

# NEW HOPE PRES CHURCH

FT MYERS, FL

## Disaster Relief

**“New Hope exists to glorify God and make disciples by living out the gospel together”**

**The New Hope Building and Campus.** A hurricane preparedness plan is already in place. This plan protects the physical assets of the church. Our building was not designed as a storm shelter, but could be used as a “Last Resort Refuge” if so authorized by the senior pastor.

- See attached “NH Last Refuge Policy”
- Preparedness includes: shutting off power to certain areas of campus; sand bags at all door thresholds; reinforce window gaskets as needed; take down signs, banners, flags, trash cans, potted plants; prepare backup generators.

### **New Hope Response**

- Our goal and mission are to support our Church Body and get them secure, so that they in turn can then volunteer and be the hands and feet within each of their respective communities. Our focus is not only on our church members, but also their neighbors and the greater Fort Myers community.

### **Initial steps:**

- Instruct New Hope members (via ELI) to start preparing, before a hurricane hits. Purchase personal food, water and other emergency supplies, and have an evacuation plan. Encourage people in high-risk areas to leave now.
- Alert members who have volunteered in specific areas to be ready to activate.
- Campus preparation.

### **After the storm hits**

- Bring all key stakeholders, representing all areas of the church together to evaluate their suggested response input, for their respective areas.
  - In our case this included: Head of Grounds and Facilities, Ministry of Missions and Outreach, Finance Department, Ministry of the church (Head Pastor), Children and Youth Ministry, Session leaders and other departments within the church that could be leveraged for outreach to the members.

- Establish a leadership team
- Outlining the mission of the church during this specific crisis.
- As a group, working together then assigning tasks and responsibilities to respective areas.
- **Volunteer Teams**
  - **Communications** – call, text all members to identify their needs. Status checks on high-risk individuals. Follow up on calls on those requesting assistance. Refer to work team response leadership. (See NHP Communications below.)
  - **War Room** – set up “Grasshopper” VOIP phone system. Process incoming needs requests, assigning contractor specialists. Allocate volunteer assistance to appropriate work sites. Co-ordinate with food prep teams for lunch and meal deliveries. Set up spread sheets and white boards to track.
  - **Response leaders:** construction, muck out team, procurement (tools, supplies). Skilled evaluation team members will be assigned homes to review.  
(See attached: “Homeowner Release/Agreement Form”)
  - **Labor teams:** to work alongside skilled leaders.  
(See attached: “Release, Waiver of Liability and Indemnity Agreement” - Upon completion of work: “End of Day Form”)
  - **Food Preparation:** making lunches for work crews, deliver meals to families in need, act as “Hosts” for incoming groups (providing all necessary meals) Invite families served, and volunteers who worked on their homes to a dinner. (See attached: “You are invited”)
  - **Housing:** assist families in need, with obtaining temporary housing, provided by church members who have additional space in their homes.
  - **Building Permits:** assisting homeowners in procuring building permits
  - **Insurance:** assist homeowners in filing necessary forms and photos
  - **Disaster Relief Leadership:** provide oversight, direction and assistance to all teams. Committee member will interview individual needs requests, and approve disbursement of donated funds.  
(See attached: “Needs Documentation Form”)
    - Employ, as an independent contractor, a Disaster Relief Coordinator.  
(See attached job description)

## **Infrastructure and Systems**

### **Awareness and Financial Resources**

- Website setup with all necessary information and links regarding giving opportunities.
  - Giving links and systems
  - ELI – Church Community Builders
    - <https://thechurchco.com/church-community-builders/>
- Financial
  - Special account setup to properly track all incoming money given specifically for Hurricane Ian Relief
  - Financial system setup for on-line giving to make it easier for a larger community to contribute to these efforts.
  - A five-member Ad Hoc Disaster Relief committee was established to review all requests, then approve all expenditures related to outright giving of funds, purchase of materials, gift cards, and hiring of outside contractors.
  - Donated resources and labor tracking. (See attached: Donated resources; Daily volunteer time log; Materials/goods donation log.)

### **NHP Communications:**

- NHP has a system called ELI that helps with electronic communications and managing people resources within the Church community.
  - ELI – Church Community Builders
    - <https://thechurchco.com/church-community-builders/>
- We leveraged these resources coupled with that of another outside VOIP phone system that allowed us to connect people in different locations into one phone system so we could have a more organized response. Phone service after the storm was limited within our area. Using Grasshopper we were able to send and receive text messages.
- Phone System: Grasshopper
  - <https://grasshopper.com>
  - There are a number of these systems out there as options. This one allows for SMS messages, and you can centralize all of this into one number but to multiple people so when you are trying to staff this it helps. It also helps that it can work from volunteer's current personal cell phone without compromising their cell number.

### **Key takeaways from Ian**

- Start communication with your church before the storm hits
- Encourage people in high-risk areas to evacuate
- Assemble the leadership team ASAP after the storm
- If possible, hire a project manager with disaster related experience, or strong construction background.
- Have someone follow up the next day, with homeowners to ensure work was completed.
- Partner with, but do not count on outside groups, to assist.
- Identify where FEMA and Operation Blue Roof is set up. Provide this information to members.
- Give your dedicated volunteers a break from doing the hard jobs.
- It is impossible to get everything done immediately. Persevere, but be patient.
- Get people to sign up to volunteer before hurricane season. (see attached: Volunteer Helper; Storm Follow up – enrollment form)

### **Other**

- Gift cards, in \$50 increments were purchased at Publix Supermarket, Walmart and Target.  
A large number of people lost all their food due to power outages, and flooded homeowners needed clothing and personal items. These were easier to distribute than issuing checks.
- An Appliance replacement Program with discounted pricing was made available. These resources were not needed until initial remediation and reconstruction was completed.  
(See attached: “Hurricane Relief Appliance Replacement Program”)

## **THE FLORIDA & CARIBBEAN PRESBYTERY SPECIAL COMMITTEE FOR DISASTER RELIEF**

This committee will be authorized as a Special Committee by the Presbytery under the provisions of Article IV, section 1,C, 1 of the Presbytery of Florida & Caribbean By-Laws.

This Disaster Relief Committee (DRC) will represent the Florida & Caribbean Presbytery in coordinating disaster relief activities of the Presbytery with the EPC General Assembly Disaster Relief Committee.

### **1. MISSION:**

Promote and encourage Prayer, Planning, Preparation and Recovery for our people and churches and engage in Missional opportunities to serve as the hands and feet of CHRIST in our communities and beyond.

### **2. MEMBERSHIP:**

The DRC will recruit its membership based on qualifications, experience and ability to work in and/or managing a disaster situation. Membership could include both active and retired TE's, RE's and lay members of the Presbytery. No term limits will be established.

### **1. DUTIES:**

- a. Implement the GA DRC guidance and maintain liaison with their committee as the responsible agent of the Presbytery.

- b. Coordinate disaster rescue, recovery and rebuild actions with GA DRC.
- c. Coordinate with GA DRC requests for assistance and other disaster related communication with other EPC Presbyteries.
- d. Provide and maintain a disaster relief plan for all of our churches to use as a guide in preparing a plan for their churches.
- e. Encourage churches to establish a PRAYER FOR DISASTERS TEAM before, during and after a disaster. Plan for the long-haul recovery needs of their people.
- f. Encourage churches to budget for emergency response actions after a disaster.
- g. Coordinate training for church disaster response managers and teams.
- h. Encourage churches to be MISSIONAL MINDED and seek out opportunities to serve their communities and beyond after a disaster.
- i. Be the Point-of-Contact for reporting and responding to disasters within our Presbytery.
- j. Provide on-site assistance to churches after a disaster.
- k. Propose an annual budget for conducting training to churches and providing on-site assistance to churches for disaster relief management.
- l. Receive donations and disperse funds offered for disaster relief operations.

- m. Develop and submit requests for grants offered for disaster relief.
- n. Partner with other NGO disaster relief organizations for training and disaster relief operations.

## 2. REPORTING

- a. Report to the PLT as requested.
- b. Report to the GA DRC as required.

## 3. COMMUNICATIONS

- a. Provide ZOOM training to churches.
- b. Conduct ZOOM meetings with other disaster relief organizations.
- c. Create a permanent Presbytery E-Mail address for DRC communications.
- d. Maintain regular contact with other relief organizations.

