

Could Corporate Prayer Have Rescued Tampa Bay Area From Mass Devastation?

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Hurricane Ian was projected on Sunday, Sept. 25 to hit Tampa, Florida as a Category 5, prompting hundreds of thousands of people in the Tampa Bay area to be evacuated and millions of more residents to prepare, pack up and pray.

The threat of such a massive hurricane to make landfall in the Tampa Bay area was frightening because it is an area that is highly vulnerable to storm surge, due to the geographical layout. That large of an excess of water having nowhere to go would perilously hit its beaches and roll thunderously across the area.

The national weather service, as reported by The Weather Channel, was reporting on that day that the track of Hurricane Ian was headed straight for Tampa. Residents faced the options to either escape or hunker down to ride out the storm. Mandatory evacuations were accelerated.

On that Sunday, Christian ministers led corporate prayer in churches across the Tampa Bay area. Among them was Glenn Davis, Senior Pastor of Countryside Christian Church, a fountainhead church based in Clearwater, prophetically praying in front of the church's thousands of congregants that the storm would not make landfall in Tampa. This was a similar prayer echoed in churches across Clearwater, St Petersburg, Tampa and surrounding towns.

By the next day, Tampa-based meteorologists started to report on local TV that the hurricane had shifted slightly and would hit Sarasota, which is south of Tampa, but there was still

serious concern about storm surge spinning out into Tampa Bay. The shift eased tensions in the population, but only modestly. Uncertainty still prevailed in Tampa.

However, by Tuesday, Sept. 27, a local weatherman named Denis Phillips, the chief meteorologist at the local ABC affiliate and a local legend in weather in the Tampa Bay region, was reporting in blatant amazement that Hurricane Ian had taken a surprising and dramatic right turn and was heading to the Ft Myers/Naples area.

Within a matter of hours, both national meteorologists and local meteorologists ceased from talking about the hurricane making a direct hit on Tampa. Instead, Tampa was going to get the outer edges of the storm. All attention shifted to Ft Myers.

The forecasts had been wrong for days, for the most part, resulting in a Category 4 hurricane making landfall in a part of Florida that had only been given hours of notice that it would be hit with wind speed of 155 mph as well as storm surge of historic levels.

Prayers of the believers in Tampa Bay shifted, too, to the people in southwest Florida. Ft Myers took the full brunt of Hurricane Ian. Devastation ensued, with thousands of people being displaced, losing their homes either permanently or temporarily.

Wind speeds of 50 mph to 70 mph hours were seen in Tampa Bay at the peak of the storm hitting Florida, but nowhere near the level that had been expected less than 72 hours earlier. Damage was relegated more to some fallen trees, debris, broken fences and certain areas of flooding. But the prevailing feeling among residents was that Tampa Bay had, in a sense, dodged a bullet.

Local churches in Tampa Bay, including Countryside Christian Church, which recently expanded to South Tampa, mobilized

rapidly to provide support for the people hit hardest in southwest Florida. Tampa Bay went from being the prime target for the enormous storm to being a blessing to others in Florida in the aftermath of the one of the biggest hurricanes in Florida's history. {eo}

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