

Bethel, Redding, Provides Wildfire Relief in Utah, California

When it feels as though all hope is lost, Bethel Global Response (BRG) shows up representing Jesus. Whether to Redding, California, residents or those living in other states and countries, the disaster relief ministers can be found amid some of life's most challenging situations—wildfires, hurricanes and more.

“In times of disaster, people need both practical and emotional support,” said Carl Ladd, BRG director. “As Christians, we believe that God’s love is demonstrated through action.”

As disasters occur, BRG deploys teams to disaster sites to work with the people most impacted. Earlier this week, teams were on the ground in Utah helping residents sift through the ashes of their homes to find meaningful remains, like a wedding ring, medal or badge.

In partnership with the homeowners, team members put on protective gear and head into the ash. These “ash outs” are a tangible, practical way to come alongside families.

In addition to the sifting, team members trained volunteers from 13 local churches on how to coordinate and conduct their own ash outs.

A Tangible Touch

BGR was formed in 2012 as an outreach of Bethel Church, Redding, a nondenominational charismatic megachurch with about 11,500 attendees. More than 1,000 volunteers respond, revive and restore communities that have been devastated by disaster.

They provide lifesaving physical assistance with spiritual and emotional care.

BRG consists of a collection of administrators, engineers, medical personnel, counselors, teachers and construction workers. They provide emergency food, clothing, shelter, materials, equipment and financial resources.

Since its inception, BRG has provided relief in over 25 natural disasters around the world, touching the lives of more than 50,000 people.

Moving Quickly

The current fire season in California has included 5 of the 6 largest fires in the state's history. The Zogg Fire—active for three days—is burning west of Redding in Shasta County. It has scorched 55,303 acres and is now 26% contained. In Sonoma and Napa counties; the Glass Fire has consumed 51,266 acres and remains less than 2% contained.

"The fire continues to burn in grass, oak woodland, chaparral and mixed timber," a Cal Fire Incident update said Wednesday. "Hot and dry conditions are forecasted again for the evening with a northwest wind developing across the area."

Today, BGR is gathering information on families who have lost their homes to prepare to offer free ash-out services. The group works in partnership with other ministries and organizations such as Hands of Hope, a Joyce Meyer ministry; Operation Blessing; and a group known as VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters).

In addition to the area fires, the partners are involved in providing relief needed during the COVID-19 crisis. Bethel Church has been acting as a packaging center for food distribution. It also provides volunteer management for the program, which unites the Salvation Army, Dignity Health Connected Living, Bethel partner Convoy of Hope and others.

Every weekday, volunteer drivers gather at Bethel to receive food packs and delivery route assignments. They drop off all the packs at people's homes via contactless delivery.

As disasters continue to arise, BGR will continue to answer the call of help those in need. {eo}