

February 2025 – Hurricane Helene Update

Dear Family and Friends,

We apologize for the time gap since our last newsletter. Last September Hurricane Helene came through – changing the lives of untold numbers of people forever. Since then, we have been very busy helping flood victims from Hurricane Helene during much of our time not previously committed to ministry. The pictures below are typical of the damage in many places in NE TN and Western NC.



Barnardsville, N.C. just north of Asheville



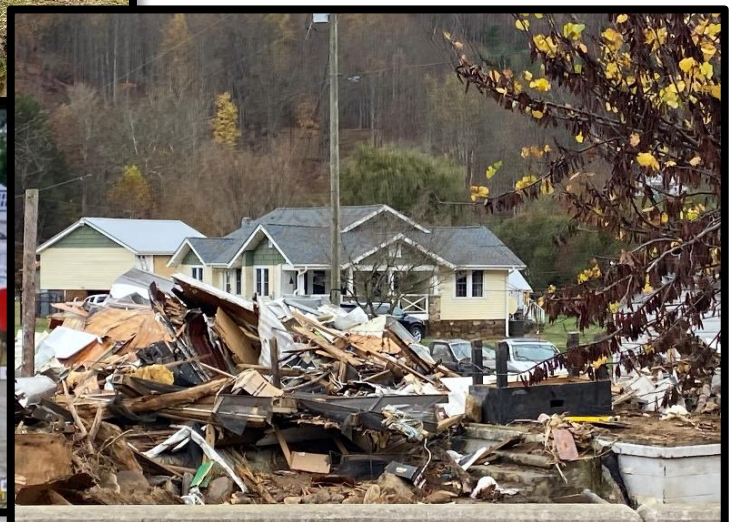
**I-26 outside Erwin TN –
totally unusable**



**Clean up has begun
here. So much loss!**



**Newport, TN not very far
from our church.**



After the flood our hearts were breaking for the many people – believers and unbelievers – who were hurting. We asked the Lord to show us how we could help. The first thing He said was to see if we could help anyone salvage anything from their home. A couple in our church, (song leader/elder and his wife, piano player) had lost basically everything that was in their mobile home which was picked up and destroyed by the flood waters. We asked if we could try to clean some of their mud-covered clothing that was “rescued” but in bad shape. They graciously allowed us to try to help. It is amazing that a pressure washer on a lower setting can do to mud!



We were amazed, but everything looked like new after washing! Please pray for this family as they continue to pick up the pieces and find a new piece of land on higher ground for their mobile home.



We knew this was not all that God would have us to do, so we did some inquiries into what areas were really badly hit so we could gather supplies and take to them. Thanks to the generosity of many people, flood relief distribution centers sprang up in many places to act as places where people could come get what they needed or others could get things to take to those who were still trapped. With the help of our granddaughters, Emily and Lauren, we were able to load our car and our 5' x 8' trailer with as much as it would hold and take it to the Samaritan Purse's headquarters in Burnsville, NC. They were thrilled to get things – especially the gloves, shovels, and things needed in the early days of the clean-up.



We ended up making a couple of trips to Burnsville, N.C. to take supplies – including a lot of supplies brought up to us from our “home church” in Memphis - Memphis Bible Church. Meanwhile, God laid it on the hearts of several friends, family, and churches to give money to help some of these folks. So far, we have given away about \$7000 in money and Lowes gift cards! More investigating next took us to Barnardsville, N.C. We recently met a couple who have family in Barnardsville, NC which was hit extremely hard who needed help.



We were so blessed to meet **Jerry and Evie** in October. They are a beautiful couple who love the Lord and are trusting Him even as they are struggling physically and financially. As soon as we drove up to their house, we couldn't help but see a "Jesus" license plate that they had attached to the front of their house that was destroyed. After we visited with them for awhile in the tiny camper they were living in, Don asked if we could pray with them. It blessed our hearts to see Jerry immediately get on his knees to talk to the Lord! They were pretty overwhelmed and so thankful to God for the \$2000 we were able to leave with them to help with their many needs.



Not long later we heard about a family who had moved to the area (Cocke County, TN) from Vermont. **Dan and Carol** had just finished fixing up the house they had bought when the flood came. It did not wash away their home, but did extensive damage. When we met them, they were sleeping in their attic where they had retreated when the flood came. Since they had not been in the area long, they had no family and few friends here. We don't believe that they are saved at this point, but we, as well as other believers who have helped them, have been a witness and example of the love of Christ for them. We were so happy to be able to share \$2000 as well as a pretty fall decoration with them. Since they lost all of their fire wood in the flood (washed away) they

ended up leaving for the winter to stay with family in Florida. They will be back in the spring. Please pray for them as they rebuild that the Lord will be with them and that they will come to saving faith in Christ.



Mike and Jama were referred to us by another pastor in Greene County. When the flood came, they were able to leave their home and go to a place of safety. However, when they later returned "home" there was absolutely no home to return to. Their house had been totally washed away, and they have never been able to find any of it! We were able to give them a cash gift and some Lowe's gift cards for a total of about \$2000. When she saw the gift, Jama immediately cried tears of joy. They have been taken in by family and are living with them as they try to rebuild. As professing Christians, they are so appreciative to the Lord and other believers who made these gifts possible!

We don't have a photo, but just last week we were blessed to take a **pickup load of seasoned firewood** to **Tim** who said he was unable to find seasoned wood to burn in with his greener wood. Tim lives up in the tip of Tennessee that was devastated. His home was damaged, and he needed good dry wood to burn while his heating system was being repaired. Tim is not a believer, but he heard the gospel when we gave him the wood. Please pray that he will give his life to the Lord.

A big “Thank You” to everyone who has prayed or given any kind of aid or help for the folks in this area! Please continue to pray for the many people in Appalachia who were displaced due to Hurricane Helene and are trying to build back their lives. It has been very difficult for everyone, and Many still need prayers and help.

Bible Release Time Classes

We began our Release Time Bible Classes in September along with our regular holiday school programs Last year, Don taught three classes in Greene County (grades 3-5) for Nolachuckey Elem. School and two classes in Cocke County (grades 5-8) at Grassy Fork Elem. This past fall our ministry was expanded as Carol began teaching three classes for grades K-4 in Cocke County at Grassy Fork Elem and helping Don with the classes for Nolachuckey.

Please pray that we will have wisdom and energy for this opportunity. Release time classes are conducted off the school property at a nearby community building or church. All children must have parental permission, and all classes are held during non-instructional times for the students. This is a wonderful opportunity to reach these students for our Lord. The Greene County school classes are working through Children’s Bible Mission (once a month) and the classes in Cocke County are through LifeWise which are weekly.



We send a special thanks to you for your many prayers and gifts as you continue ministering here with us in East Tennessee. Please pray for our health and energy for the work God has for us to do and safety as we travel these mountainous roads. God Bless You!

Special News:



Last September Hurricane Helene grounded us temporarily with flood waters and bridge closures. One large **bridge near us collapsed just 2 hours after our son had driven over it!** We rejoice in God’s special care for him! (You can’t tell it in the picture, but the bridge is normally 75-80 feet above the water!) We were glad when things opened pretty soon so we could travel again and continue our ministries.

In December our family was saddened when Don’s sister’s husband, **Gene Gregory unexpectedly went to be with the Lord** while he was taking a major part in a special Christmas ministry. Please pray for Gladys as she adjusts to Gene’s home going, and for his 2 churches he pastored as they also adjust.



Family news: We have been richly blessed with our three children and eight grandchildren. This past summer was fun with all of them visiting us and helping in different ways. This includes help in VBS from Lizzie and special help with day camp from Emily and Lauren. We also enjoyed the participation of Khylei and Lizzie at day camp and the special help Eva gave to Camp Galilee. All the grandchildren helped with multiple jobs around our home. The summer passed so quickly but with a special surprise in August - **A surprise 50th anniversary party for us at our church!** There were so many family and friends to greet us, and we were completely blown away!! What a blessing!! Since it was 2 months before the actual anniversary in October, it was pretty easy to surprise us! In September Don had the joy of baptizing Emily just a week before the massive flooding. So glad it was done while the river was still usable! We'll post a few pictures from the special summer.



Emily's Baptism

Making Pickles!

50th

50th

Lizzie helping Granddaddy and Grandma with Vacation Bible School

Mr. Collins is loving extra attention from Eva and

Emily, Lauren, Carol and Eva picking mimosa flowers to make jelly.

Kristi and Lillie shared a birthday on November 2.