

How a fellowship Responds to Disasters

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Our state has experienced two “thousand-year floods” – less than two years apart! Matthew and Florence were unwanted visitors that devastated eastern North Carolina. CBFNC is not a disaster relief organization, but we are a missional fellowship that cares deeply about our people, their churches, and their communities. How does our fellowship respond to natural disasters?

Care

The first thing we do when disaster strikes our state is to express care. With both Matthew and Florence, with winds still blowing and the rains still falling, we began reaching out to partner churches, primarily through their pastors. Text messages, phone calls, emails, and social media are the avenues we use to let them know how much we love them and are praying for them. While we certainly aren’t able to speak to everyone directly and quickly, we make a good faith effort to love one another in the midst of the storms and soon thereafter.

Communicate

We not only communicate that we care, we also seek to share with the rest of our fellowship how they can pray and help. We receive and share reports from churches that were affected so that churches in safe areas can provide support. As Len Keever of First, Dunn and Allison Collier of Angier, Angier, communicated after Florence, their church members were out in the community as soon as the rain stopped, “neighbors helping neighbors,” clearing debris from their property.

We also communicate needs from other agencies. For example, after Florence, FEMA contacted CBFNC for assistance with housing for disaster response workers, thinking we operated retreat centers. Of course, CBFNC owns no real estate, but we communicated that need with our vast network, with the hope that someone in or connected to our fellowship could meet that need.

Connect

Though CBFNC is not a disaster response organization, we partner with those who have the calling and capacity to do that work. These partners include:

Baptists on Mission (North Carolina Baptist Men) – CBFNC provides funding for Baptists on Mission. When disaster strikes, we connect volunteers with NCBM for feeding and recovery operations.

CBF Global Disaster Response – CBF Global seeks to identify neglected areas or people groups and organize long-term recovery efforts in those areas. They have been especially helpful in North Carolina in the aftermath of Florence.

Other Agencies – As with the FEMA example cited above, CBFNC will assist other agencies and organizations when they call on us, such as Red Cross and Salvation Army. For example, a Mennonite disaster relief group established its base of operations on the campus of First, Lumberton, after Matthew.

Convene

After Florence, CBFNC convened regular conference call meetings of pastors and church leaders to share information, to support one another, and to coordinate response efforts. These meetings not only enabled everyone to be more effective in ministry, they provided pastoral support within our beloved community.



Commit

When disaster strikes, the world’s attention is riveted on the affected areas for a brief time. As Cooperative Baptists, we seek not only to address immediate needs, but also to support a long-term presence. For example, with Matthew, some of the funds collected by CBFNC were used to purchase gift cards distributed by partner churches to their neighbors in critical need. Other funds were used in creative ways by partner churches, such as Dortches, Rocky Mount, which initiated “Rest in the Lord,” a ministry that provided over fifty mattresses to homes in their community. Other funds were used to help rebuild the Robeson County Church and Community Center, an ecumenical organization supported by several CBFNC churches that ministers to the underserved year-round. It is led by Andrew Collier, a member of First, Lumberton.

How does a fellowship respond to natural disasters? In genuine, effective ways that flow out of our deep relationships and unique capacities. Thank you for your participation and support.

