



Finding Comfort and Hope After *Helene*

Seven nationally recognized trails pass through Damascus, VA, making it a popular recreational destination for tens of thousands of visitors annually. Unfortunately, Hurricane Helene, which traveled 500 miles from the coast of Florida to the mountains of Southwest Virginia, left many beloved small mountain towns unrecognizable. The storm's fierce winds downed trees, while deadly floods washed out everything in their path.

In Damascus, bikers typically shuttle up Whitetop Mountain to ride the Virginia Creeper Trail, winding down through Green Cove and Taylors Valley, before returning to town for lunch. But on this particular September day, the floodwaters were no longer part of a scenic ride—they were rushing down the mountain, washing away everything in their path. Many residents found their homes filled with mud and debris or completely washed away.

Recreation was no longer the focus in Damascus. People were coming to help—to rescue, relieve, and meet the immediate needs of those affected. Individuals and groups, both religious and non-religious, mobilized to support the

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community. Among our SBC of Virginia family, the response was no different. We saw a surge in Disaster Relief (DR) training sign-ups, with record numbers of people eager to serve. Pastor Chris Myers, his wife Kathy, and four members from **Beacon Light Missionary Baptist Church** in St. Charles, Virginia, were among those who received online DR training.

The mission of Disaster Relief is to come alongside local churches to advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ while meeting the needs of our neighbors. At the SBC of Virginia, our goal isn't just to provide physical aid, but to equip, resource, and mobilize churches to share the Gospel as we meet physical and spiritual needs. Disaster Relief is challenging, often dirty work with long hours. Yet, it provides a unique opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus, sharing His Good News with those who are hurting.

While many SBCV members deployed to southwest Virginia, for Chris and Kathy, it was an answer to prayer. “We’ve been praying for our church to no longer be the mission, but to become the missionary,” Kathy shared. They served on a two-week deployment based at **Fellowship Baptist Church** just outside Damascus. While the Beacon Light team worked on-site, they had the opportunity to engage in Gospel conversations, which led to a mother and her son professing Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

The aftermath of Hurricane Helene is still evident, and the need is still great. But we know that the power of Christ is greater, and the call to serve is still urgent. As Jesus said in Luke 10:2, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (NKJV).

Helene has left plenty of opportu-

nities for us to be the hands and feet of Jesus. The question is, how is the Lord calling you and your church to respond? Are you ready to step in when a disaster strikes? Or perhaps God is calling you to be part of the rebuilding efforts—bringing help and hope long after the immediate crisis has passed? ■

