

BY CHAPLAIN BILL STEPHENS

SALVATION AFTER THE STORM

When Hurricane Ivan struck the Gulf Coast, it presented many opportunities to respond as a chaplain. People affected by the storm suffered physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

One need was discovered with a cup of coffee. National Guard checkpoints were set up, providing stationary individuals to speak with. Because I had church members in the affected area I had to gain access. This point of access turned into a place to help.

I asked the Guardsmen if they had ever wanted to travel to Hawaii. They responded positively. I said, “Well, just think beach thoughts and have a cup of Kona coffee.” Friends of mine had traveled to Hawaii recently and brought back Kona coffee as a gift for me.

Sharing the coffee, conversation and later hot meals with these troops provided the avenue to get to know them and share the ministry of a chaplain.

One of the catch phrases today is “putting your faith, the truth of God’s love into definable and demonstrable actions.”

The coffee and hot meals were the tools to care for the troops at their checkpoint.

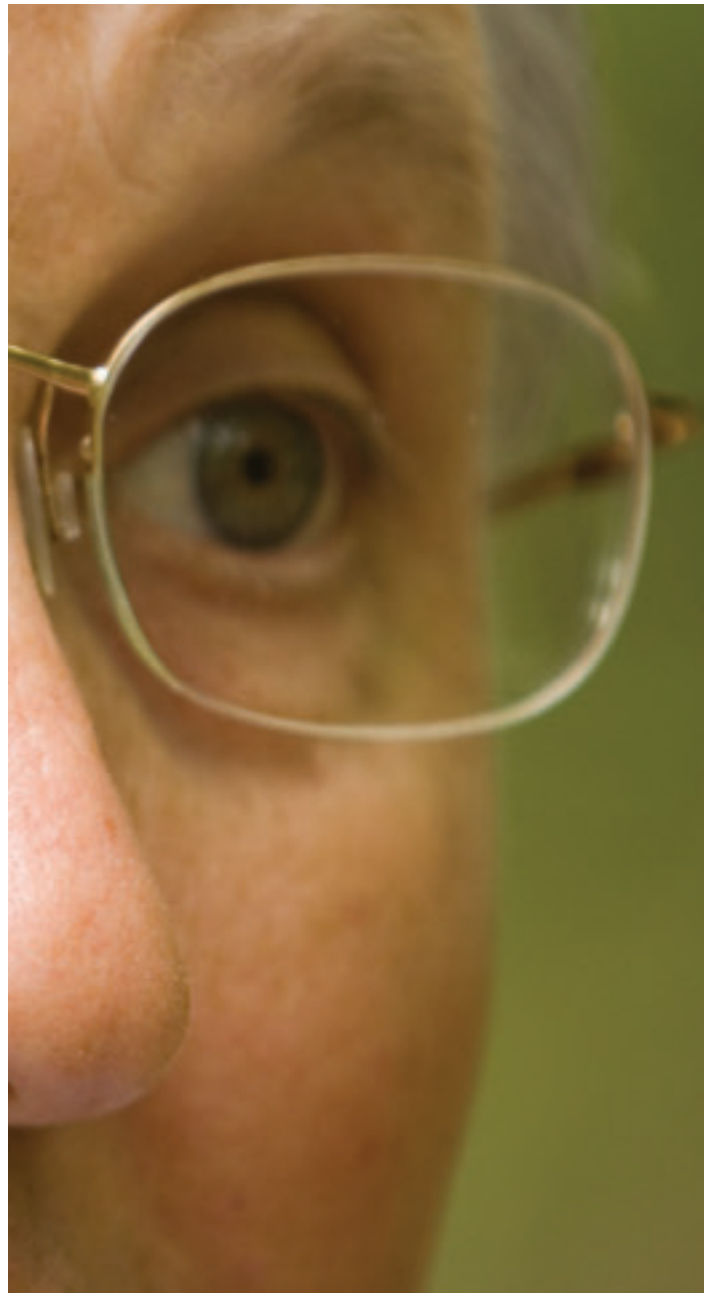
The Disaster Relief Center was another focus point of activity. Those needing and seeking help, and those organized to provide the help were located there.

As resources came in, the individuals driving the trucks were always filled with questions and the most pressing was, “Who can unload this truck?”

One driver from Maine was very patient as he observed the beehive of work and the constant flood of people coming and going.

While it took some time to alert the right people and secure equipment to unload his truck, he asked, “Can anyone tell me how to trust Jesus?”

I was called to come tell Tom how he could trust Jesus. Tom was open and eager.





As we walked through a simple tract his only question was, “Can I trust Jesus now?” I led him in a simple prayer as he prayed after me. Tom invited Jesus into his life.

The next two weeks Tom soaked up all he could as he shared what Jesus had done in his heart.

When it came time to head back to Maine, Tom said, “This has been the best two weeks of my life.” I had the privilege to listen, lead and help Tom find his way to Jesus even in the midst of a disaster.

*For more information about chaplaincy ministries among Alabama Baptists and how to receive training, please contact State Missionary Joe Bob Mizzell at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 267, jmizzell@alsbom.org **OM***