founded, the "one-room schoolhouse" became a hub of all community activity. Besides the education, it was a place for political rallies, church services, community meetings and social events. The same is very much true for Coney Island Gospel Assembly and other churches today.

There are three aspects of community service I would like to touch upon. First is the religious services provided by the Church. Second is the Disaster Relief and Recovery we have been involved with since "Sandy" devastated our seaboard communities. Finally, and most importantly, I will elaborate on the nature of our

church, outside of the religious and current disaster relief efforts, to hopefully demonstrate, without question, the center of community life and activity our church, and many like it, have clearly been for a very long time.

Our house of worship was established 55 years ago and since the very early days has been a place of spiritual comfort, religious education and sacerdotal vocation. Worship services, prayer meetings, religious education for all ages, summer youth outreaches, Vacation Bible Schools, pageants, social functions and evangelistic outreach have all been a part of our spiritual ministry to the community. In fact, to this very day, we serve hundreds of families, members and nonmembers alike, offering baby christenings, weddings and funeral services to all residents of the community without any charge. This is the spiritual legacy of our founder, the late Reverend Jack A. SanFilippo. His own religious conversion catapulted him into a life of religious service and ministry that has been the hallmark of our presence in the community. The spiritual work of the church is foundational to everything else.

We have been invited here today because of the unique position we have found ourselves in since Super Storm Sandy devastated our region. Despite the fact that our church suffered, at minimum, \$1.5 Million dollars in damage is only half of the story. To this day we are using generators to power the facility, there is no heat or phone service and we continue to the steady process of repairing and restoring everything that was lost in the storm. Thankfully, the church sanctuary was built at a high elevation. The flood waters wiped out our lower level kitchen, fellowship hall,

youth center, classrooms and offices but our assembly hall and other rooms on our main level were spared of any major water damage which has allowed our church to become a hub of relief operations from the onset of the storm. Our parking lot has been converted to a relief camp and, also since the beginning, has been home to tractor-trailers being used for storage, a 70-foot by 90-foot tent, food canteens, and distribution site for a major relief effort. It is estimated that over \$100 Million dollars in goods and services have been provided to the storm victims through our efforts. This was from non-governmental sources. The good will of the people from all over this nation and the nonprofit community at large has been an overwhelming testament to the spirit of American compassion. Our church has welcomed officials, dignitaries and celebrities from near and far since this crisis. We have had sports figures from the Mets and Rangers, teachers and students from many high schools, volunteer crews from the DOE Fund, the American Red Cross, AmeriCorps, City Harvest, the Brooklyn Jubilee and every possible NGO relief agency you can imagine come and offer their kind assistance. The church has been a hub, active literally 24/7, in relief and recovery mode. In fact our Pastor and our church were honored, on-site, at the Robin Hood Foundation's 12-12-12 historic concert at Madison Square Garden for these model efforts and compassionate commitment to the community.

As you can see, our religious work and our recent relief work have made us a place that never closes our doors. However, the story is just beginning. Between the spiritual foundation and disaster relief efforts of our assembly, the FULL story of our

house of worship/(slash)/ community center is told. It is this part of the story, that needs to be especially recognized by the decision makers with the political power to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to give churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and other houses of refuge that serve the community in such multi-faceted ways the same consideration it affords to other nonprofit groups.

As I mentioned earlier, our church is more than a religious house, it is a community center, much like the one room schoolhouses of days gone by. With that thought in mind, please let me alphabetically list just SOME of the various activities, institutions and community events we have sponsored, housed and partnered with throughout our nearly six decades of presence in the community:

- After School Center for Black & Latino Young Men
- AIM After School Program
- Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous
- Alternate site for public schools being repaired due to damage, asbestos, overcrowding. Certified by the DOE to do so.
- AmeriCorps
- Benevolence Fund – assisting residents with rent and utility payments
- Boy Scouts
- Brooklyn AIDS Task Force
- Brooklyn Cyclones

- Brooklyn District Attorney Neighborhood Office
- Brooklyn Jubilee Legal Services
- Bus Company Training for Drivers and Matrons and for local and daily Dispatch/Check-In Hub
- College & Career Preparation, Counseling, and Placement
- Community Festivals and Block Parties such as Festival of Life and Rock the Block
- Community Home Owners Meetings
- Community Service Programs for parolees and offenders
- Coney Island Clear - 1199 Union
- Coney Island Homeless Men's Shelter
- Coney Island Hospital Protestant Chaplain - over 30 years
- Coney Island Sharks Football Team (100 boys presently involved)
- Cornell University Nutrition and Healthy Cooking Programs
- Crisis Intervention Center
- Day Care Alternative Site - State approved while one of the community centers was flooded, over a year of daily operations.
- Early Intervention Tutoring, Counseling and Drug Prevention Program
- Emergency Overnight Shelter for Mayor's Office
- Food Pantry serving 40 other nonprofits and 2000 families, weekly deliveries
- Friends of Kaiser Park
- Frost'd AIDS Education and Prevention (Dr. Mary Wallace)
- Girl Scouts

- Government/City Certified Food pantry
- Heart to Heart Theater Company – drama training and performance
- High School of Sports Management – helped design and continue to advise it.
- Hollywood movie directors have used the building as an offsite base for feeding, filming and pre-production.
- Hunger Coalition Hub-Site
- Legal Aid Neighborhood Office
- Libraries for Literacy – distributed one million books to schools, agencies and community members.
- Loan the church to other churches and community groups that need an assembly hall, always without charge.
- Medical Screenings/Fairs
- Moore 4 You Summer Camp
- NYC Clothing Bank
- NYC Parks Department
- NYPD Truancy Track Program (Daily youth center during school hours)
- Police Athletic League Summer Camp
- Provide meals to homeless and those in need every Saturday
- Project Hope
- Prison Outreach – Brooklyn House, Queens House and Riker’s Island
- Rachel Carson High School of Coastal Studies – helped design and continue to advise it.

- Red Cross Relief and Training Hub (even prior to Sandy) – preparedness, CPR and First Aid training.
- River Fund Feeding Programs
- School of Ballet
- South Brooklyn Youth Consortium
- Suicide Prevention Seminars/Services
- Town Hall Meetings
- Tutoring Programs
- Various community rallies from community leaders and politicians of all parties and causes most notably the rally to save Coney Island Hospital and often as a neighborhood “Healing” Center after major acts of violence
- Youth Choir
- Youth Community Drop-In Center

This is by no means an exhaustive list and just represents a fraction of all the community collaborations the church has been involved with. Our Pastor Constance Sanfilippo-Hulla has been an NYPD Clergy Liaison for nearly 25 years and as such has been at the forefront of working with all the community leaders to foster a better Coney Island.

The great community involvement of this church is nothing new. In the very early years, Reverend Veronica SanFilippo, wife of “Brother Jack” and mother of our pastor, worked very closely with noted educator and psychiatrist, Dr. Lilly Pope, in

establishing cutting edge programs for the learning disabled. Going door-to-door, "Sister Ronnie" literally brought children to the clinic on a daily basis where they would be treated and tutored. This outreach became a transformational pillar in many people's lives on their path toward obtaining a full education and career, thereby breaking the cycle of poverty for hundreds of families. The push for our young people to obtain an education, college preparation, counseling and placement is evident in all our youth programs to this very day.

The Coney Island Gospel Assembly has not taken their responsibility to the community lightly. As the largest church on Coney Island, it is a beacon of hope and light to the entire community. This is why many people saw the urgency in keeping the church running in the after the recent storm. That is why I, representing our leaders and congregation, am privileged to stand before you today to testify that we did not become insular after the storm. No one would have blamed us, after suffering our own devastating losses, if we chose to just focus solely on our own restoration and repair and then turned our attention to assisting only those of our church membership. We chose to lay our own needs aside and rise up in the community to serve the community and to serve our neighbors. We chose to care for one another, as our faith inspires us to do. We would have never been able to serve so many people if we did not have the long-term commitment to community service and outreach that we did PRIOR TO the storm. That is the key, ladies and gentlemen; our building was a hub of community life, NOT just religious life, but daily, active and the full day-to-day "secular" life of Coney Island. We were here

before the storm and we will continue to serve after the storm. When the news crews and the nonprofits are gone, we will still be present as that beacon of care and light.

This, we humbly submit to you, is why houses of worship like Coney Island Gospel Assembly should be counted worthy to receive FEMA assistance, not only for this present crisis involving Super Storm Sandy, but for any other manmade or natural disasters that may impact our citizens in the days to come.

On behalf of our Pastor, congregation and community, thank you for the time you have given me today and for your consideration of the urgent matter before you at this challenging time.

From: Rev. Chris Dito
International Christian Center South
1501 Richmond ave. Staten Island NY
210-852-1424 ICCNYC.ORG

TO: Kihani Brea c/o NYC Council meeting on disaster relief to Houses of
Worship

Date: Thursday, February 7th 10:00 am

Testimony:

Dear NYC Council,

My name is Rev. Chris Dito from Staten Island, NY. Our congregation rents from New Dorp High School on Sundays from 11-1 PM.

Hurricane Sandy has directly devastated our community and congregation. The damage has touched the homes, but also the everyday lives of our people in Staten Island and NYC..

Our church has been active since day after Sandy's landfall, by feeding the community, providing temporary and permanent shelter, dispersing clothing, and counseling families that are emotionally distraught.

During Thanksgiving week, we distributed 120 turkey baskets to those in need in the community of New Dorp , and also during Christmas, we gave out another 120 baskets and thousands of dollars in toys to kids who lost everything. We have a team that goes to homes to deliver meals, and participate in the clean up of the mold remediation.

Needless to say, it has been challenging to our bank account, as I'm sure the city can identify with that pain.

This resolution presented would greatly increase the spectrum of the funding available, thus making it possibly for us to continue in the process of bringing restoration to the hardest hit areas in NYC.

We are committed to this community for the long haul, our homes are there, and our hearts are there.

Last week I spoke with a counselor from New Orleans who stated that the long term effects of the hurricane, as they learned from Katrina, were a huge spike in depression, suicide, divorce, and children cutting themselves.

As a community and church we must come together to provide the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of NYC. Renting from New Dorp High

School has provided us an incredible opportunity to assist those in need in Staten Island.

I wish to thank speaker Quinn for her taking the initiative on this resolution for considering the Houses of Worship to receive the Disaster Relief aid.

I have a brief 3 minute video that shows our active participation to the community following Sandy.

VIDEO LINK:

http://www.youtube.com/my_videos_edit?ns=1&video_id=0ILBVuj5bvI

Sincerely,

Rev. Chris Dito



National Council of Young Israel
111 John Street Suite 600
New York, NY 10038

February 7, 2013

CITY COUNCIL SPEAKER QUINN, DISTINGUISHED COUNCILMEN

MY NAME IS CHAIM LEIBTAG, I AM THE PRESIDENT OF CONGREGATION KNESETH ISRAEL IN FAR ROCKAWAY, A PROUD HOMEOWNER OF OVER 30 YEARS IN THE ROCKAWAYS AND A SURVIVOR OF SUPERSTORM SANDY. I HAD THE PRIVILEGE TO LEAD MY SYNAGOGUE DURING THE CRITICAL WEEKS FOLLOWING THE STORM AS WE PROVIDED FOOD (THREE MEALS A DAY) SHELTER, ELECTRICAL POWER STRIPS AND WIFI, GASOLINE, AND CRITICAL INFORMATION TO THOSE IMPACTED. WE OPENED OUR SYNAGOGUE TO FEMA, THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE AND OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES TO SET UP INFORMATION TABLES. WE TOOK TWO CLASSROOMS AND GAVE THEM TO A LOCAL PEDIATRICIAN WHOSE OFFICE WAS DECIMATED. THE OTHER ROOMS WERE SET UP AS A CLOTHING DISTRIBUTION CENTER AND A FOOD PANTRY. FOR THREE WEEKS WE HOUSED THE 2ND AND THIRD GRADES OF THE HEBREW ACADEMY OF LONG BEACH, RAN YOUTH ACTIVITIES INCLUDING A MAGICIAN, ARTS AND CRAFTS AND A MUSIC CONCERT FOR CHILDREN OUR VOLUNTEERS WALKED AND DROVE THE DARKENED STREETS AT NIGHT AS AN ADJUNCT TO THE LOCAL 101. OUR VOLUNTEERS DROVE TO CONNECTICUT TO BUY BATTERIES AND FLASHLIGHTS THAT WE DISTRIBUTED FREE OF CHARGE. AND WE DROVE THE NEIGHBORHOOD OFFERING OUR ASSISTANCE TO THE CHURCHES AND COMMUNITY CENTERS WHO WERE NOT AS WELL ORGANIZED AS WE WERE. ONE NIGHT WE LOADED OVER 15 PALLETS OF FOOD TO THE BAPTIST CHURCH AROUND THE CORNER.

IN MY PROFESSIONAL LIFE, I SERVE AS THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF YOUNG ISRAEL (THE PARENT BODY TO OVER 150 SYNAGOGUES IN THE UNITED STATES) OUR ORGANIZATION HELPED TO RAISE CRITICAL FUNDS AND PROVIDE ORGANIZATIONAL RELIEF FOR THE 13 SYNAGOGUES IN OUR NETWORK THAT WERE MOST HEAVILY IMPACTED. OUR COMMUNITIES INCLUDE, OCEANSIDE, LONG BEACH, WOODMERE, NORTH WOODMERE, MERRICK, CEDARHURST, FAR ROCKAWAY, BAYSWATER, BELLE HARBOR, BRIGHTON BEACH, KINGS BAY, CANARSIE AND MARGATE NEW JERSEY. AND WE DID THIS AS OUR OWN OFFICES IN LOWER MANHATTAN WERE SHUTTERED FOR OVER TWO MONTHS. OUR SYNAGOGUES SUFFERED SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE, WELL OVER 3 MILLION DOLLARS, YET WERE CENTERS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES FOR DISASTER RELIEF. JUST THIS PAST SUNDAY WE RAN A WEBINAR ATTENDED BY NEARLY 50 LEADERS OF OUR COMMUNITIES TO REVIEW AND PREPARE THEM WITH THE TOOLS AND KNOWLEDGE THAT THEY WILL NEED AS THEY ENCOUNTER GOING FORWARD OVER THE NEXT 9 MONTHS. OUR COMMUNITIES ARE STILL SUFFERING AND WHILE WE SLOWLY MOVE BACK TO "NORMAL" THE PROFESSIONAL AND VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS WILL CONTINUE TO BE MET BY OUR RELIGIOUS NETWORK.

WHERE WOULD WE BE TODAY WITHOUT OUR RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS. WHILE I COMMEND THE CITY FOR THEIR INCREDIBLE WORK, CAN YOU IMAGINE THE CITY TRYING TO FEED AND CLOTHE THE MYRIAD OF PEOPLE IN NEED WHILE AT THE SAME TIME GIVING THEM A PLACE TO CHARGE THEIR CELL PHONES?

AT NO TIME, DID WE EVER ASK THE RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF THE THOUSANDS WHO CAME THROUGH OUR DOORS. . AT NO TIME DID WE EVER DENY ANYONE FOOD AND SHELTER. AT NO TIME

DID WE EVER CONSIDER THAT WE SHOULD BE REPAID FOR THE TIRELESS WORK WE DID. **AT NO TIME DID WE EXPECT THE GOVERNMENT TO COME AND BAIL US OUT. AND AT NO TIME DID WE EVER CONSIDER THAT BECAUSE OUR FOUNDING FATHERS IN THEIR INFINITE WISDOM CREATED A SEPARATION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE, THAT WE WOULD BE ABANDONED BY OUR GOVERNMENT.**

SYNAGOGUES, MOSQUES AND CHURCHES ARE THE CENTERS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES. THEY BECOME THAT WAY BECAUSE THAT IS THE NATURE OF WHAT THEY ARE. EVEN THE UNAFFILIATED AND NON BELIEVERS COME TO A HOUSE OF WORSHIP IN DIFFICULT TIMES BECAUSE THEY KNOW DEEP INSIDE THAT THIS IS THE PLACE THAT THEY WILL RECEIVE HELP.

MADAME SPEAKER, OUR HOUSES OF WORSHIP ARE BUILT WITH PRIVATE DOLLARS. THESE PRIVATE DOLLARS HAVE BEEN DECIMATED BY THE STORM. THE 3 MONTH HARRANGUE WITH FEMA, THE STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, AND THE INSURANCE CARTELS HAVE PLACED AN UNACCEPTABLE BURDEN ON THOSE PRIVATE DOLLARS. SO, DO OUR HOUSES REMAIN UNFINISHED OR DO OUR HOUSES OF WORSHIP LAY BARREN. **GOVERNMENT IS FORCING US TO MAKE CHOICES THAT ARE TOTALLY UNNECESARY AND MORALLY UNACCEPTABLE.** THE FOUNDING FATHERS MADE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE SO THAT GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE AND BY THE PEOPLE WOULD ENDURE IN A COUNTRY WHERE RELIGION WOULD NOT BE FORCED UPON ANYONE. THEY DID NOT MAKE THAT DISTINCTION SO THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE AND BY THE PEOPLE WOULD ABANDON THEIR CITIZENS IN THEIR GREATEST HOUR OF NEED, **IN THE ONE CENTRAL HOUSE THAT ALL WHO CHOOSE CAN CALL HOME.**

OUR ORGANIZATION AND MY SYNAGOGUE IMPLORE YOU TO FIND THE WAY TO HELP US CROSS THIS FICTITIOUS BOUNDARY SO THAT THE INSTITUTIONS OF RELIGION CAN REBUILD. AMERICANS AND NEW YORKERS ESPECIALLY, HAVE ALWAYS FOUND THAT WAY . WE URGE YOU TO INTRODUCE AND PASS LEGISLATION THAT WOULD AMEND THE ROBERT T. STAFFORD DISASTER RELIEF AND EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE ACT TO ALLOW AID TO BE GIVEN TO HOUSES OF WORSHIP AFFECTED BY HURRICANE SANDY ON TERMS SIMILAR TO OTHER ELIGIBLE PRIVATE NON-PROFIT FACILITIES. WE STAND WITH YOU AND ASK TO JOIN YOU TO ESTABLISH A PLURALISTIC COMMITTEE THAT WOULD REGULATE THIS FORM OF DISBURSEMENT. FUND US NOT FOR OUR RELIGIOUS PRACTICE, FUND US FOR OUR PRACTICE OF HUMANITY.

IN GOD WE TRUST SHOULD NOT BE LEFT JUST AS A SLOGAN ON A DOLLAR BILL, IT SHOULD BE THE MANTRA THAT WE SING AND THE BANNER THAT WE RAISE SO THAT GOVERNMENT CAN HELP ITS RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES GROW TO HIGHER AND GREATER LEVELS OF SERVICE.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

CHAIM LEIBTAG, LCSW

Reaching Out Ministries, Inc

2860 West 36th Street

Brooklyn, NY 11224



Testimony By: Rev. Adam and Magdalena Lebron
{718} 902-2783

Reaching Out Ministries, Inc. is an outreach ministry which was founded in 2001. It is a faith based organization which is currently affiliated with Iglesia Pentecostal De Jesucristo "Cristo Viene" and in the same facility. In the wake of Hurricane Sandy the facility was destroyed. During the first days it was difficult to register and to think of what would be next. However as the days passed by the church was opened into the community and was a beacon of Light. What Houses of Worship are called to be... A Beacon of Light.

Reaching Out Ministries, Inc. does outreach such as feed the homeless, provide immediate needs such as taking food to a family in need etc. In its recent years Reaching Out Ministries, Inc. has become a ministry which utilizes music to preach the Gospel. During the summer of 2012 we had a Salsa Concert on the Boardwalk of Coney Island in which several musical bands brought music to the community of Coney Island with a positive message proclaiming the Word of God. We have taught music, primarily guitar, to several students and look forward to beginning this work once again.

It was exciting to see that although the facility was closed IPJ Cristo Viene and Reaching Out Ministries locked arms and was able to provide for the community. We were able to bring a sense of security and hope to all those that had none.

During the Thanksgiving Holiday Reaching Out Ministries, Inc. feeds over 300 homeless people in which we bring live music, clothing and a word of hope and encouragement. We provide resources to shelters, to rehabilitation programs anything that would help them get off the street and back into society. We had planned an outreach for Thanksgiving of 2012 by Elmhurst Hospital in Queens and when Hurricane Sandy hit the outreach was done in Coney Island. We were able to bring Thanksgiving and Christmas cheer to the community despite the fact that the

Reaching Out Ministries, Inc

2860 West 36th Street

Brooklyn, NY 11224

first floor had been destroyed.

It has been such a pleasure working with Iglesia Pentecostal de Jesucristo "Cristo Viene" and the fact is that the facility must be restored, programs need to be restored, families need to be reached and the community is depending on us and on you the deciding committee. Time is passing by fast, families are still displaced, my family being one of them, people need a place to come and find peace, joy, serenity and emotional support. This is the time where families are dealing with the emotion of all that has happened and we need to give them a shoulder to cry on, a place of restoration and a place they can run to. Our facility needs to be open and whole so that they can do that.

Houses of Worship play a vital role in our communities. We bring hope where there is no hope and peace where there is no peace. Houses of Worship is where people ran to in desperation during 9/11 looking for hope, looking for something they knew they could not find elsewhere. Houses Of Worship is where our children learn about unity, values and is a place of safety. Houses of Worship is where our youth can come to and find positive influences and get a word of edification. Houses of Worship is where we can find unity, people in one accord working together towards one Goal.

Reaching Out Ministries, Inc. has always worked fervently with the youth. In past years we had access to a community center, as it stands now, Coney Island has no youth centers available for use. They have all been flooded. The youth of today need to be in a place of security, a place where they are not judged but taught, loved, lead and understood. We endeavor to get up, rebuild and begin to reach out to our communities youth and bring them to a place where they can become young men and women that have fear of the Lord and that walk in the right path. Youth that do not end up behind bars, that do not end up on drugs, that do not end up being parents at a young age, that will be respected members of society and the pride of our community.

Reaching Out Ministries, Inc

2860 West 36th Street

Brooklyn, NY 11224

Reaching Out Ministries, Inc. looks forward to the future. To the greater things yet to come. To a better facility where we can have a youth program and a music program that will change and transform lives.

We thank you for considering the Houses of Worship during this difficult time. We thank you for giving us the opportunity to rebuild stronger than before and to be able to move forward in this New Year knowing that the country we love so dearly has made provision for us.

Thank You and God Bless America

Manhattan Beach Jewish Center
by Rubin Mangles, President

Europeans came to America to flee religious persecution, that unrest fueled the desire of our founding fathers to establish the organization of a country in which the separation of church and state and the freedom to worship was granted in the first amendment which is called the Establishment Clause: It states, "*Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof*"

Given today's economic reality, our inability to be treated as a part of the community and receive the economic assistance we need is indirectly affecting our first amendment right to exercise our religion.

We are a secular nation, and for that we are thankful, but I do believe the purpose of the first amendment was not to make it harder to facilitate observance by the faithful, but that all faiths should be able to observe their religions as they see fit.

In spite of being a secular country, our founding fathers gave us a strong religious heritage that is sometimes overlooked. For example:

- ~ The Star Spangled Banner contains the phrase "Praise the Power that has made and preserved us a nation...in G-d is our trust"
- ~ "G-d bless America" is sometimes called our 2nd national anthem. It was written in 1918 by Irvin Berlin.
- ~ "In G-d we trust" is printed on our currency.
- ~ The pledge of allegiance... "one nation under G-d"
- ~ The Liberty Bell in Philadelphia: "Proclaim liberty throughout the land and unto all the inhabitants thereof..."

Synagogues and churches provide invaluable services to the community every bit as important as private not for profit facilities. We definitely deserve to be given the support provided to every other non for profit organization. When I saw the hearing notice and the issue was whether or not to allow aid to be given to houses of worship, I thought of the famous quote in The Merchant of Venice "If I am cut, do I not bleed?"

In our Center, we have after school programs and tutoring open to all people regardless of their religion. Our senior center is open to the entire community. 80% of the people who visit our Center are not there for religious purposes and come from all denominations and works of life. Yet we are not asking for programming support, but to be treated fairly. We are not second class citizens.

The Manhattan Beach Jewish Center provides for the community we serve through our educational programs and senior citizen programs, our Yeshiva Day School provides an education for over 200 young people.

Today, an institution such as ours that has grown to nearly 100,000 square feet of space, in its main synagogue and adjacent 6 story school building cannot rely on our membership to make us whole again, after such a devastating destruction. Because, just as we are hurting so are they. Most of the families in our community had 6-8 feet of water in their homes. They are also, as you know, dealing with insurance companies, dredging up a paragraph or two, never before seen, as to why our losses are not covered. It is difficult to ask them for help, when they need it themselves.

As an institution we have not forgotten them and have been able to also assist them and direct them to some of the get help seminars that were held. We refer congregants and community people without distinction to sources of assistance and provide counseling for those who seek it. The night of the storm, we opened our doors on our second floor to accommodate people who needed shelter and did not evacuate. Over a dozen persons took advantage of the shelter. Unlike many not for profits, we have been in the community for many years and know our people and their needs.

Our own needs, as a congregation, are staggering, over \$200,000 for “temporary” electric work alone, so our kids could come back to school, so our seniors can return to their friends, enjoy a hot meal and social activities so important to their well being. To get our boiler / burner working, not replaced, has produced an invoice of \$68,000. The remediation and demolition of our catering hall, that provided us with income to meet our operating budget and is used by the school as an auditorium, was totally devastated. The remediation and demolition cost us an additional \$100,000. Estimates that we have received indicate that to repair and refurbish can cost upward of between 500K to 1M dollars. It is money we do not have, and only a fraction can be raised thru donations.

We service Pre-k to our oldest seniors. In today’s world, we cannot have an old fashioned barn raising as in the past when a community came together to cut the lumber, raise the roof, and rebuild that which was destroyed. Today’s economics are obviously totally different and our needs should be met. We need help for which we have never asked for before. Today we are

asking for help in order for us to continue to give help. We are part of the community and should be recognized as such.

The extraordinary constellation of events that caused the damage from hurricane Sandy requires an extraordinary response and outreach. It requires that the government accommodates all segments of the community regardless of denomination. The test should be whether or not we are serving the needs of our community regardless of affiliation.

MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

330 BEACH 67TH STREET

ARVERNE, NEW YORK 11692

REV. EVAN DEAN GRAY, SENIOR PASTOR

Macedonia Baptist Church, Arverne, New York located at 330 Beach 67th Street is a pillar of strength in the Arverne/Far Rockaway Community. Its doors have been open for more than eighty years providing hope, solace and comfort to the community where it stands. Super Storm Sandy has completely destroyed the framework and the foundation of this historic church. Since October 29, 2012, the doors have been shut and no activity has come from the church because of the damages inflicted by the storm. Because of the church being very close to the Atlantic Ocean and other particulars, we had no ability to purchase flood insurance. And, now with the walls in disrepair, there is great need for support to rebuild this church and community center.

Macedonia Baptist Church is a community institution. Many of the neighborhood entities rely very strongly on the meeting space and kitchen of the church to gather and makes plans for the future. The NAACP, all of the neighborhood organizations including block units and civic clubs have breakfast, lunch and dinner meetings along with residents who use this facility for funerals, weddings and gathering events. Without this church in the community, there is limited meeting space and there is no place to assist the community in its endeavors.

The damages of Super Storm exceed \$275,000. The Electrical system is completely comprised. The boiler/air condition units are destroyed, the foundation of the church has structural issues coupled with the fact that in this cold weather, the pipes are endangered now of bursting and the general direction of the church is comprised because of lack of financial support. The church's resident population has mainly low and moderate income parishioners that depend on this church to provide for the community's distinct needs. It is important that FEMA evaluate the strong link of the church to the community in its decisions to help with the funding to rebuild the infrastructure of the Arverne/Far Rockaway community. The church's role here is key and essential for without it many people have no hope and a place to belong. Although there is cause for separation of church and state, it is also duly noted

that the churches of Arverne/Rockaway serve in dual capacities. Without the link of the church's facility to the community, there is a great void in the everyday life of the neighborhoods and communities.

It is my hope that as we continue in the discussions with regards to FEMA funding that proper focus will be given towards shaping a new paradigm for understanding the church's vital link and role within this community. Many seniors and young people depend upon it for a meeting space that is both economical, affordable and as a place that belongs to this community. Without the financial support of FEMA, it will be difficult if not impossible to return to the pre Sandy conditions that this church and community have enjoyed for many years.

First Baptist Church

Deacon Ministry
William Rucker

Trustee Ministry
Mildred S. Davis

Church Clerk
Doris Threat

1510 Redfern Avenue
Far Rockaway, New York 11691-3898
Established Since 1916

Church Office: (718) 327-2208
Church Fax: (718) 327-3170

Church Theme:
2013:
RESTORATION in
the Body of Christ!

Scripture:
Joel 2:25; Psalm
51:10-12; Psalm 23:3

Rev. Duane M. Sleet, Sr., Pastor

February 7, 2013

The First Baptist Church of Far Rockaway was severely affected by Super Storm Sandy on Monday, October 29, 2012. The entire lower level fellowship hall was decimated and completely destroyed by the convergence of water from the Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. There was water over 6' [feet] that entered ferociously into the premises. The water came sudden, strong and steady until it toppled over all of the appliances of the church including both industrial refrigerators, freezers, the ice machine, the stove and all of the contents of the kitchen. The storm surge destroyed the boiler and the electrical systems of the church. Everything that was housed in the lower level fellowship hall was destroyed leaving us without the ability to utilize the church.

The main Men and Women's bathrooms were housed on the lower level and they were completely destroyed by the flood waters and what was not decimated by the flood waters was contaminated by the mold. The church had to completely gut the lower level fellowship hall rendering us completely helpless to do the community, civic and religious work that is a part of the paradigm for ministry that this church has supported for over 30 years. Within the framework of this church, we house a Soup Kitchen and Food ministry that supported more than 400 needy families per week. Since the storm has wreaked havoc on our facilities, we are temporarily discontinuing our ministry to our community. It is our hope that with the support of FEMA and others entities we will be able to continue the work.

Our insurance company Philadelphia Insurance has awarded us \$50,000. Our damages are in excess of \$200,000 excluding some equipment. We are trying to find a way to get back into our facility as we are paying over \$1100 monthly to have meeting space at a local middle school. Because of the enormity of the task that lies ahead for our community ministry and church we need support that will extend beyond the normal procedures. This is why I stand this morning to represent my community and parish to say that FEMA should extend itself to help us because we are a community entity, a specialized trust that helps those who live within immediate proximity to our church building. Our work is necessary to help the people who live in our community to have a better life that is supported by our efforts. We also work tirelessly with person affected by HIV/AIDS. We have a strong and vibrant connection to Rikers Correctional Facility as persons from our community have relatives who live there. We try to build a

bridge that integrates family, community and faith as the necessary approach to build strong, committed and faithful families that continue to be a positive and constructive part of the community.

Jesus commands us that we are our brothers keeper and with this spirit in mind, our faith community works to carry out this great commission. Our faith community is not just a church but a place where people are help, nurtured and edified. We do not just reside within the framework of religious occupation but we strongly and vibrantly support the larger vision of community as the necessary ingredient for successful life and a stronger New York City.

Please lend your voice and support to our plea for assistance as the churches of the Rockaways. We are communities of faith that provide safe havens, meeting places and strong hubs for consistent community support. Our meeting rooms house many community functions and programs that help our neighborhoods.

Respectfully,

Rev. Duane M. Sleet, Sr.

**Rev. Duane M. Sleet, Sr., Pastor, First Baptist Church of Far Rockaway, New York
Executive Director, H. O. Scott Community and Education Center, Incorporated**

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3206

February 6, 2013

Domenic M. Recchia, Jr
Chairman of Finance Committee
The New York City Council
250 Broadway
Suite 1785
New York, New York 10007

Dear Chairman Recchia and Members of the New York City Council Finance Committee:

I am writing in support of the preconsidered resolution introduced by Council Member Vallone, Chairman Recchia and Speaker Quinn which:

Calls upon the United States Congress to introduce and pass legislation that would amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to allow aid to be given to houses of worship affected by Hurricane Sandy.

Last month, I offered an amendment in the House of Representatives to the Hurricane Sandy relief legislation that would have allowed houses of worship to be included as eligible non-profits. I urge the New York City Councilmembers to support this resolution, which would continue this fight.

Hurricane Sandy devastated New York City, and damaged many houses of worship that are now in desperate need of repair or are struggling to reopen. Many of the region's affected churches, synagogues, mosques and temples are not simply buildings, but pillars of their communities that help people in need, providing essential social services—including child care and food pantries—to the areas they serve. Without added support, recovery efforts in the neighborhoods and communities that depend on these houses of worship would be significantly impeded. Many of these affected institutions are also small business with dozens of employees. To deny them a chance for federal assistance in the wake of one of the nation's worst natural disasters is discriminatory to these entities, and imposes a great hardship on the New Yorkers they serve.

Sincerely,



Grace Meng
Member of Congress

From: Richard Foltin <foltinr@ajc.org>

Date: December 20, 2012, 6:23:48 PM EST

To: "garrett_eucalitto@lieberman.senate.gov"

<garrett_eucalitto@lieberman.senate.gov>, "elyse_greenwald@hsgac.senate.gov"

<elyse_greenwald@hsgac.senate.gov>

Cc: Nathan Diament <ndiament@ou.org>, Marc Stern <sternm@ajc.org>

Subject: Support for Lieberman amendment to Hurricane Sandy relief bill

We understand that Senator Joseph Lieberman has filed a proposed amendment to the legislation to provide aid to victims of Hurricane Sandy which will clarify that houses of worship are permissible recipients of aid from the Federal Emergency Management Administration. As we understand it, pursuant to this amendment houses of worship will receive aid on the same basis as all other non-profits damaged by the hurricane. We write to lend our support to that amendment. We do not do so lightly, since AJC usually opposes direct government aid to religious institutions.

AJC has a long record of opposing aid to religious institutions as an ingredient of the separation of church and state that is an essential component in the protection of our religious liberties. Nevertheless, we believe that aid distributed under a neutral program of storm relief may constitutionally be made broadly available to a wide range of organizations where eligibility is determined on the basis of an objective and unusual factor—hurricane damage—and not under the standardless discretion of government officials, posing a risk of religious favoritism.

Time does not permit a fuller discussion of why we believe that the Lieberman proposal passes constitutional muster, but suffice it to make these brief points: Storm relief is a reaction to a rare event, with broad impact on a large swath of society, which is beyond anyone's control—hence, it is the case both that the precipitating event cannot be used as a subterfuge for transferring responsibility for the support of houses of worship from the collection plate to the tax collector and that there is a strong societal interest in aid to all who have suffered damage, even institutions that for compelling constitutional and policy reasons would not otherwise be eligible for government assistance. These factors reassure us that

support for the Lieberman Amendment will not undermine the general rule that government should and must not support religion

Finally, AJC believes that, as a matter of sound public policy, it makes good sense to include houses of worship among the broad grouping of nonprofits eligible to receive FEMA aid. That aid is a form of social solidarity and social insurance that may be made available to all not-for-profits harmed by a once-in-a-lifetime event. Houses of worship are part of the social fabric. FEMA aid is designed to repair the social fabric—a cause that will be well served by the extension of aid, under these circumstances, to houses of worship.

Richard T. Foltin, Esq.

Director of National and Legislative Affairs

AJC Office of Government and International Affairs

Washington, DC

Marc Stern, Esq.

AJC General Counsel

New York, NY



ELIZABETH BRATON
Chairperson

COMMUNITY BOARD 10

CITY OF NEW YORK • BOROUGH OF QUEENS
115-01 LEFFERTS BOULEVARD
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TEL: (718) 843-4488
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E-MAIL: cb10qns@nyc.rr.com



KARYN PETERSEN
District Manager

Feb. 7, 2013

Hon. Dominick Recchia, Chairman
New York City Council Finance Committee
City Hall, NY 10007

Dear Councilman Recchia:

Community Board 10 respectfully requests that you enter the following into the record of today's Finance Committee hearing in regard to the Council's effort to call upon the Congress to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to allow aid to be given to houses of worship affected by Hurricane Sandy.

Community Board 10 serves the communities of Howard Beach, Ozone Park, South Ozone Park, and part of Richmond Hill. Our Howard Beach community was severely impacted by Superstorm Sandy. Approximately 20,000 of our residents in probably more than 8,000 of our homes experienced flooding of many feet in their basements. Many also experienced flooding in their main living floor as well as in their basements. Our commercial areas within Howard Beach saw virtually every business flooded.

The damage within the community also severely damaged all of the houses of worship located in Howard Beach. Our Lady of Grace R.C. Church, St. Barnabas Lutheran Church, and the Howard Beach Assembly of God Church located in Howard Beach east of Cross Bay Blvd. where flooding within buildings generally ranged from floor to ceiling were very severely impacted. The Rockwood Park Jewish Center, St. Helen R.C. Church, and the Howard Beach Judea Center are located in Howard Beach west of Cross Bay Blvd. Each of them also sustained considerable damage to their facilities. Every one of those houses of worship serves their congregations within their building spaces. However, they also serve the general public as community space. Every one of them provides space for numerous community activities that have no relationship to the particular religious affiliation of the building's congregation. These are the buildings where our children participate in scouting and sports, where neighborhood meetings are held, where our seniors meet – the list could go on and on. These buildings are part of our community and they are integral to the fabric of community life because we all benefit from their allowing all the use of their space.

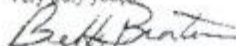
It is essential as we move forward in recovering from the effects of "Sandy" that our house of worship that have served us all in the non-secular aspects of community life be provided with a way to get assistance to aid them in restoring their buildings. Until those buildings are restored, we as a community will continue to be without places for the myriad of activities we use them for to occur.

I believe the pastor of one of our congregations, the Rev. William Baum, will be testifying before you today. The following anecdote provides a clear example of how houses of worship respond to public needs. On Sept. 12, 2011, I was made aware of more than 100 stranded airline passengers huddling in the Howard Beach Subway Station without food, water, or sanitary facilities. At my request, within minutes, literally – Pastor Baum opened the doors of the St. Barnabas community space. These stranded people, representing countries spanning the globe, were housed, clothed, and fed in that space – free of any cost – for more than a week. That type of response is not just a unique one, occurring under unique circumstances. Tonight, Community Board 10 holds its regular monthly meeting. If, for example, something were to occur today that would prevent our regular meeting space in another

location from being used tonight, I have absolutely no doubt that if his space were not damaged – it would be made available on a moment's notice at no charge if I asked for it. Our Board has utilized space in our other houses of worship at times as needed. For example, there is some senior housing being constructed in the community. When there was a need to hold a meeting in the area local to it, the space at St. Helen was made available. When there is a need for space to hold meetings on zoning matters specific to an area within our board, space is always available from one or another of our houses of worship.

Pastor Baum's building and the buildings of all of our houses of worship serve us all. The types of community activities he will describe are similar to those provided by houses of worship all over our city. Our city will be diminished if we lose them because our federal government excludes them from recovery assistance when natural disasters strike. We urge your passage of the resolution you are considering.

Very truly yours,



Betty Bratbh
Chairperson

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dahlia Goldenberg

Address: 103-04 39th Ave Corona, Ny

I represent: Queens Congregations United in Action

Address: See above

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DAVID POLLACK

Address: _____

I represent: JCRC

Address: 225 W 34th ST

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Pers Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joe Rosenberg

Address: 1011 1st Ave

I represent: Catholic Community Relations Council

Address: 1

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/7/13

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: The Rev. William Garm

Address: 9 Stuyvesant Oval

I represent: St. Barnabas Lutheran Church

Address: Howard Beach

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/7/13

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rev Alonzo Jordan

Address: 116-21 FRANCIS Lewis Blvd

I represent: CLERGY UNITED FOR Community Improvement

Address: St. ALBINS Church

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2-7-13

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rev. Chris Dito

Address: 11 East Raleigh Ave

I represent: International Christian Center

Address: 1501 Richmond Ave

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/7/2013

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: QUONCE JAMES

Address: 2915 W. 332d ST.

I represent: Pastor Connie Hulla Covey Island Gospel

Address: 2828 Neptune Ave. Astoria Bldg

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/7/13

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MAGGIE LEBRON

Address: 2860 WEST 36th STREET

I represent: REACHING OUT MINISTRIES & IPI

Address: 2102 MERMAID AVE

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Adam Lebron

Address: 2860 WEST 36th STREET

I represent: REACHING OUT MINISTRIES & IPI

Address: 2102 MERMAID AVE.

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Adina Frydman

Address: 130 East 59th Street

I represent: USA Federation of NY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: FEB. 07, 2013

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PASTOR CONNIS M. MOBLEY

Address: 2701 MERMAID AVENUE • BROOKLYN, NY 11224

I represent: UNITED COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH, INC.

Address: 2701 MERMAID AVENUE • BROOKLYN, NY 11224

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/17/13

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Paul de Vries, PhD

Address: Church Station - Box 3277, NYC 10008

I represent: NY Divinity School

Address: Church Station - Box 3277, NYC 10008

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: STEVEN FROHLICH

Address: 444 NEPTUNE AVE

I represent: YOUNG ISRAEL OF BRIGGTON

Address: 293 NEPTUNE AVE.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chaim Leibk@9

Address: 752 Empire FAR Rockaway NY 11691

I represent: Cong. Knesseth ISRAEL & National Council of Young Israel

Address: 111 JOHN ST. NY NY (SUITE 600)

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2-7-13

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Agustin Quiles

Address: 2871 W-35 STREET B'KLYN NY

I represent: Pentecostal Church of Jesus Christ

Address: 2102 HERMAID AVE. B'KLYN, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2-7-13

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JEFF LEB

Address: 11 BROADWAY, 14TH FLOOR, NY, NY 10004

I represent: ORTHODOX UNION

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/7/2013

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rev. Duane Sleet

Address: 1510 Redfern Ave.

I represent: First Bapt., For Rockaway

Address: 1510 Redfern Ave.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: REV EVAN D. GORAY

Address: 330 BEACH 67TH ST ARVERNE

I represent: MALEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

Address: 330 BEACH 67TH ST ARVERNE NY.

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 7 Feb. 2013

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: REVEREND PASTOR WILLIAM DEVIN

Address: 760 WEST 60th AVE. NY

I represent: NYC RIGHT TO WORKERS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Rev Dr. Cheryl Anthony

Address: 141 Rogers Avenue, Bklyn, NY

I represent: Manhattan Christian Center

Address: (same as above)

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Rubin Margules Pres

Address: 20 Ocean Ct. BRUNY

I represent: Manhattan Beach Jewish Ctr.

Address: 60 WEST END AVE

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Sarah Fleishbach (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: Met Council

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Rev. Edwin Malace (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 2823 W 15 ST Bklyn N.Y. 11224

I represent: New Church Intl (Coney Island)

Address: 2002 Neptune Ave Coney Island

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/7/13

Name: Rabbi Veltoshva Merenfeld (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 4823 Beach 48th Street Sea Gate NY 11224

I represent: Cong Veshiva Tiferes Menachem

Address: 4823 beach 48th St Sea Gate NY 11224

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms