Disaster Response: Where Does My Help Come From?
By deacon, Len Richards

Jeremiah 29:11 says, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Disasters can be like alarm clocks, shouting, “Wake up! Love each other! Pray!” The OPC Disaster Response coordinator recently introduced a video to local OPC churches chronicling its efforts after Hurricane Harvey deposited over four feet of rain on the Houston area. After seeing the impact the local church made, with help from OP Churches all over the country, I am struck by opportunity—opportunity to listen to the cries of those suffering. But most of us aren’t ready to respond immediately are we? It is never too late, though, to begin to prepare. How does one go about that?

Before jumping into action, it’s wise to ask yourself, “why go?” We are called to reach out with mercy and compassion. We are witnesses to suffering as well as the changes that occur through hands-on involvement. Matthew 5:16 instructs us to, “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” The work of our hands helps to break down barriers and gives the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ—with or without words.

Some initial steps as you consider may look like this:

Pray, asking the Lord for wisdom. Psalm 34:4 promises, “I sought the Lord and He delivered me from all my fears.” Every circumstance is an opportunity to pray together.

Share your desire to serve with others who know you well.

For the remainder of this article, please go to our website: opcdisasterresponse.org/https://www.opccdm.org/resources/mercy-minute/

Deacon Challenge!

Invite ten people in your church to sign up for the disaster response registry. Go to our website: opcdisasterresponse.org/volunteer-registry. Questions? Please visit our, “Frequently Asked Questions” page: opcdisasterresponse.org/frequently-asked-questions/ or contact us: opcdisasterresponse@opc.org. We currently have 170 registrants with a goal of 300 by hurricane season!

The Houston Story

Have you shown the disaster response video at your church? If you are not yet familiar with it, this inspirational video portrays the impact of those blessed by the effort of the OPC Disaster Response volunteers. Additional resources are available, designed to assist you in presenting the video to your congregation. Go to our website: https://opcdisasterresponse.org/opc-disaster-response-video/

About Deacon Len Richards:
I’m Len Richards, a deacon at New Life OPC in Williamsport, PA. I wandered in a wilderness of deception for 38 years. The Lord rescued me from despair and broke the chains of bondage to sin. I soon arrived at Church of the Covenant in Hackettstown, NJ and found that I was home.

After being trained for leadership by Pastor Ron Pearce, God revealed that He had prepared and equipped me for diaconal service to His church. For 23 years at two OP churches, I have served the kingdom in whatever circumstances He has uncovered along the way. The joy of existence is made abundantly manifest in service to the King and His people.

Jim Elliot once noted, “The man who won’t act until he knows it all, will never act at all.” I heard His whisper, “Whom shall I send?” and I responded, “Send me!” May that be the exclamation of us all.
An Unexpected Opportunity
by David Nakhla

On my way back from a recent trip to Grand Rapids, Michigan where I led a diaconal conference, I was unexpectedly thrust into an opportunity to bear someone else’s burden. Because the encounter was so rare and timely, I recalled it in an email to the group with whom I had just met. May this remind you, as it did to me, to pray for opportunities like this, despite our worry that we are not fully prepared. The Holy Spirit who ordains such occasions will also give the right words to speak.

Brothers,

As you will recall, I had encouraged you to pray that the Lord might give you opportunities to minister mercy. Well, I had not prayed that for myself (maybe one of you did for me) but for some reason, the Lord saw fit to bless me with a divine appointment on my trip home.

Sitting at the airport awaiting my flight from Grand Rapids to Chicago, a young man (23) sits next to me. He breaks the ice, introducing himself as Tanner, asking if I’m in Grand Rapids on business. “Not really business…I work for the church and was here to do some training.” “Oh, you’re with the church? Do you mind if I share something with you?” I hesitantly respond, “Sure”. He then goes on to share with me that he is heading to Wisconsin because both his father and brother (16) were killed in an auto accident the previous night! I was speechless! I really didn’t know what to say other than “I’m so sorry!”. He really just wanted a listening ear. After a bit of talking, and as boarding neared, I asked him if I could pray for him. He responded that it was exactly what he hoped I would do. I placed my hand on his shoulder and prayed for him, as best I knew how.

We boarded the flight. Being a nearly empty flight, he urged me to sit next to him. Throughout the flight, he continued to share with me his conflicting emotions. Before getting off the plane, we swapped phone numbers, giving me the opportunity to continue to encourage him. We have since texted back and forth.

Brothers, I couldn’t help but think that we have no idea what the person sitting right next to us is going through, do we? This was a divine appointment, planned out by God. This type of interaction doesn’t occur every day for me…so I couldn’t help but correlate it to the content of our meeting together. Praise the Lord, and may He use the training and time thinking about these things to open up such doors for you as you go about as servants of Christ!

Register to show your interest in OPC Disaster Response efforts and you’ll receive our newsletter “the DRIP”. Go to our website: opccdisasterresponse.org/volunteer-registry.