

Charisma effort aids New Yorkers

Funds from readers are being channeled to ministries that are helping families in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Chinatown

In an effort to aid those affected by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Charisma gave an appeal in the November edition for readers to donate to a special "September 11 Fund." Charisma founder and publisher Stephen Strang encouraged readers to participate with him and his staff in providing comfort to the families of victims by giving to Christian Life Missions, the nonprofit ministry arm of Strang Communications.

In the first two months after the fund was established, Christian Life Missions received more than \$43,000. All gifts designated for the fund will be divided equally among three ministries that are providing assistance in the wake of the attacks: Convoy of Hope, Bill Wilson's Metro Ministries and Metro Relief Fund—a Metro Ministries companion ministry founded by Chris Blake.

Convoy of Hope, affiliated with the Assemblies of God, is working on location at Ground Zero in New York. "We have made a commitment to work in lower Manhattan for one year," said executive vice president Steve Donaldson. "According to USA Today, the area has lost 250,000 jobs. The churches want to supply items such as food, clothing and medical supplies to [displaced] individuals, and Convoy of Hope will resource them."

Metro Ministries founder Bill Wilson says his organization is reaching out to the residents of Chinatown, an area adjacent to the World Trade Center that was closed off after the

attacks. Many of the residents lost their jobs, and some are still without electricity and running water in their homes, Wilson said.

Metro Ministries is helping to relocate some residents to San Francisco, as well as providing food and paying rent for the needy who opt to stay in New York. When necessary, the group is also paying for kids to go to school and assisting the unemployed in finding new jobs.

Wilson said handling the myriad of physical needs created by the terrorist attacks is a big challenge. "This is a new thing for us," he said. "We've never dealt with anything like this before."

Blake's Metro Relief Fund focuses on needy children in Brooklyn, just across the East River from the disaster site. In the days immediately following the attack, Blake was "doing a lot of work at Ground Zero and in hospitals in Manhattan," he says—everything from trying to locate missing parents to organizing funerals to arranging child-care.

"Now it's just picking up the pieces—helping the kids figure out what the rest of their lives are going to look like," Blake said. Some of the children who lost a parent in the attacks are now homeless and are turning to gangs. Blake is working to rescue them through grief counseling and other forms of aid.

All three ministries are dedicated to addressing the immediate needs of the people who were most heavily affected by the attacks, but they are allowing God to use them to spread the gospel at the same time.

“The whole area is ripe for the gospel,” Donaldson said, “and we are working on strategies to reach people.”

—Maureen D. Eha

Tax-deductible contributions to the September 11 Fund can be made payable to Christian Life Missions, marked “Sept. 11 Fund,” and sent to P.O. Box 952248, Lake Mary, Florida, 32795-2248.