

# DISASTER RELIEF VOLUNTEERS *blessed*





**W**e often hear the stories of disaster survivors and the impact a crisis has had on them. We should also consider how disasters impact the volunteers who respond to them, as they are also affected.

In early-to-mid July 2023, Vermont experienced catastrophic flash floods across much of the state. Washouts of numerous roads and bridges resulted in significant property losses. From the aftermath of those historic floods came the following disaster response testimonies.

“This trip reminded me that everyone really is fearfully and wonderfully made by God, and each has a fascinating back story God has written for them,” said Stephen Ritchie of **Maysville Baptist Church** in Buckingham. “I think God used this to show me that I should love my neighbor as myself, not just in deed but internally with genuine Christ-like love and prayer.”

“This has been an awesome week with God revealing Himself through His Word and the common heart amongst the workers from several states,” Joanne Booth of **Redeemer Bible Church** in Spotsylvania Courthouse reflected.

Norm Douglas of **Spotswood Baptist Church**, Fredericksburg, recalls, “I learned to thank God for the disaster because He is using it to soften the

hearts of many hardened Vermonters ... In the little town of Chelsea, VT, the people were amazed at all the yellow shirts around town and that they were all volunteers who had come to work for free for them and their recovery. God is at work!”

The flood was especially personal to Monica Tillas, a **Thomas Road Baptist Church** member in Lynchburg. She had formerly lived in Barre (pronounced “berry”), the very town where the Southern Baptist Convention of Virginia Disaster Response (SBCV DR) team was serving. She said, “We had one house we worked on all week and were able to build a relationship with this dear family whose higher power is Mother Nature. They heard plenty about Jesus, our higher power. There was a great movement of God happening here.”

“I find God is so close with us in hard times,” said Carol Irving of **Southside Baptist Church** in Suffolk. “One morning when I woke up with a sinus headache. I had gotten ice in a baggie and asked my crew for a bit more time lying down. I felt a hand on my shoulder. I looked around but was alone. I thanked my crew for praying for me, only to feel that check in my spirit! I had been touched by the hand of God and had not thanked Him—Praise God! Servitude is a wonderful gift, but it all belongs to God!”

We tend to measure the fruit of relief ministry from the impact on those being served. But let’s not forget that when we serve others, God ministers to us at the same time. He is great to be praised! ■

*Consider*

**12**

state conventions served in VT, giving

**24,759**

hours, making

**1,376**

significant contacts, and sharing the gospel

**214**

times, and seeing

**92**

people make a profession of faith.