

What This Megachurch Pastor Did When Fire Eviscerated His Community

The brevity of life and uncertainty that we face as human beings was at the forefront of my thoughts last week when my wife texted me, saying she was evacuating Anaheim Hills Church. One week, later the fire in my neighborhood, known as the Canyon 2 Fire, had consumed 9,000 acres and destroyed 25 structures. The Santa Rosa Fire has consumed 36,000 acres, destroyed nearly 6,000 structures and caused a reported 34 deaths.

I knew in my heart that we had to do something for Santa Rosa; it was time for action. Our fire, by comparison, was minor to that which struck Santa Rosa. A few days after evacuating, we were back in our home, and our church were unharmed. But we saw many people, including our own church members, who came home to nothing but ashes. The idea came to launch a campaign called "Fire to Fire" that would collect clothes, gift cards and survival backpacks and take them to our sister city. In addition, we launched the California Wildfire Fund for people outside our community and state to make monetary contributions to victims.

We also partnered with Danny and Erin Williamson, a family in our community who lost their home, to collect items that to be sent to Santa Rosa. We put this fund together in a matter of days, and so far, the outpouring of love from the community has been amazing.

Earlier in the week, we flew to Sacramento and then drove to Santa Rosa to discover how we could best partner with those who had lost everything.

As we drove into Coffey Park, a community in Santa Rosa

severely damaged by the fire, I was ill-prepared for what I saw. It looked like a war zone. The first thing I spotted was a U.S. Army Hummer and a military checkpoint complete with barricades. The soldiers took their job seriously and were determined to prevent any unauthorized activity or entrance. The air was filled with the sound of military helicopters that circled the area and sent a clear signal that this is a state of emergency.

Many of the homeowners had constructed makeshift signs that stated, "We're home, and we're armed! Any non-residents seen past this point are considered a threat."

My immediate visceral response was that this was different from anything I had previously experienced in America.

Fear, loss and the unknown were now the order of the day. Everything normal had been stripped away. Experts tell us that episodic or experience and picture-based memories are the most persistent in our long-term memory, therefore the hardest to overcome.

I would agree with that statement, but beyond donations and supplies, there is another way we can help bring about deep-level healing and help victims create fresh "pictures" and memories. This can come in a variety of ways; your caring face handing someone a gift card, offering a hug, prayer or labor digging through the ashes of a home, help to create hope and paint new pictures that will be cherished for many years.

While there is a lot of pain and sadness, the good news is we have each other and an amazing, loving God who will provide for us every step of the way as we rebuild. Even in all of the pain, his love and goodness shine through the people that help create these new, positive memories.

For more information or to donate to the California Wildfire Fund, visit . {eoa}

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His new book, *One Nation Without Law*, is available now through major online retailers and bookstores nationwide. In *One Nation without Law*, Phil warns against the emerging trend of lawlessness in America and around the world. He looks at the history of unruliness going back to slavery, the treatment of Native Americans, the protest movement of the 1960s and more recent incidents including police-involved shootings and terrorist attacks. He links this research to interpret the uprising of unruliness and the role it plays in our nation now as well as the end times. For more information, visit [.](#)