

## Hurricane Relief at Countryside Wesleyan - Alva, Florida

Poured-Out, a relief ministry affiliated with The Wesleyan Church set up their equipment at Countryside Wesleyan Church on Rt. 80, Alva, FL within a week after hurricane Irma hit Southwest Florida. They coordinated a variety of resources to assist people affected by the storm. The following report is from Countryside pastor, Kevin Barnsdale.

Saturday, September 30, 2017 was food distribution day at Countryside Wesleyan in Alva, Florida. We were ministering to our neighbors impacted by hurricane Irma.

As we begin our sharing of food and supplies, a fellow pastor commented, "This is how the body of Christ should work"! Many pastors and members from Florida Wesleyan Churches had gathered to assist in distribution.

Pastor Rick Stevens from Diplomat in Cape Coral, Dr. Tom Arminger, pastor from Villas, Pastor Obed Morales from Alva's Iglesia Wesleyana La Cosecha, Pastor Kevin Barnsdale from Countryside in Alva, Pastor Mark Benedict and his wife Ronda, and people from Peace River were present. Many other



volunteers from the state also came to assist in the relief effort. Together these pastors, their people, and volunteers shared Jesus' love and compassion under the hot Florida sun. They ministered to hundreds of people throughout the day!

The base of operations at Countryside Church became a beehive of service. A group of Wesleyan Men from Pinellas Park Wesleyan Church, working alongside Steve Adams and volunteers from Poured-Out, cleared fallen timber and brush, and put tarps on a nearby families' storm damaged homes.

At the relief-supply distribution center, people ministered through the generous donations from World Hope, Bagley Swamp Wesleyan, and area Wesleyan Churches. People received water, cleaning supplies, food, diapers, baby food, and many other items through the generosity of others. In addition to physical needs, spiritual needs were met!

Pastor Benedict had embraced the role of assisting visitors in carrying supplies to their vehicles. He also helped to carry their burdens to the Lord as he prayed with them and humbly brought them before God! Pastor Morales and his family were praying with Spanish visitors. Many others were praying as the relief effort went on. The prayers spanned cultures as voices lifted to heaven in English and Spanish. It was amazing to hear the prayers throughout the day and to view people in groups praying a prayer of thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ!



The results of the day are far reaching. Local neighbors dropped by Countryside in the days leading up to the distribution and volunteered to help. One family of seven helped us sort the donations and prepare the facility. Children from nearby Alva Elementary and Middle School jumped in like young adults and

worked tirelessly at helping families seeking relief.

The people who stopped by were so grateful for the prayers and supplies. They were overwhelmed by the love of God's people, especially when they learned the supplies had come from people scattered around the country!

Later in the day, we learned that another truck was on the way from Michigan. World Hope had arranged the transport from Christ Wesleyan Church in Milton, PA. by the Brinks Truck Line of Holland Michigan. This meant more supplies for extended distribution to communities.

The truck arrived at approximately 4:15. A young mother had received some supplies from the first distribution and was leaving. She was searching for diapers, which had been one of the first items depleted. She was in her car, backing out when Steve Adams from Poured-Out unloaded the truck's first pallet. He shouted, "Hurry and let the young mother know there are diapers on this load!" Tears streamed down her face as she told us she had been unemployed for two months and now was dealing with the effects of the hurricane. God was on time, in time, at the time! Thirty seconds later would have had a completely different outcome! The change of her countenance was like a glimpse of heaven because of sacrificial Wesleyans from over a thousand miles away!

At Countryside we have been saying we have a new normal and that we are not sure we want to go back to the old normal. God is moving in our midst! This storm has resulted in a demonstration of God's love we never witnessed before!

One more thing, the neighbor family of seven that jumped in and helped was in service at Countryside the next day. Further, they have continued to help this week. The dad went out to work sites with Poured-Out while the mom continues to help us in sorting and preparing donations for another distribution day. Thank you all for helping us know the body of Christ stands strong in the storm!