

From Ruins to Revival: The Remarkable Comeback of Lighthouse Church

Five years after Hurricane Michael ravaged Florida's Panhandle, Lighthouse Church in Panama City stands as a testament to perseverance. Lead Pastor Cole Bailey reflects on those challenging days with gratitude for CBN's Operation Blessing, praising it as a powerful, life-changing force for good.

Scars from Hurricane Michael are still visible in Panama City Beach. Where the former Lighthouse Church building once stood, now there's just a mere concrete slab that once supported a thriving congregation.

"When you're in Florida, a Category 3 hurricane might not worry you – but when it escalated to a five, we knew it was serious and we evacuated," said Pastor Bailey.

The first Category 5 storm to strike Florida's Panhandle, Michael became the most powerful hurricane to make landfall in the U.S. It claimed 59 lives and caused an estimated \$25 billion in damage.

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After 24 years of serving this community, Lighthouse Church lost its entire physical site to Hurricane Michael except for the ground it once stood on. The church's foundation in faith, however, remained unshaken.

Pastor Cole Bailey, an Air Force veteran, brought his military experience to bear when Hurricane Michael devastated Panama City Beach. As pastor of Lighthouse Church, his leadership was

instrumental in organizing the community and coordinating relief efforts. He vividly recounted the pivotal moment when a helicopter from CBN's Operation Blessing landed at their ravaged property, bringing much-needed aid and volunteers to help restore hope and order.

Volunteers brought chainsaws, hot meals, and a spirit of perseverance. Pastor Bailey saw it as the power of faith in action.

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"They came in with resources that blew our minds," said Bailey. "They came in with hundreds of volunteers just at one location. We were able to serve 38,000 hot meals after that storm. Resources are coming in, equipment is coming."

Pastor Bailey mentioned the church is experiencing significant growth, with multiple services each week, and they currently do not have enough chairs to accommodate everyone attending. He highlighted that they have 1,300 people participating in small groups weekly.

"But this church right here is so thankful for when Operation Blessing landed on our property and helped us through the hardest time of our lives," said Pastor Bailey. "I cannot express how life-changing and how powerful that ministry is."

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