

Disaster Relief Plan

Grace Church Articles

When a disaster occurs, we are rightfully concerned about how people will be affected physically, financially, emotionally, and spiritually. Because we want to help ease suffering, we may be tempted to respond impulsively in ways that are more likely to help us feel good than do real good. As a church, we want to be intentional, purposeful, and reflective in how we respond and reach out to those affected by disaster.

To that end, our first response will include:

- **Praying for those affected.** Pray for those who are suffering and in need of relief. Pray for mental and spiritual health and healing over the coming months and years. Pray for the organizations and churches who are responding to this crisis. Pray for the good stewardship of the funds raised. Pray that the church will be strengthened and that the message of the gospel will give hope. Pray for the faithfulness and stamina of organizations, churches, and their volunteers to keep caring for the duration.
- **Giving financially to organizations that are prepared to respond quickly.** Giving financially can make a significant difference. There are many needs surrounding relief which include food, clothing, and shelter. There will also be recovery needs down the road. Financially supporting relief organizations enables them to do what they do best. We seek to support organizations that are equipped with the infrastructure and the experience to best respond to current and ongoing needs in the wake of a disaster. Donations empower organizations to make event-specific decisions and directly provide the resources most needed.
- **Waiting and evaluating if and how we should be involved.** We are concerned about disasters and crisis situations, but we are not responsible for all of them. We will wait and evaluate our responsibility and then pursue any direct involvement as God leads. We will assess our responsibility based on how close the disaster is to our area; we will consider a more hands on response for situations within a few hours of the Upstate. We will seek to find a balanced response that includes immediate relief and long-term rehabilitation.

Our first response will not include:

- **Collecting items.** Making monetary donations to these organizations is often more helpful than collecting and sending supplies. Distribution can be challenging and ineffective. Financial support empowers organizations to make event-specific decisions and directly provide the resources most needed.

- **Sending our own teams.** Communities are often overwhelmed by well-meaning, yet poorly organized, volunteer efforts. We can partner with organizations that send teams well and effectively when it seems appropriate.

As our responsibility becomes more clear:

- We will work in partnership with organizations and local churches. We will work during times of “non disaster” to build partnerships with credible relief organizations who already have the infrastructure and experience to respond quickly and effectively. We will follow the lead of these organizations during times of disaster response. We will also look to connect with local churches in the area.
- We will act based on both the needs and the opportunities that God presents us. We want to be faithful to help people in our sphere of responsibility by partnering with other organizations who are doing things well. This may include giving financially or mobilizing people to serve. We want to discern where God is leading, and not get ahead of God and take matters into our own hands.

Long-term response:

Natural disasters create needs and suffering that must be addressed in phases. Social media and the news cycle will keep any disaster at the forefront of our news feeds and conversations during the initial time of need. The importance of quick response and relief is immeasurable and saves lives. However, we must also remember that long-term rehabilitation and rebuilding will be needed. When our responsibility is clear, it is our hope that we can remain faithful to a disaster area and its people long after our news feeds have fallen silent.

ORGANIZATIONS TO SUPPORT

1. American Red Cross: redcross.org
2. Samaritan's Purse: samaritanspurse.org
3. Convoy of Hope: convoyofhope.org
4. Send Relief (North American Mission Board): namb.net/send-relief/disaster-relief

We suggest that you evaluate the effectiveness and credibility of any organization before you give:

charitynavigator.org • guidestar.org • charitywatch.org

