

Katrina—Four Years Later

In 2005, the initial response to Hurricane Katrina was swift and generous. Americans, shocked by the storm's destructive power on the Gulf Coast, came to the aid of their fellow countrymen with compassionate abundance. But time passes, and people forget. While agencies and individuals have moved on to other noble causes, the Gulf Coast residents cannot forget Hurricane Katrina. Many continue to live in barely habitable homes, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reports that 3,000 families still live in its issued mobile homes.

There is one agency, however, that has not moved on. One organization has maintained a constant vigil for four years, meeting physical and spiritual needs of the people in New Orleans, Louisiana, as well as in Gulfport and Waveland, Mississippi—The Alliance.

The Alliance continues its commitment to help rebuild homes and lives in the hurricane-stricken areas. Read more about these God-sized outreaches and how you can help.

New Hope in New Orleans

From the day that Hurricane Katrina breached the levees of New Orleans, Louisiana, leaving most of the city under water, Willie Neudahl, associate pastor of New Hope Church in Gretna, has worked selflessly to serve the suburban neighborhoods of The Big Easy. The multiethnic communities have benefitted from Neudahl's efforts to rebuild homes but still are in desperate need of spiritual renewal.

Understanding that he needed assistance in reaching the large ethnically diverse population of displaced residents, Neudahl sought help from his district leaders, who invited

Rev. Donald Smith from Pennsylvania to join Neudahl in the daunting task of rebuilding homes and lives in the Gretna area. Smith joined Neudahl in 2007, and together, the two are impacting a community for Christ.

With the majority of relief work taking place in the Gentilly area, New Hope is in various phases of reconstruction. "While the need is far greater," says Smith, "our ability to assist is proportionate to the number of missions teams that partner with us." The need is expected to continue for at least a few more years.

The Vision

Because of the ethnic diversity of New Hope, it is necessary to understand the various cultural backgrounds in order to meet the people at their level of need. "This requires careful consideration of everything from music to the propagation of the gospel to social interaction," Smith says. "But the leadership of New Hope—an African American pastor and a Caucasian associate pastor—demonstrates to those on the outside that Christ loves people from all walks of life."

New Hope facilitates five weekly home Bible studies as well as a mid-week study at the church. "Home studies allow people to get to know us while learning about Christ in an informal setting," says Smith.

Outreaches such as Vacation Bible School and cookouts pave the way to community involvement. "Most of the people who attend New Hope are involved in some way to help the pastors in proclaiming the good news," says Neudahl. "Many have accepted the Lord, and many others have recommitted their lives to Him." (cont.)

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As Smith and Neudahl plant and water the seed of the gospel, “The Lord opens doors of opportunity,” says Smith. “As we disciple the souls that the Lord entrusts to our care, we believe that a mighty army for the Lord will arise.”

Help is still needed to continue this critical New Orleans ministry. If you would like to partner with New Hope, contact Pastor Smith at djjd49s@cox.net

Waveland’s Camp Katrina

From the moment The Alliance stepped foot in Waveland, there has been a continuous flow of workers who have helped in demolition, rebuilding, supplying, and meeting the physical needs of the city’s residents, most of whom live in spiritual darkness.

“RP* represents the need for each of us to never give up on the people God puts in our life,” says Tom Barbour, who pastors the Christian Life Center (CLC), “no matter how futile our efforts may seem.” A meth addict, RP received help from the original staging area of “Camp Katrina,” which is now CLC. She indicated early on that she wanted a life change and was ready to follow God on His narrow road. After four years of off-again, on-again attendance at CLC, the once-emaciated woman praises God for delivering her from drugs and tells others of their need for the Savior.

While in search of wood for the smoker grill that is used to cook meat for volunteers, Barbour asked the Spirit to lead him. He turned onto a dead-end street in an old and obviously poor neighborhood he had never seen. “At the end of the street was a pile of oak logs,” says Barbour, who was joined by an older African American man, Theo,* from a FEMA trailer in the neighboring yard.

As the man assisted Barbour in loading the wood, Barbour offered the services of a volunteer rebuilding team. Theo thanked Barbour, who gave his standard reply, “Don’t thank me. You know who I work for, don’t you?” Cautiously, Theo answered, “No.”

“I work for Jesus,” Barbour told Theo, whose face brightened immediately. “You know Jesus?” he asked. Barbour and Theo spent the next hour talking about Jesus.

Greg, a recent college graduate, had the next 45 years of his life neatly planned—until he visited Waveland with a short-term missions team. “Trying to fit my recently grace-filled spirit into the constraining box of American routine proved painful,” he says. “Here [in Waveland] was life abundant, and I found myself in a position where I was unable to exist without it.” Greg joined the CLC staff to minister to Waveland residents as well as CLC volunteers, finding his contentment “in Christ alone,” he said.

A Promise Kept

Many lives have been impacted by the CLC ministry, whether they are recipients of CLC’s help, like RP and Theo, or on the giving end, like Greg. Circumstances vary, but the results are the same—God moves in the hearts of all who come in contact with CLC.

Through ongoing rebuilding efforts, a thrift store, Bible studies, and church services, CLC has remained faithful to its promise four years ago: “We’re in it for the long haul.”

If you would like to partner with Christian Life Center, contact Tom Barbour at jtbarbour@comcast.net

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