

"What Do They Really Need?"

This is the all-important question we should always ask ourselves when we reach out in mission to help people in need. It's one thing for us to **think we know** what people need, but often quite another for us to take the time to discover **what the real needs are** so that we can meet them in a way that makes the greatest difference.

This is certainly the case in the aftermath of the unprecedented flooding we are hearing about from our neighbors to the south, in places like Houston, Texas, and surrounding areas affected by Hurricane Harvey. Many places have received more rainfall in less than a week than we normally get in an entire year here in Ohio! I can't even begin to fathom what people are going through right now.

As we give of ourselves missionally, I will normally encourage us to **go the extra mile** beyond just pulling out our wallets, checkbooks, and debit cards. Instead, I will challenge us to get out there and build relationships whenever possible with the people we're assisting, in addition to our financial giving. That's what the practice of "Risk-Taking Mission and Service" is all about. Let's be honest - people often give to good causes in order to make themselves feel better, but they often do it at a safe distance, so that they don't really have to feel the pain that the people we're helping might be experiencing. At least, I know I've done that before.

However, in the case of helping the people affected by Hurricane Harvey, things are different **right now**. What do the victims of the winds and flooding need? Lots of things!

Do they need our prayers? Yes, absolutely, they do, but as we see images and hear stories, I think we all realize that our prayers and well wishes are not enough.

Do they need to have their homes cleaned up and rebuilt? Yes, but now is not the time to go in yet to help, because it's not safe and we have not been invited to come.

Do they need fresh supplies of clothing, furniture, and so on? Yes, but if we sent those things to them right now, where would they put them?

So, what **do** they really need at this time? From what I've learned over the years, people in these kinds of urgent situations need **cash first**, and then more tangible help later. Having money up front gives storm victims the ability to do what they need to survive and cope right now, and then begin to rebuild their lives when they get to that point. These gifts can help people meet their basic needs of food, shelter, transportation, clothing, etc.

Eventually, there will be a time for sending needed supplies and people for clean-up efforts. I pray that when that time comes, we will not have forgotten about these people and their needs. Perhaps we will sense the call to become trained as early responders who can go to that region to serve when it is safe enough and we are invited to come. As humans with short attention spans, we tend to want to react heroically and offer help right away, but then we tend to move on to other situations in the long run.

What can we do right now? I am inviting our congregation to respond to the urgent situation in the Gulf Coast areas by **collecting a special offering this Sunday, September 3rd in our worship services**. My family plans to give an extra gift, over and above our regular offering to Trinity's ongoing ministries. We will gather up funds as a congregation and then send them off to UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) who will manage the distribution of those funds with excellence. I can assure you that 100% of your contributions will be given to relief efforts, as the overhead costs are already covered by the apportionment giving of churches like ours all around the world.

For those of you writing checks, please write the check out to 'Trinity UMC' and place the following in the Memo line: **UMCOR Hurricane Recovery 2017**. Cash gifts are welcome as well. Please mark your envelope so our counters know how much you are giving to the church's general offering and how much is going to Hurricane Recovery.

If you want to go ahead and make a secure, online donation, you can do that by going to this link, managed by the UMCOR website: https://secure3.convio.net/gbgm/site/SPageNavigator/umcor_donate.html?type=1002&project=901670

May We Offer the Grace and Peace of Christ to Those People in Their Time of Need!

Grace and Peace,
Pastor David

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