



The President's Perspective

A Glance from the Gulf



For three days last weekend, I was able to view firsthand the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Word and pictures do not do justice to the destruction that I saw.

After collecting a sizeable amount of supplies from churches across the piedmont section of North Carolina, we loaded it all into a trailer to deliver to two churches in the Gulf. The first church is in Baton Rouge, LA, that is housing approximately 600 evacuees from New Orleans. The second church is in Gulfport, MS, a church that sustained a significant amount of damage to its auditorium.



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As we interacted with the members of the two churches and viewed the damage, three things impressed me. First, one could not help but be overwhelmed by the DAMAGE TO PROPERTY. Unbelievably, we were able to drive right out to the waterfront in Pascagoula, MS and see the remnants of century old homes. Mere shells of what had been multimillion-dollar residents were all that was left. I was moved to tears as I saw a sign, painted on a sheet of plywood, and nailed to a tree in front of one residence. The words were "Twas grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home." A 40-foot storm surge totally destroyed a three-story home, pushing the third story four blocks north and sweeping the first two stories out to sea. Senator Trent Lott's home, which had been on that same street, was nothing but shambles.



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Second, I was impressed by the DEDICATION OF THE PEOPLE. The church in Baton Rouge, a large ministry with beautiful facilities, has suspended all activities except for two services on Sunday morning. All other efforts are directed toward ministering to the 600 evacuees that they are housing. Their gymnasium and Sunday school buildings will have to be totally renovated when the evacuees finally leave. Carpets and walls have been ruined by people who did not function well in New Orleans and have brought all their problems with them. It's as if the church shelter is a microcosm of all the problems from the city of New Orleans (attempted drug use, prostitution, social interaction difficulties, etc.). Yet, this church and its members are willing and joyfully



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dealing with all of this in order to show the love of Christ. They realize that ministry is not using people to build buildings, but rather using facilities to build and minister to people.

Third, I have been overwhelmed by the DYNAMIC OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED. As we delivered supplies to the church in Gulfport, you could see and sense the great appreciation for what we were doing. Over and over, we heard, "Thank you so much for what you have done." Our goal is to return the first week of December, set up our tent, and conduct Christmas themed services there in Gulfport. Many churches have no facilities left, which means that they will do no Christmas programs this year. In addition, we want to take at least one semi load of supplies (toys, shoes, clothing, etc) for the children of the region. All of this, of course, is to model the love of Christ and proclaim the gospel.



For the last three days, I have been on the phone coordinating with four other churches how we can most effectively make this a reality. Already people are stepping up to the plate, volunteering time, vehicles and supplies to this effort. As the picture becomes clearer, we will keep you updated as to how you can have a part in this outreach. Right now, we need your earnest prayers for a spirit of cooperation among all involved and wisdom to significantly and powerfully reach this area of our nation. Disasters like this will occur more, not less, the closer we get to our Lord's return. Even now, a second hurricane is impacting the Gulf region. In the middle of tragedy and devastation, the light of the gospel can and must be clearly seen.



Dave Kistler

President,

H.O.P.E Ministries International

www.hopeministriesonline.com

Email comments to:

davekistler@hopeministriesonline.com

We appreciate your input, but please understand that due to the volume of email that we receive, we are unable to personally respond to each email.