



RISING FAITH IN MIDST OF STORM

VOLUNTEERS FROM HATTERAS ISLAND CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP HELP RESTORE THEIR COMMUNITY IN THE OUTER BANKS

Doors rattled violently, with 95-mph gusts shrieking like a whistle beside Dave Davidson's ear, as he weathered Hurricane Dorian alone. Minutes earlier, in the storm's eye, everything was sunny and peaceful; but Dorian returned with a vengeance, pushing an eight-foot storm surge. Waves broke just below the house, despite its position on Buxton, NC's highest ridge. As the neighboring town's fire chief, Dave had been preparing for the storm almost non-stop for five days. Now that it was here, he could only sit helplessly as emergency calls poured in on his radio. "During the storm, there's nothing but anxiety," Dave reflected afterward. "All kinds of thoughts go through your head. Through all that, though, I know where God is: He's right there. He's always working—before the storm, in the storm, after the storm. Every step we take, we're in His plan. But the people who don't know God—where is their hope?"

While, thankfully, no lives were lost on the Outer Banks' southernmost islands, Dorian caused immense damage

there. Since the September 6th storm, Dave and others from Hatteras Island Christian Fellowship (HICF), a Calvary Chapel affiliate, are finding ways to share their hope in Christ while helping neighbors in need—especially on hard-hit Ocracoke. "The islands are very resilient," said HICF's pastor, Billy Rutledge. "Everyone here helps each other. Whatever HICF does, we always pray and make a point of saying we're here because of Jesus." Due to Billy's connections as a Coast Guard chaplain, HICF's first 10-person team arrived in Ocracoke by Coast Guard vessel a few days after Dorian, long before ferries

were running. They have returned many times with more volunteers wearing bright red shirts with WHY? on the front. The backs read, BECAUSE OF JESUS.

Sheltered Through the Storm

"It's the worst flooding and the strongest winds I've experienced in the 25 years I have lived here," reported Billy. "I saw pieces of houses floating down the street at record speed." However, HICF's members have also seen God's protection. During the storm, Bill and Joyce Bowman endured the sound of their roof being lifted up and slammed down directly over their beds. Afterwards, they discovered that although their shingles and tarpaper were ripped away, there was no rain damage inside.

The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD is enthroned as King forever. PSALM 29:10, NIV

"Hatteras got beat up, but Ocracoke got slaughtered," Billy declared. Rapidly rising waters left Ocracoke's vehicles and most of its businesses underwater. Many residents had to be airlifted. From the safety of the hotel room they had evacuated to, Mark and Sharon Spies watched an Ocracoke friend's Facebook video of water lapping at the top of her attic steps. Mark's Hatteras carpentry business was completely destroyed. But after seeing Ocracoke's devastation, he put his own needs aside to join HICF's second trip.

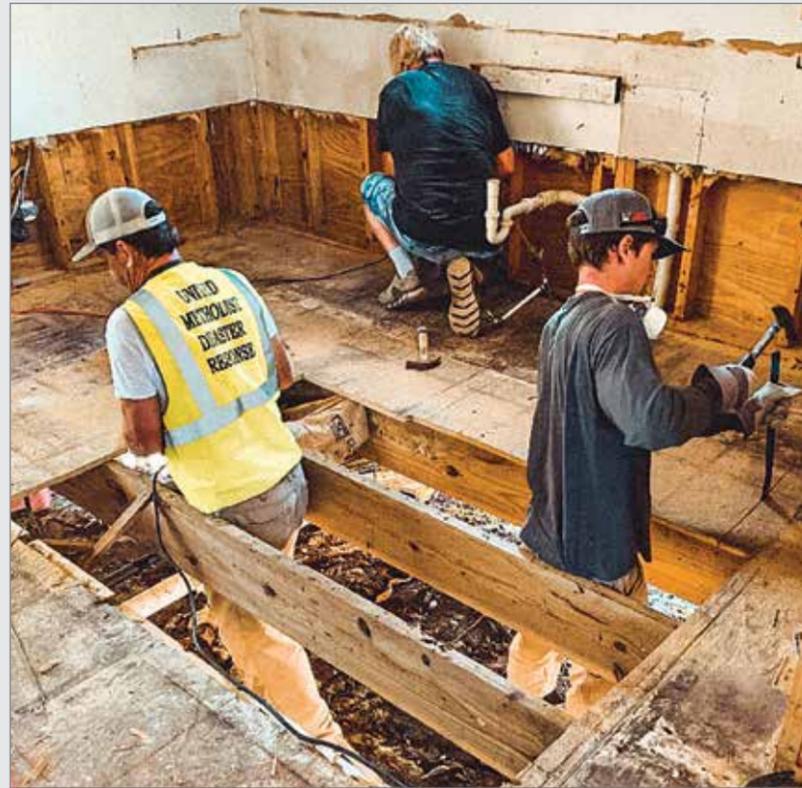
By that trip, Ocracoke was teeming with aid organizations. HICF's team looked for people who had fallen through the cracks. They discovered a young Hispanic



Top left: Cape Hatteras Secondary School is deluged by flooding from Hurricane Dorian.

Bottom: Pastor Billy Rutledge of Hatteras Island Christian Fellowship (left) prays with a Hatteras Village resident.

Story by Carmel Flippen
Photos courtesy of HICF



couple who had not received—or requested—help. Billy commented, “We really want to reach out to the Hispanic community. I think many illegals are afraid to reach out to anything that looks like government assistance. Personally, I stay out of the politics and go on what God says about ministering to the alien in the land.” For HICF’s 120-person family, serving neighbors in Christ’s name is a year-round focus. Hurricane relief is simply the current emphasis. Before the storm, HICF was already

active in outreach to the surfing and Coast Guard communities, and they will continue demonstrating God’s love long after aid organizations have moved on. 🙌

The LORD will give strength to His people; The LORD will bless His people with peace. PSALM 29:11

HICF is requesting dehumidifiers to help dry out homes that sustained water damage.



Top left: Relief worker Woody Willis mucks out a home.

Top center: An HICF team tears out damaged flooring on the hard-hit island of Ocracoke.

Top right: Billy removes debris from inside Rocco’s Pizza in Hatteras.

Bottom left: Frisco Station Fire Chief and HICF member Dave Davidson tarps a damaged roof.

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IN THE EYE OF THE HURRICANE

According to Pastor Billy, viewing news reports of the damage in the Bahamas created pre-storm anxiety. Hatteras Island is a sandbar 30 miles out to sea on North Carolina’s Outer Banks with one highway from which you can see both sides of the island. “Living on a narrow sandbar in the direct path of every East Coast hurricane can be very unsettling when a Category 4 storm is in the Caribbean, heading your way. You scurry about buying supplies and equipment—boarding up windows and making sure your property is secured, placing cars on high ground, and putting valuables in plastic bags. And then you wait. Later you are awakened to the howling wind and your house shaking. And then later the eye of the storm arrives; the sun shines and the wind becomes calm. Within an hour the winds return with a ferocious, violent force that you didn’t experience on the front side of the eye of the hurricane. The waters come rushing in, and within an hour it is higher than you ever could have imagined. The house no longer just shakes and sways—it actually shudders, and you fear that the storm has created a tornado which can completely destroy your home and take lives. You can hear the toilet splashing and the water in the sink trap gurgling as it is sucked out by the intense winds blowing across the vent. If your house is on ground level, you watch the water rise to your porch and seep into your home. Before long it’s splashing into your electrical sockets. The fear of electrocution and fire fills your thoughts as your heart breaks watching your home destroyed; furniture, beds, and clothes are ruined. Then it happens: The water rises to a level outside, pushing the raw sewage in your septic tank back through your toilet and tub. In the darkness of the storm, the smell of sewage spilling into your living space takes away even the relief of breathing. Finally, the worst of the storm passes and everyone exits their homes, moving slowly, taking it all in, wondering how much damage has been done to your property and if your friends and family are okay. Next you look to see if help is coming—or if maybe you are the help. You wade through sewage-infested waters and praise the Lord that your family is unharmed and your home is still standing. Overwhelmed by the avalanche of emotions, you wonder what is next. This is where the mission of serving in the name of Jesus begins.”