

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

A Lesson from DCPC's Disaster Assistance Trip

April 2026

Ms. Sherry lives alone in a small, one-bedroom house in Newland, just outside of Spruce Pines, NC. Her mobility is not good so she spends most days and every night in her recliner. When Hurricane Helene hit, the water entered her home and kept rising to three feet. There she was, alone in her chair, for three days!

Because her neighbors came to check on her, she was eventually rescued. Every day since then she's been trying to regain a little bit of control over her life that was thrown so far out of control that day.

When our DCPC Disaster Assistance Team was briefed on her case the first morning, we were cautioned that Ms. Sherry can be cantankerous. She wants no decisions made on her behalf, and must be consulted on everything. The minutest detail should not be assumed. Previous teams had experienced this with varying degrees of difficulty.

When our team of four arrived at her home, it became abundantly clear what the Case Worker meant. The order of the work - for example, what would be done in which room - was to be cleared with her. The pattern of the flooring she had purchased was to be continued in a different way than that established by the team working in her bathroom the week before. Nothing could be moved without her knowing and approving where it would be put. Above all, no one was to touch anything without her permission.

At first this was very difficult for our team to accept. They were used to homeowners wanting things done quickly and "professionally" but not with this exacting amount of oversight. And her list of jobs kept expanding well beyond the scope the team had been assigned for the week.

At one point, Ms. Sherry described a family member saying, *"I know you think I'm difficult, but you should see him!"* To which our team replied sarcastically, *"You're difficult?"*

One of the tenets of serving in Disaster Response is to quietly walk alongside these survivors. We are not there to judge or critique, but to give them the support they need while we help to rebuild their homes and lives.

For four and a half days, Ms. Sherry sat in her recliner crocheting an afghan and kept a close watch over the team.

The whole team, though frustrated at first, worked with her to finish the projects she needed. Flooring was laid as she had requested, rooms of items and furniture were moved with her approval. The kitchen and its cabinets were painted. Real progress was made.

On day four, she noticed one of our team was having difficulty keeping her hair out of her face while she was painting. Ms. Sherry quietly switched from the afghan's white yarn to a blue yarn. When our team member asked her what she was working on now, she said she noticed the volunteer's hair kept getting in her face, so she was crocheting her a headband.

She was giving back as she could. It was a sign that she felt seen, heard, and respected. What a delightful way to wrap up a week of difficult work! That headband is now a souvenir of a week of walking alongside a neighbor in good times and especially the bad.

~written by Lyn Dodillet on behalf of the Communications Committee.

***Love Your Neighbor
as Yourself.***

- Matthew 22:39

