

Why This Miami Megachurch Was Forced to Shutter Its Doors

His hands are tied. He cannot help the community he's served for decades.

Kevin Fischer of Miami Vineyard Community Church was forced to evacuate and shutter his megachurch as Irma pulsed toward his city.

"I want to go back as soon as I possibly can," Fischer, now evacuated to Orlando, tells Charisma News. The church holds four services during the weekends, all of which have been canceled ahead of the storm.

"The church is shut down," Fischer says. "We've covered all electronics best we can, and we pulled a big lever and cut all the power so electrical surges can't surge and can't get us. The place is shut down. After the storm, we will be a shelter. We've registered with the city of Miami to be a shelter for victims, to be a place to stay. I'm not sure if we'll be utilized in that way, but we're more than happy to assist."

This isn't Fischer's first hurricane. He and his family weathered Andrew in 1992 and saw significant damage to their home.

But Irma is different.

"We evacuated because this is a historic storm," Fischer says. "No storm on record has maintained this level of intensity for this length of time. We're in a mandatory evacuation area, so we're supposed to [evacuate]."

MVCC will partner with Convoy of Hope after the storm and may be a distribution site as needed.

Fischer's church isn't the only one canceling services come

Sunday.

In Florida, which Charisma Media calls home, dozens of congregations have asked that people stay home on Sunday for their own protection. Others will have times of prayer. Here's what some of them are saying:

Life Church, Miami

Our Wednesday night Bible study and Sunday service are both cancelled in preparation for Hurricane Irma.

We ask you to pray, prepare and stay safe. Contact us if you need anything, and stay connected by turning on your push notifications for the Life Church Miami app.

Northland, A Church Distributed, Longwood

Given the latest track of Hurricane Irma, we have decided to cancel all of our regularly scheduled worship services this weekend (Saturday evening, Sunday morning and Monday night). We have also canceled all classes and activities on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, except for a funeral on Saturday at 11:30 a.m. We care deeply for you and value your safety as well as the safety of our staff and volunteers.

In lieu of our regularly scheduled worship services, we will hold a worship and prayer service on Saturday morning from 10 a.m. – 11 a.m. led by Pastor Vernon, Pastor Joel, Pastor Matt, Kailey and Ryan. We want to worship God for who He is and what He has done, pray for our community and pray for all the people impacted by this storm. This is a family-type service, so come one, come all, as there will be no childcare available. We will rebroadcast this prayer service online on Saturday at 5 p.m., Sunday at 9 a.m., Sunday at 11 a.m. and Monday at 7 p.m.

Christ Fellowship, Miami

Effective immediately, all church-wide activities are cancelled, including all CF Kids and student groups, small groups and any meetings. The church office will be closed. We want to give you extra time to prepare for this upcoming storm. We continue to pray for the safety of our city and our church family.

St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Lake Mary

The church campus, preschool and MaxLife are closed today through Monday, Sept. 11. Seminole County is expected to feel the brunt of Hurricane Irma this Sunday.

Note: The ordination of Tom Phillips and Rob Strenth will proceed as scheduled Saturday, Sept. 9, at 11:00 a.m. at the Cathedral in downtown Orlando. Those planning to carpool are still meeting at St. Peter's at 9:45 a.m.

We pray for our parishioners and community. Our bulletins planned for this weekend are below. Although we may not be worshiping within the church building, we can worship where we are and with those around us.

We will assess the church campus on Monday and make further closure decisions at that time. We will continue to communicate via our website, social media, and email.

We would like to remind our parishioners to stay up-to-date with the local news and to take all necessary precautions in order to remain safe throughout the storm.

Miami Church, Miami

*Due to Hurricane Irma, there will be no Sunday Gathering or any other church activities this weekend. We are trusting God for a miracle and praying for our loved ones right now.
#irma #hurricaneirma#faithoverfear*

Calvary Assembly Orlando, Winter Park

Calvary will definitely have a Sunday morning service, with a focus on prayer. We have a number of people who are planning to shelter at Calvary, and we will livestream the service.

Vous Church, Miami

Due to hurricane Irma, we have cancelled all services on Sunday, Sept. 10. Please make sure to prepare as necessary and evacuate if needed. We are praying for your safety!

Nativity Catholic Church, Longwood

We will have Saturday morning Mass at 8:30 a.m. and Saturday Vigil Mass at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 9. All Masses, Faith Formation Classes, Parent Orientation, Men's Club Breakfast and any other meetings will be cancelled on Sunday, Sept. 10 and Monday, Sept. 11. We will assess the situation on Monday, Sept. 11 and make decisions regarding the days ahead.

Faith Formation Classes (morning and evening) and Parent Orientation for Sunday, Sept. 10, will be postponed until next Sunday, Sept. 17. Please take every precaution to be safe during this storm. We will continue to post any new updates as decisions are made. Thank you for your patience.

Northwest Church, Orlando

We have decided that it is best to cancel all Northwest events and services this weekend due to hurricane Irma. The following are affected:

Saturday: Mother's Encounter rescheduled

Saturday: Dance Studio closed

Sunday: Both services cancelled.

Monday: Dance Studio closed

As Christians, we trust God and praise him in each circumstance. Hunker on down!

The Vine of Greater Orlando, Orlando

Also, blame this on the optimistic rose-colored glasses I wear, but I was hoping we could still meet this week and hesitated to send this out too early. It is possible I am jumping the gun a bit, but I am going to err on the side of caution. Based on reports of various news agencies and local authorities suggesting people stay off the roads starting Sunday, I have made a decision to cancel this week's Celebration on Sept. 10, 2017, and related activities. Also, for those involved, we are also going to have to postpone our Launch Lunch, where we expected to plan out some of our programming for this season of church life.

Frankly, I hope and pray this storm veers away from us and dissipates quickly. Please take this time to look after your families and others around you in need. This can be a great time for us to mobilize as lights in our communities and serve our neighbors. Also, if you have any needs, please let me know (text or call). Please also let me know if you are available in some way to serve others in need.

Fear not, stay safe, stay well, stay dry and keep praying.

As winds catapult toward Florida, be encouraged by Mark 4.