

Billy Graham Relief Team Chaplains Prepare to Minister in Response to Hurricane Dorian

Millions across the Southeast are keeping a watchful eye on Hurricane Dorian after the storm made landfall in the Bahamas as a Category 5 on Sunday afternoon, killing at least five people. While Dorian has come to nearly a standstill over the Grand Bahama Island, life-threatening storm surges are possible as the storm slowly moves toward Florida's east coast, where a hurricane warning has been issued.

Forecasts now say Hurricane Dorian may not directly hit the U.S. coast, but states of emergency are still in effect for all of Florida, North Carolina and South Carolina, along with a dozen counties in Georgia. Mandatory evacuations are underway in numerous areas of Florida, Georgia and South Carolina.

"Pray for residents in the Bahamas as the flooding and high winds continue—and pray for all those in Dorian's path."
—Franklin Graham

"As Hurricane Dorian continues to bash the Bahamas on its path north toward the U.S., reports say the devastation there is unprecedented with thousands of homes damaged or destroyed," said Franklin Graham, president of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Samaritan's Purse.

"Pray for residents in the Bahamas as the flooding and high winds continue—and pray for all those in Dorian's path."

Ready to respond with emotional and spiritual care, the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team (RRT) is monitoring the massive storm, reaching out to contacts from previous deployments in

Florida. Chaplains have also been in touch with church leaders in the Bahama island of Nassau.

Dorian first hit the U.S. Virgin Islands as a Category 1 hurricane Wednesday. The following day, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis declared a state of emergency for all of its 67 counties due to the encroaching storm. By Tuesday morning, the storm was about 105 miles from the Florida coast and dropped to a Category 3 storm with 130 mph winds.

Consequently, the RRT has notified its chaplain coordinators in Florida to standby, and has prepared Mobile Ministry Centers to travel from their headquarters at the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) in Charlotte, North Carolina, to partner with local churches in affected cities. During deployments, these vehicles serve as a safe haven for the community, where chaplains can offer a ministry of presence. For the past two years, they've deployed these vehicles and crisis-trained chaplains to Florida, caring for residents facing the aftermath of hurricanes Irma and Michael.

Steve Rhoads, BGEA vice president of church ministry, recognizes that the love and compassion of God can be displayed through the body of Christ in the event of a hurricane or disaster. His team is building partnerships with Florida churches for the upcoming Decision America Tour, a series of one-day evangelistic events led by Franklin Graham that will span from Panama City Beach to the Key West in January 2020.

"The truth is, wherever the storm hits, the ministry will respond to encourage the people of Florida," Rhoads said. "I'm praying for life to be protected."

Please keep all those in the path of Dorian in your prayers.

Let God be your refuge in the storm. Start a relationship with Him today. {eoa}

