

Churches Are a Beacon of Hope in Helene's Aftermath as Remote Regions of NC Report Little Gov't Aid

Communities across the Southeast are working to recover from the devastation left by Hurricane Helene. Churches and faith-based organizations are stepping in to meet critical needs beyond food and water, offering hope and restoration to those affected.

In the small mountain town of Swannanoa, North Carolina, volunteers from across the country have gathered to assist with recovery efforts. One of the hardest-hit areas, Swannanoa's residents are relying on their faith as they salvage what remains of their homes and livelihoods.

"That river is usually a nice little river, beautiful. It turned into a massive 27-30 feet above flood stage – places where nobody had ever seen it," said Jeff Dowdy, Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church of Swannanoa.

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Dowdy's church was spared significant damage, allowing it to serve as a beacon of hope for the community. The church has become a distribution site, receiving so many supplies that they're now sending them to those with fewer resources. Still, the destruction around Swannanoa is staggering. Utility poles have snapped in half, roads and railroads are washed out, and concrete slabs are all that remain of some homes.

"We were able to make it through as a church, so we feel that God has spared us so that we can be a beacon of hope in this

community,” Dowdy added.

Further north in Asheville, the Asheville Dream Center has set up operations outside Revel Church, organizing semi-truck loads of donated goods. They’re distributing water, food, and other supplies throughout the region. Founder Michelle Coleman says the outpouring of donations has been overwhelming.

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“We’ve been trying to keep track, but the need is so great, we’re just sending it out,” Coleman said.

Coleman noted that while there have been reports of government aid, they have yet to see it in the area. However, the church and its volunteers have refused to wait, creating a grassroots network of support.

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