

September 25, 2017

Good Morning Friends,

Over the last few days it has been challenging figuring out how best to coordinate our disaster relief efforts. The AB Men's Team from Bentley Creek Baptist Church needed to change their original plans, deciding to depart from Pennsylvania on September 29 instead of September 24. The updated plan was for Gary Wood (one of our AB Men Disaster Relief Coordinators) and a team from Bentley Creek to take one of our disaster relief trailers to Lake Charles, LA to do disaster relief October 1 - 6.

Yesterday, I received word from Gary that he was encountering significant back issues that needed medical attention. He was heartbroken to report he would not be able to make the 1500 mile drive to Lake Charles and was not sure he could find someone else to drive the trailer to Louisiana. At this point it is a bit uncertain whether we have leaders who can take the trailer to Lake Charles, so please keep all of this in your prayers.

Over the last few days I have been in contact with Jack Cobb, our National AB Men's Disaster Relief Coordinator. There are teams traveling to Lake Charles to do disaster relief from many Regions in the ABC. I will be traveling to Lake Charles Sept 28 - Oct. 4 to assist in the clean-up effort as well as plan for ABCOPAD Teams to serve later in October and November.

Additionally, plans are underway for ABCOPAD Pastoral Leader, Rev. Tim Schwartz, to be a coordinator for disaster relief teams in the Houston / Galveston Area, under the guidance of American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS). Pastor Tim hopes to travel to the Houston / Galveston area soon and be ready to receive teams in late October or early November.

While emotionally there is a great push to "go", ABCOPAD is doing everything we can to work strategically. In talking with Frank Frischkorn about the challenges, he offered the following reflection: "While our hearts press us to run to areas devastated by hurricanes, we need to be patient. We need to pray and plan so we can maximize our efforts. We need to discern the LORD's plans for us, so we can be most effectively used to fulfill His Will. In doing this, we lean into our regional vision as a lens to gain clarity. It guides us in knowing what to do and what not to do, and since the third leg of our vision calls us to work with our wider ABC Family to fulfill Christ's mission in our world, we should seek to do just that."

To that end, we will be partnering with the ABHMS and our National AB Men's ministry in these disaster relief efforts. In doing so, we can work far more effectively in caring for those whose lives have been impacted by the recent storms.

Thank you for your continued prayers and support as we seek to care for those impacted by the recent hurricanes. Thank you for your contributions to the ABCOPAD Hurricane Disaster Relief Fund. 100% of those dollars will be used to help people in need following the hurricanes.

If you or members of your church family are interested in volunteering to do hurricane disaster relief, please contact me or Denise Veselicky. Let us know when you would be available, and we will try to coordinate your trip. The disaster relief efforts will be on-going for many months / years. Along with Texas and Louisiana, I am sure we will have trips going to Florida and Puerto Rico. Thank you for being such great partners in ministry.

God Bless,
Mark