

Imagine you live in a town at the base of beautiful mountains and nearly 500 miles from a hurricane battering the Florida coast. Now you could imagine that you would have some residual effects from this hurricane, in the form of some rain showers for a day or maybe two. BUT you could never imagine or prepare for a storm that would sit over you and your mountains for 5 days and dump 30 inches of rain. 30 inches of rain that floods not only every creek and river in the mountains, but also every creek and river below the Mountains. And when all that water converges on your city you have catastrophic flooding of the proportions perhaps Noah experienced. This was Asheville, North Carolina (NC) and Hurricane Helene!

25 ft of water rushing down streets and taking with it homes, businesses, cars, everything imaginable. You have nowhere to go. Your just pray that GOD spares your life and those of your friends and family. Sadly, that will not be the case for all, as 95 people die across NC and nationwide 175 deaths are attributed to Hurricane Helene, 42 of those deaths were in the Asheville area. Roads were destroyed, bridges, and so much more. Homes slid down Mountains as the rain made it all unstable. The town went without water for 6 weeks while the USACE (US Army Corps of Engineers) worked to bring water to the community to drink and cleared the rivers of debris. Lost lives, homes, businesses and belongings would become an everyday sight as the community worked to rebuild their lives.

Six months later Good Morning America did a show from Asheville highlighting the fact that they were working hard to recover, but the public needed to know and see that there was still so much to do. They had gone through holidays and suffered through winter with people still having no home. They lived in tents and sheds and whatever they could find to give them shelter. They also had the fear of mud slides as over the course of six months nearly 2000 had hit the area. A campground that held almost a hundred sites was at the base of a mountain and the intersection of two major rivers... it was wiped out and was just at the point where six months later they could start rebuilding everything. But it was spring, and they were afraid of rain again causing more slides and flooding.

I saw this episode of GMA and almost started to cry just thinking of the things they were going through. I wanted to help, BUT how? And then it hit me. I looked at my husband and said, "you know how we were going to sell our trailer this year? What if we donate it to this organization (BELOVED ASHEVILLE) and give someone down there a home even if while they build theirs back up again?" Without a moment of hesitation, he said YES! The wheels were in motion. I worked on finding out the people to contact at this organization and over the next couple of weeks we planned our trip. We would get the trailer ready for someone to just move in and everything would be there. All they needed to provide was food and we supplied some staples. At first, I just told a friend we were doing this and then at their

encouragement I told the pastor of our church. Immediately, the church jumped in to help. Donations poured in from the members and the church mission fund provided a check for \$500 for incidentals. When we left with our trailer and the back of our truck full of donations 2 weeks later, we were feeling blessed.

As we made our way to Asheville, we had to take the long way from Knoxville as large portions of I40 had been washed away by flood waters and mud slides and it had been closed for 5 months. Even the long way around the mountain to Asheville had a 2-mile section that had washed away, but two lanes had been completed so we could get through. But to see that little bit right there and the piles of debris and the mud let us know what we would see is like nothing we could have imagined. First stop was 'Beloved Asheville', where we would unload the trailer and then park it for them to find a recipient. The co-directors were there, and they were so welcoming. Hugs and smiles at all the stuff our church had sent and the prospect of how it would help those in need. We exchanged stories about us and the church and the things that had happened there and the people they served and who they were. It was so emotional and yet so heartwarming. The suffering they had seen and the things this great organization and all the contributors had been doing so far... and yet there was so much more to be done. We saw their warehouse and then we went to see the tiny home village they had underway. 17 houses just about done waiting on water lines and then families could move in.

We spent the night in a VRBO and as we were having dinner we reflected on all we had seen as we drove around the city. What had been done and what was left to be done. I was so overwhelmed as I thought about what little we had done; but yet, how much it meant to me. I grew up really poor and to think that now even though we are not rich I could give something that would mean so much to someone was just a lot to take in. Even though it has been about 6 weeks since we were there, I still think about it each day and hope there are others who have been guided to help these people recover in the way we were.

Today I got pictures and a note from the director of Beloved Asheville. Last week they handed the keys to the trailer over to an elderly lady who had been living in a shed since the hurricane last September. She now has a home! My heart is smiling that we were able to do this small gesture, just as she is smiling in the picture they sent holding the key to her new home.