

Tragedy Sparks the Church to Spring Into Action

When the monstrous tornados hit Oklahoma, the church sprang into action. That's the reports I'm getting from some friends who live in the area and who have been helping, along with thousands of others.

One was Steven Earp, the young pastor I wrote about a week ago. I texted him to see if he was OK because I knew his Elevate Church was in Moore, Okla., where the worst devastation took place. He called back and told me he was OK and how people in his church were responding. One of his associate pastors, who also works in the sheriff's office for Cleveland County, gave us this report.

Earp's church is also collecting money, and I urge you to give as I am. Many people in central Oklahoma lost everything. It will take months for life to get back to normal for many. He also sent me a link to last Sunday's sermon entitled "Prepare for Struggles" as the first sermon in a series called "Strength From Struggles." (To download, click "Download latest sermon.") How prophetic!

I talked to another friend, Marc Nuttle, a prominent attorney whose book I published several years ago about the country's cultural and political situation, entitled *Moment of Truth*. The book has been prophetic in predicting the direction of our nation during the last four years.

Marc spent several hours at his church—Journey Church—about two miles from the path of the tornado. It was used as a staging area to help those affected. He granted me an interview, in which he compared this devastation to the infamous 1999 tornado that hit the area and was the worst up to that time. Because this one was so slow and so wide, he

said the destruction was even greater. But he said it's amazing how quickly the churches sprang into action to help.

Here's Marc's report in his own words:

"I was an eyewitness to the May 3 tornado in 1999, which was an EF5 that hit the same area. We haven't seen one of those since, where it's actually simple devastation with no houses left or no foundations as far as the eye can see. These tornadoes are so powerful that they actually suck the grass up from the ground. It's bare ground where there used to be lawns. This one was more devastating for the reason that it moved slower. They don't know yet if it's an EF5. They're calling it an EF4, but it moved so slow that it would grind with enormous tornadic winds. [The storm has since been categorized an EF5.]

"The first responders are wonderful servants. They found some 101 people in the rubble last night. What we need now is ongoing relief. People are dazed and are trying to find each other and their belongings. They don't know where to sleep at night. The University of Oklahoma, which is about 15 miles south, has opened its dorm rooms since the students are gone for the summer. I talked to the sheriff last night, who basically said that they have things under control as far as doing relief work, getting supplies to the churches that have become part of the distribution center on the perimeter of the destruction, and then keeping watch. It will take weeks to get people relocated and the services that they need.

"If you are a national broadcaster, I would think you would be amazed at the response the churches have provided. They're everywhere. They're acting without qualification and they are stopping whatever they are doing, providing services that are needed as projected or asked for by the emergency responders. It really makes me feel good to be in Oklahoma. I didn't know they could kick into action that fast and it is a marvel to watch.

“When the media talks about refuge centers, they’ll list 10 churches and two community centers that people are going to. The main center to find lost relatives is St. Andrews Church—that’s where they’re directing everybody. So as far as emergency preparedness, the church is part of the county, and the sheriff and the police systems are using their parking lots for staging and communication. The Catholic church, which I am also a member, said parishioners from all over the country are sending relief supplies for the people. But what they’re going to need is cash, so we took some cash by there today. The volunteer coordination centers are primarily being sent to churches, and that report came out today. If you’re a volunteer, they’ll tell you what church to go to even if you’re not a member of that church.

“It’s also interesting that at the height of this, the newscasters were asking for prayer. This is the secular news media—NBC, CBS news asking for prayers for the responders and of course the victims. It’s all awful, and no tragedy is greater or less than another because there are people trapped in that elementary school, which they’re still trying to get to the bottom.

“As for me, I just put on my jeans and went straight to Journey Church and started working with the dispatch. They were collecting water, blankets and pillows. They had so much they didn’t know how to distribute it. We took a bit of the donation for the immediate relief and got my directions, but they probably had enough people at that point to work the distribution channels, preparing for next week. Some of the people are coming back Thursday to get back on it. We’ll really need the help weeks from now. It will be months before we’re back to normal here.”

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