

# Sharing Love & the Gospel in Texas After Hurricane Ike

Christina pulled up to her mobile home. A group of men was clearing debris from her elderly neighbor's yard. Just days ago, Hurricane Ike had left her community near Houston, TX, with no power and plenty of uprooted trees and damaged roofs.

Story by Christmas M. Beeler  
Photos by Calvary Houston and Committed Relief unless otherwise noted



Residents receive ice at CC Houston, TX.



photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Paul Flitpse

photo by James Lee Harper Jr.



Staff Sgt. Lopaka Mounts receives a hug from a resident during search and rescue operations after Hurricane Ike.

An Air Force Reserve pararescueman from the 920th Rescue Wing scans the ravaged Texas landscape for signs of life in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike. Deployed from Patrick Air Force Base, FL, the pararescuemen, along with aircrews, two HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters, and two HC-130P/N refueling aircraft, rescued 17 people from the small town of Nederland, TX, on September 13. Hurricane Ike hit the

Texas coast just after 2 a.m. that day.

One of the men approached her, introduced himself as Rene Coppock—a believer from CC Houston in Friendswood, TX—and asked if she needed any help. “My home hasn’t really been damaged—just a partition that fell over,” she said, gesturing toward her yard. As some of the men secured the partition, Rene asked if he could pray for her.

“I’m very blessed. Just pray for those who were more affected than I was,” Christina said.

“That’s a great heart you have—very unselfish. How long have you been saved?” Rene asked. He knew that some people in the Bible Belt refer to themselves as Christians but do not have a personal relationship with Christ.

“All my life,” she said.

“Well, Christina, that’s not quite right,” Rene said gently. “The Bible says that we must be born again. There must be a time in our lives when we confess to God that we are sinners, ask His forgiveness, and follow His Son Jesus Christ.” He pulled out his Bible and showed her some verses.

***That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.***

Romans 10:9

He said that God loved her and wanted to have a personal relationship with her. Tears streamed down her face as she recounted how hard things had been for her lately and how good it was to hear that God cares. Rene asked if she would like to pray to receive Christ, and she did. Her 11-year-old daughter came out into the yard, listening. Rene encouraged Christina to read the Bible, share her new faith with her daughter, and get plugged into a fellowship. She thanked him and the men for coming.

## Whiskers and Deborah

With a long moustache and biker attire, Whiskers and his girlfriend Deborah waited in anticipation for the relief team from Calvary Chapel to arrive. He had often been invited to church by Rene, who also rode with him in the Gypsy Motorcycle Club. Whiskers argued that bikers weren’t usually welcome in church, but Rene had insisted that they would be; still, Whiskers had never come. Finally, after Hurricane Ike, Whiskers agreed to let believers help repair his home. Like many other buildings



photo by Liz Roll/FEMA

*“The Bible says that we must be born again. There must be a time in our lives when we confess to God that we are sinners, ask His forgiveness, and follow His Son Jesus Christ.”*

Rene Coppock

A week after the storm, these residents of Sabine Pass, TX, were living in a tent on their property because their home was left uninhabitable by Hurricane Ike.

message as he taught. After church, she told Rene, “Wow, you guys actually tell God that you love Him.” She had always assumed that God was distant and unapproachable. She returned week after week, bringing another lady from the motorcycle club with her—Bobby Jo, Rene’s neighbor whom he had also invited to church several times before. Bobby Jo’s teenage daughter joined the youth group, and they both got involved in the disaster relief and started attending church on Sunday mornings. “That’s a big deal in the biker community,” Rene explained, “because Sunday is ‘ride day.’”

**Quick to Help**

Crediting the Lord for His divine guidance, a team of Calvary relief workers was on the scene near Houston, TX, providing food and ministering alongside the local Calvary Chapel church less than 24 hours after Hurricane Ike pummeled the Gulf Coast in mid-September.

families. Pastor Ron Hindt of CC Houston said, “Our parking lot became a spiritual triage. People were coming to get ice, water, and meals. We were ministering to people in line; we had a prayer booth set up. It was absolutely awesome. . . . God is so good.” Ron, who has been ministering in the Houston area for more than 15 years, said, “In the wake of the devastation, people’s hearts are soft toward God; they are looking for answers. And we have the answer—Christ.”

Many visitors have come to CC Houston after receiving help. The day after Ike, Sunday, Pastor Ron taught outside in the parking lot while another pastor held a megaphone for him. Describing the first indoor service after their electricity was restored, Ron said, “I was sharing that there will always be storms in our lives, and it’s only through a relationship with Christ—Who becomes our Rock of refuge—that we can have stability. Everything else will wash away.” He urged people to turn to Christ while they were aware of their need for Him.

“I was amazed they came so quickly,” said Charlie Quiroz, assistant pastor at CC Houston. “I didn’t realize some of them had just come from Louisiana, where they had been helping with Gustav.” The relief team included Committed Relief, a disaster relief ministry based out of CC La Habra, CA; and Calvary Relief, a ministry out of CC Chino Hills, CA. A few days later Samaritan’s Purse, a disaster ministry headed by Franklin Graham, arrived with 18-wheelers full of chain saws, tarps, and portable shower facilities. Parakletos, a ministry of CC Costa Mesa, CA, had been in Baton Rouge, LA, and also assisted in Houston during the first week. Nearly 200 believers from CC Houston joined in to meet the needs of the hurricane-ravaged community.

***Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.***  
Isaiah 55:6

As soon as he gave the invitation to receive Christ, several people left their seats to come to the altar to pray, some with tears.

**Parts of the Same Body**  
“It was amazing how God brought us together—these four different groups who had never worked together—and we all fit like a glove,” Charlie said.

***The effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.***  
Ephesians 4:16b

The relief workers helped repair nearly 450 homes, fed 1,400 people two hot meals per day for at least two weeks, and distributed tons of water, ice, and supplies to area



The morning after Hurricane Ike pummeled the Gulf Coast, Pastor Ron Hindt held Sunday service outside CC Houston. Power was out for two weeks.



Ron teaches as worship pastor Dan Loaiza holds the megaphone.

in San Leon, a small community southeast of Houston, Whiskers’ home and electrician business had been badly damaged.

Trucks pulled up. More than 20 men and women unloaded and began cheerfully cleaning up the yard, removing debris, and shoveling mud out of his home. They greeted him warmly; some had come all the way from California. He and Deborah watched in amazement. Finally, after several hours, the workers had done all they could for the day. A team member asked if he could pray for the couple. Whiskers nodded. As the believers started to pray, Whiskers and Deborah couldn’t hold back the tears. They thanked the team over and over.

The next Wednesday evening, Deborah came to church, agreeing verbally with the pastor’s



**Committed Relief headed up the feeding ministry, serving two hot meals per day to residents and the National Guard.**



**A volunteer from CC Houston, right, prays for a local resident at the disaster camp on the church grounds.**



**CC Houston believers prayed with hurricane survivors in Friendswood, TX.**

Experienced in disaster ministry, both Dave Bird of Calvary Relief and Scott Crawford of Committed Relief immediately went to work. First, Committed Relief volunteers began serving free meals at the camp. “We were without power for two weeks after the storm,” said Charlie. “People were so grateful. At first, they thought we were with the government, but when they realized we were from the church, they were amazed.” While people waited in the food lines, Calvary Relief workers handed them forms to request help cleaning up damaged homes, removing debris, and covering roofs with tarps. “People would ask, ‘How much?’ and we’d say, ‘It’s free.’ ... ‘Free?’ That spread like wildfire. Within three days, we had 300 work orders,” he said.

Believers from several Calvary Chapels all over the country came to help—from as far away as California, Denver, Arizona, Florida, and other parts of Texas: Dallas, Austin, and Corpus Christi. The residents were visibly touched. Charlie said, “Some came back and said, ‘You tarped my house yesterday, so how can I help?’”

### **Provision and Friendship**

God provided more supplies as needed. Pastor Ron recounted, “We needed 30 loaves of bread for the meal one day. ... I went to the local grocery store and asked to talk to the manager. He gave us 120 loaves. ... And now I have a relationship with him. There are so many stories like that.”

Charlie added, “We had restaurant owners coming to us saying they had freezers full of food that would go to waste, so they offered it to us. ... The Lord just kept providing.”

The church now has a stronger relationship with city leaders. Ron said, “The mayor heard what we were doing, and he was here on our property every day. All the city council members came and thanked us. It gave us favor with our city officials. Maybe in the future we can team up and do more things in our community.”

At the mayor’s request, the CC relief workers fed National Guard members who had come to work in the area. “We fed them for a week—three meals a day,” Charlie said. The city donated fuel to run the camp’s generators. “When you get a group of believers together who really just want to serve—no one vying for position, but using their different gifts together—it’s very

powerful. I think the community saw the love of Christ.”

***“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”***

John 13:35

The relief work in Houston continued into late October, Ron said, inviting other CCs to come help. Committed Relief and Calvary Relief moved their headquarters to San Leon, where they assisted dozens of people and led several to Christ, according to updates. “The devastation in this small, poor, fishing community is staggering. Every house still standing has suffered damage,” said Dave Bird. He asked for prayer and safety for volunteers and a spiritual revival in San Leon. After Committed Relief and Calvary Relief pulled out of San Leon in mid-October, more volunteers from the ACTs (Action Crisis Teams) disaster team of CC Dallas, TX, arrived and continued ministering to area residents. 🙏

*Those who would like to volunteer may contact:*

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